

The International Intervention in Libya

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the world has been characterized mostly by intrastate rather than interstate conflicts. Yet, and despite the “outlawing” of the use of force in international law, we are still witnessing wars and aggressions in the international arena. While few classical wars have been conducted, the new “trend” for intervening is by gathering support through a coalition of states willing to get involved for a “superior” or “justifiable” cause. Such was the situation for the war against Afghanistan in 2001 where the armed operations were launched by the United States and the United Kingdom following the events of 9/11. The operations were later carried on by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led security mission that was authorized by the United Nations (UN) Security Council (UN 2001). While Afghanistan was considered as a legitimate war and as an example of multilateral cooperation – where more than a dozen countries participated – that was not the case for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Indeed, the Iraq war was the target of substantial amount of criticism from the international community, some critics considering it to be a unilaterally preemptive American war. It was also judged as illegal (BBC 2004) and lacking solid justifications (unlike the intervention in Afghanistan which was based on the self-defense argument).

What about the current intervention in Libya? On March 19th 2011, France was the first to intervene and to strike Gaddafi's military forces under the international military operation in Libya, operation “Odyssey Dawn” (France Info 2011); and was later followed by the British and the Americans. The operation is currently under the command of NATO. But

why Libya in particular? It is true that after the successful events in Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011, Libya also started witnessing some domestic upheavals and revolts. Fearing an “Arab Spring” that might overthrow his forty-two-year rule of the country, Gaddafi chose to crush the unrest by the use of violence. Facing this situation, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1973 to protect civilians (UN 2011) and consequently, allowed the launch of Operation Odyssey Dawn in order to enforce and support this resolution.

This intervention succeeded in gathering strong international support. However, and as was the case for Iraq, there was no direct act of aggression from Libya against any of the intervening countries. Therefore, what makes this intervention different from the highly criticized war in Iraq? If the reason is purely in order to protect the population, one cannot help but ask why we are intervening in Libya when we failed to intervene in Darfur or even Rwanda, where genocide was committed? In light of the recent events, these questions entail others. As a matter of fact, the events occurring in Libya were considered as matters of internal sovereignty and within the authority of the Libyan authorities. And yet, the intervention occurred. Which international norms and values allow a violation of the national sovereignty of a state? Furthermore, with the UN-backed resolution, it can be said that the intervention was legal, but it is uncertain whether it was legitimate. Finally, if the coalition was intervening to protect civilians and on the plea of humanitarian intervention; can this kind of intervention really be free and independent from states’ national interests?

To answer all these questions, my argument will be divided in four parts in order to underline the importance of issue framing and international agenda-setting for such interventions. First, I will explore the legal grounds of the intervention to understand through which means the intervention was allowed and made legal. This section will mostly be an analysis of relevant articles within the UN Charter. Second, I will go through the concepts of “Humanitarian Intervention:” how it emerged, and how it led to the doctrine known as the “Responsibility to Protect” (or commonly called R2P). I will further analyze how this doctrine became embedded in the mentality of international diplomacy, as well as its importance for framing the current military intervention. Third, I will analyze

the role of the media in shaping public opinion and perception. I will try to understand how media coverage of the Libyan events influence how people think about a topic and how it affected decision-making and agenda-setting. Finally, I will examine the political will and international leadership that emerged through the crisis and whether domestic politics play a role in shaping international policies. This section will be divided in two parts, which will mainly focus on the French President and his tenacity and perseverance to secure an intervention, and on the American rationale and Barack Obama's reticence in engaging his country in another war.

Legal Grounds of the Intervention

The UN Charter was drafted after World War II to promote world peace and security as well as economic and social cooperation, as well as guidelines for the settlement of disputes, among other objectives. The main purpose of the establishment of the UN was to guarantee world order, and avoid the events that led to the outbreak of World War II and its atrocities.

The purposes of the organization are stated in the first two articles of the Charter. Indeed, Article 1 stipulates that "the purposes of the United Nations are: to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which lead to a breach of the peace" (UN 1945). However, to constrain member states from interpreting broadly the terms "threats to peace," and from using the collective security clause extensively or when they see it fit, Article 2 forbids member states to intervene in "matters within the domestic jurisdiction of any state", except for the "application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII" (UN 1945). Moreover, the term "aggression" was purposely used by the authors of the Charter: by using that broad term, they were ensuring that any act or use of force would be outlawed, without playing on the semantics.

Chapter VII of the Charter was considered the core that would give the Organization – especially the members of the Security Council – the power and the tools to guarantee the objectives of the Charter. Articles 39 to 51 indicate the measures to be implemented in situations of breach of peace and acts of aggression. The two most important articles are article 41 and 42. The first indicates the measures not involving the use of armed force and refers largely to the use of time to economic and diplomatic sanctions. As for article 42, it stipulates that in case of failure of measures adopted under article 41, the Security Council “may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations” (UN 1945). This article has usually been translated as the authorization of the use of force in cases of breach.

Looking at these legal foundations, the upheavals happening in Libya can be categorized as matters of internal and domestic affairs, which would legally exclude any intervention. Moreover, examining the Libyan crisis, pre-intervention, nothing indicated an act of aggression against another state or a direct threat to international security that would justify an exception to the aforementioned Article 2. Yet, the Security Council adopted under article 41 the Resolution 1970 to impose non-military measures on the Libyan regime. It condemns the use of lethal force by the Gaddafi regime against protesters and civilians, and imposes international sanctions such as travel bans for members of the regime, and assets freezings of Gaddafi’s family (UN 2011a). Shortly after, the Security Council adopted under Article 42, resolution 1973 and authorized member states “acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements, to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of the Libyan territory” (UN 2011).

Hence, while the legality of the intervention has been established thanks to both resolutions, the reasons invoked for such an intervention do not fall in any of the categories stated in the Charter. Indeed, the actions committed against civilians are

serving as basis for intervention. Therefore, are actions against civilians becoming the justification for this new interpretation of Chapter VII? The following section will explore the legitimacy of the intervention and the concepts that helped achieve this legitimacy. The principle of humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect “Never Again!” That was the international consensus in the 1990s following the events in Somalia, the Rwandan genocide and the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia (Evans and Sahnoun 2002, 99).

After these events, a debate started to emerge about whether interventions should be allowed on human rights and humanitarian grounds. Indeed, too little too late was done to prevent these events. They also highlighted the “inability of the community of states to prevent these horrors. In this new century, there must be no more Rwandas” (Evans and Sahnoun 2002, 99). Consequently, the concept of “humanitarian intervention” started emerging in international debates and referred to a military action against a state to protect its people and end human rights violations. Indeed, human rights began to gain more and more importance on the international scene as well as the concept of human security, which challenges the Westphalian concept of an international system where states are the only actors. At the same time, the Canadian government established the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) that published in December 2001 the “Responsibility to Protect” report. This report was a keystone for the formulation of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine.

This doctrine, in the words of Evans and Sahnoun, two of its founding authors, “implies a duty to react to situations in which there is a compelling need for protection” (Evans and Sahnoun 2002, 99). It also allows the use of coercive measures and military action to protect populations in four situations: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity (International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect 2011). However, Evans and Sahnoun further argued that six core principles must be satisfied to justify a military intervention: a just cause, the right intention, the intervention must be a measure of last resort, it should be authorized by the right authority, it must be undertaken in proportional means, and it must have reasonable chance and prospects of

success (Evans and Sahnoun 2002, 99). But how did this doctrine become embedded in international diplomatic mentalities? In his article on the UN, NGOs and women's rights, Jutta Joachim argues that it's all a question of "issue framing and seizing opportunities." According to her, there are three phases for the agenda-setting process at the UN level: "the problem stream in which unacceptable situations are identified; the policy stream, which contains solutions generated not necessarily in response to a particular problem; and the politics stream carrying motivations and justifications for political action" (Joachim 2003, 250). Moreover, she stresses the importance of access to international institutions, the presence of powerful allies and the mobilizing structures they have at their disposal (Joachim 2003, 248). With regards to R2P, the events of the 1990s helped identify and define the problem. Furthermore, the role of the ICISS was crucial. Indeed, thanks to its report and its extensive consultations with NGOs, the ICISS managed to mobilize civil society organizations in order to politicize the issue, and "strengthen both the capacity and political will of the international community to respond more effectively to newly emerging crises involving the potential for large scale loss of life" (World Federalist Movement Institute for Global Policy 2003). R2P managed to catch the attention of then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan who understood the seriousness of the issue and the efforts needed in order to avoid further inaction. Consequently, the ICISS and various civil society actors managed to mobilize a very powerful ally on the international scene who also wanted to "include protection from genocide as part of his UN reform agenda" (International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect 2011). For that purpose, he formed a high-level panel in 2005 that led to the organization of the 2005 World Summit and the unanimous adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution embodying the principle of the Responsibility to Protect. Thus, being approved by all member states of the UN, this resolution helped the Responsibility to Protect emerge as an international norm (Joachim 2003, 248).

The adoption of such a resolution would not have been possible without the engagement of the Canadian government and the advocacy work undertaken firstly by the ICISS and NGOs, and secondly by Kofi Annan. Being the Secretary General of the UN, he helped convince and commit member states to this principle, and proved to be an

invaluable resource for the pursuit of such a normative change at the international level (Joachim 2003, 251). This political opportunity provided by Annan helped the issue gain acceptance and legitimacy.

But what about Libya? The UN resolution 1973 is considered as an embodiment of the Responsibility to Protect. Indeed, the resolution stipulates that member states are authorized to “take all necessary measures to protect civilians,” and states the “responsibility of the Libyan authorities to protect the Libyan population” (UN 2011). Hence, it is a clear illustration of the integration of R2P into the collective conscience, and of how Chapter VII of the Charter can be invoked for the protection of civilians. It also explains how domestic abuses within a state’s jurisdiction can allow the exception mentioned in Article 2, Paragraph 7. Hence, in Michael Doyle’s words, “in passing RtoP, the Security Council helped bridge the gap between the so-called legitimate (ethically justifiable) and legal (legally authorized) intervention” (Doyle 2011). The Security Council also broadened the scope of “acts of aggression” to include aggressions against civilians. Consequently, with the international media broadcasting the events, with Ban Ki-Moon – the current UN Secretary General – reporting the deaths of civilians on a large scale (UN Centre d’Actualités de l’ONU 2011), and with the embedment of the Responsibility to Protect as a legitimate norm and value, the current intervention in Libya succeeded in being both legal and legitimate, and in gathering international support.

As previously mentioned, six principles must be satisfied to justify a military intervention under humanitarian grounds. In the case of Libya, some experts argue that five are met: first, civilians faced serious threat of large-scale loss of life through a deliberate state action. Second, the purpose of the intervention was intended to end human suffering. Thirdly, a military intervention should have been the last resort. Indeed, after the sanctions of resolution 1970 proved to be ineffective in stopping Gaddafi’s attacks on his own citizens, military intervention became justified. Next, the intervention had to have been authorized by the right authority: the UN through the Security Council. Fifth, the proportional means principle was guaranteed due to the imposition of the no-fly zone and absence of ground battle forces. As for the sixth principle, the prospects of success: at the outset, the situation indicated nothing else than uncertainty (Patrick

2011), and the prospects of a long war given the intervention's vague objectives (Presseurop 2011). Nevertheless, and despite the presence of the required elements and principles, the ultimate source of legitimacy was international support (Patrick 2011). The next section will look at the role of the media in gathering international support and in shaping public opinion.

The Role of the Media

Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, news channels and networks broadcasted the events occurring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, and many others, and globalization made the dissemination of information easier than ever before. The most recent example was the live broadcasting on the internet of Hussein Mubarak's (Egypt's ousted president) final speech on Al Jazeera live.

Without a doubt, the media have been a major actor in the Libyan crisis. It has continuously reported the events since the beginning, broadcasting Gaddafi's sons' speeches as well as Gaddafi's public appearances and interventions. Every step of the intervention has been relayed by the media. According to Bernard-Henri Lévy, the French philosopher who successfully convinced President Sarkozy to react to the Libyan events (Willsher 2011), acknowledged the importance of mediatization for transparency purposes (Le Monde 2011). Nevertheless, mediatization is a double-edged sword that not only helped report Gaddafi's actions, but that also recognized and highlighted the coalition's mistakes and states' ulterior motives as we will see in the next section.

It is true that this war is considered by many to be a "just war," (Presseurop 2011) and the media significantly contributed to this consideration. In a study on international agenda-building and agenda-setting, Kiouisis and Wu write that "media concern with objects in the news is a key determinant of their perceived salience in public opinion" (Kiouisis and Wu 2008, 59). Indeed, they argue that news and media coverage of an issue can influence "how people think about a topic by selecting and placing emphasis on certain attributes and ignoring others" (Kiouisis and Wu 2008, 59). Since February, the media reported Gaddafi's regime as orchestrating massacres and assassinations, as using torture

and mercenaries, as well as launching systemic attacks on the population. Gaddafi's infamous pledge, "No mercy, no pity" for rebels went around the world and portrayed Gaddafi as a ruthless tyrant. Even Gaddafi's son, Saif al-Islam, who is also known to be the reformer among the Gaddafi family, became infamous thanks to his televised speech in which he said "the regime would fight to the last man against the uprising" (al-Ameri 2011). It should be noted that the Libyan leader has often attracted the press' criticism with his well-know outrageous behaviour and for his responsibility behind the Lockerbie bombings.

These pejorative portraits of Gaddafi further prove Kiouisis and Wu's findings about the effects of the tone used in news reporting (Kiouisis and Wu 2008, 60). Gaddafi has historically been a subject of negative coverage. Moreover, Al Jazeera became the reference in reporting what is happening in the Arab world. It has been explicitly supporting the Arab revolutions and the Libyan rebels. Nonetheless, due to its financial dependence on the Qatari regime, it has been more silent regarding the uprisings in Bahrain and in Syria (Talon 2011). Therefore, by covering certain events more than others, the events in Libya became more salient to the international community and later helped promote the way in which the intervention was framed. That was especially done by calling the attention on this particular country, by adding some moral evaluation to it, and above all, by spreading the rebels' call for an international intervention. Consequently, framing the Libyan situation as a humanitarian crisis helped agenda-setting thanks to the salience of the issue in the media.

An additional argument to the support of the intervention is the findings of Wanta et al. In their study on media influence on public perceptions, they found that media coverage of nations affects individuals' perceptions of these nations. They concluded that greater negative media coverage about foreign nations is associated with greater negative attitudes and perceptions towards those nations (Wanta et al 2004, 372). In consequence, the availability of negative information combined with the accepted moral value of the protection of civilian helped generating unfavourable public opinion about Gaddafi on one hand; and compassion as well as the need to "save" the Libyan

population from its dictator on the other. Polls conducted in France at the time of intervention showed that 63 per cent of the French and 55 per cent of Americans approved the intervention of the international coalition (Courtois 2011).

The media had and continues to have an important role in making an issue salient and in gathering support to legitimize the action. But the media can also be used for instrumentalist purposes. As stated before, two of the core principles of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine are the presence of a just cause and of the right intention for intervening. The members of the coalition have met these two requirements but one cannot help and wonder whether the “right intention” is masking other intentions. In that case, the media would be painting a picture of heroes fighting a villain, without considering other calculations happening behind the scenes. Or, as Evans and Sahnoun noted, “these days good international citizenship is a matter of national self-interest (Evans and Sahnoun 2002)”

An Altruistic Intervention?

In their formulation of the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine, Evans and Sahnoun argued that the six principles might be present in certain situations, however, an intervention will always be contingent on states’ and global players’ will to act. The most important risk for humanitarian violations is inaction: it is one thing not to be allowed to do something (despite the fact that it does not always impede states from acting unilaterally as was the case in the 2003 invasion of Iraq); it is another not wanting to do it. Hence, the “Never Again!” formula becomes irrelevant: the Security Council could authorize collective measures but that does not guarantee that any action will be taken or implemented (Evans and Sahnoun 2002). Accordingly, leadership becomes a condition sine qua non to ensure states’ commitments to the humanitarian actions. Logistical and financial constraints might put a significant strain on states’ capacity and capability to act. But the one of the major obstacles remains domestic politics and the national political environment of a country. This section will firstly examine the reasons behind the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy’s strong leadership in securing the UN Resolution. Secondly, it will analyze the US President Barack Obama’s policy, and the motivations behind his

discreet voice and presence regarding Libya.

A Quest for Grandeur?

France has incontestably played an important role in the decision-making process of the intervention in Libya. Indeed, the Franco-English couple has been advocating for an intervention before any other country. After thorough diplomatic exchanges and negotiations, it managed to secure their allies support in order to adopt resolution 1973, without the risk of any veto from any of the three other permanent members of the Security Council. As soon as the resolution was adopted, the French were the first to intervene and bomb targets to secure the no-fly zone over Libya. They were also the most virulent opponent of a handling of operations to NATO.

For many observers, the Libyan intervention was above all “une guerre à la Française,” that seeks to re-establish France as a Great Power, and to restore the country’s prestige in the world, and, more specifically, in the Arab world (Presseurop 2011). As a matter of fact, Sarkozy is in line with General de Gaulle’s ideology in the “pursuit of grandeur, the primary *raison d’être* of a head of state” (Goldhammer 2011). But his push for the adoption of the resolution can be seen as a reaction to both external and internal forces. From intermediating in the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, to the release of Ingrid Betancourt from the Colombian FARC guerrillas, Sarkozy has been avid, from the beginning of his term, for diplomatic successes, especially personal ones. Another example goes back to 2007, when he succeeded in negotiating the release of the Bulgarian nurses who were accused of infecting Libyan children with HIV. Following this success, and despite criticism from his close circle, Sarkozy invited Gaddafi to Paris and tried to convince him to join his project, the Union pour la Méditerranée, but without any success. Although Sarkozy was disappointed by the failure of the Union, one of the motives for sponsoring military action against Gaddafi was less a personal vendetta. Rather, it could be perceived as more a desire to save face following some of his Cabinet members’ scandals regarding their close ties and links with the ousted Tunisian president, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali (Goldhammer 2011).

The other motive is France’s upcoming presidential election in 2012. His party had

been crushed in the cantonal elections and his popularity was at its lowest: around 30% approved him as president (Le Nouvel Observateur 2011). According to Goldhammer, “a leader who takes his country to war will always be suspected of seeking advantage at the polls” (Goldhammer 2011). Playing with French values and patriotism, especially with regards to human rights, might have revived French pride, for which Sarkozy will certainly take credit.

Despite all these motivations, Sarkozy’s official motive remains the perfectly legal and legitimate humanitarian one. However, the reality is that France and Great Britain would not have engaged in a military intervention without the agreement and the support of the United States. Even though the French took the leadership position that is usually occupied by the U.S., the reality was that they did not have the full military capability for the whole intervention.

Obama the European?

The American government was silent during the preparatory phases for the intervention in Libya. Rather than meeting with his French and English counterparts, President Obama visited Latin America to promote and reinforce ties between the two Americas. It was at the last minute, and with the increasing urgency of the situation that the US gave their approval for an intervention. To most observers, even the American public opinion, the White House stance on Libya was unknown, or even uncertain. The media depicted this war as a war for oil. In the face of such a mystery, the media can only speculate and shape the issue as it appears to them. However, Libya supplies little hydrocarbon to the United States. Additionally, Robert Gates, the Secretary of Defence, stated that the U.S. does not have any real interests in that region (Landler 2011). So why did the United States tiptoe into this intervention? Obama’s considerations can be broken down in both domestic and international terms, like Sarkozy’s.

The US initial nonchalance on Libya had domestic roots. First, the United States was still present in Afghanistan. Indeed, it is now one of the longest wars in American history, and nothing seems to indicate a near end for the conflict. Next, Iraq post-invasion was

not faring much better: suffering from civil strife and rises in insecurity. So engaging in another war did not appear to be a rational decision, especially when vital interests were not at stake. Furthermore, the United States continues to face one of the most important public deficits in their history. Latest numbers estimate the American debt to be around 14, 400 billion dollars, which is more than a hundred per cent of their Gross Domestic Product (Le Monde 2011a). These numbers show that the United States is on the verge of debt spiral that might severely affect its economy and that might drive it back to recession. Moreover, the presidential elections are approaching, and if Obama wants to have a chance in being re-elected, his focus must be firstly on what's happening in his own country. Consequently, going for more defence spending does not really look like a viable political option for President Obama. He "can no longer afford to play global policeman alone" (Landler 2011).

On the international scene, Obama, since the beginning of his term, rejected the interventionist and unilateral policies of his predecessor. But with the international community urging action and with French and British willingness and determination, Obama finally decided to step in. President Obama's entourage may also have played a role for the U.S. involvement. Such women as Susan Rice (the UN ambassador), Samantha Power, Gayle Smith (two national security advisers), and Hillary Clinton are believed to be "haunted" by the Rwandan and the Bosnian massacres since they also held senior positions during these two episodes. Pushed by the "Never Again!" motto, journalists argue that these women diplomats – or the "Valkyries" as they are being called – are the "hawks" of the Administration, and the ones "urging President Obama to man up against the crazy Gaddafi" (Landler 2011).

Nevertheless, before participating in the coalition, the United States wanted to ensure that the intervention was as multilateral as it could possibly be, and that no ground troops would be sent. This could be seen through the control of commands of the operations being held by NATO as a way of ensuring further multilateralism, and of sharing the burden and the costs with the rest of the international community (especially reluctant countries such as Canada who would not intervene without NATO's involvement).

Indeed, the U.S. involvement was highly criticized and a fear of engaging in a long and costly war was among the main concerns. But the situation in 2011 is different from 2003. Firstly, the intervention has the Arab countries' support (which was done through a condemnation of the Libyan actions) (UN 2011a) and countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are even participating in the operations (Le Monde 2011b). Gaining that endorsement from the Arab League was a key point for the American engagement. Secondly, live broadcasting, especially by Al Jazeera, as well as the clear evidence of massacres made the intervention even more necessary. Furthermore, the US concerns were overarching across other Gulf countries, including Bahrain (Landler and Cooper 2011). The Gulf region, where U.S. military bases are widely present, has been an important region for the U.S. national interest since the early 1900s, especially in regards to energy security.

But the most important consideration remains the American image and the considerable Anti-American sentiment in the Middle East. Obama, by stepping down from the leadership role and by ensuring both UN and Arab League endorsement, sought to avoid the perception of an American-led intervention, going to war for the third time against a Muslim country (Bergen 2011). However, it is worth noting that if the United States had not intervened, it would have shown the international community a very selective way of promoting democracy and human rights, and would have negatively affected the U.S. image. Consequently, the relationship between the United States and France proved to be a "marriage of convenience" (Landler 2011) where a reluctant Obama was followed Sarkozy as he stepped into the leader's role regarding Libya. Both were partly driven by political calculations and by a desire of re-establishing a certain image on the world stage.

Conclusion

The international intervention in Libya is different from the invasion of Iraq in 2003. While both fighting dictators, the current intervention succeeded in gaining legality and legitimacy due to the UN resolutions, Arab countries' support, the Responsibility to Protect Doctrine, and strong international support. This intervention also highlighted

the importance of framing. On one hand, the role of the ICISS and civil society seized the window of opportunity that opened after the Rwandan and Bosnian episodes, and succeeded in mobilizing support from senior officials and influential world figures to put the concept of Responsibility to Protect on the UN agenda. These organizations clearly contributed in the emergence of a new norm and of “internationally shared understandings” (Joachim 2003, 268). Framing of that concept, as well as the process of framing it, were essential in legitimizing humanitarian interventions: state sovereignty was no longer “a licence for a dictator to murder his citizens” (Patrick 2011). On the other hand, framing the Libyan campaign itself as a commitment to the principle of the Responsibility to Protect proved to be the key element, if not the only one, gathering support and authorization from the right moral authority, that is, the UN, the institutional body representing the international community.

Nevertheless, the escalation of events in Libya display how framing can easily be manipulated and modified. The original intent of the intervention was to help civilians but declarations from the French, British and American governments are increasingly and subsequently hinted at the ousting of Gaddafi – a complete regime change – for the success of the intervention, thus stepping outside the original mandate of the UN resolution (Le Monde 2011c). Responsibility to protect was intended to save civilians but it increasingly seemed that it took a political aspect and stepped aside from the main objective of helping the Libyans take control of their own affairs without foreign intervention or presence. Consequently, this begs the question, is the Responsibility to Protect opening the door for a new kind imperialism, the “Humanitarian Imperialism?” (Wente 2011). Additionally, are we going to see more interventions on humanitarian bases? Does it mean that the international community will increasingly intervene on the grounds of RtoP? Not necessarily. Securing a UN resolution is not simple considering the omnipresent chance of a veto vote by one of the five permanent members of the Security Council. Moreover, guaranteeing both the legality and the legitimacy of an action is difficult. But still, two things are certain. First, as Doyle noted, “the intervention in Libya is sure to shape how RtoP is applied in the future” (Doyle 2011), and second, there is no such thing as impartial intervention (Betts 1994) free from states’ selfish interests.

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