

Libya: Is Washington Pushing for Civil War to Justify a US-NATO Military Intervention?

By [Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya](#)

Global Research, February 25, 2011

24 February 2011

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

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [ARAB PROTEST
MOVEMENT](#)

Is Tripoli being set up for a civil war to justify U.S. and NATO military intervention in oil-rich Libya?

Are the talks about sanctions a prelude to an Iraq-like intervention?

Something is Rotten in the so-called “Jamahiriya” of Libya

There is no question that Colonel Muammar Al-Qaddafi (Al-Qaddafi) is a dictator. He has been the dictator and so-called “qaid” of Libya for about 42 years. Yet, it appears that tensions are being ratcheted up and the flames of revolt are being fanned inside Libya. This includes earlier statements by the British Foreign Secretary William Hague that Colonel Qaddafi had fled Libya to Venezuela. [1] This statement served to electrify the revolt against Qaddafi and his regime in Libya.

Although all three have dictatorship in common, Qaddafi’s Libya is quite different from Ben Ali’s Tunisia or Mubarak’s Egypt. The Libyan leadership is not outright subservient to the United States and the European Union. Unlike the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, the relationship that exists between Qaddafi and both the U.S. and E.U. is a *modus vivendi*. Simply put, Qaddafi is an independent Arab dictator and not a “managed dictator” like Ben Ali and Mubarak.

In Tunisia and Egypt the status quo prevails, the military machine and neo-liberalism remain intact; this works for the interests of the United States and the European Union. In Libya, however, upsetting the established order is a U.S. and E.U. objective.

The U.S. and the E.U. now seek to capitalize on the revolt against Qaddafi and his dictatorship with the hopes of building a far stronger position in Libya than ever before. Weapons are also being brought into Libya from its southern borders to promote revolt. The destabilization of Libya would also have significant implications for North Africa, West Africa, and global energy reserves.



Colonel Qaddafi in Brief Summary

Qaddafi's rise to power started as a Libyan lieutenant amongst a group of military officers who carried out a coup d'état. The 1969 coup was against the young Libyan monarchy of King Idris Al-Sanusi. Under the monarchy Libya was widely seen as being acquiescent to U.S. and Western European interests.

Although he has no official state or government position, Qaddafi has nurtured and deeply rooted a political culture of cronyism, corruption, and privilege in Libya since the 1969 coup. Added to this is the backdrop of the "cult of personality" that he has also enforced in Libya.

Qaddafi has done everything to portray himself as a hero to the masses, specifically the Arabs and Africans. His military adventures in Chad were also tied to leaving his mark in history and creating a client state by carving up Chad. Qaddafi's so-called "Green Book" has been forcefully portrayed and venerated as being a great feat in political thought and philosophy. Numerous intellectuals have been forced or bribed to praise it.

Over the years, Colonel Qaddafi has tried to cultivate a romantic figure of himself as a simple man of the people. This includes pretending to live in a tent. He has done everything to make himself stand out. His reprimanding of other Arab dictators, such as King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, at Arab League meetings have made headlines and have been welcomed by many Arabs. While on state visits he has deliberately surrounded himself with an entourage of female body guards with the intent of getting heads to turn. Moreover, he has also presented himself as a so-called imam or leader of the Muslims and a man of God, lecturing about Islam in and outside of Libya.

Libya is run by a government under Qaddafi's edicts. Fear and cronyism have been the keys to keeping so-called "order" in Libya amongst officials and citizens alike. Libyans and foreigners alike have been killed and have gone missing for over four decades. The case of Lebanon's Musa Al-Sadr, the founder of the Amal Movement, is one of the most famous of these cases and has always been a hindrance to Lebanese-Libyan relations. Qaddafi has had a very negative effect in creating and conditioning an entire hierarchy of corrupt officials in Tripoli. Each one looks out for their own interests at the expense of the Libyan people.

Fractions and Tensions inside the Hierarchy of Qaddafi's Regime

Because of the nature of Qaddafi's regime in Tripoli, there are a lot of internal tensions in Libya and within the regime structure itself. One of these sets of tensions is between Saif Al-

Islam Gaddafi and his father's circle of older ministers. Libyan ministers are generally divided amongst those that gather around Saif Al-Islam and those that are part of the "old guard."

There are even tensions between Qaddafi and his sons. In 1999, Mutassim Al-Qaddafi tried to ouster his father while Colonel Qaddafi was outside of Libya. Mutassim Qaddafi holds a Libyan cabinet portfolio as a national security advisor. He is also famously known amongst Libyans for being a playboy who has spent much of his time in Europe and abroad. There is also Khames Gaddafi who runs his own militia of thugs, which are called the Khames militia. He has always been thought of as possible contender for succession too against his other brothers.

There have always been fears in Libya about the issue of succession after Colonel Qaddafi is gone. Over the years, Qaddafi has thoroughly purged Libya of any form of organized opposition to him or prevented anyone else, outside his family, from amassing enough power to challenge his authority.

The Issue of Loyalty and Defection in Libya

Undoubtedly, little loyalty is felt for Qaddafi and his family. It has been fear that has kept Libyans in line. At the level of the Libyan government and the Libyan military it has been both fear and self-interest that has kept officials, good and corrupt alike, in line. That mantle of fear has now been dispelled. Statements and declarations of denunciation against Gaddafi's regime are being heard from officials, towns, and military barracks across Libya.

Aref Sharif, the head of the Libyan Air Force, has renounced Qaddafi. Interior Minister Abdul Fatah Al-Yunis (Al-Younis), who is from Benghazi (Bengasi) and oversees a branch of the special operations work in Libya, has resigned. Yunis is reported to be Qaddafi's "number two" or second in charge, but this is incorrect. Abdullah Sanusi, the head of Libyan Internal Intelligence and Qaddafi's relative through marriage, is the closest thing to a "number two" within the structure of power in Tripoli.

Reports have been made about two Libyan pilots defected to Malta and Libyan naval vessels refusing to attack Benghazi. Defections are snowballing amongst the military and government. Yet, there must be pause to analyze the situation.

The Libyan Opposition

At this point, however, it must be asked who is the "opposition" in Libya. The opposition is not a monolithic body. The common denominator is the opposition to the rule of Qaddafi and his family. It has to be said that "actions of opposition or resistance against an oppressor" and an "opposition movement" are also two different things. For the most part, the common people and corrupt Libyan officials, who harbour deep-seated hate towards Qaddafi and his family, are now in the same camp, but there are differences.

There is an authentic form of opposition, which is not organized, and a systematic form of opposition, which is either external or led by figures from within the Libyan regime itself. The authentic people's internal opposition in Libya is not organized and the people's "actions of opposition" have been spontaneous. Yet, opposition and revolt has been encouraged and prompted from outside Libya through social media networks, international news stations, and events in the rest of the Arab World. [2]

The leadership of the internal opposition that is emerging in Libya is coming from within the regime itself. Corrupt officials that have rebelled against Gaddafi are not the champions of the people. These opposition figures are not opposed to tyranny; they are merely opposed to the rule of Colonel Qaddafi and his family. Aref Sharif and Al-Yunis are themselves Libyan regime figures.

It has to also be considered that some Libyan officials that have turned against Qaddafi are doing it to save themselves, while others in the future will work to retain or strengthen their positions. Abdel Moneim Al-Honi, the Libyan envoy to the Arab League in Cairo, can be looked at as an example. Al-Honi denounced Qaddafi, but it should be noted that he was one of the members of the group of Libyan officers who executed the coup in 1969 with Qaddafi and that later in 1975 he himself tried to take power in a failed coup. After the failed coup, he would flee Libya and only return in 1990 after Qaddafi pardoned him.

Al-Honi is not the only Libyan diplomat to resign. The Libyan ambassador to India has also done the same. There is an intention on the part of these officials to be members of the power structure in a Libya after the ouster of Qaddafi:

Libyan Ambassador to India Ali al-Essawi told the BBC that he was quitting, opposing his government's violent crackdown on demonstrators.

Mr. Al-Essawi was reported to be a Minister in Tripoli and could be an important figure in an alternative government, in case Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi steps down.

The second Libyan diplomat to put in his papers was Tripoli's Permanent Representative to the Arab League Abdel Moneim al-Honi, who said in Cairo that he had quit his job to "join the revolution" in his country.

"I have submitted my resignation in protest against the acts of repression and violence against demonstrators, and I am joining the ranks of the revolution," said Mr. Al-Honi. The Second Secretary Hussein Sadiq al Musrati, announced his resignation from China, in an interview with Al-Jazeera, and called on the Army to intervene in the uprising. [3]

Again, these revolting officials, like Al-Yunis and Sharif, are from within the regime. They are not mere diplomats, but former ministers. There is also the possibility that these types of "opposition figures" could have or could make arrangements with external powers.

External Forces at Play in Libya

The governments of the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, and Italy all knew very well that Qaddafi was a despot, but this did not stop any of them from making lucrative deals with Tripoli. When the media covers the violence in Libya, they should also ask, where are the weapons being used coming from? The arms sales that the U.S. and the E.U. have made to Libya should be scrutinized. Is this a part of their democracy promotion programs?

Since rapprochement between the U.S. and Libya, the military forces of both countries have moved closer. Libya and the U.S. have had military transactions and since rapprochement Tripoli has been very interested in buying U.S. military hardware. [4] In 2009, a Pentagon spokeswoman, Lieutenant-Colonel Hibner, affirmed this relationship best: "[The U.S.] will consider Libyan requests for defense equipment that enables [Libya] to build capabilities

in areas that serve our mutual interest [or synchronized U.S. and Libyan interests].” [5] The qualifier here is U.S. interests, meaning that the Pentagon will only arm Libya on the basis of U.S. interests.

In what seems to have happened overnight, a whole new arsenal of U.S. military hardware has appeared in Libya. American-made F-16 jets, Apache helicopters, and ground vehicles are being used inside Libya by Qaddafi. [6] This is a shocking revelation, if corroborated. There are no public records about some of this U.S. military hardware in the the arsenal of the Libyan military. In regards to the F-16s, Libyan jets are traditionally French-made Mirages and Russian-made MiGs.

Silvio Berlusconi and the Italian government have also been strong supporters of Qaddafi’s regime. There is information coming out of Libya that Italian pilots are also being used by the Libyan Air Force. [7] Mercenaries from Chad, Sudan, Niger, and Nigeria are also being used. This has been verified through video evidence coming out of Libya. The Libyan regime is also considering contracting American or European security firms (mercenaries). [8]

The Politics of Al Jazeera

The Libyan government has shut down the internet and phone lines and an information war is underway. Although one of the most professional news networks in the world, it has to be cautioned that Al Jazeera is not a neutral actor. It is subordinate to the Emir of Qatar and the Qatari government, which is also an autocracy. By picking and choosing what to report, Al Jazeera’s coverage of Libya is biased. This is evident when one studies Al Jazeera’s coverage of Bahrain, which has been restrained due to political ties between the leaders of Bahrain and Qatar.

Reports by Al Jazeera about Libyan jets firing on protesters in Tripoli and the major cities are unverified and questionable. [9] Hereto, the reports that Libyan jets have been attacking people in the streets have not been verified. No visual evidence of the jet attacks has been shown, while visual confirmation about other events have been coming out of Libya.

Al Jazeera is not alone in its biased reporting from Libya. The Saudi media is also relishing the events in Libya. *Asharq Al-Awsat* is a Saudi-owned paper that is strictly aligned to U.S. interests in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region. Its editor-in-chief is now running editorials glorifying the Arab League for their decision to suspend Libya, because of the use of force by Tripoli against Libyans protesters – why were such steps not taken for Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, or Yemen? Inside and outside the Arab World, the mainstream media is now creating the conditions for some sort of intervention in Libya.

The Role of Foreign Interests in Libya

Qaddafi and his sons have run Libya like a private estate. They have squandered its wealth and natural resources. One of Gaddafi’s son’s is known to have paid the American singer Beyoncé Knowles a million or more U.S. dollars for a private music concert. [10] Foreign corporations also play a role in this story.

The positions and actions of foreign corporations, the U.S., and the European Union in regards to Libya should not be ignored.

Questioning the role of foreign governments and corporations in Libya is very important. The Italian and U.S. governments should be questioned about the role that pilots of Italian

nationality and newly bought U.S. weaponry are playing in Libya.

It is very clear that democracy is only used as a convenient pretext against dictators and governments that do not bow down and serve U.S. and E.U. interests. All one needs to do is to just look at the way Muammar Qaddafi was welcomed with open arms in Washington on April 21, 2009 by Hillary Clinton and the Obama Administration. Upon their meeting, Secretary Clinton publicly said:

I am very pleased to welcome Minister Gaddafi to the State Department. We deeply value the relationship between the United States and Libya. We have many opportunities to deepen and broaden our cooperation and I am very much looking forward to building on this relationship. So Mr. Minister welcome so much here. [11]

What the U.S. and the E.U. want to do now is maximize their gain in Libya. Civil war seems to be what Brussels and Washington have in mind.

The Balkanization of Libya and the Push to Civil War

Qaddafi's son Saif Al-Islam has made statements on Libyan television about deviant Taliban-like faith-based organizations taking over Libya or attempting to take it over. Nothing is further from the truth. He has also warned of doom and civil war. This is part of the Qaddafi family's efforts to retain power over Libya, but a path towards civil war is unfolding in Libya.

Amongst the ranking members of the military, Mahdi Al-Arab, the deputy chief of Libya's military staff, was said to have renounced Qaddafi. [12] Al-Arab, however, has modified his position by saying that he does not want to see Libya spiral into a civil war that will allow foreign intervention and tutelage. [13] This is why Al-Arab prevented the people of his city, Zawarah, from joining the revolt and going to nearby Tripoli. [14]

The drive towards civil war in Libya is fuelled by two factors. One is the nature of Qaddafi's regime. The other is an external desire to divide and weaken Libya.

Qaddafi has always worked to keep Libyans divided. For years there have been fears that Qaddafi's sons would start a civil war amongst themselves or that some other high ranking officials could try to jockey for power once Qaddafi was gone. Civil war on the basis of ethnicity, regionalism, or tribalism is not a big threat. Tribes and regions could be co-opted or allied with, but the people that would spark a civil war are regime figures. The threats of civil war arise from the rivalries amongst regime officials themselves. Yet, it must be understood that these rivalries are deliberately being encouraged to divide Libya.

The flames of revolt are being fanned inside 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 becomes balkanized this will benefit the U.S. and the E.U. in the long-term and will have serious geo-political implications.

All the neighbouring states in North Africa would be destabilized by the events in Libya. West Africa and Central Africa would also be destabilized. The tribal boundaries running in Libya and Chad extend into countries like Niger, Algeria, and Sudan. The chaos in Libya would also have a significant effect on Europe and global energy. Already the events in Libya are being used to validate the drive to control the Arctic Circle and its energy



What Will Be Qaddafi's End?

It is very likely that Qaddafi will not have as fortunate an exit from power as Ben Ali in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt. Finding refuge for Qaddafi will not be easy. In general, Qaddafi is considered a liability by other governments. Saudi Arabia, which can be portrayed as a refuge for Arab dictators, will most likely not give Qaddafi refuge. Libya and Saudi Arabia have bad relations. He is also wanted for investigation in Lebanon. Generally, Qaddafi's relationship with the leaders of the Arab petro-sheikhdoms in the Persian Gulf is tense and negative. He will not be granted refuge anywhere in the Persian Gulf.

In general, Arab governments will also be afraid to host him. In his efforts to present himself as a champion of the people, he has insulted many of his fellow Arab dictators. There is something to be said, however, when Qaddafi's statements at Arab League meetings or about Palestine and Iraq are far more popular or candid than the rest of the Arab dictators.

It is highly improbable that any Latin American, European, or ex-Soviet countries will give him refuge. A country in sub-Sahara(n) Africa is the mostly likely place Qaddafi could seek refuge.

His options are limited and he is determined to hold on to power. Civil War seems to be looming in the horizon. It is highly unlikely that he will leave Libya peacefully and the U.S. and its allies have no doubt examined this scenario. On February 23-24, 2010, he met with the leaders of the three biggest tribes in Libya (Werfala, Tarhouna, and Wershfana), to secure their support. [16] His own tribe, Qaddafa is supporting him and it seems that the Madarha and Awlad Slieman tribes are also supporting him. [17]

The Threats of NATO Intervention and U.S. and E.U. Control over Libya

Libya has been in the cross-hairs of the Pentagon for years. According to Wesley Clark, the retired general who was the supreme military commander of NATO, Libya was on a

Pentagon list of nations to be invaded after Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. The list included Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, and lastly Iran. In Clark's own words:

So I came back to see him [a high ranking military officer in the Pentagon] a few weeks later, and by that time we were bombing in Afghanistan. I said, "Are we still going to war with Iraq?" And he said, "Oh, it's worse than that." He reached over on his desk. He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, "I just got this down from upstairs" — meaning the Secretary of Defence's office — "today." And he said, "This is a memo that describes how we're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran." [18]

In one way or another all the nations on the list have been attacked directly or indirectly and all of them, but Syria and Iran, have succumbed to the U.S. and its allies. Again, the only exceptions are Iran and its ally Syria. In Lebanon, the U.S. has made partial gains, but it is now receding with the decline of the Hariri-led March 14 Alliance.

Libya started secret negotiations with Washington in 2001 that materialized into formal rapprochement after the fall of Baghdad to British and American troops in 2003. Yet, the U.S. and its allies have always wanted to expand their influence over the Libyan energy sector and to appropriate Libya's vast wealth. A civil war provides the best cover for this.

Libyans Must Be Aware of the Pretext of Humanitarian Intervention

The Libyan people should be on their high guards. It is clear that the U.S. and the E.U. are supporting both sides. The U.S. and the E.U. are not the allies of the people of the Arab World. In this regard, the U.S. supports Qaddafi on the ground through military hardware, while it also supports the "opposition." If the so-called Western governments were serious about democracy, they would have cut their business ties to Libya, specifically in the energy sector, before 2011.

Both Washington and the powers in Brussels could co-opt opposition forces. They have supported Gaddafi, but they do not control him or his regime like they controlled Ben Ali in Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt. Libya is a very different story. The objectives of Washington and Brussels will be to strengthen their control over Libya either through regime change or civil war.

"Actions of opposition to Gaddafi" are strong, but there is no strong organized "opposition movement." The two are different. Nor is democracy guaranteed, because of the nature of the coalition opposed to Gaddafi, which includes corrupt regime officials.

There is now talk about a "humanitarian intervention" in Libya, similar to Yugoslavia and Iraq. A "no-fly zone" over Libya has been mentioned, as has NATO military intervention. The aims behind such statements are not humanitarian, but are intended to justify foreign interference, which could potentially lead to an invasion. Should this come to fruition, Libya would become an occupied country. Its resources would be plundered and its assets privatized and controlled by foreign corporations as in the case of Iraq.

Today, in Libya and the Arab World the ghosts of Omar Mukhtar and Saladin are still very much alive and active. Getting rid of Gaddafi and his sons alone is not the solution. The entire corrupt system of governance in Libya and the culture of political corruption must be

dismantled. At the same time, however, foreign interference or domination should also not be allowed to take root in Libya. If the Libyan people are mobilized and steadfast, they can fight such schemes.

Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya specializes in the Middle East and Central Asia. He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization.

NOTES

[1] "UK Hague: some information that Qaddafi on way to Venezuela," *Reuters*, February 21, 2011.

[2] One is taken back by the proliferation of pre-1969 coup Libyan flags. Where did all these flags come from?

[3] "3 Libyan Diplomats resign," *The Hindu*, February 22, 2011.

[4] James Wolf, "U.S. eyes arms sales to Libya," *Reuters*, March 6, 2009.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Information from sources in Libya; not publicly confirmed yet.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*; I have been given two explanations for this. The first explanation is that government agents from Libya have been disseminating misinformation to Al Jazeera. This includes reports made to Al Jazeera that jets have been attacking civilians in the streets. Gaddafi has used this to try to discredit Al Jazeera internally in Libya by pointing out to the Libyan people that no jet attacks have occurred and that Al Jazeera is broadcasting misinformation. The second explanation is that Al Jazeera is simply spreading misinformation. Whatever the case, both explanations agree no Libyan jets have attacked protesters yet.

[10] Marine Hyde, "Beyoncé and the \$2m gig for Colonel Gaddafi's son," *The Guardian* (U.K.), January 8, 2010; it was Mutassim and not Hannibal Gaddafi that the music concert was for (the article is wrong). The article is not authoritative and has been cited to illustrate that these types of escapades are even vaguely known by the mainstream press in Britain and Western Europe.

[11] U.S. State Department, "Remarks With Libyan National Security Adviser Dr. Mutassim Qadhafi Before Their Meeting," April 21, 2009: <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/04/121993.htm>>.

[12] Information from sources in Libya; not publicly confirmed yet.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] David Ljunggren, "Libya turmoil puts focus on Arctic oil: Greenland," ed. Robert Wilson, *Reuters*, February 23, 2011.

[16] Information from sources in Libya; not publicly confirmed yet. I have been told that Qaddafi promised the tribes reform and that he would step down in about one year in time. I was also informed that he claimed that none of his sons would control Libya either.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] General (retired) Wesley Clark, "92 Street Y Exclusive Live Interview," interview by Amy Goodman, *Democracy Now*, March 2, 2007.

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About the author:

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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