

Post-Qaddafi Libya: A Western Success Story?, Liountri Christianna

September 12/ 2012: U.S. Ambassador to Libya killed in consulate attack. That was the headlines on that day. Questions were raised on the reason why something like that would happen to a country set free by a NATO-led operation. A plain answer would be: "To oust a regime is one thing but it is something fundamentally different to install a viable entity in its place".

Few are aware that other attacks preceded the murder of ambassador Stevens: on the 5th of June, the American diplomatic mission was attacked in revenge for the death of Abu Yahya al-Libi (one of al- Qaeda's leaders) in Pakistan; on the 11th of June, the British diplomatic mission was attacked. The International committee of the Red Cross, after being attacked twice in Benghazi, announced on the 5th of August that it would stop its operations in Libya.¹ Instability reigns in post-Qaddafi Libya and the International Community is responsible for securing that the new Libyan government will be in control of the country. However, there are important issues that we need to considerate when examining Libya's case.

First and foremost, there is reasonable doubt about whether the newly elected government will be able to legitimize its power and control the widely spread parallel security institutions since there is no unifying cause any more.² Indeed, the revolution against Qaddafi didn't reflect a specific political or ideological orientation. The anti-Qaddafi forces consisted of groups with diverse agendas and there's high chance that if the demands of the leaders of the rebel forces aren't meant, controlling them would be unlikely.³ The loss of Qaddafi's tight grip has led to the resurgence of fights among tribes, ethnic groups and rival militias. There are complaints of torture perpetrated by the rebels against pro-Qaddafi civilians and the set-up of illegal prisons where Qaddafi loyalists are being held. Moreover, there are indications that Libyan cities are being divided according to their stance during the rebellion. The Libyan Armed Forces are not only ill-equipped but also unable to face these new challenges since Qaddafi had transformed them to a tribal administration, placing reliable relatives in fear of his personal safety and in order to safeguard his power.⁴

Another aspect to which we should pay attention, is the rise of radical Islam from

1 Instability Reigns in Post- Qaddafi Libya, The Palestine Chronicle, 08/16/2012, http://palestinechronicle.com/view_article_details.php?id=19483

2 After Qaddafi, Libya's Daunting Path, Council on Foreign Relations, 10/20/2012, <http://www.cfr.org/libya/after-qaddafi-libyas-daunting-path/p26249>

3 Libya and the US after Qaddafi, Foreign Policy, 06/23/2011, <http://www.thefastertimes.com/foreignpolicy/2011/06/23/libya-and-the-u-s-after-gaddafi/>

4 Libya after the NATO invasion, Al Jazeera, Opinion: Mahmood Mamdani, 04/09/2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/04/201148174154213745.html>

within the ranks of the rebels. Qaddafi had managed – by blind repression- to prevent the Islamists in his country to organize themselves and claim political benefits from their charitable work, which was the case in neighboring countries such as Egypt.⁵ Nevertheless, now that religious barriers are lifted, there is high chance that Islamic organizations will make their appearance in Libya and will try to benefit from the instability and the suffering of the population. The poor percentage the Libyan Islamists gained in the recent elections shouldn't be perceived as a guarantee of the preservation of a secular state. In the elections of July 2012, the National Forces Alliance – a coalition of 58 political parties that campaigned as a “more liberal, progressive option”- won 39 seats while the Justice and Construction Party -a Muslim Brotherhood affiliate- won 17 seats. After the elections, the National Transitional Council handed the power over to the General National Congress that would oversee the drafting of a constitution.⁶ However, the total absence of functioning democratic political institutions during Qaddafi's means that the Libyan civil society isn't accustomed to liberal democratic procedures and isn't characterized by a culture of trust and cooperation.

Radical Islam is connected with another important issue on the international arena: Terrorism. The most profound act of terror was the assassination of Ambassador Stevens and it indicates the consequences that a prolonged destabilization could have. Firstly, Libya could be transformed to a safe heaven for terrorists. It is said that during the rebellion, al-Qaeda's fighters have joined the ranks of the rebels and there is great concern in the US with regard to the missing 20,000 shoulder fired ground to air missile systems. The dominant fear is that these weapons will end up to al-Qaeda in the Maghreb, to Chad or to Darfur.⁷ Qaddafi had joined the American led “war on terror”, since himself was being threatened by radical groups such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group and the Islamic Martyr's Movement. In 1998 an assassination attempt against him is said to have been linked to al-Qaeda.⁸ Now that Qaddafi is ousted and the new government is preoccupied with setting the country in order, there is a political vacuum that can easily be dominated by terrorist organizations.

Macroscopically, there is need to examine the implications that the invasion has

5 Libya: Still a long road ahead, Open Democracy, 07/17/2012, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/karen-kramer/libya-still-long-road-ahead>

6 Liberal coalition makes strides in historic Libyan election, CNN, 07/18/2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/07/17/world/africa/libya-election/index.html>

7 Post – Qaddafi Libya: Internal, Regional and International Security Implications, South African Institute of International Affairs, 11/18/2011, <http://www.saiia.org.za/feature/post-gaddafi-libya-internal-regional-and-international-security-implications.html>

8 Libya and the US: The Unique Libyan Case, The Middle East Quarterly, Winter 2006, <http://www.meforum.org/886/libya-and-the-us-the-unique-libyan-case>

caused to the American Foreign Policy. Firstly, on a regional level: the American allies in the area have already express their resentment over the way Qaddafi was ousted. For one thing, the Arab League's resolution was calling for a "no-fly zone" and not for a foreign intervention. Now, they believe that the West has used the resolution as an excuse to legitimize the intervention and to promote its own agenda. The results can be seen in the cautious way the Arab League deals with the Syrian case: it keeps its distance and it denies the approval of military intervention in Syrian domestic affairs.⁹ Others (North Korea and Uganda) have reached the conclusion that Americans had deceived Qaddafi and convinced him to remove nuclear capabilities from Libya through negotiations as a precursor to invasion.¹⁰ It is true that Qaddafi's regime was disdained by the western powers due to its links with terrorist organizations but such a view resembles to conspiracy theories. A more pragmatist analysis underlines the obstacles that the invasion poses to the western efforts of promoting a non-proliferation policy in the Middle East.¹¹ Given that Israel is perceived as a threat, the Arab countries may consider that Iran should obtain a nuclear weapon in order to counterbalance West's threatening presence in the area. So, US may have lost or will lose allies in their policy against Iran. Moreover, they may have caused a middle eastern trend in obtaining nuclear capabilities or weapons of mass destruction, as a way to protect their national interests and secure the preservation of their regimes.

On an international level, the abuse of the legal provision of "Responsibility to Protect", a provision that is ambiguous and may be interpreted at will, polarizes the international community. Countries such as China and Russia see behind these legal regulation a disguised effort of the West to obtain the right to intervene in their internal affairs, under the pretext of protection of human rights and civilians. The US abused the Security Council's Resolution and has therefore lay mines to the function of the Security Council as a potential instrument of collective management in a multi-polar world.

Last but not least, the Libyan case has an impact on the American Domestic Politics. Obama didn't get congressional approval for the operation, claiming that he has been authorized by the United Nation's Security Council. Furthermore, the operation was funded from accounts of the Executive Power. There was no need for further funding that would demand congressional approval. This issue can be combined with the recent maneuvers of the Obama administration in order to shift 8 million dollars from Pentagon

9 Libya: a costly victory, Middle East Institute, 10/21/2011 <http://www.mei.edu/content/libya-costly-victory>

10 Libya after the NATO invasion, Al Jazeera, Opinion: Mahmood Mamdani, 04/09/2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/04/201148174154213745.html>

11 Libya: a costly victory, Middle East Institute, 10/21/2011, <http://www.mei.edu/content/libya-costly-victory>

operations and counter terrorism aid budget for Pakistan to begin building an elite Libyan force over the next year. We quote from the recent article of the New York Times that revealed the above mentioned plan:

*“The proposed Libyan commando force springs from an unusual partnership between the State Department and the Pentagon. Just last year, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and the defense secretary at the time, Robert M. Gates, agreed to pool resources from their departments in a fund approved by Congress to respond more quickly to emerging threats from Al Qaeda and other militants in places like Libya, Nigeria and Bangladesh. The program, the Global Security Contingency Fund, is small as government projects go with a budget of up to \$250 million a year, mostly from the Pentagon, but it is meant to address many of the government’s counterterrorism and broader security challenges over several years.”*¹²

A first comment is that the war on terrorism is a delicate case that demands cautious, rapid and sometimes secret maneuvers. That said, this decision of the Obama administration can be partially justify. However, it is imperative for the preservation of democratic and liberal principles of the country that transparency and control on the actions of the government will be guaranteed and that the Congress performs its constitutionally defined task.

To reach a conclusion, for the Libyan case not to turn into a failure such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia or Kosovo, it is imperative for the West not only to observe the actions of the newly elected government but to help her establish reasonable security and guide her throughout the whole process of coming up with a reconstruction program. It is also necessary to work on the Libyan nation building so that the ideas of secession or of the construction a federal state be excluded as an alternative.

12 U.S. to Help Create an Elite Libyan Force to Combat Islamic Extremists, The New York Times, 10/25/2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/16/world/africa/us-to-help-create-libyan-commando-force.html?_r=1&