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**From:** Anne-Marie Slaughter [redacted]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 1, 2011 10:47 PM  
**To:** H  
**Cc:** Abedin, Huma; Sullivan, Jacob J; Mills, Cheryl D  
**Subject:** Weekend Reading (in your infinite spare time)

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Here and below is a piece I wrote for the New York Review of Books blog this week building on the framework of states and societies that I laid out in my farewell remarks and connecting it both to the Libya debate and to the women go to war meme (altho v lightly). I think you will like it. <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2011/mar/30/interests-values-obamas-libya-strategy/>.

There is also a really interesting piece by an Israeli professor arguing that if in fact the UN were to recognize Palestine w/l 1967 borders it would be recognizing Israel w/l 1967 borders as well – immediately delegitimizing all who claim Israel does not have a right to exist. Here is the link. It may well be too clever by half, but it's thought-provoking re simply creating the baseline via int'l recognition and then let them work out land-swaps. [http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/31/israel\\_should\\_endorse\\_un\\_recognition\\_of\\_a\\_palestinian\\_state](http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/31/israel_should_endorse_un_recognition_of_a_palestinian_state)

I hope you get at least an hour or two of downtime this weekend – everywhere I go people are rooting for you but worrying how on earth you can keep up the pace – out of concern for you but also for the country.

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## Interests vs. Values? Misunderstanding Obama's Libya Strategy

Anne-Marie Slaughter



*Barack Obama: drawing by John Springs*

President Obama made an important contribution to the Libya debate in his speech Monday night by rejecting the over-worked dichotomy between America's strategic interests and its core values. Most of the media coverage of the debate relied on this familiar trope. On March 16, at the beginning of the critical week that resulted in a UN resolution and the start of air strikes two days later, the *Times* reported that "senior officials, notably the national security adviser, Thomas E. Donilon, have made it clear that the United States does not view Libya as a vital strategic interest." After the President made the decision to support a no fly zone, the press continued to refer to this dichotomy, but now asserted that values had triumphed over interests. The *Times* story of the crucial meetings in which the decisions were made—the story which, not coincidentally, provided the original fodder for the women go to war saga—began: "Ever since the democracy protests in the region began three months ago, the Obama administration has struggled to balance America's national security interests against support for democratic principles."

In his account of why he decided to support a UN resolution authorizing military intervention in Libya, Obama began by reminding us of what did *not* happen. He summoned the prospect of a house-to-house massacre of all opposition supporters in Benghazi, a city of 700,000, a massacre that would have "reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world." He then said: "It was not in our national interest to let that happen."

Later in the speech Obama specified precisely the interests he weighed against the costs and risks of intervention. First was the strain that floods of refugees resulting from a Qaddafi victory would put on the fragile transitions in Egypt and Tunisia. Second was the message that would be sent to other dictators across the region, “as repressive leaders concluded that violence is the best strategy to cling to power.” Third was the erosion of all credibility for the UN Security Council.

Alongside these specific strategic interests, as Obama characterized them, was a more fundamental betrayal of “who we are,” a denial of our values that would cost us our integrity as a nation and as a global leader. That is a reason grounded in both our values and our interests. When the gap between what we say and think about ourselves and what we actually do becomes too great, it can cause a crisis of both national identity and international legitimacy. Obama knows this better than most Presidents; it is why he came to power vowing to reject torture and close Guantanamo (though that has proven difficult to accomplish in practice). During his inaugural address, remember the sense of a weight lifting from our collective shoulders and the roar of applause after the line: “As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals.”

Obama acknowledged, rightly, that the US has more direct vital interests—the preservation of US territory, the safety of our people, the security of our allies, and “our core interests.” Protecting civilians in Libya does not fall within that category, but rather within the category of “challenges to our common security and common humanity.” The US should not “be afraid to act,” but neither should it act alone.

I dwell on Obama’s parsing of values and interests because both the terms and the way that they are typically used in foreign policy debates are heavily freighted with assumptions and associations that typically skew the outcome of those debates. In the first place, any effort to argue for intervention in circumstances where the protection of lives and rights are involved almost immediately gets framed as values versus interests, no matter how hard the advocate of intervention insists that it is interests versus interests. It’s a very smart debating move, because that framing carries all of the following baggage:

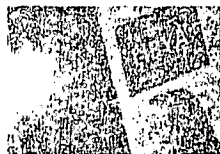
INTERESTS	VALUES
Strategic	Moral
Vital	Optional
Realist	Idealist
Cool	Passionate
Hard-headed	Warm-hearted
Calculation	Emotion
Narrow	Broad

I could add the question of gender, but every woman reading this has already filled it in. When the President said at the Gridiron dinner, “I’ve dispatched Hillary to the Middle East to talk about how these countries can transition to new leaders—though, I’ve got to be honest, she’s gotten a little passionate about the subject,” I sincerely doubt that he understood why so many women bridled. To any professional woman who has done battle to get herself taken seriously, “passionate” is the kiss of death. In my view, the entire “women go to war” narrative was fueled in part by the automatic association of women with strong emotional engagement with humanitarian causes and crusading support for idealist principles.

If we can move away from values versus interests and recognize that many participants in the Libya debate are weighing interests versus interests (some of which are reinforced by values), then we can focus on the deeper question of how American interests should be defined. In this debate, the disagreement is really between those who define American interests only with respect to a world of states, or with respect to a world of both states and societies. In a world of states, the United States is threatened only by strong states; Libya is weak. In a world of both governments and the societies they rule, the fate of the

Libyan opposition would have resonated through social networks across the region, with pictures of horrific atrocities against men and women calling for liberty, democracy, justice, and Western help.

In a world of states, geography is still a function of bounded physical borders. In a world of governments and societies, geography includes the unbounded virtual world in which social networks operate despite the efforts of some governments to control them. In a world of states, we look to the distribution of natural resources among them and favor those states that have more. In the world of governments and societies, we must look not only at natural resources but also at the distribution of the wealth they generate. In a world of states, governments can be bribed, coerced, and cajoled into pursuing a desired course of action. In a world of governments and societies, we must take account of the power of citizens to constrain their governments in ways that are directly contrary to our ability to solve global problems.



Toby Melville/WPA Pool/Getty Images

*Hillary Clinton after the Libya Conference at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London, March 29, 2011*

This is a much more complex definition of interests, and a much more complex game—so complex that it is hardly surprising that many foreign policy advisers would rather stick to the world of great power chess. Yet here is what it means in practice. It means that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was probably not arguing for a No Fly Zone because the people of Libya were tugging at her heart-strings or because of a patriotic commitment to American values, but because she had just returned from a trip to Egypt during which a number of members of the Egyptian youth movement refused to meet with her because of the perception that the US had sided with Mubarak—and young people now make up 60 percent of the population of the Middle East.

It means that Samantha Power, who is assumed to be automatically for military intervention whenever a massacre looms because she wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning book on genocide, may well have been motivated to take a position favoring a NFZ, if indeed that is the position she took, because the gravamen of her book, *A Problem from Hell*, was precisely that the US *said* “never again,” but actively *did* whatever it could to avoid calling Rwanda a genocide precisely so we would not have to intervene. As a former journalist and writer, she is acutely sensitive to both the power of words and the tremendous and lasting damage that can be done by the gap between “said” and “did.”

This world of governments and societies is the foreign policy frontier. Many members of the Administration have been arguing that although it may be messy and uncomfortable, US foreign policy must change fairly dramatically to prosper in that world. Recognizing the importance of societies as well as governments—and both are important—requires focusing on development, the suite of policies dedicated to improving the lives of the individual human beings who comprise a society, as much as on diplomacy. It requires standing for Internet freedom and promoting all the ways in which information technology can help societies hold their governments to account. It requires paying attention to which voices are and are not heard in societies. And it points to the value of engaging the full spectrum of US society—economic, civic, educational, religious, philanthropic—to connect to foreign societies.

More specifically and immediately, defining US interests with respect to both governments and societies, rather than of unitary states, means supporting all efforts to reach a negotiated solution in Libya. Our goal should be not only to have Qaddafi leave office, but also to support as broad a spectrum of Libyans as possible in making a transition to, in the President’s words, “a legitimate government that is responsive to the Libyan people.” We should not try to engineer a government that will support us in Qaddafi’s stead, or fight to the finish to burnish US credibility and power.

We know from too many examples how difficult it is for a society to reconstruct itself both physically and socially after a conflict. The more killing and destruction, the longer and harder it will be for Libyans to rebuild the economic and social ties that can support development and a healthy political process. As commentators have already begun to point out, many of the members of Qaddafi’s army are young and terrified conscripts who want no part of Qaddafi’s war but whose families will be

mobilized by their deaths. Let us protect Libya's civilians by any means necessary, but let us at the same time support any effort to stop the conflict on whatever terms both sides will ultimately accept. Both our interests and our values will be well served.