



Whitehall Report 1-12

Short War, Long Shadow

The Political and Military Legacies of the 2011 Libya Campaign

Edited by Adrian Johnson and Saqeb Mueen

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFRICOM	Africa Command (US)
AOC	Air and Space Operation Center
AQIM	Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb
ATO	Air Tasking Order
AWACS	Airborne warning and control
CAOC	Combined Air and Space Operation Center
EBO	Effects-based operations
GPS	Global Positioning System
HQ	Headquarters
ISR	Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance
ISTAR	Intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance
JSTARS	Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System
LIDAR	Light Detection And Ranging
MoD	Ministry of Defence (UK)
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEO	Non-combatant evacuation operation
NSS	National Security Strategy
NTC	National Transitional Council
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RAF	Royal Air Force
RFTG	Response Force Task Group
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAV	Unmanned aerial vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force



Map No. 3787 Rev. 6 United Nations
September 2011

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

Map courtesy of the UN Cartographic Division

Timeline of Events

Compiled by Grant Turnbull

17 February 2011	Celebrated in Libya as beginning of revolution against Colonel Qadhafi
18–24 February	<p>Qadhafi fighters are forced out of Benghazi</p> <p>Rebels in Misrata fight against government forces beginning the siege of the city</p> <p>Zawiyah, to the west of Tripoli, also falls to rebel forces</p>
23 February	British begin evacuation of nationals across Libya using chartered aircraft, military planes and ships
26 February	UN Resolution 1970 passed imposing arms embargo and freezing Qadhafi family assets
3 March	The International Criminal Court (ICC) confirms it is investigating the Qadhafi regime for crimes against humanity
5 March	The National Transitional Council (NTC), the rebel's political body, holds its first meeting in Benghazi
6 March	Loyalist forces begin counter-offensive, rebels lose Ras Lanuf and Brega, west of Benghazi
8 March	NATO deploy AWACS aircraft to monitor movements in Libyan airspace
10 March	<p>Qadhafi forces retake Zawiyah</p> <p>France recognises the NTC as the legitimate government of Libya</p> <p>The African Union reject foreign military intervention in Libya</p> <p>Qadhafi counter-offensive continues towards rebel-held Benghazi</p>
12 March	Arab league vote in favour of supporting a UN-backed no-fly zone in Libya

17 March	UN Resolution 1973 passes authorising a no-fly zone over Libya – China, Russia, Germany, India and Brazil abstain
19 March	<p>Operation <i>Odyssey Dawn</i> begins with deployment of US, British and French military assets under command of US Africa Command (AFRICOM). The British element is named Operation <i>Ellamy</i></p> <p>The first RAF Tornado aircraft arrive at Gioia del Colle airbase in Italy</p>
20 March	<p>Rebels stage a second offensive from Benghazi</p> <p>RAF Typhoon aircraft arrive at Gioia del Colle airbase</p>
25 March	<p>NATO agrees to take over command of enforcing no-fly zone</p> <p>Fierce fighting in Ajdabiya leads to rebel victory, as they push towards Brega, Ras Lanuf and Bin Jawad</p>
31 March	NATO takes sole command of no-fly zone under Operation <i>Unified Protector</i>
7 April	Qadhafi forces go on the offensive and retake Brega beginning a stalemate between the opposing forces
19–20 April	<p>The UK, Italy and France announce they will send small number of military advisors to improve rebel organisation and communications, but deny they will train or arm them</p> <p>Two photojournalists, Tim Hetherington and Chris Hondros, are killed in Misrata by loyalist shelling</p>
30 April	NATO bombing in Tripoli kills Qadhafi's youngest son and three grandchildren
4 June	First strikes by Apache attack helicopters near the town of Brega
27 June	<p>The ICC issues an arrest warrant for Colonel Qadhafi for crimes against humanity. His son, Saif al-Islam and intelligence chief Abdullah al-Sanussi is also wanted by the ICC</p> <p>The NATO air campaign enters its hundredth day</p>
29 June	French military officials confirm that weapons have been air-dropped to rebels in the Nafusa mountain region

27 July	The UK recognises the NTC as 'sole government authority' in Libya and expels remaining Qadhafi diplomats in London
1 August	West of Misrata on the road to Tripoli, rebels enter Zlitan in a renewed offensive
14–15 August	<p>Rebels capture Sorman and Sabratha, west of Tripoli and continue fighting for Zawiyah</p> <p>Main supply lines from Tunisia to Tripoli are cut</p> <p>Rebels in the Nafusa mountain region reportedly control Gharyan and Tiji</p>
20 August	Rebels push into Tripoli with three-pronged assault, Operation <i>Mermaid Dawn</i>
23 August	Qadhafi's main compound is stormed by rebels in Bab al-Azizia, signifying the fall of Tripoli
1 September	<p>Sixty-three nations attend the Paris Summit aimed at reconciliation among rival rebel factions</p> <p>EU announces that it is lifting sanctions on twenty-eight entities to boost Libya's economy</p> <p>Russia formally recognises the NTC</p>
16 September	The UN Security Council unanimously adopt Resolution 2009 authorising the mandate for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya
21 September	Operation <i>Unified Protector</i> extended ninety days while fierce fighting continues in Qadhafi stronghold Sirte
20 October	Qadhafi is captured and killed while fleeing his hometown of Sirte
31 October	NATO Secretary General announces the end of a 'successful' mission while visiting Tripoli

Table of Military Assets

Compiled by Joanne Mackowski

Country	Combat Assets	Non-Combat Assets	Personnel
Belgium	Air: 6x F-16AM Fighting Falcons (4 active, 2 reserve) Air-to-air and air-to-ground loadout Maritime: 2x <i>Tripartite</i> -class minehunter <i>Narcis</i> (23 Mar–24 Jul) <i>Lobelia</i> (12 Aug onwards)	N/A	157
Bulgaria	1x <i>Wielingen</i> -class frigate <i>Drazki</i> (1–31 May)	N/A	160
Canada	Air: 7x CF-18 Hornet (6 active, 1 reserve) Maritime: 2x <i>Halifax</i> -class frigate (with 1x CH-124 Sea King helicopter) <i>Charlottetown</i> (until 18 Aug) <i>Vancouver</i> (18 Aug onwards)	Air: 2x C-17 Globemaster III ¹ 2x CC-150 Polaris aerial refuelling tanker 2x CC-130 Hercules aerial refuelling tanker ² 2x CC-130J Super Hercules transporter ³ 2x CP-140 Aurora maritime patrol craft 72x personnel of Task Force Malta for NEO	2,561
Croatia	N/A	2x Air Force/Air Defence officers	2
Denmark	6x F-16 AM Fighting Falcons (4 active, 2 reserve)	1x C-130J Super Hercules transport, based in Denmark	86
France	Air: 8x Rafale F3 with Reco NG pods ⁴ 4x Mirage 2000-5 (until Jul) 8x Mirage 2000D (from Apr) 6x Mirage 2000N (from May) 2x Mirage F1CT (from Jul) 2x companies Air Commando Parachute units No. 20 and 30 Maritime: 1x Aircraft carrier <i>Charles de Gaulle</i> (until 12 Aug): 8x Rafale M 6x Super Étendard Modernisé 2x E-2C Hawkeye 2x Dauphin Pedro helicopter 1x Alouette III helicopter 1x French Air Force Puma helicopter 2x French Air Force Caracal transport helicopter 2x <i>Mistral</i> -class amphibious assault helicopter carrier <i>Mistral</i> <i>Tonnerre</i> 20x (total, both ships) French Army helicopters comprising: ⁶ Aérospatiale Gazelle Eurocopter Tiger Eurocopter Puma 2x <i>Horizon</i> -class destroyer (each with Eurocopter Panther) <i>Chevalier Paul</i> <i>Forbin</i> 3x <i>La Fayette</i> -class stealth frigate <i>La Fayette</i> <i>Courbet</i> <i>Aconit</i>	Air: 2x Mirage F1CR (from Jul) C-130 Hercules tanker ⁵ 6x C135 aerial refueller ?x C-160 Transall transporter ⁵ ?x CN-235 transporter ⁵ ?x E-3F Sentry platform ⁵ Harfang UAV (from 18 Aug) Air bases: Avord Dijon Istres-Le Tubé Nancy-Ochey Saint-Dizier-Robinson Solenzara Maritime: 2x <i>Durance</i> -class fleet oil replenishment tanker <i>Meuse</i> <i>Marne</i> 1x <i>Rubis</i> -class nuclear attack submarine <i>Améthyst</i> 2x Atlantique 2 signals intelligence aircraft	4,200

Country	Combat Assets	Non-Combat Assets	Personnel
France (cont)	2x <i>Cassard</i> -class (Type F70 AA) anti-air frigate <i>Cassard</i> <i>Jean Bart</i> (until 2 Apr) 3x <i>Georges Leygues</i> -class anti-submarine frigate <i>Dupleix</i> <i>Georges Leygues</i> <i>Jean de Vienne</i> 3x <i>D'Estienne d'Orves</i> -class Aviso <i>LV Le Hénaff</i> <i>LV Lavallée</i> <i>LV Commandant Birot</i> 1x <i>Vulcain</i> -class <i>Achéron</i>		
Greece	Maritime: 1x <i>Hydra</i> -class frigate <i>Hydra</i>	Air: 4x C-130 for NEO 1x Super Puma search-and-rescue helicopter 1x Embraer R-99A (145) Air bases: Aktion National Airport Andravida Araxsos National Airport Suda	
Italy	Air: 4x Tornado ECR with RecceLite pods 4x F-16A Fighting Falcon (until start of <i>Unified Protector</i>) 4x Eurofighter Typhoon (from start of <i>Unified Protector</i>) 4x AMXs (Ghibli) with RecceLite pods 8x AV-8B Harrier II 4x AW101 Merlin ⁷ Storm Shadow cruise missiles Maritime: 1x CVS-class light aircraft carrier <i>Giuseppe Garibaldi</i> (until 26 Jul) 8x AV-8B Harrier II 4x AW101 Merlin helicopter Boarding teams from the San Marco Regiment 2x <i>Maestrali</i> -class frigate ⁸ <i>Euro</i> (until 30 Jul) <i>Libeccio</i> (until 25 May) 1x <i>Horizon</i> -class destroyer <i>Andrea Doria</i> (until 1 Apr) 1x <i>Artigliere</i> -class frigate <i>Bersagliere</i> (30 Jul–30 Sep) 2x amphibious assault ship ¹⁰ <i>San Marco</i> (22 Feb–7 Apr) <i>San Giusto</i> (from 27 Jul) 2x <i>Comandante</i> -class offshore patrol vessel ⁸ <i>Comandante Bettica</i> (until 10 May) <i>Comandante Borsini</i> (9–31 May) 1x <i>Sauro</i> -class submarine <i>Gazzana</i> (30 Aug–22 Oct) 1x U212A-class submarine <i>Todaro</i> (13 Jun–24 Aug)	Air: 4x Tornado IDS (aerial refuelling role) 1x KC-130J aerial refueller 1x KC-767A tanker transporter 1x G.222VS transporter 1x Predator B UAV AB 212 helicopter for SAR SH-3 Sea King for SAR Air bases: Amendola Decimomannu Gioia del Colle Pantelleria Airport Trapani-Birgi Maritime: 1x <i>Etna</i> -class auxiliary ship <i>Etna</i> (until 1 Jun) 1x <i>Durand de la Penne</i> -class destroyer for NEO <i>Francesco Mimbelli</i> (until 1 Mar) 1x <i>Stromboli</i> -class fleet replenishment ship <i>Vesuvio</i> (until 1 Jul) 1x <i>Cassiopea</i> -class offshore patrol vessel <i>Libra</i> (5–9 Mar, 16–22 Mar) 1x amphibious assault ship for NEO ⁹ <i>San Giorgio</i> (until 8 Mar)	4,800
Jordan	6x F-16 Fighting Falcon	C-130 Hercules transport for NEO ⁵	30
NATO	N/A	E-3 Sentry platforms ¹¹ Poggio Renatico CAOC-5 (Italy)	
Netherlands	Air: 6x F-16 AM Fighting Falcon (4 active, 2 reserve) Maritime: 2x Tripartite-class minehunter <i>Haarlem</i> (until 23 Sep) <i>Vlaardingen</i> (from Sep)	Air: 1x KDC-10 aerial refueller 1x C130 Hercules transporter Maritime: 1x <i>De Zeven Provinciën</i> -class frigate for NEO <i>Tromp</i> 1x SH-14D Lynx helicopter	500 ¹²

Country	Combat Assets	Non-Combat Assets	Personnel
Norway	6x F-16 AM Fighting Falcon ¹³	2x C130-J-30 transporter	130
Qatar	6x Mirage 2000-SEDA	2x C-17 Globemaster III transporter	60
Romania	N/A	1x Type-22 Frigate <i>Regele Ferdinand</i> (from 26 Apr)	207
Spain	Air: 4x F/A-18 Hornets Air-to-air loadout Maritime: 3x <i>Álvaro de Bazán</i> -class frigate ¹⁴ (each with 1x SH60-B Seahawk helicopter, and 1x security task force EOS) <i>Almirante Juan de Borbón</i> <i>Álvaro de Bazán</i> <i>Méndez Núñez</i> 1x <i>Galerna</i> -class attack submarine <i>Tramontana</i> 1x <i>Agosta</i> -class attack submarine <i>Mistral</i>	1x 707-331B(KC) tanker 1x C-130 Hercules aerial refueller (from 20 Apr) 1x CN235 MPA maritime surveillance plane Air bases: Morón Torrejón	1,200
Sweden	8x JAS Gripen (reduced to 5x after 90 days)	1x C-130 Hercules aerial refueller (first 70 days only)	122
Turkey	6x F-16 Fighting Falcon	Air bases: Incirlik Izmir Air Station 3x G-class frigate <i>Giresun</i> <i>Gemlik</i> <i>Gaziantep</i> 1x <i>Yavuz</i> -class frigate <i>Yildirim</i> 1x <i>Akar</i> -class fleet support ship <i>Akar</i> 1x Type 209-class submarine <i>Yildiray</i>	Unknown
UAE	6x F-16 E/F Fighting Falcon 6x Mirage 2000-9	N/A	35
UK	Air: 16x Tornado GR4 6x Typhoon Storm Shadow cruise missiles Maritime: 1x Landing Platform Helicopter-class (amphibious assault ship) <i>Ocean</i> (from May) 5x Apache AH1 Army Air Corps helicopter (from 4 Jun) 2x Lynx Mk 7 helicopter 2x Sea King Mk 4 helicopter 1x Lynx Mk 8 helicopter 2x <i>Broadsword</i> -class Type 22 frigate <i>Cumberland</i> (until Feb) <i>Cornwall</i> (until Apr) 3x <i>Duke</i> -class Type 23 frigate <i>Iron Duke</i> <i>Sutherland</i> <i>Westminster</i> 2x <i>Sheffield</i> -class Type-42 destroyer <i>Liverpool</i> (from 9 Apr) <i>York</i> (until Feb) 1x <i>Sandown</i> -class minehunter <i>Bangor</i> 1x <i>Hunt</i> -class mine countermeasure vessel <i>Brocklesby</i> (until 22 Jun) 1x <i>Albion</i> -class landing platform dock <i>Albion</i> (from 27 May) 2x <i>Trafalgar</i> -class nuclear attack submarine <i>Triumph</i> <i>Turbulent</i>	Air: 1x Nimrod R1 signals intelligence aircraft 1x Sentinel R1 airborne standoff radar aircraft 2x Sentry AEW.1 AWACS 2x VC10 aerial refueller ³ TriStar K1 aerial refueller ^{3,5} TriStar KC1 aerial refueller ^{3,5} C-17 Globemaster III transporter ^{3,5} C-130J Hercules ^{3,5} HS 125/BAe 125 transporter ^{3,5} BAe 146 transporter ^{3,5} Air bases: Joint Force Air Component HQ, RAF Akrotiri (Cyprus) RAF Marham RAF Waddington Maritime: 1x <i>Fort Rosalie</i> -class replenishment ship <i>Fort Rosalie</i> 1x <i>Wave</i> -class fast fleet tanker <i>Wave Knight</i> 1x <i>Leaf</i> -class fleet support tanker <i>Orangeleaf</i> 1 x <i>Argus</i> -class casualty/aviation support ship <i>Argus</i>	3,500

Country	Combat Assets	Non-Combat Assets	Personnel
USA	<p>Air:</p> <p>6x A-10 Thunderbolt</p> <p>3x B-2 Spirit</p> <p>2x B-1B Lancer</p> <p>10x F-15E Strike Eagle</p> <p>8x F-16C Fighting Falcon</p> <p>2x AC-130U Spooky</p> <p>2x HH-60 Pave Hawk CSAR helicopter</p> <p>1x EC-130H Compass Call</p> <p>1x EC-130J Commando Solo</p> <p>Maritime:</p> <p>1x <i>Blue Ridge</i>-class amphibious command ship <i>Mount Whitney</i></p> <p>2x <i>Wasp</i>-class amphibious assault ship <i>Bataan</i></p> <p>6x AV-8B Harrier II</p> <p>4x AH-1W Cobra attack helicopter</p> <p><i>Kearsarge</i></p> <p>4x AV-8B Harrier II from 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit</p> <p>1x <i>Austin</i>-class amphibious transport dock <i>Ponce</i></p> <p>1x <i>San Antonio</i>-class amphibious transport dock <i>Mesa Verde</i></p> <p>1x <i>Whidbey Island</i>-class dock landing ship <i>Whidbey Island</i></p> <p>3x <i>Arleigh Burke</i>-class guided missile destroyer <i>Barry</i> <i>Mahan</i> <i>Stout</i></p> <p>2x <i>Los Angeles</i>-class nuclear attack submarine <i>Providence</i> <i>Scranton</i></p> <p>1x <i>Ohio</i>-class cruise missile submarine <i>Florida</i></p> <p>1x <i>Oliver Hazard Perry</i>-class frigate <i>Halyburton</i></p> <p>400+ Marines, 1st Battalion 2nd Marines</p> <p>2x MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft from 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit</p>	<p>Air:</p> <p>3x E-3 Sentry</p> <p>3x E-8C JSTARS</p> <p>1x RC-135V/W Rivet Joint</p> <p>4x KC-10A Extender refuelling tanker</p> <p>KC-135 Stratotanker aerial refueller</p> <p>2x MQ-1 Predator UAV</p> <p>1x Global Hawk UAV</p> <p>1x U-2</p> <p>Air bases:</p> <p>Ellsworth Air Force Base</p> <p>RAF Lakenheath (UK)</p> <p>RAF Mildenhall (UK)</p> <p>Spangdahlem Air Base (Germany)</p> <p>Sigonella Base (Italy)</p> <p>Aviano Air Base (Italy)</p> <p>Maritime:</p> <p>2x <i>Lewis and Clark</i>-class dry cargo ship <i>Lewis and Clark</i> <i>The Robert E Peary</i></p> <p>4x <i>Henry J Kaiser</i>-class oiler <i>Big Horn</i> <i>Kanawha</i> <i>John Lenthall</i> <i>Laramie</i></p> <p>5x EA-18G Growler</p> <p>1x EP-3E ELINT</p> <p>2x P-3C Update 3 maritime surveillance aircraft</p> <p>2x P-3C AIP maritime surveillance aircraft</p> <p>2x CH-53E Super Stallion cargo helicopter from 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit</p> <p>1x KC-130J Hercules from 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit</p> <p>Naval Station Rota (Spain)</p>	8,507

Source: All data are public domain. Where possible, data have been cross-checked with official sources.

Notes

1. C-17 dedicated to NEO evacuation. Thereafter, deployed as supporting assets when needed, but not dedicated to the Libyan operation.
2. Used during maintenance of CC-150, to maintain level of air-to-air tanking support.
3. Used in support, but not dedicated to the Libyan operation.
4. Reduced to 5, on 10 July 2011.
5. Numbers unknown.
6. Numerical breakdown not available.
7. Also conducted search-and-rescue operations.
8. One ship initially delivered humanitarian aid.
9. Delivered humanitarian relief.
10. Initially participated in NEO.
11. At least four aircraft, but exact number unspecified.
12. This excludes the (unknown) number of Dutch personnel that participated as part of the NATO AWACS component.
13. Numbers reduced 24 June 2011.
14. One frigate deployed in the zone at all times; each frigate carried one helicopter and one EOS.

Introduction

Adrian Johnson and Saqeb Mueen

On 19 March 2011, the United States, the United Kingdom and France began bombing targets in Libya. The subsequent campaign, to enforce a no-fly zone and prevent Muammar Qadhafi from butchering his own people, eventually led to his own unedifying demise. In the process, large-scale massacres and a protracted civil war were avoided.

Undoubtedly, the credit for the Qadhafi regime's overthrow goes to Libya's assortment of rebels. Initially a movement that was hampered by poor organisation and little equipment, the rebels benefitted from special-forces training provided by outside countries, the inflow of equipment, crucial air support and, finally, the growing support from the rest of the population which ultimately led to the fall of Tripoli.

In seven months, we also witnessed an aerial operation that had the United States offering crucial background support, with leadership devolved to other nations, particularly France and the UK under the NATO umbrella, at least nominally. On 31 October 2011, NATO officially declared an end to Operation *Unified Protector*.

This was the first NATO campaign since the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and, in the UK, the first after the publication of the Strategic Defence and Security Review. As RUSI observed in its Interim Campaign Report, this operation was novel in terms of the assets deployed, the alliances struck and the strategy that was initiated.

Britain and France found themselves, uniquely, leading an operation where the US pulled out of the combat at an early stage. NATO found itself operating in new ways that will change the alliance. NATO was joined by Qatar and the UAE, while Germany abstained in the initial UN vote.

In technical terms, the Interim Campaign Report viewed the operation as unlike any of those of the last decade, and more like those of two decades ago. Parallels were drawn to the primarily air-led interventions in the Balkans. The Libya air and maritime campaign demonstrated the success of precision weapons, but also their dependency on hi-tech ISTAR technologies.

With the reforms of the Strategic Defence and Security Review still underway, the RUSI Interim Campaign Report observed how the RAF and the Royal Navy had to divert assets from other tasks to undertake this operation and successfully improvise some combat systems.

The operation's success masks the complications of a high-risk strategy being played out in Libya for all concerned. In RUSI's Interim Campaign Report, we observed that 'several features of this operation show evidence of improvisation, innovation, and good luck, as well as the characteristic military professionalism of the allied forces involved.' In our estimation, this was a 'curious' operation where all actors operated in a permissive environment.

In this Whitehall Report – our final assessment of the seven month campaign – it is apparent that these conclusions still hold true.

The One-Off Intervention

This Whitehall Report focuses on the legacy of the Libya campaign. Simply put, what were the lessons of the military intervention from its conception and conduct, and to what extent does Libya provide any sort of 'model' for future endeavours?

Strategy and Decision-Making

Despite the elaborate institutional architecture recently developed in Whitehall for strategic defence and security decision-making, the decision to intervene in Libya did not go through the new system. As Michael Clarke reveals in his chapter, the impetus for the UK to intervene came very much from the top, with a hawkish prime minister pushing the operation despite private military warnings of the risks.

Key to the successful conduct of the campaign was the NATO alliance framework, led by a de facto Franco-British axis. This was also the first military operation since France rejoined NATO's integrated military command structure. As Alastair Cameron discusses, the Alliance acquitted itself creditably, even if there was some friction between Paris and London, particularly at the start of the operation. There now seems to be real substance to defence treaties between the two European powers.

The Military Component

The Libya operation marked a departure from the model of intervention that has prevailed since the toppling of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan: that of large-scale ground commitments, with air and maritime capabilities confined to a supporting role. In this regard, as Michael Codner points out, we must be careful to remember that the Western campaign was only one element of Qadhafi's downfall, with the ground-work done by a broad, and increasingly well-armed, rebel movement.

Nevertheless, Elizabeth Quintana and Lee Willett show how air forces and navies used their inherent capabilities to great effect. Yet the campaign also demonstrated the limitations of the British and NATO militaries. Intelligence, in particular, was a problem, as were some of the logistical capabilities

necessary to sustain a force in theatre. The Libyan intervention threw into relief the areas in which European capability is lacking: ingenuity and adaptability may only go so far before more, or better, investment is needed.

The International Political and Legal Context

At home and abroad, a debate quickly flared up over the generous interpretation of 'all necessary means' to 'protect Libyan civilians' in UN Security Council Resolution 1973. Whatever the initial intention of the Permanent Five, there is little doubt that the operation mutated into a proxy war with regime change as the object. Jonathan Eyal concludes that this may lead to some troubling implications for the fledgling concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) – not least, China and Russia feeling that they were hoodwinked into permitting an operation they did not intend. They may not be so trusting in the future.

Finally, Shashank Joshi and David Roberts each offer an examination of the ever-important regional political context. The Arab League's support for the operation was imperative, though as Shashank Joshi notes, it was not one necessarily supported by the 'Arab street'. David Roberts analyses the unique role the Gulf States – in particular, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates – had in propelling and supporting the campaign.

Legacies

What, then, are the legacies of the 2011 Libya campaign? There is a trend to see the latest intervention as the new model for future campaigns. The First Gulf War suggested that broad, multilateral coalitions could fulfil the hitherto unobtainable ideals of collective security. The NATO campaign in Bosnia in 1995, and then Kosovo in 1999, demonstrated the potential of force in getting factions to the negotiating table. The invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in the early years of this century steered militaries towards major ground-based operations, with air assets very much in a supporting role. From Bosnia to Iraq, intervention was generally followed by the expectation of complex peace-building, though not always under UN auspices. Yet in all these cases, the assumptions of a previous intervention were never fully applicable in the next. So it will be with Libya – a proxy war fought on behalf of a broad rebel uprising, ended not by a mediated peace deal, but by an absolute rebel victory.

The success of the military campaign will likely have an impact on how the UK, and many of its European partners, structure their forces in an era of defence budget austerity. Operations over Libya highlighted the vital necessity of effective battlefield intelligence assets. And not simply in a technical sense: minimising civilian casualties – a *sine qua non* of political support – demands effective and up-to-date targeting information. Advanced ISTAR assets,

therefore, will be essential to both sustain the military effort and the political will behind humanitarian interventions.

Regardless of the military successes of the campaign – helping depose Qadhafi at little civilian cost – Libya provides little in the way of a widely applicable model. It is important to bear this in mind as the unfolding crisis in Syria rumbles on, or new ones develop.

Domestically, it is not clear that the UK has learnt its own lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan about the coherent, institutional formation of strategy. If anything, the top-down vision of intervention pushed by the prime minister and key Cabinet figures harks more back to the Blair administration's informal style of 'sofa government'. It may have been clear and decisive – but it was not strategic in the way the government had defined it. Whether this is a useful model for future interventions is therefore debatable.

Internationally, we must be careful in assuming that Western intervention will buy favour with the wider Arab world. Opinion polls show support and sympathy for the rebels on the ground, not the Western planes operating in the sky above them. The Libya intervention took place in a singularly unique moment where the international stars, as it were, had aligned in a set of propitious circumstances. Qadhafi had no powerful friends and was isolated in a way that Bashar al-Assad, for example, is not. Qadhafi also virtually invited military action upon himself: what dictator would now ever risk announcing to the world's media his intention to butcher an entire city 'like rats'?

Further, key Arab states were keen to boost their credentials in the context of a region-wide uprising against the old autocracies. Qatar, in particular, played the ambitious arriviste, keen to throw its weight around and play a role out of proportion to its size and traditional influence. But the Arab Spring is now evolving, and clear-cut situations like that of Libya are unlikely to occur again.

The Libya campaign was hailed as a triumph for the principle of the Responsibility to Protect. But the truth may be otherwise. For the manner in which the initial Security Council Resolution was contorted out of all recognition from the protection of civilians to, in effect, outright regime change has left a sour taste in the mouths of powers like China, Russia and India who still hold an absolute conception of state sovereignty. For advocates of the R2P, the worry should be that there is indeed a legacy of the Libya conflict: China and Russia will presume that the model in future operations is rather regime change under the cloak of R2P, and will be more forthcoming with vetoes. We have already seen this over Syria.

The events in Libya in 2011 will be instructive for many years to come, but as noted above, likely more as a one-off case than as a model. Beginning with our Interim study in September 2011, RUSI has provided detailed analysis and judgments that have not appeared in any other form, reflecting on the overlooked aspects of the campaign. As more information has become available, and following further studies and conversations by RUSI contributors, this Whitehall Report offers a fuller picture of the Libya campaign, and, crucially, the legacy left behind.

However, with the country still undergoing transition after forty years of dictatorship, the effects on Libya itself remains to be seen. While this report deliberately does not consider the effects the campaign has had on Libya itself, RUSI will continue to study the situation there and, indeed, the ongoing implications of the Arab Spring.

These conclusions are not merely theoretical concerns. The Benghazi scenario, averted in Libya, has already happened in Syria in Homs and Idlib precisely because the international community has not been able to wage a campaign as it could in Libya. If the analysis of the Libyan campaign has indicated that concerned powers still have the capability to intervene effectively, it also demonstrates that the political circumstances that permitted it cannot be easily transposed.

The Making of Britain's Libya Strategy

Michael Clarke

The military operation that began in Libya during March 2011 and ended successfully seven months later may come to be judged as a curious success; unanticipated, of minor strategic significance to the UK and the NATO allies, but of greater political significance in the long term. The removal of the Qadhafi regime, once it had responded so brutally to civil unrest, is an evident benefit to the people of Libya, even if the road to stability and more equal prosperity is likely to be hard. The unprecedented combination of unity and proactive diplomacy on the part of the Arab League was a welcome benefit to global diplomacy that has created more expectations for the future. And the leading political players who backed the Arab League and who unexpectedly fell into line at the UN during the key week from 12 March – President Obama, Prime Minister Cameron, President Nicolas Sarkozy and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen – deserve credit for seeing through a military operation that was never universally popular, where they all had rather more to lose than to gain.

For Britain itself, Libya represented a welcome success for a government that was trying to administer painful cuts in public expenditure, was criticised for cutting defence unwisely or too harshly, and which was still wrestling with generally negative perceptions over the continuing war in Afghanistan. It showed to the world a determined and competent side of British military policy. So the Libya crisis seemed unusual because it represented a welcome, if brief, upward blip in an otherwise gloomy strategic picture.

The operation, however, may be even more curious, and curiously significant, for different reasons as its longer-term implications play out.

UK Decision-Making: Clear, Decisive and Non-Strategic

The UK's strategic decision to engage in Libya was in itself something of a novelty and certainly not what had been anticipated in the National Security Strategy (NSS).¹ Of the fifteen generic 'priority risks' the NSS sets out as a basis for strategic action to defend and promote British interests, the Libya scenario could just about be covered by half of one of the generic cases, and one that was put firmly in the midst of the second of three tiers of priority risks to be addressed.² It is not that the Libya operation was directly inconsistent with the National Security Strategy, or the assumptions behind the Strategic Defence and Security Review, both of which were expressed in very general terms. It was more that the military commitment which emerged did not meet the most immediate – or even the less immediate – criteria that those documents assumed should be a guide to future military action.³ Nor did it meet the coalition government's clear statements when it took office in

spring 2010 that Blairite 'liberal interventionism' would be reinterpreted in a far more hard-nosed way and that participation in any future international military operations would be guided by what was directly in Britain's national interest.⁴ Yet Libya was a classic example of the liberal interventionist policies that Tony Blair had said we should be prepared to undertake, and the Cameron government had made clear it would not.

The NSS was designed as a check list of considerations that should guide strategic national action; a list of boxes, if not to be ticked, at least to be duly considered, before action is initiated. But neither the security strategy as it was written, nor the mechanism of the National Security Council that it founded, had much to offer on Libya in the build-up to the key crisis moments in the week of 12 March 2011. Intervening in Libya was not a policy choice that went 'up through the system' gathering staff work and refinement on its way to the prime minister's desk. The impetus to get involved – to 'do something' in the face of Qadhafi's escalating brutality – came from Downing Street directly. The prime minister had stated privately that he was determined Benghazi would not become another Srebrenica – not on his watch.⁵ It was a top-down strategic decision, taken largely on the hoof in the face of a rapidly changing situation at the UN and in Libya itself. Decisions on war and peace may be none the worse for this, and the bureaucracy can take some credit for regrouping rapidly around the prime minister and his key advisors, but this was not how national strategic decision-making was supposed to work.⁶

The Libyan intervention had not worked itself up through the 'NSS system' mainly because the system did not rate it as strategically important. It was certainly less significant than most other developments occurring in the Arab world at the time, and was of far less importance to Britain itself than events in Yemen, Somalia or the Gulf. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office was cautious about how strong a UN Security Council Resolution authorising the use of international force could be and did not anticipate Arab League unity, or the late switch in favour of a strong resolution from the US president. Liam Fox, then minister for defence, was privately sceptical about the wisdom of any UK military action for a number of reasons and apparently saw no decisive strategic benefit in some open-ended intervention. He was effectively overruled by Downing Street, but then became hawkish about the operation once the die was cast. The chief of the Defence Staff, as is his duty, laid the military possibilities before the prime minister and the Cabinet, but is thought to have advised against taking a military lead, since the outcomes would be unpredictable and would stack up risks against marginal strategic benefits.⁷

There were known to be some fierce arguments about the wisdom of a military intervention between senior Liberal Democrats and Conservatives

among coalition partners at Cabinet level. And there was a distinct difference of emphasis, if not explicit disagreement, between the prime minister's own view and the military advice he was receiving. There was subsequently a distracting spat over the chief of the Defence Staff's view that the UN resolution did not in any way mandate the targeting of Colonel Qadhafi directly. This was contradicted by Liam Fox and Downing Street then asserted that targeting the Libyan leadership would not be ruled out and it published a summary of the legal advice of the attorney general.⁸ In the two weeks between 12 and 26 March, when a theoretical intervention – no more than a preparatory military planning exercise – turned into an ambiguous and open-ended commitment to another military operation in the Arab world, it was evident that the advice being offered at the top level of government was far from consensual. But prime ministers can decide, and this one did. His decision was based more on political instinct than staff work and it was supported by some key Downing Street figures such as Michael Gove and his Chief of Staff, Ed Llewellyn.⁹ The elaborate procedures for collective strategic thinking and discussion that the government had put in place – the NSS system and the National Security Council – were left with the task of carrying out the leader's wishes.

Military Diplomacy: Making it Harder for Ourselves

NATO was an indispensable part of coalition operations in Libya. Many have reflected that the operation could not have been conducted successfully without the framework the Alliance provided.¹⁰ The intervention has also boosted the Franco-British defence relationship and their joint role within NATO, certainly at the operational level where the two military establishments learned quickly from each other in the press of events. But it was not that way at the beginning. When the military operation began on 19 March with French, and then US and British air strikes, it was not clear whether or not the Alliance would be able to act at all. Indeed, the commencement of air operations was partly delayed to the evening of that day by a rumbling disagreement between Paris on the one hand and Washington and London on the other, with the French government arguing that NATO should be explicitly excluded from the operation. There followed a week of political uncertainty and command confusion before NATO formally took over the operation on 31 March.¹¹ Even then, the tensions between the official NATO command centre in Naples and the US, British and French national command centres and their operating base mainly in Poggio Renatico continued to dog the enterprise throughout the first four months of the operation.

Despite all the statements of unity, there were clear political differences of view over how far NATO nations should go in pushing for the defeat of the Qadhafi forces. There were many good reasons for the initial hiatus and for tensions within an alliance that was risking a lot of political unity to run the operation at all. In many respects the Alliance's command machinery got

itself into gear rather quickly, if not entirely smoothly. But this was not a good example of an alliance in natural unison. Instead, the 'bedrock of our defence' as the SDSR characterises NATO¹² was having to work demonstrably hard to cope with a small military operation, not morally ambiguous from a humanitarian point of view, that was well within its geographical compass.

If any future British operations are more likely to resemble Libya than Afghanistan, politically and militarily, then this 'bedrock' of defence strategy cannot be taken for granted. The Libya operation showed that the Alliance coped with the issue – but not effortlessly, and not in a way that inspires easy confidence for the future.

Perhaps the most crucial aspect of military diplomacy was the evident need to avoid civilian casualties at all costs. The operation was in pursuit of UN Security Council Resolution 1973 that was designed wholly to protect Libyan civilians. Nothing could have derailed the operation so quickly in the minds of a non-committal public at home, and of Libyans themselves, than civilian casualties among those the operation was explicitly mandated to help. Not least, with NATO unity in such a shaky state, one or two nasty mistakes, of the sort that occurred in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, could have split the Alliance wide apart. Low stocks of the most appropriate munitions had some effect in slowing the tempo of operations, but the need to exercise the utmost care in targeting was so overwhelming that the whole thing took longer and required layers of sophisticated intelligence and targeting assets to guarantee genuinely surgical strikes. Attack sorties had to be conducted on a 'zero-risk' basis – uncommon in any military operation – and required a good deal of patience over the seven months of the mission. In London, politicians were routinely frustrated with such slow progress. When NATO had such a monopoly of sophisticated military capability they continually fretted that the mission was not pressed more rapidly.

This, too, is of strategic importance for the future. Iraq and Afghanistan have left the British public generally sceptical about the efficacy of using military force, at least for the time being. Political leaders were anxiously aware that the patience of the public would probably not last very long, even when there were no British casualties, no crashes, no setbacks; nothing but high-tech images of military efficiency, though the Libyan rebels on the ground looked chaotic. The stark fact of the Libyan operation was that if it did not work quickly, it would not work at all, regardless of how well NATO might perform. The planners were between a strategic rock and a hard place. The operation had to be handled slowly enough to maintain a zero-risk policy, but fast enough to have some effect before the public and politicians turned against it. And ultimately, their success would depend on rag-tag rebel forces on the ground being as good as we hoped they could be. Even in its timing,

the operation was a high-risk political strategy for limited national interest gains: a strategic trade-off that was hardly envisaged in 2010.

The Diplomatic Price of Victory

All military victories come at some diplomatic price and the costs of this one are becoming evident as subsequent events unfold. The military logic of enforcing the UN resolution effectively turned the coalition into the air arm of the rebels in a civil war – albeit a rebellion that most of the world thought legitimate. The political fallout of operating at the very edge of what the resolution authorised had a well-noted effect on both Moscow and Beijing.

President Putin reportedly feels personally duped and angry at the outcome in Libya. Certainly, neither he nor the Beijing leadership will put themselves in a similar position over Syria. By vetoing a strong Arab League resolution over Syria at the UN in February 2012, Russia has walked itself into a political blind alley and ensured that the Syrian city of Homs suffers the fate that was prevented in the Libyan city of Benghazi. Having Putin's Russia discomfited in this way may give British politicians some satisfaction but it makes the avoidance of regional chaos around Syria harder to achieve. While there is no direct relationship between success in Libya and failure in Syria, it is evident that Libya has reinforced the perception of how difficult a similar military outcome would be to achieve against President Assad, whilst also hardening the route to any immediate diplomatic solution.

The diplomatic price of victory may be high, too, in transatlantic relations, though this will not become clear until after the US presidential election in November. A positive interpretation is that Libya provided a useful reality check on what both the US and the European allies can expect from the other in any future crises; the Obama administration might refine the way it can most efficiently 'lead from behind' in military affairs, and the European allies might be prepared to step up their military capabilities in the areas in which the operation showed them to be weak and where they could better complement US power. The negative interpretation is that the operation simply exposed how little real combat power the Europeans could put into such operations, how reluctant they were collectively to commit even to something in Europe's backyard, and how great a gulf has now opened up between US and European military capabilities and their relative perspectives on global security. This was certainly the view of Robert Gates, the outgoing US secretary of defense.¹³

If the negative interpretation prevails, particularly on the last point, the effect on any Iranian crisis arising in the next eighteen months or so could be very severe. If Britain is to get some diplomatic benefit from the Libya operation that it can apply to Iran – an issue that is genuinely critical to the country's strategic future – then it somehow must use Libya to bolster transatlantic

unity during a time when it will be severely tested. It is not easy to see how it can do this. And any attack on Iran in the coming months that involves the US, or is even condoned by it, would put Britain in a very difficult position between Washington and other European capitals.

The Libyan operation seems destined to go down in history, at best, as a strategic footnote. It could easily have been a politico-military embarrassment to Britain and its allies, but in the event it was a neat success, given the challenges. Not all the implications of success are good, however, and reflecting on this operation raises some interesting questions about the way strategic decisions were handled and how the effects of Libya on NATO, on Britain's allies, and its diplomacy, will play out as policy-makers confront far more serious challenges to British security over the next two years.

Notes and References

1. HM Government, *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy*, Cm 7953 (London: The Stationery Office, October 2010), p. 27.
2. Even that is something of a stretch, since the wording in the NSS speaks of 'major instability, *insurgency or civil war overseas* which creates an environment that terrorists can exploit to threaten the UK'. It is arguable whether the Libyan crisis conformed to anything more than the middle of that formulation. *Ibid*.
3. Compare, for example, the conception of national security challenges outlined in the SDSR with that contained in a 2011 document, after the Libya crisis; House of Commons Defence Committee, *The Strategic Defence and Security Review and the National Security Strategy: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2010–12*, HC 1639 (London: The Stationery Office, 9 November 2011), p. 11. This latter document referred to a 'new approach' that had been set out as a 'Building Stability Overseas Strategy' statement of July 2011. This is hard to find as a priority objective in any government documents before the onset of the Libya crisis.
4. See for example, William Hague, 'Britain's Foreign Policy in a Networked World', speech at the Foreign Office, 1 July 2010; David Cameron, 'The Conservative Approach to Foreign Policy', speech at Chatham House, 15 January 2010; Channel 4 News, 'Will Libya Change David Cameron?', 24 August 2012.
5. See *Guardian*, 'David Cameron's Libyan War: Why the Prime Minister felt Qadhafi had to be Stopped', 2 October 2011.
6. Parliament's Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy reported that the National Security Council established a Libya sub-committee, the NSC(L), which met sixty-two times during the whole operation. The Joint Committee also reported that with such a concentration on operational issues, the NSC appeared to be looking at

- what it called 'non-strategic' issues. See, Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, *First Review of the National Security Strategy 2010*, HC 1384, HL 265 (London: The Stationery Office, 8 March 2012), p. 27.
7. Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Libya: The General's Reality Check', *Guardian*, 16 May 2011.
 8. 'Libya: Removing Qadhafi Not Allowed, Says Cameron', *BBC News*, 21 March 2011; 'Is Muammar Qadhafi a Target? PM and Military Split over War Aims', *Guardian*, 22 March 2011.
 9. *Guardian*, *op. cit.* in note 5.
 10. House of Commons Defence Committee, *Operations in Libya*, HC 950 (London: The Stationery Office, 25 January 2012), Evidence, Qs 127–131.
 11. Claire Taylor, 'Military Operations in Libya', House of Commons Library, 24 October 2011, pp. 10–11.
 12. HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, Cm 7948 (London: The Stationery Office, October 2010), p. 59, para 5.2.
 13. See, Rob Corbridge, 'Robert Gates was too Diplomatic to Name Names', *Associated Press*, 13 June 2011.

The Channel Axis: France, the UK and NATO

Alastair Cameron

Since the end of the Libya campaign, lessons-learned exercises have now been conducted which help us to better understand how the mission unfolded. France and the UK have in this sense both separately produced a series of cross-government and service-specific reviews, which have been debated amongst their respective strategic communities.¹ These serve a crucial purpose in terms of identifying key instructions for government regarding future crisis-management procedures, as well as informing others not immediately involved about the ins and outs of the country's military campaign – whether it be in terms of equipment performance, readiness or the availability of critical capabilities.

A significant characteristic of these reviews is the way in which they are written from the point of view of the department that they emanate from, as well as the near-exclusive application of their recommendations within a national context. Lessons 'identified' in one context are rarely lessons truly 'learned' in another. A gap and consequent failing emerge in that these national reviews very often bear no mention of the multitude of interactions and near-failures that occurred at both the intra-state and international level, which otherwise played such a fundamental part in shaping the multi-national campaign.

France and the UK having been most uncommonly joined at the hip during the entire Libya affair, the two countries have already shared a great deal throughout the campaign that has contributed to lifting a veil across the Channel. Be it a better appreciation for each other's capabilities, or a more accurate picture of each other's limitations, the process has on many levels been usefully cathartic in strengthening the relationship.

Weighing up the positives and negatives of their interaction, as well as identifying further areas for co-operation based on a better reading of their mutual capability gaps, the now deepened Franco-British bilateral exchange needs an honest appreciation of the strategic choices that were made during the conduct of the operation. Heading down the rabbit-hole together in such a way, they can be better assured that future strategic choices stand a greater chance of being understood, and if possible shared, by each nation. Indeed, if what was apparent in Libya is to be repeated, where responsibility for military leadership in Europe fell upon France and the UK almost by default, then the lessons learned within such a context need to be the right ones.

Importance of Strategic Confidence in the Mission

Having as yet undergone none of the spending cuts that have beset British defence policy in the aftermath of a stringent SDSR, the way in which France came to play an important part in the Libya operations felt markedly more assertive than the UK.

Although the UK followed France every step of the way, a clear amount of second-guessing regarding the merits of intervention was palpable coming from within the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) at the start of the operation. Libya, coming as it did on the heels of the SDSR and on top of the MoD's avowedly all-consuming Afghan campaign, a sense of disbelief certainly affected a significant proportion of the British military as to why the UK was getting involved. No doubt sharing in the public misgivings of US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, this lack of strategic confidence towards the mission left the UK looking deeply unsure of itself, even as Prime Minister David Cameron took the country down the strategic route of intervention.

In several ways, the Libya military campaign would have been very different had France not led in the way it did. Interpreting the mission through the lens of France's own motivations throughout the Libya campaign helps to underscore the important role that France played in setting the early dynamics that affected the operational tempo, and ultimately, the political outcome of the mission.

As a result, France's intervention in Libya is considered with a great deal of satisfaction by its political and military establishment. Largely seen as a validation of the strategic orientations taken by France's last 2008 defence White Paper, the operations have highlighted effective capabilities employed in Libya, and confirmed those already identified gaps in the field of intelligence, reconnaissance, refuelling and others, which will now be put forward as justification of the merits of sustained defence spending ahead of another White Paper review in 2012.²

In contrast, the UK's own military lessons-learned process is likely to reopen wounds over the SDSR by highlighting the number of assets that were either taken out of service or due to be scrapped. Yet the truth is the UK managed reasonably well in the Libya campaign despite the cuts while also having to deal with on-going operations in Afghanistan. The verdict on the UK SDSR should therefore now come to a more balanced view and strategic confidence be rebuilt around what went well in the Libya campaign.

Understanding when Strategy Meets Interests

As determined above, the very method of France's intervention in Libya largely influenced the mission. Calling the first shot in the Libya campaign, President Nicolas Sarkozy announced the beginning of hostilities live on

television during a press conference at the end of the Paris Summit on 19 March. Less than forty-eight hours after the UN Resolution passed, the announcement made through global media channels was compelling news: French Rafale aircraft had at that very moment already begun their military engagement by destroying Colonel Qadhafi's tanks encircling the city of Benghazi.

An element of theatrics aside, it was the right call to make. Within the context of the mission – its objective being to uphold UN Security Council Resolution 1973's mandate to use 'all means necessary to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas' – the move came none too soon as seen from Paris. Failure to avert a massacre in Benghazi would have robbed the coalition of its primary justification and indeed deprived the coalition of an essential support base in the east of the country. Home to the National Transitional Council – which France officially recognised on 10 March as the sole representative of the Libyan people – the city of Benghazi was a symbolic bastion of the revolution that simply could not be allowed to fall.

In contrast, France's standing in support of the Arab Spring had largely missed a beat until Libya. Wrong-footed in the initial response to revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, Michèle Alliot-Marie, the then foreign minister, had had to resign over a series of embarrassing allegations of personal interests with Tunisia's outgoing Ben Ali government. The new French Ambassador to Tunis, Boris Boillon, was in turn also heavily criticised following dismissive comments he made to Tunisian journalists during his inaugural press conference. In Egypt, where France had little political capital to play, the political tightrope that the Obama administration had to negotiate demonstrated what could be the dangers of inaction. Re-establishing France's credentials in the region consequently demanded a demonstrable engagement: it came with France's support of the budding Libyan revolution.

Through its determined action over the skies of Libya, as well as through its political role in establishing the Contact Group as the overall governance framework for the campaign in preference to NATO proper, French diplomatic actions have since had a positive return across the Arab world. In associating the Arab League with the launch of the operation, and in sponsoring Qatar and the UAE to join the planning and execution of military strikes within NATO's Combined Air Operations Centre in Poggio Renatico, the campaign was eventually successful not purely from a military perspective, but also from a political one. Libya was as such a profoundly modern militarily campaign executed as much in the field as through the pulling together of elements of a wider comprehensive approach from both official diplomatic and unofficial channels towards a relatively rapid conclusion.

In that the Libya operation was well-founded on humanitarian grounds, for which the UN had given a clear mandate in response to a call from the Arab states, the campaign also served France's wider strategic interests. Libya was in a very strong sense therefore a political opportunity that was commendably executed across all spheres of the French government from the diplomatic engagement that had been committed at the UN and the Arab League, right through to the conclusion of a strategically minded military campaign.

The Importance of France Being 'Back in' NATO

The Libya campaign was effectively the first NATO military operation to have been launched since France re-joined the NATO integrated military command structure. With the country having steadily contributed to all major NATO operations despite previously having been outside the integrated command structure, this in itself did not profoundly affect France's behaviour or conduct during the course of the operation, yet the mission still constitutes a series of first-time experiences for France, from which it has drawn some salutary lessons.

Firstly, through the Libya operation, France has been able to confirm its ability to take a strong leadership role within the Alliance. Whereas previous French leaders had indeed always been suspicious of the disproportionate balance of power in favour of the US – fearing France would therefore be constrained to a subservient role within the Alliance – President Sarkozy's visible assurance at the joint helm of the mission (alongside Britain and the US, supported by only a handful of other Europeans) substantially justifies his choice to 'reintegrate' where others would still claim that France is too closely 'aligned' to the US as a result of reintegration.

Secondly, contrary to most previous Alliance-led campaigns, NATO itself was far less a battleground for political influence. In view of NATO's internal divisions over Libya, France was determined not to see the objectives of the mission be dampened in any way. In practice, this meant that the North Atlantic Council (NAC) became only a secondary framework to where decisions were really discussed. Meeting first bilaterally with the UK through each other's permanent military representations in Brussels, then more regularly amongst those of the eight countries that contributed to actual strike operations, more open divisions within the NAC were thus circumvented to some extent by ensuring that a largely agreed position had been established by those at the helm of the campaign, even before being discussed amongst the NATO ambassadors. Thereupon freedom of manoeuvre was largely given to Lieutenant General Ralf Jodice, NATO Combined Force Air Component Command and Allied Air Component Commander, to draw-up the aerial campaign plan and oversee the enforcement of the no fly zone and the embargo. France, however, like Britain, retained operational discretion over its assets. The Contact Group was likewise in all evidence a way of taking the

political messaging away from the NATO core, in favour of one fashioned by France and the UK that saw the importance of pulling in Arab partners, which would be both more acceptable and effective in the steering of the campaign.

Strengthening Early Steps of the Bilateral Entente

Whereas a bilateral military exercise (*Southern Mistral*) had originally been planned for 15–25 March 2011 between the French Armée de l’Air and the RAF, the start of the Libya campaign saw instead the launch of a live and full-scale operational alternative which has given a much greater profile and depth of purpose to the Franco-British defence agreements.

Through the experience of having worked together towards a successful military outcome in Libya, the campaign has accelerated a form of cultural change by demonstrating to the military chains of command, as well as to service personnel, that the two armed forces are adjusted to working together in the field as well as in national capitals. This is essential considering that the current cadre of UK and French officers have known no truly joint deployments throughout the last decade.

Regarding the political direction of the mission, France and the United Kingdom demonstrated clear leadership and political will that will have served the two countries well in terms of embedding the bilateral relationship and strengthening the establishment of common working practices. Taking decisive political stewardship over the campaign and acting in consort at NATO and in involving the wider Contact Group, Prime Minister David Cameron and President Nicolas Sarkozy at the executive level – mirrored by their Foreign Secretaries William Hague and Alain Juppé – demonstrated in Libya a profound unity of strategy.

The fact that France and the UK had complementary international ties in North Africa and the Middle East – particularly in the Gulf States, which they could bring together in support of the Libya campaign – was of tremendous help in keeping political cohesion around the international effort. This was especially important as the military operation progressed. Having together secured positive votes at the UN Security Council and the Arab League, this form of competitive complementarity extended to encouraging the defection of regime loyalists, dealing with international financial aspects of the campaign (such as the freezing of Qadhafi and regime assets), right through to encouraging international recognition for the NTC.

Looking forward, the Foreign Office and Quai d’Orsay should now look to identify joint perspectives on matters of mutual regional interest around the globe, starting in the Sahel and Eastern Mediterranean, thus allowing the two to gain a head start on another such episode of co-operation. Neither

country can today necessarily afford a large footprint in every area of interest around the world, so leaning on each other for help should assure both countries of a better mutual understanding and joint approach to dealing with regional affairs.

Plugging Some Remaining Gaps

The potential highlighted by a strengthened Franco-British bilateral relationship is thus certainly cause for optimism. Yet debriefings on the conflict-entry phase of the campaign should not shy away from a genuine evaluation of what happened. Even as France and Britain embarked on the campaign, there indeed seem to have been several disconnects between the two.

The launch of the operation has thus been characterised by some, rather unfairly, as French grandstanding, with the received wisdom being that French combat aircraft unilaterally began air strikes ahead of the other allies, thus spoiling the element of surprise ahead of a more co-ordinated attack with coalition partners.

However, according to several officials interviewed by this author, the launch of the operation had in fact been planned until the very last moment as a joint Franco-British initial air strike. France had indeed certainly pushed for a bilateral stewardship over the launch of military action, as it was keen to capitalise on the Franco-British lead that their respective diplomats had been developing hand-in-hand for several weeks prior to the operation. This would have been underpinned, in their view, by the defence treaties signed in November 2010, as well as the availability in France and the UK of two NATO-certified air operation command-and-control centres.

Instead, there are allegations that the RAF refused to participate in the mission with French Rafales sent to protect Benghazi on 19 March.³ (This interpretation, however, is not corroborated in London.) The UK then had to revert to a small number of submarine-launched Tomahawk cruise missiles some six hours later, fired alongside US strikes. What the UK achieved in the process can only have had relatively small tactical impact, considering the US's far more significant land-attack strike and compared to the strategic effect that would have resulted had France and the UK together struck first. Indeed, some figures suggest a US-to-UK ratio of almost 32:1 in the number of missiles launched, meaning that without the US, then the UK's contribution of such assets does not necessarily stand on its own. Other than demonstrating a key strategic capability held by the UK and not France, this sort of deep strike alongside the US also clearly signals where the UK's closest military affinities still lie.

Equally, prior to the NATO hand-over on 25 March, it remains unclear whether British political officials might have endorsed a form of bilateral France-UK command-and-control arrangement, which was then superseded by advice from the British military chain of command. Supporting such a view is the fact that as agreement was being set on one of three potential command-and-control centres for the operation (HQ Air Command High Wycombe, the French Air Operations Centre at Lyon Mont-Verdun or NATO Headquarters Allied Air Command at the US Air Force Base in Ramstein, Germany), it has been reported that French officials arrived at RAF High Wycombe only to be told that their UK counterparts had already left for Ramstein. Considering the tension in London between Number 10 and the National Security Council in the very first days of the operation – notably regarding the overall interpretation of the mission and whether Colonel Qadhafi himself constituted a legitimate target – this could suggest that the military advice came back contrary to any feasible initial political intent to go for a bilateral route, the use of NATO Command Structures was no doubt advocated as the only option that the UK felt it had.

Be that as it may, crossed wires and miscommunication regularly occur in such a fast-moving environment. The Libya test case came, perhaps understandably, too soon after the Franco-British defence treaties in order to serve as the framework for the conduct of the operation. But whether this hides more fundamental differences in doctrine remains a pregnant issue; the risk is next time that knee-jerk strategic assumptions are made by each side at the launch of a joint military operation, which then lead to contradictory decisions. Future Franco-British operations thus need a sounder footing with regards to possible command-and-control agreements so as to ensure progress in the future. Further, limitations that may likewise have been imposed by gaps in either state's respective capabilities must be identified within a bilateral context, so that a greater alignment can be found, when appropriate, in future joint operations.

This is precisely what informed the joint thinking on display during the latest bilateral summit between France and the UK on 17 February 2012, held on the first anniversary of the Libyan uprising. Succinctly put within the joint declaration and summit communiqué, the matter of Franco-British co-operation is indeed a moving target with both countries looking to improve on their past record wherever they can: 'Following an analysis of lessons identified, we have decided to prioritise our joint work in the key areas of command and control; information systems; intelligence; surveillance; targeting and reconnaissance; and precision munitions.'⁴ Moreover, France and the UK agreed a significant step-change in their deployable headquarters capability by setting-up a Combined Joint Force Headquarters in order to operate the previously envisaged Combined Joint Expeditionary Force. This would use existing French and UK high-readiness national force headquarters

staff, with the ability to expand in order to include staff from other nations willing to participate in a multinational operation – precisely what was not considered to be on offer for Libya in March 2011.

A Joint Future

Given that the US in Libya effectively supported a Franco-British mission – rather than ‘leading from behind’ – Europeans bringing warfare back within their own means represents a critical test for their ability to deploy in the future. This is a key issue for all European militaries at a time of spending austerity, but all the more so for the UK in terms of its reliance on costly, hi-tech intensive capabilities that are largely influenced by US doctrine. In many cases, even the effective employment of such capabilities is only truly enabled by operating alongside the Americans themselves so as to achieve sufficient strategic and tactical bulk. Should the US for whatever reason be unable or unwilling to play its part within similar operations in the future, the burning issue today is whether the UK will at all be confident in its ability to operate independently on the strategic level, and, if not, whether its strengthening co-operation with France will contribute to plugging the gap, with benefits for both nations.

Libya marked a definite success story for the French and British militaries, and, as one looks on at the very start of this bilateral entente, such operational accomplishment can only warrant further encouragement elsewhere. In the future, as the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force comes to full operational capability around 2016, shifting the emphasis of Franco-British co-operation in theatre from de-confliction to greater interoperability will be the revealing test by which people come to realise the extent to which there is growing substance behind the treaties.

Notes and References

1. For an example of a United Kingdom’s review, see: HM Government, ‘Libya Crisis: National Security Adviser’s Review of Central Co-ordination and Lessons Learned’, 1 December 2011, available at <<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/report-on-libya/>>. For France’s reviews, see: ‘L’armée de l’air à l’épreuve des opérations en Libye: retour d’expérience et perspectives’, CESA colloquy, December 2011, available at <http://www.cesa.air.defense.gouv.fr/article.php?id_article=722/>; and General Secretariat for Defence and National Security, ‘La France face à l’évolution du contexte international et stratégique’, February 2012.
2. France’s 2008 *Livre blanc sur la défense et la sécurité nationale* [*White Paper on National Defence and Security*] notably stated that the global strategic context had become subject to a much-higher risk of uncertainty with regional instability concentrated along an ‘arc of crisis from the Atlantic to the Sea of Oman and Indian Ocean’ (encompassing the Maghreb, Sahel-North Africa, Yemen, the Gulf and Middle East, right through to the Indian Ocean) where there was most potential for sudden strategic upsets, that could

then lead in turn to unexpected strategic consequences. Without naming it, the Arab Spring and its subsequent revolutions in the Middle East can be seen here as having been accurately painted.

3. Author interview with senior French officers, November 2011. It should be noted that this phase of the operation was under US leadership within Operation *Odyssey Dawn*.
4. HM Government, 'UK-France declaration on security and defence', available at <<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/uk-france-declaration-security/>>, 17 February 2012.

Military Doctrine and Intervention

Michael Codner

The NATO air campaign in Libya is already being interpreted by Western militaries as a success and a model for future operations.¹ There is a danger that it will be understood as the successful coercive use of air power in the Kosovo model – air strikes without any commitment of forces on the ground that succeed in inducing a brutal regime to relinquish its hold on territory. In the case of Kosovo, the jury is still out on the role of air power in convincing Milosevic to accede. In any event, it did not do what NATO planned at the outset: that is, to force him to surrender Kosovo within a few days.²

Effects-Based Operations

After Kosovo, a groundswell of interest in ‘effects-based operations’ (EBO) followed.³ EBO ceased to be predominantly an air-force concept, and was adopted almost universally on both sides of the Atlantic as the way to win. Coercive airpower in Kosovo had had not been as successful as intended because the targeting had not been precise enough nor, most importantly, had it related directly to the aim through appropriate military effect.

Fast forward twenty years, and a very different opinion emerges from senior Western military commanders. The Kosovo War represents ‘a failure of expectations for air power and the sterility of Effects Based Operations and of the Revolution in Military Affairs’ as the then Chief of the General Staff General Sir Richard Dannatt said at a major conference on land warfare at the Royal United Services Institute in June 2009.⁴ His view was unsurprising because a major defence review was in the offing. His agenda was to present a model of the British Army of the future that could address the demands of complex emergencies and that would keep ground forces for the United Kingdom for the foreseeable future at ‘land army’ scale for this purpose, and in particular against competition for funding from the Royal Air Force.

Dannatt was not alone in his criticism of EBO. The widely respected American General James N Mattis expressed a similar view that EBO had had its day in a memorandum to Joint Forces Command in 2008,⁵ as have a number of other senior Western commanders. In the meantime, the United States and Britain have been engaged in major land operations in Afghanistan and Iraq involving the removal of governments and coping with the consequences on the ground. Except in certain limited circumstances, such as the initial invasion of Iraq, recent wars have not been sequential, a series of decisive events leading to victory. Air power has been an obvious enabler, but has not provided a discrete solution.

Shock and Awe

In an article written at the end of the Kosovo campaign, Air Marshal Sir John Walker, a former British chief of Defence Intelligence, offered his view of the target sets that would have achieved the 'one-week outcome'.⁶ He recommended first eliminating the entire electrical power system of Belgrade by destroying power-station boilers, followed by destruction of the refineries and storage of fuel oil. In sum, the nation's civil infrastructure must be closed down. Clearly Walker understood that bombing of this sort would have been unacceptable. However, he concludes that 'If airpower is to be used to win the war then it has to be *shocking* and *sudden* and *overwhelming*. It has to really *hurt*'. But how much can one hurt a civilian population with no say in the decisions of an authoritarian government, when the reason is to protect another group of civilians a few miles away the other side of an internal border?

Walker's view is similar to that of Harlan Ullman and James P Wade, the authors of the shock and awe rapid dominance concept.⁷ It was clearly attractive to United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and was used in the bombing of Baghdad in the early stages of the 2003 war in Iraq. In addition to some useful targeting of command-and-control capability, the purpose was to so frighten Saddam Hussein's senior political and military leaders so that they would concede to American might, with the result that there would be no combat on the ground. Ullman also spoke at the 2009 RUSI Land Warfare Conference. He mentioned 'shock and awe' in his address, but claimed that the Baghdad bombing was in his mind not an example of this, though he must have been delighted at the time that the media had grabbed that label. Subsequently he ought to have realised that there are levels of complexity in the cognitive domain that will defy control and management however sophisticated the human terrain mapping, the precision of weapons and elegant targeting. What were the messages that were being sent by the 'shock and awe' bombing of Baghdad to all the other parties in that conflict beyond Saddam Hussein and his senior leadership – the ordinary citizens of Baghdad who shortly would have to accept occupation by the 'shockers and awers' – and the international community at large?

While the systematic relating of ends to ways and means is essential in operational planning as it always has been, there is no philosopher's stone that will deliver consistent and decisive outcomes if only the relationship between capabilities and effects can be established 'scientifically' in both the physical and cognitive domains. Understanding of the operational situation in military operations should be maximised, but it will always be constrained by time among other things. There are the uncertainties of complexity, in particular in the relationship between the effects of actions in the physical and cognitive domains. In any event, social psychology is an immature science when compared with the physical sciences. And Western militaries and their

governments are limited in their actions by legal and moral constraints of the laws of armed conflict and humanitarian law, and by how their behaviour is perceived in these respects. So, for these reasons it is not always possible to achieve the right effect.

When it comes to exploiting the cognitive domain, the lessons are as old as the hills, and are threefold. First, as any military practitioner of the doctrinal concept of operational manoeuvre should know, an operational plan which emphasises coercive effect may provide the possibility for an elegant solution which will minimise violence and waste of resources for all parties. However, dependence on effective coercion involves a high level of risk and needs to be supported by a lower-risk alternative plan or 'branch' – for instance, evidence of a ground campaign option. The 1991 Gulf War needed a ground campaign to see it through. Secondly, land operations demonstrate political commitment in a way that air and maritime operations do not. Thirdly, once violence is used, there are unintended consequences because one is entering into the realm of complexity theory in which unpredictability is an inherent feature.

Insights from Libya

In the case of the 2011 Libya operation, the matter of precision that dogged the Kosovo campaign was not a problem, and the effects appear to have achieved the military aim – notwithstanding the long-term humanitarian consequences for the Libyan people, which remain very uncertain. Ironically, one of the very few cases in recent history in which air power in isolation has been understood to have achieved strategic purpose through compellent coercion was the US's Operation *Eldorado Canyon* in 1986. This air operation against multiple targets in Libya was a response to a Libyan state-sponsored terrorist attack on a bar in West Berlin that had killed one American serviceman and injured many others.⁸ The operation was deemed a success because Qadhafi stopped overtly sponsoring terrorism. It did not, needless to say, prevent him from providing covert help to the Irish Republican Army in Ulster, nor the Lockerbie atrocity.

The important point about the 2011 Libyan air operations is, of course, that they were not compellent coercive operations in isolation. Indeed, the United Nations mandate was to protect civilians. The implication of this for military action by NATO and its partners was that they needed to physically destroy as well as deter Libyan ground forces alongside a deterrent no-fly-zone operation. There was clearly significant coercive effect, and of course supportive effect to the rebels as well. And perceived support is an often forgotten element of inducement⁹ – the concept that links the negative and positive functions of coercion on the one hand and support on the other. Importantly, the air attacks were chiefly to aid a ground operation by the rebels – support in a different physical sense. They comprised close

air support and air interdiction to eliminate the regime's physical military capability.

So Libya was essentially a proxy war and not an air-delivered compelling campaign that succeeded – as a result of the evolution of EBO – where Kosovo had failed in achieving the timely removal of a regime's control over a country or province. Like Kosovo, it was a high-risk campaign with great uncertainty as to a satisfactory outcome until very late in the day. And it is a campaign that no wise Western nation or group of nations would entertain lightly again in the future.

At a time when Western expeditionary nations and their electorates are and will be for a long while reluctant to enter wars where they must put troops on the ground with all the risks of embroilment, the completely wrong message to take away from Libya 2011 is that the surgical use of air power can effectively deliver in support of national interests and moral objectives without the fall back plan that all coercive operations need. What happens if the target leadership ignores the message from the air?

It bears mention also that France and other continental countries did not support *Eldorado Canyon* in 1986, and the ground-based F-111 attacks had to be routed from the United Kingdom in a circuitous route over the sea. The US 6th Fleet could deliver carrier-based attacks from the Mediterranean. In Libya 2011, Italy was available and overflight was not a problem. But where next? Would European air bases be available and within range? And what if evacuation of British and European citizens, which was required in Libya, is the real challenge? In terms of calls for intervention abroad, non-combatant evacuation would be the first obligation of the British government, but this is unlikely in most cases to be achievable solely from the air. A ground presence using elite infantry is likely to be necessary to eliminate risk of the consequences of escalation, as is a sea base in a very large number of cases.

It would, however, be equally mistaken for the British government and Ministry of Defence to conclude that the future of British defence policy and military strategy is to go with the flow of the argument leading up to the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review – that the case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan assume a future of counter-insurgency and stabilisation delivered by land forces. Britain is fortunate amongst Western nations in having a large degree of choice as to the types of armed forces it will contribute to coalition operations, bearing in mind its geo-strategic situation. It can choose to configure forces to minimise embroilment in the context of a military strategy that emphasises the same – provided that it can meet some specific obligations of protection of sovereign territory including Overseas Territories, protecting nationals abroad, and access for trade and resources.

Notes and References

1. Alexander Mackenzie, 'The Renaissance of Air Power', *RUSI Journal* (forthcoming, 2012).
2. The effect of the Kosovo campaign on Western military doctrine is discussed in Michael Codner, 'Kosovo: Certain Uncertainties of War Termination', in Holger Afflerbach and Hew Strachan (eds), *How Fighting Ends: A History of Surrender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
3. EBO is a United States military doctrinal concept. The related British and NATO equivalent is the 'Effects Based Approach to Operations'. One definition of EBO is 'coordinated sets of actions directed at shaping the behavior of friend, foe, and neutral in peace, crisis, and war.' See Edward J Smith, *Complexity, Networking and Effects Based Approaches to Operations* (Washington DC: Department of Defense Command and Control Research Program, 2003).
4. Richard Dannatt's unpublished keynote speech for the Royal United Services Institute Land Warfare Conference, 23–25 June 2009. The author was present and has the text.
5. James N Mattis, 'Memorandum for Joint Forces Command: USJCOM Commander's Guidance for Effect-Based Operations', 14 August 2008.
6. John Walker, 'Air Power for Coercion', *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 144, No. 4, August 1999).
7. Harlan K Ullman and James P Wade, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1996).
8. Most of the attacks were conducted against Libyan targets assumed to be associated with terrorism namely Aziziyah (Tarabulas) Barracks in Tripoli, Jamahiriyah Guard Barracks in Benghazi, Murrat Side Bilal base, and the military facilities at Tripoli's main airport. Also Benina Military Airfield was attacked because MiG air defence fighters were based there.
9. The expression 'suasion' is often used in academic literature.

The War from the Air

Elizabeth Quintana

Operation *Unified Protector* was based on the use of full-spectrum military capabilities, rather than ground-based counter-insurgency forces with air and maritime services in support. The success of a rapid, but restrained air-led military intervention has also put to rest many of the concerns that were raised about the use of air power by the disastrous Israeli campaign in Lebanon in 2006.¹

The Libya campaign was conducted throughout with very restrictive rules of engagement, with a mandate to protect the population and minimise collateral damage to the infrastructure in order to help the country back on its feet after the cessation of violence. On the other hand, the 1999 NATO operation in Kosovo, *Allied Force*, was conducted under rules of engagement that were initially extremely restrictive, but were rapidly broadened to include economic, communications and transportation targets in order to demonstrate an escalation of force.²

In addition, *Unified Protector* proved more particularly that an ad hoc, multinational alliance could indeed respond with remarkable speed and successfully conduct an operation. NATO military staff undertook much of the preliminary planning in parallel which allowed the organisation to telescope the planning period down from a number of months to three weeks. In comparison, Operation *Allied Force* in Kosovo took fifteen months to plan, although this also included planning for the NATO land component, which was absent from Libya.

Finally, this experience has been a catalyst for change within European forces which have relied heavily on the United States both financially and for capabilities over several decades. Although the US agreed to launch the operation, it was determined to quickly hand over the operation to NATO while continuing to play a supporting role. This had led some to describe the US contribution as 'leading from behind', but the role of European forces should not be underplayed: around 90 per cent of all-strike sorties were conducted by the Europeans, while half of all sorties were flown by US, France and Britain meaning that the contribution of the other fifteen nations was far from insignificant. (A full account can be found in the Table of Military Assets in this report.) European nations are rightly proud of their role in this operation, and have recognised the need to mitigate gaps in capability highlighted by the intervention.

Germany and Turkey's decision not to support the operation was initially seen as detrimental to the Alliance, although there is evidence that the

German military was more forward-leaning than its politicians and ensured that those personnel in NATO posts were fully engaged. The German military also creatively deployed personnel to this or other NATO missions in order to support ongoing operations.

There is some evidence to suggest that Eastern European nations used Germany's decision to sit out on ethical grounds as an excuse to do the same, although this may have hidden more serious problems. Indeed, Robert Gates stated that few of those who did not contribute actually had the ability to commit high-quality air assets or personnel.³ This contrasts starkly with the Qatar Emiri Air Force, which managed to commit two thirds of its twelve combat aircraft to the operation.

The contribution of non-NATO nations was seen in a very positive light. Sweden contributed for the first time to an air campaign, initially in the defensive air combat role, and then in a tactical reconnaissance role, collecting imagery through sensor suites. The Gripen aircraft proved outstanding in this latter role and outstripped other combat assets with the quality of its tactical ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance). Sweden's longstanding collaboration with NATO as a Partner for Peace made co-operation relatively seamless, and may mean that Sweden will participate more readily in future operations.

The presence of UAE, Qatari and Jordanian aircraft was very important to the campaign. These nations operated alongside others with whom they had long-running partnering arrangements: the Qatar Emiri Air Force flew with the French Air Force; the Royal Jordanian Air Force with the RAF; and the United Arab Emirates Air Force with the USAF. Arab nations initially flew in pairs with their partner nations, but by June were fully integrated into the **CAMEO packages** and in some cases conducted their own missions. However, non-Alliance nations were reliant on their NATO partners for some administrative and logistical arrangements as well as access to orders, instructions and procedures. The Royal Jordanian Air Force principally conducted no-fly zone missions while the Qatari Emiri Air Force and UAE Air Force also flew ground strikes. The UAE also conducted cruise-missile strikes using their Black Shaheeb systems.

Non-NATO nations also contributed in other ways; there were representatives in the headquarters at Naples and Poggio Renatico; Qatari intelligence proved especially helpful for operations in and around Tripoli; while Jordanian officers helped NATO forces to monitor social-networking sites. The UAE built and operated their own airstrip in Libya for conducting humanitarian missions, but it also allowed the National Transitional Council to operate their own air service from late July/early August, which helped to sustain the rebels' economy.

Assessing the Air Operation

Command and Control

Operation *Odyssey Dawn* was remarkably rapid both in its ramp up and execution. The number of forces required for Libya was challenging; Libya is twice as big as Afghanistan and 160 times as big as Kosovo. It was quickly clear that the initial strike would require US command-and-control and strike capability. The coalition coalesced around the NATO headquarters at Ramstein; AFRICOM ran the campaign through the 603rd Air and Space Operations Center (AOC) and made use of aircraft under the USAF Europe 617th AOC, as it did not have any combat air assets of its own.

Initially, France, the UK and the US set the plan together and de-conflicted three national operations. Major General Margaret Woodward at AFRICOM ran the Joint Force Air Component and the Air Tasking Order (ATO), but gave different target sets to different members. After a three-week planning period, while the politics of any air operation in Libya were still being discussed, the first day of operations saw the French dispatch aircraft to Benghazi. This was followed by over 100 Tomahawk cruise-missile strikes from US and UK naval assets; long-range Storm Shadow strikes from the UK and B-2 stealth bomber strikes from the US. The first twenty-four hour period is said to have destroyed twenty-two of the twenty-four fixed air-defence sites. On 20 March, US, UK, and French aircraft flew against more targets. Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Norway, Qatar and Spain also contributed aircraft within the first few days.

The US was keen to hand over command of the operation within a matter of days and then play a supporting role. British officials pushed for a NATO command in order to leverage existing command structures, rules of engagement and systems for integrating non-NATO partners, while the French pushed for a Franco-British lead. Germany and Turkey were also reticent to use NATO for the operation, based on their reservations regarding military action from the outset. Despite close co-ordination between US and NATO commanders, the actual hand over has been described as a 'Hail Mary' pass – and indeed Ramstein remained in the loop for a number of days because airborne warning and control (AWACS) aircraft could not initially communicate directly with the Combined Air and Space Operations Center at Poggio Renatico. All US strike aircraft were removed at this stage although a number of F-16s remained available on a one-time-use basis.

Operation *Unified Protector* was conducted at a somewhat slower pace, in part because much of the fixed Libyan military command infrastructure had been destroyed during Operation *Odyssey Dawn* and because it was increasingly difficult to distinguish Qadhafi loyalists from the rebels: '[W]e found ourselves with both sides having the same equipment and both sides

dressed in similar fashion. And in fact, a lot of the equipment would shift back and forth within hours from one to the other'.⁴

As the operation continued and progress seemed to fade, many did not believe the NATO mandate was going to be prolonged beyond the first ninety days and there seemed to be no clear – or at least agreed – endgame. NATO commanders erred on the side of caution to maintain consensus across the Alliance, which further slowed progress. Weather also played a crucial role in hindering air operations at this stage, and indeed it was only the all-weather Sentinel R1s and JSTARS which could operate their sensors through the thick cloud.

Mass and Kinetic Effect

NATO forces only launched around forty to fifty combat sorties per day, compared with up to 1,000 strike sorties per day during the Kosovo campaign. Subsequently, air forces were stretched to cover the vast country, particularly with the French concentrating their efforts in the east on Brega and Benghazi and the rest of the coalition focusing in the west on Tripoli and Misrata. While newer combat aircraft are more capable, and advances in targeting pods and other sensors have greatly enhanced the information available to the pilot, these assets are also dependent on support from suppression of enemy air defence aircraft, tankers, AWACS and dedicated ISTAR platforms, which were also in short supply. This meant that, as fast jets were moved to respond to events on the ground, supporting assets also had to be rapidly shifted from one area to another, persistence of effort in any one area was rather difficult. Commanders stated that had larger numbers of aircraft been present at the outset, they may have had a greater effect on the loyalist forces before the latter turned to technicals and removed their uniforms.

Many of the aircraft flying air-to-ground strike missions were undertaking dynamic targeting, using their targeting pods to identify their own targets, perform collateral damage assessment and – if appropriate – destroy them. The lack of forces on the ground meant that some tasks – laser designation, first-stage battle-damage assessment – were also undertaken from the air.

Advanced munitions, particularly low-collateral, inert and fused weapons such as Hellfire, Dual Mode Seeker Brimstone and Paveway IV were highly prized. They allowed extraordinary precision from aircraft operating at up to 20,000 feet. This was a significant leap forwards from Operation *Allied Force* over Kosovo which was the first operation to use GPS-guided munitions in large numbers. Pictures shown on news channels of command-and-control nodes destroyed leaving adjacent buildings intact, or of airstrikes that had targeted specific floors on buildings, demonstrated the care with which targets were selected. Even those weapons that were deemed 'off target' usually only missed their target by a maximum of 5 metres.⁵ While

reports by Human Rights Watch,⁶ Civic and latterly by the *New York Times*,⁷ dispute NATO's claims of accuracy, the numbers of civilian casualties directly attributable to the air strikes still seem to be dramatically lower than the Kosovo campaign, measuring in the tens rather than hundreds.⁸

As with Kosovo,⁹ supply of advanced munitions proved problematic, particularly for the Europeans. Although this was a small operation by NATO standards, European stockpiles struggled to cope. The tempo of operations was such that, after three weeks sorties, had to be reduced from initial surge to a more sustainable tempo, partly to conserve munitions and partly because Qadhafi was proving more resilient than originally expected. European nations operating the F-16, which had a number of joint operating arrangements prior to the campaign, tried to obtain additional munitions from other European partners but, despite months of negotiations, an agreement to pool European stocks proved impossible. It fell to the USAF to plug the gaps. The UK too had some issues with supply, although principally with the hugely successful Dual Mode Brimstone weapon that had been developed in low numbers as an Urgent Operational Requirement for Afghanistan and was much in demand as an exceptionally accurate, low-collateral system. It was no surprise therefore that stocks for this system remained tight even after the manufacturer, MBDA, anticipated demand and strengthened the supply chain.

Intelligence and Targeting

Throughout the campaign, commanders were adamant that the NATO operation would not target Libyan infrastructure, although at one point there was discussion regarding some of the oil refineries which were still providing financial support to Colonel Qadhafi. This was designed to minimise the amount of time it would take for the country to re-establish itself after the cessation of violence.

Target development was difficult. Previous analysis on the country was out of date (some targets were ten years old or more) and there were few dedicated ISTAR assets in the air over the country, which meant that there was little to develop target packages from. In addition, NATO is reliant on individual nations' intelligence, rather than having a centralised intelligence body. It was sometimes difficult to confirm information gleaned by one nation, particularly since the French were not in the NATO intelligence cycle.

This lack of intelligence and real-time dedicated ISTAR feeds, more than the lack of combat or tanking assets, was a limiting factor for NATO forces wishing to attack targets, owing to difficulties in distinguishing between loyalist and rebel forces on the front line. Symbols painted on the roofs of technicals were often copied by loyalist forces and it was only by studying the movement of forces using wide-area surveillance platforms which could indicate where

groups of vehicles had come from (known loyalist or rebel territory) that groups could be identified (targeting pods or Predator feeds have a much narrower field of view). There were, however, certain behaviour markers: loyalists forces could sometimes be identified, for instance, because they used military manoeuvring techniques.

With such a large theatre of operations, rapidly unfolding events and very few dedicated ISTAR assets (it was only possible to build a layered ISTAR picture for ten hours a day), it was initially difficult to build the necessary pattern of life required to maintain momentum concurrently in several areas. However, the lack of vegetation in Libya helped to track movements and rapidly gain an understanding of the theatre and its actors. Wide-area ground surveillance platforms such as the UK's Sentinel R1 and US JSTARS proved vital in this regard. NATO's ability to provide persistent layered surveillance dramatically improved as operations concentrated in the west of the country and then on Tripoli as it allowed the ISTAR assets to remain stationary in one area for longer periods of time. An uplift in unmanned aerial vehicles (US and Italian Predators and French Harfangs) during August also helped.

Tankers

Aerial tankers were a vital resource for this operation given the limited number of combat air assets and the requirement for dynamic tasking. While there were limited numbers of tankers available, an average of 1.95 million lbs of fuel was delivered per day, peaking at 3 million lbs. The average fuel transferred per day was greater than the largest previous NATO fuelling operation. It initially caused great stress to the local Italian Infrastructure and threatened to ground some civilian airlines. Up to 85 per cent of fuel was delivered by the USAF, although Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and the UK also provided assets.

Conclusions

Air forces can provide a flexible and rapid response to emerging crises and NATO proved itself in this case an agile and adaptable organisation even in the face of severe challenges at the start of the campaign. This may have created a greater political appetite for air-led interventions in the future.

NATO's Rules of Engagement were extremely tight and despite some very regrettable civilian losses, continued support for NATO interventions and the operation's ultimate success was largely dependent on them.

The operation also emphasised the trade-off between increasingly capable and reliable combat air assets on the other hand and (given their expense) the numbers that can actually be deployed on the other. As US forces draw down in Europe, European forces will be encouraged to use this operation as impetus to better co-ordinate capabilities and look to plug the gaps,

particularly in all-weather capabilities. These findings are not new: an MoD report into the Lessons from Kosovo from 2000 identified very similar capability gaps in the wake of Operation *Allied Force*.¹⁰ Projects such as the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance system and Strategic Airlift Capability are good examples of efforts to plug these gaps. However, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta had some words of warning to European leaders: 'Approaches like "smart defense" help us spend together sensibly – but they cannot be an excuse to cut budgets further.'

The lack of dedicated ISTAR assets was a particular hindrance given the difficulties in determining the two sides and certainly the limited number of combat air assets would have been more effective if more ISTAR had been available. All-weather capabilities are also much sought-after and air forces are also interested in the use of 3D imaging from sensors such as LIDAR which would improve target acquisition and battle-damage assessment. All-source intelligence was given a new slant in this campaign with the emergence of social media as a network tool and through interaction with the news media. Intelligence sharing remains an obstacle to future operations and integrating France is an urgent priority, particularly if the UK wishes the Anglo-French accord to be meaningful in the mid- to long-term.

Strategic partnerships with non-NATO nations might also be seen as a priority in the future both by NATO and by individual nations. The presence of non-NATO nations in the coalition proved extremely helpful at every level, particularly as many of the NATO members were operating from a standing start in terms of intelligence; basing provided by Cyprus and Malta was also invaluable in this operation.

Notes and References

1. Israel believed that their conflict could be resolved by air power alone, whereas the NATO air campaign was fought against the regime's forces in support of armed rebels. Ground was taken by the Free Libya Forces and NATO always stressed that the victory was due to them. Secondly, the Israeli campaign was (or was at least perceived to be) very aggressive in terms of targeting civilian infrastructure, even if there were civilians in the vicinity. The NATO campaign on the other hand was conducted under very strict rules of engagement. Finally, Hizbullah had the upper hand in terms of the media campaign, which meant Israel was always seen as the overbearing aggressor. In Libya, Qadhafi quickly lost credibility with the international media and so NATO was portrayed as a liberator.
2. Robert Gates, 'Reflections on the Future of the Trans-Atlantic Alliance', speech to the Security and Defence Agenda, Brussels, June 2011, available at <<http://bit.ly/ij8xNW>>.

3. However, while every Alliance member voted for Libya mission, fewer than half have participated at all, and less than a third has been willing to participate in the strike mission. Frankly, many of those allies sitting on the sidelines do so not because they do not want to participate, but simply because they cannot as they simply do not have the military capability.
4. Charles Bouchard, 'Coalition Building and the Future of NATO Operations', remarks given to the Atlantic Council, 14 February 2012, available at <<http://www.acus.org/event/libya-revisited-coalition-building-and-future-nato-operations/transcript>>.
5. Evidence given to the House of Commons Defence Select Committee, October 2011.
6. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2012* (New York: HRW, 2012), available at <<http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/world-report-2012-libya>>.
7. *Ibid.*
8. C J Chivers and Eric Schmitt, 'In Strikes on Libya by NATO, an Unspoken Civilian Toll', *New York Times*, 17 December 2011. This article suggests at least forty and maybe more than seventy were killed at the site the reporters investigated. A UN report of March 2012 claims at least sixty civilians were killed in five strikes that they investigated. According to Human Rights Watch, over 500 civilians were thought to have died during the Kosovo campaign.
9. Michael W Lamb, 'Operation Allied Force, Golden Nuggets for Future Campaigns', Air War College, Maxwell Paper No. 27, August 2002.
10. Ministry of Defence, 'Kosovo: Lessons from the Crisis', 2000, available at <http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/31AA374E-C3CB-40CC-BFC6-C8D6A73330F5/0/kosovo_lessons.pdf>, p. 42.

Box 1: How Long Could the Operation Have Been Sustained?

In September 2011, the prime minister criticised the ‘arm-chair generals’ who said it would be difficult to intervene in Libya because of a lack of supplies and platforms. However, sustaining Operation *Ellamy* was a challenging task. The Ministry of Defence and armed forces did a remarkable job with the limited resources they had available, but the public was not aware that the operation entailed significant risk to standing tasks. The timelines for implementing the capability decisions of the SDSR also meant that, after September, many platforms vital to sustaining and supporting operations in Libya would no longer have been available or would have been operating at levels of risk considered too high: the operation could not have gone on indefinitely as suggested by the government. A key lesson from Libya is that the government will have to make harder judgements about operations and priorities in the future as a result of capability reductions from the SDSR, and arguably should have done last year. The armed forces were lucky the rebels toppled the Qadhafi regime when they did. However, there is a risk that political leaders will draw the wrong lesson: rather than making difficult decisions on prioritisation, and reassessing the UK’s ability to respond to concurrent threats, they might assume that the forces will always be able to meet political demands.

The issue of sustainability can be looked at in two ways:

First, did other military operations and tasks have to be cut because of the intervention in Libya? While operations in Afghanistan continued almost unaffected (despite some initial concerns about the diversion of intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance assets), the number of Tornado GR4 and Typhoon aircraft that were tasked for Operation *Ellamy* (sixteen and twelve/six, respectively) and the high rate of their usage (the aircraft undertook sorties every day), meant the UK lacked adequate air defence at home. Yet air defence is meant to be a standing military task.

In the maritime space, the government had already cut back on counter-piracy operations, deterrent presence in the South Atlantic and domestic tasking.¹ The government may have had to scale back more of the UK’s standing maritime patrols around the world if the operation had continued beyond September and direct maritime replenishment to *Ellamy* itself would also have become more difficult.

Second, did the UK have enough capabilities to support the mission until September 2011, and potentially after September? The real issue concerned the ability to refuel the Tornado and Typhoon aircraft. To sustain operations in Libya, the ageing VC-10 had to be used at a very high rate. However, at this point in its lifecycle, the VC-10 was not intended for use at such a tempo, and airworthiness became a real concern as a result. A related issue is that the VC-10 is due to retire by March/April 2013, as a result of the SDSR; this might seem like a long time away, but there is a planned gradual decline in its operational use, maintenance, training and exercising

programmes, starting a few years beforehand. The impending retirement of the VC-10 and related redundancy notices meant that there was not an optimum level of expertise within the RAF, the design authority or industry for maintaining the aircraft, particularly as it was being used at such a tempo. This posed real challenges for both ensuring and assuring airworthiness throughout the duration of Operation *Ellamy* and had it continued beyond September, the challenge would have been even greater.

This example highlights the importance of government understanding the significant implications of reducing investment across any of the Defence Lines of Development – namely training, equipment, personnel, information, concepts and doctrine, organisation, infrastructure and logistics – for the UK's ability to provide capabilities. In this respect, there are potential lessons from the UK's experience in Libya for the challenge of reconstituting or regenerating a number of capabilities – an ambition that was set out in SDSR; if long-term, sustained investment in relevant Lines of Development is not made, knowledge, skills and equipment will decline rapidly, and will be very hard to revitalise.

TriStar aircraft were used for conducting air-to-air refuelling for operations in Libya. However, this aircraft was scheduled to form part of the 'air bridge' to Afghanistan from December, so had *Ellamy* been prolonged, the UK's ability to maintain its contribution to the air campaign would have been questionable.

Some might argue that both the VC-10 and TriStar could be replaced by Voyager and the Future Strategic Tanker Aircraft, but these aircraft are just entering service and there is always technical risk in operational use of new platforms that have not been extensively tried and tested beforehand. Indeed, if these new aircraft had been needed and used, but had malfunctioned or failed in other ways, operations could not have continued due to safety considerations.

Mark Phillips

Notes

1. See Lee Willett, 'The Maritime Contribution', in 'Accidental Heroes: Britain, France and the Libya Operation', RUSI Interim Campaign Report, September 2011. HMS *Cumberland* had been conducting counter-piracy and other maritime security operations in the Indian Ocean before being redeployed to Libya. Her relief, HMS *Liverpool*, was sent to Libya; HMS *York* was en route to the South Atlantic, for her second deployment there in twelve months, when she was re-tasked to head to Libya; HMS *Westminster* had been operating in UK waters. In addition, the Fleet Ready Escort duty was not able to be carried out.

Don't Forget about the Ships

Lee Willett

Many nations deployed forces to the Mediterranean in early 2011 anticipating that intervention might well be required in circumstances other than Libya. However, as the humanitarian crisis in Libya escalated, naval assets formed a key component of the campaign, and one that is often overlooked.

Maritime forces provided specific responses, and offered options, in support of operations in Libya and may do so for other potential flashpoints in the Arab Spring. When John Tirpak wrote – on air power – that the critical lesson of Libya is that ‘there [is] simply no substitute for forward deployed forces’, his analysis was equally relevant to the maritime environment.¹ However, the Libya operation also highlighted the challenges that face navies in maximising their ability to operate together and in maintaining the ability to make an appropriate contribution to multinational operations in an age of uncertainty.

Libya: The Maritime Contribution

UN Security Council Resolution 1973 permitted ‘all necessary measures’ to protect civilians – including the an arms embargo, demands for a cease-fire, a no-fly zone and unimpeded access to provide humanitarian assistance – but ‘while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory’.² Given the post-Afghanistan and -Iraq legacy of reduced political and public appetite for prolonged engagement ashore, the contribution of maritime assets in supporting each specific component of Security Council Resolution 1973 was of critical importance in this case.

As the Arab Spring flared across the Middle East, the range of challenges that the UK and other nations faced included preparing for non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) as far apart as Syria and Yemen; civilian crises in Gulf States such as Bahrain; and the unravelling situation in Libya. With the ability to deploy forward in international waters to generate presence, there is an argument that basing military forces and other government assets at sea can offer the kind of flexibility in political and military choice central to preparing for such uncertainty, giving nations the ability to prepare to conduct a number of tasks both simultaneously and sequentially.

As the Libya crisis developed and as international resolve and policy direction hardened, maritime forces got under way with NEO tasks. Maritime forces found themselves contributing to operations across the spectrum of conflict from the very lowest end, such as NEO activities, through to high-end conventional operations with Tomahawk cruise-missile strikes. In the case

of Tomahawk cruise-missile strikes, the nuclear-powered attack submarine HMS *Triumph* targeted air defence and regime targets to enable the establishment of the no-fly zone, and to reduce the ability of regime forces to harm civilians from the first day of the combat operation, until all targets appropriate for Tomahawk strikes had been destroyed. One of *Triumph*'s Tomahawks was the first round fired by UK forces.³ The UK contributed sixteen ships, submarines and auxiliary assets to the campaign.⁴ Including a high percentage of its front-line capability, this was almost 20 per cent of the entire coalition maritime effort, and almost a third of the Royal Navy's operational front-line and support flotilla. Within this contribution, six of the Royal Navy's nineteen destroyers and frigates were present at some point – the Type-42 destroyer HMS *Liverpool* and her sister ship *York*, the Type-22 *Broadsword*-class frigate HMS *Cumberland* and the Type-23 *Duke*-class frigates HMS *Iron Duke*, *Sutherland* and *Westminster*.

Though Resolution 1973 emphatically forbade the option of deploying forces ashore, there remained a requirement to insert limited numbers of different types of personnel on land: navies disembarked ground troops (including marines and special forces), humanitarian aid workers and civilian government officials.

The Maritime Threat to Coalition Forces

Despite its small scale, the operation was nevertheless conducted in a volatile and unstable environment with a number of evident threats to coalition forces and their operations.

At sea, Qadhafi's forces used fast attack craft to mine coastal waters, creating a threat both to naval and commercial shipping taking non-combatants out and bringing humanitarian aid in. Throughout the conflict, naval surface ships – including destroyers and frigates as well as mine counter-measure ships – kept open critical sea lines of communication. Given the need to avoid lengthy engagements ashore, securing access to and from the sea can leave Western seaborne forces susceptible to strategies designed to deny them access to waters of key interest. As demonstrated by concerns about Iran's ability to mine the Straits of Hormuz, even limited levels of mine-laying activity can create significant strategic challenges.⁵ The UK, Dutch and Belgian navies in particular played a central role in mines countermeasure operations.

The nature of the conflict drew coalition ships very close to the Libyan shoreline. Destroyers and frigates from the Royal Navy, Royal Canadian Navy and the French Marine Nationale, amongst others, were exposed regularly to direct fire from Libyan shore batteries and artillery. The *Liverpool*, spending 106 of its 143 days on station close-in, was the first Royal Navy warship to

be fired upon since the Falklands War and came under fire on at least ten occasions.

More Work for the Workhorses

One of the most interesting naval developments was what could be seen as a renaissance in the role of the surface ship. Both the workhorses and the greyhounds of a fleet, and often being the visible face of national power as they deploy around the world, surface vessels have nevertheless been at the sharp end of cuts in many navies since the end of the Cold War.

Surface ships are commonly deployed forward to areas of potential national interest and international crisis, and their presence in such areas can be seen as routine without risking escalation. As the situation ashore in Libya deteriorated, the forward presence of destroyers and frigates enabled the UK and other nations to commence NEO activities as early as 24 February, before Resolution 1973 had been passed.

Surface ships were a central component of the arms embargo through their surveillance capability and ability to physically intercept. Their role in keeping sea lines of communication open enabled them to play a key role in the delivery of humanitarian aid to both Benghazi and Misrata. Surface ships destroyed significant regime capabilities ashore through precise naval gunfire. The *Iron Duke*, *Sutherland* and *Liverpool* in particular contributed to this task, with the latter firing 211 high-explosive and illumination shells in what was the most extensive use of naval gunfire support by a Royal Navy warship since the Falklands.⁶

British ships embarked other personnel ashore, including Royal Marines embarked on the *Cumberland* and *York*, who secured the port of Benghazi to enable an NEO operation to be conducted from there; diplomatic teams – embarked on *Cumberland* and *Westminster* in particular – who, amongst other tasks, were involved in making contact with elements of the rebels' embryonic National Transition Council (NTC); and special forces, who were involved in providing security for the diplomatic teams ashore, helped to secure the evacuation of British and other nationals, and located and secured key infrastructure sites including oil refineries and former weapons of mass destruction installations. British Special Boat Squadron personnel were inserted into Libya both by sea and by air.⁷

The Response Force Task Group

Libya was the first operation in which the Royal Navy's newly established Response Force Task Group (RFTG) was deployed. A post-SDSR amalgamation of the UK's Carrier Strike and Amphibious Task Groups, the RFTG was one of the UK's most significant contributions, and also enabled the Royal Navy to test a number of new operational concepts, including air/sea integration and

task-group operations as a whole. The RFTG was designed to deliver strike (through air operations and Tomahawk strikes); amphibious and helicopter operations;⁸ maritime security; command and control; regional engagement; humanitarian operations including evacuations and disaster relief; and – through the use of the open nature of the sea – access to regions of interest and the ability to provide a retractable boots-on-the-ground option.

The RFTG's employment highlighted some key developments in the role of maritime forces. First, the early deployment of the task group assets RFA *Argus*, HMS *Liverpool* and HMS *Triumph* – something commended by the House of Commons Defence Committee⁹ – and the early arrival in the region of the entire RFTG, generated presence on station which provided options both to address wider regional stability and to conduct operations in response to specific circumstances without waiting for the establishment of any alliance constructs.¹⁰ In early 2011, the RFTG had been preparing for a training operation, Cougar 11, which would take the group through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, into the Indian Ocean and then the Persian Gulf. During the deployment, the RFTG would conduct a combined exercise with the French Navy's *Charles de Gaulle* carrier battlegroup, and engage with a number of key regional partners. However, as the Arab Spring escalated, the RFTG was re-tasked to remain in the Mediterranean.¹¹ Keeping the RFTG in the eastern Mediterranean maximised its responsiveness in relation to any crisis in the region but also pre-positioned it to deploy through Suez to the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf if required. As the RFTG remained in the Mediterranean, a number of training rotations – including a NATO-led amphibious exercise in Albania, and tactical insertion training and the first embarking of five Apache Longbow attack helicopters on the landing platform helicopter amphibious ship HMS *Ocean* during Exercise *Cypriot Lion* in Cyprus – meant that the RFTG was ready to respond quickly with different options to hand.

Second, on several occasions the RFTG was usefully split. Early in the deployment, the *Argus* took elements of 40 Commando Royal Marines to poise off the coast of Yemen in the event of a non-combatant evacuation. Later, the entire group was split in two with some elements (led by *Ocean*) remaining on station off Libya and others (led by the Landing Platform Dock HMS *Albion*) heading east of Suez to carry on the original mission of regional engagement and counter-piracy operations. Splitting the Task Group, whilst still operating under the same command-and-control construct, to conduct what First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope referred to as 'separate, yet simultaneous, missions in different theatres' enabled the UK to maximise the utility of each asset in practice while demonstrating the theory that it could provide political choice and contingent capability in more than one theatre at a time.¹² Indeed, as the volatility of the Arab Spring increased, this possibility began to feature prominently in Whitehall thinking. As Admiral

Stanhope told the House of Commons Defence Committee, 'our contingent requirement was available to be used for the time of the [Libya] crisis. Some of it was used; some of it went to be contingent in the Middle East.'¹³

Third, sea-basing concepts like the RFTG showed increased strategic relevance in Libyan operations. The presence of a 615-strong Commando group, drawn largely from 40 Commando, gave the UK a retractable boots-on-the-ground option should limited intervention have been required.¹⁴ 40 Commando was deployed at sea for a range of potential operations in between two land-based tours in Afghanistan.

The RFTG's effectiveness in the Libya operation has raised the question of whether NATO should consider standing up a maritime rapid-response task force and generated much interest within other nations already.

Gunboat Diplomacy: The Coercive Effect of Sea Power

Navies have long played a key role in exerting deterrent and coercive effect, with the forward deployment of ships supporting the ability to prevent conflict.

The RFTG delivered effect both along the length of the Libyan coastline and in different theatres. Admiral Stanhope argues that through forward presence, 'the more one deploys, the less one needs to be kinetic.'¹⁵ The use of forward-deployed navies often means that naval ships will be 'first in, last out' in any given operation. The deployment of Apache helicopters on HMS *Ocean* was perceived by some to be a 'game changing' development, not only because of the precision it could deliver ashore, but also because of the way in which its operation appeared to have a coercive effect on Libyan forces disproportionate to its actual capability. According to Commodore John Kingwell (then commanding officer of the RFTG) the main aim of the Apache missions was 'psychological, not kinetic'.¹⁶ The UK surface flotilla's effective use of precision high-explosive and illumination rounds were intended to have coercive effect on regime forces by demonstrating their vulnerability. The Tomahawk – a weapon procured originally by the UK to fill a conventional deterrence and coercion niche – generated similar effect. The presence of Royal Marines embarked with the RFTG and their high-profile training exercises in Albania and Cyprus clearly fostered within the regime forces a fear of an amphibious assault – as evidenced by the building of coastal defences at Brega.

Key to generating deterrent and coercive effect is the communication of credible capability and intent to use force. Thus, even a simple Ministry of Defence press release, picked up in the international press, announcing the operation of Apaches from HMS *Ocean* is likely to have contributed, intentionally or otherwise, to the coercive effect on Qadhafi's forces.¹⁷

Beyond Libya, the embarked Apache capability on HMS *Ocean* has resulted in discussion of whether Somali pirates could be similarly deterred by this maritime package.

Lessons Identified and Future Challenges

The maritime contribution has been broadly seen as playing a significant role in the overall success of the campaign. However, the operation revealed some shortcomings.

Ships Numbers: A Critical Mass

The RUSI Interim Libya Campaign Report noted that the size of the Royal Navy's deployment left the UK short elsewhere on other tasks of major national and international importance.¹⁸ The navy has halved in size from its 1998 numbers. Despite the fact that a more capable generation of Royal Navy ships and submarines are entering service, a ship still cannot be in two places at once. While concepts such as splitting the RFTG show how improving operational flexibility can help to bridge such gaps, questions must now exist as to how effectively the UK can meet standing commitments whilst also responding to international crises.

Naval Co-operation

Navies – particularly the major Western navies – have long-established histories of formal and informal co-operation. This meant that many of the navies involved in the Libya campaign were used to co-operating, and this experience enabled the international coalition to conduct effective combined operations at a relatively early phase in the crisis.

However, the increasing desire of many nations to contribute to international operations means that more navies were involved in the Libya campaign, a number of which did not have much practical experience of co-operation. One challenge for the coalition naval forces was thus integrating some of these new partners into existing operational constructs. Specifically, many of the navies – and particularly the major Western navies – have established procedures, either individually or collectively, for conducting higher-end operations. With a larger number of navies likely to be involved in a larger number of NEOs, however, there is a requirement to improve the conceptual and operational integration of NEO planning.

A Lack of Enabling Capability?

Enabling capabilities such as command and control, ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance), refuelling and logistics are the glue that binds front-line operation in a campaign such as Libya, without which the operation could come unstuck. The provision of such enabling capabilities underlined the importance of naval co-operation: in this case, capability gaps in the inventories of many nations were filled by

US assets. It is widely accepted that, while the US deployed proportionately fewer front-line assets to the operation than has come to be expected, the operation could not have been conducted without its provision of many of the key enablers.¹⁹ This underscores a critical dependence on the US. While many nations will still concentrate on providing core assets like fast jets or surface ships, bringing critical enabling capabilities to the table can buy significant influence in a coalition.

There is an argument that nations now facing significant budget challenges may wish to consider investing in niche enabling capabilities. Command and control, for example, is a niche capability which only a few navies possess. With the US strategic focus shifting (in principle) more towards the Persian Gulf and the Pacific, as stated in its January 2012 defence strategic guidance paper, the European NATO powers might consider closely what capabilities may be required to stand up an operation without US involvement. From the UK's perspective, given the central role of surveillance requirements in supporting operations at sea and ashore in Libya and given the cancellation of the Nimrod MRA4 maritime patrol aircraft in the SDSR, concerns about this lack of capability are reflected in the Defence Committee report and its comment that it expects the UK 'to give a higher priority to the development of such capabilities in advance of the next SDSR'.²⁰

A Maritime Strategy for NATO?

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has gone through what Admiral Stanhope once referred to as an 'awakening' of strategic consciousness relating to the use of the sea.²¹ With the Libya operation underway, NATO had three separate maritime task groups operating: *Unified Protector* off Libya; the Mediterranean-based counter-terrorism task group deployed under Operation *Active Endeavour*; and the counter-piracy operation *Ocean Shield* in the Horn of Africa. Despite NATO's increasing out of area focus on three sides of its traditional sphere of interest in Europe maritime matters are becoming more prominent. The Arctic Ocean, with four NATO nations around it, remains an environment whose strategic future remains uncertain. To the east, in its war with Georgia in 2008 Russia used naval blockades, fleet-on-fleet engagement, land attack from the sea and an amphibious assault as part of its combined-arms campaign. To the south, the continuing instability in North Africa and growing instability in southern Europe brings the Mediterranean back into strategic focus as a maritime environment of some potential significance, raising the question of whether NATO should consider a 'look south' posture as part of its strategic outlook.

Given the need for NATO to consider options for rapid response at sea, as it has on land with the NATO Reaction Force, the RFTG's effectiveness – especially when set in the context of a growing discussion of the importance of both improved naval co-operation and the wider utility of basing forces

at sea – reinforces the argument for NATO to form a maritime response task force.²²

Conclusion

While Libya's war itself may have been a surprise, the Arab Spring was the kind of 'anticipated uncertainty' that the SDSR configured British forces to respond to. Forces based at sea offer inherent flexibility. The trend of declining naval force levels across NATO could force uncomfortable strategic choices at national and alliance levels when maritime power is needed.

The public perception may be that the Libya campaign was purely an air operation, but the reality is that ships and submarines still matter. As the record shows, maritime dimensions affected every part of the campaign.

The critical role of maritime forces in the operation – fulfilling a variety of key tasks in support of the UN Resolution – is a lesson which planners and politicians will not forget.

Notes and References

1. John A Tirpak, 'Lessons from Libya', *Air Force Magazine*, December 2011, p. 2.
2. UN, 'Security Council Approves "No-Fly Zone" over Libya, Authorizing "All Necessary Measures" to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with Five Abstentions'.
3. Tomahawk land-attack cruise missile capability remains unique to the UK and the US.
4. House of Commons Defence Committee [HCDC], *Operations in Libya*, HC 950 (London: The Stationery Office, 25 January 2012), p. 46, para 99, including note 113. The naval contribution can be seen in detail in the Table of Military Assets in this Whitehall Report.
5. Other anti-access options include the deployment of robust submarine and short-range missile capabilities. The efforts undertaken by China and Iran in particular to develop anti-access capabilities are well documented.
6. See, Ministry of Defence, 'HMS LIVERPOOL Arrives Home from Libya Mission', press release, 7 November 2011; Mark Stanhope, 'Influence without Embroilment: Delivering Effect from the Sea', speech to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 24 February 2012.
7. See, Mark Urban, 'The Inside Story of the UK's Secret Mission to Beat Qadhafi', *BBC News*, 19 January 2012; Mark Phillips, 'The Ground Offensive: the Role of Special Forces', in 'Accidental Heroes: Britain, France and the Libya Campaign', RUSI Interim Campaign Report, September 2011, pp. 10–12.

8. The amphibious and helicopter capacity enables the RFTG to insert by air or sea two companies of ground forces and to support them ashore for twenty-eight days.
9. HCDC, *op. cit.*, p. 9, para 23.
10. John Kingwell (Commanding Officer, Response Force Task Group), 'The Maritime Dimension of the Libyan Conflict', remarks made at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 16 November 2011, <<http://www.iiss.org.uk/events-calendar/2011-events-archive/november-2011/the-maritime-dimension-of-the-libyan-conflict/?locale=en>>.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Stanhope, *op. cit.*
13. HCDC, *op. cit.*, p. 50, para 112, including note 131.
14. Kingwell, *op. cit.*
15. Stanhope, *op. cit.*
16. Kingwell, *op. cit.* and Stanhope, *ibid.*
17. See Ministry of Defence, British Army Apache Fires First Hellfire Missile at Sea, Press Release 056/2011, 13 May 2011. See also: Richard Norton-Taylor and Nick Hopkins, 'Libya Apache Deployment Signals Britain's Escalating Role in Conflict', *Guardian*, 25 May 2011; Richard Norton-Taylor and Nick Hopkins, 'Apache Helicopters to be Sent into Libya by Britain', *Guardian*, 23 May 2011; Damien McElroy, James Kirkup and Thomas Harding, 'Libya: British Attack Helicopters to be Deployed', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 May 2011.
18. 'Accidental Heroes', *op. cit.*, p. 8.
19. Despite suggestions that its military contribution was not as significant as usual, the US Navy still sent eleven warships. See the Table of Military Assets in this report.
20. HCDC, *op. cit.*, para 22, p. 8.
21. Mark Stanhope, 'NATO: Building Maritime Security', speech to International Institute of Strategic Studies, 24 March 2009. See also, Lee Willett, 'An "Awakening at Sea"? NATO and Maritime Security', *RUSI.org*, 2011. In recent years, of course, NATO has developed a maritime component – termed the Alliance Maritime Strategy – of its Strategic Concept.
22. When asked by the HCDC whether the NRF would have been a suitable asset to deploy to Libya, Richard Barrons (Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Operations)) stated that 'the NRF is largely a land construct, so it is not ideally suited to an operation of this nature' (see HCDC, *op. cit.*, para. 72, including note 8).

Box 2: An Air/Sea Battle?

The air-sea component was the largest part of the coalition military operation. With a military intervention based primarily around naval and air-force assets, one conclusion to be drawn from the campaign was that a significant military contribution can still be made without needing to consider deploying boots on the ground.

Post-Afghanistan, another renaissance may be under way, relating to the place of air- and sea-based concepts of military operations in defence strategy thinking and planning. In the US, the navy and air force are developing the concept of the 'air-sea battle'. At the time of the Libya conflict, then US Secretary of Defense Robert S Gates told the US Military Academy in February 2011 that the US Army 'must confront the reality that the most plausible, high-end scenarios for the US military are primarily naval and air engagements', adding that, in his opinion, 'any future defense secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should "have his head examined," as General MacArthur so delicately put it.'¹

In the UK debate, Libya provided an intellectual counterpoint to the argument that strategic counter-insurgency campaigns represented the most likely future conflict construct the UK and its allies would face. Indeed, post-SDSR there was concern that while air/land integration had improved over the last ten years, the lack of attention given to air/maritime integration represented a significant risk, especially within the kinds of future scenarios that the UK's Future Character of Conflict document envisaged.² Since Libya, a debate has raged within the UK armed forces as to whether either Afghanistan or Libya would be *the* war, or whether both would merely be *a* war. Commodore John Kingwell, commanding officer of the Response Force Task Group for the Libya operation, suggested that while Libya may not be 'the model for expeditionary operations', it does provide '*a* glimpse of the future'.³ Certainly in the wake of Operation *Allied Force* over Kosovo, many analysts postulated that air-led interventions would be the model for the future, but the events of 9/11 meant that, conversely, land-centric counter-insurgency operations were the model for the next ten years.

Libya provided an early opportunity to test air-sea battle thinking, and embarking Apache helicopters on HMS *Ocean* demonstrated the ability to add air assets at sea. Integrating attack helicopters into a maritime platform for the first time and drawing on other assets – such as nuclear attack submarines – to find, fix and strike a range of targets, the Apache operations (which began over Brega on 4 June) included strike, combat, armed recce and support operations – the latter including providing naval fire direction, surveillance and targeting, and escort tasks.

The deployment of Apaches on the HMS *Ocean* is something relevant to the UK in the context of the arrival of its two new *Queen Elizabeth*-class aircraft carriers, one

of which initially will operate as a helicopter carrier, and both of which will have the capacity to support helicopter and amphibious operations. One notable success of the deployment was that it demonstrated what could be achieved by the services integrating their respective assets, to maximise the sum of their parts.

There was good co-ordination early on between the Combined Air and Space Operations Center and naval air assets such as the CP-140 or P3 Orion, which were tasked by the maritime component commander and were primarily used to survey the littoral in support of the UN sanctions. These assets were also used to provide ISTAR over land in the latter part of the campaign.

Naval gunfire at shore targets was co-ordinated with the air campaign, but drew some criticism as the accuracy was not of the same standard as air-delivered munitions. (Most air-delivered munitions were accurate to 97 per cent within a radius of 2–3 metres from the target, whereas naval fires could easily be tens of metres out.) However, most naval fires were used in response to attacks against ships and were usually aimed at an area of open land in the vicinity to the origin of the attack rather than at a specific point. Naval gunfire was also de-conflicted with attack-helicopter operations and was sometimes used as a decoy for the helicopters. UK helicopter operations were also directly tasked by the Combined Air and Space Operations Center.

While the overall operation proved successful and the air and maritime components were relatively de-conflicted, actual integration remained low. More needs to be done to better leverage the capabilities of both forces. In the US, the air-sea battle is very much focused on operations in the Pacific; however, in Europe, development of this concept will hopefully provide a framework for better capability management at a time of severe resource constraints. For the UK, it should also provide a bedrock for the future integration of the carrier strike force, which, to date, has been a source of friction rather than collaboration between the two services.

Lee Willett and Elizabeth Quintana

Notes

1. Robert S Gates, speech delivered to United States Military Academy, 25 February 2011.
2. Ministry of Defence, 'Future Character of Conflict', Defence Concepts and Doctrine Centre, Shrivenham, February 2010.
3. John Kingwell, 'The Maritime Dimension of the Libyan Conflict', discussion meeting International Institute for Strategic Studies, 16 November 2011. Emphasis added.

The Responsibility to Protect: A Chance Missed

Jonathan Eyal

Here at the UN, we have a responsibility to stand up against regimes that persecute their people', said Prime Minister David Cameron in his speech to the United Nations' General Assembly on 22 September last year; 'To fail to act is to fail those who need our help', he added.

At the time when Cameron spoke, his assertion was hardly disputed. For, just a week before he flew to New York for the UN meeting, the British premier had stood together with French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Tripoli, acknowledging the adulation of people grateful for the military support which Britain and France had provided them. And the good news kept coming in: a month after Cameron's UN speech, Muammar Qadhafi, Libya's self-styled 'Brotherly Leader and Guide' was dead. The circumstances of his killing – or, more appropriately, lynching – were unedifying, and Britain took no part in them. But the consequences, a Libya liberated from his capricious, cruel dictatorship, and a nation delivered from what were certain to be large-scale massacres, were all too real and entirely welcome. Libya was touted as a classic test-case of humanitarian intervention, now incorporated as a new United Nations concept and usually referred to as the 'Responsibility to Protect', or R2P.

And yet, it should have been obvious then – and certainly became obvious thereafter – that Libya remained the exception rather than the rule in the development of such an international responsibility. For, through a mixture of acts of omission and commission, Britain and the other powers which conceived and drove the military operation in Libya missed an opportunity to advance the concept of the R2P. Furthermore, as the subsequent debates over responses to the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Syria indicate, the faulty legal experience of Libya has emboldened nations such as Russia and China in blocking any future intervention, even one which is justified under R2P.

The Legal Background

The 'Responsibility to Protect' idea rose on the global agenda over the last two decades, in response to a manifest need to act in circumstances when a state is either unwilling or unable to protect its people. The horrors of Rwanda, the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and civil war in Darfur, to name but a few: in all these conflicts, earlier action by the international community could certainly have saved lives and may have prevented some conflicts altogether.

R2P was initially elaborated by a committee of experts in 2001 and subsequently endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2005. But, as is often

the case in international law, R2P's intellectual roots go back a millennia, to the customary 'just war' concept. As refined by generations of jurists and practice, the theory argued that, under certain conditions – such as a grave danger to international security or to a group of people, the exhaustion of all other forms of conflict-management and a reasonable prospect of success – a military intervention could be regarded as 'humanitarian' and therefore permissible, in the sense that it served a good moral purpose.

The R2P concept merely adapted the 'just war' idea to a new international context, although it diverged from it in two respects. First, R2P is not merely concerned with the use of force; instead, it seeks to set out a broad array of possible measures designed to prevent mass atrocities, which start once a conflict becomes imminent or predictable, and continue long after a peace agreement is signed, or a ceasefire obtained. So, it can include anything from humanitarian supplies in the incipient phase of a crisis, right up to demilitarisation and security sector reform measures long after the crisis has subsided. The second area in which R2P departs from the traditional concept of 'just war' is in its attempt to re-conceptualise the relationship between intervention and national sovereignty. Traditionally, an intervention may have been seen as necessary, but was still regarded as a violation of national sovereignty; the question was only how justifiable this violation was and how long its duration should be. However, the founders of R2P went further, by arguing that sovereignty does not entail just rights in international law, but also duties. The most important and basic duty of a state is to protect its own citizens and, if it is either unable or unwilling to do this, then an intervention becomes necessary. It may be a daunting argument, but the advocates of R2P asserted that, far from violating sovereignty, external intervention in such circumstances actually strengthens national sovereignty.

Unsurprisingly, the idea remains deeply controversial. One argument – advanced by both scholars and politicians – is that R2P is dangerous because it merely masks the traditional impulse for intervention, by the powerful against the less powerful; that, after all, is the only way R2P is likely to work in practice. Others argue, more broadly, that, far from making the world safer, anything which dilutes the scope of national sovereignty may undermine world order. In a time-honoured UN method, the dispute was ultimately fudged: the R2P concept exists, but it remains largely confined to General Assembly resolutions, which do not carry the same legally binding force as the Security Council. And, through some clever drafting, it allows nations to read as much or as little as they wish into it, while still maintaining that the 'basic values of humanity' remain valid, together with the concept of state sovereignty.

For the purposes of assessing the relevance and application of the R2P concept to the Libya conflict, the following considerations are relevant:

- The safest legal course, at least for the moment, is to regard R2P as a normative, rather than a legal concept; a guidance for future action, rather than a clear-cut obligation on states, or a 'right' to protection
- Since it is a normative concept, it has big potential to galvanise international action, especially if a community or a group of threatened people manage to frame their plight or their request for international military intervention on the basis of this concept
- However, as previous debates about the application of R2P indicate (particularly those surrounding the events in the Darfur war in Sudan) most developing nations, and some developed ones such as Russia, will continue to contest the application of the concept, on principle and almost regardless of the circumstances, while most Western countries will continue to uphold it, albeit selectively
- More importantly – and, again, as the Darfur experience showed – although R2P is conceived as an idea which encompasses the full spectrum of activities, the reality is that a military operation is the first measure which is being discussed at a global level, largely because it is difficult to envisage negotiations with a government which may be on the verge of annihilating its people or is already doing so.

R2P in Practice: Libya

There is little doubt that, despite all the caveats mentioned above, R2P was ideally suited to the Libyan situation, as it initially presented itself. A rebellion against a tyrannical regime started in early January 2011. It was spontaneous and not encouraged from outside; indeed, Western governments were initially accused of preferring the survival of the Qadhafi regime. By mid-February 2011, the rebellion spread, again without any outside intervention or encouragement. So, this was hardly a manufactured event, designed as a prelude to military intervention; not even the most ardent opponents of the operation have ever levelled such an accusation.

Furthermore, by late February 2011, the rebellion was losing steam, as Qadhafi's forces began to regain control over the country. Their brutality was never in doubt: the International Criminal Court launched its first investigation into the government's reported atrocities on 3 March 2011, about two weeks before the military operations started. By that time, however, a large pocket of rebels were boxed into the city of Benghazi and Qadhafi and his acolytes vowed their wholesale murder, a threat which, given their previous record, was all too credible. Members of the international community – both separately and jointly – had tried their best to limit the bloodshed. A 'press statement' was agreed by the UN Security Council on 26 February to that effect, but was ignored by the Libyan regime. Security Council Resolution 1970 was then adopted, imposing an arms embargo and sanctions, but this also did not have the required effect. Significantly, that resolution also reminded the Libyan government of its basic duties to its people, yet

that too was ignored. So, the conclusion is inescapable: the situation was calamitous, it would have resulted in a massive loss of life, there was little hope of reasoning with a government intent on killing its people and no question that a massive loss of life was about to occur. It is simply not true to suggest that peaceful means of dealing with the crisis were ignored; they were attempted, but failed.

Nor is it true – as some critics subsequently argued – that a massive or ‘indiscriminate’ use of force was contemplated. As Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Britain’s UN Permanent Representative, testified in his 12 October 2011 evidence to the House of Commons Defence Committee in London:¹

... [W]hen the situation deteriorated further, obviously we needed to give consideration to more dramatic action to protect civilians. As a result of a request from the Arab League to impose a no-fly zone, we began to focus on whether it would be possible to authorise and implement one. In the course of those discussions, again we looked at a number of different options for a way of protecting the civilian population in Libya, including the possibility of humanitarian corridors, safe havens, which had been used in some previous theatres in the Middle East.

Sir Mark’s explanation may be dismissed as self-serving, but it rings true to those who knew the political setting of that time: there was no appetite for a massive military intervention, and quite a few Western leaders continued to doubt that anything at all could be done. The operation was conceived at the lowest possible level and for the shortest period of time.

And it is equally false to claim that the aim of the operation was, from the start, ‘regime change’, Qadhafi’s removal from power. There is no concrete proof that this was contemplated and plenty of circumstantial evidence that Western governments sought to achieve only a narrow, humanitarian objective, if only because few had a clue who could replace Qadhafi. UN Security Council Resolution 1973 adopted on 17 March 2011 was, therefore, both the culmination of a process which exhausted all other peaceful means, and a measured response to a genuine, immediate humanitarian crisis.

The argument that there was no international consensus on the use of force, since five UN Security Council members abstained in the voting on Resolution 1973 is more weighty, but ultimately also irrelevant. It is true that those five governments represent about half of the world’s total population. The fact that they abstained is, therefore, a source of concern, an indication of just how far R2P is from universal acceptance as a legal obligation. Yet, there are two counter-arguments of equal strength. To start with, the reluctance of these five governments to sanction any international intervention in what they consider the ‘internal affairs’ of another nation is well-known,

pre-dates the crisis in Libya and is enduring to this day.² So, although their objections about Resolution 1973 were framed within the terms of the Libyan emergency, there is no question that these related to more general principles about the use and application of force by the UN. Secondly, it is equally clear that at least two of the five abstaining countries had it within their power to torpedo Resolution 1973 altogether: China and Russia enjoy the right of veto and Russia has a long history of exercising this right at the UN. There are many reasons why countries abstain in Security Council votes, but the result of their abstentions must have been known to them from the start: that the resolution would pass and do so under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which deals with 'enforcement measures'.

Various Russian politicians have subsequently argued that they regarded Resolution 1973 as merely providing an authority to enforce a no-fly zone, rather than launch what they consider to have been an all-out war. However, this objection is almost certainly false. By the time Resolution 1973 was tabled, all the permanent members of the Security Council – including Russia and China – knew that its practical result would be the use of force, led by a coalition of Western powers; the discussions in Britain and France were about the necessity to intervene and the initial hesitation which even the United States had in sponsoring the Resolution was precisely because Washington still debated the usefulness of a military intervention. Furthermore, the Resolution referred to the need to use 'all necessary means' in order to prevent the massacre of civilians in Libya, the usual phrase which invariably means the use of force. As Sir Mark Lyall Grant of the UK subsequently admitted, 'those five countries [which abstained] were concerned about the wide-sweeping authorisation in 1973, which is one of the most broadest authorisations of military action that the Security Council has ever enacted. The five countries were concerned that the resolution went too far, which is why they abstained'.³ The implication is that they knew that the use of military force was being envisaged and they also knew that the authority being sought from the UN Security Council was very wide. China and Russia did not veto the Resolution because, as Sir Mark subsequently observed, 'they realised that the political pressure and the fact that the Arab League was calling for the action meant that it would be politically difficult to block it'.⁴

A careful study of all the available evidence therefore points to the following conclusions:

- That the operation in Libya fulfilled all the criteria of the R2P concept
- That the use of force was only contemplated as a final and last recourse
- Everyone who debated Resolution 1973 knew that it would lead to the use of force
- Notwithstanding the substantial abstentions in the Security Council,

support for the operation was very wide and this included most of the members of the Arab League, not an organisation hitherto famous for sanctioning Western military interventions

- That, nevertheless, key Security Council member-states remained concerned about the extent of the operations being envisaged, and about their final scope.

Errors of Practice

Western governments cannot, therefore, be accused of ignoring international law by either failing in their responsibilities, or by violating them through their intervention in Libya. The real errors were not in the preparations for action but, rather, in the way Resolution 1973 was subsequently applied.

The first error – and it was a political, rather than legal one – was in **establishing the command structure** for the Libya operation. Immediately after the Resolution was adopted on 17 March 2011, a debate ensued about the structure of command to be put in place; the Resolution gave authority to countries to act ‘either nationally or through regional organisations’. Some countries toyed with the idea of creating a *sui generis* structure, specific to the operation and more European in nature. That may have suited the US and offered certain advantages for France as well. But it quickly became clear that cobbling together such an edifice was both impractical and politically divisive.⁵ So, NATO had to assume the co-ordinating role. While this outcome was inevitable, few seem to have noticed that the sight of a NATO-led operation was bound to alienate Russia, for it confirmed Russian fears that the true purpose of the exercise was not humanitarian but, rather, an attempt to expand or re-establish Western ‘domination’ in North Africa, in the wake of the revolutions which were then occurring also in Tunisia and Egypt. NATO’s involvement allowed both Russia and China to move very quickly into outright opposition to the operation; it also gave an opportunity for South Africa, a nation which initially voted in favour of Resolution 1973, to ‘retract’ its support. In practical terms, this made no difference: the authority to use force continued to exist and the operation unfolded. But in purely political terms, NATO’s involvement – albeit in the shape of a ‘coalition of the willing’ – sharpened divisions in the UN, damaged the moral authority of the operation in the eyes of doubters and confirmed all the conspiracy theories of those who argued that R2P is nothing but a new justification for some old-style Western intervention.

The **scope of the operation** also generated additional difficulties. As Sir Mark Lyall Grant told Britain’s House of Commons Defence Committee, all fifteen members of the Security Council knew from the start that what was being envisaged ‘was not just a question of flying over Libya imposing a no-fly zone, and even the imposition of a no-fly zone would require strikes on the ground to take out the air defences. In addition, the protection of civilians

specifically meant halting Qadhafi's columns and, if necessary, ships from attacking Benghazi'.⁶ So, Sir Mark is right to claim that it is 'not reasonable' for countries to 'say afterwards that they were misled or that we had over-interpreted the resolution'.

Still, the authority given by Resolution 1973 was 'to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack'. Can this be interpreted to mean that Western forces should have continued the operations long after the immediate threat to Benghazi's residents was lifted and when the pro-Qadhafi forces were in full retreat? What was the purpose, for instance, of continuing the air attacks when Qadhafi and his troops were boxed in, in places such as Sirte, where they were no longer in a position to hurt many civilians? The standard response of those who defend the continuation of operations, long after the Benghazi siege was lifted, is to resort to legal sophistries. They argue that the UN Resolution spoke of protecting various Libyan population centres 'including Benghazi', and that the word 'including' can only be interpreted as signifying that the real aim of the drafters of the Resolution was to protect the country's entire population, rather than merely that of one city. Perhaps, but if this was the real intention, then it should have been clear from the start that 'regime change', namely the overthrow of Qadhafi, was the only means by which the people of Libya could ever be made to feel safe from the tender mercies of the dictator. Supporters of the NATO-led action claim that regime change was never their objective. They also point out that, months after the operation started, Qadhafi was being offered a negotiated 'way out', which included a refuge in another country, or just his formal resignation from office. Still, both of these options would have signified regime change, albeit by less bloody means. And, in reality, regime change was the only logical conclusion of a UN Resolution which proposed to defend Libya's *entire* population. It is now forgotten that one reason for Germany's opposition to the operation was precisely the fact that it could be interpreted in an open-ended manner; as Peter Witting, that country's representative to the UN, put it during the Security Council debates on Resolution 1973, the purpose of the action was to send a message to Qadhafi and his associates 'that their time is over [and] they must relinquish power immediately'.⁷

But that is clearly not what either Russia or China thought the Resolution was meant to achieve; had they realised that to be the intention, it is more likely (although this cannot be proven) that at least Russia would have vetoed the document. Either way, those who criticise NATO and Western governments for going beyond their mandate do have a point. NATO went to great lengths to minimise civilian casualties and, overall, succeeded admirably in this objective. NATO's operation also saved many lives, but an operation which was justified in purely humanitarian terms was ultimately stretched to achieving an eminently political objective: the removal of a government

and its replacement by that of the rebels. That conclusion is also confirmed by the fact that, just days after the killing of Muammar Qadhafi, the NATO offensive was stopped, despite the fact that sporadic violence continued in other parts of the country. If the objective was just humanitarian, NATO should have continued its mission until there was conclusive evidence that further bloodshed was unlikely to occur. But this did not take place; the moment Qadhafi disappeared, NATO's planes also vanished.

But probably the most evident departure from the spirit of Resolution 1973 – if not its letter – was **the decision of the Western powers to allow the supply of weapons and training to the Libyan rebels**. The Resolution built upon previous UN measures, especially Security Council Resolution 1970, which imposed an arms embargo on Libya. Resolution 1973 toughened these provisions further, by creating an enforcement mechanism for the implementation of the arms embargo and by 'deploring' the 'continued flows of mercenaries' into Libya.⁸ In short, when the NATO-led operation began, the legal position was clear: the military intervention was designed to save people, rather than tilt the balance in favour of one side or another in the internal conflict in Libya. But, evidently, this is not what the Foreign Office in London actually believed. In his testimony to the House of Commons Defence Committee inquiry into the Libya operation, Christian Turner, who headed the Middle Eastern Department at the Foreign Office at that time, intimated that 'we think that there are some specific circumstances under which defensive weapons could be provided with the aim of protecting civilians'.⁹ Turner admitted that 'a rifle would not be a defensive weapon', but ultimately declined to explain what his – or his Department's – definition of 'defensive' armaments really was, even when he was challenged by Bob Stewart, a Conservative MP with military experience, that 'there are very few defensive weapons that cannot be offensive too'.

However, Cathy Adams, Legal Counsellor at the Foreign Office, did try to provide a legal explanation on this matter. In her own testimony to the House of Commons Defence Committee, she claimed that the arms embargo included some 'exemptions' and that 'some kit that has been supplied has fallen within those provisions'. She also added that Resolution 1973, which authorised the use of force also mentioned that this was 'notwithstanding paragraph 9 of resolution 1970', which was the arms embargo provision. Adams alleged that the effect of this mention is to create an 'expressed derogation'; in effect, Resolution 1973 set aside the arms embargo.¹⁰ Yet, as Adams must or should have known, this is nothing more than just another legal sophistry. The 'notwithstanding' expression in Resolution 1973 was included in order to underline that, whatever military action was being undertaken in Libya should not be hampered by the arms embargo so, for instance, that the deployment of any forces on the ground in Libya should

not be seen as violating the previous resolutions restricting the introduction of military hardware or combatants. The idea that Resolution 1973 provided a 'derogation' from the arms embargo, and that it allowed a group of self-appointed countries to decide what these derogations were, stretches credulity. And, if the derogation was so extensive, then why did the British government consider it important to make a distinction between 'offensive' weapons, whose delivery it believed to be banned, and 'defensive' ones which, supposedly, were not?

The reality, as everyone knows, is that both Britain and France had special forces on the ground in Libya, with the mission to train rebels in their fight against Qadhafi's forces. Britain may not have supplied weapons directly to the rebels. But the State of Qatar both financed the purchase of such weapons and their delivery and was itself supplied with large quantities of weapons, largely from France but with the possible involvement of other nations. It is unthinkable that these transactions could have taken place without the active connivance of NATO countries, or without NATO looking the other way. And, while it may be convenient to claim that Britain itself did not 'sully its hands' in this business, the fact remains that the supply of the weapons was against the prevailing legal regime and Britain, as well as other countries, were duty-bound to inform a specially constituted Committee of the Security Council about any traffic in weapons.¹¹ But no such information was ever filed with the Committee.

An Opportunity Missed

All the errors outlined above would have not been major, had they been perpetrated in isolation, or had they been confined to the Libya episode alone. Unfortunately, however, the handling of the legal framework for the Libya operation mirrors Western behaviour in previous interventions, from the Bosnia operation in 1995, to the Kosovo war in 1999 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In every one of these occasions:

- A handful of Western governments used a UN Security Council resolution which lacked full backing, supposedly on the behalf of the 'international community'
- In every single case, the aim was to persuade Russia to abstain, rather than veto a resolution, on the calculation that, once this was accomplished, China would be too embarrassed to be in a minority of one to torpedo the same resolution
- At every stage, this was accomplished by fudging the real extent of the operation being contemplated
- The scope of the operation then grew and was invariably translated into 'regime change'
- Weapons were provided to local combatants, in violation of existing provisions

- Resolutions were reinterpreted unilaterally, to suit whatever purposes were required
- And, in every single case, once a resolution passed in the UN, Western governments precluded any further debate over its interpretation and application.

It would be churlish to deny the fact that, on the whole, NATO, Western governments and many Arab countries acquitted themselves well in Libya: the casualties were minimal and the humanitarian objective was achieved. But the equally important priority – that of anchoring the Responsibility to Protect concept in a more predictable setting – was missed, yet again. Just ask the Syrians, whose government is now protected by an explicit promise of a Russian and Chinese veto in the Security Council precluding any military intervention, what this means for a future system which prevents massacres.

Notes and References

1. House of Commons Defence Committee [HCDC], *Operations in Libya*, Vol. 1, HC 950, (London: The Stationery Office, 25 January 2012), Question 78 onwards.
2. Although Brazil advanced new proposals about how the R2P concept may be applied in future conflicts a few months after the Libya operation started.
3. HCDC, *op. cit.*, answer to Question 83.
4. *Ibid.*, answer to Question 84.
5. Some Eastern European countries such as Romania initially withheld their military contributions from the Libya operation, precisely because of fears that this may sideline NATO.
6. HCDC, *op. cit.*, answer to Question 86.
7. United Nations Security Council, Minutes of Proceedings of the 6,498th Meeting, 17 March 2011 (SC/10200).
8. United Nations Security Council, UNSC Resolution 1973, S/RES/1973 (New York: UNSC, 17 March 2011), paras 13-16.
9. HCDC, *op. cit.*, answer to Question 109.
10. *Ibid.*, answer to Question 115.
11. As required by Paragraph 24 of UNSC Resolution 1970, S/RES/1970, 26 February 2011.

The Complexity of Arab Support

Shashank Joshi

In March 2011, Western and Arab armed forces waged war together for the first time since the First Gulf War in 1991. On that occasion, states as diverse as Syria, Pakistan, Argentina, Morocco, and Niger had joined the international coalition against Iraq. Last year's coalition against Libya was far narrower, but its cross-continental composition and prominent Arab component were deemed to be important in buttressing the war's legitimacy.

Multilayered Arab Support

UN Security Council Resolution 1973, authorising 'all necessary means' to protect Libyan civilians under the threat of attack, would not likely have been sought or passed had it not been for the multiple layers of popular, governmental, and inter-governmental Arab support for the intervention. On 21 February 2011, the Libyan deputy envoy to the UN, Ibrahim Dabbashi, asked that 'the UN ... impose a no-fly zone on all Tripoli to cut off all supplies of arms and mercenaries to the regime'. A week later, thirty-five prominent Arab intellectuals and over 200 Arab organisations from across the region signed a letter urging 'the rapid imposition of a UN-mandated no-fly zone over Libya'.

Only at the beginning of March did the France and UK prepare a draft UN resolution to this end. On 8 March, the head of Libya's National Transitional Council (NTC), Mustafa Abdul Jalil, now head of state in post-Qadhafi Libya's interim government, declared that 'if there is no no-fly zone imposed on Qadhafi's regime, and his ships are not checked, we will have a catastrophe in Libya'. The same day, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a group of Gulf Arab states under the de facto leadership of Saudi Arabia, issued a similar call. Four days after that, nine members of the Arab League, the region's pre-eminent international organisation, followed suit. Their spokesman declared that all member states attending the meeting had agreed with the stance.

This multi-layered Arab imprimatur for military force played an important role in persuading the wary Obama administration to back Resolution 1973 and convincing Russia and China to abstain from using their vetoes. Indeed, the resolution specifically noted 'the importance of the League of Arab States in matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security in the region'.

Arab support for intervention was anomalous in the regional context of high levels of anti-Western and anti-American sentiment and disapproval for Western (and specifically American or NATO) intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. But this support should not be exaggerated.

Arab Ambivalence

First, many observers expressed a poor understanding of what a no-fly zone would mean, failing to anticipate that it would likely entail the highly kinetic destruction of Libya's air defence system using cruise and air-to-ground missiles. Others, more reasonably, did not anticipate that the mission would entail strike missions entirely unconnected with clearing Libyan airspace.

Once operations were underway, the then secretary-general of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, claimed that 'what we want is the protection of civilians and not the shelling of more civilians'. At the very least this was disingenuous: Moussa had attended the Paris meeting at which military action was discussed, and made his opportunistic comments with an eye at the Egyptian presidency (for which he remains the most likely candidate thus far). This hedging reflected just how tentative much Arab support would prove to be.

A poll of Arab opinion taken in mid-July 2011, when the campaign looked to be in stalemate, showed that in some countries a plurality of citizens felt that the imposition of a no-fly zone had worsened US-Arab relations.¹ In Egypt, 56 per cent of respondents held this view (only Saudi Arabia and Lebanon produced positive attitudes in this regard). A broader survey conducted in October 2011, two months after the campaign had concluded successfully, found that 46 per cent of respondents considered international intervention in Libya 'the wrong thing to do', as against 35 per cent in favour.²

Al Jazeera, the satellite television station watched by a plurality of Arab respondents who treat television as their primary source for international news, is owned by the state of Qatar, which in turn was a key driver of, and participant in, the intervention. The station's coverage of the war was, unsurprisingly, favourable – in sharp contrast to its hostile coverage of the Iraq War. But it seems clear that even the backing of the region's most influential media outlet could not transform popular opinion.

Turkey, a country that vehemently opposed intervention in Libya before turning around and participating in the naval blockade, was seen by Arabs polled as playing 'the most constructive role' in the Arab Spring by far (France, a distant second, was perceived as such only by a third of respondents; Britain by just over a tenth). One explanation for this lukewarm sentiment towards the intervening powers may lie in the large majorities expressing sympathy with rebels rather than governments in Yemen (89 per cent favourable), Syria (86 per cent), and Bahrain (64 per cent). In all these countries, Western and Gulf Arab powers were seen as either unduly passive or outright complicit in state violence during early 2011. Britain and the United States, out of concern over Iranian influence and Saudi sensitivities, did not apply pressure on Bahrain despite its highly sectarian crackdown on

largely Shia protesters. In Yemen, the United States was concerned over the future of counter-terrorism co-operation and, like Saudi Arabia, adopted an indulgent policy towards President Saleh. In Syria, it took until August 2011 for President Obama to call for Assad's departure.

Despite this sympathy for the rebels across the region, a full fifth of respondents felt that the Arab Spring was 'mostly foreign powers trying to stir trouble in the region'. When judging the most important factors driving American foreign policy in the region, 53 per cent of respondents answered 'controlling oil' (up from 47 per cent in 2010, and 39 per cent in 2009); 44 per cent answered 'protecting Israel'; and 32 per cent answered 'weakening the Muslim world'. These themes – particularly that of oil – recurred in popular discussions of NATO's action in Libya.

These figures should make it amply clear that the pro-war position of Arab governments and international organisations was not necessarily representative of underlying public opinion. This discrepancy appears to suggest that multinational coalitions involving Arab states can be fashioned even when popular opinion is unfavourable.

The Implications of Arab Ambivalence

But there are a few qualifications to this judgment. First, these figures – if accurate – undercut the argument that intervention in support of pro-democratic rebel movements is a means by which the West, broadly conceived, can win over Arab opinion and compensate for the severe growth of anti-Western sentiment occasioned by the wars in Afghanistan and, particularly, Iraq. By far the greatest issue exorcising Arab publics and shaping their attitudes to the United States (and, by association, Western Europe) is the occupation of Palestine – humanitarian intervention is, comparatively, an irrelevance. Moreover, hostile public opinion explains the difficulty that some states may have in acknowledging their participation. Jordan, for instance, did not publicise its military role in Libya. This dilutes the advantages of having Arab participation in the first place.

Second, a number of Arab governments and influence-formers did not join the apparent consensus. Algeria, a neighbour of Libya, opposed the intervention and refused coalition aircraft right of passage through Algerian airspace. Algeria and Syria, both members of the Arab League, voted against the group's request for a no-fly zone.

Algeria was concerned that the internationalisation of the conflict would worsen the civil war, endanger its own border security, and empower Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Algeria was also loath to strengthen the precedent of allowing a non-African military force to intervene in North Africa, just as they opposed French efforts to tackle AQIM in Mali, and

would have preferred to see the African Union play a greater role in conflict resolution. Of course, the African Union – a beneficiary of Colonel Qadhafi's largesse – was not seen as a credible mediator by either the intervening powers or the Libyan opposition. Finally, one analyst notes that the Algerians 'have tended to pay less attention to the Arab League on issues related to the Maghreb due in part to Egyptian and Saudi support for Moroccan positions on border disputes and the Western Sahara and the logic that on issues of direct interest to Algeria, there is a greater potential for political and diplomatic support to be found in Africa than the Arab region'.³

This problem of Arab division is unsurprisingly recurring in Syria, where the impression of Arab League consensus is belied by the dissenting policies of Lebanon and Iraq, two of Syria's most important neighbours.

Third, Arab animosity toward Libya is not as anomalous as it may seem. Libya was a self-identified Arab country populated mostly by Arabic-speakers, but in strategic terms it had long positioned itself away from the region. After no less than seven failed attempts at uniting Libya with other Arab states, Qadhafi eventually turned his attention to Africa. In 1981, he sought a merger with Chad and then, three years later, with Morocco. In 1984, a Libyan plot to assassinate dissidents in Mecca was thwarted by the Saudi authorities. Twenty years after that, Qadhafi was accused of ordering the assassination of the then crown prince, now king, of Saudi Arabia. Qadhafi was a key funder of the African Union, an advocate for a United States of Africa, and had himself declared 'King of Kings of Africa' in 2008. Arab states welcomed the fall of a thorn in their side. In short, Qadhafi's Libya was in a position of extreme diplomatic isolation within the Arab world. When Syria's Bashar Al-Assad faced a similar uprising in 2011, even those Arab states hostile to his regime – such as Saudi Arabia – did not immediately turn on his government or demand external action. Syria, despite its own sponsorship of terrorism and alliance with Iran, was far better embedded in productive relationships with regional powers. Qadhafi, by contrast, had burnt those bridges – and faced the consequences.

Fourth, Arab support varied greatly in scale. Relative to what could have been provided, the Arab military hardware on show was vanishingly slight. The coalition gathered 350 aircraft from fifteen different states. This means that Arab aircraft accounted for a paltry 5 per cent of coalition airpower. Consider that Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have well over 1,000 combat-capable aircraft between them. Each possesses advanced British and American warplanes and well-trained pilots with experience of operating alongside NATO allies. And yet, each played virtually no operational role. These are also three of the four most significant states in the region (the other is Iran). Their relative absence from military operations, excepting Turkey's meagre naval presence, greatly narrowed the breadth and resilience of the coalition.

Turkey's reversal and subsequently modest stance, along with its reluctance to take the lead with respect to Syria, also calls into question its aspirations to regional leadership.

These states had their own varied reasons for inaction. Egypt, after the revolution of January 2011, was enmeshed in domestic political turmoil for much of the year. A decreasingly popular military junta faced growing criticism of its own repressive policies and efforts to curb the breadth and depth of political change. When the UN sanctioned military action in Libya, Egypt's military leaders were focused on governance and political manoeuvring. Yet even if Egypt had enjoyed political stability, it is unlikely to have meaningfully participated. The country's strategic culture is reactive. It has not used major military force abroad since the First Gulf War.

Turkey, under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, had broader strategic reasons for remaining disengaged. Erdogan's government has exhibited an ambitious agenda for projecting regional influence, particularly by leveraging the country's perceived success in fashioning a high-growth Islamic democracy. This, along with French hostility to Turkey's bid for EU membership, had led to Turkey's gradual shift away from Europe and towards the Middle East. Turkey was therefore particularly sensitive to Arab opinion – although it had every incentive to maintain influence in Libya once the insurgency there reached a critical mass.

Saudi Arabia's passivity is more puzzling because a clear majority of Saudi respondents in July 2011 (84 per cent) were of the opinion that the no-fly zone had improved US-Saudi relations. Only a tiny minority (1 per cent) disagreed. However, Saudi Arabia has been highly sensitive to public perceptions of its relationship with the United States ever since the controversial deployment of American forces on Saudi soil following the First Gulf War. Moreover, Riyadh was likely preoccupied with what it saw as a threat to its own security from Bahrain, to which it deployed military forces in the same crucial month, March 2011, which saw Arab opinion turn against Libya. At the same time, intervention was also characterised by a free-rider problem: why not allow NATO to bear the considerable risks of an uncertain campaign, when the benefits – political stability in Libya – would be available to all? After all, this dynamic was evident even *within* NATO, as is clear from the highly lopsided nature of member states' contributions.

The provision of Arab special forces may have been much more operationally significant. Egypt deployed a potentially 100-strong training mission in eastern Libya even before NATO intervention; from April, the UAE and Qatar deployed up to forty special-forces personnel; and Jordan contributed to covert training missions inside Libya. RUSI Research Fellow Mark Phillips has concluded that 'Arab states provided the bulk of the training and mentoring

effort and led the advance on Tripoli'.⁴ This suggests a greater degree of commitment than was apparent during the conflict, especially from an Egypt that was itself in political turmoil for much or much of the year.

Fifth, and finally, there may have been undesirable trade-offs resulting from the Arab role in the campaign. The two Arab states that deployed meaningful combat forces, Qatar and the UAE, had also both sent troops as part of a GCC force to quell pro-democracy protests in Bahrain. That deployment was led by Saudi Arabia, fearful that the Shia majority in Bahrain might empower agents of Iran or rouse Saudi Arabia's own Shia minority. It is likely, though impossible to demonstrate, that the United States procured Saudi support or acquiescence for the Libya intervention in part by limiting censure of the intervention in Bahrain. Trade-offs like this inhere in international diplomacy, and will recur when Western powers next seek Arab approval for similar military action.

A related concern is the difference in Western and Arab interests in the targets of intervention. Both during and after the campaign, Qatar backed a variety of Libyan Islamist groups. One of the beneficiaries of Qatar support was Abdul Hakim Belhaj, a former leader of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, accused of being terrorist organisation.

Qatar had backed groups outside the ambit of the NTC, causing friction with its Western allies and the interim government of Libya. On 19 November, Libya's envoy to the UN, Mohammed Abdel Rahman Shalgam, complained that Qatar 'gives money to some parties, the Islamist parties. They give money and weapons and they try to meddle in issues that do not concern them and we reject that'. In some respects, this is no different to Saudi Arabia's own assistance to Islamist groups in Egypt. It also represents a Qatari effort to buy influence with those likely to wield power after Libyan elections. These challenges will recur in Syria if the Assad regime falls after a long civil war, because Qatar and Saudi Arabia will likely cultivate similar anti-regime groups and militias.

Not a Model

The Arab response to the NATO-led war in Libya will have long-lasting effects. It has strengthened norms surrounding the so-called Responsibility to Protect, and demonstrated a powerful, if limited, form of Arab collective action. At the same time, the findings here should temper any conclusions about a 'Libya model' that can be applied in other cases of internal unrest or humanitarian crisis. The deep public ambivalence over Western military action in Libya, the singularly isolated nature of the Qadhafi regime, the divisions within the Arab League itself, and the low level of commitment from the region's major powers all indicate that future scenarios are unlikely

to be as propitious to the legitimacy and practicality of humanitarian warfare as was the case in Libya in 2011.

In Syria, for instance, Arab divisions are deeper, regional powers' commitment to military action is lower, and domestic as well as regional popular ambivalence is even sharper. Syria is also less isolated than Libya, and impinges upon the strategic interests of key states to a greater extent. On this, as with other issues, Arab attitudes – like those of outside powers – will remain riven with divisions at every level, and highly sensitive to the nature of the issue at hand.

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Small States, Responsible Powers

David Roberts

The Gulf remains a conservative place, whatever the aspirations of its states to global status. It was all the more surprising, therefore, when it emerged that two small Gulf States, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and in particular Qatar, were two of the key supporters of the movement to oust Libya's Muammar Qadhafi.

Yet such unusual policies could only take place with the backing of the Arab League and a highly unusual constellation of the political stars; an arrangement that is sorely lacking currently in Syria, which goes far in explaining the relative lack of action there despite equally compelling reasons. Despite an international climate conducive to intervention there is still much confusion as to why Qatar and the UAE, with not insignificant help from their fellow Gulf States, would go to such lengths to pursue such an unusual and dangerous policy.

Shifting Focus

Air-strikes and military operations dominate news international agendas. Action being taken by a coalition of Western states against Libya's notorious and enigmatic leader further guaranteed that the story dominated broadcast and print journalism's news cycles. The more international and local media focused on shots of a Libyan plane crashing to the ground or Tomahawk missiles being launched from Western ships off the Libyan coast, the less the media focused on other simmering conflicts around the region.

Almost by definition, with there being a finite amount of news coverage, because Saudi Arabia voted for some kind of action against Libya there was less coverage of their sporadic domestic protests and its intervention in Bahrain. The powers that be in Riyadh, by supporting action against Libya, though this may have set an unwelcome precedent, were left with little choice but to act after the smaller Gulf States took the lead.

Moreover, at a time of ferment throughout much of the Middle East and North Africa, it could be considered opportune and useful for leaders, worried for themselves, to show that they were aware of the prevailing mood and willing to 'combat injustice' when they could. As long as these sentiments could be harnessed and focused externally, such actions could be seen – rightly or wrongly – as helping to establish revolutionary credentials with minimal domestic reforms. Or, more to the point, given the near-universal popular support for the opposition against Qadhafi's onslaught, maybe Arab leaders were afraid of not supporting some kind of action and the potential domestic ramifications thereof.

A leader cognisant of the prevailing mood, aware of the potential dangers of fighting against the current, and consequently supporting action against Qadhafi may also garner support from America and other Western countries. This, in and of itself, given Western proclivities for favouring change in Iran but not Saudi Arabia or Libya and not Bahrain, may be seen as a sensible hedge to take.

Qatar and the UAE

Initially, it was noted by America that the Arab League would have to 'participate' in the actions in some way. Curiously, Qatar and the UAE were mentioned as the Arab states that would join in. Yet neither had any direct stake in Libya's future. Qatar sought to lead the Arab League response because this offered the small Gulf State – with its ambitions far exceeding traditionally understood capabilities – the opportunity to take the lead at the forefront of a key international concern.

Qatar would be seen as a state directly moulding the fate of nations, pursuing a just cause without any definitive incentive. Certainly Qatar did not do it for financial gain; not only is it the world's richest state, but it does not need to risk its domestic security or its citizens in risky ventures overthrowing a psychologically unstable dictator with a history of sponsoring terrorism to try to obtain a stake, for example, in the Libyan gas market. Qatar's reasons were more diffuse, with ethereal notions of bolstering international credibility and recognition being of prime importance. Qatar used Islamist connections fostered in previous decades to back certain factions in Libya, not so much to seek future financial reward as to position itself as a key interlocutor between the new Islamists in charge and Western powers clamouring for access or an understanding of who is who.

Most assumed that Qatar would 'contribute' by allowing America to use its bases in Doha to oversee if not launch operations. However, Qatar contributed six of its Mirage 2000 fighter jets along with two C-130 cargo planes, not to mention diplomatic and financial backing in addition to Qatari special forces training Libyan rebels. This deployment of assets and resources is qualitatively and quantitative different to anything that Qatar has done previously, and highlights just how strongly the elite in Qatar felt it had to play a decisive role.

Similarly, the UAE contributed twelve F-16s and twelve Mirage jets for use guarding the no-fly zone. It is theoretically easier to understand the UAE's desire to join in with this operation. In recent years, the UAE has spent tens of billions of dollars on importing a wide variety of armaments, so much so that from 2006 to 2010 it accounted for nearly a quarter of all major weapons deals in the Middle East.¹ Unlike most large platform purchases in the region, which may primarily be seen as buying protection from America

(as opposed to having any genuine military application), such is the level of military unpreparedness and poor training in the Gulf, it is possible to see the UAE's fighter aircraft squadrons as constituting a meaningful defence. Important questions of pilot training and the numbers of available pilots aside, the UAE's military doctrine, aside from seeking explicit guarantees of defence from France and America, relies on overwhelming air superiority against the presumed 'enemy', Iran. The UAE Air Force, if its levels of training are remotely up to speed, could quite easily decimate Iran's archaic air force, with Iran's strategic depth being its only saving grace. Yet if the UAE Air Force is to prove to be an effective deterrent, a demonstration of its capabilities might arguably be in order.

While this is a logical and plausible rationale, it is questionable how much of a deterrence UAE fighter jets patrolling the coasts and deserts of Libya, with limited rules of engagement, might do. Indeed, it could not even manage to do this entirely successfully; one of its planes crashed when landing. Aside from this likely – if flawed – impetus to 'show what the fighter jets can do', another key reason to join in the no-fly zone is the competitive nature of Gulf politics; if Qatar, another small Gulf State, was sending planes and it only had twelve in total, the UAE – which had over 130 F-16s and Mirage 2000s – would feel pressure to match Qatar's gambit. Indeed, one cannot underestimate the levels of competition between the UAE and Qatar.

While the UAE and Qatar acted initially to some degree as Arab window-dressing for a NATO desperate to avoid accusations of some quasi-colonial reprise of the Iraq invasion, Qatar's role in particular evolved significantly.

Alignment of the Political Stars

Under ordinary circumstances, there is little chance that the Arab League would have supported a NATO-led no-fly zone against a fellow Arab State. Neither would two Arab States have contributed to such an activity, nor would a state as brazenly support anti-regime forces with such equipment, training, financial, diplomatic and rhetorical support in such a media-savvy fashion. Yet there is nothing ordinary about the Arab Spring. It is one of the most significant periods in the Arab world's recent history. It has toppled four entrenched regimes and shaken others to their core. Qatar is the only state in the Arab world that has not felt domestic tremors directly stemming from the Spring.

In these unusual times when Arab elites fear to some degree that 'they might be next' it has behooven Arab elites to be seen to be on the side of the righteous rebels, clashing against tyrannical governments, and their often brutal armies. Only with such a permissive atmosphere could the international will be pulled together and could Qatar so openly support Qadhafi's downfall. Moreover, to blaze a path, this situation needed a country as unique as Qatar

where an elite as unfettered by bureaucratic impediments or by popular opinion could use a diplomatic, financial, commercial, and military arsenal bulged with as much surplus cash to pursue its elite's key goals of advancing its position as a key international arbiter of power and to implement core mantras such as 'Arabs should solve Arab problems'.

Moreover, in Libya too there was an unusual combination of factors. In one of the least populated countries on earth, the conflict was clearly one sided and offered would-be trainers and supporters a pleasingly favourable situation. Not only was the moral impediment to intervene as strong as it could be, but intervention could take place in vast swathes of a mostly empty country in 'captured' areas and towns hundreds of miles from the nearest Qadhafi forces. Intervention was, therefore, relatively easy – especially if one is to compare this to Syria where, though the moral case is equally strong, there are no such tactical advantages. It is thus no surprise that one has not seen thus far foreign trainers roaming the Syrian countryside as one did in Libya. Moreover, Qadhafi himself was surely one of the region's most hated dictators, not just by his people and the West, but also by regional leaders, many of whom he humiliated publicly, including Qatar's Emir and Saudi Arabia's King. While not a decisive factor, it surely helped to some degree the decisions to topple him.

Without this arrangement of the international, Libyan, and Qatari stars, the international response to Libya would have been significantly reduced and likely less effective.

Cold Feet

Still, old habits die hard, and as Qatari jets neared Libya, Arab support wavered. Amr Moussa, the Secretary General of the Arab League, complained about the scale of the attacks on Libya and called for an emergency meeting to discuss the matter. The loss of Arab support, given existing issues with Russia and China, promised to be highly damaging. However, the very next day Moussa, in conjunction with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, reaffirmed Arab support for the action. His earlier wavering has been widely ascribed to his expected candidacy for the Egyptian presidency, hence decrying the loss of civilian life from allied attacks for domestic Egyptian consumption.

Even with Moussa's renewed support of the mission, there were growing murmurs of discontent throughout the Arab world and beyond. Fundamentally, in addition to growing casualties, even with the need to appear to 'understand' and 'support' the will of the people in the face of Qadhafi's onslaught, many governments feared the precedent that they may be setting by allowing – or supporting – regime change.

Moreover, reports emerged regarding the UAE deployment suggesting a key shift in policy. *The National*, the UAE's flagship English-language newspaper, reported that the UAE would now limit its support to humanitarian aid and not military action due to 'disagreements with the west over Bahrain.'²

This was an interesting move. Despite the official reasoning, the core motive for this change had nothing to do with the West's attitude towards Iran's involvement (or lack thereof) in Bahrain's troubles, but instead it highlights just how sensitive the Emirati government is towards the prevailing sentiment. When the Arab consensus was pro-intervention, they supported it. Yet when such sentiment wavered and – crucially – civilians were being inadvertently killed, the calculus changed. The cost of Emirati pilots mistakenly killing civilians in an increasingly unpopular conflict where Qadhafi was reportedly 'recruiting' civilian shields for installations means that they eschewed the potential benefits (such as bolstering their deterrence) for fear of prompting unrest domestically.

Qatar had a similar calculation to make. Yet not only has Qatar historically been quite a contrarian, often eschewing the typical consensus, but unlike the UAE it does not have the internal political concerns of a federation. In short, there is a greater opportunity for unrest in the UAE, specifically the northern Emirates, than there is in Qatar. The risk of causing civilian casualties and indeed suffering casualties among Qatari trainers on the ground needed to be weighed against the potentially iconic footage on Al Jazeera of a Qatari jet spearing through the air on a 'humanitarian mission', acting as the very personification of Arab support.

Winning the Peace

Qatari flags sprouted up around Tripoli and Benghazi along with occasional French and British ones in a 'spontaneous' outpouring of thanks that Qatar has witnessed before, notably after securing a peace deal between the Lebanese Government and Hizbullah in 2008.

It was initially believed that Qatar would have a significant say in the new politics in Libya, having sponsored and supplied at least one of the key militias – the Tripoli Brigade. While the political machinations in Libya remain opaque, it seems that while Qatari-backed militias and actors that have taken root will allow Qatar some access. Equally, however, there are a raft of angry Libyans without Qatari money who accuse Qatar of interference.

Yet the intervention was still worth it for Qatar. After staying the course and not appearing as reticent as the UAE, Qatar cemented its place at the forefront of Arab politics, as a leader of the amorphous 'Arab street', and as an emerging central actor in global politics.

In Syria

Syria, as noted, presents a whole gamut of other issues and has consequently been dealt with differently. There is no international appetite for any kind of boots-on-the-ground action, for Assad's regime is still far too potent a threat with significant backing from Russia and China. Doubtless Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and other states will continue to pour weapons, if not mercenary-trainers, into the country, smuggling them across the Iraqi and Lebanese borders. Needless to say, this is a highly inexact science; there is no telling who the weapons will actually reach and what they might be used for. Moreover, this further explicit example of the internationalisation of the conflict may embolden Iran and Russia to pump more weapons and materiel into Syria. In the mean time the death toll will continue to climb, while diplomatic ventures are launched (such as by Kofi Annan) and likely fail.

Qatar, through its Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hamad Bin Jassem Al-Thani, will continue to press from the front for more action. NATO, the Arab League, and the UN will continue to be on the receiving end of Qatar's calls for action; what kind of action is unclear.

Some kind of humanitarian corridor appears to be the likeliest option, but given that Assad's forces are currently in the ascendancy, the Syrian government will not want to give ground now. Without the Assad regime buying in to this idea, any 'humanitarian' troops on the ground must be prepared to be greeted as hostile troops.

In Syria, therefore, the stark and critical importance of the context can be seen. For even though Qatar, at the height of its persuasive, well-funded, and diplomatically resourceful powers; even though the humanitarian situation is yet more desperate than in Libya and liable to get significantly worse soon; and even though the Arab Spring has ushered in a new wave of politics in the region, still the immutable rules of geopolitics remain.

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