

RELEASE IN PART B6

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Sent: Tuesday, April 12, 2011 10:55 AM
To: H
Cc: Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J; Abedin, Huma
Subject: Les Gelb on AU proposal for ceasefire

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I basically agree with this – the most important thing by a mile right now is to get the fighting stopped – every day it goes on we lose the goodwill we generated in the first place by coming to the opposition's aid, b/c they are increasingly calling for us to do more, which will quickly (and is already) shifting to blaming us for their losses. It also gets every harder to rebuild. In my view the winset for a compromise is to get Gaddafi out but to keep Saif (or another son) as part of a governing Council. But Les is right that if NATO counter-proposes with a really tough proposal it starts to box Gaddafi in diplomatically instead of allowing him to say that he was ready for a cease-fire. And given his propaganda hold on many of the citizens in Western Libya, at least according to some very good on-the-ground sources, there is still a constituency for his family/govt if not for him. Another possibility would be to have Qatar or UAE or someone represent Arab League and have negotiations b/w both sides take place under combined auspices of AU and Arab League. Libya has always seen itself BOTH as part of the Arab world and of Africa – as the gateway to sub-Saharan Africa.

Give the Libya Cease-Fire Plan a Chance
by Leslie H. Gelb
April 12, 2011

Westerners who rushed to the defense of the Libyan rebels bridle at the thought of any cease-fire proposal that doesn't require Col. Gaddafi's removal from power. Indeed, Libyan rebels have already rejected the proposal by African leaders that restricts itself to a straight cease-fire and puts off other contentious issues. But NATO leaders would be dead wrong to reject the African proposal out of hand. They would be wrong to let the absolutists and the rebels let the war go on until they have everything they want, no matter what the costs. For all the holes in the African initiative, it does start the ball rolling toward a possible cease-fire. At the very least, U.S. leaders owe it to Americans to explore the ideas seriously, perhaps through NATO or the U.N. Security Council. And the moral war-mongers can always console themselves with the thought that if these cease-fire talks collapse, all parties can resume the killing in the name of freedom and humanity.

No one expects Col. Gaddafi to agree to or keep a full-fledged cease-fire, but he has accepted the limited African proposal. Obviously, NATO shouldn't simply accept the African plan as is. But it should respond with a beefed-up counterproposal, one with inspectors in place and other reasonable requirements that can't be dismissed as ploys to make the cease-fire idea fail. And if the colonel says no to that, most Westerners-including myself-would feel less strained about the ongoing and costly battle.

In sum, here's what the five African presidents placed on the table on behalf of the African Union: (1) An immediate cease-fire, (2) the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid, (3) protection of foreign nationals, and (4) a dialogue between the government and rebels on a political settlement.

Among other things, the NATO counterproposal should call for a U.N. inspection team to police the cease-fire, a pullback of Gaddafi's forces to their base areas, and a cessation of all Libyan helicopter and aircraft flights. But other than items such as those to reinforce a cease-fire, the African suggestions seem necessarily general and wise as starting points. If a cease-fire would result in the creation of two Libyan states, that doesn't seem like a terrible outcome when compared to a never-ending civil war.

Predictably, the Italian and British foreign ministers threw cold water on the African plan, and joined the rebels in insisting that Gaddafi must go as part of any cease-fire. To me, this is not a serious response. Their main mission is supposed to be saving civilian lives, and everything they are saying would simply guarantee more killing.

As for the position of the Obama administration, it seems to be a typical mystery. On Monday, Secretary of State Clinton proffered a list of non-negotiable terms including: cease-fire, pullback of troops from areas that had been forcibly entered, and resumption of water, electricity, and humanitarian aid. She added: "We believe, too, that there needs to be a transition that reflects the will of the Libyan people and the departure of Gaddafi from power and from Libya." Interestingly, she did not include Gaddafi's departure among her non-negotiable demands for a cease-fire. That omission would seem very promising, save that department officials were reluctant to underline its importance.

White House press secretary Jay Carney produced his own tongue twisters on Monday: "What matters here are actions and not words...{Gaddafi's forces} need to stop menacing the civilians... pull back from the cities...garrison themselves...{But} we are in no way letting up the implementation {of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973}." To me, that sounds like the basis for a serious counterproposal. But then Carney went on to repeat the usual lines about U.S. policy being to squeeze Gaddafi until he leaves power. Go figure.

Administration officials tell me that reacting favorably toward a cease fire proposal would lead Gaddafi to think he's winning. And that, in turn, would make him more determined to fight on. My response is that NATO and the U.S. can control Gaddafi's reactions by their counter proposal -- hopefully a tough one. Besides, didn't President Obama say that while he wanted to get rid of Gaddafi, that was not to be accomplished by military force, but by diplomatic and economic means?

Of course, every decent person wants to get rid of Gaddafi. But the goal set out by the United Nations here is to save civilian lives, and it seems fair to try to achieve this by allowing for a cease-fire with Gaddafi in place, if only for the purpose of providing a power transition. Don't let us be too squeamish about dealing with the Gaddafi monster. America and its allies have a long history of bargaining with devils-mass murderers like Stalin and Mao, and nasty opponents in war like Ho Chi Minh. And don't forget the almost decade-long love fest the West had with Gaddafi himself after he renounced terrorism and destroyed his nuclear programs. The West can and does deal with devils to keep the peace and to save lives-without compromising its own security or fundamental values.

Leslie H. Gelb, a former New York Times columnist and senior government official, is author of *Power Rules: How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy* (HarperCollins 2009), a book that shows how to think about and use power in the 21st century. He is president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations.