

In the Theater of the Absurd: US-NATO Support “Al Qaeda in Libya”

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Global Research, May 14, 2011

[New Dawn Magazine No. 126 \(May-June 2011\)](#) 14 May 2011

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

Theme: [Terrorism, US NATO War Agenda](#)

“We are fighting nothing other than al-Qaeda in what they call the Islamic Maghreb. It’s an armed group that is fighting from Libya to Mauritania and through Algeria and Mali.... If you had found them taking over American cities by the force of arms, tell me what you would do?” – From a letter sent by the Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi to the US president Barack Obama.

In the Theatre of the Absurd, anything is possible. However, this latest scenario in Libya has taken absurdity to a whole new dimension. A rag-tag bunch of armed, al-Qaeda affiliated tribesmen, being referred to as a ‘pro-democracy movement’ by British State TV (BBC) and other mainstream media outlets, are now being openly armed and trained by the French, British and American governments. This same Coalition of Crusaders, with the support of the Arab League, is fighting alongside the rebels, launching continual bombing raids on targets in Tripoli and beyond, including Muammar Qadhafi’s compound, in a brazen attempt to assassinate the man and re-colonise Libya.

And what is the support inside Libya for this so-called ‘Libyan pro-democracy movement’? The answer is less than 2% of the entire Libyan population. One might have expected that the Western and Arab worlds would have offered Qadhafi and the Libyan armed forces assistance to deal with this al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) inspired insurgency. But no. Surprisingly, or maybe not so surprisingly, instead, Britain and the US, led by the clown Sarkozy, in what can only be described as a war mongering frenzy, launched an all out attack on Muammar Qadhafi, his family, and the Libyan people.

As this article goes to press in New Dawn magazine, the Coalition forces continue to savagely bomb targets in Tripoli and beyond, killing civilians and destroying vital infrastructure. They are pounding Libya with a force that was last seen when they invaded Iraq, doing their utmost to leave Qadhafi and his people defenceless against this insurgency. In fact, so brazen is the imperialist Obama, that he has announced an ‘overt operation’, sending in CIA operatives to train and equip the rebels. Rebels who the State Department admits are disorganised and untrained and unable to articulate a vision for Libya, beyond killing Qadhafi.

These rebels however do have an agenda. Their leaders and ideologues, inside and out of Libya, are well known for misinterpreting verses from the Quran, quoting out of context, in an attempt to justify their so-called jihad and practices which are fundamentally alien to the Islamic spirit. The best the Libyan rebels, read counter-revolutionaries, can do, is to chant ‘From Tunisia, Egypt to Libya and on, we will spread Jihad!’

Western Powers and al-Qaeda – On the Same Side

As far back as the mid 90s, a former MI5 agent, David Shayler, testified that British intelligence employed the services of an al-Qaeda cell inside Libya, paying them a large fee to assassinate Muammar Qadhafi. The assassination attempt was carried out. A grenade was lobbed at Qadhafi as he walked among a crowd in his hometown, Sirte. He was saved by one of his bodyguards, who threw herself on the grenade.

Shayler revealed that while he was working on the Libya desk in the mid 90s, British secret service personnel were collaborating with the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), which was connected to one of Osama bin Laden's trusted lieutenants. The LIFG officially joined al-Qaeda in 2007. On an Islamist website in 2009, Ayman al-Zawahiri welcomed them to the fold.

Over the past two years, the Libyan authorities have released scores of imprisoned Islamists from the LIFG into the custody of their families and communities in a humanitarian attempt to integrate them back into Libyan society. With a pledge that they would use the forums set up in the country, under the auspices of the General People's Congress, to express their views. Many of the released prisoners had fought in Afghanistan and Iraq and been returned to the Libyan authorities as part of an agreement with the US. If Qadhafi was truly the ruthless man the West would have us believe, then surely these rebels, classified as terrorists by the US, would have remained in prison and their fate very different.

One of those released in 2008 was the LIFG commander, Abdel Hakim al-Hasidi, now one of the leaders of this uprising. Over the last decade, al-Hasidi fought in Afghanistan, was captured in Pakistan in 2002, handed over to the US, and subsequently handed back to the Libyan authorities. In a recent interview with the Italian newspaper, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, al-Hasidi admitted that, "jihadists who fought in Iraq against the US are on the front lines of the battle against Muammar Qadhafi."

Libya was the first country to issue an arrest warrant for Osama bin Laden. The Libyan authorities have for years tried to warn the world about the very serious threat posed by these Islamic deviants. According to David Shayler, Western intelligence turned a deaf ear to Libya's warnings as far back as the mid 90s because they were actually working with the al-Qaeda group inside Libya, to kill Qadhafi, and roll back the Libyan revolution.

True Religion versus False Religion

The battle being fought in the Libyan desert today dates way back beyond the mid 90s. Today's battle is essentially a battle between, on the one hand, the revolutionary Islam of Prophet Muhammad, manifest in the writings of Muammar Qadhafi and in the practice of the Libyan revolution. And on the other hand, the reactionary Islam of the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) and their off shoots such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and its affiliate, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.

The Muslim revolutionary scholar, Ali Shariati, notes that, "the battle of history is the battle of religion against religion... true religion versus false religion."

The Islam of the Wahhabist/Salafi sect, adhered to by the LIFG, is a reactionary interpretation and practice of Islam that seeks to replicate the political and social structures of 7th century Arabian society. Although for the BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera cameras, the rebels are careful to present themselves to the world as a force fighting for 'liberal democracy' and to show their love and admiration for the West. Off camera, they are calling for what AQIM has named the 'Islamic Emirate in the Maghreb'.

Qadhafi, along with other progressive Islamic scholars, argues the message of the Quran and Islamic theology is incompatible with the idea of an emirate. They point out dynastic

rule was imported into the body politic of Islam by the likes of Abu Sufyan Muawiyah, the governor of Damascus, in the period 642 to 661, who borrowed these anti-Islamic practices from the Byzantium Empire and the Persians. Qadhafi points out this particular system of governance has nothing at all to do with Islam.

The central ideological concern of Muammar Qadhafi and the Libyan revolution was to redefine Islam in the context of modern knowledge and contemporary political systems and thought. This is a task that requires us to revisit and rethink previous political systems set up by Muslims, without losing any of the Perennial Truth that is Islam.

The Third Universal Theory, outlined in Qadhafi's Green Book, is a comprehensive worldview – a body of philosophical, political, economic, sociological and scientific principles, all inter-related. Together they form an alternative and largely self-sufficient intellectual structure. It is a guide for authentic Islamic revolution, and can be applied to non-Islamic, popular revolutions. It ushers in a whole new social and political practice, outlining an alternative model of democracy.

Progressive academics worldwide have acclaimed The Green Book as a serious body of political thought, offering an incisive critique of Western parliamentary democracy, capitalism and Marxist socialism. In addition, there is no denying the system of direct democracy, posited by Qadhafi's Third Universal Theory, offers an alternative model and solution for Africa and many other parts of the 'Third World', where multi-party 'democracy' has been a dismal failure, resulting in ethnic/tribal conflict, social fragmentation and political chaos.

In his book *Islam and the Third Universal Theory: The Religious Thought of Muammar al Qadhafi*, the respected Muslim scholar Mahmoud Ayoub points out that, "the first part of the Green Book is an interpretation of one single verse of the Quran: 'and their affairs are decided through consultation (shura) among themselves'... To others it means an assembly of jurists ruling over a traditional Islamic society strictly governed by Shariah. Only Qadhafi has taken the important Quranic precept seriously, understanding it literally, and applying it equally to every member of society."

Ayoub further states that, "Qadhafi sees Islam as a perpetual revolution against unnecessary and illegitimate wealth, exploitation and oppression. Qadhafi asserted that the Islam which both the East and the West knew was that observed by kings and princes, as well as mendicants (darawish) who live off Islam. Thus, people thought of Islam as a reactionary movement, a message which could never keep up with life. They considered Islam simply as a religious heritage which could be venerated but which had to be kept from the fields of action and human struggle."

This Islam, whose theology is primarily one of liberation, has been marginalised, distorted and co-opted to serve the interests of ruling elites throughout the Muslim world. There is the Islam observed by kings and princes, the 'feudal Islam' of the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) and its Wahhabi spiritual leaders, such as Egyptian cleric, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who recently issued a fatwa stating that any Libyan soldier who can shoot dead embattled leader Muammar Qadhafi should do so "to rid Libya of him."

Qaradawi is a neo-feudalist, who has defended the practice of female genital mutilation, called for the death penalty to be applied to those who leave Islam and advocates separate systems of law for different classes of citizens. Qadhafi views Qaradawi and those like him as the spiritual heirs of the corrupt Umayyad dynasty (661-750) that transformed the revolutionary Islam of the Holy Prophet into a feudal dispensation.

How does Qadhafi's revolutionary Islam play out in practice? Why is this man and the revolution he has led such a threat? And why, over recent weeks, have people from every corner of the globe spoken out in support of Qadhafi and the Libyan revolution? Why have thousands of African freedom fighters (not mercenaries as the BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera

would have us believe) poured into Libya from the Congo, Guinea, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Southern Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso to fight to the death for this leader and Libya?

Who is this man and this revolution that has the moral authority and power to draw an army of Africans from every corner of the continent and solidarity from liberation movements, political parties and progressive governments worldwide?

A Libyan Jamahiriya

On September 1st, 1969, the 27 year old Qadhafi, an army captain, carried out a bloodless coup overthrowing the corrupt monarchy of King Idris Senussi, who had ruled Libya for 18 years. Qadhafi established what he called the Libyan Jamahiriya or the State of the Masses. When asked what was the Constitution of Libya, he replied “the Quran.”

Immediately after the 1969 coup, Qadhafi told Gamal Abdel Nasser to consider Libya a partner in his Pan-Arab project, offering Nasser access to Libyan resources in the struggle against Israel. From a young age Qadhafi understood the absolute necessity of unity if Western hegemony and colonialism was to be challenged effectively.

Not long after the revolution Qadhafi earned the wrath of the imperialists by closing the British Naval Base at Tobruk and the American Wheelus Air Base on the outskirts of Tripoli. He nationalised key sections of Libya’s vast oil resources and used his influence within OPEC to negotiate fairer prices for oil producing countries. Qadhafi used the oil revenue to benefit the Libyan people, building schools, universities, hospitals and much needed infrastructure. During the reign of King Idris, fewer than one in five Libyans was literate and there was virtually no access to education for the majority of people. Today, Libya boasts a quality education system, free right up to university level, and the literacy rate is 83 per cent, the highest in North Africa and the Arab world. In addition, Libya has one of the finest health care systems in the ‘Third World’. All people have access to doctors, hospitals, clinics and medicines, free of charge. If a Libyan needs surgery that is unavailable in Libya, funding is provided for the surgery to be carried out overseas. Average life expectancy is now 75, during the time of King Idris it was as low as 44.

Soon after the revolution, basic food items were subsidised and electricity was made available throughout the country. Huge irrigation projects were established in order to support a drive towards agricultural development and self-sufficiency in food production.

Recognising that water, not oil, would be the most scarce resource of the future, Qadhafi initiated the construction of the Great Man Made River, which took years to complete (see illustration and photo above). Referred to as a wonder of the modern world, this river pumps millions of cubic metres of water daily from the heart of the Sahara desert to the coast where the land is suitable for agriculture. Any Libyan who wanted to become a farmer was and still is given free use of land, a house, farm equipment, livestock and seed.

At the outset of the revolution, Qadhafi vowed to house every Libyan, many of whom were still living in tents and houses made out of flattened oil drums. He also vowed that his own parents, who lived in a tent in the Sirte desert, would not be housed until every Libyan was housed. He fulfilled that promise, his own father dying before he had the opportunity to move him into a home. Large scale housing construction took place right across the country, all Libyans being given a decent house or apartment to live in rent-free. In Qadhafi’s Green Book it states: “The house is a basic need of both the individual and the family, therefore it should not be owned by others.”

Under the revolutionary leadership of Muammar Qadhafi, Libya has now attained the highest standard of living in Africa. Rated on the UN’s Human Development Index ahead of Russia, Brazil and Saudi Arabia. In 2007, in an article which appeared in the African Executive

Magazine, Norah Owaraga noted that Libya, “unlike other oil producing countries such as Nigeria, utilised the revenue from its oil to develop its country. The standard of living of the people of Libya is one of the highest in Africa, falling in the category of countries with a GNP per capita of between USD 2,200 and 6,000.”

Qadhafi believes that economic democracy can only be achieved when the GDP of a country benefits all of its citizens and when the country’s wealth is dispersed to every single citizen. Today, money from Libya’s oil revenue is directly deposited into the bank account of every Libyan.

From the beginning, Qadhafi was dedicated to the emancipation of Libyan women, encouraging them to participate in all aspects of political life. The revolution ensured that women gained full access to education and has actively encouraged acceptance of female paid employment. Qadhafi has enabled women to serve in the armed forces, and as a way of breaking down stereotypes and taboos, he established a corps of female bodyguards, assigned to his protection. Libya is a very traditional society and these moves by Qadhafi have been met with stiff resistance, especially by the forces in Benghazi.

From the outset of the revolution, Qadhafi channelled a great deal of effort and resources into continued attempts, following on from Gamal Abdel Nasser, to bring about Arab unity. At meeting after meeting of the Arab League, he condemned and exposed their ineptness at arriving at a unified position in relation to the Palestinian issue and other issues relating to neo-colonial control of the region. He became impatient as he realised that the Arab rulers of the day were more interested in protecting and preserving their own parochial interests in tandem with Western imperialism, and were only too willing to stab each other in the back behind closed doors, despite their rhetoric at the summits.

He vehemently opposed the US led invasion of Iraq and condemned those Arab leaders who supported the so-called ‘coalition of the willing’, earning the wrath of the Saudi monarchy when he said that “the Kabah was under the yoke of American occupation,” and questioned “what meaning the Haj has for Muslims as long as the American occupation of the sacred House of God continues.”

He worked tirelessly to encourage African-Arab unity, and built strong relationships with African leaders and the African streets. In October 2010, at the second African-Arab summit in Libya, Qadhafi was the first and only leader in the Arab world to formally apologise for the Arab role in the trade in captured Africans. He was highly critical of Arab leaders/elites condescending attitude toward Africans, and their despicable treatment of African workers, and in particular African domestic workers in their own countries. He stated:

“I regret the behaviour of Arabs... they brought African children to North Africa, they made them slaves, they sold them like animals and treated them in a shameful way. I regret and am ashamed when we remember these practices. I apologise for this. Today we are embarrassed and shocked by the outrageous practices of rich Arabs who treat Africans with contempt and condescension.”

This riled the Arab leaders and ruling elites and was an affront to their notion of Arab supremacy.

Disgruntled with the arrogance of the Arab leaders, and a continual thorn in their side as he openly criticised their hypocrisy and servitude to Western imperialism, Qadhafi became isolated in the Arab world.

Africa Called, Qadhafi Answered

Meanwhile, Libya’s neighbours to the south were far more receptive to Qadhafi’s ideas. When African nations called, Qadhafi answered. He is passionate about the plight of Africans and Africa and longs to see the liberation of the continent and its people. He called on the

African Union to give representation to Africans in the Diaspora – the US, Europe, the Caribbean and South America, and acknowledge the need to deal with the conditions of poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation that continues to confront these communities. At a recent conference held in Libya in January this year, to address the needs and concerns of African migrants to Europe, Qadhafi stated:

“From now on, by the will of God, I will assign teams to search, investigate and liaise with the Africans in Europe and to check their situations... this is my duty and role towards the sons of Africa; I am a soldier for Africa. I am here for you and I work for you; therefore, I will not leave you and I will follow up on your conditions.”

Today, Qadhafi is seen by Africans on the continent and throughout the diaspora as a leading Afrocentric Pan-Africanist, articulating a vision for a United States of Africa – with one government, one currency and one army.

One of Muammar Qadhafi's most controversial and difficult moves has been his determined drive to unite Africa with a shared vision for the true independence and liberation of the entire continent. He has contributed a great deal of his time, energy and large sums of money to this project, and like Kwame Nkrumah, he has paid a high price.

Many years ago, Qadhafi told a large gathering, which included Libyans and revolutionaries from many parts of the world, that the Black Africans were the true owners of Libya long before the Arab incursion into North Africa. Adding Libyans need to acknowledge and pay tribute to their ancient African roots. He ended by saying, as is proclaimed in his Green Book, “the Black race shall prevail throughout the world.”

‘Brother Leader’, ‘Guide of the Revolution’ and ‘King of Kings’ are some of the titles that have been bestowed on Qadhafi by Africans. Only recently Qadhafi called for the creation of a secretariat of traditional African Chiefs and Kings, with whom he has excellent ties, to co-ordinate efforts to build African unity at the grassroots level. This bottom up approach is widely supported by Pan-Africanists.

While the Libyan revolution has irritated the West since its inception, and although they never forgave Qadhafi for nationalising Libya's oil, the most worrying move has been his call for the unification of Africa. After years of tireless effort on the part of Qadhafi and the Libyan revolutionary movement, the idea of a United States of Africa is gaining real momentum and support on the continent and amongst Pan-Africanists worldwide.

Unity is something the imperialists fear and loathe. They are well aware that a united Africa would completely alter the balance of power globally. The well-documented fact is that if Africa stopped the flow of all resources and raw materials to the Western nations for just one week, the United States and Europe would grind to a halt. They are that dependent on Africa, and are therefore determined to maintain their ability to control events on the continent.

The leader of the Nation of Islam in the US, Minister Louis Farrakhan, pointed out many years ago at a conference in Libya, “Europe and the US cannot go forward into the new century without unfettered access to the vast natural resources of Africa.” He added: “Qadhafi is one who stands in their way.”

If they cannot maintain control, then at least they must try to maintain Africa's divisions, thereby ensuring it is always in a position of weakness. African unity and true independence is something white supremacy, in all of its manifestations – capitalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism – will oppose with all its might. The French are presently spearheading a plan, with other southern European nations, to form a Mediterranean bloc, incorporating the whole of North Africa, to try to bring about the balkanisation of the continent, in an attempt

to halt this unification project.

Liberation Movements Worldwide Called, Qadhafi Answered

In addition to his tireless efforts in the Arab and African worlds, in 1982 the World Mathaba was established in Libya. Mathaba means a gathering place for people with a common purpose. The World Mathaba brought together revolutionaries and freedom fighters from every corner of the globe to share ideas and develop their revolutionary knowledge. Many liberation groups throughout the world received education, training and support, including the ANC, AZAPO, PAC and BCM of Azania (South Africa), SWAPO of Namibia, MPLA of Angola, the Sandinistas of Nicaragua, the Polisario of the Sahara, the PLO, the Moro National Liberation Front of the Philippines, the Pattani National Liberation Front of Thailand, the Dalits of India, Indigenous movements throughout the Americas and the Nation of Islam led by Louis Farrakhan to name but a few.

Nelson Mandela called Muammar Qadhafi one of the 20th century's greatest freedom fighters, and insisted the eventual collapse of the apartheid system owed much to Qadhafi and Libyan support. Mandela said that, "in the darkest moments of our struggle, when our backs were to the wall, Muammar Qadhafi stood with us."

Having examined not only the words and writings, but also Qadhafi's life time of unwavering revolutionary action dedicated to the liberation of humankind, it is not difficult to answer the questions posed above regarding how Qadhafi's revolutionary Islam has played out in practice? Why this man and the revolution he has led is such a threat to Western powers, and why freedom fighters from all over Africa are willing to fight to the death for him and the Libyan revolution.

The Final Act – Imperialism's Last Hideous Gasp

As neo-liberalism and neo-colonialism plunges the world deeper and deeper into chaos, Western imperialism is in crisis. As people revolt in every corner of the world, their ability to influence global affairs is challenged. Even in the economic sphere, their power is decreasing, as China, India and Brazil emerge as vital new trading partners in Africa and South America. In the words of Kwame Nkrumah, "Neo-colonialism is not a sign of imperialism's strength, but rather of its last hideous gasp."

As the capitalist crisis worsens, the imperialists will become more and more desperate in their attempts to regain their influence and direct events as they are used to doing. Events which they are increasingly incapable of comprehending – not only because of the speed at which these events are occurring, but also because of the complexity of the events and the paradigm shifts taking place, that are, quite simply, far outside the Western imagination.

Furthermore, they have lost all credibility as the Iraq and Afghanistan debacles continue. The Emperor is naked, and the hypocrisy of the Empire has become so transparent, that even the least informed observers are finally realising that something is horribly wrong.

Imperialism is experiencing its 'last hideous gasp' and it is imperative for progressive movements and decent minded citizens worldwide to seize this moment and to oppose this current assault on Libya with all of our collective strength. Those who still struggle to see the wood from the trees will remain enablers of the reactionary and destructive forces that have arrested the advancement of humanity, subjugating and enslaving us since the beginning of time.

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Our thanks to New Dawn Magazine. The above article appears in [New Dawn No. 126 \(May-June 2011\)](#), www.newdawnmagazine.com

The original source of this article is [New Dawn Magazine No. 126 \(May-June 2011\)](#)
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