

Telling Only Part of the Story of Jihad

A CNN star reporter should not be shocked to learn that U.S. allies are consorting with Yemeni terrorists, writes Daniel Lazare.

By **Daniel Lazare**

Special to Consortium News



A recent *CNN* report about U.S. military materiel finding its way into Al Qaeda hands in Yemen might have been a valuable addition to Americans' knowledge of terrorism.

Entitled "**Sold to an ally, lost to an enemy,**" the 10-minute segment, broadcast on Feb. 4, featured rising *CNN* star **Nima Elbagir** cruising past sand-colored "Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected" armored vehicles, or MRAPs, lining a Yemeni highway.

"It's absolutely incredible," she says. "And this is not under the control of [Saudi-led] coalition forces. This is in the command of militias, which is expressly forbidden by the arms sales agreements with the U.S."

“That’s just the tip of the iceberg,” she adds.

“CNN was told by coalition sources that a deadlier U.S. weapons system, the

TOW missile, was airdropped in 2015 by Saudi Arabia to Yemeni fighters, an air drop that was proudly proclaimed across Saudi backed media channels.” The TOWs were dropped into Al Qaeda-controlled territory, according to CNN. But when Elbagir tries to find out more, the local coalition-backed government chases her and her crew out of town.

U.S.-made TOWs in the hands of Al Qaeda? Elbagir is an effective on-screen presence. But this is an old story, which the cable network has long soft-pedaled.

In the early days of the Syrian War, Western media was reluctant to acknowledge that the forces arrayed against the Assad regime included Al Qaeda. In those days, the opposition was widely portrayed as a belated ripple effect of the Arab Spring pro-democracy uprisings elsewhere in the region.

However, in April-May 2015, right around the time that the Saudis were air-dropping TOWs into Yemen, they were also supplying the same optically-guided, high-tech missiles to pro-Al Qaeda forces in Syria’s northern Idlib province. Rebel leaders were exultant as they drove back Syrian



government troops. TOWs “flipped the balance,” one said, while another declared: “I would put the advances down to one word – TOW.”

CNN reported that story very differently. From rebel-held territory, *CNN*'s Nick Paton Walsh described the missiles as a “possible game-changer ... that may finally be wearing down the less popular side of the Shia-Sunni divide.” He conceded it wasn't all good news: “A major downside for Washington at least, is that the often-victorious rebels, the Nusra Front, are Al Qaeda. But while the winners for now are America's enemies, the fast-changing ground in Syria may cause to happen what the Obama administration has long sought and preached, and that's changing the calculus of the Assad regime.”

Foreign Policy, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times* all reacted the same way, frowning their brows at the news that Al Qaeda was gaining, but expressing measured relief that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was at last on the ropes.

But now that Elbagir is sounding the alarm about TOWs in Yemen, *CNN* would do well to acknowledge that it has been distinctly more blasé in the past about TOWs in the hands of al Qaeda.

The network appears unwilling to go where Washington's pro-war foreign-policy establishment doesn't want it to go. Elbagir shouldn't be shocked to learn that U.S. allies are consorting with Yemeni terrorists.

U.S. History with Holy Warriors

What *CNN* producers and correspondents either don't know or fail to mention is that Washington has a long history of supporting jihad. As Ian Johnson notes in "[A Mosque in Munich](#)" (2010), the policy was mentioned by President Dwight Eisenhower, who was eager, according to White House memos, "to stress the 'holy war' aspect" in his talks with Muslim leaders about the Cold War Communist menace." [See "[How U.S. Allies Aid Al Qaeda in Syria](#)," Consortium News, Aug. 4, 2015.]

Britain had been involved with Islamists at least as far back as 1925 when it helped establish the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and both the U.S. and Britain worked with Islamists in the 1953 coup in Iran, according to Robert Dreyfus in "[Devil's Game](#)" (2006).

By the 1980s a growing Islamist revolt against a left-leaning, pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan brought U.S. support. In mid-1979, President Jimmy Carter and his national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, armed the Afghan mujahideen – not at first to [drive](#) the Soviets out, but to lure them in. Brzezinski intended to deal Moscow a Vietnam-sized blow, as he [put it](#) in a 1998 interview.

Meanwhile, a few months after the U.S. armed the mujahideen, the Saudis were deeply shaken when Islamist extremists seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca and called for the overthrow of the royal family. While Saudi Arabia has been keen to repress jihadism at home, it has been a major supporter of Sunni extremists in the region, particularly to battle the Shi'ite regime that came to power in Tehran, also in 1979.

Since then, the U.S. has made use of jihad, either directly or indirectly, with the Gulf oil monarchies or Pakistan's notoriously pro-Islamist Inter-Services Intelligence agency. U.S. backing for the Afghan mujahideen helped turn Osama bin Laden into a hero for some young Saudis and other Sunnis, while the training camp he established in the Afghan countryside drew jihadists from across the region.

U.S. backing for Alija Izetbegovic's Islamist government in Bosnia-Herzegovina brought al-Qaeda to the Balkans, while U.S.-Saudi support for Islamist militants in the Second Chechen War of 1999-2000 enabled it to establish a base of operations there.

Downplaying Al Qaeda

Just six years after 9/11, according to investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, the U.S. downplayed the fight against Al Qaeda to rein in Iran – a policy, Hersh wrote, that had the effect of “bolstering ... Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda.”

Under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, policy toward Al-Qaeda turned even more curious. In March 2011, she devoted nearly two weeks to persuading Qatar, the UAE and Jordan to join the air war against Libya's Muammar Gaddafi, only to stand by and watch as Qatar then poured hundreds of millions of dollars of aid into the hands of Islamist militias that were spreading anarchy from one end of the country to the other. The Obama administration thought of remonstrating with Qatar, but didn't in the end.

Much the same happened in Syria where, by early 2012,

Clinton was organizing a “Friends of Syria” group that soon began channeling military aid to Islamist forces waging war against Christians, Alawites, secularists and others backing Assad. By August 2012, the Defense Intelligence Agency reported that “the Salafist, the Muslim Brotherhood, and AQI [Al Qaeda in Iraq] are the major forces driving the [anti-Assad] insurgency”; that the West, Turkey, and the Gulf states supported it regardless; that the rebels’ goal was to establish “a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in eastern Syria,” and that “this is exactly what the supporting powers want in order to isolate the Syrian regime...”

Biden Speaks Out

Two years after that, Vice President Joe Biden declared at Harvard’s Kennedy School:

“Our allies in the region were our largest problem in Syria. ... The Saudis, the Emiratis, etc. what were they doing? They were so determined to take down Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war, what did they do? They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of tons of military weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad, except the people who were being supplied were al Nusra and al Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world.” (Quote starts at 53:25.)

The fact that Obama ordered the vice president to apologize to the Saudis, the UAE and Turkey for his comments provided back-handed confirmation that they were true. When TOWs

turned up in the hands of pro-Qaeda rebels in Syria the following spring, all a senior administration official would say was: “It’s not something we would refrain from raising with our partners.”

It was obvious that Al Qaeda would be a prime beneficiary of Saudi intervention in Yemen from the start. Tying down the Houthis – “Al Qaeda’s most determined foe,” according to the [Times](#) – gave it space to blossom and grow. Where the State Department [said](#) it had up to 4,000 members as of 2015, a [UN report](#) put its membership at between 6,000 and 7,000 three years later, an increase of 50 to 75 percent or more.

In early 2017, the International Crisis Group [found](#) that Al Qaeda was “thriving in an environment of state collapse, growing sectarianism, shifting alliances, security vacuums and a burgeoning war economy.”

In Yemen, Al Qaeda “has regularly fought alongside Saudi-led coalition forces in ... Aden and other parts of the south, including Taiz, indirectly obtaining weapons from them,” the ICG added. “...In northern Yemen ... the [Saudi-led] coalition has engaged in tacit alliances with AQAP fighters, or at least turned a blind eye to them, as long as they have assisted in attacking the common enemy.”

In May 2016, a [PBS documentary](#) showed Al Qaeda members fighting side by side with UAE forces near Taiz. (See [“The Secret Behind the Yemen War,” Consortium News](#), May 7, 2016.)

Last August, an *Associated Press* investigative team [found](#) that the Saudi-led coalition had cut secret deals with Al Qaeda fighters, “paying some to leave key cities and towns

and letting others retreat with weapons, equipment, and wads of looted cash.” Saudi-backed militias “actively recruit Al Qaeda militants,” the *AP* team added, “...because they’re considered exceptional fighters” and also supply them with armored trucks.

If it’s not news that U.S. allies are providing pro-Al Qaeda forces with U.S.-made equipment, why is *CNN* pretending that it is? One reason is that it feels free to criticize the war and all that goes with it now that the growing human catastrophe in Yemen is turning into a major embarrassment for the U.S. Another is that criticizing the U.S. for failing to rein in its allies earns it points with viewers by making it seem tough and independent, even though the opposite is the case.

Then there’s Trump, with whom *CNN* has been at war since the moment he was elected. Trump’s Dec. 19 decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria thus presented the network with a double win because it allowed it to rail against the pullout as “bizarre” and a “win for Moscow” while complaining at the same time about administration policy in Yemen. Trump is at fault, it seems, when he pulls out *and* when he stays in.

In either instance, *CNN* gets to ride the high horse as it blasts away at the chief executive that corporate outlets most love to hate. Maybe Elbagir should have given her exposé a different title: “Why arming homicidal maniacs is bad news in one country but OK in another.”

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a wide variety of publications from *The Nation* to *Le Monde Diplomatique* and blogs about the Constitution and related matters at Daniellazare.com.

The Other Side of John McCain

If the paeans to McCain by diverse political climbers seems detached from reality, it's because they reflect the elite view of U.S. military interventions as a chess game, with the millions killed by unprovoked aggression mere statistics, says Max Blumenthal.

By Max Blumenthal
in Washington

Special to Consortium News



As the Cold War entered its final act in 1985, journalist Helena Cobban participated in an academic conference at an upscale resort near Tucson, Arizona, on U.S.-Soviet interactions in the Middle East. When she attended what was listed as the “Gala Dinner with keynote speech”, she quickly learned that the virtual theme of the evening was, “Adopt a Muj.”

“I remember mingling with all of these wealthy Republican women from the Phoenix suburbs and being asked, ‘Have you adopted a muj?’” Cobban told me. “Each one had pledged money to sponsor a member of the Afghan mujahedin in the name of beating the communists. Some were even seated at the event next to their personal ‘muj.’”

The keynote speaker of the evening, according to Cobban, was a hard-charging freshman member of Congress named John McCain.

During the Vietnam war, McCain had been captured by the North Vietnamese Army after being shot down on his way to bomb a civilian lightbulb factory. He spent two years in solitary confinement and underwent torture that left him with crippling injuries. McCain returned from the war with a deep, abiding loathing of his former captors, remarking as late as 2000, “I hate the gooks. I will hate them as long as I live.” After he was criticized for the racist remark, McCain refused to apologize. “I was referring to my prison guards,” he said, “and I will continue to refer to them in language that might offend some people because of the beating and torture of my friends.”

McCain's visceral resentment informed his vocal support for the mujahedin as well as the right-wing contra death squads in Central America – any proxy group sworn to the destruction of communist governments.

So committed was McCain to the anti-communist cause that in the mid-1980s he had joined the advisory board of the United States Council for World Freedom, the American affiliate of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL). Geoffrey Stewart-Smith, a former leader of WACL's British chapter who had turned against the group in 1974, described the organization as "a collection of Nazis, fascists, anti-Semites, sellers of forgeries, vicious racialists, and corrupt self-seekers. It has evolved into an anti-Semitic international."

Joining McCain in the organization were notables such as Jaroslav Stetsko, the Ukrainian Nazi collaborator who helped oversee the extermination of 7,000 Jews in 1941; the brutal Argentinian former dictator Jorge Rafael Videla; and Guatemalan death squad leader Mario Sandoval Alarcon. Then-President Ronald Reagan honored the group for playing "a leadership role in drawing attention to the gallant struggle now being waged by the true freedom fighters of our day."

Being Lauded as a Hero

On the occasion of his death, McCain is being honored in much the same way – as a patriotic hero and freedom fighter for democracy. A stream of hagiographies is pouring forth from the Beltway press corps that he described as his true political base. Among McCain's most enthusiastic groupies is CNN's Jake Tapper, whom he chose as his personal stenographer for a 2000 trip to Vietnam. When the former CNN host Howard Kurtz asked Tapper in February, 2000, "When you're on the [campaign] bus, do you make a conscious effort not to fall under the magical McCain spell?"

"Oh, you can't. You become like Patty Hearst when the SLA took her," Tapper joked in reply.

But the late senator has also been treated to gratuitous tributes from an array of prominent liberals, from George Soros to his soft power-pushing client, Ken Roth, along with three fellow directors of Human Rights Watch and "democratic socialist" celebrity Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, who hailed McCain as "an unparalleled example of human decency." Rep. John Lewis, the favorite civil rights symbol of the Beltway political class, weighed in as well to memorialize McCain as a "warrior for peace."

If the paeans to McCain by this diverse cast of political climbers and Davos denizens seemed detached from reality, that's because they perfectly reflected the elite view of American military interventions as akin to a game of chess,

and the millions of dead left in the wake of the West's unprovoked aggression as mere statistics.

There were few figures in recent American life who dedicated themselves so personally to the perpetuation of war and empire as McCain. But in Washington, the most defining aspect of his career was studiously overlooked, or waved away as the trivial idiosyncrasy of a noble servant who nonetheless deserved everyone's reverence.

McCain did not simply thunder for every major intervention of the post-Cold War era from the Senate floor, while pushing for sanctions and assorted campaigns of subterfuge on the side. He was uniquely ruthless when it came to advancing imperial goals, barnstorming from one conflict zone to another to personally recruit far-right fanatics as American proxies.

In Libya and Syria, he cultivated affiliates of Al Qaeda as allies, and in Ukraine, McCain courted actual, sig-heiling neo-Nazis.

While McCain's Senate office functioned as a clubhouse for arms industry lobbyists and neocon operatives, his fascistic allies waged a campaign of human devastation that will continue until long after the flowers dry up on his grave.

American media may have sought to bury this legacy with the senator's body, but it is what much of the outside world will remember him for.

'They are Not al-Qaeda'

When a violent insurgency swept through Libya in 2011, McCain parachuted into the country to meet with leaders of the main insurgent outfit, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), battling the government of Moamar Gaddafi. His goal was to make kosher this band of hardline Islamists in the eyes of the Obama administration, which was considering a military intervention at the time.

What happened next is well documented, though it is scarcely discussed by a Washington political class that depended on the Benghazi charade to deflect from the real scandal of Libya's societal destruction. Gaddafi's motorcade was attacked by NATO jets, enabling a band of LIFG fighters to capture him, sodomize him with a bayonet, then murder him and leave his body to rot in a butcher shop in Misrata while rebel fanboys snapped cellphone selfies of his fetid corpse.

A slaughter of Black citizens of Libya by the racist sectarian militias recruited by McCain immediately followed the killing of the pan-African leader. ISIS took over Gaddafi's hometown of Sirte while Belhaj's militia took control of Tripoli, and a war of the warlords began. Just as Gaddafi had warned, the ruined country became a staging ground for migrant smugglers on the

Mediterranean, fueling the rise of the far-right across Europe and enabling the return of slavery to Africa.

Many might describe Libya as a failed state, but it also represents a successful realization of the vision McCain and his allies have advanced on the global stage.

Following the NATO-orchestrated murder of Libya's leader, McCain tweeted, "Qaddafi on his way out, Bashar al Assad is next."

McCain's Syrian Boondoggle

Like Libya, Syria had resisted aligning with the West and was suddenly confronted with a Salafi-jihadi insurgency armed by the CIA. Once again, McCain made it his personal duty to market Islamist insurgents to America as a cross between the Minutemen and the Freedom Riders of the civil rights era. To do so, he took under his wing a youthful DC-based Syria-American operative named Mouaz Moustafa who had been a consultant to the Libyan Transitional Council during the run-up to the NATO invasion.

In May 2013, Moustafa convinced McCain to take an illegal trip across the Syrian border and meet some freedom fighters. An Israeli millionaire named Moti Kahana who coordinated efforts between the Syrian opposition and the Israeli military through his NGO, Amaliah, claimed to have "financed the opposition group which took senator John McCain to visit war-torn Syria."

"This could be like his Benghazi moment," Moustafa remarked excitedly in a scene from a documentary, "Red Lines," that depicted his efforts for regime change. "[McCain] went to Benghazi, he came back, we bombed."

During his brief excursion into Syria, McCain met with a group of CIA-backed insurgents and blessed their struggle. "The senator wanted to assure the Free Syrian Army that the American people support their cry for freedom, support their revolution," Moustafa said in an interview with CNN. McCain's office promptly released a photo showing the senator posing beside a beaming Moustafa and two grim-looking gunmen.

Days later, the men were named by the Lebanese *Daily Star* as Mohammad Nour and Abu Ibrahim. Both had been implicated in the kidnapping a year prior of 11 Shia pilgrims, and were identified by one of the survivors. McCain and Moustafa returned to the U.S. the targets of mockery from Daily Show host John Stewart and the subject of harshly critical reports from across the media spectrum. At a town hall in Arizona, McCain was berated by constituents, including Jumana Hadid, a Syrian Christian woman who warned that the sectarian militants he had cozied up to threatened her community with genocide.

But McCain pressed ahead anyway. On Capitol Hill, he introduced another shady young operative into his interventionist theater. Named Elizabeth O'Bagy, she was a fellow at the Institute for the Study of War, an arms industry-funded think tank directed by Kimberly Kagan of the neoconservative Kagan clan. Behind the scenes, O'Bagy was consulting for Moustafa at his Syrian Emergency Task Force, a clear conflict of interest that her top Senate patron was well aware of. Before the Senate, McCain cited a *Wall Street Journal* editorial by O'Bagy to support his assessment of the Syrian rebels as predominately "moderate," and potentially Western-friendly.

Days later, O'Bagy was exposed for faking her PhD in Arabic studies. As soon as the humiliated Kagan fired O'Bagy, the academic fraudster took another pass through the Beltway's revolving door, striding into the halls of Congress as McCain's newest foreign policy aide.

McCain ultimately failed to see the Islamist "revolutionaries" he glad handled take control of Damascus. Syria's government held on thanks to help from his mortal enemies in Tehran and Moscow, but not before a billion dollar CIA arm-and-equip operation helped spawn one of the worst refugee crises in post-war history. Luckily for McCain, there were other intrigues seeking his attention, and new bands of fanatical rogues in need of his blessing. Months after his Syrian boondoggle, the ornery militarist turned his attention to Ukraine, then in the throes of an upheaval stimulated by U.S. and EU-funded soft power NGO's.

Coddling the Neo-Nazis of Ukraine

On December 14, 2013, McCain materialized in Kiev for a meeting with Oleh Tyanhbok, an unreconstructed fascist who had emerged as a top opposition leader. Tyanhbok had co-founded the fascist Social-National Party, a far-right political outfit that touted itself as the "last hope of the white race, of humankind as such." No fan of Jews, he had complained that a "Muscovite-Jewish mafia" had taken control of his country, and had been photographed throwing up a sieg heil Nazi salute during a speech.

None of this apparently mattered to McCain. Nor did the scene of Right Sector neo-Nazis filling up Kiev's Maidan Square while he appeared on stage to egg them on.

"Ukraine will make Europe better and Europe will make Ukraine better!" McCain proclaimed to cheering throngs while Tyanhbok stood by his side. The only issue that mattered to him at the time was the refusal of Ukraine's elected president to sign a European Union austerity plan, opting instead for an economic deal with Moscow.

McCain was so committed to replacing an independent-minded government with a NATO vassal that he even mulled a military assault on Kiev. "I do not see a military option and that is tragic," McCain lamented in an interview about the crisis. Fortunately for him, regime change arrived soon after his appearance on the Maidan, and Tyanhbok's allies rushed in to fill the void.

By the end of the year, the Ukrainian military had become bogged down in a bloody trench war with pro-Russian, anti-coup separatists in the country's east. A militia affiliated with the new government in Kiev called Dnipro-1 was accused by Amnesty International observers of blocking humanitarian aid into a separatist-held area, including food and clothing for the war torn population.

Six months later, McCain appeared at Dnipro-1's training base alongside Sen.'s Tom Cotton and John Barasso. "The people of my country are proud of your fight and your courage," McCain told an assembly of soldiers from the militia. When he completed his remarks, the fighters belted out a World War II-era salute made famous by Ukrainian Nazi collaborators: "Glory to Ukraine!"

Today, far-right nationalists occupy key posts in Ukraine's pro-Western government. The speaker of its parliament is Andriy Parubiy, a co-founder with Tyanhbok of the Social-National Party and leader of the movement to honor World War Two-era Nazi collaborators like Stepan Bandera. On the cover of his 1998 manifesto, "View From The Right," Parubiy appeared in a Nazi-style brown shirt with a pistol strapped to his waist. In June 2017, McCain and Republican Speaker of the House Paul Ryan welcomed Parubiy on Capitol Hill for what McCain called a "good meeting." It was a shot in the arm for the fascist forces sweeping across Ukraine.

The past months in Ukraine have seen a state sponsored neo-Nazi militia called C14 carrying out a pogromist rampage against Ukraine's Roma population, the country's parliament erecting an exhibition honoring Nazi collaborators, and the Ukrainian military formally approving the pro-Nazi "Glory to Ukraine" greeting as its own official salute.

Ukraine is now the sick man of Europe, a perpetual aid case bogged down in an endless war in its east. In a testament to the country's demise since its so-called "Revolution of Dignity," the deeply unpopular President Petro Poroshenko has promised White House National Security Advisor John Bolton that his country – once a plentiful source of coal on par with Pennsylvania – will now purchase coal from the U.S. Once again, a regime change operation that generated a failing, fascistic state stands as one of McCain's greatest triumphs.

McCain's history conjures up memory of one of the most inflammatory statements by Sarah Palin, another cretinous fanatic he foisted onto the world stage.

During a characteristically rambling stump speech in October 2008, Palin [accused](#) Barack Obama of “palling around with terrorists.” The line was dismissed as ridiculous and borderline slander, as it should have been. But looking back at McCain’s career, the accusation seems richly ironic.

By any objective standard, it was McCain who had palled around with terrorists, and who wrested as much resources as he could from the American taxpayer to maximize their mayhem. Here’s hoping that the societies shattered by McCain’s proxies will someday rest in peace.

Max Blumenthal is an award-winning journalist and the author of books including best-selling [Republican Gomorrah: Inside the Movement That Shattered the Party](#), [Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel](#), [The Fifty One Day War: Ruin and Resistance in Gaza](#), and the forthcoming [The Management of Savagery](#), which will be published by Verso. He has also produced numerous print articles for an array of publications, many video reports and several documentaries including [Je Ne Suis Pas Charlie](#) and the newly released [Killing Gaza](#). Blumenthal founded the [GrayzoneProject.com](#) in 2015 and serves as its editor.

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For Italy, Trump Represents a ‘Populist’ Opportunity

The new Italian government is taking comfort in some of Trump’s positions, especially on migration, trade and Russia, says Andrew Spannaus.

By Andrew Spannaus
in Milan

Special to Consortium News



During the 2016 United States election campaign, most of Italy’s political class and media adopted the standard line about how Donald Trump was a grave threat to the stability of the Western world.

Unlike previous Italian governments, which toed the pro-globalization

line, the new government in Rome, supported by the anti-system Five Star Movement and the right-wing League, seems ready to view Trump as an opening, not a disaster.

For the new Italian leaders, Trump's victory presents a number of opportunities for Italy. It has opened a way to potentially link the anti-establishment vote in both countries and across Europe by addressing the negative effects of globalization on the middle and lower classes, as well as challenge disastrous "regime change" policies that breed instability.

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte began revealing his hand at the G-7 summit in Charlevoix, Canada in June, shortly after he was chosen by the two populist parties as a compromise figure to lead the government. At the summit, he was the only other leader to support Trump's call to allow Russia to rejoin the group. Conte also refused to join with other European leaders in railing against the threat of tariffs wielded by Washington to obtain concessions on trade. During Conte's visit to the White House on July 30, he confirmed this position, seeking ways the two countries could work more closely together.

The Libya Disaster

The first common issue is how to deal with the chaos in Libya. In 2011, French President Nicolas Sarkozy—with the help of then-U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—successfully convinced President Barack Obama to launch a "humanitarian intervention" that led to the ouster and killing of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. What followed was a period of instability that persists to this day. For Italy in particular, the war has been disastrous on two fronts: it has hit its economic interests and increased human trafficking and the flow of refugees and migrants across the Mediterranean.

Italy is the Western country with the strongest ties to Libya, a former Italian colony. Italy has invested heavily there, including through the construction of transport, military and housing infrastructure in the form of reparations for colonialism under a 2008 agreement with Gaddafi. Ties are strong in the energy sector as well,

as the Italian conglomerate Eni manages numerous oil and gas fields there, providing about 20 percent of the company's overall hydrocarbon production.

When NATO bombs were unleashed in 2011, the French military had included Eni infrastructure among its targets, according to then Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini. The Italian oil assets were apparently never hit. But armed groups continue to attack oil pipelines and hinder oil exports, including Eni's.

The targeting of Eni infrastructure has led to a belief in Italy that one goal of the Libyan war for France was to wrest control of Italy's Libyan energy resources. Corroboration has come from the Clinton emails published first by WikiLeaks, and subsequently released in part by the State Department itself. Clinton aide Sidney Blumenthal sent intelligence assessments regarding Sarkozy's motives in attacking Libya, which included "a desire to gain a greater share of Libya oil production." Other emails show this meant cancelling existing oil concessions (such as those granted to Eni), and reassigning them to France's Total. (Another major goal was to stop Gaddafi from creating a new pan-African currency which would supplant the CFA, the French franc used in French-speaking African countries.)

Italy also has borne the brunt of the increase in immigration passing through Libya. The north African country has become a hub for migrant and refugee passage, with ruthless traffickers exploiting and torturing people who hope to make it to Europe.

The elimination of the Gaddafi regime contributed strongly to the wave of desperate humans trying to make it to Italy, with over 90 percent of them arriving from Libya.

The political result has been strong anti-immigrant sentiment in Italy that contributed significantly to the League's March election success. The new Italian government has sought to block all arrivals not controlled by its coast guard and force other European countries to share the burden of those who are granted entry. This has led to claims that Italy is ignoring the humanitarian needs of desperate people. The Italians counter that European neighbors are refusing to

do their part, having closed their borders within Europe despite their obligations under the Schengen Agreement that guarantees free movement of peoples throughout the EU.

Not surprisingly, Trump has offered his support to Conte, praising the Italian government's approach and suggesting that Europe as a whole should reintroduce strong borders. Trump's support on Libya can be of most help to Italy.

France continues to seek dominance in Western policy on Libya, while Italy aims to regain its leading role in the area, despite being seen as a second-tier power in Europe. After the bilateral meeting at the White House, sources told the Italian press that Italy could count on U.S. support for the Libya conference Conte is organizing in Rome this fall. Trump said: "We recognize Italy's leadership role in the stabilization of Libya and North Africa."

To Russia With Love

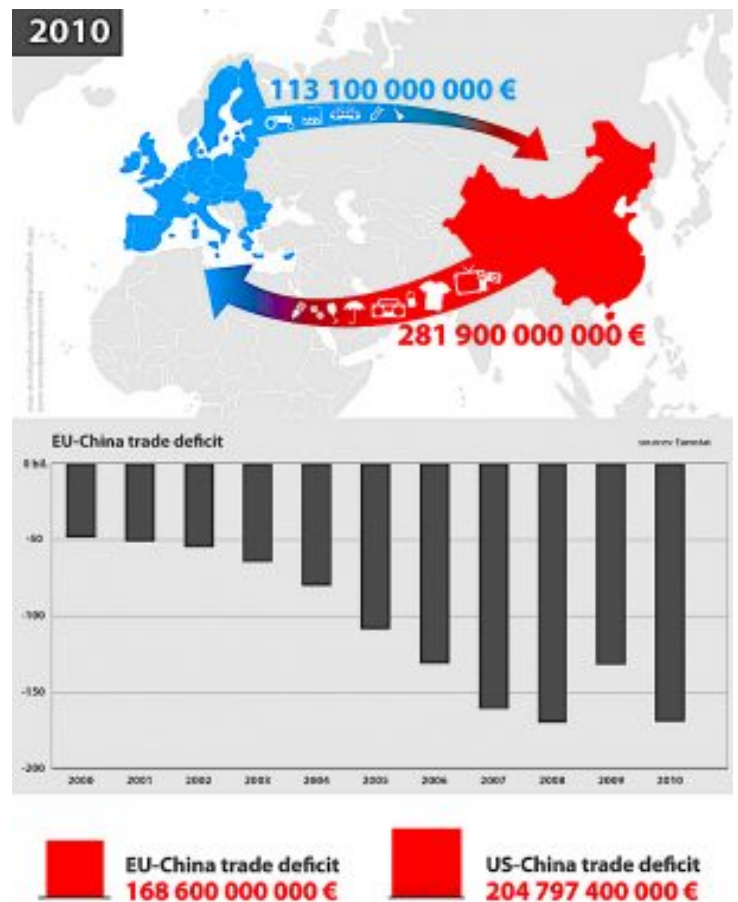
Trump and the Italian government also see eye to eye on Russia. Few people in Italy appear to support continuing the sanctions and deploying additional military personnel and equipment toward the East. Many Italians also would seem to welcome a shift away from the New Cold War mentality, but without rupturing the Western alliance.

So far, Trump's openness to diplomacy with Russian President Vladimir Putin hasn't brought much actual change. In fact, last month's NATO summit produced a series of commitments for further NATO deployments toward Russia's borders. But Italy's desire for better relations with Russia, without alienating the U.S., is being facilitated by Trump's approach to Moscow.

Conte and Trump skirted the Iran nuclear deal, over which Italy and the U.S. disagree. Italy has long been a major economic partner of the Islamic Republic. Though there is debate within institutions in Rome over the best approach to Iran, there's no question many Italian companies stand to lose from Trump's decision to reimpose sanctions.

Trade With China

On trade with Europe Trump has followed his usual method: talk tough and make threats, hoping to obtain concessions. The first shot was Trump's imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum, prompting Brussels to retaliate on a raft of American imports, including bourbon, motorcycles and numerous food items. Then Trump threatened 20 percent tariffs on European automobiles unless the EU reduced barriers to U.S. products.



The European Commission responded with a threat of over \$300 billion in tariffs on American goods. Ultimately, a deal was reached in which the two sides committed to “work together towards zero tariffs.” The White House claimed victory after EU concessions in the energy and food sectors. More significantly, Europe appears to be siding with Trump over China on trade.

After his July 30 meeting with Trump, Conte agreed on the need to review the terms of China's participation in the World Trade Organization. China still is accorded the status of a developing nation, which allows it to maintain higher tariffs and restrictions than its Western counterparts in many sectors. China has made great

strides in improving living conditions for its population, but has a long way to go to deal with internal imbalances and inequality.

While the growth of the Chinese middle class represents an important opportunity for European industry, low-cost production from China and other developing nations has cost millions of jobs in developed countries, supplanting many Western industries during the process of globalization in recent decades.

Italy maintains a competitive advantage in many advanced manufacturing sectors—as do other European countries, led by Germany—but that advantage is waning as other nations reach higher levels of development. Italy must compete on quality, not quantity, overcoming the negative effects of unbalanced competition with China with its low costs and disparities in rules and regulations.

Limits of the EU

The populist Italian government is also seeking a more general challenge to the decades-old neoliberal economic system, which the Trump administration has supported. It is premature to think that Italy and the U.S. have established a new partnership, given uncertainty on both sides. Even on rare occasions when Trump pursues reasonable goals, he is inconsistent and must do battle with many sides in the U.S.—even within his own administration. The Italian government is in a similar situation, with the European establishment putting roadblocks in the way to prevent wholesale changes in economic policy.

Seeking U.S. support outside the confines of the EU is in Italy's interest, but raises concerns among those who look with disdain on Trump and his mistrust of supranational institutions. If EU countries act on their own, the idea of a common foreign policy loses credibility, strengthening the arguments of those who oppose further integration.

The problem is that the pro-EU forces so far have failed to address the issues leading to the populist revolt, whether economic or in foreign policy. Repeating the mantra that European nations must act as

a bloc doesn't solve the fundamental problems facing the member states. If Brussels won't face its own failures, more conflict will be inevitable, and the alliance between populist forces will likely continue to grow.

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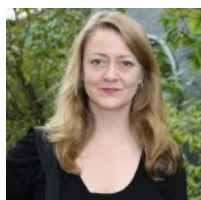
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A Tale of Two Tortures

How the Americans and the British "tortured some folks" and got away with it, as Annie Machon explains.

By Annie Machon *Special to Consortium News*

in Brussels



It was with some disbelief that I read of two torture-related stories emerging around the same time last week. The first was about the legal victory of Abdul Hakim Belhaj, Libyan dissident, kidnap victim of MI6 and the CIA, and torture victim of Colonel Gaddafi. UK governmental apologies were finally made and reparation paid. For once justice was seen to be done and the use of torture condemned.

Meanwhile, across the pond last week the reverse side of the same coin was on full disgusting display. Our American chums are in the process of attempting to appoint an alleged notorious torturer as the head of the CIA.

While nominee [Gina Haspel](#) had soft-ball questions lobbed at her by a tame pack of senators at her confirmation hearing, retired CIA senior analyst, former presidential briefer, and now justice activist, Ray McGovern, stood up and said what the Senators knew, but would not say: namely that she supervised – directly, on site – the waterboarding of Al Nashiri, who had been kidnapped and brought to the first secret CIA prison abroad (in Thailand) for "interrogation."

McGovern was dragged out by four burly police, thrown to the ground, and injured when additional police piled on. Here is [a link to the video](#) of this assault.

By juxtaposing these two incidents I am not trying to make the point that the UK is morally better than the USA when it comes to torture over the last 17 years – manifestly it has not been – but certainly in the time I served in MI5 in the 1990s the use of torture was verboten. Partly for ethical reasons, but mainly because the British Deep State had learned to its cost how counter-productive the use of torture and illegal imprisonment could be during the early stages of the bitter civil war in Northern Ireland in the 1970s.

A Lesson Forgotten

Unfortunately those hard-won lessons were generational, and that peer group began to retire in the late 1990s. As a result, come the aftermath of 9/11, when the USA lurched down a path of harsh military retaliation, illegal war, kidnapping and torture, the compliant British intelligence agencies followed helter-skelter down the same path, all in the name of the special intelligence relationship.

So, back to the Belhaj case. To get to the root of this I shall need to transport you back to 1995. Although the [US-funded Mujahideen](#) in Afghanistan was by then morphing into al-Qaeda and had just about hit the radar of MI5 as an emergent, if regional threat, peace seemed to be breaking out all over the world: the Cold War was officially over, a peaceful resolution to the civil war in Northern Ireland was in the making, and there even seemed to be some progress with the running political sore that is Palestine and the Israeli occupation, with the Oslo Accords of 1993.

However, Libya – at that time a “rogue” nation – was still on the Western intelligence hit list. This was partly because it was suspected by the UK government to have been behind the [Lockerbie bombing](#) in 1988 and the search for the perpetrators was a top level priority for MI6 in which it had failed for years to make any progress, and partly because Gaddafi had largely closed the huge Libyan oil reserves to Western oil companies.

Worth a Ton to MI6

So when, in 1995, a Libyan military intelligence officer (subsequently codenamed TUNWORTH) walked into the British embassy in Tunis and asked to speak to the resident spook, MI6 leapt at the chance to get rid of Gaddafi, solve the Lockerbie case, and allow Britain and its allies to once again plunder the vast Libyan oil reserves.

TUNWORTH had a group of “rag-tag Islamist extremists” to carry out this coup

attempt, and wanted support and money from MI6, which was quickly offered. The attack was illegal under UK law, which required a ministerial sign-off before such an operation, and then it went wrong, killing innocent people. How much heinous could it get? Here is the full account of this failed coup attempt.

So how does this fit in with Abdul Hakim Belhaj? Well, it turns out he was the co-founder of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), the very organisation that MI6 had funded for this attack. As a result, he was a wanted man in Libya. And after Gaddafi's return to the international fold following his notorious deal in the desert with then-UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in 2004, Belhaj was the gift from MI6 that sealed the deal.

In 2004 he and his pregnant wife were tracked down and intercepted by MI6 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. They were flown to Bangkok in Thailand and held in a CIA black site, before onward transit to Libya. The flight took 18 hours, and both Belhaj and his pregnant wife were lashed to the floor of a US military transport plane for the duration.

Belhaj was subsequently held in the notorious Abu Selim prison for the next six years where he was repeatedly and hideously tortured. He was finally released under an amnesty brokered by Gaddafi's son and heir, Saif al-Islam, in 2010.

That could have been the end of it, except the West made a catastrophic decision to once again try to depose Colonel Gaddafi in 2011. This time the charge was led not by the USA but by France and its President at the time, Nicolas Sarkozy, but ably backed up by the ever-reliable UK and USA, in a "humanitarian intervention" to protect the citizens of Islamist Benghazi – which by the way was not under direct threat at the time. Another fabricated excuse for a Western war of aggression.

(As a side note, Sarkozy is currently under investigation for illegally accepting five million euros from Gaddafi to fund his bid for the French Presidency in the 2007 election, and in the same year Gaddafi was awarded a full state visit to France.)

The 'Deal in the Desert'

This time the West achieved openly and shamelessly, in the gaze of the world's media, what they had failed to do shamefully and in secret in 1996: it toppled Gaddafi, who was caught, brutalised and bugged with a bayonet, murdered, and his mutilated corpse left on display for days. His son, Saif al-Islam was captured, tortured and imprisoned. He is now free and re-entering the political fray in Libya.

In the chaos that followed the overthrow of Gaddafi, Human Rights Watch staff

made it to Libya and found a cache of documents left in the office of notorious intelligence chief, Musa Kusa, who had fled the country initially to the UK and then fled on to Qatar.

Amongst these documents was a letter from the MI6 Head of Counter-Terrorism, Sir Mark Allen, dated from 2004. He had helped facilitate the “deal in the desert”, and wrote a congratulatory letter to Musa Kusa about being able to help facilitate the capture of Belhaj, and effectively to see him as a “gift” to the Libyan regime in 2004, as a gesture of good will. Here is an excerpt from Allen’s letter to Musa Kusa, submitted by Belhaj’s lawyers:

“I congratulate you on the safe arrival of [Mr Belhaj]. This was the least we could do for you and for Libya to demonstrate the remarkable relationship we have built over recent years....Amusingly, we got a request from the Americans to channel requests for information from [Mr Belhaj] through the Americans. I have no intention of doing any such thing. The intelligence about [Mr Belhaj] was British... I feel I have the right to deal with you direct on this”.

Because of that good will, the Gaddafi regime fatally trusted its new relationship with the West; and a man and his pregnant wife suffered, and the country as a whole continues to suffer immensely from the ensuing civil war that followed Gaddafi’s assassination..

The court case last week in the UK was a victory for them. Belhaj himself, despite successive UK governments offering one million pounds to drop the case, has always stated that he only required £1, plus an acknowledgement and apology from the UK government about what happened to him. This week he finally received it.

For her ordeal, his wife accepted half of the amount offered. The three UK key players – Blair, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, and MI6 Sir Mark Allen naturally have yet again not been called to account. Not a blemish to their reputations....

So are we likely to see the same admission of guilt from the instigators of the US torture programme?

Far from it. Even if Gina Haspel is not confirmed by the full Senate, the fact she was even considered for the post of heading the CIA is utterly shameful. As was the disgusting treatment of CIA pensioner and peace protester, Ray McGovern.

Annie Machon is a former intelligence officer in the UK’s MI5 Security Service (the U.S. counterpart is the FBI).

Nicolas Sarkozy: Crime and Punishment?

Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy is under investigation for allegedly receiving millions of euros in illegal election campaign funding from Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. This must be placed in the broader context of war crimes by Western heads of state, Gilbert Doctorow explains.

By Gilbert Doctorow

The relationship between Sarkozy and Gaddafi fits the pattern of the old mafia joke: "You're my friend. I kill you for nothing."

Two news items jostled for attention on the front pages of mainstream newspapers and news bulletins of the main television channels on the Old Continent last week. One was the Sergei Skripal "nerve agent attack" and Theresa May's attempts to find support among EU leaders for a common stand against Russia as perpetrator. The other was the arrest and questioning of former French President Nicolas Sarkozy over allegations that he took 50 million euros in cash from Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2007 for the election campaign that won him the presidency.

The Skripal story of "the Russians did it" had its day in court in Brussels on Thursday and Friday during the summit of EU leaders at the European Council, the EU's chief executive body. The deliberations ended in verbal support for May: the EU said it was recalling its ambassador to Moscow for four weeks of consultations. As EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker explained at a press conference, however, the EU faces important challenges which require active coordination with Russia, so channels of communication must remain open.

But then on Monday, Germany, Poland and France expelled four Russian diplomats; the Czech Republic and Lithuania expelled three; Denmark, Italy, and The Netherlands two apiece; and one each from Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Finland, Sweden and Ireland. (The U.S. topped them all with 60 Russian diplomats expelled and the closing of Russia's Seattle consulate, further undermining the Democratic Party narrative that President Donald Trump is a Russia "puppet.") On Tuesday, NATO kicked out 13 Russians, further weakening the safety net protecting against East-West conflict.

These demarches were presented as an act of solidarity with the UK over the Skripal case. But these flea bites could be better described as the EU response to Vladimir Putin's overwhelming victory in the presidential elections of March 18, which concerns all EU states far more directly than a so-far totally

unproven and highly questionable allegation against Russia by the Brexiting United Kingdom. Following the predictable Russian symmetrical measures in the coming days, the Skripal case is likely to disappear from the headlines, until the results of the forensic investigation into the poisoning of the ex-double agent are completed and made public.

By contrast, the story about Sarkozy's arrest and 23-hour interrogation by judicial police over the course of two days was just gaining traction, with French media in particular split down the middle over whether an indictment and trial is warranted.

The Sarkozy case has unusually split the governing elites of France and Europe. As a result, a great deal of information has been released into the public domain, including in *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mail*, *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*. Even the American *Time* magazine devoted several pages of factual, as opposed to editorializing, coverage in a March 21 piece.

The facts of the case have dribbled out over a long time, especially from 2012 when Sarkozy decided to run again for the presidency. That brought attention to the story of Libyan financing of his 2007 election. Incriminating documents were disseminated by investigative French media and ultimately Sarkozy lost at the polls to Francois Hollande by several percentage points. Sarkozy later directly blamed the stories of Libyan financing for his defeat.

The Sarkozy affair must be placed in the broader context of investigating alleged war crimes by Western heads of state. So long as we choose only to look forward as Barack Obama insisted on immediately after taking office, when he closed the book on investigations into the George W. Bush administration, and not look into the recent past, we are condemned to an endless succession of "road accidents" yielding only chaos and death in the Middle East, and possibly in the wider world.

The Sarkozy Story

The wheels of justice turn slowly and may or may not grind finely. The current charges against Sarkozy go back to the days when he still occupied the office of Minister of the Interior in the government of Jacques Chirac and campaigned to succeed Chirac in the presidency as candidate of the center-right Union for a Popular Movement party (UMP). Sarkozy is said to have concluded a written agreement with Gaddafi's intelligence chief Abdullah Senussi to provide 50 million euros to his campaign in exchange for unspecified French assistance to rehabilitate Libya's international standing. The choice of Sarkozy to perform this mission was not arbitrary: he had over a long time spoken favorably of Islam and attempted when in power to integrate France's Islamic minority,

including its religious hierarchy, into the national landscape.

A number of intermediaries on both sides were appointed to facilitate the secret transfer of funds including in cash, according to the French outlet Mediapart. Following his election, Sarkozy very warmly welcomed Muammar Gaddafi in Paris on December 10, 2007 for a state visit during which the Libyan leader was permitted to set up his tents in gardens close to the Elysée Palace. At the time, this hosting of someone seen as a dictator in France created controversy in the French media, all the more so as the visit coincided with the anniversary of the convention on human rights.

In the midst of the Arab Spring of 2011, Libya was one of the last dictatorships in North Africa to come under attack from self-proclaimed democratic rebels. France was among the loudest calling for Gaddafi to step down and be replaced by a transition government.

When the Colonel's armed forces appeared to have taken the upper hand, and victory over rebel forces in Benghazi and the east of the country was imminent, NATO, led by France, entered the conflict, initially under UN authorization to impose a no-fly zone for the stated purpose of protecting civilians from an anticipated massacre, one that was later questioned by a British parliamentary committee. This intervention in fact went well beyond its authorization and facilitated the overthrow of the Libyan regime, resulting in the brutal murder of its leader, who died amidst gang violence with a shot to the head. Chaos and disintegration of the state have continued to this day, with two power centers still vying for control of land and international recognition.

The fall of the Libyan dictator has special piquancy today because in his final months Gaddafi had reminded France and Europe of the important service he was performing for them: holding back the hordes of would-be asylum seekers from North and sub-Saharan Africa as well as containing a jihadist threat. As it turned out, that warning was not exaggerated. With the chaos that followed Gaddafi's murder, Libya became one of the main jumping off points for millions of immigrants on their way to Europe, compounding the problem that otherwise has been created by the civil war in Syria and strife throughout the Middle East extending as far as Afghanistan. It has also become a center for jihadist operations.

In March 2011, prior to the final assault on the regime, Gaddafi's son gave an interview to Euronews in which he issued veiled warnings to the French to desist from their encouragement of the rebels, whose spokesmen Sarkozy had received in Paris. "We can reveal a lot of things. Secrets. ... So the French should behave, or there is going to be a big fiasco in France," he said. Others in Gaddafi's entourage were less discrete and spoke of a large financial contribution to

Sarkozy's election in 2007.

In 2012, when Sarkozy prepared his next presidential bid, the investigative French news website Mediapart published the 2007 master agreement and several other documents relating to Libyan funds being passed to Sarkozy's chief of staff, Claude Guéant. One of the pieces of evidence was a film of Ziad Takieddine, a Lebanese businessman who introduced Sarkozy to Gaddafi. Takieddine explains in the film how he handed cases of cash to Sarkozy and Guéant.

Also in 2012 rumors emerged that Muammar Gaddafi was killed not by the rebels who surrounded and mutilated him but by a French secret service agent who infiltrated the mob and shot him in the head, acting on express orders of Sarkozy.

In 2013, when Sarkozy no longer enjoyed immunity from prosecution, a judicial inquiry was opened in France with a view to possible charges for "active and passive corruption, misuse of power, forgery, abuse of public money, money laundering, and complicity in and concealment of these offences." The inquiry did not at the time lead to any proceedings against Sarkozy, though it was not closed either.

In the meantime, Guéant had claimed that the documents obtained by Mediapart were false. However, a French court concluded that some were authentic and could be used in the investigation.

In the past week, Sarkozy was arrested and held for questioning in a unit of the judicial police in the Paris suburb of Nanterre. He was subjected to 23 hours of interrogation over the course of two days, allowed to go home to sleep under bail conditions. He was barred from contacting Guéant and others from his former associates who were being interrogated separately. These include a former minister and close ally of Sarkozy, Brice Hortefeux.

In a separate but related line of investigation against Sarkozy, in January British police arrested a French businessman who is suspected of having funneled money from Gaddafi to Sarkozy's 2007 campaign. Alexandre Djouhri appeared in a London court and was released on bail. He was subsequently returned to pre-trial detention in February under a second warrant for his arrest issued by France. Djouhri is to appear in a hearing scheduled for later this month.

On the same day Sarkozy was released from custody, the former president took to the air waves on state channel TF1 to give his side of the story. One-sixth of the French electorate, approximately 7.3 million people, viewed his broadcast. On the next day, his remarks were debated at length in the country's leading newspapers, *Le Figaro* on the right, long-time supporter of the UMP

(later renamed the Republican Party), and *Le Monde*, on the left, long-time supporter of the Socialists.

A Background of Impunity

The Sarkozy affair falls into a succession of attempts to bring to justice the leading perpetrators of war crimes since the start of the new millennium: George W. Bush and Tony Blair. So far, the record is not promising on justice being done.

In the United States, during Bush's presidency, Congressmen Dennis Kucinich and Robert Wexler introduced 35 articles of impeachment against Bush in the House of Representatives on June 10, 2008. Fifteen of the articles related directly to the invasion of Iraq, starting with the false evidence used to obtain authority for military action. The House voted 251 to 166 to refer the impeachment resolution to the Judiciary Committee where it died. For his efforts, Kucinich was gerrymandered out of his Ohio electoral district and is only now trying to make a political comeback in local politics in his state of Ohio.

In the UK, an investigation into the decision by Blair's government to join the U.S. in the 2003 invasion of Iraq went much further, though it took a very long time to reach a decision. It took still longer, nearly four years, to publish it while the authors of the report wrestled with the government over what documents could be made public given the possibility they would severely damage relations with the United States.

The so-called Chilcot Inquiry was launched in 2009 by then Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The remit took in not only the start of the war but how it was prosecuted all the way to 2009.

The Inquiry held open sessions from November 2009 to February 2011. It had the authority to request any British document and summon any British subject to give evidence. Its prime witness was Blair himself, who was called upon twice to undergo questioning. Other witnesses included former cabinet ministers and other politicians, senior civil servants, diplomats and high ranking military officers.

The Chilcot Inquiry's final report was published on July 6, 2016, nearly seven years after the probe began. It consisted of 12 volumes plus an executive summary. The report was highly critical of the case for war made by the British government and military. It found that the legal basis for war was not satisfactory. It concluded that the Blair government had overestimated the UK's ability to influence US decisions on Iraq. It faulted the war preparation and planning, and concluded that the UK's objectives in the war were not achieved.

British media described the Chilcot Report as “damning,” and a “crushing verdict” on the Blair government.

On the day of the report’s release, the leader of the opposition Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, who had spoken out against the war in Parliament from the beginning but was ignored by Blair, said in a speech to Westminster: “I now apologize sincerely on behalf of my party for the disastrous decision to go to war in Iraq in March 2003.” Corbyn denounced the war as “an act of military aggression launched on a false pretext.”

Blair, the major villain in the report, acknowledged some of the criticisms with respect to preparation, planning and the relationship with Washington, but insisted he had acted out of good faith in the best interests of the nation.

For Blair, the report was a bloody nose, and nothing more. He was not contrite about the heavy price for the wanton destruction and loss of life that the invasion caused.

However, the Chilcot Report did honorably achieve what it set out to do: it established responsibility for disastrous decisions, it found that the invasion was not justified by any urgent threat to British interests, and that the UK had undermined the authority of the UN Security Council. It was a rebuke, better than anything achieved in the U.S., where there has never been a reckoning over the disaster of Iraq. Indeed, Bush has been rehabilitated by of all quarters, the Democratic Party, enlisting him in its fight against Donald Trump. Neoconservatives in think tanks and the media who pushed for the war have suffered no consequences. They’ve kept their jobs or been promoted.

This Time, with Sarkozy, it May be Different

On Sunday, *The Mail* reported that: “Sarkozy, 63, is facing a criminal trial and could be jailed over the donations.” But why would the French establishment impose such shame on a former president, bringing disrepute to the country?

It must be said that Sarkozy, unlike Blair or Bush, lacked warmth and charisma. On the contrary, this little Napoleon, as many viewed him, had an undisguised taste for ostentatious luxury, which exceeded by far his personal pocketbook until he fell in with his third wife, former super model and popular singer Carla Bruni. He had also left a trail of controversial public statements that were indelibly burned into the popular memory.

Perhaps Sarkozy’s ugliest known altercation with the common man took place on February 23, 2008 at an International Agriculture Show, when he responded sharply to someone who refused to shake his hand with the vulgar dismissal “Casse-toi, pauvre con” (get lost, you poor schmuck). At a minimum, his comment

was regarded as un-presidential.

To be sure, Sarkozy had a long and successful political career during which he held many contradictory positions which suited various segments of the electorate and which changed over time. He extolled Islam on a visit to Riyadh and was long an advocate of Muslim integration in France. He backed the notion of state appropriations for the construction of mosques, to ensure they were not financed and run from abroad. And yet, he was always tough on immigration and used inflammatory language when addressing the issue of violence by Arab and black minorities in the French suburbs.

However, questions of his domestic policies and presence or absence of charisma do not bear on Sarkozy's present predicament. The unique challenge he has faced from the beginning is that his accusers have not all been murdered like Gaddafi. In particular, the Libyan dictator's highly educated second son and political heir, Saif al-Islam, is very much alive to avenge the family's loss. Bush and Blair never had to contend with a challenge to their narrative of the Iraqi adventure from the circle of Saddam Hussein.

That the charges against Sarkozy have reached their present critical point cannot be separated from the recent release of Saif from captivity by one of the armed bands which held him for six years, nor can it be separated from his declared intention to run for president in elections to be held in Libya later this year. This development in Libya has mobilized the surviving regime members and those who were go-betweens with Sarkozy. The witnesses include Abdallah Sanoussi, former director of Libyan intelligence services, and Bashir Salah Bashir, the former CEO of Libya Investment, the country's sovereign wealth fund.

The second factor working against Sarkozy is the wave of popular repugnance in France with the old, corrupt political class that swept Emmanuel Macron to power last year and overwhelmed the candidate from Sarkozy's Republican Party, Francois Fillon. Fillon was caught out on the petty venality that has long typified French politics. In this sense, the Sarkozy case comes amidst a popular mood of house cleaning.

Why This is Worse Than Chirac

In considering Sarkozy's prospects, it bears mentioning that in 2011 ex-President Jacques Chirac, under whom Sarkozy served as minister at several points in his career, was found guilty of embezzlement and breach of trust when he was mayor of Paris in a prosecution delayed for years by the President's constitutional immunity. Chirac was accused of lavish entertainment at public expense, appointment to government jobs of party hacks, inflation in the number of such positions and similar measures to buy public support for his party and

for himself.

The criminal prosecution of Chirac ended in the first conviction of a former head of the French state for corruption. Chirac was given a two-year suspended prison sentence. Moreover, leniency towards Chirac seemed justified given his frail health and memory loss related to a neural disorder.

Of course, the charges against Chirac were child's play compared to those being leveled at Sarkozy today: illegal acceptance of foreign donations to his electoral campaign, accepting contributions which were double the allowable amount to campaign in the second round of voting.

Moreover, there were no foreign policy implications to the felonies committed by President Chirac as there are now with Sarkozy, who promoted an illegal aggression on a sovereign state, destroying it in the process, and opened the gates to mass illegal immigration and the spread of jihadism by deposing and possibly having Gaddafi murdered.

Even the U.S. has gotten into the anti-Sarkozy act. Hollywood actor George Clooney's wife Amal Clooney was quoted as saying recently: "Gaddafi is not guilty, it's Sarkozy who is guilty." The human rights lawyer of Lebanese-Libyan descent has also been a practitioner of criminal law in her high visibility professional career. She is known to be close to Ziad Takieddine, the French Lebanese who, as noted above, claims to have been an intermediary carrying funds from Gaddafi to Sarkozy.

When he left the interrogation and got into his car on his way home, Sarkozy is reported to have looked disheveled and haggard. During his televised defense on TF1, he looked nervous. And well he might, because to defend himself against the accusations Sarkozy had to muster a day-by-day recollection of his meetings with the various go-betweens who alleged bringing him cases of cash in 2007. He had, in particular, to discredit Takieddine, his main accuser.

The newspaper of the right, *Le Figaro*, issued a verbatim account of Sarkozy's defense the day after he was released. In its weekend print edition it published a full page on the Sarkozy affair. At the head of the page, was an article devoted to Sarkozy's dinner with friends and close family at his favorite Italian restaurant in the fashionable 16th arrondissement immediately after his television appearance.

The newspaper claimed that the former President had "electrified his supporters" and he was inundated by text messages not only from the Republican Party but from ministers, including several now serving in the Macron government. At the start of the gathering, we are told all present were busy reading incoming

messages on their mobile devices. One message from Alain Juppé, long-time leader of the right, mayor of Bordeaux and Sarkozy's rival for presidency, bears mention: "I watched TF1, I found Nicolas Sarkozy extremely combative. I also felt that he was deeply wounded, and I understand that. His argumentation seemed to me to be consistent."

An article to the right of the page quotes one of Sarkozy's close supporters and official spokesman for the Republican Party, Gilles Platret, who put the investigation into Sarkozy in a different light. He called it an attack on France and its presidency: "He [Sarkozy] was right to return the discussion to fundamentals. It is not so much the person who is being accused. It is the image of the presidential role. Can it be that a deceased dictator can still have an impact on the national sphere with accusations..?"

Platret regretted that the accusations "give a sad color to the French political life." He was confident that Sarkozy will "reestablish the truth in this affair...He began to do just that this evening." Platret reminded readers that Sarkozy achieved a great deal for France during his presidency: "History will recall this with a big letter H." But the *Figaro* journalist added a word of caution: "Unless the courts decide otherwise."

The greater part of the Sarkozy page in the weekend edition of *Le Figaro* was a point for point discussion of the charges against the ex-President. It called attention to the 2007 interview with Saif al-Islam on Euronews, which said he was carried off by the revolution and is now living in Egypt. It highlighted the key role of Takieddine as witness against Sarkozy. It also recalled the written agreement signed by the head of Libyan intelligence on financing Sarkozy, published by Mediapart in April 2012. *Figaro* said this document was found to be a forgery by investigators in another case, as Sarkozy argued in his televised defense.

The paper mentioned still another Libyan accuser, the former Oil Minister Choukri Ghanem, whose personal notebook was taken by French judges and is said to mention the financing of Sarkozy. Ghanem was never interrogated. He was found drowned in the Danube at Vienna in April 2012. The death was determined to be "accidental" by the Austrian police. *Figaro* points to the testimony given by Gaddafi himself when bombs were already falling on Tripoli, in which he mentioned financing the French but without any details.

The *Figaro* article tried to place the whole affair in a geopolitical context. It noted that around the year 2000, Gaddafi had sought respectability. He received President Chirac in Libya in 2004, and a year later Sarkozy, accompanied only by two translators. Gaddafi believed that Sarkozy would be the next president of France and was quoted by one of the interpreters as saying: "It is a good thing

to have a brother, a friend at the head of France.” Tight relations were knit as well with the close advisers to Sarkozy, Claude Guéant and Brice Hortefeux. As soon as he took office, Sarkozy launched his Union for the Mediterranean, an organization intended to promote North-South dialogue that was France’s answer to the EU’s Eastern Neighborhood Policy initiated by Germany.

Figaro then weighed the evidence against Sarkozy. It noted that no written proof of transfers of funds by Libya exists. It said that the sums transferred are described variously by different witnesses ranging from the 35,000 euros in cash dispensed in 2007 to some employees of the UMP party, all of which is a drop in the ocean, while accusers speak of between 20 million dollars and 50 million euros. As for the travel restrictions placed on Sarkozy by the judges, and the ban on association with his colleagues now undergoing separate interrogation, the paper remarked that the opportunity to coordinate their testimony existed ever since 2013 when the first accusations appeared. *Figaro* told the Sarkozy story with a distinct bias toward the ex-president, but without fully endorsing his innocence.

Le Monde’s Alternative Take

Le Monde had a different and more dangerous take on Sarkozy. In a piece published on March 22 headlined, “Libyan financing: the blind spots of Nicolas Sarkozy’s defense,” the first paragraph says that the former president’s argument “is sometimes specious, with dead ends on material elements to the case.” It said Sarkozy focused his efforts on discrediting Takieddine, “But he skirts around numerous substantive elements gathered by the investigators since 2013.”

In his televised defense, Sarkozy had rejected the notion that he had ever worked to advance the interests of the Libyan state. He reminded viewers that he had been responsible for getting UN approval to use military force against Gaddafi. *Le Monde* agreed but pointed out that Sarkozy’s had a honeymoon with the Libyan leader at the start of his presidency.

Sarkozy’s core defense is that there is no material proof to support any of the claims made that Takieddine transferred the funds. Sarkozy accused Takieddine of stealing from the Libyan state and said there is no evidence he ever met the man at any time between 2005 and 2011.

Takieddine is suspected of having been involved in other French electoral financing going back to the campaign of Edouard Balladur in 1995. But he is the one who helped form the relationship between France and Libya beginning in 2005 and was involved in other cases relating to France, in particular the liberation of Bulgarian nurses held in Libya on charges of AIDS contamination. Takieddine

says he was then dropped by Sarkozy as an intermediary in favor of the French businessman Alexandre Djouhri, and so he first turned state witness in the Balladur case, then in 2012, came forward as a witness in the developing scandal around Sarkozy.

Le Monde said that no mention of a meeting with Takieddine in the ex-president's personal agenda does not mean such a meeting never took place. The agenda was offered to judges by Sarkozy in another court case over alleged corruption during the 2007 electoral campaign. One can imagine that Sarkozy had no interest in noting in his agenda a meeting with Takieddine two months after the first revelations by Mediapart of alleged Libyan financing.

Le Monde is giving Sarkozy no slack. His every word and action is weighed against the possibility, if not likelihood that he is lying.

We will see shortly whether the French courts have the stomach to take the investigation of Sarkozy through to prosecution and conviction and possible jail time, unlike the American response to its own engineers of Middle East disaster.

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Hillary Clinton Keeps Pointing Fingers

Hillary Clinton blames others for last year's electoral defeat, never recognizing that many Americans – both Democrats and Republicans – found her public record appalling, as Dennis J Bernstein discusses with John Pilger.

By Dennis J Bernstein

Because of the failure of the corporate press to report fully on Hillary Clinton's policy failures throughout her career, it was difficult for voters to perceive how dangerous her presidency might have been, although many Democratic voters bolted to Bernie Sanders and enough Americans voted against her last November to give Donald Trump his narrow Electoral College victory.

In the following conversation with the legendary filmmaker and muckraking journalist John Pilger, we leap off from [his recent article](#) regarding Clinton's

new book and her recent appearance on Australian Broadcasting (ABC).

In the interview, I delve with Pilger into the career of Clinton as a hawkish U.S. senator who continued her interventionism as Secretary of State, not only voting for the Iraq War in 2002 but protecting the 2009 coup in Honduras and pressing for the “regime change” war in Libya that turned the once-prosperous country into a failed state. She also chuckled at the news of the rape-murder of deposed Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Dennis Bernstein: Hillary Clinton has been featured on Australian Media to talk about her new book and apparently to blame anyone and everyone for the fact that she lost the election to Donald Trump.

John Pilger: Actually, the interview I wrote about was conducted in New York but it was broadcast by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on their flagship current affairs program called “Four Corners.” The interviewer was someone with a reputation for hard-hitting interviews named Sarah Ferguson. I thought it was an extraordinary display of Clinton’s attempting to justify herself after all these months.

When I was in New York recently I read quite a few interviews conducted by female reporters with Hillary Clinton in which she was portrayed as a feminist and therefore all else should be set aside if not forgiven. This was what came across in the Sarah Ferguson interview. It opens with “your pain seemed almost visceral, describe your pain to us.” It was as if she were being invited to lie on a therapist’s couch instead of being interviewed. This has run right through interviews with Clinton by women journalists. The whole question of identity politics has such potency now that a corrupt politician who deceived and abused the electorate can be held up as a martyr.

There is nothing in the interview, for example, about why she described ordinary Americans who might have voted for Trump as “irredeemable and deplorable.”

Nothing about how she earned from Goldman Sachs speeches a total of about \$670,000, displaying the sort of greed that upset ordinary people in the US.

And of course there is the central issue of the emails leaked by WikiLeaks, which showed how involved Clinton has been with the whole violent, corrupt world of the Gulf and jihadism. The very people backing jihadism, especially Saudi Arabia, were donating large sums to the Clinton Foundation. All this is missing from this and other interviews. It shows how the power of identity politics can eclipse the facts. There was even a photograph I saw in New York of a reporter with her arm around Clinton, consoling her.

Dennis Bernstein: The feeling you get in watching this whole thing unfold is

that this is a full-court press to distract from the content of the released emails.

John Pilger: It is very easy to distract attention from something if you simply don't mention it. I have always felt that the most virulent form of censorship is censorship by omission. The whole nefarious state of the Clintons and the Clinton Foundation is simply left out of these interviews. Hillary Clinton is able to plead a kind of special case for herself because she is a woman and a feminist.

Dennis Bernstein: After this interview with the Australian Broadcasting Company, the producer referred to Julian Assange as "Putin's bitch."

John Pilger: The producer re-tweeted a troll message to advertise the interview with Clinton, and especially the component in which she defames Julian Assange. You have to remember, this is the state broadcaster in Australia, which is Julian Assange's country. Assange pointed out that the ABC's code was meant to prevent this kind of bias. It was a particularly bad interview but in a sense it was also a very typical one. It allowed a figure of great power and contention to say anything she wanted to say without challenge.

There was no mention of Libya in all of this. Libya was *Hillary Clinton's invasion*. It was Hillary Clinton who famously rejoiced on camera the gruesome murder of Colonel Gaddafi. 40,000 people died in this criminal US and NATO invasion. None of this was mentioned, no solidarity with the women who died. There is no solidarity with the women who will suffer as a result of the coup in Honduras, which Clinton signed off on as secretary of state. Simply to make an exception of women like Hillary Clinton because she is a woman and would have been the first female president of the United States seems to me to be a very powerful form of censorship what we should be aware of.

Dennis Bernstein: Hillary Clinton *laughed* at Qaddafi's on-camera assassination. She thought that was funny. She bragged about sustaining the coup in Honduras over the opposition of all the presidents in Central America, which has now led to Honduras being the murder capital of the world.

John Pilger: Her notoriety should be clear in the public consciousness. There she is on video saying, "[We] came, [we] saw, he died." Gaddafi was murdered publicly with a knife. His convoy, which was trying to escape from Libya, was only intercepted because NATO aircraft identified where it was. She gloated at the murder of this man. We should be enlightening people as to the corrupt and very violent nature of individuals such as Hillary Clinton. We are letting the public down if we buy into these identity politics stereotypes. I am sure there are many feminists who find Hillary Clinton and what she has done appalling. But

the media still present this woman as something very different from Trump. The grotesqueness of Trump has allowed many liberals in the United States to put aside the fact that Hillary Clinton really is the embodiment of a corrupt system.

A companion piece to censorship is double standards. With Hillary Clinton, it is an incandescent double standard. Many feminists foolishly went along with her call to support the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 on the premise that it would free the women of Afghanistan from the Taliban. Actually, it changed the position of women very little but it caused a great deal of suffering in that country.

What we are seeing is an important issue—that of identity politics—being used as a cover for violent invasions of other countries. In the Australian interview the interviewer fed her the question, “How much damage did Julian Assange do to you personally?” Her answer was that she had a lot of history with him because she was secretary of state when WikiLeaks published a lot of very important information from our State Department and Defense Department. What Clinton failed to say, and what the interviewer failed to ask her, was that in 2010 WikiLeaks revealed that Clinton had ordered a secret intelligence campaign targeted at the United Nations leadership. This intelligence operation, signed by Clinton, went after things like credit card passwords and forensic details about the communication systems used by UN officials. It was by any measure totally lawless spying.

Dennis Bernstein: There is every indication that these key emails were leaked by someone at Democratic party headquarters who was upset that Hillary and the Democratic leadership undermined Bernie Sanders’ bid for the nomination.

John Pilger: I had a long, filmed interview with Julian Assange one year ago and I asked him outright where the Podesta emails had come from, if they had come from Russia, and he said no. It seems to me that there is every likelihood that these emails were the result of what you just described. Clinton really cut the ground from beneath Sanders. We know that the emails are completely authentic.

They expose the Clinton Foundation and its greed and how important Saudi Arabia was to Hillary Clinton. After Saudi Arabia and Qatar had donated generously to the Clinton Foundation, Clinton as secretary of state approved the biggest arms sales in history, something like a total of \$80 billion. As a result, total US arms sales to the world doubled. That is big business, that is big war-making, and I would say that is big corruption.

Dennis Bernstein: It is not an exaggeration to say that she was a warmonger, that she was someone who embraced war.

John Pilger: Yes, she was. All the polls during the election campaign last year indicated that Clinton and Trump were two of the most despised candidates to ever run for president. I suppose the people's memory of that has been clouded over by the awful presence of Trump.

Dennis Bernstein: Anyone concerned about the plight of Palestinians has to recall Operation Cast Lead—which killed around 2,200 people, including about 500 children, with the bombing of schools and hospitals. When Clinton was asked about that, she said, “Israel has the right to defend itself.”

John Pilger: Compared to Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, Trump is a bit of a wimp. After Obama was elected and before he was inaugurated, he was on vacation in Hawaii where he met with members of his National Security and Defense Department team and he approved support for Israel's attack on Gaza. So Obama's first foreign policy act was to approve Israel's onslaught on the people of Gaza. I think that wondering whether a politician like Clinton will ever do something requiring strong principles and a sense of social justice is really very naive. We have to see these people for what they are. Both Clinton and Trump are a symptom of the system and people must start concentrating on the system and how to change it.

Dennis J Bernstein is a host of “Flashpoints” on the Pacifica radio network and the author of Special Ed: Voices from a Hidden Classroom. You can access the audio archives at www.flashpoints.net.

How ‘Regime Change’ Wars Led to Korea Crisis

Exclusive: The U.S.-led aggressions against Iraq and Libya are two war crimes that keep on costing, with their grim examples of what happens to leaders who get rid of WMDs driving the scary showdown with North Korea, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

It is a popular meme in the U.S. media to say that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is “crazy” as he undertakes to develop a nuclear bomb and a missile capacity to deliver it, but he is actually working from a cold logic dictated by the U.S. government's aggressive wars and lack of integrity.

Indeed, the current North Korea crisis, which could end up killing millions of

people, can be viewed as a follow-on disaster to President George W. Bush's Iraq War and President Barack Obama's Libyan intervention. Those wars came after the leaders of Iraq and Libya had dismantled their dangerous weapons programs, leaving their countries virtually powerless when the U.S. government chose to invade.

In both cases, the U.S. government also exploited its power over global information to spread lies about the targeted regimes as justification for the invasions – and the world community failed to do anything to block the U.S. aggressions.

And, on a grim personal note, the two leaders, Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi, were then brutally murdered, Hussein by hanging and Gaddafi by a mob that first sodomized him with a knife.

So, the neoconservatives who promoted the Iraq invasion supposedly to protect the world from Iraq's alleged WMDs – and the liberal interventionists who pushed the Libya invasion based on false humanitarian claims – may now share in the horrific possibility that millions of people in North Korea, South Korea, Japan and maybe elsewhere could die from real WMDs launched by North Korea and/or by the United States.

Washington foreign policy "experts" who fault President Trump's erratic and bellicose approach toward this crisis may want to look in the mirror and consider how they contributed to the mess by ignoring the predictable consequences from the Iraq and Libya invasions.

Yes, I know, at the time it was so exciting to celebrate the Bush Doctrine of preemptive wars even over a "one percent" suspicion that a "rogue state" like Iraq might share WMDs with terrorists – or the Clinton Doctrine hailed by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's acolytes enamored by her application of "smart power" to achieve "regime change" in Libya.

However, as we now know, both wars were built upon lies. Iraq did not possess WMD stockpiles as the Bush administration claimed, and Libya was not engaged in mass murder of civilians in rebellious areas in the eastern part of the country as the Obama administration claimed.

Post-invasion investigations knocked down Bush's WMD myth in Iraq, and a British parliamentary inquiry concluded that Western governments misrepresented the situation in eastern Libya where Gaddafi forces were targeting armed rebels but not indiscriminately killing civilians.

But those belated fact-finding missions were no comfort to either Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gaddafi, nor to their countries, which have seen mass slaughters

resulting from the U.S.-sponsored invasions and today amount to failed states.

There also has been virtually no accountability for the war crimes committed by the Bush and Obama administrations. Bush and Obama both ended up serving two terms as President. None of Bush's senior advisers were punished – and Hillary Clinton received the 2016 Democratic Party's nomination for President.

As for the U.S. mainstream media, which behaved as boosters for both invasions, pretty much all of the journalistic war advocates have continued on with their glorious careers. To excuse their unprofessional behavior, some even have pushed revisionist lies, such as the popular but false claim that Saddam Hussein was to blame because he pretended that he did have WMDs – when the truth is that his government submitted a detailed 12,000-page report to the United Nations in December 2002 describing how the WMDs had been destroyed (though that accurate account was widely mocked and ultimately ignored).

Pervasive Dishonesty

The dishonesty that now pervades the U.S. government and the U.S. mainstream media represents another contributing factor to the North Korean crisis. What sensible person anywhere on the planet would trust U.S. assurances? Who would believe what the U.S. government says, except, of course, the U.S. mainstream media?

Remember also that North Korea's nuclear program had largely been mothballed before George W. Bush delivered his "axis of evil" speech in January 2002, which linked Iran and Iraq – then bitter enemies – with North Korea. After that, North Korea withdrew from earlier agreements on limiting its nuclear development and began serious work on a bomb.

Yet, while North Korea moved toward a form of mutual assured destruction, Iraq and Libya chose a different path.

In Iraq, to head off a threatened U.S.-led invasion, Hussein's government sought to convince the international community that it had lived up to its commitments regarding the destruction of its WMD arsenal and programs. Besides the detailed declaration, Iraq gave U.N. weapons inspectors wide latitude to search on the ground.

But Bush cut short the inspection efforts in March 2003 and launched his "shock and awe" invasion, which led to the collapse of Hussein's regime and the dictator's eventual capture and hanging.

Gaddafi's Gestures

In Libya, Gaddafi also sought to cooperate with international demands regarding WMDs. In late 2003, he announced that his country would eliminate its unconventional weapons programs, including a nascent nuclear project.

Gaddafi also sought to get Libya out from under economic sanctions by taking responsibility for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103 over Scotland, although he and his government continued to deny carrying out the terror attack that killed 270 people.

But these efforts to normalize Libya's relations with the West failed to protect him or his country. In 2011 when Islamic militants staged an uprising around Benghazi, Gaddafi moved to crush it, and Secretary of State Clinton eagerly joined with some European countries in seeking military intervention to destroy Gaddafi's regime.

The United Nations Security Council approved a plan for the humanitarian protection of civilians in and around Benghazi, but the Obama administration and its European allies exploited that opening to mount a full-scale "regime change" war.

Prominent news personalities, such as MSNBC's Andrea Mitchell, cheered on the war with the claim that Gaddafi had American "blood on his hands" over the Pan Am 103 case because he had accepted responsibility. The fact that his government continued to deny actual guilt – and the international conviction of Libyan Abdelbaset al-Megrahi was a judicial travesty – was ignored. Almost no one in the West dared question the longtime groupthink of Libyan guilt.

By October 2011, Gaddafi had fled Tripoli and was captured by rebels in Sirte. He was tortured, sodomized with a knife and then executed. Clinton, whose aides felt she should claim credit for Gaddafi's overthrow as part of a Clinton Doctrine, celebrated his murder with a laugh and a quip, "We came; we saw; he died."

But Gaddafi's warnings about Islamist terrorists in Benghazi came back to haunt Clinton when on Sept. 11, 2012, militants attacked the U.S. consulate and CIA station there, killing Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans.

The obsessive Republican investigation into the Benghazi attack failed to demonstrate many of the lurid claims about Clinton's negligence, but it did surface the fact that she had used a private server for her official State Department emails, which, in turn, led to an FBI investigation which severely damaged her 2016 presidential run.

Lessons Learned

Meanwhile, back in North Korea, the young dictator Kim Jong Un was taking all this history in. According to numerous sources, he concluded that his and North Korea's only safeguard would be a viable nuclear deterrent to stave off another U.S.-sponsored "regime change" war – with him meeting a similar fate as was dealt to Hussein and Gaddafi.

Since then, Kim and his advisers have made clear that the surrender of North Korea's small nuclear arsenal is off the table. They make the understandable point that the United States has shown bad faith in other cases in which leaders have given up their WMDs in compliance with international demands and then saw their countries invaded and faced grisly executions themselves.

Now, the world faces a predicament in which an inexperienced and intemperate President Trump confronts a crisis that his two predecessors helped to create and make worse. Trump has threatened "fire and fury" like the world has never seen, suggesting a nuclear strike on North Korea, which, in turn, has vowed to retaliate.

Millions of people on the Korean peninsula and Japan – and possibly elsewhere – could die in such a conflagration. The world's economy could be severely shaken, given Japan's and South Korea's industrial might and the size of their consumer markets.

If such a horror does come to pass, the U.S. government and the U.S. mainstream media will surely revert to their standard explanation that Kim was simply "crazy" and brought this destruction on himself. Trump's liberal critics also might attack Trump for bungling the diplomacy.

But the truth is that many of Washington's elite policymakers – both on the Republican and Democratic sides – will share in the blame. And so too should the U.S. mainstream media.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

Refusing to Learn Lessons from Libya

Exclusive: Official Washington never likes to admit a mistake no matter how grave or obvious. Too many Important People would look bad. So, the rationalizations never stop as with the Libyan fiasco, observes James W. Carden.

By James W. Carden

In recent weeks, the *Washington Post's* Cairo bureau chief Sudarsan Raghavan has published a series of remarkable dispatches from war-torn Libya, which is still reeling from the aftermath of NATO's March 2011 intervention and the subsequent overthrow and murder of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

On July 2, Raghavan reported on what amounts to Libya's modern-day slave trade. According to his report, Libya is "now home to a thriving trade in humans. Unable to pay exorbitant smuggling fees or swindled by traffickers, some of the world's most desperate people are being held as slaves, tortured or forced into prostitution."

The numbers help tell the tale. "The number of migrants departing from Libya is surging," writes Raghavan, "with more than 70,000 arriving in Italy so far this year, a 28 percent increase over the same period last year."

On August 1, Raghavan returned to the pages of the *Post* with a disturbing portrait of life in Tripoli, reporting that: "Six years after the revolution that toppled dictator Moammar Gaddafi, the mood in this volatile capital is a meld of hopelessness and gloom. Diplomatic and military efforts by the United States and its allies have failed to stabilize the nation; the denouement of the crisis remains far from clear. Most Libyans sense that the worst is yet to come."

Raghavan notes that "Under Gaddafi, the oil-producing country was once one of the world's wealthiest nations." Under his rule, "Libyans enjoyed free health care, education and other benefits under the eccentric strongman's brand of socialism." It would be difficult not to see, Raghavan writes, "the insecurity that followed Gaddafi's death has ripped apart the North African country."

Taken together, Raghavan's reports should come as a rude shock to stalwart supporters of NATO's intervention in Libya. Yet the embarrassing fervor with which many embraced the intervention remains largely undiminished – with, as we will see, one notable exception.

An Upside-Down Meritocracy

Anne Marie Slaughter, who served as policy planning chief at the State Department under Hillary Clinton, emailed her former boss after the start of the NATO operation, to say: "I cannot imagine how exhausted you must be after this week, but I have never been prouder of having worked for you."

Five months after the start of NATO operation against Gaddafi, Slaughter went public with her approval in an op-ed for the *Financial Times* titled "Why Libya

Skeptics Were Proved Badly Wrong.” Proving, if nothing else, that the foreign policy establishment is a reverse meritocracy, Slaughter holds an endowed chair at Princeton and is also the well-compensated president of the influential Washington think tank New America.

President Obama’s decision to intervene received wide bipartisan support in the Congress and from media figures across the political spectrum, including Bill O’Reilly and Cenk Uyghur.

Yet the *casus belli* used to justify the intervention, as a U.K. parliamentary report made clear last September, was based on a lie: that the people of the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi were in imminent danger of being slaughtered by Gaddafi’s forces.

The report, issued by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, states that “Despite his rhetoric, the proposition that Muammar Gaddafi would have ordered the massacre of civilians in Benghazi was not supported by the available evidence.”

The report also noted that while “Many Western policymakers genuinely believed that Muammar Gaddafi would have ordered his troops to massacre civilians in Benghazi ... this did not necessarily translate into a threat to everyone in Benghazi. In short, the scale of the threat to civilians was presented with unjustified certainty. US intelligence officials reportedly described the intervention as ‘an intelligence-light decision.’”

Even as it became clear that the revolution had proved to be a disaster for the country, the arbiters of acceptable opinion in Washington continued to insist that NATO’s intervention was not only a success, but the right thing to do. It is a myth that has gained wide purchase among D.C.’s foreign policy cognoscenti, despite the judgment of former President Barack Obama, who famously described the intervention as “a shit show.”

Still Spinning

A full year after the commencement of NATO’s campaign against Gaddafi, former NATO Ambassador Ivo Daalder and NATO Supreme Allied Commander James Stravidis took to the pages of that reliable bellwether of establishment opinion, Foreign Affairs, to declare that “NATO’s operation in Libya has rightly been hailed as a model intervention.”

According to Daalder and Stravidis, “the alliance responded rapidly to a deteriorating situation that threatened hundreds of thousands of civilians rebelling against an oppressive regime.”

In 2016, a Clinton campaign press release justifying the ill-starred intervention, claimed “Qadhafi and his regime made perfectly clear what their plans were for dealing with those who stood up against his reign, using disgusting language in urging his backers to cleanse the country of these rebels. This was a humanitarian crisis.”

Astonishingly, the campaign “Factsheet” goes on to assert that, “there was no doubt that further atrocities were on the way, as Qadhafi’s forces storming towards the county’s second biggest city.” Yet there is, as both the U.K. parliamentary report and a Harvard study by Alan J. Kuperman found, no evidence for this whatsoever.

“Qaddafi did not perpetrate a ‘bloodbath’ in any of the cities that his forces recaptured from rebels prior to NATO intervention – including Ajdabiya, Bani Walid, Brega, Ras Lanuf, Zawiya, and much of Misurata – so there was,” writes Kuperman, “virtually no risk of such an outcome if he had been permitted to recapture the last rebel stronghold of Benghazi.”

Nevertheless, the myth persists. Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Shadi Hamid, the author of *Islamic Exceptionalism*, continues to insist, against all evidence, that the intervention was a success.

“The Libya intervention was successful,” says Hamid, “The country is better off today than it would have been had the international community allowed dictator Muammar Qaddafi to continue his rampage across the country.”

In this, Hamid is hardly alone. Left-activists in thrall to a Trotskyite vision of permanent revolution also continue to make the case that NATO’s intervention was a net positive for the country.

In a recent interview with *In These Times*, Leila Al-Shami claimed that “If Gaddafi had not fallen, Libya now would look very much like Syria. In reality, the situation in Libya is a million times better. Syrian refugees are fleeing to Libya. Far fewer people have been killed in Libya since Gaddafi’s falling than in Syria. Gaddafi being ousted was a success for the Libyan people.”

That danger in all this is that by refusing to learn the lessons of Libya (and Kosovo and Iraq and Syria) the U.S. foreign policy establishment will likely continue to find itself backing forces that seek to turn the greater Middle East into a fundamentalist Sunnistan, ruled by Sharia law, utterly hostile to religious pluralism, the rights of women, minorities and, naturally, U.S. national security interests in the region.

[For more on this topic, see Consortiumnews.com’s “Hillary Clinton’s Failed Libya ‘Doctrine.’”]

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Hiding US Lies About Libyan Invasion

Exclusive: In 2016, when a British parliamentary report demolished the excuse for the U.S. and its allies invading Libya in 2011, it should have been big news, but the U.S. mainstream media looked the other way, reports Joe Lauria.

By Joe Lauria (Corrects to show that a Times story was published.)

In George Orwell's 1949 dystopian novel *1984*, the protagonist Winston Smith's job was to delve into *The Times* of London archive and rewrite stories that could cause trouble for the totalitarian government ruling Britain. For instance, if the government made a prediction of wheat or automobile production in their five-year plan and that prediction did not come true, Winston would go into the archives and "correct" the numbers in the article on record.

In writing a response the other day to a critic of my recently published [book](#) on Hillary Clinton's electoral defeat, I was researching how the U.S. corporate media covered a 2016 British parliamentary report on Libya that showed how then Secretary of State Clinton and other Western leaders lied about an impending genocide in Libya to justify their 2011 attack on that country.

Using a combination of different keywords, I searched *The Washington Post* archives but came up with no story on the parliamentary report at all. A search of *The Los Angeles Times* archives likewise came up empty.

The New York Times had a dispatch from London. But it laid the blame entirely on the British and French governments, as if the U.S. had nothing to do with the devastation of Libya on false pretenses. The U.S. gave the same false war rationale as the British and French did. But *The New York Times* never held U.S. officials to account for it.

Ignoring or downplaying a story is one way U.S. corporate media deliberately buries news critical of American foreign policy. It is often news vital for Americans to understand their government's actions abroad, actions which could mean death or life for U.S. soldiers and countless civilians of other lands.

British newspapers widely covered the story. As did the International Edition of CNN, which has separate editors from CNN's U.S. website. An online search found no domestic CNN story. There's also no video online indicating that CNN domestic or CNN International television reported the story.

The Asia edition of *The Wall Street Journal* had a story. It's not clear if it appeared in the U.S. edition. *Newsweek* ran a story online. But it does not mention the United States even once.

It is a black mark on the Congress' two foreign affairs committees that neither undertook a similar inquiry (although congressional Republicans did obsess over the Sept. 11, 2012 attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, which occurred about a year after the Obama administration facilitated the military overthrow and brutal murder of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi).

Voice of America, which broadcasts outside the United States, ran a story on its website about the British parliamentary report, though the article confined criticism of the U.S. to not being prepared for the aftermath, not for the intervention itself.

A thorough online search shows that The Nation magazine and several alternative news sites, including ConsortiumNews and Salon, appear to be the only U.S.-based media that accurately covered the blockbuster story that undermined the entire U.S. narrative for leaving Libya a failed state.

Rationale for an Attack

The United States peddled its false story of a coming genocide in Libya under the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect to justify military intervention. On its face R2P appears to be a rare instance of morality in foreign and military policy: a coalition of nations with U.N. Security Council authorization would take military action to stop an impending massacre. It would have been hard to argue against such a policy in Libya if indeed its genuine purpose was to stop a massacre, after which the military operation would withdraw.

But that is not where it ended. While arguing that intervention was necessary to stop a massacre in Libya, the real intent, as the British report says, was regime change. That's not what American officials said at the outset and what corporate media reported.

"In the face of the world's condemnation, [Libyan leader Moammar] Qadhafi chose to escalate his attacks, launching a military campaign against the Libyan people," President Barack Obama told the nation on March 28, 2011. "Innocent people were targeted for killing. Hospitals and ambulances were attacked.

Journalists were arrested, sexually assaulted and killed. ... Cities and towns were shelled, mosques were destroyed, and apartment buildings reduced to rubble. Military jets and helicopter gunships were unleashed upon people who had no means to defend themselves against assaults from the air.”

Hillary Clinton, who according to leaked emails was the architect of the attack on Libya, said four days earlier: “When the Libyan people sought to realize their democratic aspirations, they were met by extreme violence from their own government.”

Sen. John Kerry, at the time chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chimed in: “Time is running out for the Libyan people. The world needs to respond immediately.”

Mustafa Abdul Jalil, head of a transitional council that the U.S., U.K. and France recognized as the legitimate Libyan government, pleaded for a no-fly zone. The University of Pittsburgh-educated Jalil was playing the same game as Ahmed Chalabi had in Iraq. They both sought U.S. military might to bring them to power. He said that if Gaddafi’s forces reached Benghazi they would kill “half a million” people. “If there is no no-fly zone imposed on Qadhafi’s regime, and his ships are not checked, we will have a catastrophe in Libya.”

Report Tells a Different Story

And yet the summary of the September 2016 Foreign Affairs Committee report says: “We have seen no evidence that the UK Government carried out a proper analysis of the nature of the rebellion in Libya. ... UK strategy was founded on erroneous assumptions and an incomplete understanding of the evidence.”

The report further said: “Despite his rhetoric, the proposition that Muammar Qadhafi would have ordered the massacre of civilians in Benghazi was not supported by the available evidence. While [he] certainly threatened violence against those who took up arms against his rule, this did not necessarily translate into a threat to everyone in Benghazi. In short, the scale of the threat to civilians was presented with unjustified certainty.”

The committee pointed out that Gaddafi’s forces had taken towns from rebels without attacking civilians. On March 17, two days before NATO’s assault began, Gaddafi told rebels in Benghazi to “throw away your weapons, exactly like your brothers in Ajdabiya and other places did. They laid down their arms and they are safe. We never pursued them at all.” The Libyan leader “also attempted to appease protesters in Benghazi with an offer of development aid before finally deploying troops,” the report said.

In another example, the report indicates that, after fighting in February and

March in the city of Misrata, just one percent of people killed by the Libyan government were women or children. “The disparity between male and female casualties suggested that Qadhafi regime forces targeted male combatants in a civil war and did not indiscriminately attack civilians,” the report said.

How then could *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, the most influential American newspapers, either refuse to adequately cover or not cover at all a story of such magnitude, a story that should have been front page news for days? It was a story that undermined the U.S. government’s entire rationale for an unjustified attack that devastated a sovereign nation.

There can be only one reason the story was ignored: precisely because the report exposed a U.S. policy that led to a horrible crime that had to be covered up.

History Spiked

Defending U.S. policy appears to be the underlying motive of U.S. news coverage of the world. The Libya story is just one example. I’ve had personal experience of editors rejecting or changing stories because it would undermine U.S. foreign policy goals.

I twice pitched a story about a now declassified Defense Intelligence Agency document warning of the rise of a U.S.-backed Salafist principality in eastern Syria, intended to pressure Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, that could join with Iraqi extremists to become an “Islamic State,” two years before it happened. My story was twice rejected. It would have undermined the entire American narrative on the War on Terror.

On another occasion, I wrote several articles about the lead-up to a U.N. vote to grant Palestine Observer State status. In each article I mentioned that 130 countries already recognized Palestine as a state and many had diplomatic relations, including Palestinian embassies in their capitals. That essential fact in the story kept getting cut out.

Another story I wrote was spiked about the position Russia, Syria and Iran took on who was responsible for the chemical weapons attack outside Damascus in August 2013. The story also included an interview with a Congressman who demanded to see U.S. intelligence backing its accusation against Assad.

Telling both sides of a story is Journalism 101. But not evidently when the other side is a perceived enemy of the United States. There are only interests in international affairs, not morality. A journalist should not take sides. But American journalists routinely do in international reporting. They take the “American side” rather than neutrally laying out for the reader the complex clash of interests of nations involved in an international dispute.

Downplaying or omitting the adversary's side of the story is a classic case of Americans explaining a foreign people to other Americans without giving a voice to those people, whether they be Russians, Palestinians, Syrians, Serbs, Iranians or North Koreans. Depriving a people of their voice dehumanizes them, making it easier to go to war against them.

One can only conclude that U.S. corporate media's mission is not to tell all sides of an international story, or report news critical of U.S. foreign policy, but instead to push an agenda supporting U.S. interests abroad. That's not journalism. That's instead the job Winston Smith did.

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The US Hand in the Libyan/Syrian Tragedies

Exclusive: The Obama administration's "regime change" debacles in Libya and Syria are spreading terrorist violence into Europe, but they have inflicted vastly more bloodshed in those two tragic nations, writes Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

Police investigations and media reports have confirmed that two of the bloodiest terrorist attacks in Western Europe – the coordinated bombings and shootings in Paris in November 2015, which killed 130 people, and the May 2017 bombing of the arena in Manchester, England, which killed 23 – trace back to an Islamic State unit based in Libya known as Katibat al-Battar.

Since those attacks, a number of analysts, myself included, have characterized them as a form of "blowback" from NATO's disastrous campaign to depose Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. By turning Libya into an anarchic staging ground for radical Islamist militants, that intervention set in motion the deadly export of terror back into Western Europe.

But such a Eurocentric critique of NATO's intervention misses the far greater damage it wreaked on Syria, where nearly half a million people have died and at least 5 million refugees have had to flee their country since 2011. U.S.,

British, and French leaders helped trigger one of the world's great modern catastrophes through their act of hubris.

A decade ago, Libya was a leading foe of radical jihadis, not a sanctuary for their international operations. A 2008 State Department memo noted that "Libya has been a strong partner in the war against terrorism." It gave the Gaddafi regime credit for "aggressively pursuing operations to disrupt foreign fighter flows," particularly by veterans of jihadist wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

All that came to an end in 2011, when armed rebels, including disciplined members of al-Qaeda and Islamic State, enlisted NATO's help to topple Gaddafi's regime. Western leaders ignored the prescient warnings of Gaddafi's son Seif that "Libya may become the Somalia of North Africa, of the Mediterranean. . . . You will see millions of illegal immigrants. The terror will be next door." Gaddafi himself similarly predicted that once the jihadis "control the Mediterranean . . . then they will attack Europe."

Subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe certainly vindicated those warnings, while discrediting the so-called humanitarian case for waging an illegal war in Libya. But the predicted jihadi efforts to "control the Mediterranean" have had far graver repercussions, at least in the case of Syria.

A recent story in the *New York Times* on the genesis of recent terror attacks on France and Britain noted in passing that the Islamic State in Libya, composed of "seasoned veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan," was "among the first foreign jihadist contingent to arrive in Syria in 2012, as the country's popular revolt was sliding into a broader civil war and Islamist insurgency."

A former British counter-terrorism analyst told the newspaper, "some of the baddest dudes in Al Qaeda were Libyan. When I looked at the Islamic State, the same thing was happening. They were the most hard-core, the most violent – the ones always willing to go to extremes when others were not. The Libyans represented the elite troops, and clearly ISIS capitalized on this."

Extremist Violence in Syria

These Libyan jihadists leveraged their numbers, resources, and fanaticism to help escalate Syria's conflict into the tragedy we know today. The mass murder we now take for granted was not inevitable.

Although Syria's anti-government protests in the spring of 2011 turned violent almost from the start, many reformers and government officials strove to prevent an all-out civil war. In August 2011, leaders of Syria's opposition wisely declared that calls to arms were "unacceptable politically, nationally, and ethically. Militarizing the revolution would . . . undermine the gravity of the

humanitarian catastrophe involved in a confrontation with the regime. Militarization would put the revolution in an arena where the regime has a distinct advantage and would erode the moral superiority that has characterized the revolution since its beginning.”

Largely forgotten today, the Assad regime also took serious steps to deescalate the violence, including lifting the country’s state of emergency, disbanding the unpopular National Security Court, appointing a new government, and hosting a national dialogue with protest leaders.

But on August 18, 2011, the same Western leaders who were bombing Gaddafi announced to the world that “the time has come for President Assad to step aside.” Further energizing Syrian militants, Libyan rebels were just then in the midst of conquering Tripoli with NATO’s help.

“That is an ominous sign for Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad,” reported the *Wall Street Journal*. “Already there are signs Libya is giving inspiration to the rebels trying to oust Mr. Assad. . . . Syrian protesters took to the streets chanting ‘Gadhafi tonight, Bashar tomorrow.’ . . . The Libyan episode may serve simply to sharpen the conflict in Syria: both spurring on the dissidents and strengthening Mr. Assad’s resolve to hold on.”

Stoking war in Syria was not an unintended consequence of the Libyan campaign, but a conscious part of the longstanding neoconservative ambition to “remake the map of the Middle East” by toppling radical and anti-American regimes. The same *Journal* article described the grandiose aims of some Washington interventionists:

“Beyond Syria, a new dose of energy provided by Libya’s uprising could ripple out to other nations in the region. In particular, U.S. officials hope it will reinvigorate a protest movement that arose inside Iran in 2009 to challenge President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s re-election. . . Syria has served for 30 years as Iran’s closest strategic ally in the region. U.S. officials believe the growing challenge to Mr. Assad’s regime could motivate Iran’s democratic forces.”

Instead of motivating Iran’s democrats, of course, the Syrian conflict motivated Iran’s hardliners to send Revolutionary Guard units and Hezbollah proxy forces into the country, further destabilizing the region.

Following the gruesome murder of Gaddafi in the fall of 2011, Libyan zealots quickly began fueling other terrorist conflicts, ranging from Mali to the Middle East, with arms looted from Gaddafi’s vast stocks.

“The weapons proliferation that we saw coming out of the Libyan conflict was of

a scale greater than any previous conflict – probably 10 times more weapons than we saw going on the loose in places like Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan,” observed an expert at Human Rights Watch.

A United Nations investigation determined that “Transfers of arms and ammunition from Libya were among the first batches of weapons and ammunition to reach the Syrian opposition.” It also stressed that Libyan weapons were arming primarily “extremist elements,” allowing them to gain territory and influence at the expense of more moderate rebel groups.

Spreading the War

As early as November 2011, Islamist warlords in Libya began offering “money and weapons to the growing insurgency against Bashar al-Assad,” according to the *Daily Telegraph*. Abdulhakim Belhadj, commander of the Tripoli Military Council and the former leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, an al-Qaeda affiliate, met secretly with Syrian rebel leaders in Turkey to discuss training their troops. (In 2004, he had been the victim of a CIA kidnap plot and rendition from Malaysia to Libya.)

The commander of one armed Libyan gang told the newspaper, “Everyone wants to go (to Syria). We have liberated our country, now we should help others. . . This is Arab unity.”

In April 2012, Lebanese authorities confiscated a ship carrying more than 150 tons of arms and ammunition originating in Misrata, Libya. A U.N.-authorized panel inspected the weapons and reported finding SA-24 and SA-7 surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank guided missiles, and a variety of other light and heavy weapons.

By that August, according to *Time* magazine, “hundreds of Libyans” had flocked to Syria to “export their revolution,” bringing with them weapons, expertise in making bombs, and experience in battlefield tactics.

“Within weeks of the successful conclusion of their revolution, Libyan fighters began trickling into Syria,” the magazine noted. “But in recent months, that trickle has allegedly become a torrent, as many more have traveled to the mountains straddling Syria and Turkey, where the rebels have established their bases.”

A Syrian rebel told the newsweekly, “They have heavier weapons than we do,” including surface-to-air missiles. “They brought these weapons to Syria, and they are being used on the front lines.”

A month later, the London *Times* reported that a Libyan ship carrying more than

400 tons of weapons bound for Syria, including SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles and rocket-propelled grenades, had docked in Turkey. Such weapons particularly compounded the suffering of civilians caught up in the war.

As France's foreign minister told reporters that October, rebel-held anti-aircraft missiles were "forcing (Syrian government) planes to fly extremely high, and so the strikes are less accurate."

According to later reporting by journalist Seymour Hersh, most such Libyan weapons made their way to Syria via covert routes supervised by the CIA, under a program authorized by the Obama administration in early 2012. Funding and logistics support came from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. The CIA supposedly avoided disclosing the program to Congress by classifying it as a liaison operation with a foreign intelligence partner, Britain's MI6.

Word of the operation began leaking to the London media by December 2012. The CIA was said to be sending in more advisers to help ensure that the Libyan weapons did not reach radical Islamist forces.

Of course, their efforts came too late; U.S. intelligence officials knew by that time that "the Salafist(s), the Muslim Brotherhood, and (al-Qaeda)" were "the major forces driving the insurgency." The influx of new arms simply compounded Syria's suffering and raised its profile as a dangerous arena of international power competition.

Libya's arms and fighters helped transform the Syrian conflict from a nasty struggle into a bloodbath. As Middle East scholar Omar Dahi noted, "the year 2012 was decisive in creating the present catastrophe. There were foreign elements embroiled in Syria before that date . . . but until early 2012 the dynamics of the Syrian conflict were largely internal. . . . Partly in . . . appropriation of weapons pumped in from the outside and partly in anticipation of still greater military assistance, namely from the West, the opposition decided to take up arms.

"The decision—militarization—had three main effects. First, it dramatically increased the rate of death and destruction throughout the country. . . . By mid-2012, the monthly casualties were almost in excess of the total in the entire first year of the uprising. Militarization gave the Syrian regime a free hand to unleash its full arsenal of indiscriminate weaponry. . . . Perhaps most fatefully, the advent of armed rebellion placed much of the opposition's chances in the hands of those who would fund and arm the fighters. . . . It was then that the jihadi groups were unleashed."

The collateral victims of NATO's intervention in Libya now include 6 million

Libyans attempting to survive in a failed state, millions of people across North Africa afflicted by Islamist terrorism, 20 million Syrians yearning for an end to war, and millions of innocent Europeans who wonder when they might become targets of suicidal terrorists. There is nothing “humanitarian” about wars that unleash such killing and chaos, with no end in sight.

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