

Libya: The Latest Product in Canada's Ugly War Assembly Line

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NATO members, including Canada, are continuing their massive bombing campaign against Libya in a war that may just break the record for the casual breaking of international law, and for lying about the motives for the war.

There is no mandate to engage in “regime change,” yet everyone, including the Harper government, openly admits that that is, in fact, what they are doing. Canada has stated that only the removal of Gaddafi will satisfy NATO. Not the United Nations — which gave a mandate to protect civilians from the Libyan government’s attacks — but NATO, that alliance whose mandate is supposed to be the mutual self defence of nations of the north Atlantic.

No one refers to this war against Libya as a criminal conspiracy but the term would be perfectly appropriate. And I suppose we should not be surprised that an organization that constantly violates its own mandate can hardly be expected to wince at violating someone else’s they have taken over. NATO, with almost no comment from anywhere, has become a military intervention agency aimed at protecting Western industrial nations — not from military threat but from an economic one: the threat of higher oil prices and the gradual loss of its dominant access to Middle East oil and gas.

There seems to be so little public interest in this war that its perpetrators lie like six year olds next to a cookie jar because so far they have largely gotten away with it. As the war was quickly transformed from protecting civilians to getting “the evil G,” all the western governments thought they had to do was show photos of Colonel Gaddafi looking demented or telling stories about his eccentric behaviour in order to pacify their populations.

Canadians actually oppose the extension of the war by a substantial margin (over 2:1 in an informal *Globe and Mail* poll) but so long as the media goes along with the lies (The CBC as recent as June 1 reported: “Canada is helping to enforce a no-fly zone as part of a multinational operation.”) and opposition parties rubber-stamp the mayhem, the Harper war machine (some 650 troops and over a dozen fighter bombers) can continue its assaults politically unscathed.

There are so many things about this war that are farcical, dishonest, amateurish, and just plain morally wrong that Canada and the other warmongers have given up serious efforts at justifying it. They have just recognized a rag tag National Transition Council as the “legitimate representative” of the Libyan people despite that fact that it can demonstrate no unity of any kind except its own lust for power. It has no plans for democracy and no stated vision for the country post-Gadhafi. Behind the scenes the NATO geniuses running the show

admit they have absolutely no idea what the country would look like if this disparate gang of unelected and unrepresentative opportunists ever got to exercise power.

The constant talk of “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity” seem equally opportunistic and just a bit too predictable — NATO cover fire for its blatant violation of international law and the UN mandate and its own killing of civilians (inevitable in an air war). The charges of rape being used systematically as a weapon of war so far have no credible evidence that [the UN can agree on](#) and it reminds me of the gruesome tearing-babies-from-incubators story that was created by p.r. firm Hill and Knowlton to [sell the first Iraq war to the U.S. public](#).

There are big risks here for NATO and the U.S. (Canada is just an embarrassment, lap-dogging for the U.S. in a manner even more blatant than in Afghanistan). The U.S. knows it and was so terrified of the reaction on the Arab street to yet another war against a Muslim country that it had to pretend to be acting in a support role. Much of the EU knows it, too, which is why several have been reluctant partners in a war against a country that exports most of its oil to them. The coalition of the not-that-willing is getting more tenuous even as the “mission” gets extended.

So what is it that makes eliminating Gaddafi worth the risk of years of chaos in Libya — and worth enduring the repeated accusations of hypocrisy as Syria and Bahrain went (and go) completely unpunished for what is actual murderous assaults on (unarmed) civilians?

It’s not just oil but that seems to have been the tipping point as AsiaTimes.com columnist Pepe Escobar wrote back in March. [According to Escobar](#), Gaddafi declared on March 15 “We do not trust [Western oil] firms, they have conspired against us... Our oil contracts are going to Russian, Chinese and Indian firms.” The bombing, led by Britain and France, began a few days later. Much has been made of the surging BRIC countries — Brazil, Russia, India and China — but the notion that these competitors with NATO economies might get their hands on Libyan oil may have been too much for the already vulnerable Europeans and their reluctant supporters in Washington.

The only certain outcome if Gaddafi falls will be that the country’s oil, now nationalized, will end up in the hands of Western oil companies.

But it is not just the oil. Belying Gaddafi’s image as nothing more than an eccentric or even insane, he has been responsible more than any other African leader for creating independent institutions that challenge those of the West — including the IMF. For years, Africa was forced to pay exorbitant fees — \$500 million a year — to use European communications satellites for telephone, TV and radio service. The African countries could not raise the money for their own satellite until Gaddafi put up \$300 million of the \$400 million needed. African countries now pay a small fraction of what they used to pay. EU companies lost their privilege of plundering Africa.

No living Africa leader can take us much credit for giving direction to the African Union than Gaddafi and he get no thanks from Western countries and their institutions. The U.S. has illegally frozen \$30 billion belonging to the Libyan State Bank, assets that were, [according to African writer Jean-Paul Pougala](#) “...earmarked as the Libyan contribution to three key projects which would add the finishing touches to the African federation — the African Investment Bank in Syrte, Libya, the establishment in 2011 of the African Monetary Fund to

be based in Yaounde with a US\$42 billion capital fund, and the Abuja-based African Central Bank in Nigeria.”

The African Monetary Fund is expected to completely eliminate the pernicious influence of the IMF and its enforced privatization agenda. Failed efforts by the West at scuttling African unity by setting up regional alliances are back on the table in anticipation of Gaddafi’s fall.

Once again the simple rule of follow the money — and the power — applies if you want to discover the real reasons behind NATO and U.S. adventures. Gaddafi has been a thorn in the side of the West for a long time — a much bigger thorn as a force for unity in Africa than he ever was when he supported terrorism.

I happened to watch the NDP members of Parliament voting in favour of the extension of the Libyan war on television as it was happening — a depressing sight when you know that Jack Layton and his advisers are fully aware that this conflict has nothing to do with humanitarianism and everything to do with imperialism. The NDP tried to camouflage its loss of principle by making soft amendments that Harper had no problem with because they did nothing to alter the reality of our unjustifiable intervention in that country. How it now intends to oppose the purchase of \$30 billion worth of fighter bombers, designed for exactly this kind of adventure, is anyone’s guess.

The 70 per cent of Canadians who say they opposed the three-and-a-half month extension can be thankful to the Green Party’s Elizabeth May, who refused unanimous consent to the motion. She was the only principled MP in the House on that day.

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