

Libya, the Lie

The sorry spectacle of media coverage

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When the U.S. invaded Iraq riding a pack of lies and monstrous manipulation, the entire U.S. elite, including major news services, academics, and politicians from both “sides” of the spectrum, lined up to cheerlead and off they went to war. It was one of the most shameful chapters in the long history of shameful acts of U.S. imperial foreign policy.

But it actually didn't take too long for dissenting voices to come out of the woodwork. The lies were exposed, the liars identified, the manipulation denounced.

Watching the sorry spectacle of media coverage of the tragic farce unfolding in Libya, one has to wonder if anyone will ever expose the lies and hubris that have run throughout this faux Arab spring.

To be sure, as more journalists, aid workers and human rights representatives arrive in the country the more some of the obvious facts trickle out. The “freedom fighters” — more like soccer hooligans with guns — have looted dozens of arms depots of the Libyan military. According to [Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch](#), “Every time a city falls, they end up being looted. . . Every facility we go to where there were surface-to-air missiles, they're gone.”

Just what will these lovers of democracy do with these weapons? The U.S. and E.U. might just start to worry that no matter who buys them on the black market, they will eventually end up in the hands of al Qaeda or other militant groups. As NATO knows full well, some of the so-called rebels have ties to al Qaeda. Or perhaps the missiles will end up in the hands of the Taliban where they will be used to shoot down U.S. helicopters. Talk about blowback. Too bad the Americans have never quite grasped the meaning of irony.

The photos of the revolutionaries give any thoughtful observer pause. Virtually every photo of the victorious rebels show aggressive, undisciplined, young men armed to the teeth holding their guns high in the air (often firing randomly). I haven't seen a single photo or video clip with even one woman portrayed — and hardly any men over

And while the western media repeatedly imply that the Nation Transitional Council is in control of these dangerous thugs and thieves the truth lies elsewhere. Several rebel groups have denounced the NTC and said they don't recognize its authority. So not only does the council not represent anyone, it doesn't even control its own “army.” The NTC is little more than a group of greedy opportunists salivating at the thought of getting its hands on the billions in state funds that NATO is now handing over to them. Only with the constant disciplinary efforts of its NATO handlers does the council manage to maintain a semblance

of decorum and credibility.

No one in the media mentions that Gadhafi didn't have billions of dollars stashed in vaults around the world for his personal use as others such as Mubarak did. To be sure, Gadhafi and his family and closest associates lived in luxury. But the tens of billions illegally seized by Western countries was money belonging to the Libyan state and its national bank. NATO has effectively destroyed the Libyan government — not just Gadhafi's regime. Tens of thousands of foreign workers have left the country, many of whom were critical to the running of the country. Rebels have been accused of randomly executing blacks, many of them students and workers. The contributions of these foreign workers are likely gone forever.

But none of this bothers the Canadian political elite and its intellectual hired guns. One of the most shameful examples — there are countless — is Lloyd Axworthy, the “highly respected” former foreign affairs minister under Jean Chretien. He penned an [op-ed for the Globe and Mail](#) which could have been written on contract for the cabal now in power in Tripoli . A more simplistic and deliberately obfuscating piece is hard to imagine. Axworthy's article waxes on romantically about how the NATO bombing of Libya is a huge advance for the principle of Responsibility to Protect. This principle is NATO's ideological weapon that permits it to do whatever it likes. Axworthy was a key figure in getting it established at the United Nations in 1999-2000.

According to Axworthy, “We are seriously engaged in a resetting of the international order toward a more humane, just world.” I predict that NATO's grotesque manipulation of the UN mandate to impose a “no fly” zone to protect “civilians” (a violation Axworthy doesn't even mention) will in fact do more damage to the responsibility to protect principle than any similar action to date. It will tarnish the UN, too, which has allowed its mandate to be used for imperial gain. The unseemly rush by France , Britain and Italy in particular, to get their hands on Libyan oil will soon be too obvious to cover up. The revolutionaries are no doubt busy signing deals handing over that previously nationalized resource to the neo-colonialists who put them in power — robbing the real civilians of their birthright.

Who will take the “responsibility to protect” Libyans from this new gang? Who will protect the people of Libya so that they continue to enjoy a literacy rate above 90 per cent, the lowest infant mortality rate and highest life expectancy of all of Africa , free medicare and education and the highest [Human Development Index](#) of any country on the continent? Do the boys firing their guns in the air even have a clue that their living standards — subsidized by nationalized oil — were among the highest in Africa ? Who will they blame when medical care disappears and their kids have to pay to go to school? Western, free-market democracy will come to Libya at a very high price when designed and delivered by the neo-colonial powers.

It's hard to know if the brain trust at NATO actually believed this whole thing would be over in a few weeks, but what they did know, and what the Canadian media refuses to tell us, is that Libya was the biggest obstacle to the continued super-exploitation of Africa and its vast resources. On a whole number of fronts, Libya was using its oil wealth to gradually close the doors to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the hegemony of the U.S. dollar in the economic domination of Africa .

If you want to paint a picture of the back rooms of NATO before the genuine Arab spring

burst forth, imagine the power brokers sitting around oak tables trying to figure out a way to stop Gadhafi from ruining their decades long — centuries, actually — bonanza. Then imagine the surprise arrival of the Arab spring. What a gift and delivered just in time.

Africa's role as a giant pool of cheap resources was being threatened just as the U.S. and E.U. faced economic catastrophe because of their own financial deregulation policies. China is investing billions in Africa — and not just in resource extraction. It is helping African countries industrialize, the surest way to economic independence.

There's nothing NATO can do about China . But the other side of the independence coin was Gadhafi's determination to sever Africa 's oppressive ties with Western financial institutions. Gadhafi was not only in the process of creating the African Investment Bank (providing interest-free loans) and the African Monetary Fund (to be centred in Cameroon) eliminating the role of the IMF, it was also in the planning stages of creating a new, gold-backed African currency that would seriously weaken the U.S. by undermining the dollar. All the Libyan funds set aside for these Pan-African projects were frozen by NATO and will now be handed over — carefully, no doubt — to the neo-colonial puppets installed in Tripoli .

Gadhafi was also instrumental in killing [AFRICOM](#), a new U.S. military command and control base intended to add military intimidation to American economic domination. Look for that initiative to be revived.

The implications of the conflict in Libya are thus just beginning to unfold. NATO will be mired in Libya for years to come to ensure its oil objectives are met and to manipulate “democratic elections” so its friends on the NTC can maintain control. While there has been a muted response so far from African countries and the African Union it will come sooner or later. They cannot fail to recognize that regime change in Libya was all about sabotaging pan-African unity.

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