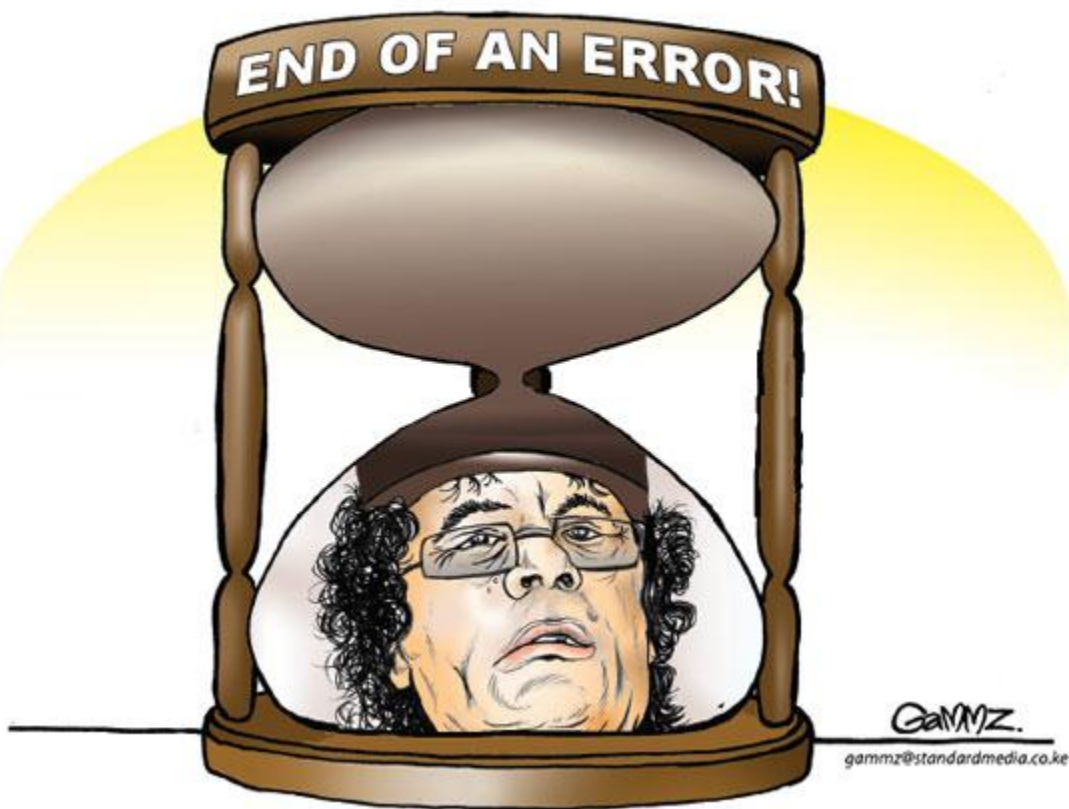


Colonel Muammar Gadhafi, The SPLM/A and Pan-Africanism

Let the free people of the world know that we could have bargained over and sold out our cause in return for a personal secure and stable life. We received many offers to this effect but we chose to be at the vanguard of the confrontation as a badge of duty and honor. Even if we do not win immediately, we will give a lesson to future generations that choosing to protect the nation is an honor and selling it out is the greatest betrayal that history will remember forever despite the attempts of the others to tell you otherwise.—Colonel Muammar Gadhafi of Libya in his “[Last Will](#)” as published by the BBC.



By PaanLuel Wel, Washington DC, USA.

For the record, I don't consider myself a staunch supporter or a sworn critic of Muammar Gadhafi of Libya. Personally, I do conceive a bigger problem—a malignant symptom of an underlying problem ailing Africa—in dictators across the continent rather than an individualized and personalized problem that can be solved, once-and-for-all, by publicly parading them in a kangaroo court of law (Mubarak of Egypt), forcing them into exiled (Ben Ali of Tunisia), or unleashing tribalized-mob justice by summarily executing them (Al-Gaddafi of Libya).

As I have once argued in one of my article "[Making Sense of Mubarak's Mega-trial: Will Africa Learn Anything From It?](#)" Africa's poor leadership and dictatorship is a direct byproduct of the society that produces such kind of leaders. As long as the African society remain as it is (and there is no slightest indication it won't) it will continue prolifically producing all sorts of Mubaraks, Ben Alis, Al-Gadhafis, Mugabes, Musevenis, name them! Killing, exiling, humiliating, or court marshalling them won't make a dent on the surface of the underlying tumor. Look at Egypt today and you would understand what I am talking about. What change (s) has that historic Tahrir Square Uprising brought to the Egyptian people?

That, and the history of South Sudanese struggle against oppression and political domination wherein Al-Gadhafi was more than a monster, is the reason I was strongly taken aback to see The Standard Media, one of the Kenyan leading newspapers, carrying a [cartoon entitled "end of an error"](#) on Friday to mark the brutal passing of Colonel Muammar Gadhafi of Libya.

That Al-Gadhafi's 42-year reign had been notorious is incontestable. In the heydays of what he himself once acknowledged as "our revolutionary blood was young and hot," Libya under Al-Gadhafi became a state sponsor of terror. On the international front, Libyan agents were accused by the West of bombing "La Belle" nightclub in West Berlin and for placing a bomb on Pan Am Flight 103 that brought it down. He expelled all the Jews from Libya though his grandmother is rumored to have been a Jew, technically making Al-Gadhafi a Jew himself according to the rule of "who is a Jew" which follow maternal lineage. When Palestinians agreed to make peace with the state of Israel, he also expelled them from Libya.

Regionally, Libya fought bitters wars with Egypt and Chad and had sustained squabbling with numerous other neighbors, some of whom planned assassinations and counter-assassinations against the "brotherly leader." Within Libya, secret police and spies used terror to quell and crush internal dissents resulting in the death of many innocent people. Daringly, Al-Gaddafi used his state agents to hunt and track down his political opponents in foreign countries like Europe and the US. And to put the ice on the cake, he would announce both the intended missions and any subsequent successes on state television!

So a menace was Al-Gadhafi regime to the West that President Reagan of the USA was not only compelled to bombard Tripoli killing over hundred people, including Al-Gadhafi young daughter, but also to brand him as the "mad-dog" of the Middle East. It is believed that Al-Gadhafi retaliated by bringing down US plane over Lockerbie, killing over two hundred passengers. The West swiftly responded with crippling sanctions that saw Al-Gadhafi confined to the periphery of international affairs, making Libya an international pariah state. The sanctions on Libyan oil and gas saw the deterioration of the economy leading to a considerable amount of economic constraints and poverty.

It was not until Gadhafi renounced terrorism, gave up his right to acquire nuclear and biological weapons, accept responsibilities for the Lockerbie bombing and agreed to monetary compensation for the victims that the West finally lifted sanctions and welcomed back Libya into the league of nations. That rapprochement was smoothly progressing well and Al-Gadhafi was afforded red-carpet welcomes in the European capitals till the Arab Spring exploded in Tunisia; an event that culminated in his brutal summary execution this week in his hometown of Sirte.

That Al-Gadhafi distinguished himself among his fellow ruthless African dictators is beyond doubt. What is questionable though is the ostensibly concerted attempt to characterize his entire 42-year rule as “end of an error” without full account of his other endeavors in Libya as well as across the continent of Africa. That is a travesty of justice and fairness to say the least!

Take, for example, the case for South Sudanese liberation struggle. Although the Israelis and the Christian missionaries had helped organized, trained, armed and sustained the Anya-Anyu One movement, it was Al-Gadhafi who offered the first substantial military assistances to both the Anya-Nya Two movement and the SPLM/A.

Anya-Nya Two movement was formed on 20 February 1977 by the remnants of the 1975 Akobo Uprising. Based in Bilpam, Ethiopia, the movement was led by Lieutenant Vincent Kuany and his deputy Corporal James Bol Kur. In his book [*“Sudan’s Painful Road to Peace”*](#) Arop Madut has this to say about the kind of support that Colonel Muammar Gadhafi gave to the Anya-Nya Two movement:

“The Anya-Nya Two...visited Libya to seek some military help. Although Al-Gadhafi did give them some assistance, he was, however, disappointed with the Anya-Nya Two movement’s poor leadership quality. In Gadhafi’s calculation, the Anya-Nya Two was not in a position to withstand nor inflict a deadly blow on Nimeiri’s regime” (pg 91).

But if Al-Gadhafi had no faith in Anya-Nya Two’s ability to take on the Nimeiri regime in 1977, he didn’t have to wait for too long before the well-organized and better-leadered SPLM/A emerged in 1983. Just like the Anya-Nya Two movement, the SPLM/A was housed in Ethiopia and it was again Libya under Colonel Muammar Gadhafi that they had to turn to for military assistance. In the same book, Arop Madut wrote this to illustrate the kind of reception that SPLM/A received from Gadhafi:

“Soon after the launch of the SPLM/A, Dr. John Garang de Mabior, the SPLA leader, was invited by Gadhafi to visit Tripoli. After the SPLM’s delegation visited Tripoli and proved to be a strong movement founded and organized parallel to the Libyan system, Al-Gadhafi immediately embraced them as true

allies. Gadhafi hoped that they would be the one to inflict a deadly blow on Nimeiri's regime" (pg 91).

Furthermore, Dr. John Garang, the former SPLM/A leader, in his 1987 interview with Arop Madut, had this to say about the kind of helps they secured from Al-Gadhafi:

"We reached a good understanding with Gadhafi and so he gave us lots of arms and ammunition, including anti-aircraft missiles....so, we stockpiled a lot of arms and ammunitions. Having received these arms, we became very strong and began overrunning enemy camps; making ambushes and virtually annihilating military convoys and taking over all of their equipment" (pg 90).

Of course, Al-Gadhafi's help was not procured on pure humanitarian ground: he had a political score to settle with President Nimeiri and the SPLM/A were counting on the wisdom that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" indeed. It is the same principle informing the working relationship between NATO and the Libyan Rebels: nothing in common other than Al-Gadhafi who is ideal "enemy of my enemy" to both parties. Those 'liberated' Libyans will be crying "Death to Yankees" within a year!

Still, that is beside the point because in international politics, double standards is the name of game and opportunism is the currency of the business. Have you ever wondered why NATO is not yet in Syria to protect the besieged inhabitants of Hama city from President Al-Bashar's regime just as they did in Benghazi, Libya? That Al-Gadhafi, an Arab Muslim, would support and arm an overwhelmingly Christian and African rebellion in South Sudan against another Arab and Muslim leader is a living testimony by itself.

In fact, the SPLM/A were not sincere in their dealings with Al-Gadhafi since they ended up swindling him out of arms and ammunitions. The SPLM/A delegation led by Cdr. Lual Diing Wuol that visited Al-Gadhafi had read and crammed a lot of quotations from Al-Gadhafi's Green Book on Third World Theory. Al-Gadhafi was greatly flattered and impressed by the numerous quotations used by the SPLM/A delegation.

This is what Arop Madut reports, in the words of Cdr. Lual Diing Wuol, about SPLM/A's tactics to acquire ample supply of arms and ammunitions from Libya after the SPLM/A's delegation visit to Libya:

"Subsequently, arms and ammunitions were ferried daily to Bilpam and Bonga training camps. When the Libyan commitment to supply logistics became evidently clear, the SPLA adopted a strategy: to graduate one battalion every month and each time the [Libyan Ambassador] in Addis Ababa was invited to attend the passing out of new recruits' celebration. Each time a battalion was

graduating, the Libyan office in Addis Ababa sent large quantities of arms and ammunition equal in number to the new graduates. What the Libyans did not know or expect to know was that it was actually the same battalion that was graduating every month, just to secure more arms quickly” (pg 91).

The lesson here being that Al-Gadhafi was very instrumental in the long struggle of South Sudanese quest for independence. To assert that his death mark the “end of an error” is to subjectively overlook and to blindly disregard the other side of Al-Gadhafi which does not necessarily fit in the grand narrative manufactured by his critics and enemies. Of course, it was not only the South Sudanese liberation struggle that Gadhafi supported; he was also involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as in the IRA-UK fight, and possibly lately in Darfur.

In addition to lending his hand to localized conflicts in and outside Africa, Al-Gadhafi was also heavily involved on continent-wide problems and solutions. After his over 40 quests to mold Pan-Arabism, Al-Gadhafi turned back on Arab Unity and embarked on Pan-Africanism. As reported by [Abdelaziz Barrouhi](#) in 1998, this is how Al-Gaddafi framed and explained his rationale:

"I had been crying slogans of Arab Unity and brandishing standard of Arab nationalism for 40 years, but it was not realized. That means that I was talking in the desert. I have no more time to lose talking with Arabs...I am returning back to realism...I now talk about Pan-Africanism and African Unity. The Arab world is finished...Africa is a paradise...and it is full of natural resources like water, uranium, cobalt, iron, manganese. I would like Libya to become a black country. Hence, I recommend to Libyan men to marry only black women and to Libyan women to marry black men."

With that apparent shift in ideology, it was Libya under Al-Gadhafi that funded the African Union (AU) and the African Development Bank among other continental institutions. That explained why the Addis Ababa based organization was too hostile to the rebel governing body—the Transitional National Council (TNC). And as the head of the AU between 2009 and 2010, Al-Gaddafi called for the establishment of the United States of Africa (USA) to galvanize and strengthen African Unity both within Africa as well as on the international level.

In effect, Al-Gadhafi renewed the same call echoed by the pioneering Pan-Africanists like William Du Bois, Khamwe Nkrumah, Marcus Garvey, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Haile Selassie, Gamal Nasser, and Robert Mugabe among others. According to Pan-Africanists' philosophy, the unity of the people of African descent across the globe would give them greater voice and protection from perpetual persecutions and humiliations by other civilizations.

Arguably, Africa has enough natural and human resources, and much greater landmass than the USA, Europe, Russia and China—if there is unity and cooperation—to play a pivotal role in world affairs instead of being the constant underdog. By offering financial supports to African’s institutions, Al-Gadhafi, in the eyes of Pan-Africanists, was not only doing the talking but also walking the walk!

Al-Gadhafi was a mortal with double sides: both bad and good according to what he did and to whom he did it to. Thus, on the one hand, he was a murderer of his own people. He sponsored and exported terror worldwide. Sometimes he was delusional. So controversial was the “King of Kings” and the “Brotherly Leader and Guide of the Revolution of Libya” that his name has garnered over 27 different and distinct spellings in English! And on the other hand, he did many other things which the beneficiaries are appreciative of and grateful to him: South Sudanese and their long struggle against repression and subjugation, for example.

To depict him only as a devil while he was a human with both sides is a subversion of justice! That is what makes me mad about [The Standard’s cartoonish](#) depiction of him because it is overly one-sided and biased against a man who is just but one among many despots on the African continent!!

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