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New Push for Military Intervention in Libya: Who Will Control the Libyan Central Bank?

By Horace G. Campbell
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There is intense push for the NATO countries to make an overt intervention in Libya. In this moment, the justification is to fight the Islamic State and to prevent terror from spreading across the Mediterranean to Europe. As is the case in matters of the destruction of African societies, the governments of Britain and France are in the forefront of the push for the latest intervention. Germany does not want to be left out so the German state is now actively working for the UN intervention.

Prior to this spring, it had been difficult to get the legal cover for a bigger military intervention by the West, but now there is supposed to be a new ‘unity’ government with the mandate to call for the United Nations to militarily intervene. Every week there is a new meeting in Europe to push for intervention with no consultation with the African Union. In January, the African Union appointed former Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete its new special envoy to Libya. Thus far, all of the reports and discussions about a new UN sanctioned intervention have excluded the interests of the peoples of Libya and Africa. Progressive forces in the world need to stay alert on this new effort to intensify the militarization of North Africa and oppose the governments who are using the question of ISIS to make another push to control the resources of Libya and Africa.

The real reasons for the intervention in Libya

The emails of the former Secretary of State and current Presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton exposed to the world the principal reasons for the NATO intervention and destruction of Libya in 2011. We are informed by one writer who had examined these emails on the traffic between the USA and France over the imperatives for intervening in Libya. In one e mail dated April 2, 2011 Sidney Blumenthal, then an aide to Clinton informed her ‘that sources close to one of Gaddafi sons were reporting that “Qaddafi’s government holds 143 tons of gold, and a similar amount in silver” and the hoard had been moved from the Libyan Central Bank in Tripoli closer to the border with Niger and Chad. “This gold was accumulated prior to the current rebellion and was intended to be used to establish a pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar. This plan was designed to provide the Francophone African Countries with an alternative to the French franc (CFA).”Blumenthal then added that “According to knowledgeable individuals, this quantity of gold and silver is valued at more than \$7 billion. French intelligence officers discovered this plan shortly after the current rebellion began, and this was one of the factors that influenced President Nicolas Sarkozy’s decision to commit France to the attack on Libya.” The email added: “According to these individuals, Sarkozy’s plans are driven by the following issues:

- 1 A desire to gain a greater share of Libya oil production,
- 2 Increase French influence in North Africa,
- 3 Improve his internal political situation in France,
- 4 Provide the French military with an opportunity to reassert its position in the world,
- 5 Address the concern of his advisors over Qaddafi’s long term plans to supplant France as the dominant power in Francophone Africa.” [i]

France and Germany are not only interested in the vast oil and gas resources under Libya but also the vast ocean of water under the *Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System (NSAS)* .. With the advances in solar technology the European states want to have control over the Sahara for the future transformation of solar power for European consumers. It is the vast resources of Libya which is still on the line as there is this new push for the UN to intervene in Libya. As the senior imperialist state in Europe prior to 1945, Britain had extensive interests in Libya but the threats of the African Union to develop an African Monetary Fund and a Common Currency is a direct threat to the future of French economic interests in Africa . In the past forty years the Germans had relegated the job of the Gendarme of Europe to France, but with the delicacy of the bank and financial crisis in Europe, the Germans do not want to be left behind. Hence, in the new pressures to intervene the Germans are toe to toe with France and last week when the French foreign minister, Jean-Marc Ayrault visited Tripoli, he was accompanied by the German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier. This was a desperate effort to convey legitimacy on Fayyez Sarraj, newly installed Prime Minister of Libya, and members of the Presidency Council.

At the time of the NATO intervention in 2011 Germany had stood aloof of the destruction, but in the aftermath of the banking and financial crisis in the Eurozone area, the Germans cannot afford

to be left out of any possible future pillaging of African resources. To secure the German front row seat in the plans for new European intervention in Libya, the Security Council of the United Nations appointed Martin Kobler, a German diplomat as the Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Kobler had earlier served on the scene of the greatest plunder of Europe in Africa in the Congo. Under the pressures from the Europeans some Libyans had stitched together a Government of National Accord (GNA) which could be designated as the legal authority to invite western forces to fight ISIS in Libya. However this new government of Fayez Sarraj does not control military forces enough to warrant the claim to control the Libyan government. The planned deployment of western forces is supposed to protect this new Prime Minister and members of his faction that is called the Presidency Council. In the meantime the US Treasury is planning to use sanctions against those military entrepreneurs who are not lining up behind the new Presidency Council.

Since the intervention of NATO in 2011, the European leaders have been seeking a new mandate for intervention and have used the issues of migrants flowing to Europe as well as the growth of ISIS in Libya to justify their intervention. This week the news of 500 migrants drowning in their attempt to reach Europe from Libya was used as another reason for the Europeans to take decisive action in Libya. Since 2014 when ISIS suddenly 'appeared' in Libya, there have been Special Operations forces from France, Britain and Italy operating in Libya, but in order to order a full blown intervention there had to be a 'credible' government in Tripoli.

Three governments in Libya

Since the NATO assassination of Gaddafi in October 2011, there has been numerous efforts to stitch together a credible government in Libya. The first experiment under the National Transitional Council had fell apart as the pressures of 1700 militia organizations bickering over oil and slaughter shattered the façade of the 'transition' process that had been put in place by the State Department. J. Christopher Stevens the diplomat who had been at the center of working with the other imperialists to recruit the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group worked hard to give legitimate cover for these Jihadists as the CIA and Stevens mobilized the eastern region of Derna as the filter for sending Jihadists from Libya to fight in Syria. The so called ISIS in Libya are working within the same infrastructure organized by the United States to destabilize North Africa and West Asia. Behind the 1700 militias groups in Libya after 2012 were differing foreign powers such as Britain, France, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Sudan, Turkey and Egypt. From these varying militias had emerged two rival groups claiming to be governments. One of these groups operated out of the eastern part of Libya under the nominal leadership of General Khalifa Hifter. General Hifter had returned from Virginia in the USA to claim leadership over the rebellion against Gaddafi and had established the Dignity brigade in the east. The other claimant over force in Libya were those who were in control of Tripoli and the Central bank with the gold and dollar reserves. This group was dominated by the Misrata brigadistas and supported by the Qataris. In 2014 before the noise about ISIS, General Hifter had made strong representations to the US to give him all the support but the Tripoli based government with control over the money made an alternative claim to Jack Lew, the Treasury Secretary,

Two years after the CIA and the US legation were exposed in the supply of Jihadists from Libya to Syria, the world was told of a new ‘threat’ to Libya in the form of ISIS. Characteristically, this new ‘terrorist threat’ emerged in Sirte, which had been the place that spawned the discussions on the birth of the African Union in 1999. To reinforce the idea that ISIS in Libya was a major threat, in February and April of 2015 there were spectacular images of the beheadings of Christian Coptic by ISIS in Sirte, Libya. It was after these spectacular images that the militarists intensified efforts to get the UN to support another intervention in Libya.

Getting the US officially on board

Britain, the USA and France had deployed Special Operations forces in Libya, but in order to get real international and propaganda value, the interventionists forces had to gain the official support of the US military and intelligence establishment. Sections of the Joint Chiefs were lobbying aggressively for the President of the USA to give overt support for the deployment of more US resources to Libya. Initially, the President delayed by arguing that the US could not deploy troops and more special forces in a situation where there was no government. It was this delay that prompted the French to work hard to organize the elements who are now called the Government of National Accord. With the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff pressuring for increased commitment, the President Barack Obama first gave an interview to the Atlantic outlining the reasons why he felt that the Europeans were unreliable military partners. [ii]

Faced with further pressures by sections of the National Security establishment, Obama repeated to Fox News that the decision to join in the UN/NATO destruction of Libya was his biggest foreign policy mistake. Barack Obama had been aware that there is now no quick way to persuade the Qatari backed factions in the West to unite with the CIA, Egyptian and UAE backed factions in the East behind the newly created Government of National Accord. Barack Obama was making clear his disagreement with members of the military as well as the Clinton, Jack Keane and David Petraeus faction who want to intensify US interventions in Africa and the Levant. In reality however, the intervention in Libya cannot be called a mistake but followed logically from the military management of the international system to prop up the financial sector of the USA.

It is this same imperative that ensures that while there is massive propaganda on the ISIS threat there is less attention to the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council who finance and facilitate the deployment and circulation of ISIS elements. It is now time for the progressive forces to also indict Hillary Clinton in the Court of public opinion to expose her active cooperation with Sarkozy to facilitate the destruction of Libya. The current Gowdy Congressional Inquiry into the killings in Benghazi cannot expose the role of Hillary Clinton and David Petraeus in Benghazi and it devolves on the progressive forces to make this information widely known.

Ignoring and disregarding the African Union

While the western media has made much to do about the role of Martin Kobler, there has been silence from within Africa about the real role of Jakaya Kikwete who had been appointed as the African Union special envoy to Libya. At the time of the NATO full blown intervention in 2011, the African Union had laid out a roadmap to bring peace to Libya. This roadmap is still relevant

and Kikwete and the AU must decide whether Africans are mere bystanders in the drama of the destruction of Libya. Thirty years ago when the military machine of the apartheid army was laying waste the peoples of Southern Africa, the Tanzanian leadership, then, under Julius Nyerere had not shirked its responsibility in bringing together political, diplomatic and whatever resources were available to halt the devastation of the apartheid army. Similarly, when the western forces had wanted to prolong the destruction in The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the South African, Tanzanian and Malawian forces that formed the core of the AU intervention forces had intervened in the DRC to bring some level of restraint to the marauding military elements who were looting the Congo.

Despite the limitations of financial and military resources, Tanzania and Kikwete as the AU envoy cannot relinquish its role as an international player on the question of the deployment of European forces into Libya. The UN Security Council remain divided over the future of western European military intervention in Libya. The Security Council of the UN has already been discredited in Libya by the exposure of the former UN Special envoy to Libya, Bernardino Leon, who took a high paying job in the United Arab Emirates and left his post in the middle of the negotiations over a national government. Leon who had spent a year arranging dialogue talks between the two rival Libya governments suddenly quit his position last November to take a job with the UAE which was to pay over US \$1000 per day. Such are the motives of those seeking peace in Libya.

At the minimum, the UN Security Council should be put on notice that there should be no more European intervention until there is a full scale inquiry into the lessons of the UN resolution that had given the NATO mandate to intervene. Now that the reasons for the Sarkozy energetic efforts to intervene are now clear, it devolves on members of the Group of 77 to take the lead to oppose the intervention of forces from countries who were implicated in the destruction since 2011. Secondly, the diplomatic efforts of the African Union should be geared at removing the foreign military elements from Qatar and the Emirates who are carrying out a proxy war in Libya. Disarming the varying militias will not be possible until foreign elements such as Turkey, the Sudan, and Qatar are forcibly removed from Libya.

Next week, the Germans French and the British will make another push to influence the Obama Administration over the full support for overt deployment of forces. According to the Guardian newspaper from Britain,

“The Obama summit with European leaders has a wide agenda, but the presence of the Italian prime minister, Mario Renzi, suggests a chief focus will be on Libya, including the need to defeat Isis and stem the migration crisis. The west is pressing the new Libyan government to seek permission for the EU’s Operation Sophia to operate inside Libyan waters, increasing the effectiveness of the EU’s efforts to defeat people traffickers.”

From within the US National Security establishment there are still some elements who understand the stakes and the limitations of another European intervention. Frederic Wehrey a senior associate in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace testified before Congress last month and stated that,

“ Alarmist assessments of the Islamic State in Libya should not lead to a hasty and heavy-handed intervention. The Islamic State may be expanding its presence in Libya, but it has not been able to tap into the popular discontent of broad segments of the population—yet.”

Is it possible that the French military authorities are just as aware of this reality but need another military intervention to draw attention away from the impending crisis in the French banking system? The African Union should not be bystanders in this drama. If Julius Nyerere had been a bystander in the apartheid destruction, Africa would not be in a place where it could be discussing a Monetary Union and a Common Currency. The progressive forces in North America and Europe ought to be more alert to the machinations of the forces who authored the destruction of Libya.

Notes.

[i] Robert Parry, “What Hillary knew about Libya,”
<https://consortiumnews.com/2016/01/12/what-hillary-knew-about-libya/?print=print>

[ii] <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>