

# The West's War Against Gaddafi

Yet another long-lasting, tragic crime against humanity

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Global Research, April 06, 2011

IPS 6 April 2011

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [History](#),  
[US NATO War Agenda](#)

I was deeply impressed as an 11-year old boy by the way my father operated day and night to save the lives of German soldiers who had come to occupy Norway, after their warship was hit by a torpedo and many swam ashore through burning oil. He said the supreme duty of a physician is to save lives, without any distinction!

A physician who heals only friends, not foes, is not a physician but a party to war. An organisation that protects civilians only on our side and not the other is not humanitarian but belligerent. We are far from the Hippocratic oath in world affairs. Thus, there is nothing historical about UN Security Council Resolution 1973, passed on March 17. A resolution protecting civilians in all wars, including a no-fly zone over Gaza, Bahrain, Pakistan, Afghanistan, would have been historical. But on the same day Resolution 1973 was passed, NATO made headlines for killing more civilians in Afghanistan -a daily routine, it seems.

What happens now is intervention supporting one side against the other. This is normally called war.

True, President Obama is more multilateral than Bush. But the problem is not how many decide but what they decide. Also true, the resolution excluded Fidel Castro's prediction of 21 February that NATO will occupy Libya. But it included the US rider: "by all necessary measures".

The majority and lack of veto are clear. But the Anglo-American-French trio represents less than half a billion people whereas the 5 abstainers -Brazil, Russia, India, China and Germany- constitute close to half of humanity. And the German abstention withdrew the biggest European NATO member, though NATO is supposed to be based on consensus.

More important, among the abstainers are the two pillars of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), China and India (not yet a full member of SCO but an observer), and Brazil, the biggest country in Latin America. By and large, the Libya intervention is the West against the Rest, NATO vs. SCO. And they all talk about a vague alternative: ceasefire and mediation. Hopefully they will translate that rhetoric into action, and soon.

The third power is Islam, but whereas NATO and SCO use state terrorism (military killing civilians), some elements in Islamic countries under US-supported authoritarian rule, have resorted to terrorism (civilians killing civilians). Whoever wins the support of the Islamic countries will rule the world, and NATO is now at war with four of them, and has a secretary-general -Denmark's Anders Fogh Rasmussen- who alienated Muslims earlier with his refusal to have a dialogue about the Mohammed cartoons.

That the US wants to recede into the background is easily explained. It is bankrupt and wants to share the economic, military, and above all political costs and risks. Constitutional objections have been raised in the US congress. Moreover, this could become a deeper quagmire than Afghanistan. The NATO action has confirmed the worst fears about the colonisers of Africa -UK, France, and Italy. To defeat Gaddafi and his supporters, NATO ground troops could be needed.

Of course nobody should just watch a regime brutalising its own people -Gaddafi turning rhetoric into reality. All other measures should have been used, including hitting his planes with sea-born missiles. But, as someone on US National Public Radio quipped, "President Obama has fired more cruise missiles than all other Nobel Peace Prize winners combined", and they have hit all kinds of targets, flying, driving, walking, being. What is next?

A precedent is the NATO action against Serbia, which also used "all necessary measures", but without a UN Security Council mandate.

As with Libya, the West diffused its usual propaganda for Serbia-Kosovo. The enemy is reduced to one person to be hated, using Orwell's recipe in his book "1984". Milosevic, Hussein, Osama bin Laden, now Gaddafi. That groundwork has also been laid for Castro and Chavez, but so far without any follow-up. It is a paradox that the West, which had produced the idea of a social contract that the people could revise -Rousseau against Hobbes- is focused on only one person and so little on the people.

But the goals in Serbia were clear: bombing state enterprises -not the privatised ones- opening control of natural resources to transnational corporations, getting that huge military base Camp Bondsteel, supporting a liberation army (UCK) with a track record of horrors. The weapons used included cluster bombs and depleted uranium, which is radioactive and causes cancer for generations to come.

We do not know if all of this will apply to the war on Libya. Who the rebels are is unclear, though there is no doubt they are strongly and rightly opposed to Gaddafi's dictatorship. But what do they stand for? Presumably they will allow direct foreign investment, in oil, and a military base or two, out of gratitude and to solidify the victory. And the US will have what it has tried to obtain for a long time: a NATO base in Africa.

In Libya, there may be millions who dislike Gaddafi but like much of what he accomplished. The West may fall victim of its own one-country-one-person doctrine and commit yet another long-lasting, tragic crime against humanity.

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