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Stories behind the western-led humanitarian intervention in Libya: A critical analysis

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The Western-led NATO intervention in Libya attracted global attention, causing a misunderstanding of the concept of 'humanitarian intervention'. The level of controversy is not alleged to stem from the imperative 'to intervene or not to intervene' but rather from the question 'what interests were intervening states possibly pursuing'? Comments from the Western hemisphere mainly focused on Qaddafi's deliberate attempts to obstruct Libya's path to democracy and fiercely claimed the right to intervene on behalf of the Libyan masses. In another side, however, claims are vehemently made about the primacy and continued resonance of the concept of 'national sovereignty', seen as incompatible with any such coercive coalition intervention. While proposing to briefly revisit the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, this article sets out to demonstrate, basing on variables that tie past to present, the degree to which the Western-led NATO intervention in Libya was encouraged by realist interests. Besides confronting the human rights rhetoric of the world leading imperial elites with Qaddafi's past misdeeds, the paper draws on the various Marxist approaches to neocolonialism to try to determine the reasons for military intervention and the extent to which it was conducted on humanitarian grounds.

Key words: Libya, humanitarian intervention, African Union, Pan-Africanism, neocolonialism, rogue state.

INTRODUCTION

The waves of demonstrations in North Africa have brought a state of confusion over the world's public opinion. While the Tunisian and Egyptian revolts ended in the stepping down of their respective government, the Libyan one was marked by very specific circumstances and has remained until now a conundrum in the Arab Spring debate. No one imagined the conflict would extend for eight months, and in regard to Tunisia and Egypt no one had thought through the implications of a heavy military intervention to protect civilians. From the handling of the situation, under the guise of humanitarianism, has resulted a frenzy of speculations among both political analysts and policymakers. Comments from the western hemisphere focused on Qaddafi's deliberate attempts to obstruct Libya's path to democracy and claimed the right for humanitarian intervention (Chivvis,

2012; Ahmida, 2012; Etzioni, 2012; Zoubir and Rózsa, 2012; Pinfari, 2012). In another side, however, claims are vehemently made about the primacy and continued resonance of the concept of 'national sovereignty', seen as incompatible with any such coercive coalition intervention (Engdahl, 2011; Nabli, 2011; Corcoran and Maher, 2011). Whatever the reason, one could possibly find —taking into account Qaddafi's anti-Western posture — political and economic motivations behind the joint military intervention conducted under the cover of implementing the United Nations resolution. The article starts by sketching a brief outline of the doctrinal evolution of the concept of humanitarian intervention. Then follows a critical analysis of the Western-led NATO intervention (in Libya), which comprises three unequal sections. These sections are on: 1. Humanitarian

intervention in Libya: rhetoric versus reality; 2. Qaddafi's pan-African and anti-West policies; 3. the US's neo-colonial trap and 'rogue state' logic.

Our method here is to analyze, in the light of the humanitarian intervention doctrine and the various Marxist approaches to neocolonialism, the Western coalition's involvement in the process to resolve the Libyan conflict with a view to capture points of substantial political motives for the intervention. Admittedly, this article does not presume to be an exhaustive examination of the humanitarian intervention doctrine. What is subject to criticism here is not the legal basis of the intervention but, rather, the logic of events and the policy choices associated with them. The analysis will be conducted using available quantitative research and other political science studies.

Meaning and evolution of the doctrine humanitarian intervention

Reference to humanitarian intervention began to appear in the international legal literature after 1840, based on two interventions. The first took place in Greece, where England, France, and Russia intervened in 1827 to stop Turkish massacres and the suppression of populations associated with the insurgents. The second was in Syria, where France intervened in 1860 to protect Maronite Christians and other European countries and Turkey subsequently approved it (Weiss, 2007). The doctrinal evolution is also well documented by Abiew (1999) who reports that prior to the nineteenth century, humanitarian intervention was based on Christian beliefs and the religious concept of the dignity of man. In addition, St Thomas Aquinas made references on the basis of religious solidarity to the effect that a sovereign has the right to intervene in the internal affairs of another when the latter greatly mistreats its subjects.

By the early twentieth century, the cluster norms governing humanitarian intervention had changed in orientation. Broadly the doctrine of intervention has come to be justified as a coercive interference — consensual or imposed operation — in the internal affairs of a sovereign state with the aim to undertake appropriate measures of protection (Abiew, 1999). In this level states were either individually or collectively unwilling to intervene for the sake of humanity. When examining the literature it appears that the principles of humanitarian intervention in the twentieth century have overwhelmingly changed and no longer match its traditional norms.

Three factors, in particular, have changed in the course of the twentieth century. Firstly, who can successfully claim humanitarian protection from strong states has changed. In the nineteenth century, only white Christians received protection; mistreatment of other groups did not evoke the same concern. By the end of the twentieth century, however, most of the protected populations were

non-whites, non-Christian groups. Secondly, how to intervene has changed as it is established that humanitarian intervention must be multilateral in order to be legitimate. Since 1945 states have consistently rejected attempts to justify unilateral intervention as humanitarian; in the nineteenth century, however they were accepted. The US intervention in Grenada is one such example, in which unilateral intervention under the guise of humanitarianism was offered. Thirdly the military purposes have also changed (Finnemore, 1996; Finnemore, 2003). The changes emphasized here do not relate to the norms about what is humanitarian but rather to the norms about legitimate intervention.

In the twenty first century, templates of conflict resolution illustrate the development of a 'new humanitarianism', which has tended to become a *Trojan horse* used by the great powers. The Rwanda genocide and above all the 9/11 attacks for instance has heralded a new era, an abrupt change in the conception of humanitarian intervention. Many believe that the change in attitudes towards human rights occurred successively after these events. According to Weiss (2007), George Bush's 'humanitarian' justifications to invade Iraq have contaminated the legitimate idea of humanitarian intervention. The former Canadian Ambassador to the UN Paul Heinbecker (2003: 2) has clearly put it, suggesting that:

Since September 11, the kind of intervention that has dominated international debate has differed considerably from that of the previous decade and indeed from that which motivated the Government of Canada to launch the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). Inaction on Srebrenica and Rwanda has given way to reaction against Afghanistan and, some argue, overreaction against Iraq. In the cases of Srebrenica and Rwanda, the issue was protecting "other". In Afghanistan and Iraq, the motivation is protecting "self".

These aforementioned crises (Srebrenica and Rwanda) played a pivotal role in the evolution of the theory and practice of humanitarian intervention. And after 9/11, there have been enormous difficulties in discussing the norms of humanitarian intervention with any degree of effectiveness and consistency. The level of controversy among analysts is not alleged to stem from the imperative 'to intervene or not to intervene' but rather from the question 'what interests are intervening states pursuing?' Liberal and classical approaches reject the behind the scenes calculations associated with the doctrine and claim that humanitarian intervention is motivated by an interest to protect civilians and to promote democracy. Efforts to alleviate starvation and establish some kind of political order in Somalia

(Operation Restore Hope), endeavors to enforce protected areas for Kurds and no-fly zones over Shiites in Iraq, to name a few, are all instances of military intervention whose primary goal is not territorial or strategic but humanitarian. However, pluralist and realist approaches of humanitarian intervention are that the latter besides being incompatible with the concept of 'national sovereignty' is more likely to be motivated by geostrategic interests (Ayoob, 2002). Pan-Africanists who find inherent links between neoliberalism and neocolonialism emphasize economic or trade advantages to be gained by intervening states. The next three sections of the article try to analyze the relevance of the humanitarian intervention doctrine to the Libyan crisis, with a particular focus to the question 'what interests the Western coalition, in particular the US, were possibly pursuing'?

HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION IN LIBYA: RHETORIC VERSUS REALITY

Intervention is classified according to the following purposes: deterrence, prevention, compellence, punishment, peacekeeping, war fighting, peacemaking, nation building, interdiction, humanitarian intervention and rescue. In addition, interventions differ in their scale, composition, duration, intensity, authority, and, above all, objective (Haass, 1999). Detailed investigation of each of these alternatives is outside the scope of this paper. I would, however, like to highlight some of them that are related to our discussion. For, the implementation of any of these variables depends on the type of conflict involved.

Of Haass's (1999) eleven resolution alternatives, five seem to be at play in the Libyan crisis: 'deterrence' and 'compellence' which are two elements of coercion, 'peace-making' which implies a passive approach and finally 'punishment' and 'war-fighting' that require active political-military conducts. While 'peace-making' aims at resolving the issues that have led to conflict by both creating a ceasefire and addressing the outcome of humanitarian abuse (Boutros-Ghali, 1992), 'deterrence' and 'compellence' place the adversary in a decision situation in which it can either comply with what has been demanded of it, or defy those demands and risk the implementation of the coercer's threatened sanction (Schaub, 2004). And if the threatened state does not comply then the coercer resort to 'punishment' which can turn into a 'war-fighting'. One may note the junction between 'compellence' and 'punishment' in that the former (compellence) requires the opponent to make concessions or suffer the consequences (punishment).

An insightful look at the list dressed by Haass (1999) reveals, for instance, that in the case of Libya, what is taken as a 'peace-making' destined to protect civilians is in reality a 'punishment', aftermath of 'compellence'. And

yet, the intervention in Libya departed from the terms of the UN Resolution, which was adopted —although not unanimously — on March 17th 2011. The draft that was issued following the vote of ten Security Council members is clear and somehow incorporates a peaceful imperative which read:

- (1) Demands the immediate establishment of a cease-fire and a complete end to violence and all attacks against, and abuses of, civilians;
- (2) Stresses the need to intensify efforts to find a solution to the crisis which responds to the legitimate demands of the Libyan people and notes the decisions of the Secretary-General to send his Special Envoy to Libya and of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to send its ad hoc High Level Committee to Libya with the aim of facilitating dialogue to lead to the political reforms necessary to find a peaceful and sustainable solution;
- (3) Demands that the Libyan authorities comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law and take all measures to protect civilians and meet their basic needs, and to ensure the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian assistance.

The excerpt provides an accurate snapshot of the purposes fixed by NATO and more to the point it captures another positive item in Haass's (1999) list of military intervention purposes: peace-making. With these peaceful guidelines, the objectives of the Western coalition were primarily to protect civilians with the following requirements: a no-fly zone, an enforcement of the arms embargo, a ban on flights, an asset freeze, a designation which consists of a list of Libyan officials who were subject to travel restriction and to the asset freeze and finally a panel of experts who gather, examine and analyze information relating to the matter (UNSCR, 2011, February 26). Thus, from a *jus ad bellum* perspective, the use of force was simply not permissible unless the ceasefire is refused by Qaddafi's regime. Because military intervention as defined by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001: XII) and a number of authors like Miller (2003) and Tesón (2005) can only be justified when every non-military option for the prevention or the peaceful resolution of the crisis has been explored with reasonable grounds for believing lesser measures would not have succeeded.

Of course, when all peaceful means have failed to resolve a conflict, then measures provided under article 42 and 43 (Chapter VII) of the UN Charter should be used, in accordance with the Security Council, 'to restore or maintain international peace and security'. A question that needs to be asked is whether the peaceful imperatives incorporated in the UN resolution were fully

explored or enforced before shifting from peacemaking to war fighting'? The answer from both Jean Ping, the chairman of the standing Commission of the African Union, and President Zuma, head of the AU High Level Panel, was NO. What the Western coalition dictated to resolve the conflict was contradictory to the solution put forward by the AU. The latter, according to Jean Ping, was supposed to go to Libya to follow and reach the same objectives as the Security Council peacefully by negotiations.

The AU High Level Panel along with the Security Council draft recognized the aspirations of the Libyan people and was very preoccupied with protecting them and sowing the seeds of a potentially democratic future. On March 10 the AU had come up with a roadmap for Libya which included an immediate ceasefire and an end to repression of democratic activities, a transition to an inclusive and democratic government, humanitarian relief, protection of African migrant workers and the control of the spread of arms (Miti, 2012). However, its 'roadmap', which was drawn following the meeting held in Mauritania on March 18, was swiftly rejected by both the National Transitional Council and NATO simply because it did not call on Qaddafi to step down. In an interview with the BBC journalist Stephen Sackur, Jean Ping underlined that they were totally ignored over the Libyan crisis: "Nobody talked to us, nobody consulted us" (BBC-HARDtalk, 2011, March 25). Powerless in the face of the US and its NATO allies, President Zuma also argued that those who have the power to bomb other countries have undermined the AU's efforts and initiatives to handle the situation in Libya (The Guardian, 2011, August 25).

However untrustworthy Qaddafi may be, he decided, the very next day the Resolution was enacted, an immediate ceasefire in conformity with Article 1 and proposed, after President Zuma's bid to solve the crisis by negotiation, a political dialogue in line with Article 2. However, his 'verbal' agreement was met with sceptical responses. For instance, David Cameron declared, in response to Qaddafi's call for a ceasefire, that 'the UK will judge him by his actions not his words' (BBC News, 2011, March 18). An argument to the same effect was also made by Secretary of State Hilary Clinton that 'the US is going to be not responsive or impressed by words, but would have to see actions on the ground' (The Guardian, 2011, March 18). The French Foreign Minister, Alain Juppé, who expanded on their ideas, stated that for Qaddafi's ceasefire to be genuine 'it has to be on all of the territory of Libya and not only Benghazi' (Reuters, 2011, March 18). Not only the world leading imperial elites made no ceasefire proposal of their own but also they fixed preconditions which took no account of the fact that Article 1 of the UN Security Council Resolution did not, of course, place the burden of a complete ceasefire exclusively on Qaddafi (Roberts, 2011). Accordingly, their requests overshadowed the non-violent alternative proposed in the Security Council's text. The interplay between their declared purposes and the conditions they

fixed is riven with ambivalences and goes beyond the humanitarian imperatives. The language of victory and 'punishment', argues Aaronson (2011), crowded out the language of peace and reconciliation.

The rejection of the ceasefire, let it be supposed, suggests that coercive diplomacy rather than preventive diplomacy, the third pillar of the responsibility to protect, was the ultimate alternative. As demonstrated by Cordesman (2011), the world leading elites constitutionally sought and got international cover from the UN by claiming a no fly zone could protect civilians when their real objective was to use force as a catalyst to drive Qaddafi out of power. More to the point, they moved so quickly to recognize the Libyan National Transitional Council as the legitimate representative of the Libyan people and to suggest that Qaddafi and the members of his inner circle 'may' have been guilty of crimes against humanity.

The main rationale of the intervention, as drawn in the Security Council Resolution, was to protect civilians through the imposition of a no-fly zone. However, the handling of the situation shows a moot point between the no-fly zone objective over Libya and the bombing campaign to protect civilians, which plunged the country to the edge of catastrophe. Thousands of innocent Libyans and foreign workers have been killed in the cross-fire (the evidence is uncertain)¹, and part of the state buildings destroyed. Now to the question did Qaddafi massacre civilians — though the West laid the blame on Qaddafi's troops — there is not yet an objective and clear answer. According to Kuperman (2011) who provided a powerful critique of the NATO intervention as violating the Resolution that should be applied, Qaddafi's forces certainly harmed innocents while defeating rebels in urban areas, as U.S. forces have done in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, despite ubiquitous cell phone cameras, there are no images of genocidal violence, a claim that smacks of rebel propaganda. There might be instances of brutal actions by Qaddafi's loyal forces. Nonetheless, there was, as reported by Bello (2011) who bases his argument on Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch investigations, no evidence for the 'gross and systematic' violations of human rights that formed the pretext for intervention.

Far from disregarding the aspirations of the Libyan people, there is no clear indication — as framed in many Western media — that the uprising resulted from the majority of the Libyan people telling Qaddafi to step down. If the answer is that of a democratic revolution driven by the Libyan mobilized masses and enabled by technology, the Western media's narrative did not provide a clear and specific understanding of the issue. Through their framing of the uprising, various names had been

¹According to a partial investigation by Human Rights Watch the number of civilian deaths appeared far lower than claimed by the Qaddafi government, but higher than acknowledged by NATO. (World Report Chapter: Libya, 2012).

used to refer to those behind it: 'peaceful protesters', 'democracy protesters', 'civilians', then 'rebels' which turned out to be a belated admission and finally 'revolutionaries'. In addition to this controversy, arguments describing these demonstrators as revolutionaries run afoul of the evidence simply because these so-called rebels would never have won if NATO had not bombed the country day in day out. NATO and Arab forces committed for the protection of civilians took a broad view of their mission and provided the firepower, and the technological and training assistance that allowed the Libyan-led resistance to succeed (Keiswetter, 2012). A strongly worded UN Resolution coupled with a one-sided media coverage helped to build support for the intervention and consequently to topple Qaddafi whom General Haig referred to, years ago, as "a cancer that has to be removed" (Wright, 1982).

In the light of the logic of events, one can argue that the intervention was not based on actual genocide, indeed not even on potential genocide but on a rhetorical threat of revenge that went viral in the media (Bello, 2011). The coalition's handling of the situation undoubtedly has some connection with Qaddafi's past 'misdeeds'. Because had Qaddafi been a Western-backed dictator, the coalition could have exerted more influence over his political choices, and encouraged him to step down and possibly be replaced with a suitably Western-obedient leader. His anti-Western posture may help explain why the Euro-American leaders were so keen to use the humanitarian pretext as justifications for intervention.

QADDAFI'S PAN-AFRICAN AND ANTI-WEST POLICIES

Qaddafi's pan-African policy was perceived as a threat to the West, particularly to the US which exerted manoeuvres on African conservative states² to obstruct his aspirations to host an African summit in Libya. The West saw in Qaddafi's pan-African policy a model of Soviet expansionism, which had to be foiled. American diplomats, for instance, confronted Qaddafi at every turn and in every part of Africa by lobbying African states to move censure against Libya. Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs under the Reagan administration, made it clear that under Colonel Qaddafi, Libya has adopted diplomacy of subversion in Africa and in the Arab world. It's a diplomacy of unprecedented obstruction to our own interests and objectives (Ogunbadejo, 1986). This antagonism between Qaddafi and the US diplomats worked to the detriment of the Organization of African Unity. For

instance, in the late 1994, the Clinton Administration signed into law the African Conflict Resolution Act which provided funds to support the organization's efforts at conflict resolutions. However, as Qaddafi developed closer ties with the OAU, the United States reacted by scaling back and eventually almost freezing all its ties to the organization (Makinda et al., 2008).

Qaddafi's anti-West policy had been extended in both Northern and sub-Saharan Africa. In Northern Africa Qaddafi was reported to be involved in a coup attempt against King Hassan in Morocco and to oppose Sadat's pro-Western policies in Egypt. In Black Africa too, Libya supported the pro-Soviet Somalis and Eritreans against pro-Western Ethiopia in the Hailé Silassié era, but switched sides after the establishment of a pro-Soviet regime in Addis Abéba and Somalia's turning to the West (Neuberger, 1982). In the case of Chad, it remained Qaddafi's aim to eliminate the French presence, but to do it in such a way as to avoid both a military confrontation and a break in its lucrative trade with France.

Another more telling example of Qaddafi's anti-West policy is his commitment to set up an immediate continental government for Africa. His steps for the establishment of an African Union were chiefly informed by his desire to see the fall of the pro-Western governments in every nook and corner of West and Central Africa. The French presence, for example, in West and Central Africa was perceived as an obstacle to the achievement of his aims in the Sahara and Sahel. Qaddafi's position about the African continental government could be understood in the light of Nkrumah's 'Africa for Africans'. He showed his sudden conversion to Pan-Africanism at the 1999 Syrte meeting, when he called African leaders to seek pan-African unity and demanded that both an African seat as a Permanent Member at the UN Security Council and compensation for Africa from the West for sufferings inflicted on it by the slave trade (Henderson, 1999). The summit reacted cautiously but favourably towards his call for a "United States of Africa" which was to be based on the OAU's 1963 Charter and the 1991 Abuja Treaty³.

Qaddafi's leadership, under the banner of Pan-Africanism, is controversial as many African states were slightly wary of his intentions, recalling its previous preoccupation with the Arab unity. With his own agenda, he claimed to be called 'the king of African kings' and suggested that Syrte should become the capital of the new African federation and that unity should be formally achieved in one year's time, at the 2000 OAU summit which was due at the Togolese capital, Lomé (Kouvibidila, 2011). However, despite his self-proclaimed pan-African policy, one may acknowledge the fact that under Qaddafi the African Union was more or less experiencing a dynamic economic and political transformation as he moved to suggest the creation of an economic union and

²After World War II, there have been two distinct pan-African groups in Africa: the *Monrovia Group* (the moderates) ally of the West and particularly the USA and the *Casablanca Group* (the progressive conservatives) championed by Nasser, Nkrumah and Mohamed V, ally of Moscow.

³ The Abuja Treaty called for the creation of an African common market and parliament, a central bank, a federal court and an African monetary fund.

Pan-African parliamentary body.

Qaddafi had made major investments in the continent's future: \$100 million in Ethiopia and \$200m to UNESCO to improve African access to higher education. He also paid off \$4.5 million worth of arrears for seven AU member states that were too poor to pay and were under temporary sanctions as a result (Henderson, 1999). In addition, reports Ogunbadejo (1986), Qaddafi had offered reluctant African states under US influence an oil 'gift' — an euphemism for a bribe — if they flew to the Tripoli summit, and he (Qaddafi) even went so far as to suggest that Libya might be willing to assist the AU by paying some of the outstanding unpaid contributions of \$16 million from member-states. In addition, to put into practice his pan-African project, Qaddafi employed a large foreign workforce from Egypt, Tunisia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, Ghana and Mali) to carry out ambitious plans for production and development. According to the report by the *Crisis Group* (2011:10) Libya hosted 300.000 workers from Sub-Saharan Africa and that during the conflict 80,000 have been repatriated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Qaddafi's investments have long been described in Eurocentric views as a colonization attempt or 'empire-building' policy in Africa. Consequently, during the conflict, the African Union's opposition to the military intervention was qualified as being Libya's clients doing their duty to their patron (Roberts, 2011). More to the point some Western media, considering the huge number of black migrants in Libya, placed the main burden of blame upon some Sub-Saharan African countries to be sending mercenaries in Libya to back Qaddafi's forces. According to Human Rights Watch (2012: 4), these Sub-Saharan migrants, along with dark-skinned Libyans, were widely accused without evidence of having fought as mercenaries for Gaddafi, although mercenaries from some countries did come to fight.

The President of Chad, Idriss Deby, was singled out by both the Libyan National Transitional Council and the Western media to be coordinating African mercenaries to act as shock troops against the protesters (Le Figaro, 3 avril 2011; Radio France Internationale, 5 septembre 2011). This issue sparked serious debates, fueled rumors and finally led to Idriss Deby's acknowledgement of the Libyan NTC. Many Western media interpreted this U-turn of the Chadian leader as resulting from his fear of economic consequences.

Accusing the African Union as clients doing duty to their boss, targeting Chad as supplying mercenaries, the Western coalition neglected all diplomatic options and opted for coercive measures to protect civilians. And to President Zuma, powerful nations besides undermining the AU's role in finding a solution, had abused the UN Security Council resolution "to further interests other than to protect civilians and assist the Libyan people" (The Guardian, 2011, August 25). Whether humanitarian in

intention or not, military force, claims Huntington (1986) who is not usually known to be a moralist, are designed to defeat opposing military forces; they are not useful in the pursuit of most other goals.

THE US'S NEO-COLONIAL TRAP AND 'ROGUE STATE' LOGIC

It's true Qaddafi showed, on not a few occasions, willful disregard of basic democratic principles and sometimes deliberately resorted to harsh and punitive tactics against his people. Like many third world leaders Qaddafi has also attempted to distance himself from Western ideologies by adopting what he labeled as 'Third International Theory', a mixture of developmental concepts from Nasserism and classical Marxism along with Islamic socialism (El-Khikha, 1997). Nonetheless, the key to understanding the Libyan issue lies mostly on US's empire building or good neighbor policy conjugated with its 'rogue state' logic. This is neither to suggest that the trigger finger on the bombing of Libya was pulled by the Obama administration nor to say that Obama is to Qaddafi what Bush was to Saddam. Rather, my concern here is to analyze the possible motives behind US's intervention in the light of Marxists approaches of neocolonialism and the 'rogue state' logic that translates US's 'Global War on Terror'.

The concept of 'neocolonialism' appeared in 1961⁴, four years after Ghana's independence. It was soon popularized by the pan-African leader, Kwame Nkrumah, whose book *Neocolonialism: The last stage of Imperialism* was published in 1965. Most of Nkrumah's views on neocolonialism still provide the basic understanding of the term, and define the assumed parameters of economic power in postcolonial theory. The major argument of Nkrumah's book is that neocolonialism is a continuation of traditional colonial rule by other means, in other words, a modern attempt to perpetuate colonialism (Nkrumah, 1965). In Nkrumah's conception, neo-colonialism operates through many channels — political, economic, cultural, and in extreme cases, using Guevara's (1964) words, the use of force as an economic weapon in support of the other forms of exploitation.

Apart from Nkrumah, other approaches to the concept of neocolonialism have been given theoretical basis, in part, through the works of critics of postcolonial Africa, such as Rodney (1973), Amin (1973) and more recently Young (1991). Though known as postcolonial critics, their views on neocolonialism are fully immersed in the perspective developed by Nkrumah. They more or less argue that independent Africa is still in the grip of Western capitalism as it were under colonization, that the means of administration have moved from coercive

⁴ *All-African People's Conference*, "Resolution on neocolonialism", Cairo, March 25-31, 1961.

regiments to regimes supported by international aid and the banking system (Rodney, 1973; Amin, 1973; Young, 1991).

While critiques of neocolonialism is widely practiced in literary theory (postcolonial theory), dependency theory has also defined neocolonialism as a field of study. In many respects, dependency theorists see neocolonialism as economic dominance: that the 'development' of the center (the dominant) is a direct result of the underdevelopment of the periphery (the dependent) (Ferraro, 2008). Sure, all protagonists⁵ of this theory do not regard international capitalism as the driving factor behind dependency relationships, but dependency theory may provide, like Marxist theorists of neocolonialism, a more comprehensive picture of 'development' that incorporates Western covert operations and wars by proxy, and that includes the notion of imperialism and neo-colonialism (Hahn, 2007).

The US foreign policy, especially after 9/11, exhibits some of the fundamental characteristics— a Manichean system of dependency and exploitation —described by both Marxists and dependency theorists of neo-colonialism (Nkrumah, 1965; Amin, 1973). Like former colonizing countries (France and Britain), the US is always seeking, with at least partial success, to build an informal empire through manipulative political, diplomatic, cultural, and military structures (Panitch et al., 2004). This informal empire requires the economic and cultural penetration of other states to be sustained by political and military coordination with other independent governments. Usually, this strategy is perpetrated under the guise of humanitarian project serving to protect democracy, human rights and freedom of trade to name a few. This mechanism is better understood under the Bush administration during which the US serious energy crisis, as the result of the imbalance between energy supply and demand, was revealed.

Before addressing the US neocolonial policy in Africa, it is useful to make a few basic points about the Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group issued in May 2001. Often referred to as the 'Cheney Report', the document estimates that 'US energy consumption over the next twenty years (2000-2020) would increase by about 33%, natural gas consumption by well over 50%, and demand for electricity would rise by 45%. Yet, highlights the report, 'the US produced 39% less oil today than they did in 1970, leaving them ever more reliant on foreign suppliers (Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group, 2001: VIII - X). Accordingly, the report identified Africa's potential to supply an ever-increasing share of the America's energy needs in the years ahead (Klare et al., 2006).

Bush's aforementioned policy towards Africa has not

changed an inch under the Obama administration. While Bush pledged in his 2006 Union Address to replace more than 75% of its oil imports from the Middle East by 2025 (Union Address, 2006, January 31), Obama sets goal of one-third cut in oil imports by 2025 (The New York Times, 2011, March 30). One possibility considered by both administrations was the development of military-style initiatives to ensure the flow of African oil to the United States. Of course, oil is not the only reason that justifies such a political orientation. But it is definitely the first of the five factors (oil, global trade, armed conflicts, terror, HIV/AIDS) that have shaped US interest in Africa in the past decade.

By early 2002, the Bush Administration— under the mantra of the Global War on Terror — began to boost its presence in Africa through military training and assistance programs. The transformation process began with the creation of the African Contingency Operations Training (ACOTA) and the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) established in Djibouti as a hedge against possible surge of extremist activity in the Horn of Africa (Bellamy, 2009). Another distinctive feature of US post 9/11 security programs was the establishment, in early 2007, of a new unified combatant command dubbed as Africa Command or AFRICOM. The launch of this military program devoted solely to Africa is US most important innovation with regard to its Africa foreign policy. In the draft mission statement (official AFRICOM website), AFRICOM is, in substance, designed to bring stability in Africa through a military-to-military relationships. Instead of establishing a foothold on the continent, AFRICOM rather aims, in concert with regional and international organizations, such as ECOWAS and the African Union, to improve security in Africa. While these declared missions may be true at one level, it does not necessarily provide a complete understanding of the command's aim.

There have been strong oppositions in 2007 and early 2008 about the placement of AFRICOM headquarters on African soil. While Morocco and Liberia have offered to host AFRICOM, other US strategic partners, such as Algeria and South Africa —for fear that a permanent US army might 'militarize' the continent and embolden domestic terrorist groups — have closed out any possibility to host the command (Nhamoyebonde's, 2010). From a Nkrumahist point of view, there are indications that AFRICOM is a smokescreen behind which the US wants to conceal its means to counter threats to its energy security, an attempt to recolonize the African continent. More explicit Afrocentric views are that AFRICOM is a highly-equipped US army primarily designed to counter terrorism, to increase access to Africa's oil, recognizing that the US currently purchases approximately 24% of its oil from Africa, and last but not least to offset China's growing economic investment on the continent (Klare et al., 2006; Africa Faith and Justice Network, 2008; The Nation, 2007, November 19). Biney (2012) went further to suggest that Nkrumah is the

⁵ There are various strains of dependency theorists. In addition to Latin America contemporary scholars such as Enrique Cardoso and Theotonio Dos Santos, Dependency theory has also been associated with Wallerstein's World-systems theory and Galtung's structural theory of imperialism.

ideological father of the notion of a Joint African Command and as such the formation of the US Africa Command by the Bush Administration is an anathema to his memory and must be resisted by all Pan-Africanists.

The initial wording of AFRICOM's mission statement seems not to match the activities on the ground. Cooke et al. (2009) report, for instance, that the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa and the Trans Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership are associated with AFRICOM. Thus, besides conducting joint military exercises with African countries, AFRICOM aims at deterring potential terrorists groups operating in the region. More recently, AFRICOM has taken the lead on Operation Odyssey Dawn (CRS Report R41725, 2011), the US leading role in the Western-led NATO intervention in Libya. Therefore earlier comments that AFRICOM, by its structure, will enhance the ability of US forces to engage in military operations in African conflicts (Volman, 2007) somehow proved right.

Although Nkrumah's book is suffused with defensive reasoning, it must be recognized that his earlier characterization of neocolonialism, which has become a central part of the theoretical underpinnings of the AU, is as valid now as it was in 1965. In line with the US motivated intervention in Libya, there are evidences of the manifestations of what Nkrumah described as the 'new forms of colonialism'. Few make the connection of the Libyan issue to neocolonialism (Engdahl, 2011). And yet, considering that military aid has the effect of establishing and maintaining control (Nkrumah, 1965), it can be argued that oil is the driving force lurking behind the US involvement. In other words, from a realist perspective, military capacity is the key for intervening states to achieve their interests, provided that these expected interests are measured against the need for action.

Next to the US neocolonial trap is the 'rogue state' logic. The phrase of rogue state – though it that has been openly expressed after 9/11 – became in the 1980s and 1990s part of the popular language of American foreign policy and international relations (Klare, 1995; Henriksen, 2001). The term has been used extensively after the 9/11 events by American policy makers and analysts to label states whose external behavior runs afoul of the standards of international community, specially through actions such as pursuing weapons of mass destruction or sponsoring terrorism. In the US view there are five rogue states: Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, and Syria all of which have been tied to terrorism in the past and have tried to acquire nuclear weapon. However, critics, like Chomsky (2000), argue that the term 'rogue state' has two uses: a propagandistic use, applied to assorted enemies, and a literal use that applies to states that do not regard themselves as bound to international norms (the UN Charter, the International Court of Justice decisions, and the various conventions and treaties). In the US diplomatic lexicon, 'rogues' are those states which flout the rules imposed by major states or imperial

structures (Henriksen, 2001). Libya under Qaddafi is lumped into this category.

Considering the fact that the US has always worked to demonize, to destabilize radical nationalist regimes (Shalom, 1993), the Libyan drama can be interpreted in terms of a war on terror against a rogue regime. The US saw Libya under the leadership of Qaddafi as a 'rogue state' posing serious threats to its national security interests. Thus, in the late 1979, under the Export Administration Act the US designated Libya as a state sponsor of terrorism (Schwartz, 2007). The critical turning point came in the 1980s following the bombing of the German nightclub frequented by American service personnel (1986) and the Pan American 103 bombing in Lockerbie (1988). These incidents led the US in repeated skirmishes with the Libyan forces and later escalated as Libya was implicated for supporting international terrorism.

Accusing Qaddafi, justly or unjustly, as the 'ogre' against whom all dictators in the world are measured (El Kihikha, 1997), the US has always sought to deter or contain its influence by isolation and through diplomatic measures. In the Cheney Report (Chapter 8: 6) for instance, Libya was not listed in the column of US foreign suppliers but included implicitly in terms like "sanctions can advance important national and global security objectives and can be an important foreign policy tool, especially against nations that support terrorism or seek to acquire weapons of mass destruction". The characterization of Libya as a 'rogue state' appears to be a justification for intervention. In the UN resolution it is stated that 'Libya continues to be a threat to international peace' (UNSCR, 2011, February 26). In a typical official statement, President Obama declared that 'the US is going after al Qaeda wherever it seeks a foothold' (The White House, 2011, March 28). Therefore, in the light of the several political skirmishes between Libya and the US, it is not unreasonable to argue that US participation in NATO operations around Libya is partly for security concerns, a preemptive military operation against a state it has long painted as 'rogue'.

CONCLUSION

This article briefly traced the historical origin of the "humanitarian intervention" doctrine and noted that the doctrine was most notably applied to prevent or to put a halt to mass atrocity crimes occurring within the boundaries of sovereign states. Since the early twenty first century, the doctrine has been mainly associated with 'the responsibility to protect', which involves the use of military forces as a central feature. As discussed in this article, many believe that the shift towards humanitarian intervention occurred particularly after the 9/11 events.

As for the relevance of the humanitarian doctrine to the Libyan crisis, the analysis has not addressed why or when intervention should occur. Instead it has attempted

to focus on the logic of events with a view to determine the driving factors behind the Euro-American joint intervention. The analysis of the logic of events shows that little room has been given to the peaceful measures, which yet initially constituted the basis of the pretext for intervention. The Western-led intervention, as argued in this article, completely ignored the African Union's opinion and position of mediating between Qaddafi and the so-called revolutionaries. In this respect, the article highlights that the Western coalition's swift intervention, is implicitly connected to what Nkrumah described as the 'new forms of colonialism'. Finally, in the light of Qaddafi's long history of antagonism towards the West, in particular the US, the discussion has partially shown that the Libyan drama is a premeditated intervention against a state perceived as 'rogue'.

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