Graphical user interface, website

Description automatically generated

Topic 2: Discussing the Legitimacy of NATO Intervention in Libya

**Introduction**

The intervention in Libya by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has generated a lot of controversies. This was mostly because of the contradictory acts NATO did throughout the intervention and how well the intervention may be judged to be. Early in 2011, amid a wave of popular unrest across the Middle East and North Africa, generally peaceful protests against long-standing governments resulted in swift changes of power in Egypt and Tunisia. However, a rebellion in Libya against Muammar Qaddafi's dictatorship sparked a civil war and international military involvement. The Libyan Civil War, which began on the heels of the Arab spring protests and the NATO campaign that overthrew dictator Muammar Gadhafi in 2011, has seen the country divided into two governments. The UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), based in the capital Tripoli and supported by Ankara, has been locked in a struggle with the Tobruk-based Libyan National Army (LNA), led by the renegade warlord Khalifa Haftar.

**General Overview**

A multi-state NATO-led coalition began a military intervention in Libya to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1973 in response to the events in the Libyan civil war. The UN Security Councils' intent was to reach a consensus in specific to "an immediate ceasefire in Libya, including an end to the current attacks against civilians, which it said might constitute 'crimes against humanity’ and thus a ban was introduced on all flights in the country's airspace, declaring it a no-fly zone, and sanctions were tightened on Muammar Qaddafi regime and it’s supporters.

People in Libya have 3 demands, Social Justice, work opportunities, and the possibility of a normal life. Libya's economy heavily relies on the Oil/Gas industry, which absorbed workers and allowed Gaddafi tight control on political and economic issues through a system of loyalty built on the foundation of nepotism, money, and alliances. Gaddafi managed to maintain power and control for a long time ever since his reign in 1969. At that time, Gaddafi proclaimed a coup d'état at the beginning of the Arab Republic of Libya. After Gaddafi survived several attacks by the United States in the 80s, Gaddafi gradually normalized his relationship with the west. In the later 2000s, the Egyptian and Tunisian government had convinced Qatar that it was possible to overthrow Gaddafi's power from the outside by relying on the help of moderate Islamic forces in Libya. The emirate of Qatar presented itself to the world as a country in favor of the fall of the north African dictatorships in order to gain an area of influence in the region and to prevail against its nemesis Saudi Arabia. Throughout the conflict, Qatar supported the Islamic fundamentalist group the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

The “Days of Wrath” or “Days of Rage” were an unexpected and large number of weapons circulating the city of Benghazi. The French and British took immediate reaction and supported the rebels more specifically Nicolas Sarkozy. He believed in Libya, especially with the rise of the Arab Spring there was a window of opportunity to overthrow Muamer Gaddafi and access the Libyan Market. News outlets began to spin a false narrative around the Libyan crisis based on the logic that Gaddafi's regime was repressing. This narrative was made to convince European public opinion that Gaddafi had unleashed a massacre with the aim of maintaining his power. Most Libyans refrained from participating in the uprisings because they feared reprisal from the regime. In March 2011, NATO and the U.S initiated Operation Odyssey Dawn; wiping out the Libyan air force . Qaddafi did not like the Western intervention and proceeded by interrupting a collaboration with Western oil production company which resulted in a 30% increase in the production of gas. France later attacked Libya with support from the US

Secretary, Germany, and, Italy because Qaddafi’s short-term intention was to replace the CFA in the France African territories, which had a new local currency. Qaddafi's large reserves of gold and silver posed a threat to France as it could lead francophone countries to achieve economic independence from France. The British royal force, France, and Qatar crushed Qaddafi's naval and air defense resulting in the collapse of key strongholds in Libya such as Tripoli and Sirte. Surrounded by the rebels, Qaddafi tried to escape in October, but he was captured and executed by the rebels. Only at that point did NATO stop operating directly in Libya. The death of Gadaffi divided the Libyan people and the effects of NATO are still apparent in Libya. Some might argue that NATO’s intervention was needed, and some might argue that it destroyed Libya.

**Definition of Key Terms**

***Regime Change***

Regime change is the forcible or coercive replacement of one government regime with another. Regime change may replace all or part of the state's most critical leadership system, administrative apparatus, or bureaucracy.

***NATO***

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, founded in 1949 and is a group of 30 countries from Europe and North America that exists to protect the people and territory of its members.

***Humanitarian Intervention***

Humanitarian intervention is actions undertaken by an organization or organizations (usually a state or a coalition of states) that are intended to alleviate extensive human suffering within the borders of a sovereign state.

***R2P***

The Responsibility to Protect – known as R2P – is an international norm that seeks to ensure that the international community never again fails to halt the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

**Major Parties Involved**

***Egypt***

The relationship between Tobruk and Egypt is not just defined by significant arms deliveries but also by a shared political project: eradicating political Islam and enhancing the autonomy of eastern Libya. For Egypt, according to some authors, having Cyrenaica – the eastern region of Libya – under the role of a leader that is friendly to Egypt (Haftar for instance) would create a buffer zone with ISIS and a territorial hinterland for any opposition to the regime in Cairo.

***NATO***

NATO had the largest influence on Libyan society, NATO initiated the intervention, including establishing a no-fly zone and launching aerial attacks on government forces. After seven months of NATO intervention, Libyan rebel forces conquered the country and killed the former authoritarian ruler, Muammar Gaddafi, in October 2011.

***United States***

Though the United States helped lead the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) coalition that brought down Qaddafi in 2011, it no longer has a presence in Libya and has played a limited role in the current conflict. The United States officially supports the GNA but has not provided it with military support in its battle against the LNA. The primary U.S. concerns in the region are counterterrorism-related, and the United States has conducted joint air strikes with the GNA against Libya’s Islamist grou**ps.**

***UAE***

The UAE has been more supportive of UN negotiations and ultimately less engaged in Libya since its intervention in Yemen. Nevertheless, Emirati weapons are still delivered to both Haftar and the militias of the city-state of Zintan, according to a report from a UN panel of experts. Moreover, the UAE’s political influence should not be underestimated. Aref al-Nayed, who was Libyan ambassador to Abu Dhabi until he resigned in October, was key to the UAE’s role in Libya and was even touted as potential prime minister at one point.

***GNA***

The United Nations helped establish and formally endorsed Libya’s Government of National Accord (GNA) in 2015 to unify rival administrations that came out of the country’s 2014 elections. Based in the capital city of Tripoli, the GNA is led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj and controls parts of the country’s west. The GNA’s armed forces comprise the remains of Libya’s official military as well as local militias, with more than thirty thousand fighters. It receives significant military aid from Turkey, Italy, and Qatar.

***France***

France supported the uprising conflict and rebel group in Libya and intervened in the conflict in hopes to benefit from the oil reserves in Libya. According to the French, France's motive for initiating the intervention was economic and political as well as humanitarian. Opération Harmattan was initiated and there was French participation in the 2011 military intervention in Libya.

***Turkey***

Turkey’s involvement in Libya, where it supports the GNA, stems from a desire for a greater presence in the region. In particular, Ankara seeks to expand its control of energy reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean and hopes to regain some construction contracts it lost after Qaddafi’s 2011 downfall. In January, it sent more than one hundred officers and two thousand Syrian militants—lured by promises of high wages and Turkish nationality—to fight alongside the GNA after months of providing weapons such as drones and air defense systems.

**Timeline of Key Events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date**  **Feb 15-16 2011** | **Event**  **Anti-Regime protests erupt in Benghazi. Early in 2011, amid a wave of popular unrest across the Middle East and North Africa, generally peaceful protests against long-standing governments resulted in swift changes of power in Egypt and Tunisia. However, a rebellion in Libya against Muammar Qaddafi's dictatorship sparked a civil war and international military involvement.** |
| **February 16-17 2011** | **Deadly ‘day of rage’ in Libya begin**  **Libyan protesters seeking to oust longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi have defied a crackdown and taken to the streets on what activists have dubbed a “day of rage”.** |
| **February 21, 2011** | **Qaddafi’s sons, Sayf al-Islam, gave a defiant address on state television, blaming outside agitators for the unrest and saying that further demonstrations could lead to civil war in the country. He vowed that the regime would fight “to the last bullet.”** |
| **February 23 2011** | **French president Nicolas Sarkozy calls for sanctions against Libya**  **Rebels appear to have expelled pro-Qaddafi forces from most of eastern Libya and some cities in the western region.** |
| **February 26th 2011** | **United Nations Security Council adopts resolution 1970 (UNSCR 1970) authorizing an arms embargo against Libya**  **The UN Security Council approves a measure that includes sanctions against the Qaddafi regime.**  **Canada suspends its diplomatic mission in Libya, withdrawing its staff from its embassy** |
| **March 3, 2011** | **The International Criminal Court announces that it will open an investigation into possible crimes against humanity by the Qaddafi regime.** |
| **March 19, 2011** | **NATO and the United States initiate operation Odyssey Dawn** |
| **April 19, 2011** | **The United Kingdom announces that it will send military officers to advise the rebel leadership. France and Italy announce the next day that they will also send military advisers. All three countries specify that their officers will advise the rebels on military organization, communication, and logistics and that they will not participate in the fighting. The announcements come amid reports that the disorganized and underequipped rebels, seemingly locked in a stalemate with Qaddafi’s troops, lack the military capability to win a decisive victory without foreign help.** |
| **April 30, 2011** | **A NATO air strike targets a house in Qaddafi’s Bāb al-ʿAzīziyyah compound in Tripoli, killing Qaddafi’s son Saif al-Arab and three of Qaddafi’s grandchildren. Qaddafi, reportedly in the targeted house at the time of the attack, escapes uninjured. NATO denies claims that it has adopted a policy of seeking to kill Qaddafi.** |
| **May 3, 2011** | **The Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, calls for Qaddafi to step down immediately. For the first two months of the conflict, Turkey had sought to maintain ties with both Qaddafi and the rebels in hopes of brokering an agreement.** |
| **June 1, 2011** | **A UN commission tasked with investigating human rights abuses in Libya finds that forces loyal to Qaddafi committed war crimes severe enough to constitute crimes against humanity. The commission also finds evidence of war crimes by rebel forces, although it says that these violations appear to be less severe and less widespread.** |
| **October 20, 2011** | **Qaddafi is killed by rebel forces in Sirte as they take control of the city after several weeks of fighting. Amateur videos appear to show that Qaddafi was captured alive by rebels but that he was fatally shot soon afterward. TNC leaders deny that Qaddafi was executed by rebels after his capture.** |
| **October 31, 2011** | **The UN Security Council votes to end international military operations in Libya on October 31.** |

**Previous attempts to resolve the issue**

***United Nations Security Council Resolution 1970***

It condemned the use of lethal force by the government of Muammar Gaddafi against protesters participating in the Libyan Civil War and imposed a series of international sanctions in response.

***United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973***

The resolution formed the legal basis for military intervention in the Libyan Civil War, demanding "an immediate ceasefire" and authorizing the international community to establish a no-fly zone and to use all means necessary short of foreign occupation to protect civilians.

In December 2015, the Libyan Political Agreement was signed after talks in Skhirat, as the result of protracted negotiations between rival political camps based in Tripoli, Tobruk, and elsewhere which agreed to unite as the Government of National Accord (GNA).

**Possible Solutions**

Imposing Sanction and restrictions in response to the Gadhafi’s regime and the GNA including

* Restrictions on supplying arms or related materiel
* Restrictions on providing certain services
* Restrictions on the import or purchase of arms
* Restrictions on providing services in relation to designated vessels
* Restrictions on dealing with designated persons or entities

***Bibliography***

Green, Matthew. “To What Extent Was the NATO Intervention in Libya a Humanitarian Intervention?” *E-International Relations*, 6 February 2019, https://www.e-ir.info/2019/02/06/to-what-extent-was-the-nato-intervention-in-libya-a-humanitarian-intervention/. Accessed 13 November 2022.

“What is R2P?” Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, https://www.globalr2p.org/what-is-r2p/. Accessed 13 November 2022.

“Responsibility to Protect at a Crossroads: The Crisis in Libya.” Humanity in Action, https://humanityinaction.org/knowledge\_detail/responsibility-to-protect-at-a-crossroads-the-crisis-in-libya/. Accessed 13 November 2022.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Libya Revolt of 2011". Encyclopedia Britannica, 8 Feb. 2022, https://www.britannica.com/event/Libya-Revolt-of-2011. Accessed 13 November 2022.

International Criminal Court (2011b) ‘Situation in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya’, ICC-01/11, 27 June.

Amnesty International (2011) ‘The Battle for Libya: Killings, Disappearances and Torture’, Amnesty International, 8 September. Available online at: www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE19/025/2011/en/8f2e1c49-8f43-46d3-917d-383c17d36377/mde190252011en.pdf [Accessed 25 September 2012].