



THE IMPACT OF NATO'S INTERVENTION ON STATE-BUILDING IN LIBYA: A STUDY OF THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY DIMENSIONS FROM 2011 TO THE POST-2020 PERIOD

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Abstract:

In the wake of the wave of popular uprisings that swept across the Arab world in 2011, Libya experienced a popular uprising against Muammar Gaddafi's regime, which quickly escalated into a complex political and security crisis, leading to instability and the collapse of a significant portion of the state's institutions. Faced with escalating violence and a deteriorating domestic situation, the intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was presented, according to official justifications, as a measure aimed at protecting civilians and restoring security and stability.

This intervention sparked a wide-ranging political and legal debate, pitting those who viewed it as a violation of the Libyan state's sovereignty and interference in its internal affairs against those who saw it as a legitimate intervention necessitated by humanitarian and security imperatives. However, subsequent developments revealed profound repercussions that affected various aspects of state-building in Libya, particularly with regard to the collapse of political institutions, the deepening of internal divisions and the deterioration of the security situation, which made the NATO intervention a factor contributing to the complications in the process of rebuilding and stabilizing the Libyan state.

Keywords: North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), military intervention, security, sovereignty, the Libyan crisis, armed conflicts, institutional reconstruction.

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Introduction:

Following the end of the Cold War, the international system underwent profound changes that redefined the concept of intervention in international relations. Military intervention is no longer solely linked to the logic of traditional warfare, but is now justified, in many cases, by humanitarian and security considerations, particularly in the context of the collapse of certain states' institutions and the outbreak of internal conflicts.

Against this backdrop, the Arab region witnessed a wave of protest movements in 2011 that affected several political regimes, with Libya being one of the most striking cases where demonstrations escalated into a large-scale armed conflict. With the escalation of violence and the deterioration of state institutions, NATO stepped in as an international military actor under the pretext of protecting civilians.

However, this intervention was not limited to ending the violence, but had profound political and security repercussions, which helped to reshape the structure of the Libyan state in a more complex manner, raising a fundamental question as to the extent to which foreign intervention contributes to state-building or to its dismantling.

Building on this, the following question arises:

What are the implications of NATO's intervention for state-building in Libya in political and security terms?

To address this issue, the following areas will be examined:

Firstly: the conceptual framework of the intervention and the military intervention.

Secondly: the evolution of the Libyan crisis and the chronology of events.

Thirdly: the motivations behind foreign intervention in Libya.

Fourthly: the legitimacy of NATO's intervention in Libya.

Fifthly: the repercussions of NATO's intervention on state-building in Libya in political and security terms.

1- Firstly: the conceptual framework of interference and military intervention:

1.1- Intervention:

The concept of intervention in international relations is associated with a wide range of meanings, as it encompasses various



forms of external influence on the internal affairs of states, whether through political, economic or military means. Military intervention is regarded as the highest degree of such influence, as it involves the use of armed force within the territory of a sovereign state(salam, 2017, p. 258).

This concept has evolved with the emergence of new approaches such as 'humanitarian intervention' and 'the principle of the international community's responsibility to protect populations', which have challenged the relationship between sovereignty and human rights, such that sovereignty is no longer regarded as an absolute right, but as a responsibility linked to the protection of populations(Al-Magdoub, p. 751).

1.1.1- Military intervention:

As for military intervention, this refers to the use of armed force by a state, an international coalition or an international organization on the territory of another state, with the aim of influencing its political, security or humanitarian situation. Such intervention may take place unilaterally outside the framework of international law, or within a collective framework based on resolutions adopted by the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, in accordance with the latter's coercive powers(Mechri, 2023, p. 177).

In the current context, military intervention is associated with the concepts of 'humanitarian intervention' and the 'UN vision of the protection of civilian populations', which emerged following the escalation of serious human rights violations in several conflict zones. The concept of transferring the responsibility to protect to the international community is based on the principle that state sovereignty is not an absolute right, but is linked to the state's capacity to protect its citizens against mass crimes and serious violations; in the event of the state's inability or failure to do so, this responsibility is transferred to the international community.

2.1.1-Sovereignty:

However, this conceptual development has sparked a clear divide within international political thought; whilst realist schools of thought regard sovereignty as a red line that must not be crossed except in very exceptional circumstances, liberal approaches consider

that the protection of human rights may justify intervention should the state fail to perform its basic functions(Aissaoui, 2023, p. 45)

In this context, international literature has identified a set of criteria that confer legitimacy on military intervention, the most important of which are: the existence of a serious and widespread threat to civilian lives; the exhaustion of peaceful and diplomatic means; the issuance of a mandate by the UN Security Council; and the necessity of proportionality between the scale of the intervention and its intended objectives, alongside realistic prospects for achieving security and stability without causing more serious repercussions.

The maintenance of international peace and security is one of the primary purposes upon which the United Nations was founded. The expansion of the Security Council's powers following the Cold War led to a growing role in the management of internal conflicts, as was clearly evident in the Libyan situation, in accordance with Article 39 of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. It also authorized the adoption of non-military measures such as sanctions and political and economic pressure, or the use of military force under Article 42 if peaceful means prove insufficient.

Military intervention within the contemporary international system has thus become linked to the dilemma of striking a balance between respect for state sovereignty on the one hand, and the requirements of safeguarding international peace and security and human rights on the other, This is particularly evident in the case of NATO's military intervention in Libya in 2011, which sparked widespread debate regarding its legitimacy and its implications for Libyan state-building and the country's political and security stability(Saleh, 2020, p. 09).

2-Secondly: the development of the Libyan crisis and the chronology of events:

1.2- The roots of the crisis prior to 2011:

1.1.2- The nature of the political system: The Libyan crisis of 2011 was not a surprise, but the result of a build-up of political and economic tensions that had developed over decades of centralized government, a hallmark of the regime. The monopoly on power, the weakness of representative institutions and the marginalization of



political actors led to the creation of a fragile environment, liable to implode at the first wave of protests.

With the outbreak of protests in February 2011, social and political demands quickly escalated into armed clashes due to the state's violent response to the demonstrators, which contributed to the gradual collapse of the state's monopoly on the use of force.

This rapid transition from a civil protest to an armed conflict paved the way for the internationalization of the crisis, particularly following the adoption of Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973, which provided the legal framework for the international military intervention led by NATO.

Since the late 1960s, Libya has undergone profound political upheavals linked to the rise to power of Muammar Gaddafi's regime following the military coup he led against the regime of King Idris al-Senussi on 1 September 1969, in what became known as the '1 September Revolution'. The new regime championed the slogans of liberation, unity, social justice and the elimination of colonialism and dependency, which initially earned it popular and political support both within and outside the country.

However, the nature of the political regime that subsequently emerged was characterized by a concentration of power in the hands of the political leadership and a weakening of official institutions, which gradually resulted in the fragility of the Libyan state structure and its limited capacity to manage internal crises through institutional means

Similarly, the lack of political pluralism and the marginalization of institutions responsible for oversight and public participation have contributed to creating an unstable political environment, the effects of which became clearly apparent with the outbreak of the crisis in 2011.

2.1.2- Tribal structure:

In 1977, Gaddafi proclaimed the establishment of the 'Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya', putting forward what became known as the 'Third Universal Theory', which he set out in the 'Green Book', seeking to establish a political system based on people's committees and grassroots conferences, However, the political reality

revealed that power was concentrated in Gaddafi's hands and that he had become the de facto ruler of the state, particularly after he assumed the post of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces in 1979 and took control of the various political, military and security institutions of the state (AL-Nahli, Ali Mohammed Faraj, 2018, p. 10).

During this period, the Libyan regime was characterized by an authoritarian nature based on the suppression of political opposition and the restriction of civil liberties, as well as the use of the tribal structure as a tool to ensure political loyalty and the regime's survival. Gaddafi relied on the support of certain tribes, such as the Qadhadhfa* and the **Magarha***, granting them political and economic privileges, whilst marginalizing other tribes such as the Warfalla, the Zintan and the Misrata. This contributed to deepening social divisions and undermining the concept of the nation state in favour of tribal and regional loyalties.

2.2- A rentier economy:

Despite Libya's substantial oil revenues, the unequal distribution of wealth, widespread corruption, high unemployment rates and deteriorating living conditions all contributed to growing popular discontent, particularly in the absence of political pluralism and in the face of ongoing security crackdowns. With the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011 in both Tunisia and Egypt, Libya was affected by these upheavals, and popular protests began in the city of Benghazi on 17 February 2011, demanding the overthrow of the regime and the implementation of political reform (Al-Saeed, 2023, p. 13)

1.2.2- The outbreak of the crisis in 2011

A- Protests: The Libyan regime responded to these protests with excessive force, deploying heavy weapons and live ammunition against the demonstrators, resulting in a large number of casualties. The protests soon escalated into armed clashes between regime forces and the opposition, who subsequently formed the "National Transitional Council" as the representative of the rebels and the Libyan opposition (Mohamed, 2023, p. 195).



As the conflict intensified and the humanitarian and security situation deteriorated, the United Nations intervened through the Security Council by adopting Resolutions 1970 and 1973 in 2011, which imposed sanctions on the Libyan regime and authorized the use of “all necessary measures” to protect civilians. In this context, NATO led extensive military operations against Gaddafi's forces under the pretext of curbing violations against the population and imposing a no-fly zone.

B- The escalation into armed conflict: International military intervention served to weaken the regime's forces and hasten its downfall, with the rebels managing to take control of the capital, Tripoli, in August 2011, before Gaddafi was captured in the city of Sirte on 20 October 2011; his death was subsequently announced, bringing to an end a regime that had lasted for more than four decades (Zerrouki., 2020, p. 339).

C- The repercussions of the regime's collapse on state institutions:

However, the fall of the regime did not lead to the desired political and security stability; instead, Libya entered a new phase characterized by multiple centres of power, escalating internal conflicts and external interference, which had a negative impact on the process of building the Libyan state and its institutions (Boumelik, 2022, p. 192).

3- Thirdly: the reasons behind the foreign intervention in Libya: The international intervention in Libya cannot be explained from a single perspective, as it combines stated humanitarian concerns with indirect strategic considerations. On the surface, the intervention was justified by the need to protect civilians and put an end to serious violations.

However, on closer analysis, it becomes clear that Libya was a crossroads of significant geopolitical and economic interests, particularly in the fields of energy and Mediterranean security. Furthermore, the governing system at that time made intervention a relatively low-cost option compared with other cases.

Consequently, the intervention was not the result of a single factor, but the outcome of interplay between humanitarian

considerations and strategic pressures linked to the international balance of power.

Politically, the Libyan regime's relations with Western countries were marked by tension and instability throughout the various phases of Gaddafi's rule. These relations deteriorated significantly in the 1980s and 1990s, notably with the US bombing of sites in Libya in 1986 and the imposition of severe international sanctions in 1992 following the Lockerbie bombing in 1988. However, relations subsequently saw some easing from 2003 onwards, after Libya agreed to settle the case and paid substantial financial compensation, as well as announcing the abandonment of its weapons of mass destruction programmes in 2004, which contributed to its gradual reintegration into the international system (Boussaha, 2011, p. 385).

However, the nature of the Libyan regime, based on autocratic and centralized power, as well as its persistence in pursuing an erratic foreign policy, contributed to reigniting a climate of mistrust with international actors, which made the future of the regime increasingly contested among Western policy-makers. In Western policy circles, particularly following the outbreak of protests in 2011 and the escalation of violence against civilians.

On the economic front, Libya has been a strategically vital player in the energy sector, owing to its vast oil reserves and its geographical proximity to Europe. Foreign investment in the oil sector has strengthened the ties of a number of Western companies to the Libyan market, including European firms such as Eni, as well as other American and European companies active in exploration and production. This energy dimension has made stability in Libya a pivotal factor directly linked to Europe's energy security (Zerrouki, 2020, p. 336).

Another key factor behind the foreign intervention was the Libyan regime's failure to contain the internal crisis; the use of excessive force against demonstrators and the escalation of the protests into open armed conflict between the regime and the opposition led to a breakdown in security and institutional stability, which accelerated the internationalization of the crisis and prompted external intervention under humanitarian pretexts linked to the protection of civilians.



Based on a realist approach to international relations, the behavior of major powers is governed not so much by moral considerations as by strategic interests, which explains the intertwining of stated humanitarian motives with underlying political and economic interests, particularly in the context of the Libyan crisis, which provided a clear example of the blending of humanitarian and strategic dimensions in decisions regarding international intervention(Boutaleb, 2011, p. 25).

1.3- The legal controversy surrounding the intervention:

The military intervention led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Libya in 2011 sparked widespread debate regarding its legality under international law, particularly in light of the delicate balance between the principle of state sovereignty, on the one hand and the requirements to protecting civilians and maintaining international peace and security on the other. At the outset of the crisis, the international community adopted a cautious approach, combining calls for humanitarian assistance to the Libyan population with increasing pressure on the Libyan authorities to end the violence. As the armed confrontation between the forces of Muammar Gaddafi's and opposition groups intensified, concerns grew regarding the humanitarian consequences of the conflict and the protection of civilian populations.

1.1.3- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970:

Adopted Resolution 1970 on 26 February 2011. Acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Council imposed a series of coercive measures, including an arms embargo, the freezing of assets belonging to Gaddafi and members of his family, and travel restrictions on key figures associated with the regime. The resolution also referred the Libyan situation to the International Criminal Court, reflecting the international community's concern regarding alleged violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.(Zerrouki, International Intervention in Libya between Legitimacy and Strategic Interests, 2014, p. 105)

2.1.3- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 and NATO Operations:

As the security and humanitarian situation continued to worsen and the Libyan authorities failed to comply with the provisions of Resolution 1970, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 on 17 March 2011. This resolution represented a decisive turning point in the crisis, as it authorized Member States, acting individually or through regional organizations, to take “all necessary measures” to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack. It also established a no-fly zone over Libyan territory while explicitly excluding any form of foreign military occupation. On the basis of this mandate, NATO launched military operations aimed at enforcing the no-fly zone and protecting civilians. However, the evolution of military operations on the ground generated controversy, as many observers argued that the intervention gradually shifted from civilian protection to direct involvement in altering the balance of power within Libya, raising questions regarding the limits of the Security Council mandate and the principle of proportionality (Mokhtar, 2009, p. 260).

2.2.3- The Libyan position on the intervention:

The Libyan position towards the intervention was characterized by a degree of ambiguity and contradiction. While sections of the opposition, particularly the National Transitional Council, welcomed international intervention and considered it necessary for the protection of civilians and the support of the uprising, others viewed the military operations and the control of Libyan airspace as a violation of national sovereignty and an unacceptable form of foreign interference in domestic affairs. Consequently, although NATO's intervention was formally based on a legal mandate provided by Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973, it remained the subject of continuing political and legal controversy concerning both the interpretation of these resolutions and the extent to which the intervention remained within the limits of its original humanitarian objectives (Al-Bouri, 1983, p. 23).



4- Fifth: The political and security implications of NATO's intervention for Libyan state-building:

The 2011 military intervention led to the collapse of the political system without a transitional framework capable of filling the institutional vacuum, which created a situation of political and security disintegration. Its repercussions differed from those of previous international interventions, notably due to the absence of an organized post-conflict phase and the lack of a transition to a comprehensive stabilization process, as had been the case in other situations (Ben Said, 2018, p. 59).

Whilst some international interventions are based on a 'post-conflict' approach involving the deployment of peacekeeping forces or the management of the political transition phase, the Libyan case was characterized by an almost total withdrawal of foreign forces following the fall of the regime, which placed the responsibility for rebuilding the state almost entirely on local actors, without direct support on the ground. This can be explained by several factors, foremost among which is NATO's reliance primarily on air power, in contrast to limited ground intervention, which reduced the possibility of establishing effective control on the ground after the regime's fall (Belkacem, 2019, p. 16).

Disagreements within the international coalition also contributed to reducing the effectiveness of the post-intervention phase, with some countries, such as France and the United Kingdom, playing a central role in military operations, whilst the US adopted a more cautious approach, leading to a lack of a shared vision for managing the transition phase. Furthermore, an international disagreement emerged within the Security Council regarding the interpretation of the mandate granted for the intervention, with countries such as Russia, China and South Africa arguing that the NATO operation had exceeded the limits of Resolution 1973, which was primarily aimed at protecting the population from acts of violence and not at changing the political regime.

Furthermore, past experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have contributed to a decline in Western countries' willingness to engage in long-term ground operations, particularly in the context of the economic pressures that followed the 2008 global financial crisis, which resulted in the absence of a comprehensive international plan for the reconstruction of the Libyan state following the intervention.

Domestically, Libya faced a significant institutional vacuum following the fall of the regime, which resulted in the weakness of the central state and the collapse of the security apparatus, leading to widespread proliferation of

weapons and the emergence of thousands of armed groups that had taken part in the fighting against the former regime. Many of these groups refused, to hand over their weapons, demanding recognition of their role in ‘shaping the revolution’ and a share in power, which led to the breakdown of the state’s monopoly on legitimate violence.

This situation has contributed to a deterioration in security, rising levels of violence, the prevalence of extrajudicial arrests, and serious human rights violations, including torture and extrajudicial killings. Over time, these conditions have created a fertile environment for the outbreak of armed conflicts between militias, whether on tribal, regional or political grounds, which has deepened the instability and undermined the prospects for building the institutions of a unified state.

1.4- Developments in Libya following 2014 and 2020:

After 2014, Libya saw the crisis evolve from an initial phase of state disintegration to a more complex phase characterized by a proliferation of centers of power and a deepening of political and institutional divisions. A conflict then emerged between rival governments and parliaments, against a backdrop of proliferating armed groups and the absence of a unified central authority capable of imposing stability. This situation led to the exacerbation of the phenomenon of a ‘dual state’ or ‘plurality of legitimacies’, which had negative repercussions on the process of state-building and the development of its sovereign institutions(Qasim., 15–16 November 2020, p. 16).

Against this backdrop, Libya has become the scene of widespread regional and international interference; the conflict is no longer purely internal, but has evolved into one in which the interests of regional and international powers intersect, a development which has helped to prolong the crisis and complicate the path to a political solution.

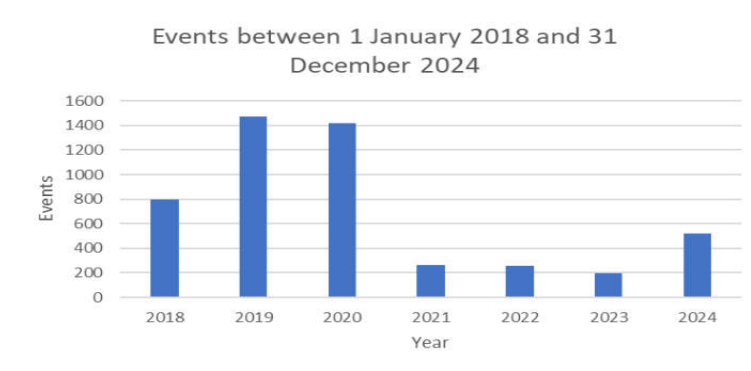
After 2020, the Libyan crisis reached a relative turning point on the political front, notably with the October 2020 ceasefire agreement and the launch of the political dialogue process under the auspices of the United Nations, which led to the formation of a unified interim executive authority within the framework of the Political order Dialogue Forum. Numerous international and regional initiatives have



also emerged, such as the Berlin Conference, aimed at consolidating the ceasefire and advancing the political process towards the organization of general elections.

However, despite their significance, these developments have not fully succeeded in ending the crisis, as Libya continues to suffer from the fragility of its state institutions, the multiplicity of centres of power and political tensions surrounding legitimacy, not to mention the persistent security challenges linked to the proliferation of weapons and armed groups.

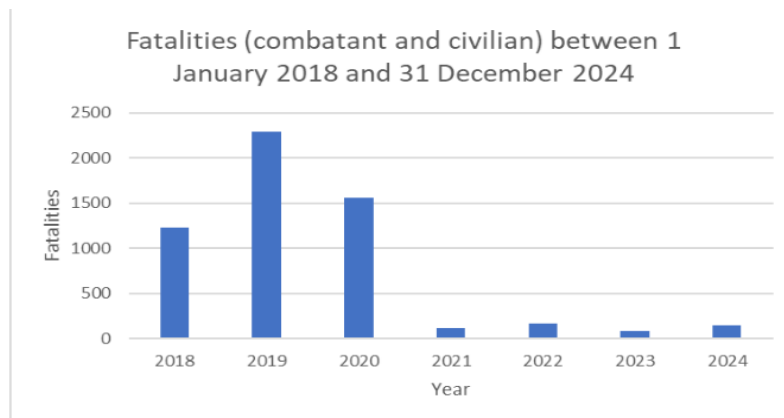
Table 1: Security incidents and deaths in Libya during the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2024:



Source:((ACLED), p. 13)

The data shows a peak in the number of safety incidents and fatalities in 2019, followed by a sharp decline in 2021, when the figures fell significantly to 264 incidents and 115 fatalities respectively. This downward trend continued, reaching its lowest level in 2023, with 195 incidents and 90 fatalities. However, in 2024, a new rise was observed, with the number of incidents rising to 524 and the number of deaths to 150, reflecting the persistence of security instability and the fragility of Libyan state institutions.

Table No. (02): Number of security incidents and fatalities (civilians and combatants) in Libya during the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2024



Source((ACLED), p. 14):

Statistical data on security incidents and deaths in Libya between 2018 and 2024 highlight the security instability the country has experienced in the wake of the NATO intervention. The figures reveal the persistence of a precarious security situation and the inability of state institutions to establish lasting stability.

The year 2019 saw the highest levels of violence, with 1,472 security incidents and 2,294 deaths, reflecting the intensification of armed clashes during this period. This increase also demonstrates the scale of the conflict between the various rival forces in Libya.

In contrast, between 2021 and 2023, Libya saw a significant decline in the number of security incidents and casualties, with figures reaching their lowest level in 2023. This trend can be attributed to political de-escalation efforts, the ceasefire agreement and international initiatives aimed at containing the crisis and reviving the political dialogue process.

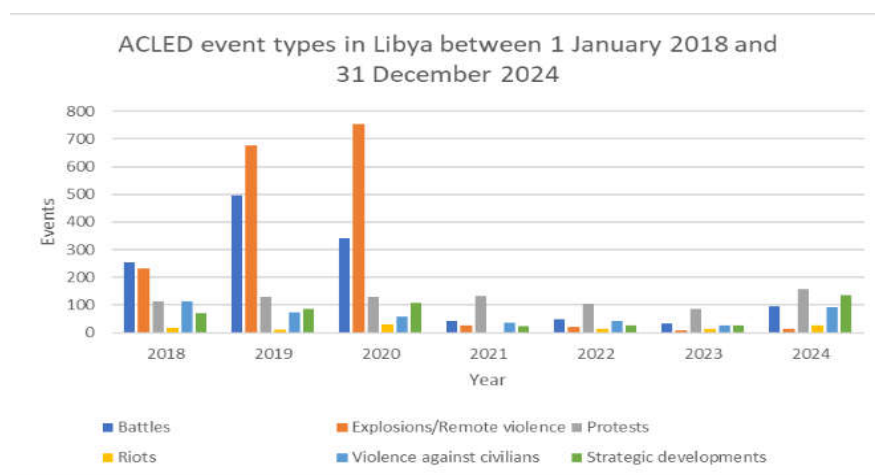
However, the renewed increase recorded in 2024, both in terms of the number of security incidents and fatalities, confirms that stability in Libya remains relative and fragile, and that the root causes of the political and security crisis have not been definitively resolved,



particularly due to the continuing proliferation of weapons, the multitude of armed groups and the persistent institutional division.

Consequently, these statistical indicators show that the repercussions of the 2011 military intervention were not limited to the overthrow of the political regime, but extended to affect the structure of the Libyan state and its security stability, meaning that the process of state reconstruction faces complex and persistent challenges.

Figure 1: Security incidents in Libya between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2024



Source:(Project, p. 15)

This graph based on data on the breakdown of security incidents in Libya between 2018 and 2024, highlights how violence has evolved in terms of scale and nature, and not merely in terms of the number of incidents.

5- Firstly: the escalation phase: 2018–2020:

It is clear from the graph that this phase was the most turbulent, with 2019 and 2020 recording the highest levels of violence.

The categories ‘armed clashes’ (Battles) and ‘explosions/remote violence’ (Explosions/Remote violence) dominated the security landscape. These categories peaked in 2019 and 2020. This reflects the escalation of military clashes between rival parties and the

increased use of heavy weapons and air strikes, which highlights the state's weak control over the security situation.

This was particularly evident in 2020, when explosions and remote violence reached very high levels, reflecting the continuing military nature of the crisis.

This phase also saw a relative increase in demonstrations, riots and violence against civilians, reflecting the worsening instability and the deterioration of security and social conditions within the country (Wehrey, 2018, p. 36).

1.5- Secondly: the period of relative decline from 2021 to 2023:

As for the period from 2021 to 2023, Libya has seen a marked decline in most types of security incidents, particularly armed clashes and explosions, attributable to the 2020 ceasefire agreement and the launch of the political dialogue process under the auspices of the United Nations, as well as the easing of the intensity of direct military clashes between the warring factions (Bellamy, 2009, p. 22).

1.1.5-Thirdly: the resurgence of tensions in 2024:

However, this decline was not indicative of lasting stability, as the graph shows a relative increase in certain events during 2024, particularly in the category of 'Strategic developments' and some armed clashes, reflecting the persistence of the security situation and the continued existence of political and military tensions despite international efforts aimed at achieving stability (Kuperman, 2013, p. 120).

Accordingly, the graph reveals that the Libyan crisis did not follow a stable course, but was characterized by successive cycles of escalation and de-escalation. This confirms that the repercussions of the 2011 military intervention did not end with the fall of, but extended to affect the structure of the Libyan state and its long-term stability and security.

A cycle of escalation (2018–2020), followed by a period of relative calm (2021–2023), and then a limited resurgence of tension (2024).

Consequently, the period following 2014 and 2020 confirms that the Libyan crisis is no longer linked solely to the repercussions of the 2011 military intervention, but has become a complex structural crisis in which internal and external factors intertwine, making the process



of state-building a long and complicated one(Eaton, 12 December 2023, p. 14).

The collapse of the former regime, in the absence of a strong institutional alternative, led Libya into a phase of pluralistic authoritarianism, characterized by conflicting governments and competing centers of power, which hampered the democratic transition. Furthermore, the absence of effective central authority contributed to the failure to draft a permanent constitution and to organize political life in a stable manner(Abdelli, n.d, p. 45).

On the economic front, numerous studies suggest that international intervention has opened the door to competition between regional and international powers over Libya's resources, particularly oil, with attempts emerging to exert influence in the energy sector. This has reinforced the argument that the intervention was not devoid of self-interest, and that the continuation of the crisis sometimes serves the interests of external parties by controlling production and export channels.

Consequently, it can be argued that military intervention in Libya not only led to the overthrow of the existing political system, but also contributed to the restructuring of the state in a way that led to its institutional and security disintegration, paving the way for a state of ongoing instability, which makes the process of building the Libyan state a complex and long-term endeavour(Aissaoui F. Z., 2011, p. 112).

Conclusion

In light of the findings of this study, it is clear that foreign military intervention in states' internal crises, including the Libyan case, has in most instances failed to achieve the desired stability; rather, it has contributed to complicating the security and political situations and prolonging the conflict, thereby weakening state institutions and exacerbating divisions and instability. The main findings of this research therefore indicate that the absence of a structured post-conflict framework was a decisive factor in transforming military intervention into a driver of institutional fragmentation rather than reconstruction.

In the Libyan case, it is evident that the intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2011, despite the

humanitarian rhetoric regarding the protection of civilians, was also linked to overlapping strategic and self-interest considerations relating to Libya's geopolitical position and natural resources, as well as the balance of international influence in the region. This has made the issue of intervention the subject of widespread debate between those who view it as legitimate on the basis of international law, and those who regard it as an extension of the logic of reproducing Western influence in the Global South.

Subsequent developments have also shown that the overthrow of the former political regime was not sufficient to ensure a stable democratic transition; the lack of clear post-intervention arrangements led to an institutional and security vacuum that contributed to the proliferation of centers of power, thereby hindering the establishment of a centralized state capable of asserting its sovereignty.

In this context, a number of political positions and media statements—including those attributed to the former Libyan ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Mohammed Saeed al-Qashat—suggest that some foreign interventions may be driven by strategic considerations relating to resources and geographical location, rather than being a purely humanitarian response, which fuels the debate over the nature and objectives of international intervention in Libya. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by bridging the gap between the legal justification of intervention and its empirical consequences on state-building in post-conflict contexts.

Ultimately, it can be said that the Libyan experience clearly highlights the challenges facing fragile states in the face of international interventions, and confirms that achieving stability and state-building remains dependent on a unifying national will and a strong institutional framework, far removed from the logic of interventions that may deepen crises rather than resolve them. Accordingly, the study recommends that any future international intervention should be accompanied by a clear and binding post-conflict reconstruction strategy, ensuring transitional governance mechanisms and long-term institutional support to avoid the recurrence of institutional vacuums.

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