

The Tribune (Seymour, Indiana)

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Business News

**August** 25, 2011 Thursday

## EDITORIAL: So where does Libya go now?

**BYLINE:** The Tribune, Seymour, Ind.

**SECTION:** COMMENTARY

**LENGTH:** 503 words

Aug. 25--Good riddance to Col. Moammar Gadhafi, the Libyan dictator who oppressed his people for 42 years while fostering terrorism abroad. As President Barack Obama said Monday from Martha's Vineyard, the situation in the Libyan capital of Tripoli remained "fluid," but "the Gadhafi regime is coming to an end, and the future of Libya is in the hands of its people .... From Benghazi to Misurata to the Western Mountains, the Libyan opposition courageously confronted the regime, and the tide turned in their favor."

Obama said directly to the people of Libya, "Your revolution is your own, and your sacrifices have been extraordinary. Now, the Libya you deserve is within your reach."

And that's the problem.

We have no idea yet whether the future in Libya will more resemble the relatively bright prospects in Egypt and Tunisia after the "Arab Spring" uprisings toppled longtime dictators, or whether it will be a years-long disaster with tribal fighting, killings and bombings, as was the case in Iraq, even after dictator Saddam Hussein's statue was pulled down and he was captured, tried and hanged.

"The war doesn't end when they pull down the statue or string up the bad guy," Christopher Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the libertarian **Cato Institute**, said. "I've never been satisfied with the Obama administration's post-war planning. I still think they don't know what will happen. I hope it works out well, that things end up better than in Iraq. There are a lot of questions about what happens next."

It's worth remembering that Obama started the air war against Gadhafi without even a nod of approval from Congress. America's most recent declared war was World War II, which ended 66 years ago. But even the wars since -- such as those in Korea and Vietnam, the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War and the ongoing Iraq war -- at least were started after Congress approved the use of force. Obama's excuse was the Libyan war was really a "kinetic military action," in the words of his deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes.

Moreover, when the attack on Libya began in March, Obama promised it would only be to prevent Gadhafi from committing massacres on rebels in the

country's Benghazi area, and that the attacks would last "days, not weeks." Yet the "mission creep" now has lasted five months, with NATO -- primarily U.S. forces -- effectively acting as the rebels' financiers and air force. The war reportedly cost America taxpayers about \$100 million a day, or \$15 billion.

We hope the best for the Libyan people. We hold out hope for enlightened leadership and and liberty for Libyans. But it would have been better for them, and us, if we had allowed the Libyans to foment their own Arab Spring, however long it took, and firmly set their own course.

What do you think?

What's your opinion on this topic? Send your comments to [ddavis@tribtown.com](mailto:ddavis@tribtown.com)

\_\_\_ (c)2011 The Tribune (Seymour, Ind.) Visit The Tribune (Seymour, Ind.) at [www.tribtown.com](http://www.tribtown.com) Distributed by MCT Information Services