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It's a TOTAL war, monsieur

By Pepe Escobar

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The winners of that "kinetic" thing in northern Africa (the Barack Obama administration swears it's not a war) - collectively described as Friends of Libya (FOL) - were all in a jolly mood as they gathered in Paris on Thursday, with no air-conditioning but potent odors of runny Brie and Roquefort, to gloat about their United Nations-sanctioned, North Atlantic Treaty Organization-implemented "operation" for regime change in Libya.

Call it the FOL war; the R2P war (as in "responsibility to protect" Western plunder); the Air France war; the Total war; anyway, the FOL had a blast spinning their win.

The Great Arab Liberator, neo-Napoleonic President Nicolas Sarkozy, gloated, "We have aligned with the Arab people in their aspiration for freedom." Bahrainis, Saudis, Yemenis, not to mention Tunisians and Egyptians, have every right to be puzzled.

Sarko added, "Dozens of thousands of lives were spared thanks to the intervention." Even the "rebels" are spinning there are at least 50,000 dead, with NATO still hooked on a wild bombing spree.

The *emir* of Qatar at least admitted that on-the-run Muammar Gaddafi could not have been toppled without NATO. But he added that the Arab League could have done more; in fact it did - by providing a bogus vote that opened the way for the Anglo-French-American redacted UN Resolution 1973.

Transitional National Council (TNC) interim prime minister Mahmoud Jibril asserted, "The world bet on the Libyans and the Libyans showed their courage and made their dream real." "World" now means NATO and a bunch of regressive Persian Gulf monarchies. As for the rest, shut up.

Yet the most sinister, true to character, must have been NATO secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen; "We have no plans whatsoever to intervene in conflicts in the region." Then came the inevitable "but". Rasmussen added, "But more generally speaking, I think this could set a template. We have demonstrated an ability to act in support of the United Nations and we have demonstrated an ability to include partners outside NATO in such operations".

Africa and the Middle East, not to mention most of the global South, you have been warned; Humanitarian imperialism, under the cloak of R2P, is the new law of the land.

Securing the loot

Hours before the Paris bash, French daily Liberation published on its website a letter written only 17 days after UN Resolution 1973. In the letter, the TNC ratifies an agreement ceding no less than 35% of Libya's total crude oil production to France in exchange of Sarko's "humanitarian" support.

The letter is addressed to the office of the *emir* of Qatar (the go-between for the TNC and France from the beginning) - with a copy to then-Arab League secretary general, Amr Moussa. The letterhead is supplied by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Libya.

The promise totally matches what an official from an oil company in Cyrenaica said last week - that the "winners" in the oil bonanza would be the nations that supported the TNC from the start.

As expected, denials piled up. The Quai d'Orsay - the French Foreign Ministry - said it had never heard of such a document. Same for Mansur Said al-Nasr, a TNC special envoy to the Paris conference. The TNC's man in Britain, Guma al-Gamaty, added that all future oil contracts would be awarded "on the basis of merit". And even energy giant Total had to muscle in; its chief executive officer, Christophe de Margerie, swore he had never discussed oil deals with the TNC.

As if Sarko and Total were altruistic, Rousseau-style humanitarians who would never spare a thought for 44 billion barrels of oil. Total was in Benghazi discussing business with the TNC already last June. A bitter intra-European "oil war" between Total and Italy's ENI is already in effect.

ENI - active in Libya since 1959 - has already signed an agreement with the TNC to be back in business and immediately supply fuel to Libya - in exchange for future payment in oil. Total's push is to secure a much larger piece of the Libya energy pie than it already had - as in future contracts.

Slouching towards Arabia

It's quasi-official. Libya is not in Africa anymore. It has been relocated (upgraded?) to Arabia. Maybe Saudi King Abdullah ordered it by decree and no one noticed. The FOL do not include Africans. The African Union (AU) has refused to recognize the TNC; it will only do so when a legitimate government is in place.

While NATO went the Air France way - liberation from above, in business class - the AU from the start pleaded for a ceasefire and negotiations. The FOL imperially ignored it.

Perhaps Africans have noticed that NATO's mission "to protect civilians" now includes bombing Sirte - where smart projectiles carefully target only "evil" Gaddafi supporters disguised as civilians, while the good guys escape unharmed.

Perhaps Africans have been the only ones to listen to the Vietnam-era threat by TNC member Ali Tarhouni - very cozy with Qatar - who said, about the few towns and regions still loyal to Gaddafi, "Sometimes to avoid bloodshed you must shed blood - and the faster we do this the less blood will be shed."

Perhaps Africans were the only ones to notice the sustained and increasingly reported (not by corporate media) ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the "rebels"; as if no one knew that people in Cyrenaica have historically been extremely prejudiced against sub-Saharan Africans.

Or perhaps Africans see right through the FOL's agenda; the new Libyan status as a barely disguised Western colony; and the neo-Orwellian fable of humanitarian imperialism.