

Destroying a Country's Standard of Living: What Libya Had Achieved, What has been Destroyed

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)
Global Research, March 20, 2021
20 September 2011

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)
In-depth Report: [NATO'S WAR ON LIBYA](#)

Ten Years ago. March 19, 2011 marks the commencement of the US-NATO led war on Libya which was conducive to the destruction of an entire country and the impoverishment of its population.

Today our thoughts are with the people of Libya.

This article was originally published by Global Research in September 2011, following the devastation triggered by seven months of intensive NATO bombings.

Today, Libya as a country and a nation state has been destroyed. Under Nuremberg, the leaders of the NATO member states involved in the war on Libya are war criminals.

What is disturbing is that this US-NATO led war against the people of Libya had been firmly endorsed by so-called "progressive" nongovernmental organizations in support of an Al Qaeda affiliated "Opposition".

The intervention was justified under NATO's mandate of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P).

Prominent Western intellectuals tacitly endorsed the conduct of a so-called "humanitarian war" on Libya.

[United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970 of 26 February 2011](#) provided an initial Green Light to military intervention.

[A subsequent UNSC Resolution \(UNSC 1973\)](#) authorizing a **No Fly Zone** was voted upon on 17 March, 2011.

The No Fly Zone is tantamount to a Declaration of War on a sovereign country.

The unspoken objective was to confiscate Libya's oil wealth.

Michel Chossudovsky, March 20, 2021

"There is no tomorrow" under a NATO sponsored Al Qaeda rebellion.

While a “pro-democracy” rebel government has been instated, the country has been destroyed.

Against the backdrop of war propaganda, Libya’s economic and social achievements over the last thirty years, have been brutally reversed:

The [Libyan Arab Jamahiriya] has had a high standard of living and a robust per capita daily caloric intake of 3144. The country has made strides in public health and, since 1980, child mortality rates have dropped from 70 per thousand live births to 19 in 2009. Life expectancy has risen from 61 to 74 years of age during the same span of years. (FAO, Rome, [Libya, Country Profile](#).)

According to sectors of the “Progressive Left” which endorsed NATO’s R2P mandate:

“The mood across Libya, particularly in Tripoli, is absolutely —like there’s just **a feeling of euphoria** everywhere. People are incredibly excited about **starting afresh**. There’s a real sense of **rebirth**, a feeling that their lives are starting anew. ([DemocracyNow.org, September 14, 2011 emphasis added](#))

The rebels are casually presented as “liberators”. The central role of Al Qaeda affiliated terrorists within rebel ranks is not mentioned.

“Starting afresh” in the wake of destruction? Fear and Social Despair, Countless Deaths and Atrocities, amply documented by the independent media.

No euphoria.... A historical reversal in the country’s economic and social development has occurred. The achievements have been erased.

The NATO invasion and occupation marks the ruinous “rebirth” of Libya’s standard of living That is the forbidden and unspoken truth: **an entire Nation has been destabilized and destroyed, its people driven into abysmal poverty.**

The objective of the NATO bombings from the outset was to destroy the country’s standard of living, its health infrastructure, its schools and hospitals, its water distribution system.

And then “rebuild” with the help of donors and creditors under the helm of the IMF and the World Bank.

The diktats of the “free market” are a precondition for the instatement of a Western style “democratic dictatorship “.

About nine thousand strike sorties, tens of thousands of strikes on civilian targets including residential areas, government buildings, water supply and electricity generation facilities. ([See NATO Communique, September 5, 2011](#). 8140 strike sorties from March 31 to September 5, 2011)

An entire nation has been bombed with the most advanced ordnance, including uranium coated ammunition.

Already in August, UNICEF warned that extensive NATO bombing of Libya’s water

infrastructure “could turn into an unprecedented health epidemic “ (Christian Balslev-Olesen of UNICEF’s Libya Office, August 2011).

Meanwhile investors and donors have positioned themselves. “War is Good for Business’. NATO, the Pentagon and the Washington based international financial institutions (IFIs) operate in close coordination. What has been destroyed by NATO will be rebuilt, financed by Libya’s external creditors under the helm of the “Washington Consensus”:

“Specifically, the [World] Bank has been asked to examine the need for **repair and restoration of services in the water, energy and transport sectors** [bombed by NATO] and, in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund, to support budget preparation [austerity measures] and help the banking sector back on to its feet [The Libyan Central bank was one of the first government buildings to be bombed]. Employment generation for young Libyans has been added as an urgent need facing the country.” ([World Bank to Help Libya Rebuild and Deliver Essential Services to Citizens](#) emphasis added)

Libya’s Development Achievements

Whatever one’s views regarding Moamar Gadaffi, the post-colonial Libyan government played a key role in eliminating poverty and developing the country’s health and educational infrastructure. According to Italian Journalist Yvonne de Vito,

“Differently from other countries that went through a revolution – Libya is considered to be the Switzerland of the African continent and is very rich and schools are free for the people. Hospitals are free for the people. And the conditions for women are much better than in other Arab countries.” ([Russia Today](#), August 25, 2011)

These developments are in sharp contrast to what most Third World countries were able to “achieve” under Western style “democracy” and “governance” in the context of a standard IMF-World Bank Structural Adjustment program (SAP).

Public Health Care

Public Health Care in Libya prior to NATO’s “Humanitarian Intervention” was the best in Africa.

“Health care is [was] available to all citizens free of charge by the public sector. The country boasts the highest literacy and educational enrolment rates in North Africa. The Government is [was] substantially increasing the development budget for health services.... (WHO [Libya Country Brief](#))

Confirmed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), undernourishment was less than 5 %, with a daily per capita calorie intake of 3144 calories. (FAO caloric intake figures indicate availability rather than consumption).

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya provided to its citizens what is denied to many Americans: Free public health care, free education, as confirmed by WHO and UNESCO data.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO): Life expectancy at birth was 72.3 years

(2009), among the highest in the developing World.

Under 5 mortality rate per 1000 live births declined from 71 in 1991 to 14 in 2009 (http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccsbrief_lby_en.pdf)

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya General information

2009 Total population (000) 6 420

Annual population growth rate (%) 2.0

Population 0-14 years (%) 28

Rural population (%) 22

Total fertility rate (births per woman) 2.6

Infant mortality rate (0/00) 17

Life expectancy at birth (years) 75

GDP per capita (PPP) US\$ 16 502

GDP growth rate (%) 2.1

Children of primary school-age who are out of school (%) (1978) 2

Source: UNESCO. [Libya Country Profile](#)

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (2009)

Total life expectancy at birth (years) 72.3

Male life expectancy at birth (years) 70.2

Female life expectancy at birth (years) 74.9

Newborns with low birth weight (%) 4.0

Children underweight (%) 4.8

Perinatal mortality rate per 1000 total births 19.0

Neonatal mortality rate 11.0

Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) 14.0

Under five mortality rate (per 1000 live births) 20.1

Maternal mortality ratio (per 10000 live births) 23.0

Source WHO <http://www.emro.who.int/emrinfor/index.aspx?Ctry=liy>

Education

The adult literacy rate was of the order of 89%, (2009), (94% for males and 83% for females). 99.9% of youth are literate (UNESCO 2009 figures, See UNESCO, [Libya Country Report](#))

Gross primary school enrolment ratio was 97% for boys and 97% for girls (2009) .
(see UNESCO tables at

http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=4340&BR_Region=40525

The pupil teacher ratio in Libya's primary schools was of the order of 17 (1983 UNESCO data), 74% of school children graduating from primary school were enrolled in secondary school (1983 UNESCO data).

Based on more recent data, which confirms a marked increase in school enrolment, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in secondary schools was of the order of 108% in 2002. The GER is the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for that level of education.

For tertiary enrolment (postsecondary, college and university), the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) was of the order of 54% in 2002 (52 for males, 57 for females).

(For further details see

http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=4340&BR_Region=40525

Women's Rights

With regard to Women's Rights, World Bank data point to significant achievements.

"In a relative short period of time, Libya achieved universal access for primary education, with 98% gross enrollment for secondary, and 46% for tertiary education. In the past decade, girls' enrollment increased by 12% in all levels of education. **In secondary and tertiary education, girls outnumbered boys by 10%.**" ([World Bank Libya Country Brief](#), emphasis added)

Price Controls over Essential Food Staples

In most developing countries, essential food prices have skyrocketed, as a result of market deregulation, the lifting of price controls and the elimination of subsidies, under "free market" advice from the World Bank and the IMF.

In recent years, essential food and fuel prices have spiralled as a result of speculative trade on the major commodity exchanges.

Libya was one of the few countries in the developing World which maintained a system of price controls over essential food staples.

World Bank President Robert Zoellick acknowledged in an April 2011 statement that the price of essential food staples had increased by 36 percent in the course of the last year. (See [Robert Zoellick, World Bank](#))

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had established a system of price controls over essential food staples, which was maintained until the onset of the NATO led war.

While rising food prices in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt spearheaded social unrest and political dissent, the system of food subsidies in Libya was maintained.

These are the facts confirmed by several UN specialised agencies.

“Missile Diplomacy” and “The Free Market”

War and Globalization are intricately related. The IMF and NATO work in tandem, in liaison with the Washington think tanks.

The NATO operation purports to enforce the neoliberal economic agenda. Countries which are reluctant to accept the sugar coated bullets of IMF “economic medicine” will eventually be the object of a R2P NATO humanitarian operation.

Déjà Vu? Under the British Empire, “gun boat diplomacy” was a means to imposing “free trade”. On October 5, 1850, England’s Envoy to the Kingdom of Siam, Sir James Brooke recommended to Her Majesty’s government that:

“should these just demands [to impose free trade] be refused, a force should be present, immediately to enforce them by the rapid destruction of the defenses of the [Chaopaya] river... Siam may be taught the lesson which it has long been tempting- its Government may be remodelled, **A better disposed king placed on the throne** and an influence acquired in the country which will make it of immense commercial importance to England” (The Mission of Sir James Brooke, quoted in M.L. Manich Jumsai, King Mongkut and Sir John Bowring, Chalermmit, Bangkok, 1970, p. 23)

Today we call it “Regime Change” and “Missile Diplomacy” which invariably takes the shape of a UN sponsored “No Fly Zone”. Its objective is to impose the IMF’s deadly “economic medicine” of austerity measures and privatization.

The World Bank financed “reconstruction” programs of war torn countries are coordinated with US-NATO military planning. They are invariably formulated prior to onslaught of the military campaign...

Confiscating Libyan Financial Assets

Libya’s frozen overseas financial assets are estimated to be of the order of \$150 billion, with NATO countries holding more than \$100 billion.

Prior to the war, Libya had no debts. In fact quite the opposite. It was a creditor nation investing in neighboring African countries.

The R2P military intervention is intended to spearhead the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya into the straightjacket of an indebted developing country, under the surveillance of the Washington based Bretton Woods institutions.

In a bitter irony, after having stolen Libya’s oil wealth and confiscated its overseas financial assets, the “donor community” has pledged to lend the (stolen) money back to finance Libya’s post-war “reconstruction”. Libya is slated to join the ranks of indebted African countries which have driven into poverty by IMF and the World Bank since the onslaught of the debt crisis in the early 1980s:

The IMF promised a further \$35-billion in funding [loans] to countries affected by Arab Spring uprisings and formally recognized Libya’s ruling interim council as a legitimate power, **opening up access to a myriad of international lenders** as the country [Libya] looks to rebuild after a six-

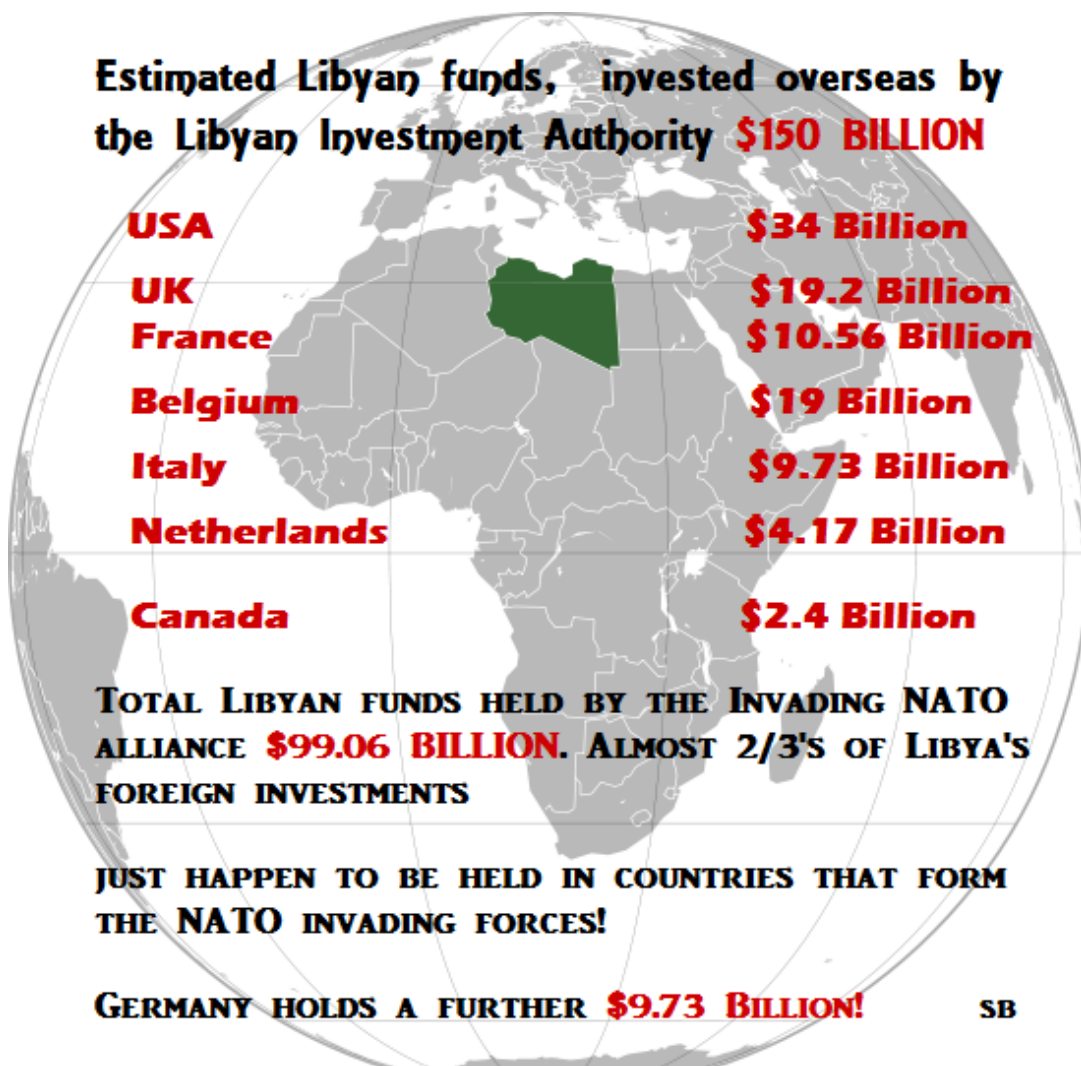
month war. ...

Getting IMF recognition is significant for Libya's interim leaders **as it means international development banks and donors such as the World Bank can now offer financing.**

The Marseille talks came a few days after world leaders agreed in Paris to **free up billions of dollars in frozen assets [stolen money] to help [through loans] Libya's interim rulers** restore vital services and rebuild after a conflict that ended a 42-year dictatorship.

The financing deal by the Group of Seven major economies plus Russia is aimed at supporting reform efforts [IMF sponsored structural adjustment] in the wake of uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East.

The financing is mostly in the form of loans, rather than outright grants, and is provided half by G8 and Arab countries and half by various lenders and development banks. ([Financial Post](#), September 10, 2011,



<http://www.truthseeker444.blogspot.com/>

Understand the fundamental directions in which our world is moving

THE GLOBALIZATION OF POVERTY AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Click to order the bestseller by **MICHEL CHOSSUDOVSKY**

Click to learn more!

"In its entirety, the book can and should be read by all with an interest in world peace and the causes of poverty."
-Frances Hutchinson, *The Ecologist*

The Globalization of Poverty and the New World Order

Michel Chossudovsky is an award-winning author, Professor of Economics (Emeritus) at the University of Ottawa. He is the Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal and Editor of the globalresearch.ca website. He is the author of *The Globalization of Poverty and The New World Order* (2003) and *America's "War on Terrorism"* (2005). He is also a contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. His writings have been published in more than twenty languages.

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#), Global Research, 2021

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)

About the author:

Michel Chossudovsky is an award-winning author, Professor of Economics (emeritus) at the University of Ottawa, Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal, Editor of Global Research. He has undertaken field research in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific and has written extensively on the economies of developing countries with a focus on poverty and social inequality. He has also undertaken research in Health Economics (UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), UNFPA, CIDA, WHO, Government of Venezuela, John Hopkins International Journal of Health Services (1979, 1983) He is the author of 13 books including *The Globalization of Poverty and The New World Order* (2003), *America's "War on Terrorism"* (2005), *The Globalization of War, America's Long War against Humanity* (2015). He is a contributor to the

Encyclopaedia Britannica. His writings have been published in more than twenty languages. In 2014, he was awarded the Gold Medal for Merit of the Republic of Serbia for his writings on NATO's war of aggression against Yugoslavia. He can be reached at crgeditor@yahoo.com

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca