

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION AND THE 'MAGNANIMITY' OF THE WESTERN POWERS

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Abstract

The political upheaval which started in the Middle East and swept through the North African countries of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya unleashed earth-shaking changes that uprooted the spectre of autocracy, pseudo-monarchism and political absolutism that characterised these countries. One connecting thread in their experiences was the close-circuited political system, which threw up the inevitable personalization of the state. The Libyan revolution originated from the seeming impossibility of change in the polity and the dwindling economic fortunes of the proverbial common man. Colonel Muammer Gaddafi's reputation for intolerance, the vehemence in his call on government apparatuses of force to quell the revolt at any cost and his characterization of the rebels as "rats" and "cockroaches" that must be crushed attracted international attention and provided the Western powers the needed excuse to break him; a task that had haunted them for decades. The active involvement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the Libyan revolution on the grounds of humanitarian considerations was ploy, which masked its real intentions. This paper examines the underlying push and pull of the Libyan revolution, the seeming magnanimity of NATO and associated institutions and argues that not only was NATO's real intention the destruction of Gaddafi and the threats he personified, but also the procurement of unfettered access to Libya's oil.

Keywords: New Imperialism, Operation Unified Protector, No-Fly Zone, Arab Spring Revolution

Introduction

The swiftness with which the international community, under the auspices of the UN Security Council, reacted to the Libyan protests that snowballed into a revolution was certainly not in keeping with the characteristic reaction period of the UN. The Libyan protest started on 15 February 2011 and by 26 February 2011, the UN Security Council had rolled out its first Resolution (Resolution 1970) which ensconced elaborate bouquet of sanctions. By 17 March 2011, the UN Security Council issued its second resolution (Resolution 1973) which strengthened the earlier resolution and provided the basis for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces to invade Libya on the grounds of protecting civilians. Prior to the Libyan crisis, several countries across the Middle East and the Maghreb were embroiled in crisis and yet no international action was taken against them.

NATO military operations in Libya code-named *Operation Unified Protector* gulped billions of dollars. Now, the pertinent question is why should NATO spend

billions of dollars to save Libyans when its major countries are embroiled in economic crisis? The answer lies in the strategic importance of post-Gaddafi Libya in the matrix of NATO's military and economic interest.

From Protest to Revolution: Arab Spring and the Internal Dynamics of the Libyan Revolution

The Libyan revolution did not have the trappings and finesse of painstaking planning, mobilization and execution often associated with contemporary strategies of regime change. It was a product of domino effect which originated from successes recorded in the political upheavals which have been dubbed the Arab spring. The uprisings pitched the people against the sit-tight, autocratic and pseudo-monarchist regimes and produced some startlingly positive results in Tunisia and Egypt. The success of the uprisings provided a beacon of hope and energized attempts at replicating them in many countries with identical socio-economic configurations. The successes of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions served as a template that motorized the aspiration for a new political order in Libya.

Despite the successful ousting of Tunisian President, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali through mass protests, there was a note of ambivalence in extant analyses about the capacity of Arab countries to follow the Tunisian example and dismantle the paternalistic and monarchical regimes that were their trademark. It was generally believed that the long years of political marginalization of the masses, contraction of the political space, intolerance of opposition and personalization of state apparatuses of force had enfeebled the masses. Based on that, Hardy (2011) opines that the ageing autocrats in the Arab countries would "cling more tightly to power rather than relinquishing it". The high prospects of state-sponsored resistance based on the pervading culture of intolerance, which manifests in harsh and ruthless suppression of dissension led Leyne (2011) to contend that "if Tunisia is to be the first of a series of dominos, the first of many Arab autocracies to collapse, there is no sign yet of the contagion spreading to Egypt". But this was later to be proved wrong. Egypt went up in flames following a popular uprising that began on Tuesday, 25 January 2011.

Several factors underpinned the perception that the Tunisian upheaval was a close-circuited political occurrence that lacked spill-over capability. The socio-economic formation in most Arab nations were characterized by high level of poverty, low educational levels, docility as a result of years of suppression, strong governmental control of the society and extreme personalization of the military, police and intelligence agencies (Hauslohner 2011). The success of the mass uprising in Tunisia and Egypt in dethroning the 23-year reign of President Ben Ali and the 30-year regime of President Hosni Mubarak was not the sole catalyst that undergirded the Libyan revolution although it provided inspiration and acted as a reference point. The peculiarities of the anti-state mass actions that played out in Tunisia and Egypt were embedded in the fact that they did not derive their *raison d'être* or motorizing spirit from ethnic, religious or sectional sloganeering, or assistance from foreign powers or demagogued by an inspiring leader figure. It was a revolution of the people, by the people and for the people and which was powered, driven and sustained by the masses based on their collective desire for a better society.

Several domestic contradictions acted as push factors that mobilized the masses against the government of Colonel Muammer Gaddafi. These included: closed political

system as a result of the personalization of statecraft, unemployment, corruption, lack of infrastructural facilities, worsening economic conditions and state terrorism of the people. Despite the creation of elaborate committees which painted the façade of decentralized administration in Libya, Gaddafi was its supreme ruler and brooked no opposition. The underlying philosophy, principles and structures for statecraft derived their essence from Gaddafi's Green Book. The paradox of political reality was that while Libya was officially known as *Jamahiriyah*, or state of the masses, the masses had little to do with political outcomes. As the Freedom House (2003) avers,

Libyans cannot change their government democratically. Colonel Mu'ammar al Qadhafi rules by decree, with almost no accountability or transparency. Libya has no formal constitution; a mixture of Islamic belief, nationalism, and socialist theory in Qadhafi's Green Book provides principles and structures of governance, but the document lacks legal status.

Although political governance in Libya was organized around revolutionary and people's committees which served as platforms for the administration of the country's subdivisions in legislative and executive capacities, Gaddafi remained the repository and symbol of actual power. The strategies which Gaddafi adopted to rein-in opposition included: the appointment of relatives and loyal members of his ethnic group into central military and government positions; skillful marginalization of rivals, selective empowerment and disempowerment of supporters and rivals to create a balance of support for his regime, abridgement of academic freedom, censorship of the media and constant excitation of the patriotic zeal of the people (Freedom House 2003; Craig 2011). The dexterity of the Gaddafi regime in keeping the level of dissension in the Libyan polity low led to his description by US diplomats as a master of tactical maneuvering (Craig 2011). In actuality, security concerns about regime survival especially the fear of coup d'état made Gaddafi to convert Libya into an endless field of security operations. According to Wikipedia, the Revolutionary Committees occasionally kept tight control over internal dissent; reportedly, ten to twenty percent of Libyans worked as informants for these committees, with surveillance taking place in the government, in factories, and in the education sector." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Libyan_civil_war).

Despite the creation of the façade of invincibility to the outside world through anti-west sloganeering and pro-terrorist pronouncements; and internally, by making a public show of the execution, hanging and mutilation of dissidents, there were cracks in the elite support base of the government. This crack whose earliest manifestation is locatable in 2000, gradually broadened until it gave way in the course of the mass protests that eventually ousted Gaddafi. In 2000, Gaddafi dissolved 14 ministries or general people's committees and transferred their powers to municipal councils to the chagrin of those involved. The move was interpreted as a deft power grab move by Gaddafi to undermine several of his ministers (Freedom House 2003).

Gaddafi fanned the embers of ethnicity and marginalized the Eastern part of the country. While Gaddafi extracted oil from the Eastern part, he neglected to provide basic infrastructure such as housing, roads, water and sewage system. Butters (2011)

describes the state of infrastructure in the eastern city of Benghazi, the second largest city in Libya with vast oil wealth thus, "the city one of million has one sewage treatment plant, built more than 40 years ago. Waste is just flushed into the ground or the sea, and when the water table rises in winter, the streets become open cesspools". Added to this was the issue of personal well-being associated with lack of housing facilities. Butters (2011) traces the genesis of the subsisting infrastructural crisis, especially in the housing sector, to Gaddafi's earliest socialist economic policies, which alienated private investments through the dispossession of landlords of their property and the transference of same to their tenants. Not only did this lead to stagnation, it created crisis. The wide-ranging implication was severe, chronic housing shortage, which induced personal survival crisis in the young people as they could neither take possession of their own homes, get married nor start their lives (Butters 2011). It was the cumulative feeling of relative deprivation in Eastern Libya that engendered and motorized the protests that rapidly transformed into a revolution. In the wider Libyan society, such factors as ethnic rivalries among senior government officials, massive corruption, mismanagement and high incidence of unemployment created despair, which formed the basis for solidarity against the regime. The level of corruption was so high in the Gaddafi era if one considered the reports of Transparency International. The Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index for 2010 ranked Libya 146th out of 178 countries surveyed. Also, the level of unemployment which was put at 20.74 percent and the incidence of poverty which was estimated to envelope about one-third of the Libyan population as they lived below national poverty line all provided the fodder for mass action (Transparency International 2010; Reuters 2009).

Despite the potentiality of these push factors to catalyze anti-government revolt, Gaddafi's reputation as a ruthless leader who spared no expense in punishing dissidents, his machinery of intelligence network, loyal police, and elite military machine exclusively loyal to him proved a daunting disincentive to confront his regime. But the disenchantment in the Libyan state proved greater incentive. Thus, from protest, the anti-government sentiments took on the form of uprising, then revolt and finally revolution. What added fillip to the mass revolt was the unexpected support from top-ranking government and military officials through resignation, renunciation of the regime and defection to the mass movement. It would appear that the speed with which these officials defected to the opposition and their apparent lack of consideration of the dangers that their political position portended for them represented pay-back time for Gaddafi for the festering "Maradonic" play-offs against them. The Justice Minister, Mustafa Mohammed Abud Al Jeleil, the Interior Minister, Major General Abdul Fatah Younis, the Prosecutor-General, Abdul-Rahman al-Abbar resigned their positions and joined the opposition. The Foreign Minister, Musa Kusa and his Oil Ministry counterpart, Shukri Ghanem withdrew their support for the regime and fled Libya, with the former pitching his tent in the United Kingdom (UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2011; Al Jazeera 2011; Abdelatti and Werr 2011). Libya's diplomatic missions also collapsed under the weight of the opposition as the ambassadors to the Arab League, European Union and United Nations, and to such countries as Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, France, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Portugal, Sweden and the US amongst others renounced the Gaddafi regime and formally resigned. The same wind of renunciation of the Gaddafi regime blew into

the army leading to the defection of high-ranking military officials in the three arms of the military.

The genesis of the Libyan protests that metamorphosed into a revolution lacked precise periodisation as they were organized in pockets around the country for different purposes. But the peaceful protest march which started on the 15th of February 2011 appeared to have spawned the anti-government protests that mushroomed in major cities of Libya and blossomed into a revolution. Prior to 15th February, protesters had, between 13th and 16th January 2011, taken over the cities of Bayda, Darnah, Benghazi and Bani Walid, to protest the undue delays in the completion of subsidized housing units undertaken by the government. Although the Libyan government responded to the housing unrest by January 27, 2011 by setting up a US\$24 billion investment fund to provide housing, the protesters were already implacable and demanded the end of the regime (Reuters 2011). The 15th February protest which started in Benghazi was in protest of the arrest of a human rights lawyer, Fathi Terbil who was also the lawyer and spokesman to a cross-section of the families of 1,270 prisoners massacred by security forces at the Abu Salim Prison in 1996. The protesters, estimated to be between 500 and 2000 were violently dispersed by the Benghazi Police with water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets. Similar protests spontaneously broke out in other cities with high casualty rate (Economist 2011).

The response of the Gaddafi regime to festering protests across the country consisted of carrot and stick. It announced the release of 110 suspected Islamic militants and the doubling of state employees' salaries (Cowell 2011). The regime, in keeping with its autocratic credentials sought to psychologically weaken the resolve of the protesters by labeling them "cockroaches" and "rats" and ordering the use of force to disperse them (Economist 2011). When this failed to work against the revolt, the regime resorted to force by employing snipers, mercenaries, helicopter gunships, war planes and anti-aircraft weaponry for the massacre of the demonstrators (Meo 2011). But the resolve of the masses to fight to the end defied the seeming superior fire power of the regime as events. It was not until February 27th that the protesters formalized their opposition by establishing the national Transitional Council (NTC). Several factors dictated the imperative of formalizing the struggle through a recognizable body: one, the need to consolidate opposition efforts; two, the need to have an organizing platform to coordinate the pockets of resistance efforts loosely scattered in different cities and towns; three, to create a central agency that will give a political face to the struggle (Aljazeera 2011b); four, the necessity of a central negotiating agency on behalf of the opposition in order to sustain the struggle at home and attract international attention and assistance; and five, to create an alternative to Gaddafi's repressive regime.

Anti-Western Sentiments and the Nationalization of the Culture of Defiance

Libya was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1911 when it fell into the imperial control of Italy. During the World War II, British and French forces occupied it and in the course of the post-war negotiations as a result of its trusteeship status under the United Nations, it gained independence in 1951 and was ruled by pro-western monarch, King Idris I. King Idris I ruled Libya until 1969 when Colonel Mu'ammr Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi, then 27 years old, led a group of army officers and toppled the monarch. The

coups led to far-reaching changes in the socio-political structuring of the country as it abolished the institution of monarchy as the organizing governmental system and the Libyan constitution as the grundnorm of governmental authority. The Libyan constitution was replaced with laws based on the political philosophy and ideology expounded in Gaddafi's multivolume treatise, *The Green Book*, which was described as a fusion of Arab nationalism, socialism and Islam (Freedom House 2008).

The underlying economic thinking of Gaddafi and one which seemingly powered the coup was the dismantling of Western domination of the oil economy. According to Freedom House (2008), "Al-Qadhafi believed that foreign oil companies were profiting from the country's natural-resource wealth at the expense of the Libyan people, and he moved to nationalize oil assets, claiming that oil revenues would be shared among the population". Gaddafi adopted anti-Western policies and with the enormous resources accruing from oil, pursued a pan-Arab foreign policy. He went on a spending spree, buying military hardware, that by 1979, Libya was reputed to own more fighter planes than Great Britain (Poggioli 2011).

Regulation did not stop in the economic sphere, it permeated all sectors of national life. In the political arena, dissent was illegal under Law 75 of 1973 and punishment for founding a political party or engaging in political activities considered treasonous was execution (Eljahmi 2006; Freedom House 2003). Up to mid-1980s, Libya's intelligence service conducted assassination of Libyan dissidents around the world and as late as 2004, bounties were placed on a Libyan journalist domiciled in the United Kingdom (Eljahmi 2006).

The regime made serious efforts to regulate the flow of information especially from the West. The state owned and controlled all media outfits including their news content and programming. In underscoring the lack of freedom in the media sector, Freedom House (2003) avers that although access to Western news channels such as the CNN was available, foreign programming was sometimes censored. In addition, international publications were censored and sometimes prohibited and internet access was provided by a service company owned by Gaddafi's son. In the course of the revolution, internet communication was shut down (Ackerman 2011). As part of the anti-Western policies of the Gaddafi regime, foreign languages such as English and French were, until recently, banned from school syllabus and discussions with foreigners about politics carried a prison term of three years (The Economist 2011b). Interestingly, while Gaddafi outlawed foreign languages, his children schooled in the West and speak such languages, which they must have learnt in Libya prior to travelling abroad.

Where Gaddafi's anti-Western policies earned him world-wide condemnation was his support for terrorist groups and belligerence against his neighbors. On the last point, Gaddafi clashed with regional neighbors such as Chad over the Aozou strip and Egypt over their common border (Freedom House 2003). Gaddafi's links with terrorist attacks worldwide led to the imposition of unilateral sanctions against his regime by the US government in 1981. The US followed this up in 1986 with the bombing of several military targets, including Gaddafi's home. In 1988, Gaddafi sponsored an attack on Pan Am Flight 103 which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland and killed all the 259 passengers on board as well as 11 residents of the town. He was also fingered in the 1989 bombing of a French airliner, UTA Flight 772, over Niger which killed 170 people. Based on the Pan Am Flight bombing, the United Nations imposed sanctions on Libya.

It was not until 1999 that Gaddafi handed over the two suspects indicted in the bombing for trial in Scotland.

The major fallout of the Pan Am Flight affair, apart from international sanctions was Gaddafi's political reorientation and transition from pan-Arabism to pan-Africanism. Under the auspices of his new pan-African preoccupation, Gaddafi worked with Egypt in a peace plan for Sudan in 2001, mediated over disputes between Sudan and Uganda and in 2003 sent troops to protect President Ange Felix Patasse of Central Africa Republic following a failed coup d'état. Gaddafi's African focus which was anchored on a vision of a unified African state dictated his involvement in the African Union (AU) and the formation of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). On the part of African States, they responded to Gaddafi's pan-African policy by nominating Libya to chair the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2003 (Freedom House 2003).

Dismantling the Gaddafi Mystique: The Beginning of the End

From the outset of his successful coup d'état in 1969, Colonel Gaddafi created a mystery around himself, not just in Libya but internationally. His regime used the weapon of propaganda effectively in challenging Western imperialism and projecting pan-Arab interest which was Gaddafi's initial preoccupation before events led to a political about-turn that aligned him to pan-African activism. Gaddafi's Pan-Arab activism had consisted of supporting extremist groups in Palestine and Syria and his imperialist ambition to set up a federation of Arab and Muslim states in North Africa. The manifestations of Gaddafi's anti-western orientation found expression in: his friendship with USSR leader, Leonid Brezhnev and Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, a friendship the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) described as "unholy trinity" (HP-Time.com and Talbot 1982); his program to fund the establishment of nuclear power plants; his occupation of uranium-rich Chad, which was interpreted as a precursor to, and important tell-tale sign of, Libya's nuclear power program; and, his professed support for such diverse terrorist groups as the Red Army Faction (RAF) of Germany; the Red Brigade of Italy and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) of Ireland.

After the 1985 Rome and Vienna airport attacks that killed 19 and wounded over 140 persons, the Libyan government reinforced its categorization as a terrorist supporter when it described the attacks as "heroic operations carried out by the sons of the martyrs of Sabra and Shatila" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Nidal). Subsequently, such incidents as the Gulf of Sidra maneuvers between Libya and the US, and the April 5, 1986 bombing of the *La Belle Night Club* in West Berlin which killed three and injured 229 people out of which the US recorded two deaths and 63 casualties ignited a chord of retaliation in the US. On April 15, 1986, the US massively attacked military targets in Benghazi and Tripoli. Despite US rationalization of the attack on the basis of self-defense in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, the UN General Assembly in its 78th plenary session through resolution 41/38 of 20 November 1986 condemned the US aerial and naval military attacks against Libya (UN General Assembly 1986).

Gaddafi's seeming invincibility was sustained by four factors: one, his anti-Western activities placed him on the front burner of US foreign policy in the Middle East. During Ronald Reagan's presidency, Gaddafi was declared US public enemy No.1

and was nicknamed the "mad dog of the Middle East" (Bowman 2011; Memmot 2011); two, the enormous resources which accrued to his country from oil and his effective insulation of the lucrative oil industry from western control; three, his fabled arsenal which is chock full of weapons, including suspicion of nuclear power capability. Gaddafi bought thousands of tanks, armored vehicles and cannons, hundreds of aircraft and submarines. He also stored 1,000 metric tons of Semtex, a key element of terrorist bombs in the 1980s (Poggioli 2011); and four, his defiance of the West and his survival of their covert and open operations to either topple or assassinate him, especially the 1986 bombing of Gaddafi's residence.

Prior to the 1986 US attack on Libya, the US had sought to break Gaddafi severally but unsuccessfully. Shortly after his inauguration as US president, Ronald Reagan ordered the expulsion of Libyan diplomats from Washington following reports that Libyan assassination teams were targeting US envoys abroad. Secondly, in the course of US Naval exercises off the coast of Libya, US warplanes shot down two Libyan aircrafts, which they deemed to be a threat. Thirdly, the US stepped up economic pressure, barring exports of aircraft parts. Bowman (2011) captures the mood in Washington thus, "through it all, Gaddafi remained firmly in power, and the president grew more annoyed".

The process for the dismantling of the Gaddafi mystique commenced with US unilateral sanctions, followed by the 1986 US bombing, and perfected by the UN sanctions as a result of the Pan Am Flight bombing in 1988. Not only was he isolated by the Arab League, the far-reaching sanctions imposed by the UN added teeth to the US sanctions that began in 1981 thus, reducing Libya to a pariah state from 1992. Davies (1990:183) asserts that the US air strikes on land targets in Libya brought it to its lowest point in 17 years considering that ordinary citizens boldly criticized and even defaced Gaddafi's posters. And it would be right to assert with the aid of hindsight that this period signaled the disintegration of Gaddafi's invincibility.

The sanctions against Libya were comprehensive as they targeted his power bases: the oil industry, the economy and the military. The UN sanctions, which came through the UN Security Council Resolutions 731 of 21 January 1992 and 748 of 31 March 1992 were in reaction to Libya's non-compliance with requests relating to investigations into the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 and UTA Flight 772. Libya specifically refused to extradite Libyan nationals accused of masterminding these attacks. The UN Security Council Resolution 748 deriving its impetus from Chapter VII of the UN Charter set out the sanctions against Libya to include:

- a) Deny permission to any aircraft to take off from, land in or overfly their territory if it is destined to land in or has taken off from the territory of Libya except on significant humanitarian grounds.
- b) Prohibit the supply of any aircraft or aircraft components to Libya including the provision of engineering and maintenance servicing, certification of air worthiness, payment of new claims against existing insurance contracts and the provision of new direct insurance for Libyan aircraft.
- c) Prohibit any provision to Libya of arms and related material including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military and paramilitary police

- vehicles and equipment and spare parts.
- d) Prohibit any provision to Libya of technical advice, assistance or training related to the aforementioned issues.
 - e) Withdraw any state officials or agents present in Libya to advise the Libyan authorities on military matters.
 - f) Significantly reduce the number and the level of the staff at Libyan diplomatic missions and consular posts and restrict and control the movement within their territory of such staff who remain.
 - g) Prevent the operation of all Libyan Arab Airline offices.
 - h) Take all appropriate steps to deny entry to or expel Libyan nationals who have been denied entry to or expelled from other states because of their involvement in terrorist activities.

Libya's indifference and defiance of the UN sanctions prompted UN Security Council Resolution 883 of 11 November 1993, which expanded the horizon of sanctions. Resolution 883 which took effect from 1 December 1993 strengthened earlier sanctions by requesting every country to freeze Libyan funds or other financial resources in their territory except funds or other financial resources derived from the sale or supply of petroleum and petroleum products, natural gas and gas products and agricultural products; and prohibiting the sale, marketing or licensing of large pumps and motors used for transporting oil and gas, equipment for oil terminals, refining equipment and necessary accessories and spare parts.

The impact of the sanctions on Libya was enormous as it stalled its economy and reversed its development trajectory. The Libyan mission to the UN in a September report to the then UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali about the impact of the sanctions on Libya avers,

The substantial damage caused in the humanitarian, economic and social spheres by the coercive and unjust measures taken against the Libyan Arab people under Security Council resolutions 748 (1992) and 883 (1993) continues to worsen day by day. In addition, all infrastructure development programmes and plans have been adversely affected, thereby dashing the hopes and aspirations of the Libyan Arab people to achieve progress, well-being, development, stability, security and peace (<http://www.geocities.com/athens/8744/impact.htm>).

Libya recorded serious reversals in its economic fortunes during its period of international isolation. Most of the effects of the sanctions were still palpable till the end of Gaddafi's regime. Between 1992 and 1995, Libya's healthcare sector virtually collapsed. Apart from increase in the number of avoidable deaths, there was sharp increase in the morbidity and mortality rate of diseases. Also, there was acute shortage in the availability of medical specialists. Financial losses in the health and social welfare sector were estimated to be in the neighborhood of US\$180, 800,000; agriculture and animal husbandry, US\$5,982,249,782; transportation and communication, US\$1,157,523,500; industry and mining, US\$4,150,677,942; finance and trade,

US\$4,257,000,000; and energy comprising petroleum and electricity, US\$3 billion (<http://www.geocities.com/athens/8744/impact.htm>).

In the face of economic stagnation and erosion of the quality of life of Libyans with likely consequences of internal revolt, the Libyan government took steps in 1999 to exit international isolation through a rapprochement with Washington. He surrendered the two Libyan nationals suspected of the Lockerbie bombing and reached agreements to pay compensation to the families of the victims of both the Pan Am and UTA Flights. One of these suspects, Abdel Basset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi, was found guilty while the other was acquitted. Although Al-Megrahi's appeal against his conviction failed in 2002, he was released from Scottish prison on compassionate grounds due to a terminal illness and returned to Libya on August 19, 2009 (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs 2011). On April 30, 2003, the Libyan government accepted responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing and set up a fund totalling US\$ 2.7 billion to compensate victims' families. Under the deal an initial US \$4 million would be paid for each victim once U.N. sanctions ended. That would be followed by another US \$4 million if the United States lifted its sanctions and by US \$2 million if it dropped Libya from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism (BBC 2003; CNN 2004). In August 2003, Libya fulfilled the remaining UN Security Council Resolutions requirements and the UN sanctions were lifted on September 12, 2003. Also, the U.S. International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)-based sanctions were lifted on September 20, 2004 (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs 2011). On January 8, 2004, Libya signed a \$170 million compensation deal with the families of 170 people killed in the bombing of a French airliner, UTA Flight. In 2008, Libya and the United States signed a compensation deal for Libyan victims of American attacks against Libya and American victims of alleged Libyan reprisals, paving the way for full normalization of ties between the two countries. The deal covered 26 lawsuits filed by American citizens against Libya and three by Libyan citizens against the US terrorist actions committed against them (Tripoli Post 2008; Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs 2011).

The next factor that demystified Gaddafi and opened the gate for NATO's preemptive support for the revolution was its actual knowledge of Gaddafi's diminished military strength and capability, knowledge which was gathered through weapons inspection of Libya. It was this same strategy that was used by Western powers against Saddam Hussein and which led to his capture and death. Prior to the program of weapons inspection, Gaddafi was reputed to possess enormous arsenal of weapons including chemical weapons. Libya had in its ballistic missile arsenal: Scud Bs (300-km, 700kg payload) acquired from former Soviet Union, a handful of North Korean Scud Cs (600-km, 700 kg payload) and a 500-700km-range missile under development, called Al Fatah. There were also disputed reports that Libya had 1300-km range Dong missiles from North Korea (Squassoni and Feickert (2004:2-3). But since 19 December 2003, when Libya announced its preparedness to abandon its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program, it inadvertently commenced the process that undermined the international perception of its military capability. In actuality, that process was inevitable considering the impacts of the international isolation on Libya's corporate survival. As Indyk (2004) observes,

Back then, Libya was facing a deepening economic crisis produced by disastrous economic policies and mismanagement

of its oil revenues. United Nations and U S sanctions that prevented Libya importing oilfield technology made it impossible for Mr. Gaddafi to expand oil production. The only way out was to seek rapprochement with Washington.

NATO, Operation Unified Protector and the Nexus of Interests

The Libyan revolution officially started on 15 February 2011 but by 26 February 2011, the UN Security Council Resolution 1970. Resolution 1970 imposed tough measures against the Libyan regime as an expression of its grave concern about the situation in the country as well as condemnation of the violence and use of force against civilians. It was also anchored on the need to protect innocent civilians and take care of the humanitarian crisis associated with such crises. The resolution was targeted against the regime of Gaddafi and its immediate aim was to secure a ceasefire which was only achievable through the exit of Gaddafi from Libyan presidency. The measures adopted by the resolution included: the referral of the situation in Libya since 15 February 2011, to the International Criminal Court (ICC); imposition of arms embargo; imposition of travel ban and assets freeze (UN Security Council 2011). On March 17 2011, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1973 which not only strengthened Resolution 1970, but expanded the horizon of its sanctions. NATO set up its military forces under *Operation Unified Protector* to protect civilians. Resolution 1973 specifically provided for concerted efforts to protect civilians and therefore imposed a no-fly zone. The aim of no-fly zone provision was to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas from attack or threat of attack. No-fly zone implied the closure of Libyan airspace to designated aircrafts, especially military aircrafts. What the no-fly zone also meant in practice was the empowerment of NATO forces to engage in air strikes on Libyan ground troops and warships identified as attacking civilians. The US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, was quoted as saying that no-fly zone would "require certain actions taken to protect the planes and pilots, including bombing targets like the Libyan defence systems" (Newstatesman 2011).

Despite the proliferation of crises in the whole of Middle East, it was only in Libya that the western powers reacted swiftly and devoted enormous resources. Why would this be so? Was it purely humanitarian concern that motorized NATO's military campaign in Libya? Or was it merely a ploy to overthrow the last bastion of anti-Western regime that was standing against its economic interest? Prior to Libyan crisis, there was crisis in 12 countries and after the eruption crisis in Libya; two more countries were engulfed in crisis. In all these countries, extreme force was used against the protesters. Apart from isolated condemnation, there were no concerted efforts to address the so-called humanitarian concerns and halt further deterioration of human condition in those countries.

Under the cloak of protecting civilians, the unofficial mandate of NATO was to provide military backing to the revolutionaries to actualize the goal of ousting Gaddafi. It was never in doubt that what the Western powers wanted was the overthrow of Gaddafi. All policies adopted nationally and internationally by Western countries were geared towards the actualization of that objective. Even before the resolution on no-fly zone was adopted by the UN Security Council, France had insisted that Gaddafi must go and the US Naval Forces had already positioned their aircraft carrier, the *USS*

Enterprise off the coast of Libya. Also, by March 2nd 2011, the Royal Canadian Navy frigate *HMCS Charlottetown* had already been deployed to the Mediterranean, off the coast of Libya. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_military_intervention_in_Libya).

NATO's magnanimity was not completely altruistic or entirely driven by the moral burden of the consequences of inaction in the face of Gaddafi's threat to show no mercy to those in the rebel-controlled city of Benghazi (Exum and Hosford 2011:2). Embedded in its humanitarian concerns was the high economics of unfettered access to resources worldwide. Amongst the trouble spots in the Middle East and Maghreb region, it was only in Libya that NATO directly intervened. The reason lay in the fact that Libyan leadership under Gaddafi with its traditional anti-Western policies did not fit into the matrix of Western interest. The implication of this was that despite Gaddafi's overarching gestures especially, the condemnation of terrorism and dismantling of his weapons of mass destruction (WMD), he was still perceived by the West as dangerous and, therefore, expendable.

The NATO campaign was principally driven by economic and military concerns which were central to the continued domination of the global economy by Western countries. And these concerns would only be served by a friendly regime. While Libya was considered strategic in the realization of these concerns, Gaddafi with his unpredictability and well-known anti-Western foreign policy was not. The importance attached to these concerns underpinned the enormous capital outlay that characterized NATO operations in Libya as shown by Table 1.

Table 1: Funds spent by Major Powers in NATO Operations in Libya

S/N	Country	Funds Spent	As at
1	Canada	CAD\$ 50 million	October 2011
2	France	US\$ 413 million	October 2011
3	Italy	US\$ 940 million	June 2011
4	United Kingdom	US\$ 333 million BPS 212 million	October 2011
5	United States	US\$ 1.1 billion	September 2011

Source: Wikipedia Encyclopedia,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_military_intervention_in_Libya

NATO did not want to risk the prolongation of the war especially, in the face of Eurozone economic crisis and domestic unrest, hence its proactive military campaigns (see statistics in Table 2). The relative lack of sophistication and organization as well as the atomization of rebel groups meant that the necessary momentum to end the war in a foreseeable timeframe was difficult. And considering Gaddafi's strength militarily, the most likely outcome would be defeat or stalemate. Defeat was unthinkable as it would have led to regional instability, including massive wave of refugees that would adversely affect Europe considering Libya's proximity (Gheciu 2011:2). A stalemate was what NATO least expected as it would definitely create more problems than the revolution originally intended to achieve. One, a stalemate would increase the burden of

responsibility to midwife a peaceful transition to a post-Gaddafi Libya. The implication is that additional resources would be needed. Two, it would create pockets of enclaves likely to serve as breeding spots for militant and criminal groups; three, these militant and criminal groups could convert themselves into a reserve army of mercenaries and thus, commodify violence and instability in North Africa and the Middle East; and four, with fiscal constraint and war fatigue on the part of the rebels and their NATO allies, reversals in their military fortunes would signpost the end of the revolution with disastrous consequences on their lives as Gaddafi would have no pity for them.

Table 2: NATO's Operation Unified Protector (OUP) Statistics

Description	Action
The Arms Embargo	Commenced on 23 March 2011
The No-Fly Zone	Commenced on 25 March 2011
Protection of Civilians	Commenced on 31 March 2011
Legal Basis	OUP was mandated under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter. UN Security Council Resolutions 1970, 1973 and 2009 directly relate to NATO's mission.
Peak Military Figures	Approximately 8,000 troops. Over 260 air assets (fighter aircraft, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft, air-to-air refuellers, unmanned aerial vehicles and attack helicopters). 21 naval assets (supply ships, frigates, destroyers, submarines, amphibious assault ships and aircraft carriers).
Air Missions	Over 26,500 sorties, including over 9,700 strike sorties* <i>*Strike sorties are intended to identify and engage appropriate targets, but do not necessarily deploy munitions each time.</i>
Targeting	Destroyed over 5,900 military targets including over 400 artillery or rocket launchers and over 600 tanks or armored vehicles.
Arms Embargo	Covered a maritime surveillance area of around 61,000 nautical square miles. Over 3,100 vessels have been hailed. Around 300 vessels have been boarded. Eleven ships have been denied transit to or from Libyan ports because the vessel or its cargo presented a risk to the civilian population.
Humanitarian Assistance	Over 2,500 air, ground and maritime movements into Libya have been de-conflicted by NATO.
Safety of Life at Sea	NATO maritime assets have directly aided the rescue of over 600 migrants in distress at sea during Unified Protector.
Mission Financial Cost	Each contributing nation paid the costs resulting from the use of their capabilities deployed as part of Operation Unified Protector. Airborne Early Warning and Control Aircraft (AWACS) were the only NATO-owned capabilities subject to NATO common funding. The total cost of the 24/7 deployment of NATO AWACS were estimated at 5.4 million EUR/month. In addition, the complementary cost for the structural and personnel augmentation of headquarters involved in Operation Unified Protector was estimated at 800,000 EUR/month, subject to final verification by NATO financial authorities.

The NATO intervention in the Libyan revolution was not an isolated case. It fits into the jigsaw of the new imperialistic framework of eliminating anti-Western regimes and installing pro-Western regimes. For instance, former President Laurent Gbagbo of Cote d'Ivoire was overthrown by the French Forces and in his stead, Alassane Ouattara was installed. The French made sure that Gbagbo was removed from circulation by arresting and handing him over for prosecution for human rights crimes (Madunagu 2011). The commitment of enormous resources by NATO in the campaign to remove Gaddafi and the urgency that characterized its *Operation Unified Protector* underscored Libya's strategic importance. For sure, Libya is important in the North African region. Libya's importance lies in its strategic geographic location: it is bounded by the Mediterranean in the North; Tunisia and Algeria in the West; Chad in the South; and, Sudan, Southern Sudan and Egypt in the East. It also holds Africa's largest proven oil reserve, some 35 percent larger than Nigeria. Therefore, to Pentagon's AFRICOM long-term strategy, access to Libya guarantees access to controlling Africa and its resources (Engdahl 2011).

It has been suggested that the overriding consideration in NATO's new imperialism is to cut short China's increasing influence in Africa. As Engdahl (2011) opines:

NATO's Libya campaign was and is all about oil. But not about simply controlling Libyan high-grade crude because the USA is nervous about reliable foreign supplies. It rather is about controlling China's free access to long-term oil imports from Africa and from the Middle East. In other words, it is about controlling China itself.

The unfolding NATO involvement in Africa is reminiscent of the 1884 Berlin Colonial Conference where Africa was divided into the dominant European powers of that epoch. What the so-called liberation of Libya means is that the West has opened an unfettered access in the institutionalization of its imprimatur of dominance. Prior to now, Gaddafi had stood in the way of the West, blocking the concretization of its objective of a unified military command under the auspices of AFRICOM.

NATO's immediate achievement in the Libyan campaign appeared to be the extension of the success that AFRICOM has made. Dr J. Peter Pham said that AFRICOM's objectives included among others the task of "protecting access to hydrocarbons and other strategic resources which Africa has in abundance ... a task which includes ensuring against the vulnerability of those natural riches and ensuring that no other interested third parties, such as China, India, Japan, or Russia, obtain monopolies or preferential treatment" (cited in Engdahl 2011). The oil concessions which Gaddafi granted to Chinese state oil companies as well as Russia and others in recent years appeared to have undermined this major Western objective.

The second objective of NATO in Libya was to secure a pedestal for its military operations. The Gulf of Sidra has been a theatre of skirmishes since 1973 between the US and Libya. The Gulf of Sidra is a body of water in the Mediterranean Sea on the northern coast of Libya. According to Wikipedia, the gulf measures 273 miles (439 km) from the promontory of Boreum (now Ras Teyonas) on the East side to the promontory of Cephalae (Ras Kasr Hamet) on the West. The greatest extension of the gulf inland is

110 miles (180km) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Sidra). In 1973, Gaddafi drew a line on the gulf which he called *The Line of Death*, the crossing of which would elicit military action. He claimed much of the gulf by drawing a closing line at 32 degrees, 30 minutes north between a point near Benghazi and the Western headland at Misrata with an exclusive fishing zone (EFZ) of 62 nautical miles (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Sidra; CIA World Factbook). The US considered part of the area claimed by Gaddafi as part of the international waters based on standard 12-mile territorial limit from a country's shores and authorized Naval exercises in the gulf to conduct freedom of navigation (FON) operations. This clash of interest put the Libyan and US forces on a recurrent collision course which manifested in military skirmishes in 1973, 1980, 1981, 1986 and 1989.

The overthrow of Gaddafi by NATO forces means that "Libya has become a colony of the political principals of NATO, that is, America and the European Union (EU), with the former exercising hegemony in a 'collective imperialism'" (Madunagu 2011). Another achievement of NATO is the creation of the psyche of dependence and gratitude in the new regimes in Libya for the foreseeable future, which would preferentially open the floodgate of the oil economy to them and their allies. And finally, the NATO success in Libya has ensured the opening of the Mediterranean coast and the desert for the setting up military bases to ensure "the flow of oil in the 'right' direction, in the 'right' quantity and at 'correct' prices" (Madunagu 2011).

Conclusion

Although Gaddafi had been swept away by the Libyan revolution, it was the coalition of Western powers rather than the people of Libya that achieved that feat. While Libya is free of Gaddafi, it is not free of the stranglehold of capitalist interest of NATO countries. Libya will have to contend with the quest for another kind of freedom; that is, national freedom to carve its own path of development outside the Euro-American orthodoxy. NATO's role in ousting Gaddafi was motivated by high economics: the economics of access to Libya's sweet crude as well as access to the Mediterranean coast and the desert for military bases. In ousting Gaddafi, Libya has been brought under the umbrella of new imperialism that converts resource-richness into curses through concessions and other exploitative strategies.

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