



# The Lessons of Libya

Amitai Etzioni

**W**HAT A DIFFERENCE six months make. Early in 2011, an overwhelming majority of American policymakers, opinion makers, and the public were strongly opposed to more military entanglements overseas, particularly a third war in a Muslim country. And there was a strong sense that given our overstretched position due to the war in Afghanistan, continued exposure in Iraq, and—above all—severe economic challenges at home, the time had come to reduce U.S. commitments overseas. In June 2011, when announcing the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, President Obama put it as follows: “America, it is time to focus on nationbuilding here at home.” Regarding involvement in Libya, then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated in March 2011: “My view would be, if there is going to be that kind of assistance [providing arms] to the opposition, there are plenty of sources for it other than the United States.” Admiral Mike Mullen raised questions about a Libyan involvement, stating in a March 2011 Senate hearing that a no-fly zone would be “an extraordinarily complex operation to set up.”

Six months later, in September 2011, as the military campaign in Libya was winding down, it was widely hailed as a great success. As Helene Cooper and Steven Lee Myers wrote in *The New York Times*, while “it would be premature to call the war in Libya a complete success for United States interests . . . the arrival of victorious rebels on the shores of Tripoli last week gave President Obama’s senior advisers a chance to claim a key victory.” NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated in early September, “We can already draw the first lessons from the operation, and most of them are positive.” In a meeting on 20 September with Libya’s new interim leader, Mustafa Abdul-Jalil, President Obama said, “Today, the Libyan people are writing a new chapter in the life of their nation. After four decades of darkness, they can walk the streets, free from a tyrant.”

Moreover, Libya was held up as a model for more such interventions. Cooper and Myers wrote, “The conflict may, in some important ways, become a model for how the United States wields force in other countries where its

Amitai Etzioni is a professor of international relations at George Washington University and author of *Security First: For a Muscular, Moral Foreign Policy* (Yale, 2007).

PHOTO: Demonstrators wave the flags of Libya and the U.S. in support of Libyan rebels, calling for an end to the regime of Libyan ruler Moammar Gaddafi, in front of the White House, Washington, DC, 9 July 2011. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)



(R.D. Ward, DOD)

**U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, right, escorts British Secretary of State for Defense Liam Fox, through honor guard members and into the Pentagon, Arlington, VA, 24 May 2011. The defense leaders discussed the situation in Libya, where NATO air forces were fighting against the rule of Moammar Gaddafi.**

interests are threatened.” Philip Gordon, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, opined that the Libyan operation was “in many ways a model on how the United States can lead the way that allows allies to support.” Leon Panetta, current Secretary of Defense, said that the campaign was “a good indication of the kind of partnership and alliances that we need to have for the future if we are going to deal with the threats that we confront in today’s world.”

As international attention turned to the massacres in Syria, world leaders and observers discussed applying the “Libyan model.” French President Nicolas Sarkozy pointedly said on his visit to post-Gaddafi Libya, “I hope that one day young Syrians can be given the opportunity that young Libyans are now being given.” Syrian activists called for the creation of a no-fly zone over Syria, similar to that imposed over Libya.<sup>1</sup> An August *New York Times* article noted, “The very fact that the administration has joined with the same allies that it banded with on Libya to call for Mr. Assad to go and to impose penalties on

his regime could take the United States one step closer to applying the Libya model toward Syria.”

No doubt, as time passes, the assessment of the Libya campaign will be recast—and more than once. Nevertheless, one can already draw several rather important lessons from the campaign.

## Lesson 1. Boots off the Ground

The Libya campaign showed that a strategy previously advocated for other countries, particularly Afghanistan, could work effectively. The strategy, advocated by Vice President Joe Biden and John Mearsheimer, a political scientist at the University of Chicago, entails using airpower, drones, Special Forces, the CIA, and, crucially, working with native forces rather than committing American and allied conventional ground forces.<sup>2</sup> It is sometimes referred to as “offshoring,” although calling it “boots off the ground” may better capture its essence.

Boots off the ground was the way in which the campaign was carried out in Kosovo, which NATO won with no allied combat fatalities and

at low costs. It was also the way the Taliban were overthrown in Afghanistan in 2001, in a campaign that relied largely on the forces of local tribes, such as the Northern Alliance of Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks, among others—although some conventional backup was committed. The United States “[took] full advantage of their air superiority and the [Taliban’s] lack of sophisticated air defenses . . . using a wide and deadly repertoire: B-52’s, B-1’s, Navy jets, Predator drones, and AC-130 Special Operations gunships.”<sup>3</sup> And “boots off the ground” worked in Libya, with minimal casualties for NATO, at relatively low costs, and with the fighting mainly carried out by Libyans seeking a new life for themselves.

Aside from the important but obvious advantages of low casualties and low costs, “boots off the ground” has one major merit that is not so readily apparent. It is much less alienating to the population and makes disengagement—the exit strategy—much easier to achieve.

People of most nations (and certainly many in the Middle East) resent the presence of foreign troops within their borders. Thus, even many Iraqis and Afghans who view the American military presence as beneficial to their security (or pocketbooks) often seem troubled both by U.S. combat methods (which they see as yielding too many civilian casualties) and by what they deem freewheeling personal conduct (including the presence of female soldiers). Above all, they consider foreign troops a violation of their sovereignty and a sign of their underlying weakness. They cannot wait for the day when these troops go home.

The Libyan rebels made it clear from the beginning that although they sought NATO support, they did not want foreign boots on the ground. Avoiding such presence largely mitigated the perceived threat to sovereignty.

Similarly avoided were the political traps that await an administration seeking to disengage from

a military campaign but afraid that the opposition will criticize it for being weak on defense if it leaves prematurely, as we have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. This whole issue is avoided in Libya; as the military campaign ends, disengagement is not much of a problem.

Can “boots off the ground” be applied elsewhere? Is it the new model for armed interventions overseas? One should be wary of generalizations. Obviously, what can be made to work in Libya cannot be employed against North Korea. Arguably, it is already being employed in Yemen, but it might well not work against the well-entrenched Hezbollah.

Also, some question whether we can make “boots off the ground” work in land-locked nations like Afghanistan. Carrier-based close air support aircraft may have to travel much greater distances, potentially decreasing responsiveness and hindering the “boots off the ground” effort. In addition, when one has no local bases, it becomes more difficult to collect human intelligence. Given the high number of casualties and costs of a long war involving conventional forces, whether these disadvantages are sufficient to negate the merits of the “boots off the ground” strategy is a question on which reasonable people can differ. One lesson, though, stands out: when “boots off the ground” can be employed, it seems to compare rather favorably to conventional “boots *on* the ground” invasions and occupations.

## Lesson 2. Avoid Mission Creep

Assessments of military campaigns depend on what their goals were. Thus, if one looks at Operation Desert Storm that pushed Saddam out of Kuwait in 1991, one will rank it as very successful if one assumes its goal was to reaffirm the long-established Westphalian norm that lies at the very foundation of the prevailing world order—that no nation may use its armed forces to invade another nation, and nations that do so will be pushed back and “punished.” However, one would rank Desert Storm less well if one assumed its goal was to force a regime change in Iraq, to topple Saddam, and to protect the Shi’a who were rising up against him.

The American tendency to allow campaigns with originally limited goals to morph into campaigns that have more expansive goals can turn successful drives into questionable and contested

***People of most nations...  
resent the presence of foreign  
troops within their borders.***

operations. The failures or defects are thus as much a consequence of mission creep as of inherent difficulties.

A key example is the war in Afghanistan. In March 2009, President Obama narrowly defined the goals of the war there as to “disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al-Qaeda.” Later, in October 2009, the Obama administration reiterated that the plan was a limited plan to “destroy [Al-Qaeda’s] leadership, its infrastructure, and its capability.” This definition reflected a scaling back of a much more ambitious goal set by President Bush, who sought “to build a flourishing democracy as an alternative to a hateful ideology.” However, over time, a variety of forces led the Obama administration to expand again the goals of the war to include defeating the Taliban (even after very few Al-Qaeda were left in Afghanistan, and much larger numbers were threatening U.S. interests in other places) and to help establish a stable Afghan government.

Obama outlined the added goals in May 2010 by stating his intent to “strengthen Afghanistan’s capacity to provide for [its] own security” and “a civilian effort to promote good governance and development and regional cooperation.” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton offered a still more expansive view, saying: “I would imagine, if things go well [under President Karzai], that we would be helping with the education and health systems and agriculture productivity long after the military presence had either diminished or disappeared.”

The forces that pushed for this mission creep deserve a brief review, because we shall see them in play in Libya and elsewhere. In part, they are idealistic and normative. Americans hold that all people if free to choose, would “naturally” prefer the democratic form of government and a free society respecting human rights and based on the rule of law. Indeed, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S. neo-conservatives argued that the whole world was marching toward “the end of history,” a state of affairs in which all governments would be democratic. They held—and President Bush reportedly agreed with them—that in the few situations in which nations were lagging, the United States had a duty to help

them “catch up with history.” Or, in plain English, to force regime change. This is one of the reasons given for U.S. armed intervention in Iraq in 2003. At the same time, liberals held that the United States should use its power to protect people from humanitarian abuse and thus support more armed interventions on this ground. For instance, Special Assistant to the President Samantha Power, who played a key role in convincing President Obama to engage in Libya, is the author of an influential book, *A Problem from Hell*, in which she chastises the West for not using force to stop genocide in places such as Cambodia, the Congo, and Rwanda.

In addition, a military doctrine was developed that held that one could not achieve narrow security goals (i.e., defeating Al-Qaeda) without also engaging in nationbuilding. It suggested that one cannot win wars against insurgencies merely by using military force, but must also win the hearts and minds of the population by doing good deeds for them (e.g., building roads, clinics, schools, etc.). Also, by shoring up our local partners, we show that to support, say, the Karzai administration, would lead to a stable, democratic government with at least a reasonable level of integrity. This doctrine (referred to as counterinsurgency or COIN in contrast to counterterrorism or CT)



(AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

**U.S. President Barack Obama makes a statement on the ongoing developments in Libya in Brasilia, Brazil, 19 March 2011.**



entailed a very considerable mission expansion, and its results are subject to considerable differences of opinion. However, there is no denying that while the military victories in Iraq and Afghanistan came swiftly and at low human and economic costs, the main casualties and difficulties arose in the nation-building phase, where the outcomes are far from clear.

All these considerations have played, and continue to play, a role in Libya. Initially, the goal of the operation was a strictly humanitarian one: to prevent Gaddafi from carrying out his threat, issued in February 2011, to “attack [the rebels] in their lairs” and “cleanse Libya house by house.”<sup>4</sup> He repeated his intent by saying, “The moment of truth has come. There will be no mercy. Our troops will be coming to Benghazi tonight.”<sup>5</sup> In March, President Obama stated, “We are not going to use force to go beyond a well-defined goal—specifically, the protection of civilians in Libya.” True, even at that point, he mentioned the need to also achieve a regime change, but explicitly ruled it out as a goal of the military operation. The regime was going to change by other means; as Obama put it, “In the coming weeks, we will continue to help the Libyan people with humanitarian and economic assistance so that they can fulfill their aspirations peacefully.”

Very quickly, the goal of the Libyan mission expanded. In April 2011, Obama, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron published a joint pledge asserting that regime change must take place in order to achieve the humanitarian goal. They stated, “Gaddafi must go, and go for good,” so that “a genuine transition from dictatorship to an inclusive constitutional process can really begin, led by a new generation of leaders.” Moreover, they added that NATO would use its force to promote these goals: “So long as Gaddafi is in power, NATO must maintain its operations so that civilians remain protected and the pressure on the regime builds.”

The issue came to a head when, in May, Gaddafi offered a ceasefire with the rebels that would have

ended the humanitarian crisis and would have led to negotiations between the rebels and Gaddafi—but entailed no regime change. (The ceasefire could have been enforced either by threatening to resume NATO bombing if it was not honored or by putting UN peacekeeping forces between the parties.) NATO, however, rejected the offer out of hand; Gaddafi—and his regime—had to go. Next, NATO proceeded to bomb not only military targets but also Gaddafi’s residential compound in Tripoli, reportedly killing his son and three grandchildren.<sup>6</sup>

As of September 2011, the goals of both averting a humanitarian crisis and toppling the Gaddafi regime had been achieved, and hence one might conclude that mission creep had no deleterious effects, at least in this case. Actually, two goals were attained for the price of one.

It is here that the question of what follows becomes crucial for a fuller assessment of the Libya campaign. There are strong sociological reasons to expect that it is unlikely that a stable democratic government will emerge in Libya. These include the absence of most institutions of a civil society after decades of tyranny, the thin middle class, and the lack of democratic tradition. (For more indicators, see a discussion of a Marshall Plan below.) Clearly, we may evaluate the mission expansion rather differently if we witness the rise of a new military authoritarian government in Libya—whether or not it has a democratic façade—than if a stable democratic regime arises.

The same holds for the level of civil strife and the number of casualties that may follow. Libya, like many other societies, is a tribal amalgam. If these tribes hold together to support a new government and solve their differences through negotiations, the 2011 NATO regime-change add-on mission will be deemed a great success. If we witness the kind of massive civilian casualties we have seen in Iraq, where more than 100,000 civilians are estimated to have died between 2004 and 2009 and inter-group violence continues, the assessments will be less rosy.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, despite assurances that the new leadership

***...Gaddafi offered a ceasefire with the rebels that would have ended the humanitarian crisis and would have led to negotiations between the rebels and Gaddafi...***



Revolutionary fighters celebrate an accurate tank shot at Gaddafi loyalist positions in Sirte, Libya, 13 October 2011.

in Libya is “building a democratic and modern civil state with rules, governed with justice and equality,” there is room for concern.<sup>8</sup> An Amnesty International report released in September found that the Libyan rebels have committed war crimes ranging from torture to revenge killings of Gaddafi loyalists.<sup>9</sup>

As early as July, Human Rights Watch reported that rebel forces had “burned some homes, looted from hospitals, homes and shops, and beaten some individuals alleged to have supported government forces.”<sup>10</sup> The report finds that, since February, “hundreds of people have been taken from their homes, at work, at checkpoints, or simply from the streets.”<sup>11</sup> The rebels beat the detainees, tortured them with electric shocks, and sometimes shot or lynched them immediately. Furthermore, the rebels have stirred up racism against many sub-Saharan Africans, who have been attacked, jailed, and abused under the new government. Rebel forces have emptied entire villages of black Libyans.<sup>12</sup>

Black African women were raped by rebel forces in the refugee camps outside of Tripoli.<sup>13</sup>

Reports of internal conflicts and lawlessness are also cause for concern. In July, allied militia sent to arrest military chief Abdel Fattah Younes for possible contact with Gaddafi assassinated him instead.<sup>14</sup> These militias also looted ammunition warehouses abandoned by Gaddafi’s forces and sent weapons to Al-Qaeda factions in North Africa and other terrorist groups outside the Libyan borders.<sup>15</sup>

In short, whether the mission creep has ended up this time with a resounding success or a debacle remains to be seen. However, the sociology of Libya suggests that, at least in the near future, no stable democratic government is in the offing, and hence that the mission creep was an overreach.

### **Lesson 3. Nationbuilding, a Bridge Too Far**

The ink had hardly dried on September’s rosy assessments of the Libyan NATO operation, when

we heard a chorus of voices declaring that “we” (the West, the United States, or the UN) should help the Libyan people build the right kind of government, economy, and society. Moreover, the nation-builders seem to want to repeat the mistakes the United States made in Iraq in trying to recast most everything, which resulted in scores of unfinished and failed projects. Thus, in a “Friends of Libya” session at the UN, more than 60 government representatives “offered assistance in areas including the judiciary, education, and constitutional law.” President Obama promised to build new partnerships with Libya to encourage the country’s “extraordinary potential” for democratic reform, claiming that “we all know what’s needed. . . . New laws and a constitution that upholds the rule of law. . . . And, for the first time in Libyan history, free and fair elections.”

Others seek to include all the Arab Spring nations, or better yet—the entire Middle East. Former Foreign Office Minister and Member of Parliament David Davis calls for a British Marshall Plan in the Middle East, arguing that such a plan is “one of the best ways to consolidate and support the Arab Spring as it stands, [and] could spark reform in other Arab and Gulf countries, too.” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton believes that “as the Arab Spring unfolds across the Middle East and North Africa, some principles of the [Marshall] plan apply again, especially in Egypt and Tunisia.” Senator John Kerry argues, “We are again in desperate need of a Marshall Plan for the Middle East.” Senator John McCain also favors such a plan.

Although the Marshall Plan did not cover Japan, the great success of the United States and its allies in introducing democracy and a free economy to Japan and Germany are usually cited as proof of what can be done. However, this is not the case. What was possible in Japan and Germany at the end of World War II is not possible now in the Middle East, and particularly not in Libya. There are important differences between then and now.

The most important difference concerns security. Germany and Japan had surrendered after defeat in a war. Political and economic developments took place only after hostilities ceased. There were no terrorists, no insurgencies, no car bombs—which Western forces are sure to encounter if they seek to play a similar role in Libya, Sudan, Somalia, or Yemen.

Moreover, after the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, few would even advocate that the West should occupy more land in the Middle East and manage its transformation. Thus, while the German and Japanese reconstructions were very much hands-on projects, those now under consideration amount to long-distance social engineering, with the West providing funds and advice while leaving the execution of plans to the locals. Such long-distance endeavors have a particularly bad record.

Germany and Japan were strong nation-states before World War II. Citizens strongly identified with the nation and were willing to make major sacrifices for the “fatherland.” In contrast, Middle Eastern nations are tribal societies cobbled together by Western countries, and the first loyalty of many of their citizens is to their individual ethnic or confessional group. They tend to look at the nation as a source of spoils for their tribe and fight for their share, rather than make sacrifices for the national whole. Deep hostilities, such as those between the Shi’a and the Sunnis, among the Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, and Kochi, and among various tribes in other nations, either gridlock the national politics (in Iraq and Afghanistan), lead to large-scale violence (in Yemen and Sudan), result in massive oppression and armed conflicts (in Libya and Syria), or otherwise hinder political and economic development.

One must also take into account that Germany and Japan were developed nations before World War II, with strong industrial bases, strong infrastructures, educated populations, and strong support for science and technology, corporations, business, and commerce. Hence, they had mainly to be *reconstructed*. In contrast, many Middle Eastern states lack many of these assets, institutions, and traditions, and therefore cannot be reconstructed but must be constructed in the first place—a much taller order. This is most obvious in Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan, and Libya. Other nations, such as Tunisia, Pakistan, Morocco, Syria, and Egypt have better prepared populations and resources, but still score poorly compared to Germany and Japan.

Finally, the advocates of a Marshall Plan for the Middle East disregard the small matter of costs. During the Marshall Plan’s first year, it demanded

13 percent of the U.S. budget. Today foreign aid commands less than one percent and, given the currently grave budgetary concerns, America and its NATO allies are much more inclined to cut such overseas expenditure than to increase them.

Both the West and the Middle East—in particular, countries that have the sociological makeup of Libya—will be better off if we make it clear that the nations of the region will have to rely primarily on themselves (and maybe on their oil-rich brethren) to modernize their economies and build their polities. Arguing otherwise will merely lead to disappointment and disillusion—on both sides of the ocean.

#### **Lesson 4. Leading from Behind—But Who is on First?**

The campaign in Libya was structured differently from most, if not all, of its predecessors in which NATO (or NATO members) were involved. The United States deliberately did not play the main role. French President Sarkozy was the first head of state to demand armed intervention in Libya, initially in the form of imposing a no-fly zone. He was soon joined by British Prime Minister David Cameron, and only then did the United

States add its support.<sup>16</sup> Although the United States did launch 97 percent of the Tomahawk cruise missiles against Gaddafi's air forces at the beginning of the mission, NATO forces took over relatively quickly.<sup>17</sup> NATO Secretary General Rasmussen pointed out that "European powers carried out the vast majority of the air strikes and only one of the 18 ships enforcing the arms embargo was American." France was the largest contributor, with French planes flying about a third of all sorties.<sup>18</sup>

This approach reflected President Obama's longstanding position that the United States should consult and cooperate with allies, share the burden of such operations, and not act unilaterally or even as the leader of the pack (in contrast to President Bush's approach). As David Rothkopf, a former national security official under Clinton, put it, "We need to give the Obama administration credit for finding a way, taking the long view, resisting the pressure to do too much too soon, resisting the old approaches which would have had the U.S. far more involved than it could have or should have."

Critics of this approach considered it a reflection of weakness. "Leading from behind" became a much-mocked phrase. In March 2011, Mitt Romney stated, "In the past, America has been



(AP Photo/Charles Dharapak)

President Barack Obama and French President Nicolas Sarkozy walk in the rain as they attend an event honoring the alliance between the United States and France and their efforts in Libya, at Cannes City Hall after the G20 Summit in Cannes, France, 4 November 2011.



feared sometimes, has been respected, but today, that America is seen as being weak.” He offered as evidence the fact that “we’re following France into Libya.” Even in the more recent wake of praise for the operation, Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham expressed “regret that this success was so long in coming due to the failure of the United States to employ the full weight of our air power.”

There is room for legitimate disagreement about the best ways to organize such campaigns and what the U.S. role in them should be. However, both those who favor leading from behind and those who oppose it should realize that the Libya campaign does not favor either of these positions. The main reason: it let the whole world see that NATO—the grand military machine initially designed to thwart the attacks of another super power, the U.S.S.R.—turned out to be a very weak body.

NATO has always had some difficulty in acting in unison, as there are often considerable differences among the members about who to fight, how to fight, and what to fight for. Thus, in the past many nations introduced caveats restricting how and where NATO could deploy its troops, essentially allowing nations to opt out of NATO operations. This is the case in Afghanistan, where German, French and Italian troops have been restricted to noncombat areas.<sup>19</sup> Caveats also hindered the Kosovo Force response in Kosovo in 2004, when German troops refused orders to join other elements in controlling riots.<sup>20</sup> *The Economist* sees in Libya a “worrying trend of member countries taking an increasingly *a la carte* approach to their alliance responsibilities.” It elaborates: The initial ambivalence of Muslim Turkey was to a degree understandable. But Germany marked a new low when it followed its refusal to back Resolution 1973 with a withdrawal of all practical support for NATO’s mission, even jeopardizing the early stages of the campaign by pulling its crews out of the alliance’s airborne warning and control aircraft . . . Poland also declined to join the mission, adding insult to injury by describing NATO’s intervention as motivated by oil.

Out of 28 NATO members, 14 committed military assets, but just eight were prepared to fly ground-attack sorties. They were France, Britain,

America (albeit on a very limited scale after the opening onslaught on the regime’s air defenses), Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Italy and Canada. Only France and Britain deployed attack helicopters.

Moreover, “NATO’s European members were highly dependent on American military help to keep going. The U.S. provided about three-quarters of the aerial tankers without which the strike fighters, mostly flying from bases in Italy, could not have reached their targets. America also provided most of the cruise missiles that degraded Colonel Gaddafi’s air defenses sufficiently for the no-fly zone to be established. When stocks of precision-guided weapons held by European forces ran low after only a couple of months, the U.S. had to provide fresh supplies. And, few attack missions were flown without American electronic warfare aircraft operating above as ‘guardian angels.’”

Rasmussen admitted, “The operation has made visible that the Europeans lack a number of essential military capabilities.” In June, Former Defense Secretary Gates criticized the lack of investment by European members in “intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets” which he believes hindered the Libya campaign. He warned, “The most advanced fighter aircraft are little use if allies do not have the means to identify, process, and strike targets as part of an integrated campaign.” In short, he concluded that NATO European allies are so weak they face “collective military irrelevance.” In the foreseeable future, it seems, the United States will have to lead, and commit most of the resources, especially if the other side poses more of a challenge than Libya did.

## In Conclusion

The military success of the 2011 NATO-led campaign in Libya indicates that, even in the current context of economic challenges, calls for reentrenchment, and concerns that U.S. forces are overstretched overseas, humanitarian missions can be effectively carried out.

The strategy of “boots off the ground” has many advantages—when it can be employed. It results in comparatively low casualty rates and low costs, and it is also less alienating to the local population and makes disengagement much easier.

While the United States succeeded in letting the European members of NATO carry a good part of the burden in Libya, the European nations' low level of resources and disagreements with one another makes one wonder if such "leading from behind" could work in dealing with more demanding challenges, say, in Iran.

One must guard against the strong tendency of humanitarian missions (which set out to protect civilians) to turn into missions that seek forced regime change, lead to much higher levels of casualties, and tend to fail.

Moreover, wrecking a tyranny does not automatically make for a democratic government; it is far from clear what will be the nature of the new regime in Libya, for which NATO has opened the door by destroying the old leadership structure.

Above all, those who seek to engage in nation-building should carefully examine the conditions under which it succeeds, and avoid nationbuilding or minimize their involvement in it when the conditions are as unfavorable as they are in Libya and in several other parts of the Middle East. **MR**

## NOTES

1. Liz Sly, "Calls in Syria for weapons, NATO intervention," *The Washington Post*, available at <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/calls-in-syria-for-weapons-nato-intervention/2011/08/26/gIQA3WAsI\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/calls-in-syria-for-weapons-nato-intervention/2011/08/26/gIQA3WAsI_story.html)> (28 August 2011).

2. John Mearsheimer, "Pull Those Boots Off the Ground," *Newsweek*, available at <<http://www.newsweek.com/id/177380>> (30 December 2008).

3. Michael Gordon, "A Nation Challenged: Military; Tora Bora Attack Advances Slowly In Tough Fighting," *The New York Times*, B2, available at <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/16/world/a-nation-challenged-military-tora-bora-attack-advances-slowly-in-tough-fighting.html>> (16 December 2001).

4. "Qaddafi: I will fight protests, die a martyr," *CBS News*, available at <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/02/22/501364/main20034785.shtml>> (22 February 2011).

5. Dan Murphy, "Qaddafi threatens Libya rebels as UN no-fly vote nears," *Christian Science Monitor*, available at <<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0317/Qaddafi-threatens-Libya-rebels-as-UN-no-fly-vote-nears>> (17 March 2011).

6. Tim Hill, "Muammar Gaddafi son killed by NATO air strike—Libyan government," *The Guardian*, available at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/may/01/libya-muammar-gaddafi-son-nato>> (30 April 2011).

7. Sabrina Tavernise and Andrew W. Lehren, "A Grim Portrait of Civilian Deaths in Iraq," *The New York Times*, available at <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/23/world/middleeast/23casualties.html>> (22 October 2009).

8. William Maclean, "Libya Islamist takes inclusive stance," *Reuters*, available at <<http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/09/19/idINIndia-59413620110919>> (19 September 2011).

9. "The Battle for Libya: Killings, Disappearances, and Torture," *Amnesty International Report*, available at <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE19/025/2011/en>> (13 September 2011).

10. "Libya: Opposition Forces Should Protect Civilians and Hospitals," *Human*

*Rights Watch*, available at <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/13/libya-opposition-forces-should-protect-civilians-and-hospitals>> (13 July 2011).

11. Ibid.

12. David Enders, "Empty village raises concerns about fate of black Libyans," *McClatchy*, available at <<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/09/13/123999/empty-village-raises-concerns.html>> (13 September 2011).

13. David Enders, "African women say rebels raped them in Libyan camp," *McClatchy*, available at <<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/09/07/123403/african-women-say-rebels-raped.html>> (7 September 2011).

14. Rania El Gamal, "Libyan rebel commander killed by allied militia," *Reuters*, available at <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/07/30/us-libya-idUSTRE76Q76620110730>> (30 July 2011).

15. Tom Miles and Tim Pearce, "Niger asks help fighting terrorism after Libya conflict," *Reuters*, available at <[http://old.news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20110919/wl\\_nm/us\\_niger\\_libya\\_security](http://old.news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20110919/wl_nm/us_niger_libya_security)> (September 2011).

16. Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron, "Letter from David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy to Herman Van Rompuy," available at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/10/libya-middleeast>> (10 March 2011).

17. Eric Westervelt, "NATO's Intervention in Libya: A New Model?" *NPR*, available at <<http://www.npr.org/2011/09/12/140292920/natos-intervention-in-libya-a-new-model>> (12 September 2011).

18. Ben Smith, "A victory for 'leading from behind'?" *POLITICO*, available at <<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0811/61849.html>> (22 August 2011).

19. Caroline Wyatt, "Afghan burden tasks Nato allies," *BBC News*, available at <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7061061.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7061061.stm)> (27 October 2007).

20. Kristin Archik and Paul Gallis, "NATO and the European Union," Report by *Congressional Research Services*, available at <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL32342.pdf>> (29 January 2008).