

Libya in the Cross-Hairs of a “Humanitarian War”: A “No-Fly Zone” is Equivalent to an Act of War

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Editor's Note

Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya was interviewed by Xu Jingjing for a feature article about the building threat of war against Libya by Life Week, a major Chinese magazine based in Beijing, on March 10, 2011.

The interview for Life Week discusses the divergences within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and what no-fly zones entail. It also addresses the roles that the vast energy reserves of Libya and the Chinese influence in Africa also play. It finishes by discussing the effect that the destabilization of Libya could have for Africa.

For consultation, the article cited by Xu Jinjing is Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya's Global Research Article: [Libya: Is Washington Pushing for Civil War to Justify a US-NATO Military Intervention?](#)

What follows is the English transcript of the interview.

XU JINGJING: Now the NATO members and the U.S. have divergences on whether they should intervene in Libya militarily. The British PM is very active to call for no-fly zones, but France and Italy decline this kind of proposal. Does the divergence reflect different interests of those countries? How? Why does PM Cameron favor the military to intervene?

NAZEMROAYA: It has to be made clear that the U.S. and the E.U. are partners. As capitalist powers, the U.S. and the E.U. do compete with one another; competition is a part of their nature. But this competition is limited and both Washington and Brussels have been working to reduce rivalry through policy and market harmonization. U.S. and E.U. foreign policies at many levels, especially in military campaigns, are almost perfectly aligned. Sometimes the E.U. is covert about this.

What Washington and its European allies are doing is an act for the public where a good cop-bad cop strategy is used. One party acts tough like the bad cop and the other party acts soft like the good cop, but both sides are really working for the same objective. The divergences in NATO are a show for the public by these governments. In the E.U. the people are predominately against war and in the U.S. the people do not want their government to drag them into another war of aggression. The Obama Administration does not want to be seen as the main aggressor, because the international reputation of the U.S. has been hurt

by the long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. London is now playing the lead as the bad cop, while Washington will try to be the good cop. This is why Prime Minister Cameron of Britain has been hawkish about attacking Libya and taking the lead internationally in pushing for military intervention against Libya.

Paris and Rome have deliberately been giving mixed signals about military intervention against Tripoli. The French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, and the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, are both suffering in regards to public opinions at home. Their cases are different from the case of Prime Minister Cameron who relatively speaking is a fresh new face as a European leader. Actions speak louder than words. Everything that the French and the Italian governments have done is in preparation for confrontation with the Libyans. France has sent aid and military advisors to the Libyan opposition and French officials have also made low-key statements about support for military operations against Libya. Humanitarianism and war are deliberately being re-defined. On March 7, 2010 the White House's Press Secretary, James Carney, even stated that "humanitarian assistance" is to be categorized as a military action. In regards to Rome, Italy has suspended or repudiated its Friendship Treaty with Libya. There is a non-aggression clause in this treaty between Tripoli and Rome. With the suspension of this treaty, Italy has effectively allowed the U.S. and NATO to use Italian bases in operations against Libya.

XU JINGJING: It seems the U.S. is hesitating on the subject. What are the U.S. pros and cons on the proposal? How do you rate the possibility of U.S. interference? What will be the decisive factors for U.S. policy decisions?

NAZEMROAYA: Again, the U.S. is letting Britain and its European partners in NATO play the lead on the public platform in a good cop-bad cop act. The goal of the U.S. government is to prevent itself from looking like the aggressor. To be frank, the U.S. government has no ethical problem about going to war with Libya. In fact, according to General Wesley Clark, the former commander of NATO, an attack on Libya has been planned since 2001. The Pentagon target list also included Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, and Iran. As for interference, the U.S. has already started its operations in Libya, but it is doing this in secrecy. These U.S. operations include mapping and marking targets in Libya. Currently, the White House's big problem is that it is afraid of the reaction of the American people and it is afraid of the ramifications of negative international public opinion. The domestic situation in America is very tense and another war could ignite massive protests and acts of civil disobedience that would mirror the protests in the U.S. against the invasion of Vietnam.

The U.S. wants to act in three ways. The first U.S. objective is to portray itself as the "good guy" that is reluctant to intervene in Libya or use military force. This is why there is a huge media misinformation campaign designed to create the image of a humanitarian crisis in Libya. The immediate reaction of President Obama to the events in Libya is two-faced, because when the Bahraini military attacked peaceful protesters the U.S. took no real actions and no sanctions were imposed. Secondly, the image of the humanitarian crisis that I mentioned is simply a fabricated pretext for starting a war. The reports that Libyan military jets attacked civilians and protesters at the start of the upheaval in Libya are false. The Russian military has also verified these claims as being untrue. The reports that the Libyan military also executed large numbers of its own soldiers are also false. There is video evidence that the executions of Libyan troops were conducted by elements within the opposition forces.

The second thing that the U.S. wants to do right now is to get the Libyans themselves to do

most the fighting on the ground. Like in Yugoslavia, the U.S. has an interest in fuelling the civil war between multiple sides. A Libyan civil war also gives the U.S. and its allies an excuse to attack Libya or to internationally isolate Libya like they did to Saddam Hussein and Iraq after the 1991 Persian Gulf War. They will do this claiming that they are “preventing Qaddafi from killing his own people.” The U.S. also wants a Libyan civil war to generate internal Libyan support for U.S. and NATO intervention. There are already reports that the U.S. is funnelling weapons from Egypt and Saudi Arabia into Libya for the opposition forces.

The third thing that the U.S. wants is also tied to the second point of getting Libyans to do all the fighting on the ground. The U.S. would prefer to be involved in an air war with limited ground combat. The Pentagon would most likely send troops to secure strategic locations, like oil facilities and coastal ports, and small commando units on operations against Libyan infrastructure and Libya’s command and control apparatus. Just like the British military, the U.S. has already sent small commando and special forces units into Libya. These foreign forces are working to destabilize Libya and are also establishing the basis for any future aerial attacks. The main point, however, is that the Pentagon wants to use as few soldiers as possible. The U.S. Army and the U.S. Marines are both badly worn out in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. also wants to have as few soldiers as possible on the ground to keep U.S. soldiers out of the eyes of as many Libyan citizens as possible, because the Libyan people might react very negatively and perceive U.S. troops as occupational forces.

Finally, the U.S. also wants to deploy a smaller number of soldiers to reduce the number of possible U.S. casualties to prevent domestic anger amongst U.S. citizens. This is why the White House and the Pentagon prefer to use Libyan proxy forces to do their fighting against Tripoli. So a massive deployment of U.S. troops by the Pentagon specifically seems to be out of the question. We can expect the U.S. to use mercenaries or “security contractors” as it calls them, like in Iraq and Afghanistan. If war breaks out and Libya is invaded, we may possibly see a more pronounced presence of troops from the European members of NATO, which U.S. military forces may shadow.

The world knows now that George W. Bush and Tony Blair made up their minds about invading Iraq before they even presented their fallacious arguments to the world. Obama and his E.U. allies are no different. How they confront Libya exactly is yet to be seen. There is an inter-play between military resources, public pressure, the media campaign, and the state of fighting in Libya that will prove to be decisive. The position of other independent countries, especially Russia and China, will also be very important to how the U.S. and NATO conduct themselves in North Africa.

XU JINGJING: How will the no-fly zones be implemented? Do E.U. countries, especially Britain, have the capability to implement the no-fly zones on their own or do they have to rely on America?

NAZEMROAYA: In the frankest of terms, a no-fly zone is equivalent to an act of war. To impose a no fly-zone over Libya means that there will have to be military operations on both the ground and in the air. Libyan targets on the ground have to be systematically located, mapped out, and then attacked. Both Libyan defences and infrastructure have to be destroyed. This will involve various operations. Thus combat operations or a military campaign will have to be launched against both the Libyan Air Force and Libyan ground units that have air defence capabilities. Thirdly, Libyan runways, hangers, and aircraft have

to be destroyed. While this is done, the U.S. and its allies will definitely also take the opportunity to weaken the regime by attacking non-related targets. Naturally, Colonel Qaddafi and the Libyan military will not just stand and watch. They will fight back and defend themselves. The campaign will be launched from the naval armada of warships off the coast of Libya and from Italy and the islands of Cyprus, Crete, and Malta.

I will make two important points in regards to the implementation of the no-fly zones in North Africa. Let me be clear, the U.S. and its E.U. partners are in agreement behind the scenes. What they are all analyzing right now is the most effective means to pursue their objectives in Libya. They are getting ready to impose the no-fly zones on Libya like they did in Iraq and in the Balkans against the former Yugoslavia. The U.S. Senate already passed a resolution urging President Obama to impose a no-fly zone on the Libyans. In regard to the capabilities of the E.U. states to impose no-fly zones, they will not do it alone. The U.S. is the dominant player in NATO.

But I would also like to emphasize that NATO is not the powerful war machine that it is portrayed as. Today, NATO is losing the war in Afghanistan to lightly armed guerrilla fighters that do not have sophisticated weapons or technology. Even in Yugoslavia the only reason that Belgrade surrendered was because NATO was punishing the civilian population in its campaign. The Yugoslavian military did not lose to NATO, it surrendered due to these attacks on civilians, which included places like hospitals, factories, and schools. Nor can NATO gather enough troops for prolonged combat in Libya. This is why the U.S. and NATO want to fuel the civil war in Libya first and to fracture the country into multiple sides.

XU JINGJING: The oil struggle is the key in Libyan politics. After 2000, Libya reformed its oil sector and allowed foreign oil companies' investments in Libya. It greatly relieved the tension between Libya and the West. Under these circumstance how were the foreign oil companies' investments in Libya before the upheaval? Why do the Western countries still want Qadaffi to step down?

NAZEMROAYA: It is true that the U.S. and the E.U. have established a foothold on Libyan energy reserves. But it is important to think of the events in Libya and North Africa in a strategic sense. The so-called West is willing to take short-term losses for long-term gains. In this sense we can compare Libya to Iraq.

In 1958 Iraq had a revolution and subsequently nationalized its oil reserves. The so-called West was unhappy, but it played it cool and waited for the right opportunity. The 1979 Iranian Revolution was this opportunity. In this timeframe the U.S. and Iraq resumed diplomatic relations and the Western governments instigated the Iraq-Iran War. They used this to weaken both the Iraqis and the Iranians. Paraphrasing Henry Kissinger, the idea was to get the Iraqis and Iranians to kill and neutralize one another.

Once the Iraq-Iran War ended the price of oil was deliberately manipulated to weaken Iraq and Iran economically. Saddam Hussein needed money to pay for the Iraqi debts from the Iraq-Iran War and as a result was entrapped into attacking Kuwait. April Glaspie, the U.S. ambassador to Baghdad, according to the Iraqis gave Saddam Hussein the green light to invade Kuwait in August 1990. When the Iraqi military was on the border of Kuwait, the U.S. State Department is on the record for saying that the issue was an "Arab-Arab issue" and did not concern the U.S. government. When Iraq invaded Kuwait a huge propaganda campaign started. The U.S. arranged for Nayirah Al-Sabah, the daughter of the Kuwaiti envoy to Washington, to pretend she was a nurse in a Kuwaiti hospital. Al-Sabah falsely

claimed that as a nurse she saw Iraqi troops throwing Kuwaiti babies out of incubators to die. After the Persian Gulf War, the U.S. and Britain slowly weakened Iraq and were also involved in major propaganda operations in 2003, which included doctored photographs to make it look like Iraqis supported the Anglo-American invasion. What is the end result of all this? To answer your question, the West regained the “lost” oil fields in Iraq. British Petroleum, Shell, Total, and Chevron all own Iraqi oil now. The West is back in the Iraqi oil fields. Aside from the brutal Anglo-American war and occupation of Iraq, this is one of the reasons that Iraqi living standards have fallen. This is also one of the reasons that there are large protests by Iraqi citizens all over Iraq who oppose their oil being stolen. In Libya’s case the oil was nationalized in 1969 when Qaddafi and a group of Libyan officers ousted the monarchy in Libya, which served Anglo-American interests. Now the West wants to take all the oil in Libya.

What is also very important to note is the role that China plays in all this. Today all roads lead to Beijing. The People’s Republic of China is set to become a global superpower. China is on the rise. In Africa, the U.S. and the E.U. can not compete fairly with China and its growing economic power. They use political manipulation to their favour, because they can not compete with Beijing. The U.S. also wants to control the flow of energy to China as a means to hold China hostage and to prevent it from becoming a superpower. A lot of U.S. and NATO geo-political movements are tied to this. Washington seeks to create problems in all the places where Beijing is gaining a hold in Africa. There would be no separatist movement in South Sudan if the oil in Sudan was being sent to the U.S. or Western Europe and not to China. Like the rest of Africa, in Libya the Chinese influence was growing too. This includes the Libyan energy sector. Qaddafi is not someone that Washington and its allies control like a client. He has his own objectives. These objectives are to secure his regime without having foreign masters, to lead Africa and the Arabs, and to be part of a global counter-alliance that the U.S. and NATO can not threaten. Before today, I would have said that Beijing would have eventually ended up buying most the gas and oil in Libya. If Qaddafi stays in power, I am certain that this will happen. If Washington and the E.U. fail to control Libya, we could also see a major geo-political shift in Libya. Tripoli will aggressively re-orient itself towards China and Russia. Even now I was given news from Libya that Qaddafi’s government is meeting with Chinese and Russian diplomats constantly.

If the incorrect claims of the mainstream media are exposed as untrue to the general public, the pretexts for war against Libya can also be disarmed.

XU JINGJING: In one of your articles, you mentioned: “All the neighbouring states in North Africa would be destabilized by the events in Libya. Chaos in the Arab World has been viewed as beneficial in many strategic circles in Washington, Tel Aviv, London, and NATO Headquarters. If Libya falls into a state of civil war or balkanizes this will benefit the U.S. and the E.U. in the long-term and will have serious geo-political implications.” Could you please explain for me why all the neighbouring states in North Africa would be destabilized by the events in Libya? How will the U.S. and its allies benefit from the instability?

NAZEMROAYA: This is an excellent question. Libya can be called a geo-political lynchpin. The countries bordering Libya are Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Tunisia, Algeria, and Niger. All these countries have ties with Libya that go well beyond their borders. This is in the form of either strong ethno-cultural, tribal, or both ethno-cultural and tribal ties to Libyans. In regards to the tribes, the ones in Libya are either tied to the tribes in Sudan, Algeria, Chad, and Niger. These tribal links go beyond modern borders and extend in a network all the way from Libya into Mauritania, Mali, and Nigeria in West Africa. If Libya is divided and the tribes are

galvanized amongst these divisions, it will lead to conflicts that will affect all the neighbouring countries. If things spiral out of control, the sort of cross-border conflicts and instability that has existed in Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is what could occur in regards to Libya and its neighbours. We also saw this type of relationship in regards to Darfour in Sudan and Chad and in regards to Chad and the Central African Republic.

Instability leaves a vacuum. It also creates an anomic atmosphere in a country and its society. Anomie is what sociologists call a condition of social instability that results through an erosion or lack of social standards. This can also be applied to economics. Societies that are experiencing anomie become more malleable for conditioning and restructuring. This is what conflicts and crises do. This is also how the national assets of the former Yugoslavia and Iraq were privatized by Washington and its allies. Washington and its allies in the E.U. see such a state of upheaval as an opportunity to move in and exert control. This has been their modus operandi throughout Africa since the end of colonialism. Why else did the Belgians destabilize the Congo? The so-called West maintains its control over Africa through destabilization. This is also its goal in Asia too. These are partially the reasons for why the U.S. supports Chinese Taipei and prevents a peaceful settlement between Pyongyang and Seoul in the Korean Peninsula. This is also why the U.S. is encouraging the Japanese to confront the Russians over the Kuril Islands and supporting any form of antagonism between China and its neighbours.

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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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