The Nation-building Operation in Libya: A Two-sided Critique on Incapable Nation-builders and on the Claims of Postmodern Imperialism that Surround the Intervention

Master Thesis MA International Relations, Leiden University

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Date: 21-08-2017

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Pages: 34

Word count: 14.778

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I. Introduction

Back in 2010, when the Arab Spring emerged in Tunisia, the hopes of the Western world were high. The demonstrations, that soon spread to other countries in the region, were largely intended to bring down the authoritarian regimes in North-Africa and the Middle East. The term Arab Spring 'suggested that the old systems would simply collapse in the face of the popular will. It sounded like a PR-phrase, encouraging people in the West to expect that this would be an essentially peaceful series of uprisings by people against longstanding corrupt elites' (Simpson, 2014, p.1). The Western-invented term itself overtly reveals the rather naive expectations that the West had of the events. A mostly peaceful transition from an authoritarian state towards a democratic one was suddenly perceived possible, as if the Arabians had suddenly seen the light. Brand new (Western) invented social media were seen as dominant instigators of revolt (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011) and these social instruments were widely used to finally fight decade-long repressions by authoritarian leaders. Soon, however, it became clear that most protests turned out all but peaceful, and that the wanted democratization among the involved states was not easily achievable. Riots emerged, violence erupted and humanitarian values were largely ignored. A few years later, the outcome of the 'spring', which would normally promise the appearance of new vegetation, has shown to be an illusion. Countries in which the initial government survived (Lebanon, Algeria, Tunisia) were probably the countries that were best-off. Egypt faces a stasis with a severely damaged economy and in Syria, the authoritarian president Bashar al-Assad has so far survived and he violently smashed down the revolutionaries. In fact, the 'Western countries, though they won't say so, have now decided that they would rather have Assad than having ISIS' (Simpson, 2014, p.1). Syria is now completely torn apart by a civil war, and that same fate applies to Libya. Libya has been ruined by the continuous instability, chaos and war-fighting that followed the revolution against its leader Muammar Qaddafi.

The developments during the Arab Spring caused the West to think that Libya would eventually develop itself towards a truly civilized and modern democratic state. From a historical perspective, such Western hopes were all but new. Ever since the Enlightenment, Western thinkers had classified societies along a spectrum of development, from complete savages to ultimately civilized societies (Latham, 2011). The Westerners believed that 'uncivilized' or 'traditional' cultures were mainly transitory encounters that would eventually become civilized, with or without external help. Bearing these beliefs in mind, it is unsurprising that various Western states have initiated foreign interventions to speed up this assumed civilization process in other parts of the world. The all-embracing term for such externally-initiated development operations became 'nation-building'. Since World War II, such nation-building operations came in different forms and shapes, though most promoted anti-colonialism and the idea to become self-sufficient states. We have seen the

Americans in Vietnam, trying to wipe out communism by spreading American freedom, and Russians in Afghanistan, who wanted to expand their communist sphere of influence. Even though both adversaries tried to establish it through other means, the ultimate goal of successful nation-building was shared by both sides. The American missions around the millennium, in Afghanistan and Iraq, were instigated to free those countries from terrorists and to enrich its citizens with the American values of freedom and liberty. Additionally, we have also seen several multilateral UN-led nation-building efforts, with Somalia and Sierra Leone as prominent examples.

A quick look at those previous operations, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, exemplifies that successful nation-building is an incredibly hard, if not almost impossible task. Factors that count heavily in nation-building encounters are political time horizons, the dedicated time span, the available means and resources, the top-down approaches, the inability to win the citizen's 'hearts and minds' and the Western persistence to believe in modernization and institutionalization. These are reasons why nation-building operations and its attempted transition from war to democratic peace often fail, but the decision-makers in charge do not seem to learn from their mistakes. Operations are still carried out, without paying serious attention to earlier experiences or scholarly literature.

A case to which this also applies is the aforementioned Libya. The UN-invented Responsibility To Protect doctrine was yet another reason to intervene in a civil conflict, and a transition towards a democratic Westphalian-modeled government was envisioned again. The policy-makers did not realize that the ability to stop an instant war is something completely different than bringing long-lasting stability to a state. In fact, the Libyan case (from 2011 onwards) has shown that the Western NATO forces, that were activated by UN Security Council Resolution 1973, also made mistakes that were already identified after earlier nation-building attempts. The way how the operation was carried out and the Western reluctance later on also releases an odor of postmodern imperialism around it. By using Libya as a case study, this thesis seeks to find an answer to the following research question:

Which nation-building challenges remained unaddressed in Libya after 2011 and how does this nation-building operation fit the idea of postmodern imperialism?

This question will be answered by addressing the following three sub-questions:

1. What is Libya's historical situation and which events caused the intervention in 2011?
2. How did the interveners fail to address the challenges of nation-building and what did Libya need in particular?
3. Does the mission in Libya fit the 'Empire in Denial' argument?

This thesis aims to further deepen the understanding about Western nation-building discourses and it approaches the Libyan case from a nation-building and a postmodern imperialist perspective. Applying such a framework is important, because it can effectively provide guidance to new operations in the future, that seek a transition from war to (democratic) peace. It aims to deconstruct the Western notions that persist in nation-building operations, by showing that especially these notions impede the intended processes. The thesis will address the rather significant and unaddressed challenges for interveners, as well as the broader implications of Western actions. It is an answer to contemporary scholarly literature that writes rather negatively about the intervention in Libya, by deliberatively pointing a finger at which factors actually went wrong. The nation-building framework goes beyond only military implications and the thesis also brings some nuances to the persisting claims of postmodern imperialism that surround the intervention.

The thesis itself will consist of seven parts. After the introduction, a theoretical framework will be provided to address the main concepts of nation-building. A definition will be given and its main features and the historical development of the concept will be covered. In this section, the relationship between nation-building and postmodern imperialism will also be outlined. Subsequently, the methodology of the project will be mentioned. In the fourth section, the first sub-question will be answered. This will outline the historical background of the situation in Libya in 2011 and it will mention which events triggered the NATO intervention. Fifth, the second sub-question will be tackled, in which the unaddressed challenges of nation-building will be covered. Also, the consequences of Western actions in Libya will be analyzed. Then, in the sixth section, the last sub-question will be answered. This will focus on whether the operation in Libya underlines David Chandler's (2006) concept of an 'Empire in Denial', thus also called postmodern imperialism. In the last section, the discussion, the main findings of the thesis will be briefly summarized. The three sub-questions will be brought together and the main research question will be answered. It will also address the relevance of the findings, its broader implications for society, the limitations of this study and suggestions for further research.

II. Theoretical framework

Before mentioning the main theoretical concepts that underline the idea of nation-building, it is important to address what nation-building actually means. Nation-building evolves from the idea of a establishing a nation. Though the term 'nation' is often used interchangeably with a 'state', these terms mean something else. The state is only 'a territorial juridical unit' whereas a nation can actually transcend such physical borders and points at the individual or collective (political) emotion that people feel towards a certain group. Nationalism thus makes the state the ultimate factor in a shared

feeling of togetherness and identity (Connor, 1978, pp.303-305). The confusion and the interchangeable use of the terms 'state' and 'nation' has invited Connor to state that 'contrary to its nomenclature, the nation-building school has in fact been dedicated to building viable states' (Connor, 1987, p.305). His critique is understandable, but speaking about 'nation-building' is still more appropriate in the Libyan situation. This terminology better illustrates the challenges that involved actors face while trying to establish a feeling of common identity and nationalism within Libya's state borders.

Nation-building itself means 'the use of armed force as part of a broader effort to promote political and economic reforms with the objective of transforming a society emerging from conflict into one at peace with itself and its neighbors' (Dobbins et.al., 2007, p.18). Another important feature of nation-building is that it tries to establish democratization in the concerned country. As Brownlee (2007, p.316) puts it: 'nation-building entails a deliberate process of democratization administered through foreign intervention'. In this light, it is also important to stress that nation-building is different from other related processes. It is different from imperialism, because nation-building operations hope to restore the sovereignty of a state. The operation has a certain time-limit and the intervener has the ambition to leave the state soon after the goals have been accomplished (Chandler, 2006). It is also different from development aid, because all nation-building operations involve some sort of military presence too. It is also not peacekeeping, because nation-building aims to reform state authority, while not solely aiming to keep peace (Miller, 2013). In short, the practice of nation-building is based on three main principles: statehood, sovereignty and modernization.

The principles of nation-building

Despite a lot of discussion in the field about the actual meaning of statehood, many scholars stick to Max Weber's classical definition. He argues that: 'a state is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory' (Weber, 1911, p.1). However, this definition misses crucial elements of post-WWII statehood, especially when applying a nation-building perspective. Successful statehood is built on more elements than just collective security, and Miller (2013) outlined five of these components. The first element pairs up with Weber's definition, that a state needs to be a coercive force. In his book 'Leviathan', the political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1651) already mentioned that coercion was meant to be given to a central state, in order to end the brutal force of nature. This force was said to cause a war of all against all, with individuals solely pursuing their very own interests. Tilly (1990) adds that, in order to fight a war between groups, central troops have to be mobilized. For that purpose, resources need to be centrally extracted from a population (taxes), which is the eventual beginning of a state's capacity to rule. Centrally collecting taxes also implies that the state successfully obtained legitimacy and that

it eliminated the internal opposition. Secondly, the state needs to be an embodiment of a theory of justice (Miller, 2013). It needs to appeal to norms about right and wrong ways to use state authority. It should be able to validate its actions and the state's views need to be recognizable for their citizens (Miller, 2013). Third, a state needs to be a contractor for goods and services. They should provide infrastructure and effectively collect, administer and spend common resources. Miller (2013, p.45) argues: 'Over time, social contract theory has come more and more explicitly to be identified with democratic, liberal, majoritarian forms of government. The connection is understandable: elections can be understood as a reenactment or renewal of the original contract and a means for securing actual, not just hypothetical, consent to the state's authority'.

Fourth, the state should be aware of its economic function. It should collect resources and use them effectively. The better a state performs in this regard, the more prosperous the society will be (Miller, 2013). Economic welfare can catalyze all other societal processes, and that is why the Americans, for instance, invested so much in Afghanistan's economy during the Cold War period. They knew that when the US-initiated living conditions were good, the Afghan's would not fall for Soviet communism. That perception resulted in several agricultural operations, such as extensive dam-building around the area of Kandahar (Cullather, 2002). Fifth, a state needs to be a tool that serves human life. Miller acknowledges that this category is rather subjective, but he claims that 'the state is fundamentally a human-regarding institution, so its quality can be assessed in part according to how it treats human beings and what effect it has on human life' (Miller, 2013, p.50). Nussbaum adds that looking solely at economic factors does not say anything about how humanitarian the circumstances actually are. Some things are simply not directly tied to resources, such as 'access to education, the quality of racial and gender relations or the presence or absence of political freedom' (Nussbaum, 1992, p.229). Despite the subjective nature this category, it is clear that humanitarian aspects have gained a prominent place in international politics over the last decades. The most tangible example is the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) initiative that was created by the UN, which was applied to Libya in 2011. The R2P remains hotly debated, but the underlying idea to give humanitarian values a more prominent position in international politics firmly keeps standing. Therefore, 'the R2P is a step in the right normative direction away from genocide and crimes against humanity' (Weiss et. al., 2016, p.116).

Creating state sovereignty is the next main principle of nation-building. Sovereignty can be defined as 'having supreme power over a body politic, together with freedom from external control and having controlling influence (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, August 11, 2017). The idea that a government should have central control over its entire formal territory, which fits the Westphalian model of state governance, is envisioned as the fundament for all countries across the

globe, regardless of different cultural backgrounds. This is illustrated by the fact that sovereignty is one of the main premises of the UN, directed at creating state independence within the international order (Weiss et. al., 2016). 'The sovereignty was designed to produce order, legitimize existing power arrangements and to stop violence between and within states over religious questions' (Weiss et. al., 2016, p.10). This framework was specifically designed after the huge amount of inter-state violence that took place in the first half of the twentieth century. However, being sovereign in our current age comes with the responsibility to adhere, at a judgmental level, to the five premises of statehood that Miller (2013) identified. Otherwise, as we have seen in Libya, the international community can still decide to intervene.

In all post-WWII nation-building operations, the idea of modernization played a prominent role. Modernization theory drives on the conviction that traditional and modern societies are fundamentally different in nature (Latham, 2011). This is a rather classical Western idea, as the roots of the modernization theory lay in the Enlightenment. During that period, philosophers often classified cultures along a spectrum of development, from complete savages to highly civilized societies. The most important assumption of the theory is that 'all societies ultimately travel towards the same destination of modernization, even though the societies are moving at different paces' (Latham, 2011, p.2). Or, as Karl Marx already wrote in Das Kapital: 'a country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future' (Marx, 1867, p.7). This is also the reason why nation-building operations have often paid such minimal attention to local cultures and customs, because the external nation-builders often saw these traditional societies as transitory encounters. Additionally, the modernization theory stresses personal achievement, thereby clearly fostering capitalism. Individual gains would stimulate creativity and innovation, leading to a more prosperous nation. The presence of free media, that will develop due to the enhanced creativity and capitalist values, would also bring a change in the collective mindset of the population. All these developments would further accelerate political and economic improvement (Latham, 2011). It is clear, however, that obstacles will inevitably arise during the transition towards modernization. Daniel Lerner, a supporter of the theory, wrote about its application in the Middle East. Lerner feared that those countries would not have the patience to go through the same historical 'process' as Western societies did, causing that the Middle Eastern countries would want to do it their own way. He warned: 'Because they were drawn toward new routes and risky by-passes, it would be crucial for the West to guide volatile Middle Eastern societies along the correct route to modernity. Otherwise, the persistent psycho-cultural gap between rising popular expectations and backward conditions could ultimately develop an explosive charge' (Lerner, 1964, p. 409).

Despite scholars like Lerner, Marx and many others, it is unsurprising that the modernization theory also faced resistance from early on. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his book 'The wit and wisdom of Gandhi', that was republished in 2005, about American and British occupiers that: 'they had no right to talk about protecting democracies and protecting civilization and human freedom, until the canker of white superiority is destroyed in its entirety' (Gandhi, Gandhi, & Jack, 2005, p.127). In line with Gandhi, the sociologist Frans Boas had argued in the beginning of the twentieth century that making a 'traditional-modern' distinction between societies would not make any sense. It is not possible to speak about inferiority or superiority, as humans simply adapt to the environment and circumstances around them (Latham, 2011). Later, many more scholars started to address the differences between cultures, while disregarding the idea of a transitional process. An example is the work by Geert Hofstede (1994), who used several dimensions to increase understanding across cultures. For instance, he distinguished between collective and individually oriented cultures, masculinity and femininity and short- or long-term oriented cultures. That way, the uniqueness of cultures became more touchable within certain categories. Hofstede's first work got extensively updated after the first release, but his main message firmly kept standing: that different cultures need to be approached in its own unique way.

Different motivations behind nation-building

The idea of nation-building clearly existed from the Second World War onwards, but the nature and the motivations behind the phenomenon fluctuated over time. Shortly after WWII, the world entered the Cold War, in which the two remaining world powers, the Soviet Union and the USA, were trying to spread its influence across the world. These efforts had a clear ideological character, with the USA trying to spread its capitalist system, whilst the Soviets hoped to further settle its communism in the rapidly decolonizing world. For example, both opposing powers saw Afghanistan, that was facing a deteriorating economic situation, as another opportunity for competition (Kalinovsky, 2010). Both powers invested in the Afghan infrastructure and its economy, in the hope of pulling the country towards them. Afghanistan, on their turn, tended to eagerly accept economic aid from either side, without thinking too much about possible future consequences. This largely frustrated American officials, because they believed that: 'a nation does not accept technology without ideology. A machine or a dam is a product of a culture' (Cullather, 2002, p.528). Ideology was key in this period.

After WWII, the UN and also certain NGO's increasingly saw nation-building as a tool to address 'weak states'. Weak central governance started to be perceived as the main reason why certain states face poverty, hunger, insurgencies and other threatening issues. These concerns were formally presented in the UN Millennium Goals, that aimed to provide a framework on how to cope with the challenges of upcoming globalization and extreme poverty. It stated: 'Success in meeting the

objectives to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty depends, inter alia, on good governance within each country. It also depends on good governance at the international level and on transparency in the financial, monetary and trading systems. We are committed to an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and nondiscriminatory multilateral trading and financial system' (United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000, p.4). Strengthening the capacity of the central state, together with efforts of the countries to implement practices of democracy, were seen as the way forward for the UN.

The ambitions to establish strong, liberal and central states also dominated the 'new' kind of nation-building operations that emerged after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The American president George W. Bush always used to oppose the nation-building efforts of his predecessor Bill Clinton, but after 9/11, Bush also saw the urge of stabilizing other regions of the world. Ironically enough, Bush simply recycled Clinton's ideas, while only framing them differently, namely as a 'War on Terror'. The Bush administration believed that: 'In failed states like Afghanistan, the conditions of poverty, insecurity, and unmet hopes provided fertile ground for the growth of radical ideologies' (Latham, 2011, p.1). The operations that followed in Iraq and Afghanistan were also seen as a method to bring the American values of liberty, freedom and democracy to the instable regions.

A prominent argument to engage in nation-building that persisted in all three 'forms', was the urge to establish global security. In a world that became increasingly interconnected and thus interdependent, an instable situation in one region could be a threat to the security of the entire globe. As the American policy-makers believed: 'U.S. security depended not merely on the defense of U.S. territory or resources, but also on the creation of a world environment in which American values and institutions would be most widely shared' (Latham, 2011, p.16). From Eisenhower to Bush and from Clinton to Obama, many American presidents mentioned the significance of this global security. For example, President Obama's National Security Strategy declared that 'failing states breed conflict and endanger regional and global security, and the United States' diplomacy and development capabilities must help prevent conflict, spur economic growth and strengthen weak and failing states' (Miller, 2013, p.39). The fact that this is actually part of the national strategy, reveals that the operations also serve the domestic American interests. This is overtly illustrated by the American urge to 'save' the Vietnamese and Afghans from communism and make them capitalist, or by their interest in ISIS or al-Qaeda, solely instigated by the fact that they actively harm and terrorize Western 'brothers and sisters'. Such facts leave the question open to what extent nation-building can be linked to postmodern imperialism.

Postmodern imperialism and nation-building

The practice of nation-building has often been linked to a form of imperialism. Imperialism, although the concept itself is regularly debated, can be understood as: 'The policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas' (Merriam Webster Dictionary, August, 11, 2017). Within the field of nation-building, it is important to address especially these political and economic aspects of imperialism. The efforts of the West to establish central government structures elsewhere is often framed within the idea of 'neo-trusteeship', which others eventually prefer to call postmodern imperialism (Fearon & Laitin, 2004). Neo-trusteeship assumes a mutual bond between developed and undeveloped states, with the goal that the weaker states will adopt the common way of (Western) governance. In the current age of state sovereignty and nuclear weapons, direct territorial control is hard to justify and not accepted. That is why influence needs to be spread in a 'cooperative' way, framed as it being a beneficial encounter for all involved parties. Fearon & Laitin state that neo-trusteeship also implies that the weak states are now ruled 'by a complex hodgepodge of foreign powers, international and non-governmental organizations, and domestic institutions (..) who all typically sought an international legal mandate for their rule' (Fearon & Laitin, 2004, p.7).

The invention of the R2P framework, that was used to obtain the aforementioned international legal mandate to intervene in Libya, was also associated with postmodern imperialism very soon. David Chandler (2004) argued, already before its application in Libya, that the R2P meant a moral shift away from sovereignty, reflecting the new power relations in the international sphere. He opted that the R2P provided the justification for new interventionist norms and the promotion of the democratic peace theory. Many countries, like Brazil, India and South Africa, also had their concerns. Despite the fact that they underlined the importance of human rights and humanitarianism, they would not want to support any foreign interference that had the odor of imperialism. This 'revealed the normative ambivalence of these countries by either abstaining or extracting concessions to their considerable disquiet about possible abuse' (Negrón-Gonzales & Contarino, 2014, p.264). After the use of R2P in Libya, the BRICs united themselves around the idea that R2P is promoting imperialism. 'When NATO used the UN mandate in Libya to justify regime change, the BRIC countries only hardened their support for non-intervention' (Keeler, 2011, p.1). R2P in itself, a doctrine designed to protect vulnerable citizens, is praiseworthy, but the backlash of the BRICs against it (Weiss et. al, 2016) makes it highly questionable whether it has a future.

David Chandler (2006) also connected this idea of postmodern imperialism to the practice of nation-building. In the sixth chapter, Chandler's (2006) arguments will be applied to the Libyan

intervention. It will discuss whether the Libyan case can actually be called, as Chandler (2006) puts it, a prove of the Western 'Empire in Denial', or that such accusations of postmodern imperialism need to be nuanced.

III. Methodology

In order to find an extensive and well-argued answer to the main research question, three particular sub-questions will be addressed. The thesis will be based on a single case study design, with Libya as the country under study. A single case study design, also called a within-case study, is a study that tries to explain a phenomenon at a certain point in time (Toshkov, 2016). It is not aiming for a comparison, but solely seeking to explain phenomena that took place within that very case. Such a within-case study is useful when it is unclear how to classify a specific case within the already existing and respected theoretical frameworks (Toshkov, 2016). Doing research on the operation in Libya will thus add to the already existing nation-building knowledge, because this operation holds a special position in the nation-building encounters and theories that emerged after WWII. The character of this particular operation does not easily fit in one of the identified categories. The post-9/11 fear that weak states would be a fertile ground for terrorists or insurgents did not directly play a role to intervene, because Libya had a very strong regime under Qaddafi's reign. Placing the operation in the category of UN-initiated operations after the millennium is also problematic. Despite the fact that the idea of 'neo-trusteeship' is actually applicable to Libya, the operation was initiated to overthrow a central government that was already in place, without having a dedicated plan to guide a transition towards democracy afterwards. The West now believed that the change was coming from within, due to the Arab Spring. This also makes Libya different from other previously studied operations.

The thesis relies on both primary and secondary sources. As primary sources, several official UN and NATO documents will be obtained in order to assess the peculiarities of the operation from first hand. When considered appropriate, primary documents from other nation-building attempts will also be consulted, in order to compare and link certain phenomena. The study will also greatly rely on secondary literature. These will be written books and journal articles. All sources will help to put the nation-building operation in Libya into perspective, which is essential to construct a solid answer to the main research question.

IV. What is Libya's historical situation and which events caused the intervention in 2011?

It is important to address the history of Libya in order to understand why the UN decided to intervene in the country in 2011. This historical synopsis about Libya will first focus on the colonial period (before 1943) and the reign of King Idris (1951-1969), before addressing the role that Libya's

leader Qaddafi (1969-2011) played in shaping the country and Libya's relationship with the Western world.

The colonial period and the rule of King Idris

Libya has always been a state that hosted a colorful mix of ethnic groups. From Greeks, to Romans, to Islamic Libya, to being occupied by Ottomans. Later, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the Italians colonized the territory, especially in Tripolitania. Until the UN had formally declared Libya independent in 1951, other regions have also shortly been in the hands of the British and the French.

During the Italian colonial reign (1911-1943), of lands they took from indigenous Muslim Libyans, the Italians stated that economic exploitation was not their main concern. They rather believed to be focusing on social development in Libya. As Russell claimed during that period: 'Its purpose is social and political rather than purely economic: it aims at mass redistribution of populations and strengthening of political power, and in consequence it is not to be judged by its financial returns' (Russell, 1939, p.273). Despite these hypocritical comments at the time, the social premises never seemed to go without pursuing their even bigger self interests. The Italians quickly saw the potential of the resources and agriculture in the coastal region of the country, and that is why about 110.000 Italian colonists settled there. The dislodging of certain Libyan groups that inevitably followed, for example from the region of Tripolitania, was justified as serving the overall economic public interests (Fowler, 1972). Italian North Africa, as it was called, became known as the territory 'that was not conquered for the privileged few but to give 'proletarian Italy' at least an outlet for its exuberant life' (Segre, 1972, p.141). The colonizing attempts were fueled by the fascist regime's drive for prestige and autarky in the Mediterranean area. The Italians shortly comprised the biggest minority in Libya during that period, but the main agricultural work was still predominantly performed by Libyans (Segre, 1972). It is clear that the Second World War, and especially the anti-colonial sentiments that arose after the end of it, had its consequences for Italy's colonial presence in Libya too. On November 21, 1949, the United Nations' General Assembly approved a resolution to 'set the country free', and the measures had to be implemented by 1 January 1952 at the latest (Dearden, 1950).

The wave of decolonization that spread across the world also instigated the beginning of a new era for Libya. The UN, on their part, now realized that they were engaged in constructing a completely new nation, rather than solely being engaged in repairing or independence negotiations. They saw the central government idea as the method to address the post-colonial weakness of the state. The biggest concern, that was addressed in 1950, was that the Tripolitanians and Cyrenaicans (from different Libyan regions) were 'so disastrously inexperienced in self-management that they will need to employ vast numbers of foreign specialists and civil servants' (Dearden, 1950, pp.408-409).

During the independence negotiations, it became clear that Idris, who was a religious leader in the country, would become the king of Libya, with explicit UN support. Soon, however, King Idris was confronted with the serious challenges to establish political loyalty, to instigate a feeling of nationality (which Libya did not know before) and to address the interests of all citizens that used to live in the three separate provinces: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan (Vandewalle, 2012). The country was granted independence, but that was a sudden and largely unexpected development for its citizens. The Libyan independence was not brought about by a unifying ideology or an entirely supported national-level movement (Little, 2013), but by external negotiations that were fueled by widespread decolonization sentiments.

Another important sudden development in Libya was the discovery of oil reserves in 1959. This instantly changed the country's perspective. Where it had been regarded as one of the poorest nations in the world before the discovery, it now had an immensely precious pool of resources to join the global trade market. Several European and American oil companies engaged with Libya, and this gradually increased the strength of the national government vis-á-vis the provincial ones (Vandewalle, 2012). Due to the cash flows, the government was better able to hire experienced technocrats and administrators. Nevertheless, these developments did not automatically increase the political legitimacy of the Kingdom, because the oil was also increasingly used for the personal enrichment of individuals. The line between personal and public goods blurred and self-enrichment happened on an extensive scale. Additionally, mutual suspicions among actors that used to belong to the three separate provinces made it incredibly hard for the new central government to agree on the best political formula. Many actors were still primarily advocating their own regional interests (Vandewalle, 2012). These difficulties of the Kingdom to rule in a centralized manner, strengthened the impression that the Kingdom was merely established due to Western pressures, based on the premise of modernization. As Vandewalle puts it: 'Within an Arab and Muslim tradition, the reality was that Libya had been created by the West – Idris' successor (Qaddafi) would call what happened on 24 December 1951 a “false independence” – and Western advisors played a highly visible role as the kingdom became an oil economy that needed extensive foreign inputs and investment. The kingdom had few, if any, options or inclinations to distance itself from those who had helped to create and develop it' (Vandewalle, 2012, p.69).

Qaddafi's reign and his relationship with the West

The social unrests about the (oil) corruption and the Western-dominated Kingdom slowly reached a boiling point. The young revolutionaries that instigated the coup in 1969 could not identify themselves with the Libyan Kingdom, and the self-enrichment of its officers did not encourage the revolutionaries to believe in this kind of modern statehood (Vandewalle,2012). The coup took place

within an international setting of heavy Cold War politics by the Americans and the Russians. This was a main reason to tolerate coup-leader Muammar Qaddafi in the beginning, as America hoped that he, who eventually neither believed in communism nor capitalism, would keep Libya away from Soviet influences. Though cautious, the Americans believed that the American-Libyan relationship during Idris' reign could be continued. In that period, America vastly contributed to Libya's development and helped to construct its oil industry (Vandewalle,2012). These factors instigated a relationship of mutual tolerance (Pargeter, 2012). Both sides had their own reasons for such tolerance, as Libya still wanted access to US oil technology and expertise, while the US still wanted to exploit Libya's high quality crude oil (Pipes, 1995). Nevertheless, Qaddafi ventilated clear anti-Western and anti-Israeli rhetoric, while also underlining his ambitions to 'restore the Islamic religion to its rightful place in society' (Little, 2013, p.80). Though such ideas were first ignored by Americans because they prioritized their Cold War struggles, the American leniency evaporated after a decade, in the 1980's. Shortly after Ronald Reagan was appointed as the new American president, the CIA reported that: 'Qaddafi was a Muslim zealot who had absorbed, in exaggerated form, the Bedouin characteristics of naive idealism, religious fanaticism, intense pride, austerity, xenophobia, and sensitivity to slight and who was also determined to create a unified, Pan-Arab state which will become the nucleus of a larger grouping encompassing the entire Islamic world' (Little, 2013, p.84). Eventually, even the Arab States that Qaddafi sought to ally with were rather skeptic about his plans, dismissing them as unrealistic and poorly argued (Pargeter, 2012).

To still achieve his personal goals, Qaddafi soon expelled Americans from Libyan oil platforms, closed down American air bases and he even supported terrorist attacks against Americans in covert and overt ways, with the Lockerbie bombing (1988) as the most known example. In the meanwhile, the US also developed suspicions that Qaddafi gradually established ties with the Soviets. Libya received Soviet weaponry and the US was afraid that Libya would provide the Soviets with a military base in the Mediterranean, which they actually never got (Pargeter, 2012). Reagan, who was known to be a dedicated Cold War politician, soon cut all diplomatic ties with Libya when he heard about the assumed Libyan bond with the Soviets. Reagan saw the Soviet Union as an evil empire, a totalitarian state that was driven by a militant and intrinsically expansionist ideology, and he believed that the Soviets had to be restrained by direct confrontation (Pipes, 1995). All in all, it is no surprise that Qaddafi's anti-American oil embargo, his terrorist actions and his flirt with the Soviets triggered an American reaction. Reagan replied by shooting down military airplanes and dropping bombs in Libya. Paradoxically enough, 'what the US did through the bombings was to hand Qaddafi a symbol that he could draw on time and time again, as proof of his long-held insistence that the West was out to humiliate, subjugate and crush the Arabs' (Pargeter, 2012, p.80).

In the first years of his reign, the Qaddafi regime was not able to make its population benefit from the huge oil reserves that the country possessed. Despite the oil, the regime failed to invest in long-term resource projects or more general development (El-Kikhia, 1997). The revolutionary government found it rather hard to address real governing issues, or they simply did not find those important. 'Internally, the regime had managed to destroy, reshape, or reorganize many of the institutions of the state in the name of popular rule' (Vandewalle, 2012, p.134). In fact, Libya's inability to adhere to central institutions, a concern that was already present during King Idris' times, was overcome by simply stopping to use them. The regime also eliminated private initiatives and entrepreneurship, thus breaking the economic potential that certain groups had (Vandewalle, 2012). Especially in the early years, those difficulties did not refrain the Libyan citizens from supporting Qaddafi's revolution, as they saw their leader as someone they could identify with. In the last fifteen years before the millennium, however, the Libyans started to lose some of their patience. Despite the oil (and some very temporary wealth), the average income was still very low, the labor force depended on the government's handouts and the country was largely dependent on import. While Qaddafi thus failed to reform his own economy, the hostilities with the West continued to cause diplomatic isolation. El-Kikhia comments: 'General Qaddafi has accomplished a rare feat: in record time he has bankrupted a rich oil-producing country with a very small population. Libya's money was squandered on self aggrandizement, white elephants, antiquated and rusting military equipment, military adventures, international terrorism and schemes that rarely benefited the country' (El-Kikhia, 1997, pp.82-83). After the millennium, Qaddafi eventually realized that economic reforms and thus reconciliation with the West were his only way to stay on. Despite these economic motivations, it was also not a coincidence that America hanged Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein in the same period, which forced Qaddafi to reflect on the fate of his own regime as well (Solomon & Swart, 2005). Qaddafi 'would abandon his quixotic quest for nuclear weapons, denounce Osama bin Laden as a terrorist and heretic, and invite U.S. multinational oil firms to return to Libya three decades after they had been forced to leave' (Little, 2012, p.93). The Qaddafi regime saw the new situation, that was announced in 2003, as an opportunity to show their citizens that they would not refrain from making pragmatic choices when needed (Vandewalle, 2012).

The 2011 uprising, civil war and NATO intervention

Ever since Qaddafi obtained power in 1969, he managed to keep his opposition silent. What has been framed as the revolution of the people, turned out to be mostly beneficial for the circles around Qaddafi. Consequently, the revolution had never fully provided a sense of identification or nationhood (Vandewalle, 2012). Probably encouraged by the 'Arab Spring' protests, but primarily executed due to the economic hardship, the corruption of the regime and the tiredness of

authoritarian rule, the opposition started its anti-Qaddafi protests on 15 February 2011 in Benghazi. These protests started peacefully, asking for democratic change and calling for respect for human rights. Soon, however, the unarmed protesters were confronted with violent crackdowns of the regime. As a response to Qaddafi's force, the opposition also armed itself and they established their National Transitional Council (NTC) in several cities. This resulted in a mass revolt between Qaddafi and the opposition, which gradually turned into a civil war. During the struggle, 'The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported about ill-treatment, beatings, injuries, rapes, torture, killings, enforced disappearances and arbitrary arrests of protesters including lawyers, human rights defenders and journalists' (Ulfstein & Christiansen, 2013, p.159). Due to Qaddafi's recklessness, the UN quickly decided to recognize the NTC as the official body to represent the Libyan people in UN conferences.

The fact that the Qaddafi regime was believed to continuously harm its own civilians, led to the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1973, only eleven days after the protests against the regime started. The resolution called upon a military no-fly zone, the protection of civilians, an arms embargo and an asset freeze to hit the resources of the Qaddafi family (United Nations Resolution 1973, 2011). As stated earlier, the Resolution 1973 was based on the R2P framework. This framework was introduced to address the increasing frictions between the UN's respected state sovereignty and the large amount of civil wars within sovereign borders in the last decades (Weiss et. al., 2016). In many cases, these civil wars led to humanitarian disasters that this framework thus aims to prevent. The framework allowed the NATO to intervene in Libya and to accelerate the removal of Qaddafi. Within a few hours after the 1973 mandate had been passed, forces loyal to Qaddafi violated the terms of the agreement. This caused that US, British and French fighter jets started to bomb military bases in Libya, which continued for about seven months (Weiss et. al., 2016). In this period, the UN expected Qaddafi to step down quickly, but he did not. It was not until October 2011 that the opposition forces, backed by US-support, captured and killed their former authoritarian leader (Capasso, 2013).

It is clear that the NATO intervention in Libya has faced severe criticism since it ended in 2011. The most prominent critique focuses on the deteriorated security situation in Libya after NATO's efforts. It was the reason for Kuperman to call it a complete disaster. He states: 'It is possible that, in the long run, the intervention will turn out to have contributed indirectly to some beneficial consequences for Libya or its neighbors that cannot now be predicted. To date, however, the observable impacts on other interests—including human rights in Libya and its neighbors, regional stability, and international security—also have been decidedly negative. If this is a 'model intervention', as U.S. officials claim, it is a model of failure' (Kuperman, 2013, p.133). Another

frequently heard critique is that resolution 1973 was too broadly interpretable. That it simply gave NATO the possibility to do whatever it wanted and that NATO went far beyond only protecting civilians. In that light, the countries that abstained during the vote (Brazil, Russia, India, China, Germany) expressed their concerns that the operation effectively became the air force of the opposition (Weiss et. al., 2016). Kuperman (2013) adds that NATO's actions were based on biased 'internal' information and exaggerated sensationalistic media reports and that Qaddafi did not purposefully target innocent civilians. At last, Kuperman also addresses the clear nation-building component in the operation. He claims that the desire to protect civilians is 'prone to expanding its objective to include regime change, even if that magnifies the danger to civilians, contrary to its original intent' (Kuperman, 2013, p.135). This nation-building intent was underlined by the establishment of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Among other things, this UNSMIL operation, which still continues today, seeks to accelerate the country's reconciliation by assisting the Libyan authorities with building a central and secure state. This was, and still is, to be done without overt military presence (United Nations Resolution 2009, 2011).

In the next analytical section, it will be outlined how the interveners in Libya failed to effectively address challenges that inevitably arise while committing to nation-building. Next to identifying those challenges, the section will also outline what Libya actually needed in particular.

V. How did the interveners fail to address the challenges of nation-building and what did Libya need in particular?

When applying Miller's (2013) five components of statehood to the situation just before the intervention, it became clear that the Libyan state could hardly meet any of the criteria. The Qaddafi government used its coercive force wrongly, they refused to provide justice and descent economic standards in the country and the regime failed to respect and serve human life, regardless of the contemporary discussions on whether Qaddafi was purposefully targeting civilians or not. All these factors were judged severe enough to consider Libya a failed state and to instigate state-reform through military intervention and nation-building. During this process, the interveners faced several challenges and they failed to recognize what kind of support Libya actually needed. Those challenges will be analyzed below.

Modernization and resources

An important reason to engage was the persisting Western belief in the modernization theory. The theory has a very ethnocentric departure point, as it ignores the fundamental differences in cultures and fails to truly respect them. Earlier operations in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, that could be called difficult at its most positive, had never instigated a shift in Western 'modernization' thinking. In

the current age, in which the UN and other organizations repeatedly promote equality and diversity, it is remarkable that the modernization idea is still so prominent among decision-makers. In essence, it is praiseworthy to help others to develop, but the underlying political motivations of interveners should be way less visible. There are more ways leading to Rome and the West should allow developing countries such as Libya more autonomy to find their own unique way.

In that process of modernization in Libya, the establishment of a (truly) democratic system was perceived as the ultimate way towards a modern society, with economic prosperity and personal freedom. Strong institutionalization was considered the first step in order to achieve that goal (Chandler, 2006). In that process, it was rather naive to believe that the anti-Qaddafi forces would have the experience and the capabilities to bring about such a radical regime change, or that they would have the true desire to govern in the country centrally. The NATO coalition also too easily disregarded all institutions that Qaddafi had already put in place, and it hoped to build a completely new central government. A cooperative approach would have been more fruitful, especially when considering Libya's four-decade long history of authoritarian rule, which is the exact opposite of what the interveners wanted to create. With co-option, 'the intervening authorities try to work within existing institutions and to deal, more or less impartially, with all social forces and power centers, to redirect their ongoing competition for power and wealth from violent to peaceful channels' (Dobbins et. al., 2007, p,20).

This all-destroying strategy in Libya is also remarkable when taking the dedicated resources for the operation into account. Previous experiences had made the countries in the coalition reluctant to spend an endless amount of money for a reform. This caused that the nation-building operation was already rather limited in what it could achieve. A cooperative approach was thus likely to be not only more effective, but also less resource-demanding. The unstable situation in Libya is the result of a lack of political will and the reluctance to deliberately plan the operation. Dobbins et. al. (2007) also stress the importance of good planning before the operation is conducted. Scenario's should be kept open and the interveners should accept the amount of resources needed to address upcoming challenges properly. Planning to be flexible is important, because otherwise political leaders will be tempted to step back when domestic political skepticism about the mission arises. Having such flexibility was impossible in Libya, due to the minimum amount of resources dedicated to the mission. The UNSMIL-resolution became the frugal outcome: a nation-building support mission that is based on solely political endeavors, shying away from using any military force apart from protecting the UN's own personnel. Due to the criticism on previous nation-building encounters, it is understandable that the West decided not to send troops, but it is questionable whether that was the right decision. According to Dobbins et. al. (2007), it is crucial to send troops or

other officers that would at least be able to keep peace and security after the bombings. This is a very logical remark, but the international community refused to adhere to it because they kept a strict eye on their resources. As Latham writes: 'there is a minimum level of resources that must be devoted to a development program if it is to have any chance of success. Launching a country into self-sustaining growth is a little like trying to get an airplane off the ground. There is a critical ground speed which must be passed before the craft can become airborne' (Latham, 2011, p.30).

The history of Libya and the tribal approach

The effort of the West to bring about peace and security in Libya through central governance proves that the West neglected to take the historical situation of the country into account. As described in the previous section, the country had always existed of the three provinces: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan. These areas always operated rather autonomously from one another. The country had thus never known central stability before, with for example Greeks, Ottomans, Muslims and Italians occupying it instead. Even the establishment of the Libyan Kingdom (1951 to 1969) was not enough to create a true central state. King Idris, who was widely supported by Western leaders, was also unable establish a real feeling of Libyan nationality, pride and commitment. Due to the Arab Spring, however, the West believed that the changing force was coming from within society itself, instead of it being initiated by an external force. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that Libya could not digest the package of fundamentally different values that the NATO/UN wanted to install. In this regard, Lacher (2011) stresses that even though the revolution seemed to be undertaken by a unified coalition of forces, this idea of unity soon disappeared when the common enemy was successfully defeated. The revolution largely served the interests of prominent families, tribes and local loyalties. Many of the actors that joined the NTC were members of influential families that were disempowered during Qaddafi's revolution. After overthrowing Qaddafi, all these groups started to defend their own interests again, thus making the establishment of a central democratic government very difficult. As Lacher puts it: 'The localized and fragmented nature of political and military players, as they emerged during the revolution, suggests that the transition will be led by a loose and fragile coalition of interests, rather than any single political force or institution. Too many local counterweights to central authority, in the form of local councils and revolutionary brigades, developed during the conflict. Families, tribes and cities will play leading roles in shaping the transition' (Lacher, 2011, p.151).

The biggest tribes in Libya are the Warfalla, Magarha, the Tuareg, Gaddadfa (of which Qaddafi was a member) and the Berbers, but Libya hosts about 140 tribes in total, of which about 30 to 40 can be considered influential. Vervelli (2013) writes that all tribes have unique ethics and norms, together with concrete procedures and institutions. Tribal culture is not only about having a

certain identity, it also tells a lot of individuals how to live their daily lives. Within the tribes, authoritarian practices are rare. The internal structure often knows sub-tribes that internally and externally negotiate for power. After 2011, none of those tribes has been strong enough to become the central culture, due to several reasons. At first, a consensus oriented way of ruling is very strongly embedded in the tribal traditions, making a new central coup unlikely. Secondly, the different rituals and habits among tribes cause that obtaining political legitimacy across entire Libya is an almost impossible job for one tribe. Third, Libya faces a situation in which the tribal society has difficulties to cope with or integrate the urban civil society, particularly due to their conservative stances. Huesken states: 'In the last months tribal politicians did not hesitate to exclude liberal groups, the educated urban youth and particularly women from the political arena in order to gain power' (Huesken, 2012, p.29). The youth does challenge the tribal structures, but the cultural power of the tribes is still deeply rooted in society. This inevitably impedes reconciliation of the country.

In order to successfully deal with the tribes, families and other communities in Libya, it would have been good if the policy-makers had considered an alternative approach. Such an approach was tried earlier, though on a very small scale, in Afghanistan. To encourage economic and democratic development, community-driven projects had been set up in several villages. In this NGO-initiated project, the actors deliberately anticipated the decision-making dynamics that were common in the area. Historically, due to the weak central government in Afghanistan, rural communities had established informal but effective local governance structures, and the project respected them and constructively built on those (Beath, Chrisia & Enikolopov, 2015). They slowly created democratically elected community development councils and they funded small-scale development projects. This local and almost tribal approach was effective to manage the resources in the community better. It had a broad range of positive effects, such as an 'increased access to drinking water and electricity, the acceptance of more democratic processes, and positive perceptions of economic well-being and attitudes towards women' (Beath, Chrisia & Enikolopov, 2015, p.315). The project also showed, however, that the attitudes towards the central government performance, on both local and national level, remained rather negative. This notion could be interpreted as something that interveners should work on, but it would be more effective and respectful to accept that different cultures can have different perceptions on how governance in general should be organized. Although the aforementioned bottom-up idea of community-based development is still in its infancy, and has not been tried often before, it might be a way to overcome the severe limits of the externally UN-led and top-down nation-building approach that has been tried in Libya after the NATO intervention.

Winning the hearts and minds and local UN legitimacy

The intervention itself, together with the UNSMIL mandate afterwards, were unable to truly win the 'hearts and minds' of the people in Libya. This is exemplified by the huge variety of rebel forces that impede a centralization process. If all citizens would have accepted the authority of the UN and would have supported its efforts to unify, the current instability would obviously not be there. Hanna Gurman (2013) wrote a book about the difficulties that interveners face when trying to win those hearts and minds of the local population. She explains that successful nation-building does not depend on military strength or resources, but on the ability to persuade and win the trust of local communities. This is incredibly hard, as local communities often distrust Western interveners. This is strikingly illustrated by a poem from the Taliban (2007), a rebel group in Afghanistan. It shows that nation-building is not a struggle between the good (West) fighting the evil local population. The poem is called Goodbye.

Allow me to go and to say goodbye to you,

Dear mother! I won't stay anymore, goodbye.

Englishmen have occupied my home,

By no means, I cannot stay anymore.

They play with our dignity and chastity,

I shy with my conscience.

It would be better at this moment to go and fight.

(Alam Gul Naseri, July 2007; in Strick van Linschoten & Kuehn, 2013).

The poem exemplifies that reality is simply not as black-and-white as the interveners want their audiences to believe. Insurgents, rebels and even dictators in Libya have its roots embedded in society. They have mothers, fathers, uncles and nieces that, no wonder, are loyal to those local tribes or forces. Understanding local culture is crucial to be successful in nation-building, and therefore it is remarkable that this knowledge did not fully reach the nation-building policy-makers, or that they failed to address that knowledge properly.

An almost indispensible event to precede nation-building operations is a (civil) war, but nation-building also takes place while these struggles are still continuing. This makes that many well-known nation-building mission, such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sierra Leone(UN) or Somalia (UN), almost resemble counterinsurgency operations. The efforts in Libya are different in this case, as the military NATO forces decided to leave soon after their operation ended. It was a deliberate choice

not to keep the military in the country, but to try and carry out nation-building through the UNSMIL mandate, which only uses political measures. However, this very loose approach obviously does not take away the difficult circumstances under which the UNSMIL has to operate. Especially because 'war damage changes economic incentives and encourages illicit smuggling and looting. It also shortens the time horizon within which actors calculate the costs and benefits of their choices: immediate gains and losses far outweigh distant ones because of actors' uncertainty about their circumstances or even their survival in the medium and long term' (Miller, 2013, p.67). It causes the UNSMIL to balance between two pulling forces: the recognition that (military) stabilization efforts are highly needed in Libya and the negative critiques that nation-building operations have received over the last years. To reach consensus between these two pulling ends, the UN created the UNSMIL. That project was initially set up for a duration of three months (UN Resolution 2009, 2011) after the NATO left, but it still continues today. Despite the fact that the prolonging exemplifies that the goals of the mandate have not been reached yet, it also raises questions about how the local actors actually perceive the legitimacy of the UN. The continuous prolonging of the UNSMIL might indicate that the UN faces difficulties to cooperate effectively with influential locals.

According to Sabrow (2017), who studied the legitimacy of different organizations that were involved in the peace operations in Mali, legitimacy is based on pragmatic or ideological considerations. The pragmatic concerns greatly prevail in moments of imminent danger. In such situations, victims do not care who saves them and under what ideological concerns. For Mali, that meant that timely humanitarian interventions by the French were welcomed, despite their history as a colonial power. Nevertheless, Sabrow underlines that obtaining ideological legitimacy becomes important in the long term. It is important that the locals can identify with the operators, as that will strengthen their regional self-reliance and stop the feelings that they are being dominated by outside powers. In this light, Sabrow also puts the assumed legitimacy of the UN into perspective. She writes: 'Seeking to carve out those conditions that make peace forces locally legitimate, my research indicates that many scholars overrate the essence of the UN for its legitimacy. While the international community might attribute a unique legitimacy to the organization, neither the UN's particular status nor the presence of a Council mandate seem to matter to local legitimacy' (Sabrow, 2017, p.178). Due to the loose nature of the UNSMIL and the current situation in Libya, it is not very likely that the UN would score better results in Libya than in Mali. Especially, because the political mission is unable to meet the practical requirements to obtain pragmatic legitimacy. They do not even have the capabilities and resources to keep Libyan civilians from immediate suffering.

VI. Does the mission in Libya fit the 'Empire in Denial' argument?

An interesting scholar that addresses the idea of imperialism behind nation-building is David Chandler. He states that despite the premises of decolonization and sovereignty, the idea of imperialism has lost none of its relevance. The Western will to dominate the world is still there, though executed through different methods. Chandler calls it the 'Empire in Denial', which 'may sound nicer than the brash hubris and overt racism of the imperial past, though it is, in its formulation, no less elitist and patronizing and, in its consequences, no less divisive, destabilizing and restricting' (Chandler, 2006, p.9). This idea thus closely relates to neo-trusteeship and postmodern imperialism, which were mentioned in the theoretical framework. In this section, it will be argued how and if the nation-building efforts in Libya fit the 'Empire in Denial' statement, or that some nuance is needed.

They pursue oil and create a phantom state

Even though the NATO intervention was perceived legitimate by the majority of the Libyan population at the time, it also fitted the Western interests. Particularly the oil reserves have been a prominent motivation to intervene. For the West, the US and EU in particular, the commercial bonds with Libya during Qaddafi's reign have long been a point of concern. This made the violent protests a good opportunity to intervene, notwithstanding Qaddafi's earlier intentions to adopt a more cooperative approach around 2003. The relationship between Libya and the EU was peculiar before the intervention. On the one hand, Libya delivered a vast part of the EU's energy supply, while on the other hand it was known that Qaddafi continuously violated human rights. Additionally, the country was also perceived pivotal in stopping the illegal migration flows towards Europe (Lutterbeck, 2009). The energy supply that came from Libya was a reason for the EU to largely sidestep their concerns about human rights violations. The EU favored the proximity of Libya towards European markets, the relative low cost of oil recovery and the high quality of the oil (Lutterbeck, 2009). By ignoring humanitarian concerns in favor of economic profit at the time, the Western powers had shown to prioritize its own economic benefits over helping Libya to develop itself further. With the ultimate chance to intervene in 2011, the West hoped that a more Western-minded government would further open up trading possibilities, resulting in a more liberal approach after Qaddafi's authoritarian way of ruling.

However, the violence that erupted in the country also turned out to have severe consequences for the oil revenues. Kuperman found that: 'Prior to the revolution, Libya produced 1.65 million barrels of oil a day, a figure that dropped to zero during NATO's intervention. Although production temporarily recovered to 85 percent of its previous rate, ever since secessionists seized eastern oil ports in August 2013, output has averaged to only 30 percent of the prewar level'

(Kuperman, 2015, p.69). The West envisioned that the intervention would ensure easier access to resources, but they overlooked the power struggles that the resources would cause. Almost all tribes, families and groups have tried to get their hands on the precious black substance. According to Michel Chossudovsky, the instant decision to intervene was made on pure economic and imperial grounds. He believes that, despite the fact that the intervention was framed as a humanitarian one, it was primarily conducted to strip Libya of its oil wealth. Oil was to be seen as the trophy of the war. Chossudovsky states: 'The Anglo-American oil giants including British Petroleum which signed an exploration contract in 2007 with the Qaddafi government are among the potential "beneficiaries" of the US-NATO military operation. More generally, what is at stake is the redrawing of the map of Africa, a process of neo-colonial re-division, the scrapping of the demarcations of the 1884 Berlin Conference, the conquest of Africa by the United States in alliance with Britain, in a US-NATO led operation' (Chossudovsky, 2013, p.15).

Since the NATO operation, Libya has been torn apart by families, tribes and other groups that hoped to fill up the power vacuum that the operation brought. The UN, on their part, was quick to recognize one of those anti-Qaddafi parties, the NTC, as the official party to represent the Libyan nation in UN-conferences. The NTC was put in charge of leading the transition, but the inability of that council to create stability and eradicate the power vacuum (in which two other 'governments' also tried to obtain power), proves that the organization lacked real support within Libya itself. The civilians in the country simply have been brought up with different values, norms and perspectives that do not directly match the ideologies of one single party that gets the external permission to lead. This results in a 'phantom state'. Chandler explains: 'the practices of Empire in Denial are much more invasive than those of a nineteenth-century empire, preventing the establishment of strong links between non-Western states and their societies and resulting in the phenomenon of 'phantom states' whose governing institutions may have extensive external resourcing but lack social or political legitimacy' (Chandler, 2006, p.9). The rather ethnocentric Western notions of global security and democratic peace (Owen, 1994) are simply not easily translatable to a country like Libya. When the local people do not feel committed to what is being done in their country, a forceful relationship between the parties lurks ahead, as force is then the way to increase legitimacy. Consequently, it is unsurprising that force is also used by the countless amount of militias that try to obtain power in the region.

Nuance is needed

Next to the fact that the government in Libya seems to be the ultimate example of a 'phantom state', Chandler underlines that contemporary nation-builders build a new framework of Western domination, while refusing to take responsibility for their actions, so the 'denial' part of his

argument. It implies that the West imposes controls without providing adequate guidance and tools to the weak states to cope with those. Chandler states: 'Underneath the formal trappings of independence, non-Western state governments have been opened up to a wide range of external regulatory controls and direct intervention under the rubric of state capacity-building' (Chandler, 2006, p.10). On a macro-level, such an argument seems legitimate. The West wanted to overthrow Qaddafi and hoped to install a new leader that could more easily adhere to Western wishes, just as King Idris did in the decades before Qaddafi. Furthermore, it is known that NATO left Libya very soon after the overthrowing, unwilling to take full responsibility to establish an all-embracing nation-building mission, or at least to adequately fight the deteriorating situation in Libya. However, it must be noted that the inability of the UN to establish a full-scale nation-building operation is also classically impeded by the internal working of the UN Security Council and its veto-system. Even if some countries would want to truly invest in a nation-building mission to stabilize the country, it is very likely that Russia or China will use its veto against it. The backlash against the R2P and the accusation of the BRICs that a humanitarian mission was used as a cover to instigate regime change (Keeler, 2011), predicts that a real nation-building mission will not happen. Therefore, calling the operation in Libya a proof of postmodern imperialism seems a bridge too far, as the Security Council first adopted resolution 1973 without any veto's, while it is now simply paralyzed by the BRICs that only retrospectively ventilated their criticism.

Some scholars have stated that the humanitarian aid in Libya was the cover for imperialist goals. They have labeled human rights, or the urge to disrespect the sovereignty of certain states because of humanitarian concerns, as 'humanitarian imperialism' (Bricmont, 2006; Chomsky, 2008). However, these arguments easily dismiss the true humanitarian and social concerns that form the basis for such intervention. Actually, the importance of human rights has been underlined by practically all members of the UN. The fact that these human rights are generally well-respected in the Western countries, does not directly imply imperialism when they try to protect civilians that face humiliating violence in other regions. The humanitarian standards that countries need to keep up in order to outrun an intervention are not that high. The scholars supporting the postmodern imperialism frame, should acknowledge that a huge spectrum exists between trying to prevent humanitarian disasters and the eagerness to possess an 'empire'. Kuperman (2013) was quick to address that Qaddafi did not purposefully hit innocent civilians, but the facts were that protesters died and that countries like Russia and China also tolerated NATO's action at the time. Furthermore, the UNSMIL supporting mission, that aims to protect vulnerable people and to assist the people in charge with achieving (central) stability, is not necessarily equitable to real imperialist intentions. The accusations are that the West subtly manipulates the suspect, by the use of bargaining power and a

power-relationship (Bricmont, 2006), but some sort of power-relationship is inevitable when one party needs help and the other is providing it. Sometimes, there is just no other way out. We all know the examples of genocides in Srebrenica and Rwanda, in which the UN forces did not react adequately enough. These kind of UN efforts are designed to bring about pragmatic legitimacy (Sabrow, 2017), rather than really injecting ideological concerns. The point here is that the distinction between foreign domination and utterly needed humanitarian help is simply not that clear cut.

A last factor that would nuance the claims that Libya is part of a Western 'Empire in Denial', is the short political time-horizon that contemporary policy-makers adhere to. They all focus on their domestic political structures, often a four-to-five year cycle. Within such a limited framework, political actors tend to think on the short term, trying to optimize their own political benefit and prestige, while minimizing the chances to face a storm of critique. Chandler also addresses this problem by stating that: 'Today, Western political elites lack a strong political vision and therefore have a transformed perception of and relationship to political power' (Chandler, 2006, p.19). A good example is how Bush first rejected all nation-building operations by Bill Clinton, before Bush himself started anti-terror operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Krebs and Rapport state about time horizons in international relations that 'people think about far-off events in more abstract terms than they do about near-term events, and this is crucial for how and whether they weight costs, plan for the future, and engage in wishful thinking' (Krebs and Rapport, 2012, p.530). More distant events are approached in more abstract and ideological terms, where closer events are debated in more pragmatic ways. The long-term ideology of creating a stable central government was perceived possible in Libya due to the Arab Spring, but the instant instability that the bombings caused also made clear that a huge amount of resources was needed to make that goal possible on the short term. The skepticism about resources inevitably also caused domestic resistance in the NATO-countries. The fact that Chandler states that contemporary political leaders lack the political vision to overcome such challenges, paradoxically seems to contradict his own 'Empire in Denial' argument. Even though imperialism cannot easily be described as a black-and-white business and can happen rather organically, the establishment of an 'empire' still needs some adequate enforcement, al lot of patience (and thus a long-time horizon) and also enough resources to maintain peace and push a country into the right direction. If the 'emperor' does not continue to 'inject' the occupied country with influences, the empire is to fall apart soon, and this is illustrated by the contemporary chaos in Libya. The aforementioned characteristics that come with 'having' an empire stretch beyond the scope of contemporary political decision-makers. Also, no adequate actions are taken to change the situation in Libya, so it rather seems that the West does not want to be bothered with Libya, than that the country is part of a Western 'Empire in Denial'. This situation leads to a half-baked solution

with which the decision-makers fail to take responsibility for either ends: they do not leave Libya completely (with the UNSMIL-project), nor do they fully participate in rebuilding the country.

VII. Discussion

This thesis aimed to put the nation-building efforts of the UN and NATO in Libya into perspective. With extensively indicating which nation-building challenges remained unaddressed in Libya, it has provided more context to the negativism that emerged about the operation in the last couple of years. The thesis first sketched the historical situation of Libya. It became clear that Libya has always hosted (or been occupied by) a very diverse mix of ethnic groups. Greeks, Ottomans, Muslims, Italians and the French all lived in the country in relatively recent history. Already during the colonial period of the Italians, it was evident that a central Libya did not really exist. It was better to speak of three different provinces, namely Fezzan, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, who all had a distinct character and functioned rather autonomously. Back in those days, the Italians primarily used their colony for agriculture, despite arguments that they wanted to strengthen the social and political circumstances in the country. The occupation instigated a big Italian migration flow towards Libya, and the territory was even used to give proletarian Italy an outlet for an exuberant life. The end of the Second World War in 1945 also marked the end of the international acceptance of colonial rule. In 1949, the UN passed a resolution confirming the independence of Libya, and in 1951 this resolution formally became reality. The Kingdom of Libya was established, with King Idris, a respected spiritual leader, as the head of state. Also King Idris was, despite his sincere efforts, not able to unite the three provinces. He did not succeed in creating a sense of Libyan nationhood or identity. His successor Qaddafi even called Idris a Western puppet, due to his good relationship with the West and the fact that Idris was openly appointed in conclave with the UN. With the sudden and unexpected discovery of oil reserves in Libya in 1959, the pressure on King Idris and the dissatisfaction of his rule slowly started to increase. King Idris made sure that his family and his surroundings profited greatly from the instant oil wealth, but he forgot to ensure that the ordinary citizens could also profit from the new oil flows. The oil, together with the accusations that Idris was a Western puppet, instigated the coup d'état in Libya in 1969, with Muammar Qaddafi as the opposition leader. In the beginning, Qaddafi was supported by the Libyan population, as he succeeded to make the population profit from the oil. However, this relative prosperity was short lived. Qaddafi soon made the same mistakes as Idris did. He predominantly made his own surroundings profit from the country's wealth, causing that Libya remained heavily dependent on imports, despite its rich resources. The Libyan authoritarian leader did not put effort in developing sustainable resources, so unrest among the population slowly started to grow. In the meantime, Qaddafi never tried to hide his aversion towards

the West, and he kept provoking them. This aversion was clearly mutual, and the West was quick to see the Arab Spring as an ultimate opportunity to get rid of the detested leader.

With that choice to accelerate the removal of Qaddafi, the UN forced itself into a new nation-building encounter. However, due to the skepticism that arose after earlier operations, for instance in Afghanistan and Iraq, the international coalition was hesitant to fully invest in a new full-scale operation. Nevertheless, the UN performed extensive bombings and later established the UNSMIL mission, to help rebuilding the country. The character of the mission was different of those that we have seen before. It was a combination of a UN-mission to instigate stable and central governance and the American urge to establish global security. By having assessed the efforts in Libya, it is remarkable that the decision-makers had not learnt from mistakes made in earlier operations. The nation-building challenges that remained unaddressed in Libya are the main reason that the operation never succeeded. Researching these factors comprised the first part of the research question. First, it became clear that the idea of modernization still persisted in the minds of the decision-makers, causing that they disregarded the local cultures. They envisioned a Western-like structure in Libya, with a Westphalian-model government. In this regard, while acknowledging the minimum amount of resources (which is also a big challenge) that the interveners wanted to invest, it is also peculiar that they took a fully destructive, instead of a more cooperative approach. The interveners completely dismissed all institutions that Qaddafi already put in place, and decided that the country had to be built from scratch. Secondly, the interveners also did not take the history of Libya into account. The country had never known a nationalistic pride or identity, so the idea of a central state was simply not imbedded in their culture. All 140 separate tribes in Libya have their own identities and they tell their individual members how to live. There are three reasons why none of those cultures has been able to restore order and become a national culture. The tribes know local consensus-seeking decision-making mechanisms, their leaders lose political legitimacy as soon as they leave their own tribal territory and their traditional approach causes frictions with the urban civil society. Because of this, it was unsurprising that the perceived unity during the protests against Qaddafi was soon gone after the leader was killed. The opposition quickly fragmented itself again, returning to the classical Libyan governance structure with influential tribes, families and local loyalties. The interveners should have respected those tribes and should have come up with a structure that showed more understanding of local habits, just like the community-based ruling project that was tried in Afghanistan. Third, nation-building operations continue to face difficulties with winning the 'hearts and minds' and the legitimacy of the population. The resistance that nation-builders face is deeply rooted in the local society, as the oppositional fighters also have mothers, fathers, uncles and nieces that (often covertly) support them. The UNSMIL operation is already

struggling to establish pragmatic legitimacy, so speaking about ideological legitimacy really seems a bridge too far. Lastly, it needs to be noted that the power vacuum after Qaddafi also changed the perspectives in Libya. Due to the uncertain circumstances, time horizons of civilians shortened and immediate gains soon outweighed distant ones. Survival became the main priority, which actually only further destabilized the situation in the country.

The second part of the research question dealt with whether the nation-building operation in Libya fits the idea of postmodern imperialism. Especially in the last couple of years, many academic scholars argued that humanitarian aid, the R2P framework and the operation in Libya in particular were the proof of a Western 'Empire in Denial'. This is a 'new' kind of imperialism in which the West does not take responsibility for its actions, as they act under the flag of independence. There are indeed arguments that advocate the 'Empire in Denial'. The Western interests in the Libyan oil were obvious, and the West also consciously created a phantom state, meaning that the set up governing institutions may have extensive external resourcing but fail to achieve political or social legitimacy across the population. Nevertheless, the accusations of the 'Empire in Denial' need to be nuanced. At first, the internal working of the UN's Security Council is largely responsible for how things turned out in Libya. In 2011, the SC accepted resolution 1973, without a veto of the non-West. The severe critique on the operation by the non-West predominantly emerged retrospectively, when it was obviously too late. The current backlash that the BRICs have created against R2P and Libya also caused that the international community is now unable to fix the current humiliating situation in the country. Trying to protect civilians is still something different than pursuing an empire. Secondly, and related to the previous argument, is the felt responsibility to protect those civilians in danger. A huge spectrum exists between trying to prevent humanitarian disasters and the eagerness to possess an 'empire'. Civilians in Libya were in danger in 2011 and the entire international community agreed on that, so the UN decided to act. It is simply inappropriate to dismiss basic humanitarian aid as imperialism. At last, the time-horizon that political leaders adhere to is too short to truly speak about an empire. Even though imperialism cannot easily be described as a black-and-white business and can happen rather organically, the establishment of an 'empire' still needs some adequate enforcement, al lot of patience (so a long time horizon) and also enough resources. This thesis has shown that exactly those factors have been absent in the nation-building operation in Libya.

This thesis aimed to provide some context to the literature that is already available about the operation in Libya. The negative tendency in the literature is understandable, but constructively pointing at the pitfalls is important to prevent such things from happening again. Not all unaddressed challenges deliberatively remained untouched, but more because of inappropriate planning and forgetting to delve in to what Libya really needed before the intervention started. Put in a greater

context, Libya's situation is clearly different from their neighboring countries, because the country was hit the hardest by the consequences of the Arab Spring. This is mostly due to the intervention itself and the absence of a good plan afterwards. Neighboring countries that did not face such intervention (Lebanon, Algeria, Tunesia, Egypt) also still have their serious challenges, but they do not immediately equate to those in Libya. Only Syria still faces a very similar situation, with also an authoritarian leader, crimes against humanity by the government and a great extent of different ethnic groups that seek power. The similarity of the countries is one of the reasons why the international community is (for now) so hesitant to start an R2P operation in Syria. All in all, the applied nation-building framework in the thesis went beyond only military implications and gave recommendations on how to make nation-building operations more successful when the future would ask for one again. The thesis also nuanced the claims of postmodern imperialism that surround the intervention, as none of the involved parties benefits from such statements. It leads to exaggerated accusations and the international community must realize that sometimes humanitarian disasters are so severe that providing aid or intervening is the only humane option. To follow up on this judicious thesis, it could be interesting to research the North-African perspectives on the 'Empire in Denial' debate. Moreover, additional research could also focus on the practical implications of nation-building in Libya. It could dig deeper into the opinion of the involved citizens, which could provide policy-makers with useful tools to nation-build in a more feasible way. A more cooperative and tailor-made approach is thus the way to go, while sincerely respecting local cultures.

VIII. References

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