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# POLITICAL RATIONALE AND INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR IN LIBYA



Edited by

**DAG HENRIKSEN &  
ANN KARIN LARSEN**

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POLITICAL RATIONALE AND INTERNATIONAL  
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# Introduction

Dag Henriksen and Ann Karin Larssen

The ambition of this book is to use the Libyan intervention as a case study to explore the dynamics of international interventions in so-called 'wars of choice'.<sup>1</sup> Richard N. Haass argues that 'wars of necessity' are essentially unavoidable. They involve the most important national interests, a lack of promising alternatives to the use of force, and a certain and considerable price to be paid if the status quo is allowed to stand. Examples include the Second World War and the Korean War. By contrast, wars of choice tend to involve interests that are less vital and the existence of viable alternative policies, be they diplomacy, inaction, or something else. The wars in Vietnam, Bosnia, and Kosovo were all 'wars of choice'. By definition, a war of choice is optional. What governed the decision to intervene in Libya?

The military intervention in Libya in 2011 is a particularly interesting case for many reasons, not least because the legitimization for military intervention was leaning heavily on the principle of 'the responsibility to protect' (R2P). Thus, publicly, it was a war of choice with a motive not rooted in self-interest. Still, the military coalition consisted of a number of nations with different histories, cultures, interests, and strategic outlooks.

It seems fair to argue that the vast majority of empirical evidence, after millennia of international politics and decisions on war, has gravitated overwhelmingly more towards national interest as the real rationale for military interventions. Despite public rhetoric of humanitarian intervention and this being the first war based on the new doctrine of R2P, were the dynamics governing the international intervention in Libya any different than national self-interest? Thus, this book tries to answer two broad questions:

1. What was the *political rationale* for the various actors to proceed as they did in the lead-up to and conduct of the military intervention in Libya?
2. Given the way this operation was handled, what are the *consequences* of the United Nations (UN)-authorized military intervention in Libya?

In order to try and answer these somewhat large and overarching questions, a variety of options and actors was available. We quickly realized that not only

<sup>1</sup> We are using the definition of Richard N. Haass, from *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010); and 'The Necessary and the Chosen', *Foreign Affairs* (July/Aug. 2009), <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65072/richard-n-haass/the-necessary-and-the-chosen>>.

perspectives from *contributing* nations and organizations were of interest—it would be of great significance to explore the arguments and rationale for why nations and organizations opted *not* to contribute.

The strength of this book we believe is twofold. First there is its combination of unique perspectives. While the perspectives of the US, France, and the UK on the Libyan crisis/war have been well documented, the Arabic and Scandinavian political and military dynamics have been much less so. While the perspectives of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the UN and R2P have been debated, the view from the Arab League and African Union (AU) have been less in focus. Bringing these perspectives forward is important in and of itself.

Second, it has been an ambition that this book can be read in order to understand the dynamics of the Libyan crisis/war, but *also* as individual chapters by those who want to increase their understanding of the political and strategic outlook of individual nations and organizations. In other words, one can, for instance, read the chapters on Sweden, Qatar, and China in terms of their involvement in the Libyan campaign, or as individual chapters to get a better understanding of their more general strategic outlook, and why they have approached other contemporary crises and conflicts the way they have.

To be clear, this volume should not be considered merely as a book on Libya, or a book on R2P or international law with Libya as a case study. It is the combination of perspectives that can be read in the context of Libya or as stand-alone chapters that is the strength of this book.

This strength may also be its clearest weakness. Compiling sixteen perspectives into one book may compromise its overall cohesion, and risks becoming sixteen more or less interesting academic ‘satellites’ without comparable, cohesive, overarching lessons, knowledge, and wisdom to bring forward. We have broadly tried to avoid that through the editorial process in two aspects in particular. First, we invited all contributors to address the following three questions. (1) What are the longer lines in the foreign and security policy outlook that might explain the nation’s/organization’s involvement in Libya (or whether it was a breach of these long lines)? (2) How did the nation/organization contribute in this campaign? (3) To what degree has the Libyan experience shaped the nation’s/organization’s foreign and security policy after Libya (Syria, the Islamic State or ISIS/ISIL, etc.), if indeed at all? By seeking to ensure each contributor stayed within this analytical framework, we believe we have ensured sufficient cohesion.

The second way in which we have attempted to ensure cohesion is by actively seeking to stimulate cross-referencing, rooting out overlapping material, and providing feedback to each contributor to delete or include material that would increase the book’s cohesion. In this way we believe we have found the balance we are seeking; it is up to the reader to evaluate whether we have succeeded.

The starting point for this book is the 2011 military intervention in Libya. Although the extent of force needed to uphold the authorization in UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1973 for 'all necessary measures' was hard to define, a significant threshold for the international community was overstepped by March 2011. The use of force by the international coalition in order to, at least publicly, protect civilians dramatically changed the internal dynamics in Libya. What appeared to be a civil war in Libya had been internationalized.

The first bombs dropped on Libyan territory by the coalition fell on 19 March 2011.<sup>2</sup> The military intervention started as a 'coalition of the willing', with a number of unilateral military operations<sup>3</sup> that converged into the US-led Operation Odyssey Dawn (OOD). Gradually the operation was transferred to NATO, which, by 31 March, had formally assumed control. This involved a name change to Operation Unified Protector (OUP), which formally ended seven months later, on 31 October 2011.<sup>4</sup>

The intervention in Libya was unique in many respects. The US, which is usually the dominant political and military figure in international interventions of this nature, opted to play a more restrained role, restricting itself to not conducting offensive strike missions in OUP.<sup>5</sup> It was NATO's first intervention on African soil (unlike former support to African Union peacekeeping operations and/or anti-pirate operations off the Horn of Africa). Most observers also consider the use of force in Libya to be the first military intervention based on the principles laid out in the R2P doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

During OUP, there was a lot of criticism of the military implementation of Resolution 1973. While the resolution's goal was to protect civilians against atrocities by the forces of the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, a number of nations and observers argued that the war turned into a quest for 'regime change'.<sup>7</sup> The heart of the disagreement seems to be whether a change of

<sup>2</sup> David D. Kirkpatrick, Steven Erlanger, and Elisabeth Bumiller, 'Allies Open Air Assault on Qaddafi's Forces in Libya', *New York Times*, 19 Mar. 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/20/world/africa/20libya.html?%20pagewanted=all&r=0>>.

<sup>3</sup> The UK had 'Operation Ellamy', France 'Operation Harmattan', Canada 'Operation Mobile', and the US 'Operation Odyssey Dawn'.

<sup>4</sup> This is taken from a chronology of NATO events: NATO, 'NATO and Libya: Operation Unified Protector', 27 Mar. 2012, <<http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/71679.htm>>.

<sup>5</sup> Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya', National Defense University, Washington, DC, 28 Mar. 2011, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya>>.

<sup>6</sup> Stewart Patrick, 'Libya and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention: How Qaddafi's Fall Vindicated Obama and RtoP', *Foreign Affairs*, 26 Aug. 2011, <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68233/stewart-patrick/libya-and-the-future-of-humanitarian-intervention>>.

<sup>7</sup> See Ian Black, 'Libya Regime Change is West's Goal, But Doubts Remain over How to Achieve it', *Guardian*, 15 Apr. 2011, <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/15/libya-regime-change-analysis>>; Michael Hughes, 'Libyan Regime Change: U.S./NATO Hypocrisy Knows No Bounds', *The World Post*, 18 Apr. 2011, <<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael>>.



government was actually necessary in order to protect civilians in Libya, or whether Resolution 1973 was a pretext for alternative real political ambitions in Libya and the dynamics in the wider North African and Middle East region following the so-called Arab Spring.

The intervention in Libya triggered a number of important questions: will the short-term emphasis on ousting Gaddafi from power weaken the UN and the concept of R2P in the years to come? Will it influence the broader discourse and evolution of international law? Is the lack of a Security Council resolution addressing the very severe situation in Syria today a consequence of the international handling of Libya? Were we seeing a divided NATO, or at least a more fragmented NATO, which should be seen more as a pool of nations to form coalitions of the willing in future international interventions, rather than a cohesive organization more focused on collective defence? Did the intervention in Libya lower the threshold for NATO/coalition interventions in Africa? Was the US approach of playing a less dominant role (by some critics deemed 'leading from behind'<sup>8</sup>) in the political and military spheres of influence in the Libyan operation an indication of a new US foreign policy doctrine? Was the French–British cooperation in Libya a signal of increased bilateral ties between the nations and an indication of a new dynamic in European foreign and security politics? Was the support for the intervention's no fly zone by the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and many Muslim nations an indication of the future need for broader alliances and an increased need for legitimacy for Western-dominated interventions?<sup>9</sup> How did the international handling of Libya influence the internal dynamics of the African Union? This book tries to address these questions.

## BOOK STRUCTURE, ACADEMIC CHOICES, AND KEY FINDINGS

The war in Libya was a war of choice, and, somewhat unsurprisingly, the various chapters reveal that national interest was a key rationale for the involved nations and organizations. Each nation had a different set of national interests that governed its decisions. Sometimes these interests overlapped

hughes/libya-us-nato-\_b\_850418.html>; Ellen Barry, 'Putin Criticizes West for Libya Incursion', *New York Times*, 26 Apr. 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/%202011/04/27/world/europe/27putin.html>>.

<sup>8</sup> See Charles Krauthammer, 'The Obama Doctrine: Leading from Behind', *Washington Post*, 28 Apr. 2011, <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E_story.html)>.

<sup>9</sup> Al Jazeera, 'Arab States Seek Libya No-Fly Zone', 12 Mar. 2011, <<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/%202011/03/201131218852687848.html>>.

with those of others, sometimes not. This does not mean that the humanitarian impulse or the importance of R2P is diminished after Libya. Rather, this book is indirectly making the argument that those who see the lack of a Security Council resolution in Syria as a direct consequence of the war in Libya are overstating their argument. Libya and Syria are different: they exhibit a range of diverse factors that directly impinge upon the national interests of other nations in distinct ways. Perhaps the broader lessons are in fact as simple as Professor Thomas G. Weiss argues in this book:

When humanitarian and strategic interests coincide, a window of opportunity opens to activate the humanitarian impulse in the Security Council . . . In Libya, the Security Council did act. As we know from Syria, the Council also may choose not to act. Consistency is a fool's errand: Syria is not Libya, and Sri Lanka is not Côte d'Ivoire. Political interests vary from case to case.

Decisions on war are rarely solely about idealism. National interest is more often than not a more significant motivation for military involvement. It is arguably why wars of choice often ends up with coalitions of the willing. The different perception of national interest helps explain why so few NATO nations wanted to contribute militarily in Libya, and, for instance, even why two small Scandinavian NATO member states, Norway and Denmark, with similar culture and overlapping history, both contributed in Libya, while they approach Syria and ISIL quite differently from each other.

Given our two overarching research questions, the book's title, *Political Rationale and International Consequences of the War in Libya* was a given. We approached some of the world's leading experts on each topic, and decided to organize the book into five parts.

## PART I: THE UN VETO POWERS' PERSPECTIVES

Although we wanted to include nations and organizations that are rarely highlighted in academic analysis of coalition military interventions, the five Security Council veto powers were a logical starting point. As noted, this was the first time the UNSC authorized the use of force based on the concept of R2P, and the veto powers, in different ways, enabled this unique mandate. France (in particular), the UK, and the US (militarily) were the driving forces behind the intervention and were obvious choices for inclusion in the book. We opted to include Russia and China even though they did not contribute to the military intervention. Their actions—or perhaps their somewhat surprising decision not to veto the authorizing resolution—significantly shaped the handling of this conflict.

In Chapter 1, Tom J. Farer argues that the US reluctantly supported the Libyan intervention and that the operation was not in accordance with US national interests because Gaddafi had been supporting the so-called War on Terror for several years leading up to the intervention. President Obama was reluctantly persuaded by his advisers to use military force to avoid further crimes against humanity—not least an impending massacre in Benghazi—and believed the war could be won fairly easily. The decision to withdraw from combat missions in OUP stems from a broad strategic goal of reducing the US militarized profile in the Middle East and, more generally, of building a strong presumption against large-scale military operations anywhere for purposes other than defence against direct threats to core interests. Another reason for Obama's position was his strategic conviction that the US could not afford, and the electorate would not support, the pursuit of democracy and human rights unless the burden was widely shared. A final source of his reluctance was concern and uncertainty about the limits of presidential power to employ force without Congressional authorization, or at least post facto consent. According to Farer, Libya will remain an anomaly, and the US will in the foreseeable future limit itself to intervene only where national interests are at stake.

In his chapter, François Heisbourg argues that France, through its political initiative, diplomatic activity, and military engagement, along with the United Kingdom, played the leading role in setting the terms of foreign involvement in the conflict, the conduct of the war, and its eventual outcome. With the historical parallel of Srebrenica looming in French public debate, the government's public rationale for intervention was largely humanitarian. The humanitarian objective would best be served by deliberately seeking to help the insurgency remove Gaddafi from power in short order—replicating, with outside intervention, what had happened to leaders in Tunisia and Egypt. The political rationale thus became one of humanitarian intervention through 'regime change'. Conversely, France had been caught off-balance when the Arab Spring bloomed in Tunisia, with the French foreign minister, Madame Michèle Alliot-Marie, holidaying there during the uprising. This took on serious implications when she offered material help, in her official capacity, to the Tunisian dictator, President Zine el-Abedin Ben Ali, so that he could quell rioting with less loss of life. This egregious misstep made on prime-time television called for a vigorous correction, beyond the sacking of Alliot-Marie. Intervention in Libya was expected to more than make up for these initial shortcomings. French diplomacy was active in getting a positive, albeit ambiguous, statement from the Arab League on 12 March 2011, which proved to be a very important legitimation for the intervention. Overall, France's war in Libya has had little influence, one way or another, on its readiness to operate in Sub-Saharan Africa or the broader Middle East. It has, however, induced greater diffidence vis-à-vis events in northern Africa.

In a similar vein, Christina J. M. Goulter argues that Britain was caught by surprise when open protests against Gaddafi's government began in Libya in the middle of February 2011, and then escalated into civil war. Prime Minister Cameron wanted to demonstrate his leadership on global security issues at a time when he was being heavily criticized for excessive cuts to the defence budget. However, Cameron's decision to intervene in Libya was not anticipated by either the newly instituted National Security Council or the British military. The UK's National Security Strategy, revealed some five months earlier, listed some fifteen 'priority tasks' for defence and the promotion of national interests. Not only did Libya not feature in the Tier One list, but the coalition government Cameron led had previously indicated that it was opposed to the type of 'liberal interventionism' which had characterized the previous Labour government, especially during Tony Blair's premiership. So, when Cameron announced that it was the UK's responsibility to intervene in Libya, it caught most of Whitehall by surprise. There is little evidence to support the notion that the Libyan experience has had any significant influence on British defence policy, national security strategy, or inclination to participate more generally in similar operations after Libya.

Russia played a significant role in the diplomatic discussions in the UNSC leading to the authorization of force, and has been a staunch critic of the intervention ever since, reportedly influencing its decision not to authorize a similar intervention in Syria. As Ann Karin Larssen points out, while Russia is often perceived as a naysayer when it comes to authorizing international interventions, it has authorized interventions in the UNSC on a number of occasions, not least in Africa, suggesting a more pragmatic approach than is often portrayed in the media. While Russia has traditionally been sceptical of humanitarian intervention, fearing it creates a precedent that can be used against it in areas involving its own national interest, there is reason to believe that it calculated a veto in the Libyan case would be more costly than beneficial.

China's influence in the world is rising, and it has invested enormous resources on the African continent. Sheng Ding points out that China undertook an unprecedented mass evacuation of almost 36,000 of its nationals from Libya between 22 February and 2 March 2011—the first time China fully utilized its military, commercial, and diplomatic capacities to evacuate citizens from a conflict-ridden country without engaging militarily. However, similarly to the Russian position, China does not favour R2P or the rationale behind humanitarian intervention, fearing it can create a precedent that can be used against it at home. Libya showed that further integration of China with the world economy will generate more demand for protection of its growing economic interests around the world, indicating that Beijing needs to rethink its commitment to the principle of non-interference and play the role of a major responsible country in global affairs.

## PART II: THE ARAB PERSPECTIVES

Without support from the Muslim world, it is doubtful that either a Security Council resolution on Libya, or, subsequently, a military intervention would have been politically feasible. Thus the support of the Arab League, the GCC, and nations such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Jordan was of huge importance. Much as we would have liked to include the perspectives of the GCC and Jordan, forced for brevity's sake to make a choice, we opted to include the Arab League, Qatar, and the UAE.

The Arab League played a key role in legitimizing the intervention in Libya, and as a consequence the League increased its status and role as a legitimizer of conflict and popular demands for democratic freedoms. This was the first time the Arab League had supported military action against one of its own member states on account of its internal affairs. In many ways the Libya conflict transformed the Arab League into a more respectable and significant actor in the region. Ranj Alaaldin argues that the Arab Spring protests established a new moral and political framework within the region, and that this framework today allows the Arab League to act more strongly in defence of human rights and democratic freedoms, despite the autocratic and conservative nature of its member states.

Qatar played a more influential role in the Libyan crisis than most observers have acknowledged. According to Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Qatar took advantage of a fortuitous set of domestic and regional circumstances to play an astoundingly high-profile and increasingly controversial role in the Arab Spring in general, and towards Libya and Syria in particular. Qatar's prime minister, Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani, engineered Libya's suspension from the Arab League and subsequently secured a unanimous vote of support in favour of the no fly zone after a confrontational diplomatic struggle with Algeria. Qatari Mirage fighter jets took part in the NATO-led air strikes, and the Qatar-based Libya TV gave the rebels a voice to make their cause heard across the world. Qatar organized and hosted the first meeting of the International Contact Group on Libya in April 2011 and a follow-up gathering in August, and supplied weapons, training, and operational advice to rebel forces in addition to elite forces that were controversially only later revealed to be operating in their hundreds throughout Libya.

The UAE is another small Arab nation which played an important role during the Libyan Crisis. Jean-Marc Rickli argues that, under the chairmanship of the UAE, the GCC called for the imposition of a no fly zone on 8 March 2011, which, together with the Arab League statement on 12 March, played a very important role in providing legitimacy for the military intervention. The UAE provided six F-16 and six Mirage 2000 jets to OUP, which represented the first time its air force had participated in a multinational military operation. It conducted more than 100 ground strikes, as well as cruise missile

strikes using Black Shaheen air-launched land attack cruise missiles (French SCALP missiles). The Libyan crisis bolstered the UAE's credibility as a reliable partner, and the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dempsey, stated after the war that 'the UAE is among our most credible and capable allies, especially in the Gulf region'. Together with Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar, the UAE became a member of NATO's Istanbul Cooperation Initiative during the organization's 2004 Istanbul summit, and in May 2011 the UAE appointed an ambassador and opened a mission to NATO headquarters, becoming the first country in the Middle East to do so.

### PART III: THE SCANDINAVIAN PERSPECTIVES

The Scandinavian nations of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden held a somewhat surprisingly high profile during the Libyan crisis. Dag Henriksen points out that Norway and Denmark were by far the highest per capita contributors to NATO, and according to commentators in the *New York Times*, 'Denmark and Norway together destroyed as many targets as Britain; Denmark, Norway, and Belgium dropped as many bombs as France'. Perhaps more important, in the early phase of the war, was their willingness to undertake difficult missions, and as one key individual in the targeting community points out: 'The Norwegians and the Danes were the ones doing a lot of the hard targets. The Norwegians and the Danes made it possible to generate and strike harder targets. We were amazed by the Norwegians [and Danes]—you guys were leading the way. You used the BLU-109's [2000 lb] bombs and struck downtown Tripoli. You were making the others comfortable with dropping bombs and doing the types of target sets you were willing to strike.' With Norway using an unprecedented level of force in Libya and set to purchase fifty-two F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, the country may well become a more significant military player in the years ahead.

Peter Viggo Jakobsen argues that Denmark increasingly views military force as a natural and legitimate tool of statecraft. The Libya operation reinforced the belief among Danish decision-makers that their armed forces can be used to 'do good' and serve as an effective means in their pursuit of pride, praise, and position in the international arena. The Danish involvement in the Libya war is mostly seen as a huge success and key members of both the Løkke Rasmussen government, which took Denmark to war, and the Thorning Smith government, which took over at the helm before its end, have indicated their willingness to do it again. The latter government has since portrayed the Libya war as a vindication of its 'new foreign policy', with forceful participation in Libya followed up by willingness to contribute in later military endeavours—not least participating with seven F-16s in the US-led Operation

Inherent Resolve against ISIL in Iraq and Syria in August–October 2014. As of 6 November 2014, the Danish F-16s had flown forty-one missions and dropped thirty-nine smart munitions.

Robert Egnell argues that Libya represented the first Swedish international deployment of combat aircraft since the early 1960s. Sweden has committed significant resources to conforming to NATO standards over the past decade, and at the height of its contribution during summer 2011, the Swedish contingent flew roughly 30 per cent of all tactical air reconnaissance (TAR) missions within OUP. With the positive Swedish view of the Libyan experience, and rising political tensions following the Russian intervention in Ukraine, there is a debate related to whether a future NATO membership would be beneficial to Sweden.

#### PART IV: NATO, INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (R2P)

The public debate over Libya has been dominated by several issues: whether NATO exceeded the limits of the authorization for ‘all necessary measures’ in Resolution 1973 and consciously devised a campaign for regime change; the debate over whether Libya has strengthened or weakened the concept of R2P; and whether Libya can be seen as more or less a causal reason for the lack of a Security Council resolution in relation to the Syrian conflict. Thus, we find it logical to address NATO, the UN, and R2P, and the evolution of international law in the same section.

Ryan Hendrickson argues that Operation Unified Protector was unique in NATO’s history of military interventions. The breadth of NATO’s ongoing transformation into a global security organization is illustrated by reflecting on the evolution from a difficult transition and intense debates over whether the organization should go ‘out of area’ in 1994 when using force on Bosnian-Serb militias, to 2011, when the alliance bombed Libya’s pro-Qaddafi forces threatening mass slaughter in Benghazi. In many ways, the mission proceeded in a way that reflected quite poorly on NATO’s core principle of collective defence and common security interests, as only a handful of its twenty-eight members were willing to use force. The majority of NATO’s members refrained from sharing the burden of the operation, and in some cases explicitly resisted calls for assistance from those who were willing to carry out the mission. Moreover, the operation again highlighted an ongoing challenge for NATO, that is, the profound differences in military capabilities between the United States and its partners. Such different strategic outlooks among the allies, and the vast capabilities differences within the alliance does not bode well for NATO’s future.

The organization's previous partnerships also helped integrate non-allies into the mission, most notably Sweden and Qatar, who proved quite valuable militarily. NATO's previous diplomatic outreach efforts to the Arab world through the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative also proved useful in cultivating Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates' willingness to contribute to the mission. These examples highlight NATO's ongoing transformation and a new range of security partnerships that were previously inconceivable in this classic regional security organization. Such partners create new incentives for allies to create new coalitions when future crisis management conditions arise.

Thomas G. Weiss argues that the central insight and main tactical advantage of R2P is that state sovereignty is conditional; it entails duties not simply rights; and it permits a conversation about the limits of state power even with the most ardent defenders of sovereign inviolability. After centuries of largely looking the other way, sovereignty no longer provides a licence for mass atrocities in the eyes of legitimate members of the international community of states. Every state has a responsibility to protect its own citizens from widespread killings and other gross violations of their rights. If any state, however, is manifestly unable or unwilling to exercise that responsibility, or actually is the perpetrator of mass atrocities, its sovereignty is abrogated. Meanwhile the responsibility to protect civilians in distress devolves to other states, ideally acting through the Security Council. Often used loosely to mean any kind of effort to influence another state's foreign policy, the term 'intervention' should be reserved for three categories of threatened or actual coercion against the expressed wishes of a target state or group of political authorities: sanctions and embargoes; international criminal prosecution; and military force. Still, political interests vary from case to case. Militarily coming to the rescue, even for human protection purposes, is an unlikely option for democratic states. Foreign ventures risking lives where few vital interests are at stake are a tough sell. The humanitarian impulse is the maximum to which the international community of states can aspire. Governments have activated it more often since the end of the Cold War than earlier. We can agree that selective application corrodes principles. However, lest the ideal become the enemy of the good, we should agree that international action in some cases is better than in none.

Sigmund Simonsen addresses the intervention in Libya from a legal perspective. What were the roles of international law and the new doctrine of R2P in the intervention in Libya in 2011. Simonsen argues that Resolution 1973 solidified the evolving practice in the Security Council that a humanitarian crisis within one state may constitute a threat to international peace and security, which the Council can then address, as a last resort, by authorizing the use of necessary and proportionate force. Resolution 1973 also reaffirmed, and therefore to a degree strengthened, R2P, as the Council explicitly applied



the doctrine when justifying the intervention. The impact of this new practice is evident: only a few days after Resolution 1973 the Council authorized use of force for the protection of civilians with explicit reference to R2P in the Ivory Coast, in Resolution 1975. In September 2011 the UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, concluded that ‘in the six short years since its endorsement by the World Summit, this doctrine has gone from crawling to walking to running... [O]ur debates are now about how, not whether, to implement the Responsibility to Protect. No government questions the principle.’<sup>10</sup> The Council also authorized use of force for human protection purposes in Mali in 2012 (Resolution 2085), and in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic in 2013 (Resolutions 2098 and 2117, respectively). All resolutions included explicit reference to R2P. The claim that the international community’s failure to protect millions of people in Syria seriously damaged the emerging doctrine of R2P thus seems greatly exaggerated. The main reason why it is unlikely that R2P will prove short-lived, however, is that the notion of a responsibility to protect is not radically new. The concept can be traced way back in time and is firmly anchored in well-established principles of international law.

## PART V: THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES

Leaving out the African perspective would have reduced the academic value of this volume, and not putting a particular emphasis on the specific situation in Libya following the intervention equally so. Linnéa Gelot explains the reasons and dynamics of the AU’s response to the 2011 Libya crisis. The AU is the premier Pan-African governance institution and principal body for maintaining peace and security on the continent. Many African states argue that the stronger the AU is, the better it can ensure empowerment of African states, regional actors, and peoples. In addition, the more autonomous the AU is, the better it can interpret, determine, and lead what it considers a rightful R2P response in African conflicts.

The AU role in the Libya crisis generated intense and complex internal debates regarding the need for a legitimate African security order and enhancing the continent’s impact on global governance. The AU argued that a negotiated transition was more likely to bring a sustainable protection outcome to the affected communities and the wider region, and today, even though observers often argue the AU acted too slow, many within the organization feel vindicated in their reading of the situation—that a hasty and

<sup>10</sup> Ban Ki-moon, press statement, UN doc. SG/SM/13838, New York, 23 Sept. 2011, <<http://www.un.org/%20News/Press/docs/2011/sgsm13838.doc.htm>>.