

# LIBYA – WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE?

Jan OBERG

## ABSTRACT

This article comes in three parts. First, what decision-makers could have learned about conflict-management in the light of the major conflicts the last few decades, beginning if you like with the lessons learned from (mis)handling the Balkans. Secondly, the author argues that a series of initiatives could - and should - have been tried and found in vain before taking to the NATO bombing campaign in the name of protecting the Libyan people. It also disputes the stated motives of that decision even though it had a mandate from the UN Security Council. The third part makes up a status as of August 15, 2011; a series of facts are presented that have not been featured prominently in the Western mainstream media, including the fact that over 15% of the Libyan people have become refugees which indicates a deficient protection. Next it makes 9 predictions about the future of Libya and argues that the NATO bombings may well be the starting point of a prolonged and complex violent conflict. The article ends with some reflections - pertaining to Scandinavia but other too - on whether war has become "Salongfähig" with both the Right and the Left; it is the first time in the history of Denmark, Sweden and Norway that their parliament votes "yes" to NATO's intervention with one little xenophobic party in Sweden as the only exception. In summary, although the author is strongly critical of this case of conflict-handling, the main thrust is the article is the constructive perspective - and thus the title - that it could have been handled with much less violence had the knowledge, the tools, the interests and the political will been present.

**Key words:** Lybia, intervention, NATO, conflict-management, peace

## АПСТРАКТ

Статијата е составена од три дела. Прво, се поставува прашањето кои лекции требаа да ги научат носителите на одлуки, во контекст на главните конфликти од изминатите неколку децении, почнувајќи од (мис)менаџментот на Балканот. Второ, авторот изложува низа иницијативи кои можеа (и требаа) да се пробаат пред НАТО да започне со бомбардирање во име на заштита на либискиот народ. Во статијата се преиспитуваат и декларираните мотиви зад оваа кампања, иако таа доби мандат од Советот за безбедност на ОН. Во третиот дел се дава пресек на состојбата во Либија на 15 август 2011 година; презентирани се серија факти, кои западните медиуми не ги изложија, вклучувајќи го и фактот дека над 15% од либискиот народ станаа бегалци, што е индикатор за нивна недоволна заштита. Во продолжение авторот дава девет

предвидувања за иднината на Либија и аргументира дека бомбардирањето на НАТО може да биде вовед во пролонгиран и сложен насилен конфликт во земјата. Текстот завршува со неколку рефлексии, кои се поврзани со Скандинавија, но и со други региони, за тоа дали војната стана „салон за битка“ и на десницата и на левицата; имено, за првпат во историјата на Данска, Шведска и Норвешка праламентите гласаа позитивно за интервенцијата на НАТО, а единствен исклучок беше една мала ксенофобична партија во Шведска. Накусо, иако авторот е многу критичен кон овој случај на справување со конфликт, главниот акцент е ставен на конструктивна перспектива (за што зборува и насловот) дека истиот можеше да се третира со многу помалку насилство, доколку беше внесено знаење, инструменти, интереси и политичка волја.

**Клучни зборови:** Либија, интервенција, НАТО, менаџирање со конфликт, мир

## I PROLOGUE - WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE LEARNED BY NOW

It is a safe assumption that people in general neither like nor love war. They prefer peace, and major organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union state that their highest aim is world peace. There are distinguished prizes for peace, and peace people like M. K. Gandhi, Luther King Jr., Dalai Lama and Nelson Mandela to name a few are revered by everyone. There is nothing similar for those who bomb, kill and rape. In consequence all wars and security and defence policies are legitimated by noble motives, among them the wish to maintain or create peace.

In the recent case of Libya surprisingly few have protested compared with, say, the war on Iraq. From right to left, men and women, human rights and peace movements as well as scores of intellectuals have - admittedly more or less hesitantly - endorsed NATO countries' intervention, mainly with reference to there being so little time and that a genocide on thousands of people were immanent. And media people cried: *do* something!

It's hard to believe that they all love war, isn't it?

It is! And therefore the assumption we make here is that *they accept it more or less reluctantly because they don't see alternatives to war - bombings and interventions. (And because they are seduced by their own talk about being so noble, but that is another matter).*

Thus, if we all became better at thinking about alternatives to war, there would likely be fewer wars. Another word for that is *pro-peace* - the search for treatment and not only for critical analyses of the assumptions, the diagnosis and the prognosis. It's necessary to be critical but it is never enough to change the world.

It has always been easy - too easy - for peace people to denounce warfare. The real challenge for a peace person and for peace politics is to answer this question: If war is unacceptable, *then what can we do to deal with a conflict? What tools can we use instead of those of violence?*

This three-part analysis is an attempt to stimulate a dialogue about some possible answers. The first part is mainly theoretical and general. In the second and third we apply it to Libya.

You may choose to read only one of them, but if you want to *do* something and help make this a better world, let me tell you that there is nothing so practical as a good theory and no theory better than that which is based on practice in the real world.

## 1. LEARN LESSONS

It would be good for the world if decision-makers could reduce the propensity to repeat the mistakes of their predecessors. Drawing at least some lessons from Yugoslavia, Somalia, Georgia, Afghanistan, and Iraq - about the role of propaganda, the character of civil wars, noble motives versus state interests, military intervention in civil wars, No-Fly Zones, etc. would have helped us to do better in the case of Libya - and over time move from conflict amateurism to professional international conflict management based on expertise (as military activity is based on professional knowledge, training and historical experiences).

*So, learn lessons from earlier conflict mis-management and improve your skills. It will help you serve as a model to others and to be principled instead of erratic and self-serving.*

## 2. DO SOLID FACT-FINDING

It is so important to have at least basic knowledge about the parties - widely defined - and ourselves as participants in most of the conflicts. The West is not a noble mediator; it is a historical participant in virtually all conflict zones.

We need to know much more about Libya's history, social structure, political culture, modern development, Bedouin modes of thinking, local peace and conflict traditions and economy simply to know how the people and its leader are likely to react to what we do. And we need media that can tell us about those things and not only show pictures of war, military parades and the faces of leaders they suddenly decide are 'dictators'.

*So, know the parties, know the 'enemy' and - not the least - know yourself! Spin-doctored messages and smart media presentations must not substitute knowledge about the parties, their problems and professionalism in conflict-management. Those who let them do so will fall into their own traps, sooner rather than later.*

### 3. AIM AT COMPLEX UNDERSTANDING

If truth is the first victim in war, complex understanding is the second. Focussing only on Khaddafi (as media do) and making one man the root cause of everything (as politicians do) is human folly, a dangerous ignorance of complexities in any conflict anywhere. Everything in Iraq is not fine because Saddam is dead. All problems will not be solved if Khaddafi goes. (And Obama could not make everything fine in U.S. foreign policy).

So, to believe that everything will be fine if one man goes or comes, is a recipe for wrongheaded policies - as we have seen everywhere else. *To be on the safe side, ask many questions and seek answers from many and different people - or you'll be surprised later!*

### 4. ANALYZE THE CONFLICT, THE PROBLEM - DON'T APPORTION GUILT

Conflict analysis has a minimum of four elements: Who are the Parties? What are their Attitudes? What is their Behaviour? And what is the Conflict about? - P + A + B + C. Be aware that there is their understanding inside the conflict and yours which is the outsider's.

When you have a solid understanding of these things, make your Diagnosis, Prognosis and Treatment - *before* you intervene.

We can apply a lot from medicine to conflict-handling and conflict-resolution; a professional doctor doesn't just blame the patient for the disease but focuses on therapy, healing, on health and prevention of the disease in the future. In short, s/he looks at the problem to be solved rather than get blinded by whom to blame.

*So, be tough on the problem and softer on people and beware that if your Diagnosis is wrong, everything else will go wrong! For these kinds of things, you need professional conflict and resolution expertise, area experts etc. - if you don't consult professionals the result will be as miserable when a person without medicine performs surgery on a cancer patient.*

### 5. IT IS THEIR CONFLICT, NOT YOURS

If you believe you know everything better than the parties do and you have the solution they can't see, you'll do more harm than good. If you intervene, you must keep in mind that it is their conflict and that, therefore, the only solution(s) that will work are those they have participated in developing and are willing to live with after you have left.

*So, the moment you steal the conflict from them, dictate or threaten solutions or know best - you become a participant, not a mediator, never a peace-maker.*

### 6. WIDEN THE SPACE OF THE CONFLICT

Don't think for a moment that this is about Libya only. It is about the whole of the Middle East, about the West's future encounter with the BRIC countries Brazil, Russia, India

and, not the least China. It is about the future control of the world's oil and financial transactions flowing from it, etc., not the least in Africa. It's about Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

*So, the war-zone is only like a stage in a theatre, the drama acted out there builds on material derived from society outside the theatre.*

## **7. EXTEND THE TIME OF THE CONFLICT**

Don't believe for a moment that this is about Libya February 2011. It's about Libya over a hundred years as it was occupied in 1911 - Italian North Africa that was divided in the Eastern Cyrenaica and the Western Tripolitania, quite similar to today. It is about Libyans fighting for independence and the Italians killing tens of thousands of people in fighting and through starvation in camps. It about the British taking over East and West 1943-51 while the British controlled the southwestern one-third, Fezzan. It is about independence under King Idris 1951-69 and the Khaddafi revolution 1969-2011 that has created a country different from all others.

*So, apply a minimum of history, also the one that include your own Western-created horrors and hatred in the past.*

## **8. LOOK AT HOW NON-VIOLENT AND VIOLENT METHODS OF SOCIAL CHANGE ARE EMPLOYED?**

Why did it become violent in Libya? Who armed Khaddafi and made him the "dictator" he suddenly was called by Westerners? Who armed the rebels? Why did the rebels change from nonviolence to violence, from saying 'No' to any foreign intervention and to - allegedly - begging for it?

As part of the D-P-T above ask: What can non-violence achieve under what circumstances? What can violence methods achieve under what circumstances? Interestingly, the long chain of liberation struggle from authoritarian leaders around the world in our contemporary history has been overwhelmingly non-violent and failed in cases where violence dominated.

It's an ignorant, lazy intellectual who advocates violence before having explored the non-violent options. A doctor can never justify causing more blood-spilling or pain than what is necessary to heal a patient.

*So, to be on the safe side: Investigate the potentials of non-violence in any conflict, before you recommend violent methods which - in its turn - must be seen in the light of what you want to achieve. As Gandhi said "the means are the goals in-the-making."*

## **9. APPLY A LITTLE COMMON SENSE, EMPATHY AND HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY**

Decision-makers in conflict situation tend to make a series of fallacies such as believing that 'they' will react as 'we' wish them to react upon our actions - and get surprised that they don't. Living yourself into the situation of, say, Khaddafi and his regime is not a sign of sympathy but of sound empathy-based analysis: What would 'we' do if they did to 'us' what we now do to them? Having good answers to such a question minimize the risk of going wrong and drive on wishful thinking - they will do as we say! Secondly, how come decision-makers so often believe that what we know does not function in closer human relations - such as threatening violence or humiliating someone - will work at the international level?

Third, learn from history that it won't work in the long run that we conduct policies on the basis of one set of norms and laws for 'us' and another for 'them'.

*So, it is wise to continuously challenge our own assumptions about persons, cultures and politics before we intervene in someone else's conflict - and better take time planning to make it right than jumping to conclusions and make everything worse. And since people are not dumb, double and triple standards will be revealed.*

## **10. BEWARE OF YOUR LIMITATIONS AND BIASES - DON'T COMMIT HUBRIS!**

It's been proven again and again that the global system invests billions and billions in military tools but lack the most basic when it comes to civilian conflict-management, peace education, peace and conflict academies, research in the human dimensions of international conflicts etc.

We can kill hundreds of millions fellow human beings in well-planned, sophisticated nuclear war, we plan to be able to shoot down missiles with missiles and we can make iPhones.

But humanity still does not know how to live and thrive through unity in diversity. It has not solved the problems of poverty and structural underdevelopment; human suffering is unbearable even though some would argue that the world is a better place on some indicators than a few decades ago. We have known for 5-6 decades that the oil would peak and disappear but we haven't done much to meet the challenge. You can go on yourself!

The strongest have little wisdom but the banal, missionary and deeply violence-prone idea that everybody should become like us, i.e. the big standardizing project worldwide. Frankly, this total mismatch between our military investments and our human investment is not very impressive in terms of civilization.

So when conflict happens - and it always will - the gut reaction is: Send the marines or the air force, kill first and ask questions later. One reason so many otherwise sensible people advocate violence is that they don't see alternatives but also that it is so easy - it is all available and ready to use. The more you have of it, the easier it is to take down from

the shelves, shoot and ask questions later. Ask how much weaponry a country or culture has and you have a fairly good indicator of how interventionist, trigger-happy it is.

Thus, there is no parallel to NATO, there are no peace ministries and academies, there are virtually no funds for peace research compared with military research - and little conflict journalism in an ocean of war reporting and violent imagery. There is military service but no parallel civil peace service - continue yourself with indicators of the militarist society of our time.

*So, the international "community" is woefully inadequate in terms of norms, decision-making mechanisms, governance, organization, education and civilian conflict-handling. It is totally unbalanced. When conflict happens, we have most of what we need the least and lack what we need the most. To remain civilized. It doesn't really help to have five hammers in your tool box, when your window is broken or your tapestry needs to be glued to the wall. The end result is likely to be no windows and no walls.*

*There is a reason that, in contemporary history, big, militarily strong countries have systematically lost wars in smaller countries. They will in Libya, too.*

*Omnipotence is a bad navigator and war is an outdated way of handling humanity's problems. Conflict professionalism and peace-making is the emerging paradigm.*

## **II WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE BEFORE THE UN/NATO DECISION TO BOMBING?**

The following is based on a - consciously naive - assumption: That the international so-called community was really trying to help solve a serious internal conflict in Libya. And the question we ask is this: What should, under such an assumption, be done?

However, if the real issue is a power game - be it about sheer Western interventionism, gold, finance capital, oil or a primitive urge to simply kill someone we don't like - then the thoughts and ideas below are of course naive. But if so, we must also draw the sad conclusion a priori that the noble motives stated by the Western powers about the need to save human lives, pave the road to democracy, having a responsibility to protect and similar stated goals is nothing but deception and propaganda - and self-delusion.

What I do below is simply to take such noble motives seriously and ask: If we believe in them, what should then have been done?

### **1. MUCH BETTER INTELLIGENCE GATHERING AND EARLY WARNING**

Generally, it can safely be assumed that foreign units and intelligence people were on the ground in Libya way before all this happened. British SAS units are known to have been there.

Thus, it is not credible that it was all a surprise, particularly given the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt.

Better intelligence would mean, among other things, that we would have known more about Khaddafi's intentions and military planning as well as about who the rebels/freedom fighters were.

The time pressure so often referred to it as not credible. The truth is that the Western decision-makers were woefully uninformed by those who should be knowledgeable about world affairs and make early warnings exactly to prevent leaders from being caught by surprises as well as providing them with information in time for them to make quality decisions instead of panic policies.

Thus, there was more time to decide what to do. A society in which we have made numerous deals and in which Western intelligence and other agencies allegedly have made numerous attempts to kill the leader - well, that must be a society we also know quite a lot about. And if Western leaders did, they ignored that knowledge for other reasons.

Given all this, one wonders: Where was the early warning, the early listening and early action to *prevent* the violent conflicts inside the Libyan society to blow up?

## **2. FACT-FINDING MISSIONS, EXPLORATORY TALKS, HEARINGS, GATHER STAKE HOLDERS**

The basic rule of thumb of all conflict management applies of course in this case too: Never get involved in someone else's conflict without doing your homework. Presidents, prime ministers, foreign and defence ministers should have gathered all materials possible from Libya and other area experts, conflict-resolution experts, connoisseurs of Islamic and Beduin thinking, etc. and listened to their opinions.

One or more delegations could have been sent to Libya to speak with all sides and not just with the rebels. Further fact-finding could have been done by inviting various parties to the conflict to the EU, holding hearings in the European Parliament and in the United Nations General Assembly. Let the parties tell their stories to the world, answer questions from enlightened media people and others - and we may begin to understand complexities and get a broader understanding in space and time.

With a global media structure, there is no reason why CNN, Aljazeera, BBC and many others could arrange panel discussions and roundtables where representatives of the parties could confront each other - and listen to each other - in civilized manners. In and of itself it would give media an opportunity to do professional work while also helping a little to bring about peace rather than mobilizing energies in the direction of war.

With due respect: basing French foreign policy on the uninformed views of an egocentric, celebrity philosopher only tells one thing: how utterly poorly equipped France,



and the rest of the world for that matter, is when it comes to conflict-management and peace-making.

Had the UN kept its older fact-finding capacity and lessons learned units, or had it had a corps of fact-finders and mediation professionals - it would have been possible to develop a much broader understanding and devise a more complex reaction than the one-and-only No-Fly Zone that amounted simply to aggression on another sovereign state (something which Khaddafi has not done).

To mention just one advantage: We would have avoided the classical banalization conflicts that consists in believing that even complex conflicts have only two parties, one evil and one good with no shades of grey and with no other parties. A simple reading of the Libyan society gives at hand that there are unlimited potentials for conflicts in what is basically a society divided into almost 150 family/clan units, some 6 million Libyans and about 1,5 foreigners, workers and others. One does have to be a fortune-teller to imagine also that there will be a huge de facto party to the conflict - however latent rather than manifest, consisting of all those who one must suppose are neither pro-Khaddafi nor with the rebels.

One would also have gathered some understanding of possible answer to the question: What kind of vacuum will appear if Khaddafi is deposed or killed? Which groups will try to move in there and with what means? One of the most naive beliefs in the person-fixated West is that all problems are caused by a single person with a few loyalists around him - say, Mohammed Farah Ideed, Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, etc. - and that everything will be just fine the day such leaders fall.

Without a comprehensive diagnosis everything - *everything* - that follows will be wrong and most of the future actions will be decided with a view to cover up for the deficient diagnosis - like performing various other surgeries and spilling more of a patient's blood because we thought the problem was to cut off a leg where a better diagnosis would have led to a completely different and efficient treatment.

### **3. COORDINATE AND CO-OPERATE WITH REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

In terms of history, structure, culture and religion Libya is partly West, partly East, partly Middle East and very strongly African. Chances are that other governments than those of the United States, United Kingdom and France would have not only had a better understanding of Libya but would also have better access to the regime.

The most relevant regional organizations of course would be the African Union, the Arab League, perhaps the Gulf Cooperation Council & OPEC; they are all organizations that Western media and state-financed security experts are happy to describe as inefficient and

not getting their act together - without seeing that the same applies to the European Union - perhaps only to a higher degree.

If these institutions had been systematically involved with some kind of division of labour among them, we would likely have seen more diversity in views, more different aspects discussed - we would have seen much more emphasis placed on civilian-political methods and negotiation, whereas with the West believing it knows everything and can run the show alone - it is bound to make all the simplification and mistakes *in relation to* the stated goal of conflict-resolution. We would also have witnessed a higher degree of cultural sensitivity and respect.

In the year 2011, it would have been natural to expect for a sophisticated EU and UN to have mechanisms in place to always be able to handle conflicts in co-operation with regional organizations as well as respect the UN Charter norm of trying to make 'peace by peaceful means' before taking to bombers and aircraft carriers.

Regrettably, however, the international community is not that mature, its governments not that conflict-competent and the interest in civilian/human security not that strong that such mechanisms are in place. So much more has been invested for decades by every government around the world in the military that that is the only tool that stands ready in emergency situations. 'Send the Marines', may be relevant in some cases, but if you say so just because you have no other ideas of how to deal with a situation, everybody is guaranteed to be worse off down the road.

#### **4. AVOID SAYING ALL THE ALARMIST, HATE-INDUCING AND OFFENSIVE THINGS - TREAT THE CONFLICT SIMPLY AS A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED**

Inflammatory notions, accusations and demonization of those we profess to work with to find a solution - such as persuading Khaddafi to stop killing his own citizens, accept a ceasefire, or step down - is not helpful, to say the least. It seems to be rooted in, and speak to, the basest instincts here and there for revenge, death and fast victory.

So, notions such as accusing someone of planning a genocide without the slightest evidence, switching in days from 'Colonel' and 'head of state' to 'dictator' militates against every professionalism. Would any Western leader sit down at a table with anyone who had called him a 'mad dog' or 'dictator' or 'criminal' prior to any moves made? The answer is obvious.

'No-Fly Zone' perhaps sounded fine but there were three reasons why it would not fly in the context of mediation and conflict-resolution; it was the 'only plan in town' (intellectual poverty with no other position to fall back on), it was de facto and de jure aggression against a sovereign state; in other words an indication of contempt for law or what we

accused Khaddafi to show. And, third, it sent the wrong signals, namely this: No matter what you do or don't do now, we intend to bomb you.

'Regime change' is another idea that won't fly for basically the same reasons. A regime can change, yes, but only - according to democratic theory - by the will of the people or by some elite negotiation process that usually takes quite a lot of time. Regime change through military intervention, attempts to kill or actually killing individual leaders and their families is unthinkable from a conflict-management perspective - but of course not from an interventionist-imperialist or neo-colonialist perspective.

So, if you say and do all these things, chances are that you are by no means aiming to solve a conflict with as little violence as possible and help the citizens on the way to democracy. Rather, you use these terms as a pretext for policies of dominance, humiliation and the fulfillment of strategic and other interest of your own. At any rate, you opponent's red warning lamps and sirens will go off at hearing any of this.

So, to put it crudely, we still lack even the contours of a professionally trained and effectively structured conflict-handling apparatus in every country as well as internationally.

## **5. ESTABLISH AN INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION COMMISSION**

True mediation and problem-solving requires a minimum of objectivity or impartiality. We would have served the cause of peace better, had we put together a truly global Commission with people from all continents, several religions and high standing - former UN, Nobel Prize laureates, people of culture who could have shuttled back and forth between different capitals and talked at length with every side in Libya - a kind of Jimmy Carter-like endeavor, showing respect for all parties (broadly defined) and operating in professional ways that it could not be accused of having taken sides.

Its members would have to possess a series of competences and personal experiences and come from countries that have no interests in a particular solution to the conflict in Libya. They would speak on for themselves and not in any way as representatives of any country. Its task would be to present, say, 2-3 proposals to the parties, to various organizations and to the world community. What a delightful, innovative idea it would be if such Commission's proposals could become objects of a vibrant discussion throughout parliaments, media, bloggers and others and encourage citizens as well as experts in debating the best possible solution to the conflict.

## **6. STICK TO CERTAIN PRINCIPLES, AVOID SELECTIVE MEASURES WITH THEM AND EXCEPTIONALISM FOR YOURSELF**

Get your principles right and use them in a principled way - don't tell the world that your humanitarian concerns are so deep and noble in the case of Libya where very few

people have been killed while you did not lift a finger in Cote d'Ivoire, Bahrein, Syria and perhaps above all, in the case of Israel's law- and UN resolution-defying occupation since 1967 and its systematic violations of all possible laws and rights including its activities on the West Bank, Gaza and in Lebanon which are much worse than Khaddafi's human rights violations.

The counter-argument of course is: But there is neither willingness nor resources available to intervene everywhere when such unacceptable things happen. The counter-argument to that counter-argument of course is: but then show us at least one case where you intervened rapidly and with military means where there were absolutely no material or strategic interests present. Even in cases of pure humanitarian concerns, say the hunger catastrophe at the Horn of Africa happening simultaneously and which threatens about 12 million lives, 2000 dying per day in July 2011, has mobilized only a tiny fraction of the political, economic or military energy invested in the case of Libya.

Governments with deep, long-term commitments to human suffering beyond their own national and vested interests are far and few between. Until proof of genuine humanitarian concerns can be discerned in the real world - say, in meeting the Global Millennium Goals and many other goals such as nuclear disarmament that have been high on the international agenda for decades - concepts like the Responsibility to Protect and military interventions to promote democracy, human rights (including women's liberation) and welfare can be written off as noble aims turned into salesmanship vis-a-vis media and the taxpayers who pay for the wars.

## **7. A ROBUST UN MISSION SHOULD HAVE BEEN TRIED BUT WE KNOW WHY IT HAS NOT**

A robust UN mission that could keep government and rebel forces from each other and from killing each other mercilessly should have been tried. It would have to consist of the three classical components: a) a well-armed military (some 20.000-30.000 perhaps) from all over the world, plus a few thousand globally composed UN Police and UN Civil Affairs people.

In the case of Libya there would have had to be a clear mandate of impartiality but also a robustness to disarm any side that would violate a ceasefire or non-attack agreement. Would the parties have accepted such a mission at an early stage? While we really cannot know because it was never even mentioned, the author believes the answer is positive. Why?

Khaddafi would be smart enough to see that he could lose a battle in the long run if the rebels in Benghazi would accumulate international support over time. Such a mission would make him a player in the game rather than open up for a violent regime change.

At the early stage of the conflict, the rebels were so weak, untrained, disorganized and inexperienced that they - who had originally vowed to fight only with non-violent means - would have seen it in their interest to work *with* and appear co-operative with the international community to gain legitimacy rather than against the international community and thereby get protection from the regime through such a mission.

Third, the vast majority of Libyans would have benefitted from such a mission too - earning money from tens of thousands of foreigners being in the country and providing at least some protection for those who are always, without exception, paying the prices for warfare: the innocent majority who do not take an active part in the fighting but are its victims.

It wouldn't be so difficult, would it? Eight thousand robust Canadian troops defeated Franjo Tudjman's forces in no time in Eastern Slavonia, Croatia - perfectly doable in Libya too. What was needed was to disarm anyone who breaks the protected zone with weapons, taking the weapons from this or that side and store them into a warehouse to which only the UN military would have the key. Weapons going into depots open up possible negotiations, arming the different sides - which is, predictably, what happened to the opposite. Believing Khaddafi, his family and country can be bombed day and night and that *that* will make him come your way and/or give himself up to the International Criminal Court is not supported by historical evidence; it's a foolish, if not stupid, assumption. Believing that people will side with NATO - and the Libyans stand with flowers along the roads when troops roll in - well, Iraq should have taught us that lesson.

Outside military pressure, bombings and destruction is perceived by normal people as humiliating and unfair *even if* they hate their leader. It usually increases people's dislike of the West and provides the leader with an opportunity to become a hero, standing up for the nation, becoming a martyr, etc. And the clients on the ground of those bombing countries become dubious in the eyes of others on the ground: Do we want new leaders who invited people to bomb us to pieces in order to become our new leaders right away (don't forget that the Benghazi fighters at a very early stage declared themselves the only legitimate representatives of the Libyan people, 300 people gathered who didn't consult anyone about that decision!) I've seen myself how these psycho-political mechanisms worked out both in former Yugoslavia and in Iraq before the war. I don't see why it should be different in the case of Libya.

But some kind of UN involvement was not even mentioned. Why? Because the norms of the UN Charter are still not understood or adhered to by the far majority of the member

governments; because none of the stronger international players want any organization like the UN beside or above them; because the UN will never be better than its member states want it to be; because the UN has been systematically undermined, underfunded and underutilized during the last 20 years and because Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is, beyond any doubt, the weakest - some would say most incompetent and spineless - UN leader since the establishment of the world organization.

The fact that a UN peace-keeping or -making intervention of some kind was not even discussed - and the absence of such a discussion not discussed either - is indicative of how very serious the situation is: the UN is perceived as utterly irrelevant by the strong, except in its role as fig leaf for Realpolitik strategies.

## **8. FOLLOW THE UN CHARTER NORM OF "PEACE BY PEACEFUL MEANS" UNTIL EVERYTHING HAS BEEN TRIED AND PROVED IN VAIN**

As everybody knows now nothing was really tried, the No Fly Zone being the only tool seriously contemplated and planned. The Western countries did not *want* a peaceful, negotiated solution with Khaddafi. And this in spite of the fact that they are committed to the principle of the UN Charter's extremely urgently important and central norm: that everything shall have been tried first non-violently before military action is set in motion.

If the task was to get rid of Khaddafi, as we are told, and create conditions for a better life for the Libyans, contemporary history offers more than enough evidence that non-violence is considerably more effective in ridding the world of dictators than full-blown war. One has only to think of cases such as the Marcos family in the Philippines, the Sha of Iran, the Solidarnosc movement in Poland, the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, the fall of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, of Shevardnadze in Georgia, etc. Right in front of our eyes, a comparative study in social change is going on - compare the changes in Tunisia and Egypt with those in Libya. While these processes are hugely complex and - by late summer 2011 when this is written - we have not seen which path the largely non-violent revolutionary changes will take in those two countries, we can still be hopeful and perceive non-violent mass uprisings as an eye and door opener to a better future. That is not the view anyone can have who has witnessed Libya's destruction from March 19 till early August 2011.

## **9. SOME KIND OF MECHANISM AND MODEL TO ACHIEVE A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION**

Its main argument of this analysis is that each of the above proposals as well as their synergic effect *could* have contributed to what ought to be seen as intelligent professionalized conflict-management aimed at a fair and sustainable solution. This is admittedly a kind of counter-factual assertion but so is the one stating that nothing else

but the so-called No Fly Zone covering up for a de facto mass bombing of Libya was the *only* option.

As a matter of fact, unless you believe blindly in the non-substantiated claim that Khaddafi was about to commit genocide - eradicating parts of or all of a people, i.e. his own Libyans - which militates against common sense in a non-ethnic setting like this, much more speaks for the hypothesis that other options *were* available but deliberately not tried, options that are likely to have created a less devastating and hope-killing process than the one the world has witnessed over the 5-6 months of NATO bombing.

Together these proposals, if implemented, would open the path for a mechanism to be established with a structure and functions that could be open for consultations, one-on-one explorative talks, various types of facilitations, secret diplomacy, confidence-building etc. - until some kind of negotiations would have begun in reasonably good faith by all relevant parties. It is not the aim here to describe such a mechanism in any detail, its modalities, place or time perspective.

Instead of playing the less than constructive role as bombing nations, the West - led by the UN and the EU could have served as constructive facilitators in close co-operation with other regional actors, the above-mentioned international mediation commission. In short, provided good offices rather than become the most destructive actor in the conflict theatre.

Unfortunately, Western nations are better at bombing and forcing through their own solutions than at dialoguing-facilitating-mediating while listening intensely to possible solutions coming out of conflict zone itself, i.e. from those who not only *know* their own society, culture and problems best but are also those who are going to implement and *live with* a solution. However, it must be remembered that a conflict can only be solved and sustained over time when the parties, broadly defined, a) changed their goals, perceptions and behaviour to some - converging - extent; b) when they have come to some kind of vision of the future that they can live with (albeit not perfect for all), c) have a strong feeling of being stakeholders and co-implementers, and d) have come to that result in a voluntary manner. (Signing a peace treaty written up by foreigners with a pistol in the back, is not exactly conflict-resolution or peace-making even if politicians and media would have us believe that peace is identical with the dying down of direct violence in a conflict area).

The elements described above are not exhaustive, neither are they prioritized. It's a common experience that any conflict to be solved requires some common or general elements and initiatives but also deserves tailor-made treatment in terms of who can do what, when and how - a process that relies thoroughly on both excellent science and creative arts.

## III STATUS 6 MONTHS LATER AND SOME – HOPEFULLY WRONG - PREDICTIONS

### 1. ELEMENTS OF A STATUS OF THE PERIOD MARCH TO AUGUST 2011

1. According to an urgent appeal on the UNHCR website in August, over 1 million Libyans have fled the continuing violence to seek refuge in Tunisia, Egypt, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Algeria. That is 15% of the people! Allegedly, several thousands have died on their journey across the Mediterranean, on small boats not rescued by NATO- and other vessels in the vicinity. This is the opposite of the alleged motive for the intervention - the Responsibility to protect people in danger.

2. Already 6 weeks into NATO bombings, in late April, a U.N. Human Rights delegation to Tripoli and rebel-held areas reported an estimated 10.000-15.000 killed civilians “on both sides”.

3. While NATO insist that all its missions target only military targets, regime palaces, building where Khaddafi was supposed to stay, radio and television stations etc. have been turned into ruins. One grandchild, one son and possible another son have been killed. As an example, on August 11, Amnesty called on NATO to investigate allegations that it killed 85 civilians of whom 33 children, in airstrikes on forces loyal to Moammar Khaddafi.

4. One small but very active bomber country, Denmark, has flown 441 missions and thrown 740 bombs by August 10; the Danish defence minister, Ms. Bech, states that she has no reports that any civilians have been killed (by Denmark).

5. Although UN SC resolution 1973 permits a broad variety of military action, except deployment of ground forces, its emphasis is on bringing about a ceasefire and a negotiated solution as well as on protecting civilians with every means except deployment of ground forces. It is clear that many of those who voted in favour of it and those who abstained did not anticipate a drawn-out, full-blown war with the type of ferocity and destruction that it has been rather much from Day One. Few had envisaged that *this* was the reality behind the seemingly rational and war-limiting concept of No Fly Zone. It is therefore highly unlikely that the bombing nations will be able to come back and get another mandate and fig-leaf legitimacy from the UN for continued warfare. The mission “creep” has been far too conspicuous, and the authorized bombing, so far at least, no problem-solver but, rather, a problem accumulator.

6. It is very clear that the assumption that the “Libya problem” would be solved within 3 months or so, has turned out to be wrong. The Khaddafi regime’s power position and military tenacity surprise and annoy everyone whether or not they admit it. While diplomats and officers have defected from the regime, there are no signs that the Libyan masses have revolted against “the mad dog” as Ronald Reagan called Khaddafi.



7. The National Transitional Council that has been recognized as the new government by numerous countries, led by NATO members, and units around it are known to have elements of Al-Qaeda. The NTC is deeply split on a number of issues and in late July its military leader was liquidated in cold blood. Western countries have increasingly begun to question who they so quickly threw in their support for back then in March 2011.

8. This Council, of course, wasn't worth the Western support - except if you base yourself on the banal assumption that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. In two weeks in February the 300 people making up the Assembly in Benghazi managed to make a 180 degree change on their two vital, original provisions: 1) they would fight only with non-violent means like their brothers in Tunisia and Egypt and 2) they would make the revolution by themselves and not call upon the international community. In addition, they chose themselves as the only legitimate representatives of the Libyan people - of course without having consulted the 6-7 million other Libyans they represented. It is indeed a peculiar support for democratization to recognize the NTC as many NATO countries have done.

9. The Council has, very carelessly, been granted access to billions of dollars in frozen Libyan assets abroad and thereby given an opportunity to buy modern expensive weaponry. (This is one reason that the Council's first important decision was to establish a new Libyan national bank). The first oil deals have also been done between these forces and Western powers.

10. In late July, Britain's foreign secretary, William Hague, made a turnabout by stating that Khaddafi could stay in Libya - quite a change from the earlier chorus that he has lost legitimacy, must leave and should be brought to the International Criminal Court.

11. French President Sarkozy aired the idea, a few days before Hague, that it was time for negotiations with the regime, but his test balloon was shot down within hours by Mme Clinton: NO negotiations with Khaddafi!

12. The UN Security Council Resolution 1973 was voted through with no representative of Tripoli being present. The Libyan ambassador to the UN had resigned the day before and given a special passport by the Secretary-General. Not to hear any functioning representative of a country party to a conflict being debated in the Council is a clear violation of its rules.

13. A number of countries, among which France, have delivered arms to the rebels. Whoever pumps in weapons to either of the sides do only three things - earns money on death and destruction; prolongs the fighting and increases the suffering and, three, effectively prevents a cease-fire and, thereby, a negotiated solution.

In addition, Security Council resolution 1973 strengthens the arms embargo imposed in Resolution 1970 and, so, it ought to be against the resolution to deliver weapons to either side. Of course, the resolution airs nothing but noble pretense; the "merchants of death"

knows exactly how to exploit arms embargoes, as was the case in former Yugoslavia. These merchants are never treated like war criminals, only those who use their weapons.

14. It has become impossible to hide from the public how divisive this war has been within NATO and the EU and between them and the United States. This is a war that was predominantly started by European countries and not by the United States. There has been very little enthusiasm among allies to make contributions whether in terms of fighter bombers or funding.

In the case of Libya, the Lisbon Treaty goal of the Union's members speaking with one voice in foreign and security policy matters almost appears almost farcical. When it comes to NATO, President Obama seems very aware about the necessity of not involving the U.S. in yet another war; the preceding ones have been more than enough of costly catastrophes contributing substantially to the de facto bankruptcy of the country.

15. By August it is clear that the rebels in Benghazi are increasingly sliding into factionalism and infighting among tribes and various groupings and also showing no signs of a democratic mode of operation or capacity to rule a post-Khaddafi Libya. There is extremely little reason to believe that the Libyans will see the Benghazi rebels as a great improvement compared with Khaddafi. With Khaddafi they know, for good and for bad, what they have - including a very high level of welfare, education, health care system, etc.

## 2. SOME PREDICTIONS BY LATE SUMMER 2011

The following points are based exclusively on the author's experience from a number of war-zones combined with lessons that-should-be-learnt from places such as Vietnam, Afghanistan, Somalia, etc.

### 1. *This conflict and its violence are likely to continue for years.*

The fighting has drawn out way longer than NATO ever anticipated in its hubris mood in February-March. The war will not be over even if Khaddafi is murdered or gives in somehow. There will be too many competing for filling the power vacuum after him - a full-blown civil war being the most realistic prospect. And that could last for anywhere between 2-3 years and a decade.

### 2. *The logic of war will prevail. There will be no serious human(itarian) concerns*

The bombing countries will continue to ignore whatever Responsibility to Protect they profess to have and no matter that the war they're having costs more innocent lives than Khaddafi has ever killed.

It would be naive to believe that increasing human costs over time would compel the governments that participate in the bombing to simply stop.

Given the experiences from a number of places - former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq to mention some - Western governments are much more focused on "winning" than on sparing

or saving human lives - no matter whether the original motivation may have been to protect civilian lives at the firing line or human rights in general. In other words, wars have a certain logic and it is extremely difficult to be the first to stop. And think.

3. *An unconditional bomb stop is unlikely*

The only factors likely to stop the bombing will be a) the economic cost to the main bombing countries, such as France and Denmark; b) internal political divisions in NATO and the EU and between Europe and the United States - or c) other countries in the world managing to push a Stop The Bombing Now to the top of the international agenda, including the UN. This is not likely to happen; e.g. the BRIC - Brazil, Russia, India and China - as well as, say, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, SCO, will enjoy waiting and seeing the bombing nations break their neck in the Libyan quagmire deserts and mountains as well as waste their money.

4. *Ground troops may be deployed somewhat dependent on who will be the next U.S. president.*

When the bombing has drawn out ad absurdum, the voices in favour of a troop invasion will increasingly be heard. Since it can not be taken for granted that Obama will be elected for another term, a new President in the U.S. may be much less hesitant to engage the U.S. in this war - and argue that "we have for all practical purposes left both Iraq and Afghanistan; here is a chance to resurrect NATO and show who the real master of the West is - and it is not the Europeans and their Union, as we have seen since March 2011."

5. *It is highly likely that the country will be split in two or three.*

The contours of a split Libya are already there - a replica of what European states did one hundred years ago. We only have to imagine the scenario that the rebels will not be able to win over and oust Khaddafi and that the Khaddafi regime will not be able to control all of the country again. Western powers have always had a propensity to "solve" conflict by divide and rule, drawing lines in the sand etc. Former Yugoslavia and Kosovo in particular are the most recent examples (or keeping North and South Korea split at all costs to the Koreans).

6. *There will more attempts to kill Khaddafi*

The - naive - assumption is of course that the Libyan problem is embodied in one personality, unable as the West seems to be in terms of intellectually comprehending complex conflicts. The death of Khaddafi will not bring peace and stability; more likely is that it will open a new chapter to a full-blown civil war - with numerous tribes and factions and individuals fighting each other to fill the vacuum and control the country's wealth in terms of oil and gold.

7. *One country after the other will drop off from NATO's Operation Unified Protector*

The longer this war goes on with none of the original political goals being reached, it will

become increasingly difficult for parliaments to extend their participation and get the necessary funding in place. Operation Unified Protector was always small; the initial coalition consisted of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, Qatar, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. Norway ended its military participation at the end of July. Belgium has an ongoing political crisis. Denmark presumably holds elections in autumn. France carries a major burden of the Operation and its economy is crisis-ridden. Italy is deep in economic and political crisis, so is Spain. And the UK - another major carrier of the military and financial burden - was hit by serious rioting in early August 2011. The United States is virtually bankrupt and President Obama fighting for his political life against an increasingly strong Republican/Tea Party.

To get new countries on board with air and navy forces and thereby make a decisive difference in Libya amounts to little but wishful thinking.

8. The day it is all over - say, 2016-2020 - there will be a bill to pay in terms of rebuilding an almost completely destroyed Libya (provided a miracle does not happen in the meantime). NATO countries would hardly feel morally obliged to provide that aid. But they are likely to build mega-bases like the Bondsteel Base in Kosovo and the dozen of bases in "liberated" Iraq. They will have done their utmost to secure control over the main oil fields and ports in Libya, i.e. siding with the local parties that may eventually control them. IMF, the World Bank and others will get access to Libya which was virtually impossible in Khaddafi's Libya where there was only one national banking system controlled by the regime.

9. Western mainstream media will continue to under-report the human costs of NATO's bombings and systematically ignore the views of the Khaddafi regime. The war as such will receive less and less coverage. In Danish and Swedish media, for instance, the fact that these countries are at war - Denmark for the 4th time, Sweden for the first, in about 50 years - is hardly mentioned anymore. Media that stage-set the black-and-white image of "the dictator" and more or less explicitly urged and pushed for the "No Fly Zone" will see it in their own interest to *not* highlight how deficient and lacking in basic conflict understanding their own trade is - again.

10. The majority of Libyans will be caught in the middle, neither wanting Khaddafi forever nor trusting for a moment the foreign-aided, money-making "freedom" fighters of the NTC. No one will ask what they - perhaps 75% of the people - would want. Their hatred of the West will be significant. In the worst of cases, the West is now creating yet another terrorist producer. For generations ahead, there will be animosity between "Christian" and "Muslim" cultures - the contrary of what we need, namely mutual understanding, dialogue and respect.

### 3. POST-SCRIPT

The wars in former Yugoslavia split many otherwise cohesive groupings. Traditionally pacifist Green parties and human rights advocates urged bombings - so did intellectuals such as Habermas; women groups and even peace movement people - "humanitarian intervention" and "we can't stand idly by when a new Hitler (Milosevic) ravages a part of Europe" being the slogans of those days. On the famous other hand, you would find high-level militaries, political hawks and right-wingers who were adamantly against the roles of US/NATO in Croatia, Bosnia and in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict in particular.

Thus, one may say that Yugoslavia turned about much of the classical configurations along right/left and hardline/softline and Realpolitik/Idealism and, finally, between war as destructive and war as constructive in some sense.

A major factor in a series of European states seems to have been that the Social Democracies basically went with hardline Reapolitik and gave up every commitment to international solidarity, the UN, international law - not to speak of its historical anti-militarism. It was, for instance, a government lead by Social Democrats in coalition with small liberal (historically pacifist) party that made Denmark go to war in former Yugoslavia. In Sweden it was Social Democracy that gave its unreserved political support to NATO's bombing of Serbia, to the war on Afghanistan and Iraq and to the war on terror. For those who may still think that Sweden still is what it was in the 1970s and up to the 1990s in the era of Olof Palme with a strong emphasis on solidarity with the small countries, high profile on disarmament, international law and the UN, and seeking to be a mediator, etc - it is indeed time for a reality check. Today, for instance, Sweden is militarily present in Libya with 6 JAS Gripen aircraft albeit not in bombing rôles and while its troops are under NATO command in Afghanistan, there is not a single Swede in the UN Blue Helmets anymore.

Much of these changes can also be explained by increasing EU foreign policy integration. There is no need for original, independent or "alternative" inputs from each member - the reason being that foreign policy has become much more of a positioning game within the Union which pretends to be working under the Lisbon Treaty provision of speaking with one voice in foreign and security policy matters. (The only time it ever did was when it recognized Slovenia and Croatia as independent out of Yugsolavia, which was *the* main reason for the war breaking out in Bosnia 5 months later).

In comes the Libyan crisis and what happens? For the first time in their histories, the Left and the Right converge on warfare being the solution to the problem, i.e. on a pro-war stance. From the far left to the far right in Denmark, all members of parliament, Folketinget, voted for the Danish F-16s to be deployed to Libya. In Sweden, only the tiny new right-wing xenophobic Sweden Democrats voted against; all social democrats, greens

and socialist party members voted pro-intervention/war with the right-wing coalition government. In Norway, like in Denmark, all MPs from right to left voted pro-war.

This is something fundamentally new in the mentioned countries. We are witnessing European parliamentarians with no personal experience from the Second World War or the Vietnam War and a limited sense of the Cold War. We have seen the Nobel Peace prize being awarded people who are responsible for war in indisputable violation of the will of Alfred Nobel. War is peace?

The new trends raise the question about the role of war and interventions in contemporary society. Overall, warfare seems to have become more acceptable, pressing anti-militarist and non-violent options and ethics further into the background. It can indeed be seen as mind-boggling that these parties in these countries choose the options they do with three failed war projects fresh in mind or ongoing - former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Perhaps each generation believes that this war will be different, that *this* time they get it right. In the case of Libya they haven't and they won't - either. One can only hope that this fourth war failure in-the-making will make *some* think next time. But will they?