

The Great Nothingness of Libya, Two Years After Muammar Gaddafi

By [Maximilian Forte](#)

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The notion of a “Libya” has ceased to have any meaningful practical application. As a concept that either refers to some degree of national unity, an imagined community, sovereignty, or the exercise of authority by a state over the territory within its borders, “Libya” has been driven back to the time when it had yet to become formalized as a concept.

Those once celebrated as “rebels” and “revolutionaries” — by Obama, NATO states, UN bodies, Western media, and a range of liberal imperialist opinion along with those “socialists” who, after an extended period of internalized structural adjustment now model their thinking to better accord with neoliberal principles — are rarely if ever held up now as paragons of the “better future” that was to come. Visions, as in hallucinations and delusions, of the better that would come once Gaddafi was dutifully executed, abounded in the politically prepubescent writings of an “Arab Spring.”

If there ever was an “Arab Spring” in Libya, within days it quickly turned into an African nightmare. This was especially true with respect to the racist terrorism launched against scores of unarmed black Libyan civilians and African migrant workers. To the extent that “Libya” exists any longer, it is either as an absence or as a shameful stain. Libya is now Africa’s newest apartheid “state” and torture “regime”. Why the quotes? Unlike apartheid South Africa, the “new Libya” lacks any kind of cohesion as either a state or among actual or prospective rulers as a class, and in fact class analysis when applied to Libya by using Marx as a how-to-manual, produces laughable results to be expected from orthodox Eurocentrics, from those who cast the present in non-western settings as a mere projection or repetition of “Stalinism”.

The grotesque and criminal torture, murder, and butchering of Muammar Gaddafi should have symbolized what would soon be done to all of Libya, just like it had been done to thousands of black Libyans and African migrants by the “heroic rebels” of NATO’s 2011 war against Libya. Libya is being dismembered as this is being written, sinking into a war of all against all for the benefit of a few.

Days, weeks, then months and now years have passed marked by daily kidnappings, acts of torture, wrongful imprisonment, assassinations, bombings, raids and bloody clashes between rival militias, armed extortion, strikes that have reduced the oil sector to a mirage of what “once was,” and an explosion of racialism, religious fundamentalism, and regionalism. If “Gaddafi” was their enemy, then Libyans have a funny way of showing it: by slaughtering each other, armed Libyans declare that they are each other’s worst enemies.

Gaddafi was clearly not the problem: he was the solution that had to be broken in order for Libya to be “fixed,” to be fixed good and proper from the standpoint of the cruel tyrants in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the U.S.

If Libya has suffered a thousand deaths since the brutal overthrow of Gaddafi and all of what he had achieved, gone too—and this is happy news—are all of the jejune and childishly simplistic pretenses at theory that are founded on Eurocentric binary oppositions and ideas that are barely veiled translations of the idiotic, demonizing caricatures of Gaddafi.

So here was “the dictator,” but who apparently ruled without a state, if you believe what Reuters tries to pass off as political analysis. (No amount of “being there” will cure you if you’re insistent about your ignorance.) Here was the “brutal” dictator, but who apparently kept his army weak. Or there was a state, but it was also a one-man show—whatever, something, anything to cast all blame on the past and take our eyes away from all those who have responsibility for the present.

If they’re continuing to fight “Gaddafi,” and credit/blame Gaddafi for everything in the present, then there was no “revolution” either, just multiple, continuous reenactments of all that was “Gaddafi.” If militia leaders see Gaddafi everywhere and in everyone, it is because they are nowhere. Gone too are the grandiose declarations—that passed for expert analysis by Juan Cole and friends—of all of Libya “rising up,” united, to “throw off the regime,” a people against a dictator. I mean really, this is embarrassing when you think that supposed adults — “scholars” even — were behind such cartoonish drivel.

To those “socialists” in the West who cheered the Libyan “revolutionaries,” let’s ask them: where do you see *socialism* in Libya today? To those liberals who spoke of “democracy” and “human rights,” where do you see either of those today? To the advocates of “humanitarian” principles of intervention and “protection,” why did you go so silent after the lights were turned off with Gaddafi’s murder? To those who imagined would-be “massacres” to come that accompanied the demands of British and U.S. altar boys that “Gaddafi had to go,” why does your imagination suddenly fail you when confronted with the actual massacres that you yourselves committed and enabled?

To those who claim “lives were saved,” where were you when the bodies began to pile up amidst swarms of flies in blood-stained, abandoned hospitals? When patients in hospitals were gunned down in their beds, and when handcuffed prisoners lying on their stomachs were executed at such close range that the grass beneath their heads was scorched, did you wince? In other words, where do you all see this great “success story” in the charnel house that is now “Libya”?

It’s polite analysis to speak of the time-space compression of globalization, that presumably explains how many iPad imperialists personally vested themselves in “correcting” Libya so it could become more like what they imagined they possessed. They would not stand idly by, no, not when another chance presented itself to flatter themselves with a reinvigorated cultural evolutionism, applied by the force of NATO bombardments.

Libya was now “ready for democracy,” and the cruise missiles showed just how ripe Libya was for “improvement.” Time-space compression? The globalization of consciousness? Consciousness, however much there ever was, was certainly compressed: into a tiny a nut-shell that prohibited considering contrary opinions, as right as they consistently proved to

be.

In that vein, I recommend that the reader invest a mere 40 minutes or so in reviewing how things looked before we became deluded by our own lies. These are overviews of Libya and Gaddafi, produced by the BBC and CBS news (believe it or not), when the demonological fantasies had not yet fully hatched, taken wing, and unloaded so many propaganda droppings on our heads as come from Obama's vainglorious, imperial monologues. Challenge yourself, and look at some of what Libya has lost, all in the name of the great nothingness.

BBC: Libya and Gaddafi in 1976

BBC: Libya and Gaddafi in 1979

CBS: Libya and Gaddafi in 1980



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About the author:

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. Visit him online at <http://openanthropology.org/>

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