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# Libya in Retrospect: Security Implications and Evolving Norms

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# 1 Introduction

In 2014, Libya continued to descend into more profound security turmoil. The spiral of violence followed nearly three years of escalating instability. In this volatile situation, armed militias, federalists, jihadist, secularists and organised crime syndicates have put an effective end to the calm that followed the early non-violent resistance in 2011.<sup>1</sup> In light of this vicious security trend, it is pertinent to ask what went ‘wrong’ with the so-called *Arab spring* in Libya.<sup>2</sup> Following an increasing body of literature that seeks to explain Libya’s contemporary political and security situation<sup>3</sup>, a number of questions remain unanswered. In this study, the analysis is confined to the following two questions:

(1) How are we to interpret the course that took Libya from the Arab spring and a ‘quest for dignity’ to a breakdown of the domestic security order, and what are the main causes of the break-down?

(2) What are the broader normative implications for Libya and the international community of the decision to intervene on behalf of the anti-Gaddafi loyalists?

Hence, the aim of this memo is twofold. First, it seeks to encompass a number of emerging debates on the causes of Libya’s post-authoritarian security situation. Second, it seeks to lift the Libya case into a general analysis on the role of external interventions.<sup>4</sup> In so doing, the overall objective is, as Giovanni Sartori puts it, “to climb the ladder of abstraction” and use Libya as a point in case to scrutinise key issues relevant for broader strategic thinking on current world affairs.<sup>5</sup>

The study consists of three main parts. The first of these provides a brief overview of key political and security events in Libya’s security process to the current era of security fragmentation (Chapter 2). The objective is to recapture key developments of the Libya case from 2011-2014. The period covers the uprising, the external intervention, the fall of Gaddafi and the emergence of a fractured security landscape inside Libya. This first part seeks to answer question (1) above. The second part of the analysis attempts to lift the Libya case out of the specifics to consider the more general implications it has had for the international community (Chapter 3).<sup>6</sup> The objective in this second part is to determine the normative implications the Libya process has had for the international community in terms of prospects for other interventions into domestic armed conflicts, i.e. question (2) above. The third and concluding part (Chapter 4) includes a general discussion and some conclusions of this study.

<sup>1</sup> For a recent overview of the deteriorating situation, see UN Security Council: S/2014/106 (2014), and Blanchard (2014). For an overview of the Libya uprising, see Bassiouni (2013: 154); Eriksson (2011, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> This analysis is a commissioned study by the Swedish Ministry of Defence to the Swedish Defence Research Agency’s project on Africa security. The memo builds on a number of previous studies on security developments and power shifts in Africa and North Africa in particular. This particular study follows an earlier memo from 2014 that took a more empirical and policy-orientated approach to Libya’s contemporary security situation (see FOI MEMO 2014-4922)

<sup>3</sup> Chivvis (2014), Pack (2013).

<sup>4</sup> As the study takes a conventional security perspective, it refrains from any deeper analysis of human security implications as opposed to state and societal concerns.

<sup>5</sup> Sartori (1970: 1040).

<sup>6</sup> This second part is based on a longer argument made by Eriksson (forthcoming 2014).

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## 2 Libya 2011-2014

The past three years have been profoundly turbulent for the Libyan state and its people. Inspired by the events in Tunisia and the fall of President Ben Ali, a number of anti-Gaddafi rallies began across Libya in mid-February 2011.<sup>7</sup> From the outset, it was clear that the early demonstrations were non-violent. It was also clear that they were being carried out by different segments of Libyan society, including a broad spectrum of generations and classes, as well as male and female participants. In contrast to the incremental brutality of his neighbours, Gaddafi responded fiercely to the demonstrators at once, using public verbal threats and intimidations. As early as 25 February 2011, the first rounds of live ammunition were fired against unarmed demonstrators. The warning posed to the Libyan people by the regime gave direct impetus for the formation of civil militias at different urban centres across the country. While some of these civil militias were created solely for day-to-day self-protection – in the absence of a domestic security order – several groups with more far-reaching political agendas were formed. In retrospect, these latter formations quickly adapted to the developments and hijacked the non-violent nature of protests against Gaddafi (i.e. Jihadist groups), thereby making the ensuing political development more violent.<sup>8</sup> A first sign that the country was heading towards civil war was a number of counter-attacks by rebels against government security forces, which were carried out in late February and early March 2011.

Alarmed by the quickly deteriorating situation and in light of other regional events, a number of governments, notably those of France, the UK and the US, began preparing for evacuations and for military scenarios that included a worsening security situation. On 26 February 2011, the political process and the increasingly deteriorating security situation in Libya changed drastically. Acting under Chapter VII, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorised mandatory action to isolate the Libyan regime following the indiscriminate use of violence against its own citizens. In response to Gaddafi's forceful response to his opponents, the resolution stipulated that an arms embargo, a travel ban and assets freeze should be imposed against the regime, and that the situation should be referred to the International Criminal Court.<sup>9</sup>

As violence spread across Libya during spring 2011, the battle dynamics alternated in favour of government forces and rebels. However, following events on the ground that at the time seemed about to tilt the balance in favour of the Gaddafi regime, rebel, Arab and Western leaders began to call for outside engagement. On 17 March 2011, the UNSC adopted resolution 1973 (2011) calling on its member states to take all necessary measures to protect civilians in Libya, including the establishment of a no-fly zone and an arms embargo. The resolve of the UNSC at the time was consolidated by rebel losses, especially around Benghazi, and equally so by an earlier 'cockroach' speech by Gaddafi against his opponents on 22 February 2011. Having ensured an intervention mandate, a military campaign was launched in mid-March by France, the UK and the US. It was later transferred from the US coordinated response *Operation Odyssey Dawn* to NATO as *Operation Unified Protector*. The goal of the military operation was to protect civilians and curb violence, but the campaign increasingly turned into a *de facto* process of Gaddafi removal.

<sup>7</sup> See Eriksson (2011).

<sup>8</sup> However, blurred by lack of historical documentation in a moment of great turbulence, this will be difficult to verify.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973 (2011).

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In parallel with the military developments, the Interim National Council that led anti-Gaddafi policy during spring and summer 2011 foresaw that a caretaker government and a General National Congress (GNC) would have to be formed to lay the ground for a National Committee of the Constitution. Thus, early on, a post-Gaddafi political process was envisioned. Once liberated, it was expected that Libya would be subject to a post-conflict agenda that would include: (1) a complete reform agenda for government institutions; (2) a considerable process of security sector reform; (3) a substantial process of demobilisation and re-integration of former combatants; (4) a process of national reconciliation; and (5) a reform of the justice sector.<sup>10</sup> Notably, however, Western governments did not allude to the reconstruction phase that would follow once the military campaign was over.

With the fall of the Gaddafi regime on 20 October 2011, Libya entered into a new security phase.<sup>11</sup> While some commentators called this the post-conflict phase<sup>12</sup>, or the peace-building phase, a more accurate analytical description would be the fragmentation phase. Regardless of the label, Libya descended into another type of security disorder. This disorder was a result of the new interim government's inability to maintain law and order (once foreign powers had left the battleground). During the period 2011-2014, the government and the GNC of Libya were subjected to repeated armed challenges by a number of brigades and militias from across Libya. While some of these groups are remnants of the civil war, other groups and alliances are new. The short review of the situation presented below reveals a complex web of actors and interests in Libya.

Across Libya, there are currently a number of armed groups present. In Eastern Libya, militias are allegedly in indirect control of different parts of the territory. The inability of the government to demonstrate territorial control has manifested itself in different ways. During 2013 and early 2014, pro-federalists blocked various oil terminals, which prevented the government from exporting oil (while trying to sell the oil themselves). The motive, besides personal enrichment, seems to have been to create funds to finance a regional administration independent of Tripoli, the 'Federal Region of Barqa' (which some commentators believe may be a precursor to territory splitting).<sup>13</sup> In north-eastern Libya, radical Islamic groups such as Ansar al Sharia and AQIM allegedly have a presence, especially around Benghazi and Derna. There are also various accounts that they have a presence in southern and south-western Libya. Responding in late May 2014 to the radical Islamic presence in Benghazi, forces loyal to Khalifa Hiftar came together as 'Libya's National Army' to challenge the GNC on its inability to stabilise the situation around the country and to deal with Islamic radicals.<sup>14</sup> A number of militias attacked the GNC and demanded that it be dissolved. Hiftar named the action '*Operation Restore Libya's Dignity*'. Claims were made that armed Islamic groups were taking an increasingly stronger grip over societal affairs and that the Islamist-dominated GNC was doing little to curb the influence of these radicals. Moreover, this area is considered a transit zone for numerous organised crime syndicates and is regarded as a major arms bazaar. Lastly, in the southern part of the country, there are considerable tensions between ethnic groups and clan groupings regarding access to various natural resources (e.g. Tabu v.

<sup>10</sup> Taken from the Interim National Council "A vision of a Democratic Libya" 2011-03-29 and "A Roadmap for Libya". Documents presented on The Interim National Council Website (as well as in various international newspapers).

<sup>11</sup> Based on Eriksson (see FOI MEMO 2014-4922).

<sup>12</sup> Cheney (2012)

<sup>13</sup> S/2014/131 (2014: 5)

<sup>14</sup> *Washington Post* (2014-05-19).

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Awlad Suleiman; Tabu v. Zwaya).<sup>15</sup> Fighting between these groups has contributed to the fragmentation of Libya and had thereby indirectly undermined the authority of the state.

In mid-2014, there were particular indications of a tripartite power struggle in Libya between government forces, secular forces and jihadist forces. There are various causes behind the repeated challenges to the GNC, causes that are not easily summarised. Based on the existing types of groups that are challenging the state, a distinction could be made between religious, ethnic, secular, liberal, territorial and democratic forces. While some of these are struggling for political and economic compensation for having taken part in the uprising that removed Gaddafi from power, others make reference to root causes such as lack of equitable political representation and prospects of a stable social and economic life.

## 2.1 Conclusions

At the outset of the revolt in Libya, it was difficult for any security commentator to envision what a post-Gaddafi era would comprise, not least in terms of security. However, given the tight grip Gaddafi and his regime had on all aspects of society, it should have come as no surprise that the dissolution of the former regime would have severe security consequences. What is therefore very surprising is that Libya was more or less left to its own devices once Gaddafi had been removed from power and the NATO operations came to an end.<sup>16</sup> Despite the optimism that oil and gas money would help re-build Libya, military planners and others left the country without a post-intervention stability force to provide a more comprehensive approach to security. While the UN and EU are modestly helping the country with economic aid and political and security reform programmes, these efforts actually weigh very lightly vis-à-vis the country's great need for support.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> S/2014/131, 2014: 5.

<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that it was completely left, a number of government provided some post-conflict support, although as argued this was not in line with the demands needed. For US support, see Blanchard (2014: pp. 12-14).

<sup>17</sup> For an overview of European support to Libya's post post-Gaddafi transition see Toaldo (2014).

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### 3 Normative implications and the future management of domestic armed conflicts

This section examines some of the broader implications of Libya's security developments in the period 2011-2014. More specifically, it looks at some of the debates that have emerged as a consequence of Libya's uprising, the subsequent foreign intervention and the era of security fragmentation. To limit the analysis, the normative implications of the global order are examined by discussing: (1) the principle *responsibility to protect* (R2P); (2) the view on interventions by taking stock of the '*end-of humanitarianism*' argument and *the projection of the liberal order* hypothesis; (3) the increasing evidence of the need for a *comprehensive approach*; and (4) the role of a *global-regional trend* in contemporary world order. These four areas were selected since they can all be clearly distinguished in the case of Libya, i.e. they clearly followed the Libya uprising and ensuing foreign intervention.<sup>18</sup> More importantly, these areas have also had a major impact on how the international community perceived and tackled other contemporary armed conflicts.

#### 3.1 Responsibility to protect versus responsibility *while* protecting

An important, yet at the outset unforeseen, implication of the decision to support the anti-Gaddafi rebellion under the notion R2P was the development of the 'protection of civilians' concept. In fact, Libya proved to be the first instance in which this concept came into practice without the consent of the host state.

The 'responsibility to protect' principle (R2P) has been well covered in the literature.<sup>19</sup> The idea has different roots in a variety of research disciplines. One of these stems from the Kantian tradition of cosmopolitan intervention. According to Kant, there are circumstances in armed conflicts that fulfil the criteria of a moral responsibility to support the population of a state when the leaders rule by tyranny.

Well placed in a longer historical debate on 'just war and just peace' principles, more significantly for contemporary policy making was the launch in 2001 of the *International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (ICISS) concept 'responsibility to protect'.<sup>20</sup> The report not only described the reasoning behind the principle, but also how to relate to it in the face of contemporary security threats as well as when to apply it. In essence the R2P is a norm principle, not legally codified, which argues that sovereignty is not to be conserved as a right for any state. On the contrary, states must protect their populations from mass atrocities such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and the like. More precisely, the ICISS report brought the foreign intervention argument into policy practice, thereby placing it on the agenda of the UN and leading council members. The chief argument for the need for protection of a civilian principle rested on the frustration in recent years with the UN's inability to prevent genocide and ethnic cleansing, as happened in Rwanda (1994) and in the former Yugoslavia (1991-95).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For a fuller account of this principle in the context of Libya, see Eriksson (forthcoming 2014: pp. 224-225).

<sup>19</sup> See for example Williams and Bellamy (2012); Silander (2013).

<sup>20</sup> At the UN World Summit meeting in 2005, the *Responsibility to Protect* was unanimously adopted by most world leaders.

<sup>21</sup> Neethling (2012:27).

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Having been considered for nearly a decade and a half, the moment of enforcement for the R2P concept eventually came with the deteriorating situation in Libya. In the context of the so-called Arab spring, the unanimity of the UNSC and the vicious attacks by Gaddafi against the Libyan people, the principle was applied as a new policy doctrine. The foreign intervention in Libya came to shake the normative and practical grounds of the principle.

Put into practice for the first time when the international community intervened on behalf of the anti-Gaddafi forces active on ground in Libya in 2011. However, the R2P principle quickly came to adopt a negative undertone. Essentially, non-Western governments of the UN Permanent 5 (P5), i.e. Russia and China, as well as the so-called ‘Global South’, soon began to question the motives and objectives of the intervention. Claims were voiced that instead of protection of civilians, the NATO force had embarked on *regime change*. Western governments such as the US administration on their part maintained that the NATO attacks were directed against Libyan military installations and that the NATO bombing of government buildings was in line with the R2P principle. In retrospect, a number of analysts of the Libya intervention came to the conclusion that after NATO deployment and the creation of the no-fly zone, R2P was essentially replaced by a policy of regime change, founded on a politically stretched interpretation of UNSC resolution 1973.<sup>22</sup> One scholar who has written much on the subject, Yuki Yoshida, concludes for instance that there was in fact a “clear abuse of the mandate because the Security Council authorized the use of force to protect civilians, not to change the existing regime and support the rebels”.<sup>23</sup>

The debate on NATO’s intervention in Libya is still raging. Critics maintain that Western governments were not primarily driven by normative principles, but by geo-political interests.<sup>24</sup> Several critics from the Global South accused the UN of advancing R2P as a Western instrument to secure members’ own interests, or as Yoshida puts it, to secure geopolitical interests and oil reserves and further their interests in counter-terrorism and preventing weapons proliferation.<sup>25</sup> Others give more emphasis to the fact that a number of civilians were killed (estimates range from a few hundreds to tens of thousands) and civilian installations were targeted during the campaign, which suggests that R2P as a principle may have back-fired.

Finally, the intervention in Libya has also come to foster another normative development, namely ‘responsibility *while* protecting (RwP).<sup>26</sup> Critical of the way in which Western governments made use of the R2P principle, the Global South, Brazil in particular, suggested that the UN in engaging future armed conflicts should become “...less trigger-happy, prioritize non-violent engagements and grade different types of mass-atrocities in order to guide international intervention”.<sup>27</sup> In essence, the launching of an RwP principle suggests that in future armed conflicts, the UN should take a more refined and well-motivated approach when mandating foreign interventions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. More

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<sup>22</sup> Lindvall and Forsman (2012).

<sup>23</sup> Yoshida (2013).

<sup>24</sup> For example, many publications – including the popular media – examining the role played by France suggest at least six reasons: that it was motivated by great power interests and post-colonial ties; to make up for having initially been on the “wrong side” of the Arab Spring; because of domestic factors (then spurring President Nicolas Sarkozy); public support domestically; it was a “doable” case from a military viewpoint; and that oil interests were important. Supporting the anti-Qaddafi forces would therefore prove a good political and economic investment (Eriksson, forthcoming 2014: 223, partly adapted from Zetterlund and Lindström 2012)

<sup>25</sup> Yoshida (2013); see also Weiss (2011:289).

<sup>26</sup> See Benner (2013).

<sup>27</sup> Eriksson forthcoming (2014)

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precisely, this entails setting out detailed criteria for when intervention should be considered legitimate and motivated, but also for how the intervening force should behave in light of circumstances on the ground.

### 3.2 End of humanitarian intervention?

For the past two decades, much academic analysis has been carried out on the nature of external interventions in ongoing armed conflicts.<sup>28</sup> Following the end of the Cold War and the rise of a unipolar world order, management by Western states, or lack thereof, of ongoing armed conflicts has spurred vibrant discussions. The trigger for these was the various strategies to tackle civil wars in the early 1990s, notably in the break-up of Yugoslavia (1990-95), Rwanda (1994), Iraq (1990-91), Afghanistan (1990-), Liberia (1989-1996, 1999-2003), etc. The scholarly debates on the role and contribution of Western states have essentially developed along two strands of thoughts. On the one hand, cosmopolitan liberal institutionalists argue in favour of humanitarian interventions as a just means to restore order and promote the rule of law, market liberalisation and (liberal) human rights – often under the banner of “civilizing societies”.<sup>29</sup> Humanitarian interventions were mainly enforced because external powers were interested in ending what they saw as ongoing human tragedies.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, some critics in the debate have argued that many of the humanitarian interventions by Western governments seen during the 1990s have generally departed from a very introverted foreign and defence policy agenda. Rather than from a sense of benevolence regarding the people they claimed to protect, interventions were mainly a projection of power. Arguably in many of these instances, the humanitarian intervention of the 1990s typically ignored local power structures, indigenous traditions for peace making and reconciliation, etc.<sup>31</sup> Instead, a pre-arranged political agenda was imposed from the ‘outside’ and from ‘above’. While the scholarly debate highlighted a number of trends in contemporary interventions, the complexity encountered by intervening states on entering a situation such as Libya in 2011 also needs to be recognised.<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, the external intervention in Libya has had an important implication for the debate and the character of the intervention. For example, David Chandler, a critical of the liberal interventionist argument, suggests that Libya differed from many other interventions since the end of the Cold War.<sup>33</sup> In his view, the Libya intervention was a case in which the international community freed itself from responsibility for simply establishing a liberal order.<sup>34</sup> Whereas the foreign humanitarian interventions witnessed in the 1990s were problematic and pursued another type of logic, as did the entire narratives on humanitarian intervention, the intervention in Libya could be interpreted as a more genuine moral response to support a people in search of post-authoritarian governance. Hence, rather the civilising a

<sup>28</sup> For an overview see Newman and DeRouen (2013) and Wolff and Dursun-Özkanca (2014)

<sup>29</sup> Eriksson and Kostic (2013)

<sup>30</sup> Paris (2010).

<sup>31</sup> Eriksson forthcoming (2014).

<sup>32</sup> For instance, the US administration may have to consider a wide range of different options and reasons for intervention, i.e.: humanitarian, geopolitical and domestic politics and so on. Moreover, different parts of the administration may have different agendas and the outcome is type of compromise position (e.g. the Department of Defence, the State Department, the White House, Congress, and the “popular opinion” may all differ, a fact which needs to be reconciled prior to a decision on how to manage the situation).

<sup>33</sup> See Chandler (2012) for an argument of a post-interventionist paradigm.

<sup>34</sup> Chandler (2011).



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people, it was about changing the military balance on the ground, allowing the anti-Gaddafi forces to reconstitute themselves.<sup>35</sup> The end of the humanitarianism argument that emerged following the Libya intervention is likely to have normative repercussions for the way in which the international community considers future interventions in armed conflicts.

Although the pendulum may have swung from humanitarianism to more genuine concerted interventions to support people in need of legitimate backing in the face of government brutality, it may swing back again equally quickly. Given the complexity of the Libya case, which initially appeared to be a democratic uprising with foreign backing but later proved to be an uprising with a number of extremist agendas, coupled with the geopolitical interests of foreign states, the external intervention debate can easily take another normative turn. For instance, Holmqvist-Jonsäter (2011) makes an interesting argument about contemporary interventions, noting that an intervention such as that seen in Libya can itself be considered a projection of a liberal order.<sup>36</sup> Hence the case of Libya was simply a manifestation of a geopolitical order.

### 3.3 Re-thinking the comprehensive approach

Another implication of the externally backed intervention in Libya is the current re-consideration of the comprehensive approach. In fact, the Libya case highlighted a number of weaknesses in the way in which the external involvement was shaped. Although many analysts tended to take the view that the military intervention was successful, the current security fragmentation of Libya tells a different story.

In essence, the UN resolution was founded on the R2P principle. Consequently, the NATO intervention in Libya was politically tasked with protecting civilians from the authoritarian force of Gaddafi. Yet, it is clear, at least now in retrospect that the military intervention focused solely on bringing down the regime, taking little or no interest in the post-intervention phase. The consequences of this failure to fully protect Libya's citizens are increasingly becoming painfully apparent. The short-sightedness by political decision makers when tasking military planners needs particular consideration in light of the countless policy recommendations in recent years on the need to adopt a more *comprehensive approach* when engaging in peace-promoting interventions. After all, building on experiences from cases such as Iraq and Afghanistan, having at least an outline of a *pre-* post-war strategy ahead of intervention could have been expected. This reconstruction could either have been a natural extension of the military operation, but through different military means, or a far-reaching plan in which the UN, the EU or the African Union (AU) could have played a stronger role. Instead of this lucidity, however, key countries, notably decision makers in key states such as the US, UK and France, locked onto regime change and opted for a counter-terrorism agenda, a short-sighted perspective that is currently back-firing by taking Libya deeper into security fragmentation. Henceforth, rather than simply leading from behind, the US, as the main military architect and hardware contributor to the Libya conflict, and its allies should have sought to prepare for a reconstruction phase.

It is possible that the Libya case, being 'doable' and fairly easy, will remind the international community of the need to make more far-reaching commitments when agreeing to external

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> See Holmqvist-Jonsäter (2011: 116).

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intervention. Shouldering responsibility to protect people can never stop at regime change. In Libya, leaving the country to its own fate, i.e. to the brigades and militias freely operating across the country, with tens of thousands of unregistered arms flooding the country and with a government incapable of maintaining sovereign control over its territory, does not fully fit with the R2P principle.<sup>37</sup> While some scholarship may be sympathetic to this conclusion, it is likely to be politically contested. After all, where do you draw the boundaries of an intervention? What determines when responsibility begins and ends? One answer to these questions rests with planning of intervention. Decision makers need to take a stronger consideration on the role of comprehensive approach and not only focusing on the short-term goals and operational aspects. Otherwise the humanitarian and post-conflict development dimensions may be lost leaving room for other negative security challenges in the country. It is therefore very important that any intervention seeking to use the responsibility principle also considers the post-intervention ‘phase’ more thoroughly.

### 3.4 Towards regionalisation in the world order?

Finally, an important consequence of the decision by the international community to intervene in Libya has been the emergence in the global order of a greater role for regional organisations. Whereas the 1990s saw the emergence of a global unipolar order, the increasingly overstretched dominant power (the US) has come to delegate power to regional organisations in areas where calls for legitimacy and burden sharing have proved important.<sup>38</sup>

In the case of the Libyan civil war, the League of Arab States (LAS) proved pivotal for the UNSC to unite behind a resolution calling for intervention. However, while Western governments among the five permanent members of the UNSC (the P5) were keen on supporting the rebels in Libya, full UNSC support could not be garnered without the sponsorship of Russia and China. With the active call for intervention by the LAS, Russia and China were swayed to support the UN resolution. Indeed, as noted by several scholars and commentators, the involvement of LAS proved critical for setting out new practices for UN peace-making.<sup>39</sup> As noted by Piiparinen, who has written on the role of the LAS in the Libyan uprising and the UN process, LAS was able to: (1) frame the Libyan conflict in such a way that R2P could be legitimately applied; (2) steer the decision-making of the UNSC by “conceptualizing the Libya war as a crime against humanity”; and (3) persuade the P5 to “buy into that epistemic and normative framework of action, the logical corollary of which was a military intervention”.<sup>40</sup>

The Libya intervention has arguably contributed to increasing the status of regional organisations in contemporary UN peace-making activities. A question that remains to be answered is whether the LAS, as the grantor of a security architecture in the Middle East and North Africa region, was ‘selected’ simply to bring legitimacy and popular support for Western powers, or whether it was genuinely calling for the R2P principle to be fully evoked. While Syria and Iraq may well serve as a reference point for the failure of emergence of a regionalisation trend, its particularities may still not undermine the future role of an arrangement such as LAS.

<sup>37</sup> McQuinn (2012) provides an overview of the many security challenges that followed on the removal of Gaddafi.

<sup>38</sup> Giving further relevance to the role of Ch. VIII arrangements of the UN Charter.

<sup>39</sup> See Piiparinen (2012: 399).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid p. 392.

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## 4 Analysis and conclusions

The aim of this memo was to provide an overview of Libya's security developments since the beginning of the revolt until today and to place the Libya case in a broader perspective, namely to examine its normative implications after the removal of Gaddafi. Based on the analysis in previous sections, the following paragraphs examine: (1) How to interpret Libya's current fragmentation and (2) How sustainable these normative implications are likely to be.

### 4.1 Factors explaining the security fragmentation

The current security situation in Libya has its origins in different political, social and economic circumstances that are not easily summarised. Several factors have shaped the security environment in which Libya currently finds itself. Over the centuries, a number of regimes, such as the Ottoman Empire or the more recent era of Gaddafi autocracy, have laid strong footprints on the country, shaping a political order which has internalised a number of social and political tensions. One characteristic of Libya has been the historical lack of a political system that guarantees political representation and public participation, which is likely to have contributed to the power struggles that Libya is currently experiencing. Beyond various governance orders, there are other more recent factors that have had an impact on Libya's structural security challenges. An important factor is the geographical location. Libya is situated in a regional landscape where there are multiple layers of rivalries between ethnic groups and states. These tensions have their causes in natural resource scarcity, lack of standing, perceived security dilemmas, etc. Only by taking a regional approach can Libya be stabilised, and vice versa. Another recent factor explaining Libya's security fragmentation, as illustrated in this study, is the short-term consequences of the military action against Gaddafi and the manner in which it was performed. As noted, the military intervention in Libya focused primarily on regime removal, leaving the country with a number of armed interest groups fighting over central power. Likewise, the overthrow of the regime led to the dissolution of the clan-based system, hence opening the way for ethnic tensions, shifting alliances and consequently new rounds of tensions and violence. Finally, while a number of security analysts suggest that Libya's energy revenues would suffice to rebuild the country, Libya was in practice abandoned by the international community.

The process from a civil and non-violent revolt to massive military intervention and subsequent security fragmentation has had considerable implications for Libya as a state, but also for the international community. The political process played out in Libya in recent years has contributed to a rethinking of the dynamics of civil resistance, but also foreign interventions. A question for scholars and policy-makers alike is to what degree the Libya situation has spurred normative turns of principles, such as R2P and more general humanitarian benevolences. Another question is to what degree experiences in Libya have created a need to think more strategically about comprehensive approaches and post-intervention reconstruction efforts. Finally, there are questions about a growing role for regional arrangements. While Libya is unique, as are all conflicts, conclusions are likely to be drawn from the Libyan case for use in future conflicts. Thus, battle scenes like Syria, Iraq and Ukraine will undoubtedly be used to test the applicability and sustainability of the lessons drawn from Libya.

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