

NATO's "Humanitarian Intervention" in Libya: Transforming a Country into a "Failed State"

Libya three years on: another example of a failed Western intervention

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Humanitarian intervention or just another imperialist campaign?

In 2011, Western politicians such as US President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister David Cameron and other members of the NATO alliance [praised](#) what they believed was a successful campaign to oust the murdered Muammar al-Gaddafi. Three years later, this Western intervention has created another [failed state](#), yet Western leaders refuse to admit their mistake. Libya is now run by [extremist militias](#), the same people that were supported and armed by the West to carry out the illegal regime change operation. Right now, Libya's parliament agrees on little, its interim government has no army to enforce security let alone impose its will, and a new constitution meant to forge a sense of nation remains undrafted. For many Libyans, who were duped into trusting and supporting Western intervention, life has now become unbearable. Libya has descended into a scramble over the future shape of the nation, with ex-rebel commanders, former exiles, Islamists, tribal leaders, and federalists all jostling for position.

Libya is now a failed state

In Benghazi, in the country's east, three key ports have been [seized](#) by a group of former oil security forces who defected with their leader Ibrahim Jathran, a former Gaddafi fighter, last summer. They want more autonomy for the region. The two most powerful groups in the country are the militias west of the capital, one in the mountain town of Zintan and the other in the port city of Misrata. Bristling with weaponry and a sense of entitlement, the rivals both claim the mantle of champions of the revolution. Each brigade is loosely allied to competing political factions, and neither shows any sign of disarming or falling in behind the government in Tripoli. Ultimately, Libya has no authoritative government or any legitimate institutions.

[Violence](#) is also rife in Libya. Car bomb attacks take place frequently. The Libyan future remains highly uncertain at present, with several scenarios plausible: partition based on fundamental ethnic and regional enmities, essentially creating two polities, one centred in Benghazi, the other in Tripoli; a perpetuation of [tribal rivalries](#) with governing authority appropriated by various militia, and likely producing a type of low-intensity warfare that creates chaos and precludes both meaningful democracy and successful programs of economic development; or a failed state that becomes a sanctuary for transnational extremist violence and then becomes a counter-terrorist battlefield in the manner of Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and Mali, the scene of deadly drone attacks and covert operations by special forces.

One fact is clear however – the West opened another can of worms when it intervened in Libya. Similarly to Iraq and Afghanistan, the false feeling of superiority has led the Western powers to create another state where people have no hope for a better future. If the West was truly serious about humanitarian assistance, it would have pro-actively helped Libya to re-build and get back on its feet. Instead, Libya has been left to wither away by itself, which begs the question – was the Libyan intervention really about protecting civilians, or was it just another geopolitical and imperialist campaign to remove a leader who opposed the Western economic system. Before his bloody assassination, Gaddafi had [pledged](#) to fund three ambitious African projects – the creation of an African investment bank, an African monetary fund and an African central bank. Africa felt that these institutions were necessary to end its dependence on the IMF and the World Bank.

It is probable that Gaddafi’s plans to disassociate Libya from the IMF was the main reason for Western intervention. We must therefore remember one fact: the Libyan case has illustrated once again that Western interventions cannot be trusted and do not work, and in fact, cause more harm than good. For this reason it is imperative to continue to oppose NATO and any future imperialist campaigns.

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