

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نښاد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

JULY 13, 2018

by BRIAN CLOUGHLEY
14.07.2018

Lessons That Should Have Been Learned From NATO's Destruction of Libya



Photo by Bernd.Brincken | [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

The summit meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the military alliance that is expanding its deployments of troops, combat and surveillance aircraft and missile ships around Russia's borders, took place on July 11-12 and was a farce, with Trump behaving in his usual way, insulting individuals and nations with characteristic vulgarity.

Before the jamboree, NATO's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg (one of those selected for a Trumpian harangue), recounted in a speech on 21 June that "NATO has totally transformed our presence in Afghanistan from a big combat operation with more than

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

100,000 to now 16,000 troops conducting training, assisting and advising.” But then he had a bit of a rethink when he was asked a question about whether NATO had learnt any lessons that might make it think about “intervening in the future.” To give him his due, Stoltenberg replied that he thought “one of the lessons we have learned from Iraq, from Afghanistan, from Libya, is that military intervention is not always solving all problems.”

He is absolutely right about that, because the US-NATO military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya have been catastrophic.

It is intriguing that NATO’s secretary general can at last admit that military muscle doesn’t solve every problem, but he did not expand on the subject of Libya, which unhappy country was destroyed by US-NATO military intervention in 2011, and it is interesting to reflect on that particular NATO debacle, because it led directly to expansion of the Islamic State terrorist group, a prolonged civil war, a vast number of deaths, and hideous suffering by desperate refugees trying to flee from Libya across the Mediterranean.

Towards the end of the West’s seven-month blitz on Libya its leader, Muammar Gaddafi, was murdered by gangs supported by US-NATO, which caused the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, to giggle “We came; we saw; he died” in an interview on CBS, which was a good indicator of how the peace-loving West approached its devastation of a country whose president had plenty of flaws but whose main mistake was to threaten to nationalize his country’s oil resources, which were in the hands of US and European oligarchs.

Gaddafi was a despot who persecuted his enemies quite as savagely as the Western-supported dictator Hosni Mubarak in neighboring Egypt, but life for most Libyans was comfortable, and the BBC had to admit that Gaddafi’s “particular form of socialism does provide free education, healthcare and subsidized housing and transport,” although “wages are extremely low and the wealth of the state and profits from foreign investments have only benefited a narrow elite” (which doesn’t happen anywhere else, of course). The CIA World Factbook noted that in 2010 Gaddafi’s Libya had a literacy rate of 82.6% (far better than Egypt, India and Saudi Arabia), and a life expectancy of 77.47 years, higher than 160 of the 215 countries assessed. But the West was intent on getting rid of Gaddafi, and managed to fudge a UN Resolution to begin the war. (Germany, under the wise leadership of Angela Merkel, refused to have anything to do with the long-planned carnival of rocketing and bombing.)

Gaddafi was murdered on October 20, 2011, in particularly disgusting circumstances, and ten days later the US-NATO alliance ended its blitzkrieg. The normally sane Guardian newspaper of the UK reported that the operation had demonstrated “a unique combination of military power that could set a model for future warfare” while the secretary general, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, proclaimed the end of “a successful chapter in Nato’s history.” The “successful chapter” involved 9,600 airstrikes that amongst other destruction “debilitated Libya’s water supply by targeting critical state-owned water installations, including a water-pipe factory . . . that manufactured pre-stressed concrete cylinder pipes for the Great Manmade River project, an ingenious irrigation system transporting water from aquifers beneath Libya’s southern desert to about 70% of the population.” As the Christian Science Monitor reported in 2010, “the Great Man-Made River, which is leader Muammar Qaddafi’s ambitious answer to the country’s water problems, irrigates Libya’s large desert farms. The 2,333-mile network of pipes ferry water from four major underground aquifers in southern Libya to the northern population centers. Wells punctuate the water’s path, allowing farmers to utilize the water network in their fields.” Not any more, they don’t, and there is now a critical water shortage

One recent observation was that “The water crisis is a powerful symbol of state failure in a country that was once one of the wealthiest in the Middle East but has been gripped by turmoil since a 2011 uprising unseated [sic] Muammar Gaddafi. For Libyans the chaos has meant power cuts and crippling cash shortages. These are often made worse by battles between armed groups vying for control of the fractured oil-rich state and its poorly-maintained infrastructure.” Thank you, US-NATO, for liberating Libya.

Two prominent figures involved in the US-NATO war on Libya were Ivo Daalder, the US Representative on the NATO Council from 2009 to 2013, and Admiral James G (‘Zorba’) Stavridis, the US Supreme Allied Commander Europe (the military commander of NATO) in the same period. As they ended their war, on October 31, 2011, these two ninnies had a piece published in the New York Times in which they made the absurd claim that “As Operation Unified Protector comes to a close, the alliance and its partners can look back at an extraordinary job, well done. Most of all, they can see in the gratitude of the Libyan people that the use of limited force — precisely applied — can affect real, positive political change.”

Well, there’s no doubt that “limited force” — if you call 9,600 airstrikes “limited” — can produce political change, but it is difficult to see how even these two twits could think for an instant that it would be “positive.” Then Rasmussen lobbied in to Tripoli on 31

October and announced that “It’s great to be in Libya, free Libya. We acted to protect you. Together we succeeded. Libya is finally free.”

The Western mainstream media, which was so supportive of the war, has not asked the team of Rasmussen, Stavridis and Daalder how they feel about the current catastrophe in Libya that they did so much to accomplish. There are few reports in western newspapers or TV outlets about the gravity of the shambles (search, for example, the New York Times and the Washington Post), but such organizations as Human Rights Watch keep the world informed about what is going on. Its 2018 World Report records that “Political divisions and armed strife continued to plague Libya as two governments vied for legitimacy and control of the country, and United Nations’ efforts to unify the feuding parties flagged . . . Armed groups throughout the country, some of them affiliated with one or the other of the competing governments, executed persons extra-judicially, attacked civilians and civilian properties, abducted and disappeared people, and imposed sieges on civilians in the eastern cities of Derna and Benghazi.”

Thank you US-NATO, and especially thank you, President Obama and Messrs. Rasmussen, Stavridis and Daalder, and all the brave pilots who had a wonderful blitzing shindig, and all the brave button-pressers on US and UK Navy ships whose Tomahawk missiles blasted the cities. The country you wrecked will take decades to recover from your use of what you called “limited force,” and the amount of human suffering you caused is incalculable.

NATO’S Jens Stoltenberg seems to have learned the lesson, albeit belatedly, that military force does not solve what NATO regards as problems. That’s to be welcomed, and what would be even more welcome would be realization that provocation and the threat of force don’t work, either, and therefore that it would be wise to stay out of wars and to draw-down the confrontational US-NATO deployments along Russia’s borders.