

# Libya and Syria: Western-led military operations

## Interview

By [Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya](#)

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The following is an interview of Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya for the publication *Eurasia*. The interview was conducted at the end of July 2011 by two Italian researchers from the Institute of Advanced Studies in Geopolitics and Auxiliary Sciences/L'Istituto di Alti Studi in Geopolitica e Scienze Ausiliarie (ISAG), Chiara Felli and Giovanni Andriolo.

In the interview Nazemroaya talks about the role of media networks and social media, which includes the militarization of Twitter. He discusses both Syria and Libya and the Turkish and Israeli roles in both Arab countries. Egypt is also discussed, as is Iran and the Saudi-Israeli alliance and its role in the Middle East. Nazemroaya also warns about the threat of defections in Tripoli by “some fair-weather friends and allies of Muammar Qaddafi.”

After months of fighting, as eye witness, what are your considerations about the Western-led military operations?

Without question, it has to be emphasized that the NATO-led bombings have deliberately targeted Libyan civilians and have sought to punish the civilian population in Libya. Water facilities, hospitals, medical clinics, schools, food facilities, hotels, civilian vehicles, restaurants, homes, government office buildings, and residential areas have all been bombed. This includes the Libyan Supreme Court, a civilian bus, a Down's Syndrome facility, a children's vaccination centre, and Nasser University. The NATO claim that military command and control buildings are being targeted is nonsense and untrue.

The NATO goal has not been to protect civilians, but to provoke civilians into blaming Colonel Qaddafi and his regime for the war and NATO's war crimes against the Libyan people. NATO believes that the brutality of its bombings of Libyan civilians and its strategy to create a shortage of fuel, money, medicine, food, and water would cause regime change in Tripoli by pushing the Libyan population to oust Qaddafi.

Muammar Qaddafi has become a military target that NATO has tried to assassinate during its attacks on Libya. Not only is this an illegal action, but it is also part of a calculated aim of destabilizing Libya. Even if the children's cartoon character Mickey Mouse were the leader of Libya, NATO would demonize him as a Hitler-like villain and target him. NATO believes that if Qaddafi is murdered that there would be a bloody power struggle in Libya that would allow NATO to exert and extend its influence into Libya and North Africa. One of the aims of this project are to ignite an intense Libyan civil war and to create tribal conflicts that would spill outside of the borders of Libya into Niger, Algeria, Sudan, Chad, and into other African

countries.

Yet, things have not gone as planned for the Pentagon and NATO. The NATO operations are a military and political disaster. The NATO military campaign has actually managed to galvanize most the Libyan population into supporting Colonel Qaddafi. Even people who opposed Muammar Qaddafi before now support him. Indeed it can be said that NATO has lost the war against Libya. NATO has not managed to topple Colonel Qaddafi and the Libyan leader now stands in a similar position to Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah after the Israeli defeat in the 2006 war against Lebanon.

Social media have a fundamental role in the diffusion of any kind of information. Do you reckon that sometimes there has been a kind of distortion of what is happening (take Syria or the same Libya as examples)?

The manipulation of social media by the U.S. military and other NATO members, such as Britain and France, must not be overlooked. Social media has been militarily manipulated as a means of manufacturing public consent and as a tool of perception management. Without question social media and the internet have been essential ingredients in launching the war in Libya and destabilizing Syria. In both countries facebook, tweeter, cellular telephones, and youtube have all been used to push forward material against both the regimes in Tripoli and Damascus. CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, Fox News, Sky News, France 24, TF1, and many other networks, newspaper, and news wires refer to these social media sources in a very authoritative manner without even verifying the information posted and the claims that are being made.

On the first days of the protests and violence in both Libya and Syria these social media were immediately mobilized from the outside. There were immediately facebook pages and tweets about the events with thousands of unknown subscribers. The authors of these pages, however, are very questionable. These pages were all written and designed in English and other foreign languages and very well designed. They did not look spontaneous whatsoever and the accounts involved were not in the local languages of Syria and Libya, which is Arabic.

In the case of Syria, these sites on the internet were created in February 2011 before the protests and paralleled the claims of the mainstream media about the protests in that country that never materialized. One specific page in the case of Syria is "The Syrian Revolution 2011" which called for a "day of wrath" on the Friday of February 4, 2011. The name of this facebook page was English and the amount of people who signed up never translated into physical numbers. Moreover, most the accounts were registered under users who supposedly lived in small Syrian urban areas where very little people used internet.

There is also a direct link between the organizations in Syria and Libya that have launched these campaigns to one another and to channels in Washington. Not only are these social media being cited as being sources about the truth, but they are actively being mobilized and used by major media networks against the governments in Syria and Libya. The material being used by CNN and these other networks raise real questions about the integrity of the mainstream media and its ties to the military-industrial complex that President Dwight Eisenhower warned the U.S. public about. For example CNN in a report by Sara Sidner used one youtube video of a rape that was edited for its audience. It appeared that CNN had edited the youtube video itself. CNN claimed that the video was a woman in

Misrata being raped by Libyan soldiers. In reality the rape took place in Tripoli and was a domestic crime from before the fighting in Misrata and did not involve any Libyan soldier.

The U.S. and its allies have used social media against Iran after the last presidential elections there and they have been using it against Libya and Syria. They are also preparing to use it against their opponents in Bolivia, Cuba, Venezuela, Belarus, Russia, Serbia, Ecuador, Armenia, Lebanon, Ukraine, China, and several other countries that they want to control. Aside from the U.S. State Department's training of opposition figures under the pretext of promoting democracy, this is why for over a decade both the Pentagon and NATO have been emphasizing on having a military strategy inside cyberspace. The use of social media falls under the Pentagon's Social Media in Strategic Communication (SMSC) policy, which is aimed at using social media as a tool of war. Both the U.S. military and the Israeli military are also known to have teams of people that specialize in going on the internet and leaving comments and trying to influence public opinion through participation in forums and internet conversations. This includes editing Wikipedia and other similar open source encyclopedia sites. It is even publicly known that the U.S. Air Force ordered software to manage multiple online personalities as part of this military project.

Moreover, the U.S. has in paradox provided the regimes of countries like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait the technology and software to counter and block the use of social media by their citizens. Social media have directly been used in military applications as well. Tweeter has also been used on the ground in Libya to give target locations to the military forces of NATO.

How about the near future of Libya? Will the recent developments of the situation on the ground (i.e. the progresses of the rebels) finally lead to an end of the operations? Or could we talk about a "Libyan quagmire"?

NATO's goal from the start was to balkanize Libya into three smaller sections: Tripolitania, Fezzan, and Cyrenaica. This objective has really been an old imperialist plan that the British, French, and Italians with the support of the U.S. government have tried to push several times as far back as 1943 and 1951. It started with attempts to establish separate trusteeships in 1943 after the defeat of Italy and Germany in North Africa during the Second World War. Later international negotiations would continue about establishing different zones or spheres of influence in a divided Libya, but the U.S., Britain, and France could not get the Soviet Union to agree. The Italian and British governments then in 1949 presented the Bevin-Sfora Plan for Libyan partition to the United Nations, which failed. Even after 1951, these countries attempted to divide Libya through establishing a federal emirate under their proxy King Idris I. This was a form of soft balkanization similar to the current status of federalism in Iraq that the U.S. helped impose after the 2003 Anglo-American invasion.

Currently, the Obama Administration and NATO are in a Libyan quagmire. Silvio Berlusconi, David Cameron, and Nicolas Sarkozy have all also been dealt major political blows. NATO cannot continue the war against the Libyans indefinitely unless they change their strategy. Nor can the so-called "rebels" advance much further on the ground in the conflict. The so-called rebels are a numerical minority that does not enjoy popular support in Libya. The rebels have not been able to make major inroads after the first NATO bombings even though they are augmented by NATO military special forces, NATO military advisors, foreign jihadists, and mercenaries.

It has to also be cautioned that NATO wants prolonged fighting inside Libya at the local level without an overt role. NATO's dilemma, however, is that it cannot win nor can it sustain the continued bombing of the Libyan people. Thus, we will see a shift in tactics when NATO withdraws and secretly resorts to covert warfare and more intelligence operations. It would also like to see fighting outside of strategic areas, while it tries to secure places like Misrata and Brega as NATO-protected enclaves.

On a parallel track NATO has a plan to mobilize many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) inside Libya. These NGOs will be covertly working for NATO on the ground under the pretext of democracy building and humanitarian missions. Already NATO has sent a secret delegation into Tripoli to try to negotiate for the entry of these NGOs as part of a negotiated peace settlement between NATO and the Libyan regime.

We heard about a Turkish proposal, a sort of "road map" to help end the Libyan crisis, calling for an immediate cease-fire, the protection of civilians and a democratic transition in the country. Do you think that could really be a viable solution?

Just as the Turkish government has pretended to be the friend of Syria, it has also pretended to be the friend of Libya. Turkey has worked as a Trojan horse and the Turkish government was never an honest third-party. Through their assistance to the CIA and other intelligence services the intelligence services of Turkey have also heavily worked against Libya and helped destabilize the country from the first days of the conflict.

The Turkish proposal is phony and was ill intended. Ankara was pretending to act as a negotiator between the government in Tripoli and the Transitional Council in Benghazi. In reality, the Turkish government was working to further empower the Transitional Council and working for the benefit of NATO. Like Germany, Ankara supported this war from the start and it did not oppose it at NATO Headquarters. Turkey has also taken part in the naval operations against Libya, it is the NATO-selected airport authority in Benghazi that has allowed weapons shipments to be flown in, and it has granted Turkish citizenship to members of the Transitional Council.

Democracy in Libya is not Turkey's goal either. Ankara's neo-Ottoman policy is not based on a benevolent desire for peace and democracy. It is part of a foreign policy script handed down to the Turkish government as part of the global imperial system. Ankara is actually a close ally of all the undemocratic regimes in the Arab World and also an important regional ally to Israel.

In reality, the Turkish government is working intensely to help establish kleptocratic proxy governments in Libya and throughout the Arab countries under the tag of democratic reforms and democratization. Nor is Turkey being presented as a model for democracy for the Arabs due to any of its democratic qualifications. The Turkish road map is merely a mirage, like the Turkish government's support for the Palestinians. Ankara's proposal is merely intended to open the doors of Libya to the modern global system of empire run by the United States.

Looking at Cairo's new foreign policy positions (normalizing relations with Iran, re-evaluating its ties with Israel...), do you think that Egypt could regain its regional influence, also through the military's expressed commitment to foster the emergence of a democratic system?

There have been some cosmetic changes in Egypt and Egypt is still volatile and the situation is dynamic. The mainstream media is hiding a lot of facts about the events in Egypt too and there is a continued struggle in that country. In reality, Cairo has not seen any real regime change or democratic transformation. The rapprochement with Tehran has not come into fruition yet either. Even the promises to end the siege against the Palestinians in Gaza have not been truly honoured. All the same political players are still in power. The Egyptian military rules the country just as it did under President Mubarak and President Sadat. The Muslim Brotherhood has also been co-opted in an effort to give the appearance of a change and a political facelift to Egypt.

Yet, the spirit of the Egyptian people has changed and they are no longer afraid to oppose their leaders and a real revolutionary spirit fills Egyptian society. If Egypt sees a real and authentic political transformation, then the world can see a real and robust Egyptian presence in Africa and the Arab World that will be at odds with Washington, Israel, and the European Union. Nasserite Egypt was a major hub of resistance and opposition to Washington that supporter the Algerian resistance to French occupation, the Yemenite resistance against the British, and the Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation. It supported independence and anti-imperialist movements across Africa and the globe. If the Egyptian people can successfully establish a free system without foreign tutelage, then the world will see Egypt become a strong pan-Arab and pan-African leader and power again.

A new dynamic would materialize in the Arab World. If such a transformation takes place, then Egypt can also be expected to compete with Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the United States, and the European Union for influence amongst the Arabs. It would also be at odds with many external powers trying to control Africa. At the same time Cairo will also undoubtedly geo-politically shift closer towards Iran, Syria, Russia, and China. Egypt would cooperate with Syria and Iran against the external powers in the Middle East and it could also coordinate with Libya for unifying Africa.

In one of your last papers published by *Global Research*, you talk about a Saudi-Israeli connection, that is fostering the United States activities in order to dismantle the Governments of Iran and its allied countries by creating unrest and sectarianism in several Arab Countries: do you think such a connection has played a role, at least in part, in the Libyan crisis?

The attack on Libya is part of the broader war being waged to restructure the area from the Atlantic coast of Morocco to former Soviet Central Asia and the Afghani-Chinese border. As well as Libya, this project is directed against Iran and its allies too. In this regard, the same methodologies of divide and conquer that have been used in Iraq have been used against the Libyans. These tactics have worked to foster what can be called "fitna" in Arabic amongst the different regions, tribes, and ethnic groups in Libya. Ethnic differences in Libya are virtually a non-existent factor, but regionalism and tribalism can be given political connotations that could be explosive. It is also in this context that NATO powers are now talking about a Berber-Arab divide in North Africa, which they want to utilize to divide North Africa and destabilize the African continent. NATO's strategy to assassinate Colonel Qaddafi is tied to igniting these differences through a power vacuum.

In regards to the Israeli-Saudi connection, the Israelis have been active in Libya and have talked to both sides. The Mossad has secretly sent agents to both Benghazi and Tripoli to speak to both Libyan sides on behalf of Tel Aviv. At the same time, the Khaliji (Gulf) Arabs have worked actively against Tripoli and supported the Transitional Council. Specifically

Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain have all been very active against Tripoli on the political, diplomatic, military, financial, and media fronts. Yet, the Saudi role should not be ignored. It was Saudi Arabia and the Khalijis that spearheaded the Arab League request to the United Nations Security Council against Libya. They also engineered the suspension of Libya from the Arab League. Al Arabiya, which is Saudi-owned, also made the initial accusations that a member of the International Criminal Court had said thousands of civilians were murdered in Benghazi by the Libyan regime.

What is interesting is that there is a fear inside the Pentagon and inside NATO Headquarters that Iran and Libya could form a strategic alliance against Washington and NATO. The Israeli press has claimed that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard has secretly sent military advisors and personnel into Libya to assist the Libyans against NATO. Tripoli and Tehran have a lot in common and have more in common now. Both are starting to consider initiating more contact between one another. A strategic axis may come into fruition between Tripoli and Tehran and this is a real cause of fear for Washington and NATO.

Talking about the internal actors in Libya, which groups or factions are currently supporting Muammar Qaddafi? And which ones are against him?

Politically, all the leaders of the major tribes support Colonel Qaddafi. Almost the entirety of the military, intelligence, and security forces also support Qaddafi and never abandoned him. Most importantly, the majority of the Libyan people also support Colonel Qaddafi.

The people and groups that are opposed to Colonel Qaddafi are a series of corrupt former regime officials, like Mahmoud Jibril, that have become aligned to the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group and several smaller groups, which even includes Libyan communists. Yet, there are also some fair-weather friends and allies of Muammar Qaddafi that are still in Tripoli that would change sides if they thought the tides were changing.

Who is going to gain more from the removal of Muammar Qaddafi? Which interest are at stake in the Libyan crisis?

The players that seek to make gains from the removal of Colonel Qaddafi can be placed into two categories. These categories are internal players and external players. The internal players are the Libyan individuals who want to retain their wealth and power or to increase it. Many of these people are aligned to the Benghazi-based Transitional Council and NATO, but there is more to say about this.

At present, I believe that Saif Al-Islam Qaddafi and his supporters have something to gain from the removal of his father, Muammer Qaddafi. For years Saif-Al Islam was preparing himself to become the next leader of Libya. Washington and NATO have the most to gain if this happens. It is also Saif Al-Islam that Washington and NATO want to actively elevate as the new leader of Libya. Many of Saif Al-Islam's supporters would have much to gain too. It is these people that are pushing for negotiations with the U.S. and NATO and they could be holding separate negotiations with them.

This could result in an internal power struggle between the two main camps within the leadership of Tripoli. These two camps are the old guard of ministers and officials, such as Abdullah Senussi, around Muammar Qaddafi and the group of ministers and officials that have been selected by Saif Al-Islam. On a personal basis I believe that Saif Al-Islam is not suited for any leadership position and that it would be a disaster for Libya. It is also

important to note all the officials in the Transitional Council who defected and betray Qaddafi were all selected by Saif Al-Islam. Even Musa Kusa was due for retirement, but was retained as foreign minister by Saif Al-Islam.

Which forces are trying to overthrow Basher Al-Assad in Syria? Is it just a popular uprising? Or do you see external forces at work in Syria in order to dismantle Assad's regime? What is the role of Turkey and Israel in the Syrian case?

There are real tensions and anger that exist in Syria, but the events in Syria are not a popular uprising. The U.S., the European Union, the Al-Sauds, Qatar, the Hariri-led minority March 14 Alliance in Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel have ignited the problems in Syria through media manipulation, agent provocateurs, and the fuelling of internal legitimate and illegitimate domestic anger. No matter what one thinks of President Basher Al-Assad, it is undeniable that he is extremely popular amongst the Syrian people.

Both the events in Syria and Libya are coordinated. If you scratch deep enough you will see that the same people helped orchestrate these events from Cairo, including Bernard-Henri Lévy and Mahmoud Jibril. The same people and organizations who have helped launch the conflict in Libya are the same players who have tried to overthrow President Basher Al-Assad and the regime in Syria. Al Jazeera and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) are two of these entities. Al Jazeera's senior management has very close ties to Mahmoud Jibril who used to work for Al Jazeera. On a parallel track, the human rights organizations that have helped demonize Damascus and Tripoli by launching the false claims of massive repression are tied to the National Endowment for Democracy and to the individuals that have ignited the violence in both Libya and Syria.

The mainstream media is twisting the facts. The parties and forces involved in the Syrian unrest have actually marginalized any real democratic voices in Syria. In a case of irony these forces are being presented as opposing the Syrian government on the premise that the Syrian regime is not democratic. Yet, the bulk of these forces pushing for the toppling of Basher Al-Assad are against democracy themselves. Amongst these forces are the Muslim Brotherhood and the Tahrir Party, which are multinational parties with offices based in London where they are instructed by the British. These parties are also an ideological minority in Syria and do not provide any better political alternative to the Syrian regime. Nor are they representative of Islam in many of their beliefs and behaviour.

Turkey has been actively involved in conspiring against both Syria and Libya. I have seen irrefutable proof for this in Tripoli where the Turkish secret service has been very active in helping prepare the grounds for the operations against Libya. It was Turkish intelligence that established many of the contacts that the CIA, MI6, and other NATO intelligence agencies are using in Libya.

The Turkish role in the destabilization of Syria has become very clear. After the Turkish parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Erdogan's language about Syria rapidly transformed from that of its friendly pre-election rhetoric to harsh threats. The Turkish government showed where it stood after Erdogan was re-elected by the Turkish people.

All the problems in Syria happened to have erupted on Syria's border areas. The first wave of violence was near the Jordanian border, then violence broke out near the Lebanese border, and then finally an armed insurgency broke out near the Syrian-Turkish border. Ankara provided a lot of covert and overt support in this regard against the Syrian regime

and its forces. There was even talk in Turkey about using the Turkish military to establish a buffer zone inside Syria. At this point the Turkish media was mobilized against Syria and the Turkish military was actively violating Syrian territory as armed groups secretly supported by Turkey began to attack the Syrian Army.

At the same time Ankara started politically acting against Syria and providing logistical and political support for Syrian opposition groups, which it even hosted at a conference on Turkish soil near the Syrian-Turkish border and the location of the fighting between the insurgents and the Syrian Army. The Turkish government started threatening Damascus to “reform.” The word “reform” is a code meaning “obey” and “submit” and really has nothing to do with any authentic democratization process or liberty in Syria. In this regard Ankara was ordering Syria to change its foreign policy, enter the orbit of NATO, de-link itself from its strategic alliance with Iran, and stop supporting both Hezbollah and the Palestinian resistance groups.

The behaviour of Turkey must not be analyzed in isolation from either NATO or Israel. Despite the fact that Tel Aviv has been very silent, Israel has not been absent from the campaign to subordinate Syria. The intelligence services of Turkey and Israel have very close cooperation and have coordinated with one another against Syria and its allies. In fact, several Israeli spies were caught in Lebanon and Syria that were linked with the events in Syria. Israel’s role in destabilizing and restructuring Southwest Asia and North Africa should not be forgotten. Israel’s Yinon Plan to divide the region is a real testimony to this.

Why have the uprisings in the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia or Bahrain, for example) not been pursued in the same way they have been in North Africa?

The protests in the Arabian Peninsula are a spinoff of the unintended consequences of the events in Tunisia and Egypt. These protests are indigenous and organic and also reflect the internal grievances of the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula. These protests also happen to work against the strategic, political, and economic interests of Washington, the European Union, and Israel. This is why these Arab protests have been whitewashed and ignored by the Associated Press, Sky News, CNN, and the BBC.

Nothing is done about Bahrain or Oman while Syria is isolated and Libya has been attacked by NATO. Aside from the Arabian Peninsula, nothing is also said about the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan or Morocco either. These upheavals should also be examined and analyzed in context of U.S. foreign policy interests. When this is done then a series of links can be made between them and the behavior of the U.S. and the E.U. in regards to them. In fact, Mahmoud Jibril of the Benghazi-based Transitional Council, which the U.S. presents as a champion of freedom and democracy, has supported the Al-Khalifas in Bahrain and the other dictators of the Arab World. Mahmoud Jibril has even been the man that has helped many of the Arab regimes present enlightened faces to the world while they massacre their citizens.

While no-fly zones were imposed on Libya, nothing has been done about the murders and torture in Bahrain. Washington and the European Union have all virtually ignored the crimes in Bahrain against the Bahraini people by the Al-Khalifa regime. They have also turned their heads the other way as Saudi Arabia has militarily intervened in Bahrain and as the Al-Sauds kill and repress their own citizens.

*Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya is a sociologist and a Research Associate at the Centre for*



*Research on Globalization (CRG). He specializes on the Middle East and Central Asia. Nazemroaya was in Tunisia, in June 2011, and is currently in Libya.*

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#### About the author:

An award-winning author and geopolitical analyst, Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya is the author of *The Globalization of NATO* (Clarity Press) and a forthcoming book *The War on Libya and the Re-Colonization of Africa*. He has also contributed to several other books ranging from cultural critique to international relations. He is a Sociologist and Research Associate at the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), a contributor at the Strategic Culture Foundation (SCF), Moscow, and a member of the Scientific Committee of Geopolitica, Italy.

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