

Explaining United States Military Intervention in Libya 2011: from Liberal Internationalism Perspective

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Abstract:

International intervention is still a complicated aspect of US foreign policy. However, the US military intervention in Libya in 2011 was a watershed moment in international relations because it was the first full-fledged test of the legal norm of Responsibility to Protect. As a result, this intervention sparked debate about the goals, strategies, and effects of such actions. In order to evaluate the intervention, this essay adopts a Liberal theory of international relations in an attempt to understand the multifaceted issues of this intervention. In so doing, this article then offers a critique of the idea of liberal interventionism and its application in this particular event.

Keywords: *United States; Libya; Liberal Internationalism; Military Intervention; International Relations Theory.*

Introduction:

Operation Odyssey Dawn, the US military intervention in Libya in 2011, was a reaction to the growing hostilities between opposition forces and Muammar Gaddafi's regime during the Arab Spring. Concerns about a humanitarian crisis prompted the international community, led by the US, to request UN approval, which resulted in the adoption of Resolution 1973. The first manifested output of the intervention was to create a no-fly zone to

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protect civilians. It was coordinated with US-NATO allies and mostly carried out through airstrikes.

A lot of writing has been done about the US military in Libya (2011). The explanations given cover a wide range of topics, including how and why the US decided to get involved¹, how the situation evolved², and how the US helped to defuse the situation in Libya³. While these accounts are accurate, this article advances the field by offering a theoretical explanation for US military intervention in Libya. By looking at this event from Liberal perspective, this paper examines this specific event by using the three main assumptions of liberal internationalism as units of analysis.

Given the foregoing, the following primary query can be posed:

- In what way does liberal internationalism account for the United States' 2011 military intervention in Libya?

A collection of the following follow-up inquiries is included in this main question:

- How closely does the theory of liberal internationalism key arguments match the outcomes of the US intervention in Libya?
- Are concepts of International Liberalism and interdependence still relevant to our understanding of world politics in general, and the US military intervention in Libya specifically, and does it provide answers to unanswered questions?

Taking into account the problem of the study, the following hypotheses were developed:

¹ Indyk, Martin, et al. *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*. (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

² Chivvis, Christopher S. *Toppling Qaddafi: Libya and the Limits of Liberal Intervention*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

³ Abomo, Paul T. *R2P and the US Intervention in Libya*. (New York, Springer, 2018).

- The theory of liberalism posits that interventions, particularly those aimed at promoting democracy, can lead to positive outcomes such as stability, the US intervention in Libya was marked by instability, political fragmentation, and a power vacuum.
- The outcome of the US intervention raises questions about the applicability of liberal interventionist theories in a real and complex geopolitical context.
- The Libya case, which ultimately failed because of the ongoing, severe crisis in Libya, outmoded the notion of Liberal internationalism.

The research paper comprises five sections. After setting the parameters of the argument and analysis and establishing the framework for the analysis, Section one is devoted to the literature on Liberalism theory and its key tenets; a theoretical lens through which to view the US military intervention in Libya (2011). Section two provides a brief history of the revolution in Libya along with international reactions. Section three provides a thorough explanation of the research topic from a Liberal theoretical standpoint. Section five offers a critical examination of the Liberal Internationalist reading of US military intervention in Libya, while Section four provides concluding remarks.

1. Liberalism in International Relations Theory

Within International Relations, Liberalism is a perspective that arose in response to Realism; it should not be confused with the economic ideology of Neoliberalism. Liberalism introduces a more upbeat and cooperative perspective of international relations, whereas Realism stresses state-centric behaviour motivated by power and security concerns. In other words, Liberalism challenges the Realist paradigm in international relations by emphasising the value of collaboration, international institutions, and

economic interdependence¹. The theory's conception of a more peaceful international order is further supported by its emphasis on soft power, democratic peace, and human rights. Despite the fact that some Liberalism ideals may not be realistic, the theory offers insightful information about possible routes to harmony and collaboration in the intricate field of international relations².

The two major theories of international relations (IR), Liberalism and Neo-liberalism, have different approaches and emphasise different aspects of the possibility of state cooperation. The core tenets of Classical Liberalism, which have their roots in the Enlightenment, are the importance of democracy, individual rights, and international law in promoting world peace³. It conceives of an international order in which democratic states work together to advance common interests and human rights. However, Neo-liberalism, which arose in reaction to the shortcomings of classical liberalism, emphasises the role that institutions and the economy play in determining international relations. International institutions and economic interdependence, according to Liberalism and Neo-liberals, are essential for promoting harmony and averting war⁴.

Neo-liberalism expands the purview of Liberalism beyond political and legal frameworks to encompass economic dynamics and the function of transnational institutions in promoting global governance. In their different ways, both theories promote a world in which mutual respect, cooperation, and the application of the law lead to a more secure and prosperous international order.

¹Gismondi, Mark D. *Ethics, Liberalism and Realism in International Relations*. (New York, Routledge, 2007), pp. 47.

²Keohane, Robert O. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 51.

³Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, in H Reiss, (Ed), *Kant Political Writing*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp.100.

⁴Steger, Manfred B., and Ravi K. Roy, 'What's 'neo' about liberalism?', *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction*, 1st edn, Very Short Introductions (Oxford, 2010; online edn, Oxford Academic, 24 Sept. 2013), pp.23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199560516.003.0001> Accessed Feb 17, 2024.

2. The Key Tenants of the Theory of Liberalism

2.1. Democratic Peace Theory

One of the three tenets of Liberalism that influence its outlook on international relations is Democratic Peace Theory. It asserts that states that respect democratic principles, such as "live and let live," hardly ever engage in hostilities with one another on the battlefield¹. Furthermore, the presence of national institutions may provide a barrier to engaging in conflict with other democratic countries.

According to this theory, it is extremely unlikely for democratic states to fight one another. The theory is based on two main observations: democracies tend to see each other as legitimate and cooperative, and they also have internal checks and balances that prevent the concentration of power. Some academics, however, contest the theory's viability, pointing out that there are not many historical instances of democracies at war with one another and that other elements like power, alliances, culture, and economics might be connected with peace. the Democratic Peace Theory is still a crucial component of Neo-liberalism and has the ability to realize realists' vision of a world without perpetual conflict¹.

It is important to note that some contend that although democracies are less likely to clash, they might be more likely to act aggressively against non-democracies. Democracies, according to their critics, may become more assertive or aggressive in their dealings with non-democratic states even as they work to promote peace among themselves. This may be motivated by a conviction that democratic principles are superior or by a sense of duty to extend democracy throughout the world. It could be assumed that the

¹ Pevehouse, Jon C. *Democracy from Above: Regional Organizations and Democratization*. (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 47.

selective application of these values in foreign policy is hypocritical, casting doubt on the sincerity of liberal intentions².

Immanuel Kant is credited as the originator of this theory in his essay "Perpetual Peace" According to Kant's essay, three essential components must exist for democracy to bring about peace. To begin with, *republican constitution* which suggests that the people must approve the use of force before the government can decide to use it. This gives the majority of people the ability to make moral decisions by making it more difficult for leaders and other powerful individuals to start needless wars³. Then, *the spirit of commerce* refers to the calming influence of strong business relationships. Fighting wars against other states will cost more when there are stronger economic ties. Conflicts can harm an offender's reputation abroad and have a negative impact on the state's economy. The third component is the necessity of a federation of countries to fight the chaos in world politics⁴.

2.2. Complex Interdependence

Keohane and Nye's Neo-liberal theory of *Complex Interdependence* reflects the liberal scholars' belief that structural anarchy in the international system can be resolved. This theory contends that the state-centric approach of realism, which views the state as a single entity rather than as a complex combination of various groups and interests, is inadequate to explain how power is distributed in the international system. The three main tenets of Keohane and Nye's theory are:

1. there are multiple paths linking societies outside of interstate relations;
2. there is no hierarchy of issues within the system;

¹ Pevehouse, J, and B Russett. "Democratic Intergovernmental Organization Promote Peace." *International Organization*, vol. 4, no. 60, (2006), pp. 969–1000.

² Owen, John M. *Liberal Peace, Liberal War*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000).

³ Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, in H Reiss, (Ed), *Kant Political Writing*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

⁴ Reiter, Dan, and Allan C Stam. *Democracies at War*. (Princeton University Press, 2000).

3. the use of military force has become less significant in settling international issues.

They contend that the idea of complex interdependence provides a more solid theoretical framework than structural realism in a number of important areas¹.

A state of interdependence is one in which people, groups, and countries depend on one another to guarantee not just their own survival and peace but also that of all of them. It is clear that trade lessens state-to-state conflict because the greater the benefit, the less reason there is to fight. Furthermore, it is also obvious that conflict lessens trade and benefits for both sides. Global leaders are aware of these "facts," and as a result, they make a concerted effort to prevent disputes in order to maximize trade, which fosters interdependence among the states².

Liberal institutionalism characterizes the international system as decentralized, self-enforcing behaviour, anarchy, and interdependence. The movement of people, capital, and goods creates interdependence and benefits all participating countries. There would be political and economic repercussions if these flows were disturbed. All parties benefit from the mutual dependence that interdependence creates, but the less dependent side may use vulnerability to its advantage if these benefits are lost. According to Keohane (1984), economic interdependence lowers the costs of conflict and promotes shared interests.

Today, member state politics and policy are inextricably linked to the European Union. Furthermore, interdependence has transcended national borders and is now a global phenomenon. Environmental issues provide another excellent illustration of interdependence in modern politics. The majority of global environmental issues are intricately intertwined, combining elements of the prisoner's dilemma with issues related to shared

¹ Keohane, Robert O, and Joseph S Nye. *Power and Interdependence*. (Boston; Toronto: Little, Brown, 1977). pp. 105

² Keohane, Robert O. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984). pp:80.

resources. Moreover, intricate interdependencies can shed light on the unique nature of cooperative agreements in environmental policy¹.

2.3. Liberal Institutionalism and Economic Cooperation

One prominent component of the larger framework of Liberalism in international relations (IR) is liberal institutionalism. Liberal institutionalism's central claim is that international institutions play a critical role in influencing state conduct and promoting collaboration. Neo-liberal institutionalism broadens its scope to encompass economic institutions and their function in overseeing international affairs, in contrast to classical liberalism, which similarly values institutions but lays more emphasis on political and legal frameworks. The focus of Neo-liberal institutionalism is expanded to encompass economic institutions and their function in overseeing international relations. For instance, International organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) have been in charge of overseeing the world economy since the end of World War II².

Institutionalists of Liberalism contend that states are logical entities that aim to maximize their own interests. International institutions offer states a disciplined environment in which to cooperate, negotiate, and settle disputes amicably. These organizations serve as go-betweens, promoting collaboration and communication on a range of topics, from trade to security³.

The relevance of laws and conventions in directing the actions of the state is acknowledged by liberal institutionalism. The establishment of international institutions aids in the development of a rule-based framework that helps avert the anarchy that might result from an exclusively self-help

¹ Martin, L, and B Simmons. "Theories and Empirical Studies of International Institutions." *International Organization*, vol. 4, no. 52, (1998), pp. 729–757.

² Bulmer, Simon J. "The Governance of the European Union: A New Institutional Approach." *Journal of Public Policy*, vol. 13, no. 4, Oct. (1993), pp. 351–380.

³ Hawkins, Darren G, et al. *Delegation and Agency in International Organizations*. (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

international order. States are urged to follow accepted conventions, which promotes consistency and predictability in their interaction¹.

3. Libya and the Arab Spring Vol. 1

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) saw a wave of upheavals known as the "Arab Spring" in the spring of 2011, with several countries calling for political, social, and economic reforms. The initial incident happened in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, when a young boy named Mohamed Bouazizi, who was selling vegetables from a barrow, set himself on fire as a form of protest against police harassment. The entire Ben Ali regime was toppled upon his death on January 4, 2011, signalling the beginning of the Arab Spring².

In retrospect, the uprisings resulted in minor political, social, and economic gains for some segments of the population, but they also resulted in widespread immigration, horrifying and pervasive violence, and increased persecution in some parts of the region. Experts claim that, while demonstrators came for a variety of reasons, their struggle for dignity and human rights ran through them all³.

¹ Jupille, J., and J. A. Caporaso. "Institutionalism and the European Union: Beyond International Relations and Comparative Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1999, pp. 429–444..

² Khondker, Habibul Haque. "The Impact of the Arab Spring on Democracy and Development in the MENA Region." *Sociology Compass*, vol. 13, no. 9, 25 (2019), pp. 1-2, <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12726>.

³ Ibid.,pp, 3.

Map 1: Libya and the Arab Spring



Source: Karthikayen, Badri (2015), Arab Spring Brings Success, Failures, the Triangle Newspaper¹

Religious issues also had a big influence in a lot of countries. For instance, Islamist organisations experienced a brief emergence in Tunisia and Egypt, two historically secular nations. Moreover, deeply held sectarian divisions contributed to the rise of anti-government movements in Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain². While Egypt regressed, Syria and Yemen entered protracted civil wars, and Libya, which had been ruled by a dictator for 41 years, saw a swift uprising and rapid advancement of rebels, only Tunisia succeeded in making a lasting transition to democracy. Colonel Muammar

¹ <https://www.thetriangle.org/opinion/arab-spring/> Accessed Feb 21, 2024.

² Ghanem, Hafez. *The Arab Spring Five Years Later. Volume 1: Toward Greater Inclusiveness*. (Washington, District of Columbia Brookings Institution Press, 2016), pp.9.

Gaddafi, unlike other presidents who had been assassinated, vowed to hold onto power and waged war against the rebels, sparking a tragic civil war that shook the nation¹.

3.1. The Historical Background of the Libyan Revolution

In an orderly military coup, Muammar Qaddafi toppled the Sansui Monarchy that had ruled Libya on September 1, 1969. Through the publication of his Green Book, he expanded his influence and shared his revolutionary and social ideas by utilizing the nation's oil resources. He declared that Libya was a "Jamahiriya" (state of the masses) under Libyan rule. When establishing his institutions and state, he drew inspiration from luminaries such as Plato, Mao, and Nasser. The Jamahiriyya is a unique political, economic, and social structure in Libya, where ministers, the army, police, grassroots organizations, and representatives are chosen to create and approve all policies².

Before being toppled and killed in 2011, Qaddafi ruled Libya nonstop from 1969 to 2011. The CIA Fact Book estimates that there are roughly 5.6 million people living in Libya as of July 2012. The majority of these people are Arabs and Berbers, comprising 97% of the population, with the remaining 3% belonging to other ethnic groups³. Tribalism remains an important part of the Libyan identity, with 140 tribal networks spread throughout the country.

On February 15, 2011, a rights activist's arrest sparked large-scale protests in the city of Benghazi. Following violent clashes between protesters and police during the demonstrations, as well as between supporters of long-time Libyan leader Maamar al-Ghadafi, a day of rage was declared. The Arab Spring's ongoing effects in many of Libya's neighbors contributed to the protests' rapid spread, which now encompassed

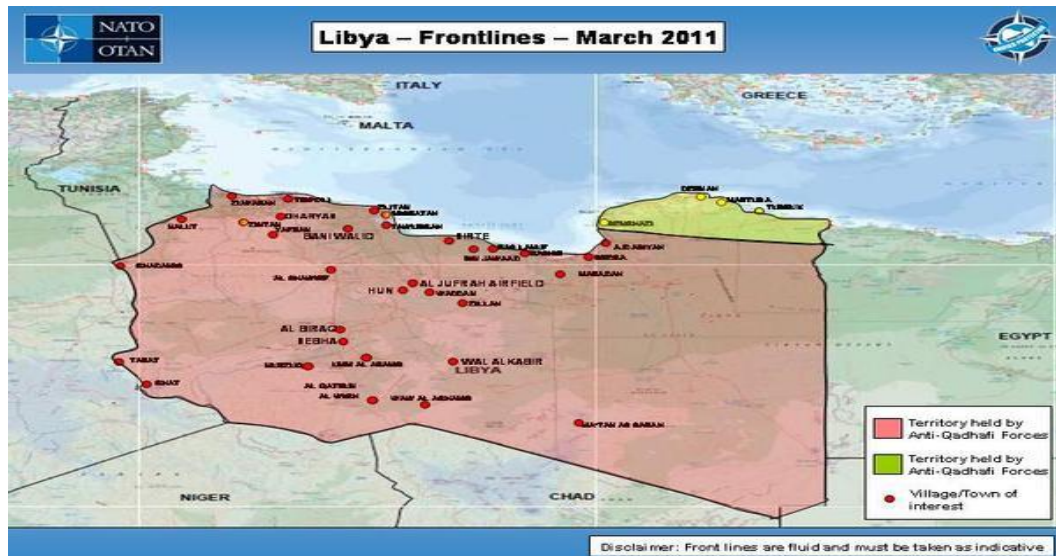
¹ Ibid., pp.2.

² Liolos, John, "Erecting New Constitutional Cultures: The Problems & Promise of Constitutionalism Post-Arab Spring" (April 1, 2012) pp. 11-10. 36 International & Comparative Law Review 219, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2146025>

³ CIA. Libya: The World Fact Book. December 12, 2023. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/libya/>. Accessed Dec 22, 2023.

the entire nation. Protesters unanimously agreed that the Ghaddafi regime had to fall¹.

Map 2: Libya Civil War: Territories held by Anti-Qadhafi forces.



Source: NATO (2011), Map of Libya Civil War¹.

Libya's events were different from those of other Arab Spring nations in that the nation descended into complete chaos, all governmental institutions crumbled, and multiple rebel factions surfaced, demanding legitimacy to govern in Libya. This distinguished the Libyan revolution from those of other revolutionary nations. One aspect of the Libyan revolution that set it apart was the creation of regional power centers after the state collapsed. As Libya prepares for the June 2012 elections for a General Assembly, cities, tribes, and militias are vying for control at the local and national levels. Greater national forces and coalitions have not yet emerged. Because the National Transitional Council (NTC) and its

¹ Teimouri, H and Subedi, SP, "Responsibility to Protect and the International Military Intervention in Libya in International Law: What Went Wrong and What Lessons Could Be Learnt from It?" *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, vol.23, no. 1. (2018). pp. 3-4.

administration are largely cut off from and have little control over the local forces influencing events on the ground, they are going through a crisis of legitimacy. Given that the rules of the game and the internal power structure are currently being renegotiated, Libya faces more fundamental issues than most other countries in the region². The deteriorating state of affairs in Libya has been made worse by foreign meddling and the division that has ensued among the various factions that make up the Libyan council. The emergence of a coherent and stable governance structure has been hampered by foreign interventions, which are marked by conflicting interests and divergent agendas.

3.2. International Reactions to the Libyan Revolution 2011

On March 12, 2011, at the Arab League's headquarters, Arab foreign ministers decided to open lines of communication with the opposition's National Transitional Council and to "call on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities by imposing a no-fly zone over Libyan airspace." According to diplomats, with the exception of Syria and Algeria, all Arab ministers accepted the decision³.

A no-flight zone over Libya was requested by the Arab League from the UN Security Council in an attempt to halt Muammar El Qaddafi's attacks on his own people. Even though they were being driven out of towns and a significant portion of road they had traveled during the three-week conflict, this offered the rebels some hope⁴.

¹<https://www.globalsecurity.org/jhtml/jframe.html#https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/images/unified-protector-110922-nato02.jpg>|||[Map%20showing%20Libya%20Frontlines%20as%20of%20March%202011](#)

² Lacher, Wolfram. "The Libyan Revolution and the Rise of Local Power Centres." *Www.iemed.org*, 8 Dec. 2011, www.iemed.org/publication/the-libyan-revolution-and-the-rise-of-local-power-centres/?lang=fr.

³ Bronner, Ethan, and David E. Sanger. "Arab League Endorses No-Flight Zone over Libya." *The New York Times*, 12 Mar. 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/world/middleeast/13libya.html Assessed Dec 11, 2023.

⁴ Ibid.,

On February 26, 2011, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1970 with unanimous support, voicing concerns about the circumstances in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and denouncing violence and the use of force against civilians. To try to resolve the Libyan conflict, the Security Council Resolution 661¹:

rejecting unequivocally the incitement to hostility and violence against the civilian population made from the highest level of the Libyan government, welcoming the condemnation by the Arab League, the African Union, and the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference of the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that are being committed in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

The UN Security Council expressed grave concern over the deaths of civilians, denounced the flagrant and ongoing violation of human rights, and rejected inciting hatred and violence in response to the circumstances in Libya in this resolution. It also denounced the use of force against civilians.

As a last resort to enact harsh measures against the Libyan government, Resolution 1973 was enacted on March 17, 2011, and the Council enlarged the scope of the mandate of the Committee²:

the Security Council is ...reiterating the responsibility of the Libyan authorities to protect the Libyan population and reaffirming that parties to armed conflicts bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of civilians, Condemning the gross and systematic violation of human rights, including arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture and summary executions.

In this resolution, the Security Council expressed concern about the deteriorating situation in Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and continued to condemn

¹ UN Security Council. "Resolution 661 (1990)." *Digitallibrary.un.org*, (1990), digitallibrary.un.org/record/94221?ln=fr. Accessed June 7, 2023.

² ---. "Resolution 1973 (2011)." *Un.org*, (2011), www.un.org/securitycouncil/s/res/1973-%282011%29. Accessed: Jun 7, 2023.

human rights violations such as arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, and summary executions, while also authorizing the use of military force to prevent atrocities and crimes against humanity. This raises the question of why the UN and NATO, led by the US, took military action in Libya in 2011, and why the situations in Syria and Egypt unfolded differently. It is clear that Libya was a selective intervention, compared to Syria and Egypt, characterized and driven by specific interests and strategic considerations rather than a genuine commitment to Libya's stability and prosperity.

4. Explaining the US Military Intervention in Libya from Liberal Internationalism Perspective

The 2011 US invasion of Libya took place in the midst of the Arab Spring, a wave of pro-democracy upheavals that swept through the Middle East and North Africa. Examining the function of international organizations, economic interdependence, and the advancement of democracy within the larger framework of liberal theoretical principles, this section analyses the US military intervention from a liberal perspective.

Through the liberal lens, the intervention in Libya can be seen as a liberal affirmation of the role that international institutions play in overseeing world affairs. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) endorsed the decision to intervene through Resolution 1973, demonstrating the neo-liberal belief in the effectiveness of multilateral cooperation. With the UNSC's approval, the intervention had a legal and normative foundation, demonstrating a commitment to upholding international laws and standards to justify and direct national policies¹.

Due to the UN's inability to settle the Libyan conflict peacefully, new international policies based on transferring the use of force to regional organizations through UN Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973 were

¹ Ibid.,

adopted by the UN body, which included NATO's major contribution to the international humanitarian intervention in Libya¹

NATO played a significant role in international humanitarian intervention in Libya due to the United Nations' inability to resolve the Libyan conflict peacefully, prompting the UN body to adopt new international policies based on delegating the use of force to regional organizations via UN Security Council resolutions. NATO was not explicitly mentioned in the 1970 or 1973 resolutions as conducting military operations in Libya. NATO has flouted international resolutions on everything from imposing an air embargo on Libyan military air traffic, protecting civilians, and providing humanitarian assistance to the Libyan people to a mission that went above and beyond those objectives by bombing civilian targets and government headquarters. In exchange, the UN Security Council has remained silent on NATO's operations².

From Liberal standpoint, the emphasis on economic interdependence as a deterrent to conflict can be applied to the US military intervention. Western nations' economic interests in the region's stability, particularly in terms of oil resources, influenced the decision to intervene. For liberals, the intervention can be seen as an attempt to protect and preserve economic interdependence, as a destabilised Libya could have had far-reaching economic consequences.

As a matter of fact, the US has already shown signs of wanting to deepen its economic connections with North Africa. To thoroughly examine the extent of economic potential in the North African region and strategies for leveraging it, the North African Partnership for Economic Opportunity (NAPEO) was founded. Through this organization, businesspeople from

¹ Engelbrekt, Kjell, et al. *The NATO Intervention in Libya: Lessons Learned from the Campaign*. (London, Routledge / Taylor and Francis Group, 2014).

² Ibid.,

Libya and the United States have already communicated and collaborated to develop economic prospects and growth in the public and private sectors¹.

The choice to send security specialists from NATO members may have been the first move toward putting this plan into action, as NATO Secretary-General Rasmussen specifically mentioned when he said²:

President Barack Obama of the United States of America has announced a long-term strategy to support democratic reform and economic development in North Africa and the Middle East, and NATO can make a significant contribution in this area...We welcome a democratic Libya as a partner in the Mediterranean dialogue,”

The notion that the advancement of democracy and the defence of human rights contribute to international stability is also consistent with the Neo-liberal viewpoint. The explanation for the intervention presented it as a reaction to the defence of citizens and the advancement of democratic principles. Neo-liberals contend that since democratic states are thought to be less likely to wage war against one another, the spread of democracy leads to a more stable international order. Therefore, this theory holds that the goal of the intervention in Libya was to support the aspirations of the Libyan people for democratic governance and human rights.

To elaborate, huddled masses have found their way to Libyan border regions, hoping to find respite from the violence of the civil war. An estimated 180,000 people are fleeing from Libya either as Libyan citizens who are refugees, or as immigrant workers hoping to be repatriated to their

¹ Gilpin, Raymond. “Oil and Turmoil in Libya.” *United States Institute of Peace*, Mar 10, 2011, <http://www.usip.org/publications/oil-andturmoil-in-libya>. Accessed: Dec 22, 2023

² Omestad, Thomas. “President Obama: U.S. Supports Democratic Movements in the Middle East and North Africa, Pushes for Middle East Peace” *United States Institute of Peace*, May 20, 2011, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/05/president-obama-us-supports-democratic-movements-middle-east-and-north-africa> . Accessed Dec 22, 2023

countries of origin. This vast numbers of people at the borders, however, have created a logistical nightmare¹.

5. Critical Examination of the Liberal Internationalist Reading of US military Intervention in Libya

A critical analysis of this intervention constitutes a critique of the idea of liberal interventionism and its application in this context. While liberalism typically promotes humanitarian intervention to protect human rights, spread democracy and cooperation, the results of the intervention in Libya was marked by instability, political fragmentation, and a power vacuum². Terrorism took root as the nation fell into anarchy, with numerous armed groups fighting for dominance³.

In fact, the deteriorating state of affairs in Libya has been made worse by foreign meddling and the division that has ensued among the various factions that make up the Libyan council. The emergence of a coherent and stable governance structure has been hampered by foreign interventions, which are marked by conflicting interests and divergent agendas. Foreign aid to different factions has frequently been directed by geopolitical factors rather than a sincere desire to see stability and prosperity return to Libya. This has exacerbated already-existing rivalries and deepened societal divisions by leading to the arming and support of various factions. To illustrate, Toaldo⁴ detailed that:

¹ Sayare, Scott and Alan Cowell. "Libyan Refugee Crisis Called a 'Logistical Nightmare,'" *New York Times*, Mar, 3 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/04/world/africa/04refugee.html>>). Accessed Dec 22, 2023

² Boduszki, Mirosław "The Libyan Revolution and its Aftermath / The 2011 Libyan Uprisings and the Struggle for the Post-Qadhafi Future", *JNAS*, vol. 20 no. 5, (2015), pp. 898-899.

³ Ben Fishman, "Could Libya's Decline Have Been Predicted?" *Survival* 199, vol. 57, no. 5, (2015), pp. 204.

⁴ Toaldo, Mattia "Political Actors 'in A Quick Guide To Libya's Main Players". *European Council on Foreign Relations* http://www.ecfr.eu/mena/mapping_libya_conflict Accessed Feb 21, 2024.

In 2016, there were three centres of power on the Libyan political scene. The first is the Presidential Council (PC), which has been located in Tripoli since 30 March 2016. This body was born out of the signing of the UN-brokered Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) on 17 December 2015... According to this agreement, the PC will preside over the Government of National Accord (GNA). The second is the Government of National Salvation, again centred in Tripoli. This authority rests on the leadership of a rump of the General National Congress of Libya (GNC). The third is Tobruk, located in al-Bayda. This self-declared government is supposed to work under the LPA, although, so far, it has failed to be incorporated into the agreement; thus, the rivalry between them continues.

The division that exists within the Presidential Council is a reflection of the larger competition for power among outside players, who all back groups that coincide with their own geopolitical objectives. To elaborate, Cafiero and Wagne¹ specified that:

The UAE, Egypt, [US] and Russia support al-Bayda authority, which is under the control of the self-described anti-Islamist General Khalifa Haftar, who leads the Libyan National Army (LNA). On the other hand, Qatar, Turkey, and Sudan support the UN-backed government of Tripoli.

This meddling has made it more difficult for a cohesive and inclusive government to emerge, which has greatly added to Libya's ongoing chaos, insecurity, and political division. Unfortunately, outside intervention has turned what could have been a road toward national reconciliation into a theater of proxy wars, extending the suffering of the Libyan people and obstructing the possibility of a long-term, peaceful settlement.

¹ Giorgio Cafiero and Daniel Wagner, 'How the Gulf Arab Rivalry Tore Libya Apart' the National Interest (Washington DC, 11 December 2015) <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-the-gulf-arab-rivalry-tore-libya-apart-14580> Accessed Feb 21, 2024.

The results of the US intervention in Libya pose important questions regarding the suitability and the rationality of liberal interventionist theory to explain the situation in Libya. The events in Libya underscore the drawbacks and complete failure of liberal internationalism as a moral precept, which foreign powers, specifically the US, exploit to further their own agendas.

The outcomes of the US intervention in Libya, according to critics of the realist perspective, were to be expected, given that the majority of realists opposed using force in Libya. Early on in the intervention, Stephan Walt¹ declared that:

the probability that our [US and its allies] intervention will yield a stable democracy is low, and that our [US and its allies] decision to intervene has increased the likelihood of civil war.

Given this outcome (the Libyan case), future applications of liberal interventionist theory raise questions about motivations, such as whether they will be driven by self-interest or undermine the credibility of international organizations. Thus, when liberal values are associated with anti-liberal interventions, both liberal foreign policy practices and liberal theory of international relations are doomed.

Conclusion:

A liberal Internationalist analysis of the US intervention in Libya in 2011 reveals a complex web of interrelated superficial motivations, such as a dedication to international institutions, the defence of economic interests, and the advancement of democracy and human rights. Essentially, it gains depth from the concept of 'complex interdependence'. The concept of complex interdependence acknowledges the various ways in which states are linked, such as through social, political, and economic ties. Considering

¹ Walt, Stephan. "Social Science and the Libyan Adventure" *Foreign Policy*. March 24, 2011. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/03/24/social-science-and-the-libyan-adventure/> Accessed Feb 21, 2024.

the preliminary analysis from a theoretical standpoint, the liberal interdependence in the case of Libya went beyond human rights worries to include issues about economy, maintaining regional stability, and the possibility of democratic transition.

Looking at this topic through the lens of the Liberal Theory of International Relations, one might initially argue that the US military intervention in Libya demonstrated a dedication to international organizations, human rights, economic concerns, and the advancement of democratic principles. However, this paper contended that the application of these tenets in the US intervention in Libya can be challenging, making it difficult to have an accurate analysis that captures the reality in post-intervention Libya.

In fact, Instability, political splintering, and a vacuum in Libyan authority were the outcomes of the international intervention in Libya, particularly that spearheaded by the United States. As the country descended into anarchy and multiple armed groups fought for control, terrorism spread rapidly. Libya's ongoing chaos, insecurity, and political division have been greatly exacerbated by this intrusion, which has made it almost impossible for a cohesive and inclusive government to emerge.

The outcomes of the US-led intervention in Libya raise significant doubts about the applicability and logic of liberal interventionist theory in explaining the circumstances there. The events in Libya highlight liberal internationalism's shortcomings and total failure as a moral principle, which foreign powers—particularly the US—exploit to expand their own interests.