

NATO's War on Libya and Africa

By [Maximilian Forte](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [NATO'S WAR ON LIBYA](#)

NATO's war in Libya was proclaimed as a humanitarian intervention — bombing in the name of "saving lives." Attempts at diplomacy were stifled. Peace talks were subverted.

Libya was barred from representing itself at the UN, where shadowy NGOs and "human rights" groups held full sway in propagating exaggerations, outright falsehoods, and racial fear mongering that served to sanction atrocities and ethnic cleansing in the name of democracy. The rush to war was far speedier than Bush's invasion of Iraq.

Max Forte has scrutinized the documentary history from before, during, and after the war. He argues that the war on Libya was not about human rights, nor entirely about oil, but about a larger process of militarizing U.S. relations with Africa. The development of the Pentagon's Africa Command, or AFRICOM, was in fierce competition with Pan-Africanist initiatives such as those spearheaded by Muammar Gaddafi.

Far from the success NATO boasts about or the "high watermark" proclaimed by proponents of the "Responsibility to Protect," this war has left the once prosperous, independent and defiant Libya in ruin, dependency and prolonged civil strife.



[Slouching Towards Sirte:
NATO's War on Libya and Africa](#)

by Maximilian Forte

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About humanitarian imperialism, Max Forte writes:

"Desperate to finally be seen as the liberators of Arabs, rescuing poor victims with the finest of American exports (human rights), some would understandably feel compelled to exploit

the suffering of others (residents fleeing Sirte) and turn that into something worthy of celebration. This is an example of the abduction process at the centre of Western, liberal humanitarianism: it can only function by first directly or indirectly creating the suffering of others, and by then seeing every hand as an outstretched hand, pleading or welcoming. We see (or imagine) helpless others, gobbling morsels of food that we hand them, brown mouths chugging down water from our plastic bottles, and we feel accomplished. Our moral might is reaffirmed by the physical plight of others. Clearly, the humanitarian relation is not a relation between equals. We are not our “brothers’ keepers” then, but rather we are more like animal keepers. Bombing for us is really just an animal management technology, and our relationship to the world remains a zoological one.” (*Slouching Towards Sirte*, p. 97.)

A War for Human Rights

(by Max Forte - in *The Political Bouillon*)

The war in Libya never happened. At least that is what one might think, considering the dearth of serious analysis and critical reflection in Canada since our participation in NATO’s bombardment campaign ended a year ago. Yet in Libya, in many ways the war is still happening...[Read more..](#)

Brendan Stone interviews [Max Forte as he discusses his book SLOUCHING TOWARDS SIRTE](#)

Praise, Reviews

“[Slouching Towards Sirte](#) is a penetrating critique, not only of the NATO intervention in Libya, but of the concept of humanitarian intervention and imperialism in our time. It is the definitive treatment of NATO’s war on Libya. It is difficult to imagine it will be surpassed.”
-Stephen Gowans, *What’s Left*, [Read More](#)

“Forte’s allegations that NATO’s war was manufactured by liberal interventionists and “iPad imperialists” whose agenda to disrupt African independence and execute regime change under the “fig leaf” of saving lives are chilling—and persuasive. So too is the timeline of events between the start of the protests and the propagandist hysteria promulgated online. Even though Forte couches descriptions of Gaddafi in amorphous, guarded language, he isn’t an apologist. In this provocative and unabashedly direct book, Forte speaks truth to power.”

-[ForeWord Reviews, January 4, 2013, read full review...](#)

The Public Archive identified [Slouching Towards Sirte](#) as one of 10 Books for 2012 on its [Black Radical Reading List](#).

[Maximilian C. Forte](#) is a professor of anthropology in Montreal, Canada. He teaches courses in the field of political anthropology dealing with “the new imperialism,” Indigenous resistance movements and philosophies, theories and histories of colonialism, and critiques of the mass media. Max is a founding member of Anthropologists for Justice and Peace.



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