most often that a people, which has supported without complaint, as if they were not felt, the most oppressive laws, violently throws them off as soon as their weight is lightened. The social order destroyed by a revolution is almost always better than that which immediately preceded it, and experience shows that the most dangerous moment for a bad government is generally that in which it sets about reform." Saif al-Islam and the neoliberal reformers set in motion the collapse of the regime. They awakened a new sentiment that bubbled into protests. It would explode in February 2011.

IV. Libya's Million Mutinies

The rebellion in Benghazi began on February 15, 2011. For the first few days the protests were peaceful and the police fired on them. The number of dead by February 19 was about one hundred and four (according to Human Rights Watch). These numbers are approximations, because the proper forensic work was not possible absent entry into morgues. Human rights activist Fateh Terbil said on that day, "Our numbers show that more than two hundred people have been killed." "It feels like a warzone," he pointed out. Human Rights Watch's Tom Porteous told AFP on February 19, "We are very concerned that under the communications blackout that has fallen on Libya since yesterday a human rights catastrophe is unfolding."

The violence did escalate, but it was not as one-sided as it appeared at first hand. On February 21, the Libyan air force attacked Benghazi. The former Libyan Ambassador to India, Ali Abd al-Aziz al-Isawi

said that the fighter jets were used to attack civilians. Others on the ground said that they targeted the military barracks and ammunition dumps. There was no attempt to verify the claims. Part of this was the lack of media access in the country (a problem magnified in Syria) and part of it is the fog of war. The Cairo-based Arab Organization for Human Rights asked for an international investigation of the war crimes. The UN's commissioner for human rights Navi Pillay denounced the Libyan regime on February 18, but she said nothing about the police station burned down by the rebels in Dernah or the execution of fifty "African mercenaries and Libyan conspirators" in Al Bayda'. That last quote was from an article in *The Guardian* (authored by Ian Black and Owen Bowcott, February 19). The full quote is from *al-Jazeera*:

> Amer Saad, a political activist from Derna, told *al-Jazeera*: "The protesters in al-Bayda' have been able to seize control of the military airbase in the city and have executed 50 African mercenaries and two Libyan conspirators. Even in Derna today, a number of conspirators were executed. They were locked up in the holding cells of a police station because they resisted, and some died burning inside the building. This will be the end of every oppressor who stands with Gaddafi. Gaddafi is over, that's it, he has no presence here any more. The eastern regions of Libya are now free regions. If he wants to reclaim it, he will need to bomb us with nuclear or chemical bombs. This is his only

> option. The people have stood and said they will not go back."

This press report made no impact on the UN headquarters, because two days later, on February 21, the UN News Center reported that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was "outraged *at press reports* that the Libyan authorities have been firing at demonstrators from war planes and helicopters." The conventional narrative in the Atlantic world was that Qaddafi's regime had begun a full-bore attack on the unarmed civilian protestors. In no time at all, which is to say by February 23, word would leak out of London and Paris that the Atlantic states were worried about a potential massacre. Qaddafi, meanwhile, said on February 22 that he had "not yet ordered the use of force," and that "when I do, everything will burn." It is without question that when Qaddafi did give his orders to his Generals they probably mimicked those of the Serbian General Ratko Mladic, whose orders to his troops regarding a Bosnian city are chilling, "Shell them till they are on the edge of madness" (Qaddafi and Mladic are heirs to the words of William Henry Drayton, who advised his settler troops in their war against the Cherokees, "Cut up every Indian cornfield, and burn every Indian town"). But such orders had not yet been given in February, according to Qaddafi. A week later the US State Department's spokesperson Mark Toner warned that Qaddafi was given to "overblown rhetoric." But this rhetoric would have it uses if Qaddafi needed to go. It would be sufficient when necessary to turn that rhetoric against Qaddafi. Such speeches were tinder for the fires of imperialism.

The details of the ground-war are essential at this point. They tell us how swiftly the rebels were able to take over Benghazi, Tobruk, Misrata, Az Zawiya and even the Tripoli working-class neighborhood of Tajoura and the Mitiga International Airport ("a serious blow to the regime," wrote *The Guardian*'s Ian Black on February 26). The Warfallah tribal elders declared on February 23 that they no longer supported the regime. Defections from the Libyan government came first in drips and then in a flood. On February 17, Youssef Sawani, Saif al-Islam's close aide and head of the Qaddafi Foundation, resigned and joined the rebellion. This was an embarrassment, but it was not decisive. That was to follow. Mustafa Abdel-Jalil, Qaddafi's interior minister, resigned on February 21. He would become the head of the rebellion's political arm, the National Transitional Council when it was formed on February 27 by himself and 'Abd al-Fattah Younis. Major General al-Fattah Younis had been the Minister of the Interior in Qaddafi's cabinet, and was sent to Benghazi on February 18 to relieve the loyalists besieged in the Katiba military compound. Major General al-Fattah Younis defected with his troops. He would become the military leader of the rebellion.

As Abdel-Jalil and al-Fattah Younis formed the core of the NTC, the defections of entire military battalions and of individual air-force pilots would begin apace. In Benghazi and Tobruk considerable sections of the armed detachments gave themselves over to the rebellion. The naval base and airport in Benghazi went to the rebellion. Soldiers from Az Zawiya joined them. In Misrata, the Qaddafi troops shot at a crowd

with rocket-propelled grenades, and the protestors fired back with an anti-aircraft gun. The cadets at an air force school joined the protests, took over the airbase in Misrata and disabled the jets. On February 24, the BBC reported, "In the eastern city of Benghazi, residents have been queuing to be issued with guns looted from the army and police in order to join what they are calling the battle for Tripoli. A number of military units in the east say they have unified their command in support of the protesters." BBC's Jon Leyne, reporting from eastern Libya, said that Qaddafi was likely ready less than ten days after the outbreak of the rebellion to make his final stand in Tripoli. The tide was with the rebels.

It was at this stage of the conflict that the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1970 (February 26). The resolution came to the Council from the Atlantic powers (France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States). The resolution called for an end to the hostilities, an asset freeze and travel ban on members of the Qaddafi regime, and an embargo on arms sales to Libya (which was interpreted to mean, no arms to either side in the conflict). There was a general understanding that the situation on the ground in Libya had devolved into an asymmetrical civil war, with the Libyan army (with air support) far stronger than the rebel army. There was no discussion about the defections to the rebels, and its gains. The language of a potential civilian massacre in any of the cities had not been raised. The statement by Nigeria's U. Joy Ogwu was typical. She expressed her concern about the "inflammatory rhetoric and loss of life occurring in Libya," and hoped that the sanc-

tions would "provide for the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian and human rights law." The Council focused on the killing of the protestors in the cities and the refugee crisis that had inflicted the Tunisian-Libyan border.

The Libyan Ambassador to the United Nations, Abdel Rahman Shalgham, a leading figure in the Qaddafi regime for his entire career, defected to the rebels. He pushed the Council hard to create a no-fly zone and to ask the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate Qaddafi and his regime for war crimes. It took a great deal to persuade China, India and Russia to go along with the ICC involvement. But no-one was willing to go for a "no-fly zone," and the Russians in particular pushed in a clause against any foreign intervention. The Council did not hear from anyone loyal to the Qaddafi regime, even though on paper that regime continued to be the recognized government.

On the ground, meanwhile, the rebels, despite the bloodshed and without foreign assistance, seemed to be making headway. This was not Egypt and Tunisia, where the armies stood down and refused to fire on the protestors. Here the army had broken into two, one part remaining loyal to the Qaddafi regime, and the other giving itself over to the rebellion. Qaddafi still controlled the air, but even that seemed to be a momentary advantage. On February 21, two Libyan Air Force Dassault Mirage F-1 jets flew to Malta, and the pilots requested political asylum. This was a turn for the Air Force. A week later, on February 28, the rebels of Misrata shot down a Libyan Air Force jet. On March 2, when Libyan Air Force jets targeted the weapons dump at Ajdabiya, the rebels shot down one

aircraft. Three days later, the rebels in Ras Lanuf shot down a fighter jet. On March 13, Colonel Ali Atiyya announced his defection at the Mitiga International Airport in Tripoli.

These high-level military defections continued. On March 1, Brigadier Musa'ed Ghaidan al-Mansouri (head of the al-Wahat Security Directorate), Brigadier Hassan Ibrahim al-Qarawi and Brigadier Dawood Issa al-Qafi defected to the rebellion. Troops joined them. On February 26, ten thousand troops in the east went to the rebellion. Meanwhile, in Az Zawiya the rebels held off the Qaddafi forces on March 1, they took Ghadames and Nalut on March 2, and battled Qaddafi's forces in Bin Jawad on March 5. As they advanced forward, Qaddafi's air force began to be an impediment. When the rebels moved toward Sirte on March 6, the Libyan Air Force fired on them, and they retreated to Ras Lanuf. By March 11, Ras Lanuf and Az Zawiya went back and forth between Qaddafi's troops and the rebels. Brega and Ras Lanuf are not heavily populated towns. They were not of supreme consequence to the fight. More important was Ajdabiya, the gateway to Benghazi.

On March 15, the rebels used their own air force to destroy two of Qaddafi's warships and they hit a third off the coast of Ajdabiya and Benghazi (as reported by *al-Jazeera*). It meant that the rebels had developed air power, strengthened the next day with the defection of two more fighter jets into Benghazi and two more battalions from Sirte, who took over its airport. In Misrata, the rebels defeated Qaddafi's forces on March 16, and took command of several of his tanks.

Nevertheless, by mid-March the Qaddafi forces had pushed the rebels out of the central towns and appeared to be advancing to Benghazi, and to Misrata. It is at this point that the calls began to intensify for either a "no-fly" zone or some kind of intervention to prevent a massacre. Britain's David Cameron had called for a "no-fly" zone on February 28, and the Arab League sharpened the call on March 12. The NTC asked the United Nations for a "no-fly" zone on March 2, the day after the military leader Major General al-Fattah Younis called for foreign intervention. As morale began to turn in the rebel's camp, the leadership sought salvation elsewhere.

Was a massacre impending? Qaddafi's troops had previously tried to take Az Zawiya (March 1) and Misrata (March 6), and in both cases the rebels held off the attacks. There is no question that blood was going to be shed, but that is not itself the definition of a massacre or of genocide. When Qaddafi took back Az Zawiya on March 7, credible reports suggested that the "minimum" loss of life was about eight people. Thirty-three people died on March 5 at Az Zawiya, with twenty-five being rebels and eight being Qaddafi soldiers. When Qaddafi's army shelled Misrata on March 6, twenty-one rebels were killed. These are the costs of war, not the outcome of genocide. Revolutions are fought. They cannot be given. The rebels seemed prepared. Protests in Tripoli amongst the working-class neighborhoods of Feshloom, Gurgi and Tajoura gave extra strength to the rebellion. These neighborhoods were in permanent siege. Martyrs lay on autopsy tables at Tripoli Central Hospital. The workers were not pusillanimous. They seized the

moment. There would be blood. No revolution comes in a straight line. The workers knew nasty from their everyday lives. No-one would expect that real revolutionary change would come absent violence.

The conflict began on February 15. Six days later, the Libyan Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Ibrahim Dabbashi, having defected from the regime, said, "The regime of Qaddafi has already started the genocide against the Libyan people." What was the evidence for the genocide, which technically is the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group" (Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, UN, 1948)? Where was the "intent to destroy" and where was the evidence that this had "already started"? Not to fix onto definitions, let us assume that Dabbashi did not mean "genocide," but simply what he had also said in the same press conference, that what was occurring were "crimes against humanity and crimes of war." The standard for these is no doubt lower. The Rome Statute (1998) that established the International Criminal Court (ICC) notes that "crimes against humanity" refers to "odious offenses" that are not "sporadic events, but are part either of a government policy...or of a wide practice of atrocities tolerated or condoned by a government." For these crimes, still, one would have to ascertain them in terms of quantity (how many dead?) and quality (how did they die?). Dabbashi, like many of the high level diplomatic defectors of the Libyan service, touted very high figures. Most of them seem to have based their numbers on a report from *al-Arabiyya*, based in Dubai and owned by a Saudi company,

Middle East Broadcasting Center, and Lebanon's Hariri Group (these are largely pro-Western and pro-Saudi business interests). On its Twitter feed, *al-Arabiyya* reported that 50,000 had already been wounded and 10,000 massacred by the Libyan government. The source for this story was Sayed al-Shanuka, the Libyan member of the ICC who had defected from the regime. This was on February 23, a week after the conflict began.

That number swept the media sphere. *Al-Jazeera*, based in Qatar, ran the story, as did the BBC and the US media. No-one seemed to ask where these deaths had taken place. France's Sarkozy and Britain's Cameron warned Qaddafi that they would act if this kind of killing continued. The word "genocide" defined the discussion. Even in the liberal-Left, commentators absorbed the idea that "genocide" had either happened (based on *al-Arabiyya* numbers) or was about to happen (the people here are Juan Cole and Gilbert Achcar). But already some credible organizations began to provide figures. On February 20, Human Rights Watch announced a figure of 233, with most of the dead in Benghazi proper. Benghazi was, by February 20, in rebel hands. One of the alarms rung by those who spoke of an impending massacre by late February was that the population of Misrata was going to be killed in large numbers. On April 10, Human Rights Watch released a report on the dead of Misrata, a major battlefield in the war. What they found for this city of four hundred thousand was that, according to Dr. Muhammad el-Fortia (of Misrata Hospital) who had the highest numbers, there were 949 wounded and 257 dead. Of these,

surprisingly, the numbers of women dead were only 22, or three percent of the total. If the violence was indiscriminately or odiously unleashed on the population the percentage of women killed would surely have been higher. The discourse on genocide in Libya was either fanciful or based entirely on speculation. It simply did not happen. By the middle of June, the first credible figure appeared that showed that about ten thousand people had been killed. This was from Cherif Bassiouni of the UN, who led a UN Human Rights Council team to Tripoli. Bassiouni's panel found evidence of war crimes by Qaddafi's side, but also noted war crimes on the side of the rebels. This number comes not within days of the rebellion and the attacks by the army, and not in one site, but over the course of four months. It includes the violence from the Libyan army, the violence from the rebels and the violence of the NATO aerial assault. Much later, on December 18, 2011, the *New York Times*' C. J. Chivers and Eric Schmitt published a long investigation on the civilian casualties inflicted by the NATO bombardment. They found that the seven month air campaign came with "an unrecognized toll: scores of civilian casualties the alliance has long refused to acknowledge or investigate." That was long after the conflict had substantially ended. Bassiouni is a credible Egyptian diplomat, who has headed many panels to investigate human rights (such as in Afghanistan between 2004 and 2006), and has consulted with the US State Department. His figures seemed accurate to human rights specialists. Nevertheless, at no point did Bassiouni's panel call for an investigation of NATO's war crimes or of the attacks by the reb-

els on civilians (such as the so-called "African mercenaries"). The emphasis was on Qaddafi's human rights violations.

Even more startling evidence of the very poor investigation of the war crimes allegations comes at a Pentagon press conference on March 1. When asked about Qaddafi's aerial attacks on civilians, Defense Secretary Gates said, "We've seen the press reports, but we have no confirmation of that," and Admiral Mike Mullen added, "That's correct. We've seen no confirmation whatsoever." That the US military complex relies upon *press reports* to confirm the use of live fire seems remarkable—with the massive surveillance infrastructure in place it seems that the Pentagon would be able to make a reasonably more accurate assessment than *al-Jazeera* or BBC, or *al-Arabiyya*, upon whom they relied to base their assessment of armed conflict. Asked about the situation on the ground in Libya, Gates offered an "honest answer," which was that "we don't know in that respect, in terms of the number of casualties. In terms of the potential capabilities of the opposition, we're in the same realm of speculation, pretty much, as everybody else. I haven't seen anything that would give us a better read on the number of rebels that have been killed than you have. And I think it remains to be seen how effectively military leaders who have defected from Gadhafi's forces can organize the opposition in the country." Asked at this point if the rebels had asked for NATO air strikes, Gates answered, "no."

Around March 14, despite the talk of genocide, *al-Jazeera* reported that the rebels fought on. East of Brega they ambushed a Qaddafi column and took fourteen

soldiers prisoner and killed twenty-five. The two major cities of the rebellion, Benghazi in the East and Misrata in the West, remained in rebel hands. On March 13, the rebels held off the Qaddafi attack on Misrata. The Qaddafi troops, according to *al-Jazeera*, had a breakdown in discipline, and this cost them their superiority in firepower. The next day, Qaddafi's advance to Benghazi was blocked at Ajdabiya, held by the main rebel force under the command of Major General al-Fattah Younis. The Major General told *al-Jazeera* that he would defend Ajdabiya, and that the cities of the east were heavily armed, ready to take on Qaddafi's armies block by block. It had already become clear by March 14 that even if Qaddafi's armies took back towns, they were not capable of holding onto them. The rebellion seemed to have the initiative.

V. Intervention

By early March, the Libyan rebellion began to be hijacked by forces close to the Atlantic powers, whose interest in Libya is governed by oil and by power: it is my view that the Libyan rebellion gave the Atlantic powers, Qatar and Saudi Arabia an opportunity to attempt to seize control over an escalating dynamic that had spread across the Middle East and North Africa, which had already been called the Arab Spring. It threatened the US pillars of stability and the foundation of Saudi rule. This dynamic needed to be controlled, or at least, harnessed. Libya, which sits in the center of North Africa, with Egypt on one border and Tunisia on the other, provided the perfect space to

hurry along the clock, to skip Summer and hasten to Winter. Apart from the obvious addiction to oil, the political issue came to the surface: to maintain the traditional order of things in the Arab world, with the main pillars of stability intact: Israel, Saudi Arabia, with the Gulf emirs, and the tentacles of the Atlantic world in the major capitals in the oil lands. No revision of that order was permitted. Libya opened the door to the counter-revolution.

Why did the Atlantic states want to remove Qaddafi? We shall have to wait for the leaks, the self-serving memoirs and the next major cache of WikiLeaks documents, this time perhaps from the Quai d'Orsay. By March, the French were in the lead at the United Nations. Initially it seemed that this was either a smokescreen or a wag the dog scenario. After all, during the Tunisian uprising, the French Foreign Minister Michele Alliot-Marie flew on a plane owned by Aziz Miled, a close associate of Belhassen Trabelsi, the brother-in-law of Ben Ali. When she returned to France, Alliot-Marie, or MAM as she is known, offered French assistance to help put down the rebellion. All this focused attention on the fact that Sarkozy was very close to Ben Ali, and in 2008 was made an honorary citizen of Tunis. Frédéric Mitterrand, Sarkozy's culture minister, went along the grain of MAM's offer of military assistance, in mid-January, "To say that Tunisia is a one-man dictatorship seems to me quite exaggerated." France had fumbled in Tunisia. MAM was fired, but her departure only heightened the stench of collusion between Sarkozy's circle and people like Aziz Miled, Belhassen Trabelsi and eventually, Ben Ali.

Libya would provide the smokescreen to cover over what the US embassy in Tunis described in 2005 as France's "tradition of cultivating close relations with ageing Arab world dictators." This was a classic case of transference. With cantonal election on the horizon in March it might have bolstered the fortunes of Sarkozy's anemic party (but it did not, as the far right and the socialists made considerable gains). As well, the French intelligentsia went out of its way to promote the war. Former Sarkozy Foreign Minister and legendary promoter of humanitarian intervention Bernard Kouchner threw himself at the English and French media to promote the war. He was helped along by *gauche caviar*, Bernard Henri-Levy (BHL), whom Tariq Ali called a "veritable Tintin." BHL phoned Sarkozy from his revolutionary safari in Benghazi, where he was also trying to steady the nerves of the neoliberal faction among the rebel leadership. The Élysée Palace needed fortitude of the BHL variety if it was to stay the course toward UN Resolution 1973 and the intervention. Sarkozy did not need much persuasion. Qaddafi had stymied his Mediterranean Union. He was an impediment to French interests in the region. The French led because the Libyan goose was ready to deliver a golden egg.

The Gaullist traditions of hesitancy over intervention were broken by the Kosovo war. No such tradition needed to be broken across the Channel in the United Kingdom or across the Atlantic in the United States. Oil is always a central preoccupation of the war planners among the cousins. The basic script for the US and the UK was set after the Iraqi coup of 1958 in a telegram sent by British Foreign Secretary

Selwyn Lloyd to his prime minister, the Conservative leader Harold Macmillan. If the British pre-emptively occupied Kuwait, Selwyn Lloyd wrote, it would get the oil into their hands quickly. There was a problem: "The effect on international opinion and the rest of the Arab world would not be good." Instead of this preferred, direct route, the best option was to set up a "Kuwait Switzerland where the British do not exercise physical control," but "we must also accept the need, if things to wrong, ruthlessly to intervene, whoever it is has caused the trouble." This ruthless intervention was necessary to protect the Gulf oil reserves and indeed the Arab oil lands, what the US State Department right after World War 2 called "a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the great material prizes in world history." It would be silly to ignore the elephant in the room, namely oil.

If oil was one part of the equation, the other was the political necessity to exercise hegemony in the region, to maintain that stupendous source of strategic power. The US had come off very poorly with Obama's hesitancy in Egypt. Sending Wisner was the wrong move. So too was the dialogue with Tantawi over stability and Israel. The US needed to get back in the game as the Arab Spring seemed to spiral out of control. Libya was the impetus for a re-engagement on US terms.

On March 15, in the White House, President Obama's inner circle sat and made their plans. At the center of it were people who believed that George W. Bush's adventure in Iraq in 2003 destroyed the will among Northern states for humanitarian intervention. That will was to be reconstructed. Libya provided the

opportunity. A senior administration official told *Time*'s Massimo Calabresi, "The effort to shoe-horn [the Libyan events] into an imminent genocide model is strained." Nevertheless, as early as February, the supporters of humanitarian intervention were "laying the predicate" for military force. Among those supporters were Samantha Power and Jeremy Weinstein (National Security Council), Susan Rice (UN Ambassador) and Hillary Clinton (Secretary of State). Obama had a harder time with his military commanders, who were loathe to enter another conflict on pragmatic grounds: they simply did not have the available troops if the conflict escalated. But Obama got their support, and on March 16 announced that if Qaddafi was not stopped "the words of the international community would be rendered hollow." This was the same argument used by George W. Bush against Saddam Hussein.

What really seems to have set the clock to intervention was the pressure from the Saudis and the other Gulf Arabs. They wanted to put down the Bahrain uprising and take control, in their own way, of events in Yemen. As well, the Saudi King hated Qaddafi. In 2003, at an Arab Summit, Qaddafi accused King Abdullah of "bringing the Americans to occupy Iraq." The following year, King Abdullah's people accused Qaddafi of trying to kill the King. In 2006 at another Arab Summit in Doha, Qatar, Qaddafi faced the King and said, "It has been six years, and you have been avoiding a confrontation with me. You are propelled by fibs toward the grave and you were made by Britain and protected by the US." The point about the British and the Americans is perhaps true, and it made for good television to watch Qaddafi erupt. The

emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, was embarrassed to see his senior potentate be scolded in this manner, and furious at Qaddafi. The memory of a monarch is longer than that of an elephant. It is also filled with petty slights that must be avenged. The monarch dreams that his enemies are flies to be swatted; when he wakes he razes cities. Any excuse to put that upstart from a minor tribe in his place was welcomed in the royal circles of Riyadh.

These are all speculations. It is of course the case that Libya's neoliberal reform agenda had been dented. Ghanem had sent his emissary, el-Meyet, to tell the Americans in 2008 that the agenda would not be able to move unless Qaddafi was out. The old man was willing to go along with the neoliberal reforms, but his regime was incapable of delivering it. It had to be knocked out. There were always conspiracies afoot, but these were not decisive. Three of the leaders of the February 17 Movement went to Paris on December 23, 2010 where they met other figures from the old anti-Qaddafi clique. Fathi Boukhris, Farj Charrani and Ali Ounes Mansouri sat down with Qaddafi's old aide-de-camp, Nuri Mesmari, who had defected to the Concorde-Lafayette hotel. What is essential to know about Mesmari, Qaddafi's shadow, is that he was a crucial figure among the neoliberal reformers, the point man who arranged state trips of foreign leaders and who pampered Qaddafi's children. It is said that Qaddafi insulted Mesmari at an Afro-Arab summit in Sirte on October 10, 2010, after which he decamped for Paris. It is also said that Qaddafi was angry with the entire clique by December 2010, and had asked Moussa Koussa for his passport. This can-

not be confirmed. What is clear is that by December Mesmari was singing to the DGSE and Sarkozy about the weaknesses of the Libyan state. Their man in Benghazi was Colonel Abdallah Gehani of the air defense corps. He was arrested by Qaddafi's regime in January 2011. The Atlantic states set aside Gehani by mid-March. He could not ascend to the leadership of the military side of the rebellion. The CIA already had its man in mind. He would soon be in place. We shall get to him below.

Cynics in Washington and Paris used Libya as a way to wash off the stain of Bush's Iraqi adventure from the carapace of the idea of humanitarian interventionism. This is cynical and inhumane. Out of such misplaced idealism comes enormous bloodshed for ordinary people.

Resolution 1973.

On March 19, the United Nations Security Council voted for Resolution 1973 to establish a "no-fly" zone over Libya. The violence against civilians and media personnel was cited as the reason for the new resolution (an earlier one, 1970, languished). The Council authorized a ban on all flights over Libya (except for humanitarian purposes), froze assets of a selection of the Libyan high command (including all of Qaddafi's family), and proposed to set up a Panel of Experts to look into the issue within the next year. Even as the members of the Council raised their paddles to indicate their "yes" votes, French mirage fighters powered up to begin their bombing runs and US ships loaded their cruise missiles to fire into Libyan targets. Their bombardments were intended to dismantle Libyan air

defenses. This was the prelude to the establishment of a "no-fly" zone.

The ground for NATO's intervention was crafted after the genocide in Rwanda (1994), when an estimated million people were massacred over the course of a few months. This action happened in plain sight, with a United Nations team unable or unwilling to act to stem the violence. The sheer sin of the event pushed the UN toward a new doctrine, if not a new understanding of whether such genocides can easily be prevented (if the US and/or NATO had acted in Rwanda, what would they have bombed to prevent the genocide? How would they have bombed the hundreds of thousands of people who wielded *pangas* [machetes] to kill almost a million Tutsis. The tiny minority of *génocidaires* convinced the many to kill, Mahmood Mamdani shows us in *When the Victims Become Killers*. Aerial bombardment does not provide a simple solution to such a grave and difficult political problem). By 1999, President Bill Clinton declared, "If the world community has the power to stop it, we ought to stop genocide and ethnic cleansing." The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001) and then a UN Panel on these issue (2004) reported, "We endorse the emerging norm that there is a collective international responsibility to protect...in the event of genocide and other large-scale killing, ethnic cleansing or serious violations of international humanitarian law." The UN General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit suggested that the UN could authorize force "on a case-by-case basis, should peaceful means be inadequate." The final clause here is central, and it was not discussed at the Security Council in March.

No-one considered a peaceful path, even though the African Union had set up an Ad Hoc High Level Committee on Libya on March 10. It was sidelined, and in fact its team was prevented from going to Libya on March 19 as the French mirages took off to bomb the country. Humanitarian intervention (the alias for aerial bombardment) would come prior to and against any peaceful initiatives to stop the violence.

To create the "no-fly" zone, the Council allowed member states to act "nationally or through regional organizations" and to use "all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas." The problem with this confused mandate was at least two-fold. One: who would be able to execute the mandate? As Mahmood Mamdani astutely put the problem, the United Nations' resolution was "central to the process of justification, it is peripheral to the process of execution." The UN had no real ability to take "all necessary measures," and nor would the African Union or the Arab League. Indeed, in the chamber, the Russian and Chinese delegates caviled about "how and by whom the measures would be enforced and what the limits of engagement would be." The only power capable of such an action was the United States either alone or in collaboration with NATO, of which the US is a major part. In other words, the UN resolution was falsely universal, calling on "all member states" when it might as well have been decidedly particular, calling on NATO and the United States to act here as it had acted in Yugoslavia.

Once the war entered its critical stage in September and October, the US military, the Obama White House and its assorted intellectuals began to promote

the view that the US "led from behind." It was NATO that was in the lead, they suggested. This was a view put forward first by Ryan Lizza in *The New Yorker* for an essay entitled "The Consequentialist: How the Arab Spring Remade Obama's Foreign Policy." "Pursuing our interests and spreading our ideals," Lizza wrote, "requires stealth and modesty as well as military strength." As an Obama advisor told Lizza, "It's so at odds with the John Wayne expectation for what America is in the world." The US had learned its lessons about the perils of unilateral intervention. Obama had the soft touch against Bush's harder manner. But this is another illusion. When Roger Cohen of the *New York Times* tweeted about this, he received an immediate rebuke from the US Ambassador to NATO, Ivo Daalder, "That's not leading from behind. When you set the course, provide critical enablers and succeed, it's plain leading." The United States provided most of the surveillance, intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities, it conducted most of the refueling missions and it provided most of the aerial bombardment. Resolution 1973 was essentially an invitation for US power to be exercised from the skies of North Africa onto its ground.

The second problem with the Resolution was graver. It did not specify who would define the limits of "all necessary measures" and how long should these "measures" remain in force? The UN Resolution 1973 called upon the parties to facilitate dialogue and to seek the means for an "immediate establishment of a ceasefire." If NATO and/or the United States went into full-scale action that would embolden the rebellion to believe that under cover of the drones

and cruise missiles they would soon ride their Toyotas into Tripoli. There would be no stomach for a ceasefire given the type of strategy NATO historically utilizes. At the same time, Qaddafi would immediately recognize that NATO's typical modus operandi was to seek to isolate the regime's leader (as NATO did with Slobodan Milosevic) by pushing for an ICC investigation on war crimes charges, to use aerial bombardment to degrade his armed force and to push the rebels to make a full-scale charge to overthrow him. Around the time of the Resolution, Sarkozy, Cameron and Obama began to say that Qaddafi "has to go." They wrote a joint opinion essay that appeared on April 15 in various media outlets (including *The New York Times*, where I read it). They laid out the full nature of their campaign against Qaddafi,

> So long as Gaddafi is in power, NATO and its coalition partners must maintain their operations so that civilians remain protected and the pressure on the regime builds. Then a genuine transition from dictatorship to an inclusive constitutional process can really begin, led by a new generation of leaders. For that transition to succeed, Colonel Gaddafi must go, and go for good.

If Qaddafi had to go "and go for good," there was no room for any negotiation. There was no option for a peaceful settlement. Assassination or war was the only option. "To insist that Qaddafi both leave the country and face trial in the International Criminal Court is virtually to ensure that he will stay in Libya

to the bitter end and go down fighting," pointed out the International Crisis Group's North Africa director Hugh Roberts. "That would render a ceasefire all but impossible and so maximize the prospect of continued armed conflict." The entire idea that NATO was open to a peaceful path was a cynical smokescreen to camouflage NATO's singular agenda: to use its military might to give air-cover for the rebels to seize Tripoli, and, as far as the evidence suggest, to remain beholden to the NATO states for their fundamental assistance.

Given this, the NATO strategy would have no room for a "ceasefire." One of the principle planks of the confused resolution would never be met. That is why even Gilbert Achcar, who otherwise supported a "no-fly" zone wrote, "There are not enough safeguards in the wording of the resolution to bar its use for imperialist purposes." One senior diplomat told Pepe Escobar of *Asia Times* why his country could not support Resolution 1973, "We were arguing that Libya, Bahrain and Yemen were similar cases, and calling for a fact-finding mission. We maintain our official position that the resolution is not clear, and may be misinterpreted in a belligerent manner." Not long after the passage of Resolution 1973, US cruise missiles struck Libyan armed forces units and Qaddafi's home.

By March 20, it was clear that the United States and NATO had gone to war against Qaddafi himself.

The murkiness of the mission perplexed General Carter Ham of the US African Command (AFRICOM). Ham acknowledged that many of the rebels are themselves civilians who have taken up arms. Resolution 1973 did not call upon the member states to assist the rebels, only to protect civilians. It followed

the Responsibility to Protect mandate of the UN. It was technically not permitted to enter the civil war on one side or another. There is no obligation to protect an armed rebellion, only unarmed civilians. By the first days of the NATO bombing, however, it was already clear that the "no-fly" zone would advantage the rebels and so violate the mandate. "We do not provide close air support for the opposition forces," General Ham notes, "We protect civilians." However, "It's a very problematic situation. Sometimes these are situations that brief better at the headquarters than in the cockpit of an aircraft." But this was disingenuous. The rebel spokesperson, and former *Good Morning Benghazi* presenter Ahmed Khalifa explained, "There is communication between the Transitional National Council and UN assembled forces," in other words NATO, "and we work on letting them know what areas need to be bombarded." This does not sound like the accidents of distance. It sounds more like collusion, with NATO taking a strong position on behalf of the rebels.

When Qaddafi's forces engaged the rebels, technically the NATO aircraft and cruise missiles were not permitted to interfere. The resolution had forbidden NATO from sending in ground forces. Technology had rendered the idea of "ground forces" redundant. The US brought its AC130 gunships and A10 Thunderbolt II aircraft into operation over the skies of Libya. These are not designed to help patrol the sky, but are capable of hovering in the sky and firing at ground troops and at heavy weaponry with its cannons (including a 40mm Bofors cannon) and machine guns. The AC130 is essentially "boots in the air," and

its presence showed that the US arsenal (even under NATO command) was no longer patrolling the skies, but was actively engaged against Qaddafi's forces on the ground. A senior US military official told the *Washington Post* on March 22, "I would not dispute the fact that in some of our actions we are helping the rebels' cause, but that is not the intent." Things got murkier by May, when US Navy Admiral Samuel Locklear told Congressman Mike Turner that the NATO forces were trying to assassinate Qaddafi. There was no UN mandate for this, nor did the US political leaders authorize this publicly (although Obama did say that "Qaddafi has to go," a more modern version of "who will rid me of this meddlesome priest"). Locklear had much more measured language, but the gist was the same. As Turner reports it, Locklear told him, "The scope of civil protection was being interpreted to permit the removal of the chain of command of Qaddafi's military, which includes Qaddafi." In any form of English, this means assassination. This was after the April 30 NATO aerial attack on Qaddafi's compound that reportedly killed three of his grandchildren. Resolution 1973 was violated by the NATO actions then, even if NATO's intent was pure.

A hundred years ago, Italian planes inaugurated aerial bombardment over these very cities: Benghazi, Tripoli. The Futurist F.T. Marinetti flew on one *sortie*, finding the bombing runs to be "hygienic" and a good "moral education." The air force communiqué from November 6, 1911 considered the runs to "have a wonderful effect on the morale of the Arabs." The *Daily Chronicle* hesitated on the same day, "This was not war. It was butchery. Noncombatants, young and

old, were slaughtered ruthlessly, without compunction and without shame." The Italians took cover behind international law. The Institute for International Law in Madrid found that "air warfare is allowed, but only on the condition that it does not expose the peaceful population to greater dangers than attacks on land or from the sea." Much the same kind of logic floated around in NATO's Brussels' headquarters prior to the UN vote and then afterwards.

In the camp of the Left, certainty was no longer an option. Qaddafi's threats against the weaker forces in the East were hard to ignore. Arrests, assassinations and artillery fire in the West were equally appalling. There was no easy lever to use against Qaddafi's power. Many who would otherwise stand surely against humanitarian intervention were now not so sure. Much the same kind of predicament stopped liberals and leftists when George H. W. Bush promised to destroy Saddam Hussein's regime (those of us who stood on vigils for the dead of Hallabja in 1987 will remember the debates). These are not manufactured discussions. They are real. No countervailing armed force of the Left was available to defend the rebels. No Vietnamese army, such as entered Cambodia in 1978–79 to crush the degenerate Khmer Rouge and save Cambodia from the maniacal policies of Pol Pot. No Cuban troops, such as came to the aid of the MPLA (who can forget the 1987–88 Cuito-Cuanavale siege and the eventual victory of the MPLA and the Cubans against the South Africans, a mortal blow for the apartheid regime). These are episodes of military intervention when the balance of forces favored the Left. Was the Resolution 1973 "no fly" zone intervention such a feat?

The events of late February are positioned as a false dilemma. Only two options are presented (massacre or intervention), when others presented themselves: the rebels had begun to take control of the dynamic, and would prevail, and the African Union had begun to assert itself as a peace-maker, and would perhaps have convinced Qaddafi to accept a ceasefire. In one case, the rebels might have won the military campaign on their own, albeit on a much longer timeframe (perhaps the Egyptians would have entered the campaign at some point to open a humanitarian corridor for the civilians of the East to flee to Egypt). In another, a peace agreement might have allowed Qaddafi to decamp with dignity and for a regime change to take place with many of the same faces from the NTC in the new government (alongside a few regime stalwarts, including Saif al-Islam). Those who posed this false dilemma had no faith in either the rebels or in the African Union. Their horizon of human action remains frozen in a colonial mindset: the natives are barbarians and the Europeans are the saviors.

Few had any illusions about the actions of the "coalition." Even the *guru* of liberal interventionism, Michael Walzer, believed that Libya was the "wrong intervention." Why the West sought to bomb Libya and not the Gulf States, or Darfur or indeed the Congo was plain to see. The answer to every question is the same: oil. In Bahrain, as we shall see, the Saudis and their Gulf Arab allies were given carte blanche to crush the dissent in the peninsula and preserve the monarchies that encircle the first amongst equals, the realm of King Abdullah and the oil barons. Yemen was on the brink. Deals were being struck. Senior

figures in the military and in the political wing who had abandoned Ali Abdullah Saleh had been given assurances from their powerful backers. As long as the revolution did not go too far, and as long as the military could contain any move to radical democracy, all would be forgiven. The bogey of al-Qaeda took care of Washington, and that of radical republicanism took care of Saudi Arabia. The realm of care could not include Bahrain or Syria, the Congo or Sri Lanka. There would be no intervention in oil-rich Gabon, where Obama mourned the loss of the old-hand dictator Omar Bongo in 2009 with platitudes that should be reserved for genuine leaders of their people. It is mockery that greets the pious declarations of human rights when these rights are so stingily doled out to areas of the world that seem to matter more than others. The question that burned up the media in the Global South was why this was the "right intervention," and why not Syria, why not Bahrain, why not all the other important sites where the "international community" (namely the NATO powers) did not bother?

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice did not have an easy time at the UN. South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil and India balked. The Chinese and Russians were not keen. It took the Arab League's assent to give Obama the lever to move South Africa's Jacob Zuma in a rushed phone call. India's Manjeev Singh Puri pointed out that his country could not support the resolution because it was "based on very little clear information, including a lack of certainty regarding who was going to enforce the measure.... Political efforts must be

the priority in resolving the situation." Brazil's Maria Luiza Riberio Viotti also demurred, largely because Brazil "believed that the resolution contemplated measures that went beyond [the] call" for the protection of civilians. She worried that the actions taken might cause "more harm than good to the very same civilians we are committed to protecting," and that no military action alone "would succeed in ending the conflict." A senior diplomat from a country among the non-permanent members of the Security States told me that he feared that Resolution 1973 would create a political moral hazard: would a secessionist or rebel movement that was weak risk an armed uprising knowing it would be crushed so as to force a NATO intervention on its behalf? Such a suicidal rebellion, which might be emboldened by the example of 1973, might result in huge casualties, the opposite of the responsibility to protect.

No doubt my diplomatic source was correct. By early September, the Syrian Revolution General Commission, the umbrella bloc of activists opposed to the Asad regime, called on the "international community" to act. "Calling for outside intervention is a sensitive issue," said its spokesperson Ahmad al-Khatib. "That could be used by the regime to label its opponents as traitors. We are calling for international observers as a first step. If the regime refuses it will open the door on itself for other action, such as no-tank or no-fly zones." By early 2012, no such Libya-style military intervention was in the cards. On the surface, the once-bitten governments of China and Russia refused to give their assent to a tough resolution in the style of 1973. Beneath the bluster, other motivations made

their impact felt. The Israelis worry greatly about their security in this new Arab Spring environment: the emergence of political Islam into Egyptian political life threatens security on that border, while the Lebanese continue to refuse to police a border while in a state of dormant war. Despite his own bluster, Bashar al-Asad has turned out to be a resolute border guard for Israel. The worry in the US State Department and in the Israeli government is that there is no alternative to Bashar's regime in Syria as far as this kind of border service is concerned. The US cannot be seen to make any moves in defense of Bashar, and they need not do so: the Chinese and Russian wall allows the US and Israel to benefit as free riders. No-one wants to see the precipitous fall of the Asad regime. This cynical analysis might give pause to the Syrian rebels, who have been willing to lose blood on the streets hoping for an intervention that will not come. Geo-politics does not dictate it.

Brazil, China, Germany, India and the Russian Federation abstained from the vote on Resolution 1973. Ten voted with the United Sates, France and the UK. There were no negative votes. It was hard enough to abstain.

China did not use its veto. Later, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu said that her government had been led by the Arab League's plea. They had not anticipated such widespread air strikes. Turkey, which did not play an active role at the UN, was also furious at the "all necessary measures" part of the resolution. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed the kind of indignation he had shown at Davos when sharing a panel with Israel's Peres in 2009,

"We have seen in the past that such operations are of no use and that on the contrary, they increase loss of life, transform into occupation and seriously harm the country's unity." Both China and Turkey suffer from regional divides (Tibet and the Kurds). Libya's East-West cardinal split is far more dramatic than anything that these countries face, but the principle is nonetheless unsettling. If a rebellion breaks out in Qamdo prefecture, would something like Resolution 1973 return to the Security Council?

The idea of the "no-fly" zone came to the Security Council from the defected Libyan representatives (February 21), from the National Transitional Council in Benghazi (March 2), from the United Kingdom and France (March 7) and from the Arab League (March 12). That the idea first came from the Libyans at the UN and then from the NTC before it came from the NATO states is important to note, but not significant in itself. Liberal intervention takes cover behind invitations. The US invaded the Philippines in 1898 only after being invited to join in the struggle against the Spanish by Emilio Aguinaldo. When the Spanish fled, the US decided to take over. This kind of imperial grammar moves from 1898 to the twenty-first century with ease. It is important to note, however, that there was no unanimity in the NTC. On February 27, Abdul Hafiz Ghoga, the NTC's spokesperson announced in Benghazi, "We are completely against foreign intervention. The rest of Libya will be liberated by the people and Qaddafi's security forces will be eliminated by the people of Libya." The strident calls from Benghazi for intervention come only after March 10, when France recognized the NTC.

The calls were heard in the NATO capitals when it was clear that the neoliberal reformer Mahmoud Jibril was the key political person in the NTC (he met with Sarkozy and Hillary Clinton in Paris on March 14) and that the military wing of the NTC was in firm hands (of whose, we shall see below). This new clique had banked on NATO air support. It wanted the NATO intervention to strengthen its own hand among the rebels, and to sideline the more patriotic and anti-imperialist among them. The NATO intervention was an essential part of the attempt to hijack the Libyan rebellion.

In the UN's Security Council "emergency room" there is a mural done by the Norwegian artist Per Krogh. Its panels showcase everyday life in Northern Europe. At its bottom center there is a phoenix, rising from the flames, around which stand people who might just be "Eastern" (the women here have their faces covered, and the men wear turbans). A field artillery gun points at these people. It is their fate. Under such illusions, the Security Council deliberates.

The Europeans and the US knew that they would not have been able to turn those guns as they wished in the case of Libya without cover from the Arab League, and from the African Union. The former was much more eager for intervention, and the latter hoped to effect some kind of political solution. Neither was willing to put all its efforts to stop NATO's entry into a rebellion that seemed to have its own dynamic. If the Arab League had said no to the intervention, or if the African Union had been more forceful in its disapproval (such as disregarding the UN and sending its team to Tripoli on March 17, 18,

19 or 20), then it would have been embarrassing for the Atlantic powers to have insisted on a resolution. Bernard Kouchner, the leading advocate for humanitarian intervention writing in *The Guardian* on March 24, provides us with an open statement of the importance of the Arab and African fig-leaf, "Fortunately, the UN, the African Union and the Arab League are here to provide us with a legal framework so that this momentary violence—under resolution 1973—may serve to achieve real peace, surely preferable to a pacifism that would allow civilians to be slaughtered." They did not provide a "legal framework." They provided political cover.

Saudi Arabia Delivers the Arab League.

On March 12, the Arab League voted to back the idea of a "no-fly" zone. At this Cairo meeting, only eleven of the twenty-two members of the League attended the vote. They were hornswoggled by the veteran Saudi diplomat, Ahmed bin Abdulaziz Qattan. Six of the eleven representatives present were members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the GCC or Arab NATO. It is worth pointing out that four of the GCC members are also participants in NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, formed in 2004 to create "inter-operatibility" or military cooperation between NATO and these four states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates). The Arab NATO is also an adjunct of NATO itself.

To gain a simple majority of those present in the Arab League meeting in March, the Saudis only needed three more votes. They got them. The only countries at the table who voted against the "no fly" zone

were Algeria and Syria. Eleven countries were not present. It was hardly a quorum.

Youssef bin Alawi bin Abdullah, the Omani foreign minister, announced this news at a press conference. The GCC's leader Abdelrahman bin Hamad al-Attiya preened for the cameras, "Libya has lost its legitimacy." Amr Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League, told *Der Spiegel*, "The United Nations, the Arab League, the African Union, the Europeans—everyone should participate." The Arab League had indeed provided the smokescreen for other motivations. This was the spur to get the vacillating members of the UN Security Council to push for a "no fly" zone. Mahmoud Jibril hastened to Paris to huddle with the NATO political leaders at a G-8 meeting on March 14. Obama worked the phones, using the Arab League's vote as the carrot. On March 17, the UN Security Council voted for the resolution.

The day before the Arab League vote, the Saudi regime, according to Toby Jones writing in *Foreign Policy*, "ordered security forces to blanket the kingdom's streets, choking off popular demonstrations and sending a clear signal that public displays would be met with a crackdown. Prince Saud al-Faisal, the kingdom's usually reserved foreign minister, warned that the regime would 'cut off any finger' raised against it in protest." Demonstrations in al-Hofuf and al-Qatif were fumigated.

Two days before the UN vote, the GCC sent a detachment of 1000 Saudi troops and 500 United Arab Emirates troops (along with a detachment of Jordanians) across the causeway that separates Saudi Arabia from Bahrain. They were part of the GCC's Peninsula

Shield. Their commander, Major-General Mutlaq bin Salem al-Azima said, "We have instructions from our top leadership that we are tools of peace and that we will never attack, but in the meantime, we will never allow anyone to attack us." These "tools of peace" set about doing what they had been trained to do, namely to beat the protestors and fire into crowds. Human Rights Watch documented the death of at least eighteen people, but cautioned that this number was perilously deflated (the Bahraini authorities refused admission to hospitals, and indeed arrested doctors and nurses who made unpleasant noises). Joe Stork, deputy director of HRW's Middle East section said in late March, "Bahraini security forces have frequently shown a reckless disregard for human life during crackdowns on protesters. Firing birdshot pellets at close range is not crowd control—it can be murder." A few weeks later, Stork noted, "Bahrain's ruling family intends to punish any and everyone who criticizes the government. The aim of this vicious full-scale crackdown seems to be to intimidate everyone into silence."

The White House released an anodyne statement, urging the GCC partners to "show restraint" but privately quite pleased with the outcome. Defense Secretary Gates had been in Manama on March 11, a few days before the Peninsula Shield entered the country. He offered the al-Khalifa family "reassurances of support" from the United States. That is what they wanted to hear. It was sufficient.

The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights remains in business a year after these events, documenting the harsh treatment of political prisoners and harassment of journalists and politicians. The opposition's

paper, *al-Wasat*, was silenced (the regime arrested its founder, Karim Fakhrawi, on April 5, and he died in custody a week later; it main columnist Haidar al-Naimi was arrested at the same time). The struggle in Bahrain continues. Occasionally protestors appear on the site of the Pearl Monument (now destroyed by the authorities who did not want it or its name to memorialize the protests and the crackdown). Mohamed Ali Alhaiki, Ali Jawad al-Sheikh, Nabeel Rajab and so many more continued their futile vigil. They have faced the full flavor of repression from the Bahraini government. Rajab was arrested and beaten brutally in the early 2012, a sign of the ongoing protests and counter-revolution. In the context of this repression and the ban on international media entering Bahrain, and you might as well say the *janazah* for the protests.

Nada Alwadi, who covered the protests for *al-Wasat*, points out that the Bahraini activists know that the "United States is not in favor of any changes... the US posture has played a major role in marginalizing Bahrain in the eyes of the international media." In early January 2012, several thousand Bahrainis protested before the UN building, chanting, "Down, Down Khalifa," and holding signs urging the UN to "intervene to protect civilians." The protestors came from the al-Wefaq party and the more secular Saad Party. One of the issues before them was to protest an anodyne report released by a commission set up by the King to assess the protests and the crackdown. Strikingly, the commission was chaired by Cherif Bassiouni, the official who had previously led a UN Human Rights Council team to Tripoli. In Libya, Bassiouni was harsh against the regime; in Bahrain,

he was forgiving to the Kingdom. Protected by the calumnies of power, the baffling crimes of the Bahraini regime are forgiven.

As the crackdown continued into the end of 2011, the Bahrani government took refuge in US forms of crowd control. They hired former Miami police department head John Timoney to come and train the Bahrain police. Timoney had cut his teeth at the New York Police Department, then made his name in Philadelphia controlling the people at the Republican National Convention (2000) and in Miami during the Free Trade Area of the Americas protest (2003). Journalist Jeremy Scahill wrote of Timoney's work in Miami, "No one should call what Timoney runs in Miami a police force. It's a paramilitary group. Thousands of soldiers, dressed in khaki uniforms with full black body armour and gas masks, marching in unison through the streets, banging batons against their shields, chanting, 'back...back...back.' There were armored personnel carriers and helicopters." A Commission of Inquiry in Miami found that the flagrant use of riot police in their outlandish gear stifled free speech since it scared public citizen action. Bahrain did not need to dig deep into its older traditions to crush dissent and affirm its autocracy; the Miami model from the cradle of liberty is sufficient.

That they had been able to get away with murder pleased the GCC members. At a meeting on March 20 at the UAE, Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal told his peers that the Gulf NATO needed to take care of its own security. "Why not seek to turn the GCC into a grouping like the European Union? Why not have one unified Gulf army? Why not have a nuclear de-

terrent with which to face Iran—should international efforts fail to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons—or Israeli nuclear capabilities?" The deal on Libya allowed the GCC to act in Bahrain, which has now emboldened the Gulf Arabs to think of a nuclear shield. This is catastrophic for the region.

Once the air war began over Libya, the members of the Arab League knew they had been taken for a ride by both the NATO countries and the GCC. The debate inside the League appeared on the surface in a very bizarre fashion. It seemed as if the League's members did not know what a "no fly" zone entailed. Nawaf Salam of Lebanon, for instance, said that the resolution did not authorize the occupation of "even an inch" of Libyan territory. The League's Amr Moussa said that the NATO bombing "differs from the aim of imposing a no-fly zone." To *Der Spiegel*, Amr Moussa said he did not know "how nor who would impose the no-fly zone." If this meant that NATO would be able to define the assault on Libya, Amr Moussa said, "That remains to be seen." The Arab League's contortions seemed bizarre if one believed that they actually did not know what a "no fly" zone would look like. But this is not credible given the actual experience of a "no-fly" zone maintained during the 1990s over Iraq, an Arab League member state. The only adequate explanation, reaffirmed by a diplomat from an Arab state who concurred with this theory, is that once the air war began the League's members balked. Amr Moussa, who had pretensions for the Egyptian presidency, had to back off from full support of resolution 1973. He was dragooned to stand beside UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in

Cairo and recant (Ban's car was assaulted as he left the Arab League headquarters by protestors chanting "no-fly, no-fly").

Amr Moussa's bid to become Egypt's next president faltered, as he seemed to be outmaneuvered in the Arab League over Libya. One of the key players who whipped Amr Moussa into line was Qatar. At the Arab League, it was Qatar that pushed ahead of Saudi Arabia, pressing the GCC to line up for the "yes" vote. Qatar did not only provide the political support for the resolution. Once it passed, Qatar worked with NATO on the military end (recall that Qatar is a member of NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative). Qatar's Mirage fighter jets and its C-17 Globemasters went into action in the air, while Qatari Special Forces hit the ground. Libyan rebels came to Qatar to train at the same time as Qatar became the base for the communications apparatus of the TNC (a television station, Libya Ahrar TV, and a radio station broadcast into Libya from an office in Doha's fabled Souq Waqif). Qatar also became a de facto headquarters of the Libyan Contact Group. The first meeting of the group was held in Doha on April 13. It was chaired jointly by the United Kingdom and Qatar. At this meeting, the Contact Group reiterated the rhetoric of peace, called on Qaddafi to go and then established it as the main channel of communication between those who were prosecuting the air war (and the trainings for the rebels) and the rebels themselves. In other words, the Contact Group and the Transitional National Council opened discussions about financing (a Temporary Financial Mechanism was set up), humanitarian assistance and "recovery" once the war was over. It was

the central focal point for deals about the future of Libya, and Qatar's fingerprints were all over it. Qatar also sent its military chief, Abdelrahman bin Hamad al-Attiya to Cairo to discuss its Libyan strategy with the ruling Military Council on April 6. Egypt, by some accounts, had provided arms to the rebels. But it would not enter the conflict with its military. That might have made NATO irrelevant.

Retribution by the disgruntled Arab states against Qatar and the GCC's manipulation of the Arab League came in May. The lead candidate to take over the GCC from the retiring Amr Moussa was the GCC's former head Abdelrahman bin Hamad al-Attiya. Al-Attiya, a Qatari, had been an active player in getting the Arab League's support for the "no fly" zone. His country, Qatar, was a major booster of resolution. The Arab League would have taken al-Attiya without complaint had this bad feeling over 1973 resolution not prevented unanimity. At the last minute, the Egyptians threw in their venerable diplomat, Nabil Elaraby, who became the Arab League's Secretary General in May 2011. Al-Attiya had been set aside.

Africa's Dented Shield.

Gabon, Nigeria and South Africa voted for UN Resolution 1973. South Africa had intended to vote against it or to abstain, but a phone call from Obama to Jacob Zuma was the decisive factor. The vote from these three weakened the process that was ongoing in the African Union (AU), namely to create a framework to bring peace to the overheated Libyan conflict. On March 10, the African Union's Peace and

Security Council met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and set up a High Level Ad Hoc Committee on Libya. They were to fly in to Tripoli and put pressure on Qaddafi. Qaddafi respected the African Union. After he felt let down by the Arab League in the 1980s, Qaddafi pivoted toward Africa. He had become the biggest backer of the African Union (including using Libyan state funds to build houses for all the African leaders for their 2001 summit in Lusaka). If anyone could influence Qaddafi, it was the African Union. By all indications, Qaddafi did not want to become an utter pariah, at least not in the eyes of those whom he sought out as his peers (the African leadership). That was the only possible lever.

The African Union Panel on Libya included heads of government (such as Amadou Toumani Touré of Mali) and foreign ministers (such as Henry Oryem Okello of Uganda). Touré was an interesting choice. In 1991, as head of the parachute commandos he overthrew the austerity dictatorship of Moussa Traoré (who governed Mali from 1968), but turned over the country to civilian rule. Not for nothing is he known as "The Soldier of Democracy." Ten years later, Touré returned to politics, and has since won two elections to lead his country. Okello studied and lived in Britain for a number of years before he returned to enter the family business (his father was president of Uganda in the 1980s). He was an active member in the Juba peace talks with the Lord's Resistance Army. Their credibility is as good as anyone else.

The other two members of the Panel are pale shadows of Touré and Okello. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz also conducted a coup in Mauritania. To his

credit, he resigned his position, put on a suit to campaign and won the election to the presidency in 2009. But there was no real transition. Congo Brazzaville's Denis Sassou Nguesso has presided over his country and run it since 1979. Sassou Nguesso shares much with Qaddafi, including a putative radical past (he is the leader of the *Parti congolais du travail*, but is better known as a big spender to tender his own family's needs). He saw the writing on the wall in 1991, was ousted from power, engineered a civil war that lasted through the 1990s and returned to being head of government in 2002.

Their effective leader was Jacob Zuma of South Africa. When formed on March 10, the Panel had hoped to arrive in Tripoli before March 20. But they were prevented from their mission by Resolution 1973 and the immediate assault on the country. The UN declined to allow the African Union Panel to proceed, despite assurances from both Tripoli and Benghazi that they would entertain the mediation. It was a remarkable example of the UN stopping a peace envoy and preferring bombardment.

A month into the conflict, the UN allowed the African Union Panel to try its hand. The conflict appeared to be at a stalemate, so the NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu said that the alliance has "always made it clear that there could be no purely military solution to the crisis." The African Union proposal was quite simple: an immediate ceasefire, unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid, protection of foreign nationals and a dialogue between Benghazi and Tripoli for a political settlement. Zuma's South Africa had voted for Resolution 1973, so he had credibility in

Benghazi. On April 10, Zuma saw Qaddafi but did not fly to Benghazi. It was a bizarre turn of events. An already demoralized African Union had to chalk up another defeat.

The African Union stumbled along. A preparatory meeting of the African Union panel met on June 26 but did not suggest anything new. They had their roadmap, but it required NATO to stand down. By the AU's meeting in Equatorial Guinea on June 30 the African Union's Libya panel's chair, Mauritania's President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, had already gone on record that Qaddafi "can no longer lead Libya." But the African Union, unlike NATO and Benghazi, would not make Qaddafi's departure a *precondition* for negotiation. That was a recipe for no dialogue at all, as the International Crisis Group recognized in its June 6 report (*Making Sense of Libya*). The African Union did not count out Qaddafi's removal, but would only allow that as a possible outcome of the discussion between the two sides. No such discussion took place.

The International Crisis Group report upheld the African Union view that "a political breakthrough is by far the best way out of the costly situation created by the military impasse." Their position mirrored the basic peace platform of the African Union. It asked for a third party political intervention. The Atlantic powers could not be a third party. They have no credibility to be unbiased. The Crisis Group went elsewhere for its mediators, "A joint political initiative by the Arab League and the African Union—the former viewed more favorably by the opposition, the latter preferred by the regime—is one possibility to lead to

such an agreement." Such political intervention could not occur, the Crisis Group argued, without "the leadership of the revolt and NATO rethinking their current stance."

The position of the Crisis Group and the African Union was shared by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (the BRICS states). At their summit in Sanya, China on April 14 the BRICS states essentially endorsed the African Union's stalled process. The BRICS had a vision that was far more robust than that of the Atlantic powers. It came out of the 1990s, when it appeared as if History had ended and Americanism was the sole approach to human affairs. During the 1990s, the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America tried to develop a new set of institutions to push against the economic and political assertions of the Atlantic powers. As the Group of Seven (G7, 1974), these Atlantic powers corralled the Third World's initiatives inside the United Nations and gave priority to the G7's own favored institutions (the IMF, the World Bank, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs and of course NATO). The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM, 1961) formed the Group of Fifteen (G15, 1989), which narrowed into the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA, 2003) bloc, and finally to the BRICS (2006). The BRICS states had made their claim to planetary governance, with a platform that is far more multipolar and polycentric than that of the Atlantic powers. The African Union would act more as an agent of the BRICS than of Washington and Paris. Libya was a test case for the transfer of power from the G7 to the BRICS—or at least a demonstration effect of whether the BRICS (taken seriously for its surplus

capital during the credit crunch) would be acknowledged as a serious partner during a political crisis. As it turned out, the G7 disregarded the BRICS. This was the undoing of negotiations and a peaceful settlement. The opinions of artillery held the day.

Before the March 17 vote in the UN, the BRICS states had agreed in principle not to support another "humanitarian intervention" by NATO. It turned out that all the BRICS states were on the Security Council in 2011, with two of them (China and Russia) as permanent members and the rest rotating through as temporary members. If the bloc had held fast and if the African Union members in the Council (Gabon, Nigeria and South Africa) had abstained or voted against the resolution it would have been embarrassing to the G7—if Germany had still abstained that would have been eight abstentions or no votes in a Council of fifteen. Such a divided Council would not have been able to go through with this resolution, and with so much uncertainty it would have been acceptable for either China or Russia to veto it. But this did not occur. South Africa voted with the G7.

The BRICS states came to Sanya for their second major summit. Between discussions on the credit crunch and their mutual trade relations, the BRICS states released a statement on the events in the Middle East and North Africa. What they saw was a "shift of power towards ordinary citizens," a fact that must have certainly confounded one or two of the heads of government who had to swallow hard while they accepted that phrase into the final communiqué. When it came to Libya, the consensus was not so clear. The Sanya Declaration was a bit stifled. Nonetheless, the

five states agreed that the military option should not be relied upon to bring peace to Libya—reconciliation between the population required a political platform, and guarantees that revenge would not be on the table and that the good of Libya would harness maximalist claims from either side. "All parties should resolve their differences through peaceful means and dialogue in which the UN and regional organizations should as appropriate play their role." The BRICS states called for an immediate ceasefire to assess the degradation of the civilian infrastructure, and to provide humanitarian aid. This was to be monitored by some combination of UN peacekeepers and the African Union peacekeepers, with every indication that if this plan would go through the BRICS countries might have provided some material and logistical support.

The regional organizations, the African Union in particular, had made its attempt. It had been set aside. The energetic UN envoy, the Jordanian politician Abdul Ilah al-Khatib (who once famously said of the Atlantic powers, "Only when there is a crisis do they realize that they have to do something"), went from capital to capital attempting to draw down the violence and produce some kind of pathway to peace. For the UN, the war had become a humanitarian catastrophe. Between February and July, about 630,000 civilians had fled the country (including 100,000 Libyans), and another 200,000 Libyans had been internally displaced. Al-Khatib's deputy told the UN Security Council in late July, "Both sides are willing to talk, but they are still emphasizing maximum demands at this point and patience is clearly required before detailed discussion can begin." It never did

begin. The talking appeared to be a smokescreen. It proved that the UN could not operate in a field where it is crowded out by the opinions of artillery, notably the very loud guns of NATO.

Russia, who had neither exercised its veto in the UN nor used its muscle against Qaddafi, now invited Jacob Zuma to bring the BRICS case to the Russia-NATO Council meeting at Sochi, the Black Sea resort, on July 3. The main item on the agenda for the summit was for NATO to smooth Russia's ruffled feathers. The Council was created in 2002 to make sure that the increased tensions between the two did not detract from Russia's support of the War on Terror. NATO's gradual march eastward, attracting former Eastern bloc states into its agenda came just after NATO's air war in Yugoslavia (1999) and its war in Afghanistan (2001 onward). All this seemed to Moscow like encirclement. Bush's insistence upon missile defense, and the US push to bring NATO and several Eastern European as well as East Asian states into its missile defense plans rattled Moscow's justified paranoia. The war over South Ossetia in 2008 allowed Moscow to flex its muscles, but this did not dampen NATO's confidence; its ships entered the Black Sea to deliver aid to Georgia (Russia went technical here, pointing out that the number of NATO ships in the area violated the 1936 Montreux Convention).

Over the past decade, Russia has moved closer to the new formation that comes out of the Non-Aligned Movement, the G-15 and IBSA. China joined IBSA to block the new trade rules that would have gone through in Cancun (2003) and to formulate a common agenda at the Copenhagen (2009) meeting on climate.

These discussions and the creation of a common platform produced the BRICS formation. Russia, long adrift somewhere between its own Cold War past and Boris Yeltsin's subservience to the US, found a new anchor with the locomotives of the Global South.

At Hainan, in April, the BRICS powers strongly criticized the NATO war on Libya, and formulated the principles that would appear in the African Union High Level Ad Hoc Committee on Libya's June 15 statement to the UN. BRICS held out for a negotiated settlement, and cautioned against the habits of war. Ruhakana Rugunda, of Uganda, represented the African Union at the UN meeting, where he pointedly noted, "It is unwise for certain players to be intoxicated with technological superiority and begin to think they alone can alter the course of human history towards freedom for the whole of mankind. Certainly, no constellation of states should think that they can recreate hegemony over Africa" (Rugunda was the Ugandan representative to the UN, and has now been moved to a domestic cabinet post). The African Union told the UN that given its experience in Burundi, in particular, it would be able to handle the negotiation and the transition in Libya.

It was in this context that the Russians involved themselves in the Libyan stalemate, sending unofficial diplomats to Libya and pushing back in the halls of NATO. At Sochi, Russian president Medvedev invited Zuma, who has been at the head of the African Union's attempts in Libya, to join the deliberations. Zuma told the NATO chiefs that they had overstepped the UN Resolutions (1970 and 1973), and that the only way forward was negotiations. If

the NATO chiefs could pressure the Benghazi Transitional Council to back down from its maximalist position (Qaddafi must go immediately), Zuma suggested, the way could open for peace with honor. The NATO chiefs listened to Zuma tell them about the African Union's Framework Agreement on a Political Settlement, and watched Medvedev applaud the African Union for its work and offer his support to the Framework and the African Union's Roadmap. Russia and the African Union offered to lean on Qaddafi to abide by the terms of the Roadmap, and they wanted NATO to lean on the Transitional Council to do the same. There was even a suggestion that they would provide an exit for Qaddafi, moving him out of Libya to a post at the African Union or somewhere to smooth the transition to peace in Libya.

NATO left Sochi indifferent to Russian concerns over missile defense, with bland promises over progress at their next meeting in Chicago. On Libya, there was no progress, as there could be none. Libya is the first battleground of a new "cold war," this one not between the US and Russia, but between the G7 (and its military arm, NATO) and the BRICS (who have not much of a military arm). The G7 commands the skies and the rhetoric of freedom, but it does not have a sustainable economic base and no sense of a political process that does not come with aerial bombardment and its threats. NATO's sword would never grow cold.

The BRICS failed to build on the momentum after the credit crisis of 2007 forced the G7 to invite them to help save the world financial system. The BRICS states showed up, opened their checkbooks,

but seemed to do so servilely. They did not insist on greater power in the secret rooms where the G7 makes its decision. When the search for a candidate to lead the IMF opened up in the summer of 2011, the BRICS states failed to coalesce around their candidate (a European once more leads the IMF). They also failed to foist their alternative to the deflationary strategies of the international financial organizations. All this took place despite the fact that the IMF announced that the United States will cease to be the world's largest economy by 2016 (that reign began in the late 1920s). In its place will come China, the anchor of the BRICS. Wen Jiabao, the Chinese premier, tried to reassert the BRICS position with "How China Plans to Reinforce the Global Recovery" (*Financial Times*, June 23). Wen called the bet. China is at ready, but not yet to take on the political challenges alone. It sought to work through the BRICS formation, but without a confrontational attitude. Neither China nor the BRICS in general are willing to stand up to the G7 in the international arena.

On the question of international politics, the BRICS have been a bother to the G7. If the BRICS were defeated in their quest to participate in the Libyan imbroglio, they have so far declined to allow the G7 to repeat their Libyan mission in Syria. The BRICS have refused to allow any strong UN resolution for that country. The grounds are that NATO misused Resolution 1973 on Libya, and it would do the same in Syria (the G7's case on Syria was made by the French representative to the UN Gérard Araud on June 13 in *O Estado de Sao Paulo*, to win over the Brazilians away from what the French see as South African

obduracy). Since June, the BRICS states blocked a resolution in the Security Council. In early August, the Council condemned the "widespread violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities," but refused to test the waters of sanctions or threats. On August 31, the *New York Times* editorial fulminated, "Russia and China, along with India, Brazil and South Africa, are blocking a United Nations Security Council resolution that could impose broad international sanctions on Damascus. Their complicity is shameful." What the *Times* did not recognize is that this blockage is a consequence of the shabby treatment of the "international community" by NATO over the Libyan war. What is shameful is the disregard the G7 showed to the world when others had good ideas to help stem the bloodletting in Libya. What is more important here is that the US and the Israelis do not want an intervention in Syria. What appears as the emergence of the BRICS on the world stage might simply be that their reticence to sign-off on a NATO intervention in Syria is along the grain of similar hesitations in Washington and Tel Aviv.

Peace was never the point. The conflict was always about the removal of Qaddafi, and his regime.

America's Libyans.

In early March, I got a message from an acquaintance who works in the many shadowy enclaves around Washington, DC. He gave me a name, Khalifa Hifter, and the name of a town, Vienna, Virginia. Make the connection, the friend said.

It did not take long to discover the story, one that was initially totally ignored and then later treated as

if it were unspectacular (I wrote about him in *CounterPunch* and then talked about him during my debate with Juan Cole on *Democracy Now!*, on March 29, 2011. That evening, miraculously, my computer was hacked and the database destroyed). An ex-Colonel of the Libyan army, Khalifa Belqasim Hifter had arrived by at least March 14 (although I think earlier) in Benghazi to share the military command with Major General al-Fattah Younis (and Omar el-Hariri). There was always a whiff of mystery about al-Fattah Younis, Qaddafi's secretary of the interior till he defected in Benghazi on 22 February. Omar Mukhtar el-Hariri also has a complicated story. He was one of the original members who conducted the coup of 1969, a man not of the tent, but just outside it (he taught Qaddafi how to drive a car). Later el-Hariri reflected that the Free Officers had no clear idea what to do with the new Libya and made many mistakes. It is what turned him against Qaddafi. In 1975, el-Hariri attempted a coup against Qaddafi, but failed and remained in prison and in house arrest in Tobruk till 2011. When the uprising began, el-Hariri rose to become al-Fattah Younis' no. 2. Neither al-Fattah Younis nor el-Hariri could be counted upon to be proper NATO allies. They had not been made "inter-operatable." For that, the CIA had to insert Hifter back into the saddle.

Things on the political side were more reliable for the NATO command. The NTC was in the hands of two well known neoliberal reformers. One of them was Mahmoud Jibril, the lead neoliberal "reformer" in the Qaddafi regime who worked, as we saw, closely with Saif al-Islam on the privatization of Libya. The

other was Ali Abd al-Aziz al-Isawi who was Qaddafi's Director General for the Ownership expansion program {privatization fund], and then later Secretary of the Committee for Economy, Trade and Investment. It helps that al-Isawi had a PhD in privatization from the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, Romania. By early March 2011, people like Jibril and al-Isawi, who had resigned in February from his post as Libya's ambassador to India, were in firm control of the NTC.

As their figurehead, Jibril and al-Isawi had the venerable former Justice Minister in the Qaddafi regime, Mustafa Abdel-Jalil (who resigned his post on February 21 after he was sent to observe the events in Benghazi by the Qaddafi regime). Trained at the University of Libya, Abdel-Jalil was as comfortable with his country's legal system as with *Sharia* law. A religious conservative in many respects, Abdel-Jalil was nonetheless a loyal regime man. When the UN Human Rights Council and others made modest calls for Abdel-Jalil to investigate extra-judicial killings in Libya between 2007 and 2011, he demurred saying that the Internal Security Agency Officers had state immunity. Despite his loyalty to the regime's codes, Abdel-Jalil showed an independent streak as a judge. This is why he was adopted by Saif al-Islam to reform Libya's justice system.

Jibril, al-Isawi and Abdel-Jalil are all Saif al-Islam Qaddafi's men, whose commitment to the reform agenda unites them and whose laxity regarding the power of imperialism makes them able to see NATO as benevolent. Abdel-Jalil is no fool. In January 2010 he told the US Ambassador Gene Cretz that many

Libyans are "concerned" with the US government support for Libya and for the perception that the War on Terror was "against Muslims." Nevertheless, Abdel-Jalil, according to Cretz, "has given the green light to his staff to work with us." The political control of leadership faction of the NTC was firmly in the hands of the neoliberal reformers by early March of 2011. They were, in a sense, America's Libyans.

Hifter returned to take charge of the military wing. He made his name in Qaddafi's war against Chad in the 1980s. At some point in that conflict, Hifter turned against Qaddafi, joined the Libyan National Salvation Front, and operated his resistance out of Chad. The *New York Times* (May 1991) ran a short piece on Hifter's 1980s operation. "They were trained by American intelligence officials in sabotage and other guerrilla skills, officials said, at a base near Ndjamena, the Chadian capital. The plan to use exiles fit neatly into the Reagan administration's eagerness to topple Colonel Gaddafi." When the US-supported government of Chad, led by Hisséne Habré fell in 1990, Hifter fled Chad for the United States. It is interesting that an ex-Colonel of the Libyan army was able to so easily gain entry into the United States. The US State Department said that Hifter and his men would have "access to normal resettlement assistance, including English-language and vocational training and, if necessary, financial and medical assistance." Also of interest is the fact that Hifter took up residence in Vienna, Virginia, less than seven miles away from Langley, Virginia, the headquarters of the CIA. In Vienna, Hifter formed the Libyan National Army.

In March 1996, Hifter's Army attempted an armed rebellion against Qaddafi in the eastern part of Libya. The *Washington Post* (March 26) noted that its reporters had heard of "unrest today in Jabal Akhdar Mountains of eastern Libya and said armed rebels may have joined escaped prisoners in an uprising against the government." The leader of the "contra-style group" was Hifter. Twenty-three rebels, soldiers and prisoners were reported to have died in this uprising and prison break. It is worth reporting that the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group also conducted an operation in the Wadi al-Injil (Bible Valley) in March 1996, perhaps coordinated with the Libyan National Army. Was it a coincidence that about four months later Abdullah Senussi's guards opened fire on the (mainly LIFG) prisoners at Abu Salim jail and killed 1200, the burr under the saddle of the Islamists and the human rights lawyers that would finally push them to their rebellion in 2011?

History called Hifter back fifteen years later. In March 2011, Hifter flew into Benghazi to take command of the defected troops, joining al-Fattah Younis whose troops had been routed from Ras Lanouf on March 12. They faced the advance of Qaddafi's forces toward Benghazi. It was in this context, with the uprising now firmly usurped by a neoliberal political leadership and a CIA-backed military leadership, that talk of a no-fly zone emerged.

In late March, the military wing went through its own power struggle. A new military spokesperson, Colonel Omar Ahmed Bani announced that Hifter, who had hitherto been no. 3 in the hierarchy but in command of the ground forces, would be the head of the rebel armed forces. A few days later, the NTC

reversed Ahmed Bani's announcement and declared that al-Fattah Younis remained in command. Hifter had his base among the civilians who joined the rebels, while al-Fattah Younis was thought to be popular among the defected troops. Many in the NTC felt that Hifter had returned with a great deal of arrogant self-assurance, with the belief that his history and his links to the CIA earned him the right to be in charge. "We defined the military leadership before the arrival of Hifter from the United States," said Hafiz Ghogha, the vice president of the NTC. "We told Mr. Hifter that if he wants, he can work within the structure that we laid out." Apparently this was not enough for Hifter, whose minions went for more.

In late July, al-Fattah Younis and two of his aides were arrested in Benghazi on the grounds that he was working for Qaddafi (or so it is said, since the entire episode remains murky). He was killed very quickly, and his body was burned. The remains of the three dead were found outside Benghazi, disposed of crudely. Benghazi went into crisis, as large crowds gathered for al-Fattah Younis' funeral and his family remained angry at the events that led to his assassination. NTC chairman Abdel-Jalil said that the assassination was the result of a "conspiracy," and on grounds of incompetence he dissolved the NTC and asked Mahmoud Jibril to reform a new government with Jibril as Prime Minister. The war was coming to a close, with all signs showing that the rebels and NATO had the upper hand. al-Fattah Younis was dispatched mysteriously, Jibril was given sole charge of the NTC and the new government of Libya, and the military command rested with the CIA's Libyan,

Hifter. Jibril, who the US State Department felt was a "serious interlocutor who gets the US perspective" was poised to govern the new Libya. People like Mahmoud Jibril and Khalifa Hifter were more accountable to their patrons in Paris and Washington than to the people of Libya, whose blood was spilled on both sides for an outcome that is unlikely to benefit them.

IV. NATO's War

"One is left with the horrible feeling now
that war settles nothing; that to win a war is
as disastrous as to lose one."
—Dame Agatha Christie, 1890–1976.

Neoliberal revolutions are bland. For heroism they require the courage of ordinary people, like those rag-tag looking young people who jumped on Toyota trucks, grabbed any old guns and went off to the front lines to face the rump of the Qaddafi army. Some of them had been steeled in Qaddafi's prisons, others in his armed forces, and yet others by what they had seen from their fellows in Tunisia and Egypt. They had hopes that far exceeded anything that Qaddafi could satisfy. In 1969, they would have fought alongside him had the Idris regime put up any resistance. By 2011, they turned their guns against him. He had become their Idris.

Early in the combat, the *New Yorker*'s Jon Lee Anderson met some of the young Benghazi rebels. "In the early days of Qaddafi's counterattack," Anderson