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Link between Foreign Interventions in Oil-Exporting States and Maintaining the Petrodollar Hegemony: A Plausibility Probe of the Libyan Intervention

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Plagiarism Declaration

The author, Claire Kruyshaar, declares that this thesis is her own work and that it refers only to the listed resources and literature, which have all been cited and listed using the ISO 690 standard.

The author also declares that this thesis was written solely for the Master's in International Security Studies offered by Charles University for the May submission in 2022 and has not been used prior to this.

Date: 03 May 2022, Prague

Abstract

This thesis examines the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) military intervention in Libya during the Arab Spring revolution in 2011. Using a plausibility probe of the Libyan case study it seeks to uncover the likelihood that the intervention was linked to a threat to the petrodollar hegemony. Although it examines four of the main NATO intervenors, the focus is on the relationship between Libya and the United States. It is significant to uncover the intentions behind interventions to inform policy for future interventions and add to the scarce academic literature on the intervention-petrodollar link. The main narrative of the Libyan intervention was that of humanitarianism under the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. However, with evidence from Wikileaks, reports, government records as well as journal articles, this thesis questions this narrative. The research did not find substantial evidence linking the intervention to the petrodollar system. However, it does propose that strategic interests rivalled the humanitarian motivation.

Autoreferátu

Tato práce se zabývá vojenskou intervencí Organizace Severoatlantické smlouvy (NATO) v Libyi během revoluce Arabského jara v roce 2011. Pomocí sondy věrohodnosti libyjské případové studie se snaží odhalit pravděpodobnost, že intervence souvisela s ohrožením petrodolarové hegemonie. . Ačkoli zkoumá čtyři hlavní zasahující osoby NATO, zaměřuje se na vztah mezi Libyí a Spojenými státy. Je důležité odhalit záměry za intervencemi, aby bylo možné informovat o politice budoucích intervencí a přidat k vzácné akademické literatuře o spojení intervence-petrodolar. Hlavním příběhem libyjské intervence bylo humanitářství podle doktríny Responsibility to Protect (R2P). S důkazy z Wikileaks, zprávami, vládními záznamy i články v časopisech však tato práce tento příběh zpochybňuje. Výzkum nenašel podstatné důkazy spojující intervenci s petrodolarovým systémem. Navrhuje však, že strategické zájmy soupeřily s humanitární motivací.

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Introduction

Since Nixon dismantled the gold standard in 1971 the dollar affirmed itself as the global reserve currency. The dollar hegemony was established largely through the help of the petrodollar system in which global petroleum exports are traded in dollars. This new international financial system facilitated the United States' (US) position as a hegemon by giving the US a high degree of influence over it (Salameh 2018).

This thesis will analyse the military interventions into oil-exporting states, focusing on the US involvement in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) mission in Libya in 2011. Various scholars and news agencies mention US interventions in petroleum-rich areas such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Venezuela as partly driven by a threat against the petrodollar hegemony. However, the supporting evidence in these articles is weak (Hughes 2018). Threats against oil-exporting states have been made in the past but were more focused on the petroleum supply than trade currency. Nixon for example implied that if oil-exporting states threaten "Western access to cheap and abundant petroleum, the United States and its allies would retaliate and inflict dire economic and political punishment" (Wight 2014, p. 15). This thesis will focus on the actualisation of such threats, specifically looking at military interventions that followed a shift (or threat to shift) by an oil-exporting state away from the petrodollar system. A plausibility probe shall be conducted on the case of the intervention in Libya in 2011, focusing on US involvement but also considering other coalition members, specifically British, French, and Italian involvement.

The thesis will examine the plausibility that the intervention was linked to Muammar Ghaddafi's decisions to shift away from the petrodollar system, such as his announcement in

2008 to create a regional gold-based currency called the Dinar, as well as his restrictive policies on the petroleum industry (Malachy 2014; Salameh 2018).

The academic literature linking the petrodollar hegemony to military interventions is limited and news media that mentions this link fails to provide substantial evidence to prove it. This thesis aims to add to the academic literature on US motivations for military intervention to further a holistic understanding of foreign interventions within petroleum-rich regions. Furthermore, this thesis is significant because of the complex duality of respecting state sovereignty but intervening to avoid massive human rights abuses where these are perceived to occur. The international community is still divided on foreign interventions. China and Russia on the one side have advocated against foreign intervention into the internal affairs of another state. Russia's stance is ironic considering its justification for its war with Ukraine, however, despite their actions in the post-Soviet region, Russia has advocated for state sovereignty to be respected over direct humanitarian intervention (Düben 2015; Glanville 2013).

The West led by the US, on the other hand, also argue that states have a responsibility to ensure human rights are respected globally, while agreeing that state sovereignty is critical. Whether their actions always match their intentions, the West has been a bulwark favouring humanitarian intervention when they deem it necessary. The case of the Libyan intervention is therefore critical to understand today because it set the course for future humanitarian interventions. Analyses reveal both the positive and negative aspects of the intervention to improve future policies. The Libyan intervention has been heavily criticised, and it has spurred numerous conspiracy theories due in part to inconsistencies, operational mistakes, and lack of publicly available information. This thesis, through a plausibility probe intends to uncover how

likely it is that other motivators beyond the humanitarian one, played a dominant role in the Libyan intervention to guide future analyses.

After a review of the most salient literature pertaining to this topic, the concept of 'humanitarian intervention' as well as 'petrodollar hegemony' shall be discussed. This conceptualisation will guide the data analysis section, which forms the bulk of the thesis. It then ends with a summary of the findings, in which the research hypothesis is addressed directly, followed by a brief conclusion.

Research Targets and Questions

This section presents the research targets as well as two research questions which guide the data analysis.

Research Targets

The target of this research is to assess whether there is a link between military intervention, especially by the US, and oil-exporting states' transition away from the petrodollar system. Additionally, the target is to add to the scholarship on foreign interventions by addressing an alternative intervention motivator (petrodollar stability) while taking into account that multiple motivations may coexist (e.g. humanitarian missions, stabilising missions).

Research Questions

Two research questions shall guide the analyses. The first one is a broad question that asks whether there is a causal link between oil-exporting states shift (or intention to shift) from the petrodollar system leading to a military intervention by the US. The dependent variable in this question is the military intervention while the independent variable is the change away from the petrodollar.

The second question is more specifically linked to the Libyan case and asks whether Ghaddafi's decision to establish the gold backed Dinar motivated the NATO intervention into Libya in 2011. For this question the dependent variable is NATO's intervention, and the independent variable is the establishment of the Dinar backed by gold.

Literature Review

The literature review focuses on two streams of literature. Firstly, on the broader stream of foreign military intervention with a focus on US intervention into oil-exporting states and then on a more narrowly focused stream focusing on the Libyan intervention in 2011.

Military Intervention – Petrodollar Link

Jeff Colgan (2013) argues that among political science scholars the link between interventionalist conflict and petroleum, is usually relegated to the 'resource wars' debate. While he cautions against overstating petroleum as a motivator for intervention, he also argues that petroleum has become such a salient part of modern life that it tends to be "a leading cause of war in the modern era" (Colgan 2013, p. 148). Philippe Le Billon and Eric Nicholls (2007) include petroleum in their article about military intervention in resource wars. They argue that an abundance of valuable resources leads to instability, such as civil war, which often attracts the attention of foreign intervention. They argue that while military intervention in such a scenario is effective for short term peacekeeping goals, it does not address long-term instability (Le Billon, Nicholls 2007). Jenny R. Kehl (2010, p. 391) also lumps petroleum into the broader category of "resource disputes" along with water and diamonds. She argues that foreign states will match their intervention strategy depending on their strategic interests. Relating to the US, she points out that the US have declared their intentions to use "military force to pursue resource interests" (Kehl 2010, p. 400). However, Le Billon and Fouad El Khatib Le Billon and Fouad El Khatib (2004) argue that there is a lack of evidence that the US military interventions in the Persian Gulf were to liberate the citizens of those states or to make it easier to access the petroleum.

Seung-Whan Choi, Youngwan Kim, David Ebner and Patrick James (2020) argue that reporting by the US State Department on global human rights violations have strongly motivated US interventions. However, they acknowledge that other factors, like petroleum in the Middle East, may operate as parallel motivations or even surpass human right's motivations (Choi et al. 2020). Chukwuemeka E. Malachy (2014, p. 33) on the other hand takes a stance against the US ideological motivations for interventions and argues instead that they are motivated by the creation of "pro-US regimes" to secure their interests. He links this to the petrodollar hegemony (Malachy 2014). Similarly, Nayna J Jhaveri (2004) argues that the US acts militarily to secure its petroleum interests and maintain a trade balance using the Iraqi invasion as an example. The goal, according to Jhaveri was to privatise the Iraqi petroleum regime to increase foreign control (Jhaveri 2004). Since little was stated at the time about US petroleum interests by the Bush Administration, it would be difficult to concretely prove Jhaveri's argument (Jhaveri 2004).

David Hughes (2018) pointed out a possible correlation between various petroleum-exporting states decision to move away from the petrodollar and US interference (Hughes 2018). He included Iran, Syria, Libya, and Venezuela in his argument. However, there was a lack of empirical evidence in his conference paper to substantiate this argument (Hughes 2018). Similarly, Mamdouh G. Salameh (2018) argues that "anyone who challenged the petrodollar did not fare well" but does not qualify what the US might perceive as a challenge aside from mentioning a shift to a gold standard. To add to this Blessing Simura (2014, p. 142) argues that the US is an "offensive actor" in the region because aside from wanting to secure petroleum-flows and prevent terrorism it also "need[s] to control the petrodollar system".

Robert Looney (2007) examined the potential effect on the US hegemony if Iran shifted away from the petrodollar to the petroeuro. His argument focused on the economics of the global

financial system dominated by the dollar. He pointed out that the threat of a state moving away from petrodollars depends on the underlying foundation of the US dollar hegemony. Only if it is built upon trade flows, does a shift away from petrodollars signify a threat to US hegemony. If, which he argues is more likely, the system is based more on foreign savings and the US lucrative investment climate, then a shift from trading petroleum in dollars to another currency should not undermine US hegemony. He did not, however, include in his assessment petroleum traded for gold, which has an inherent value and does not devalue in storage, since he was specifically analysing the prospects of the Iranian Oil Bourse. Furthermore, he argues it would be difficult for Islamic petroleum exporters to establish their own trading hub based on another currency because of public disapproval, influenced by religious beliefs, for speculation and interest. It is therefore the system, including exporters, the markets, investments schemes etc., that helps hinder oil-exporters trading in another currency and thus helps prop up the US hegemony (Looney 2007). The idea however, of shifting away from the petrodollar, does pose a risk. If more and more states start trading in other currencies, it will likely undermine the US hegemony by aiding the rise of a multipolar system (Salameh 2018).

The Libyan Intervention

This subsection narrows down the frame of analyses to the Libyan case. Most of the literature deals with the 'humanitarian aspect' and either argues for or against the humanitarian motivation.

Richard Phelps (2013) argues that the petrodollar wealth in Libya did not translate into a strong economy because the institutions and mechanisms were missing. The economy, he argues, was fragile and highly susceptible to market fluctuations. However, he does not engage much in the debate about the 2011 uprising. To add to this Colgan (2013) argues that it was the disparity in

wealth, with massive petrodollar wealth concentrated in a few elites compared to a relatively poor population which led to civil war. This motivated external intervention to stabilise the region. Therefore, he focuses more on the domestic factors leading to external intervention rather than external interests shaping domestic instability (Colgan 2013).

Simon Chesterman (2011) reasons that it was the duty of foreign states to conduct a humanitarian intervention into Libya because of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine which shall be elaborated on in the conceptualisation section. However, Chesterman (2011) argues that while humanitarian interventions appear favourable in theory, in practice they tend to exacerbate instability, as was the case with Libya. Aiden Hehir (2013) also argues that it was the R2P which motivated states to intervene in Libya. He sheds light however on the inconsistency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) decision-making process and argues that the decision to intervene in Libya was an irregularity (Hehir 2013). It is this irregularity which draws most of the scholarly attention focusing on this intervention. Benedetta Berti (2014) agrees with the above two scholars that the Libyan intervention was justified by the R2P and followed the standards set by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). However, she points out that it is important how foreign interveners act under the R2P and that the Libyan intervention was a crucial milestone for focusing "not whether to act but rather how to act" in a humanitarian crisis (Berti 2014, p. 37). Furthermore, although the intervention itself was justifiable by R2P, its military component was not prescribed by R2P (Berti 2014).

Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer (2016) in a journal article debunking myths about the Libyan intervention argues strongly that the intervention was justified and necessary to address the humanitarian crisis. Although he does not exclude other motivators for the coalition intervention, he argues that the humanitarian aspect was the primary motivator (Vilmer 2016).

Paul D. Williams and Alex J. Bellamy (2012) argue that the process of establishing the R2P doctrine facilitated the decision on UN Resolution 1973 which called for "all necessary measures" to be used to protect civilians in Libya (UNSC 2011, p. 3). This was partly because at the time there was a feeling of responsibility to intervene into states with crimes against humanity after previous crises such as the genocide in Rwanda (Larsen 2011).

Jacob Mundy (2021) argues that the humanitarian motivation for the Libyan intervention were overstated and appear to be more of a front for a regime change intervention, however, he does not link this to the threat to the petrodollar hegemony. Similarly, Sally Burt (2016) argues that it was the unpredictable anti-US behaviour of Gadhafi which led to the US involvement in the intervention and that regime change rather than humanitarian means were at the forefront of the US goals. She does not expressly link this to a petrodollar threat, however, notes that it is the petrodollar wealth which gave Ghaddafi enough regional power to pose a threat to the US interests (Burt 2016).

Many scholars point out that there is an inconsistency with the humanitarian motivation because there were far more oppressive regimes operating at the same time which were not subjected to intervention (Burt 2016; Malachy 2014). This raises the question of the motivations behind this intervention. For example, Malachy (2014, p. 33) argues that the 'humanitarian' motivation of the NATO mission in Libya is questionable considering Saudi Arabia "exhibit[s] the same level of authoritarianism and repression against their citizens". James Pattison (2011) adds to this when he argues that while the humanitarian aspect might be justifiable, he agreed with Malachy's (2014) argument about similar measures not being taken to other repressive regimes.

Scholars agree that it is the strategic importance of a state to the external state that determines whether repressive regimes are ignored or invaded (Pattison 2011; Malachy 2014; Simura 2014). For example, Milad M. Elharathi (2014) argued that it was Libya's oil and gas wealth which motivated NATO to launch a military operation in Libya and not apply the same kind of intervention into Egypt or Tunisia, whose economies were based mostly on tourism.

Martin Binder (2015) made a comparative study on humanitarian interventions to investigate this question of when the international community intervenes and when not. He focused his study on United Nations humanitarian interventions during early 2000s, not specifically looking at Libya. He found that there was a general pattern to the intervention but that humanitarian aspects were not solely the motivator, rather that other geopolitical motivators were also present which explains the seeming inconsistency. Furthermore, he pointed out that the myriad of decision-makers with their own agendas involved in the process of intervening add to the inconsistency issue (Binder 2015). Jessica Bucher, Lena Engel, Stephanie Harfensteller and Hylke Dijkstra (2013) point this cleavage of decision-makers agendas out in their research on how public opinion influenced the foreign policy choices of France and Germany over the Libyan intervention.

Henrik Boesen Lindbo Larsen (2011) argues that while national interests such as petroleum and regional stability, should not be overlooked, NATO intervened into Libya because it appeared at the time to be a straightforward and relatively low-budget intervention that could increase the perception of the interveners as peace-enforcers back in their home countries. This is a popular assumption amongst scholars. He characterises NATO's involvement in Libya as "[h]aphazardness rather than deliberate strategy" which is a vague argument, considering both the financial expensive and the consequences of such an intervention (Larsen 2011, p. 1).

Malachy (2014) does a comparative study between US relations with Saudi Arabia and Libya and concludes by elusively arguing that Ghaddafi's role as a regional leader in Africa and his nationalisation policies towards the Libyan oilfields led the US to "secure UN mandate to enforce a no-fly zone against Libya regime, and lead member states of NATO to invade" (Malachy 2014, p. 39). Along this line, Salameh (2018) makes a connection between Gaddafi's announcement of a gold-back dinar which could threaten the petrodollar hegemony and the US support for the rebels in Libya, however he does not substantiate a direct link.

Yahia H. Zoubir (2011) looked at the US's involvement in the Libyan intervention and pointed out that the US has a history of 'coercive diplomacy' with Libya. In the early 2000s the US 'coerced' Libya to change its stance on terrorism and give up weapons of mass destruction (WMD). This was largely achieved through the threat of prolonging sanctions. Gadhafi appeared receptive to such threats and complied with the US's main requests. The relationship between Libya and the US steadily improved since then, until the uprising in 2011. Despite Gadhafi's repressive regime, the US did not appear to apply great pressure on Gadhafi to improve human rights and democratise. The uprising however shifted the status quo and threatened US strategic interests which included Libya's petroleum wealth and the potential for military bases (Zoubir 2011). The US agreed to take part in an intervention only "when it did not have any other option and regime change became inevitable" (Zoubir 2011, p. 291). Although this does not suggest a link between a threat to the petrodollars and the intervention, it does highlight the complexity of the humanitarian justification, adding a 'realist' argument of selfish state interest rather than promoting a benefactor of human rights and democracy.

Although the causal link between US petroleum interests and the invasion are discussed broadly, none provide sufficient evidence for a direct link between the two.

Conceptual Framework and Research Hypothesis

The overarching concept for this thesis is 'foreign intervention', since the research aims to analyse why there was a military intervention in the Libyan case. An ideological and a strategic motivation are provided as two probable explanations for this foreign military intervention. The first in the form of a 'humanitarian intervention' and the second in terms of maintaining the 'petrodollar hegemony'. Although these two motivators are conceptualised separately, it is important to note that both motivations may coexist. In most humanitarian interventions there are also geostrategic motivations, but it is the weight of the two which is important for this thesis: to see which one, in the Libyan case, outweighed the other.

Broadly speaking foreign intervention refers to direct or indirect actions by an external state or states to influence the internal politics of a state to bring it in line with the external state's interests or values (Pickering, Kisangani 2009). Direct actions can include military intervention and covert operations, while indirect actions include political interventions, sanctions, and no-fly zones. This thesis focuses on direct military intervention, however, this can be preceded or run parallel to sanctions and the establishment of no-fly zones, as was the case with Libya.

Ideological Motivations: A Humanitarian Intervention

Since the NATO mission to Libya has been labelled as a 'humanitarian intervention' it is important to include a definition despite the controversy about the 'humanitarian' aspect of this intervention. Militaristic humanitarian intervention is:

> "the threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights

> of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied" (Holzgrefe, Keohane 2003, p.18).

In 2005 the UN adopted the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine "supposedly to replace the operationally vaguer doctrine of 'humanitarian intervention'" (Xypolia 2022, p. 5). The R2P has three pillars. The first one deals with the responsibility of a state to protect its own citizens. The second pillar says that other states have the responsibility to help if a state cannot meet its pillar I responsibilities. And lastly, the third pillar which is most significant for this thesis, deals with external intervention by foreign states into a state if the first two pillars are not successful in protecting civilians. This type of intervention mostly focuses on sanctions. Military intervention is regarded as a last resort only, once all other mechanisms of instilling a peaceful solution have failed (Xypolia 2022).

Although the term R2P has effectively replaced 'humanitarian intervention' in political discourse, the term is controversial. This is because many states, especially post-colonial states, view the responsibility of a foreign state to intervene into domestic affairs as problematic. While in principle the doctrine may form a solid basis for protecting human rights, in practice there are fears that this doctrine would be used as an excuse to intervene even when human rights abuses are questionable (Crossley 2018). As such, this thesis uses the term 'humanitarian intervention' instead of the R2P.

Strategic Motivations: Maintaining Petrodollar Hegemony

In terms of geostrategy there can be a myriad of motivators that follow the national interests of a specific intervenor. Such motivations might include regional stability or securing trade in vital goods like petroleum. While acknowledging that other motivators such as the ones just

mentioned exist, this thesis focuses on motivations linked to the maintenance of the petrodollar hegemony which has facilitated US hegemony.

'Petrodollar' is an export revenue earned in dollars, as the name suggests, for the trade of petroleum (Beck, Kamps 2009). The petrodollar system emerged after the US agreed to provide the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with security in exchange for KSA selling their petroleum in dollars in 1973. This happened shortly after the US dropped the gold standard which transformed global economies into 'floating' currencies. Currencies were no longer backed by a set amount of stored gold to dollar ratio. The major currencies remained 'floating', relying on the supply and demand of their currency to regulate the exchange rate (Malachy 2014;Salameh 2018). Other countries pegged their currency to another, for example the Saudi Arabian Riyal, much like many of the Gulf Cooperation Council currencies, is pegged to the dollar (Looney 2008).

By 1975 the other Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) countries also began trading their petroleum in dollars. Due to the increased demand for dollars for trading, the dollar became a global reserve currency. Dollar bills in storage, however, devalue and countries are wary of holding too many in their reserves. This motivates them to buy US bonds or investments which would not devalue, or use dollars to trade for imports, further entrenching the petrodollar hegemony (Beck, Kamps 2009; Looney 2007). The US currently relies on this system since the collapse of the petrodollar could have a heavy impact on the US and threatens its hegemony. In essence it is a global system which relies on petroleum traded for dollars and dollars traded for US debt/investments/imports (Beck, Kamps 2009; Salameh 2018).

Most states currently buy and sell petroleum in dollars. For example, when Italy or France buys petroleum from Libya they pay for this petroleum with dollars. Libya as a result receives

dollars. As mentioned, holding dollars in reserve would be risky due to currency devaluation so Libya would circulate the dollars back into the system through investments/bonds/imports. If, however, a state starts trading in another currency or in gold, this could undermine the petrodollar system and thus the hegemony that the US has over the global financial system. For example, if Libya decided to demand gold for its petroleum, then it can store the gold it receives without fear of it devaluing like its currency counterpart. Libya in such a scenario would not need to continue circulating dollars, thus cutting the US out of the equation. The consequences of such a shift could have hampering effects on the dollar hegemony. Aside from setting a precedent for other countries to move away from the petrodollar system., it also threatens the stability of the dollar hegemony. This is because the current system relies on this petroleum for dollars – dollars for investments/US debts to maintain its strength (Looney 2007; Salameh 2018).

Even without a direct threat to the system by an exporting state intending to shift away from dollars, the system can become threatened. Between 2002 and 2008 for example, oil-exporting states experiences high account surpluses. In simple terms, they were holding onto the dollars instead of investing or trading with them. The petrodollar system requires dollar 'recycling' for it to function optimally. This 'recycling' means that the dollars, as mentioned, need to continue circulating instead of being stored. During this period, oil-exporters had "about half of the US external deficit" (Beck, Kamps 2009, p. 5). The oil price during this period was high, thus increasing the US current account deficit. Consequently, oil-exporters were urged to "contribute to an orderly adjustment of global imbalances by increasing spending and imports and […] enhanced exchange rate flexibility" (Beck, Kamps 2009, p. 6). This illustrated how an imbalance in the system is perceived as a threat to the US dollar hegemony.

There are various views and explanations of the global financial system led by the dollar. The possible threat imposed by a shift away from the petrodollar relies on particular economic conditions. Robert Looney (2007, p. 98) outlines three different economic conditions as well as their implications for the US current-account deficit. The first relates predominantly to trade flows and deals with "U.S. overspending and lack of competitiveness" (Looney 2007, p. 98). It is within this condition that a shift away from the petrodollar may cause the demise of the US hegemony, since trade flows fluctuate and can lead to instability. The second condition looks at the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the US. It argues that high external savings particularly from Asia accounts for the current-account deficit. The third condition looks at capital flows rather than trade flows. It argues that while the US remains an attractive place for foreign investment, the dollar hegemony shall prevail (Looney 2007).

These explanations are important for this thesis because they provide some clarity on whether an 'act' by an oil-exporter constitutes as a threat to US hegemony or not. For instance, it is well argued amongst economists that shifting away from the petrodollars to trade petroleum in another currency, such as euros, may not constitute a significant threat to the US hegemony. This is because trading in another currency does not necessarily undermine the attractive investment environment that the US has been fostering. Since currencies devalue, investment is still seen as an opportunity even if petroleum is not traded for dollars (Looney 2007). However, if an oil-exporter were to sell their petroleum in gold, which has an inherent value, this may undermine this investment drive since such an exporter could hold significant stores of gold without it devaluing over time (African Union Commission 2009a; Salameh 2018). Also, moving away from the petrodollar could undermine the US hegemony if other states followed suite, aiding the rise of more multipolar world system (Salameh 2018).

Considering the uncertainty around why the US has a trade deficit however, the US may act strategically against any shifts away from the petrodollar system if they deem it a threat. Iran, for instance, proposed to set up an Iranian Oil Bourse and sell its petroleum in euros which has been criticised heavily by the US (Looney 2007).

Research Hypothesis

The US intervention into Libya, was partly caused by the intention or action by Ghaddafi to shift Libya away from the petrodollar system. The hypothesis plausibility is explored using a plausibility probe, validity is therefore not tested. This process shall be expanded upon in the methodology.

Methodology

This section covers the methodology used to guide the research. It introduces the case selection, an explanation for the selection of a plausibility probe and lastly which types of sources are used to gather empirical evidence.

Qualitative single-case study

Although there are multiple cases with evidence that may suggest the link between US intervention and threats by oil-producing states to undermine the petrodollar system, it was decided to go with a single case study rather than a comparative study for a more in-depth analysis. As recommended by Jason Seawright and John Gerring (2008), Libya's 2011 intervention was chosen because it appears as the most 'typical' case study from the selection. This type of case study is useful to "probe causal mechanisms" in order to "confirm or disconfirm a given theory" (Seawright, Gerring 2008, p. 297). In Libya there exists a presence of an indicated move away from the petrodollar system followed by a military intervention. Iraq and Syria also present themselves as case options, however, they are less of an 'ideal type' case since the shift away from the petrodollar system was made less explicit than Gadhafi's. Additionally, the US's counterterrorism strategy is a prominent motivator for military intervention in Iraq and Syria, which may convolute the causal analysis of this research. In Venezuela and Iran, the threat to the petrodollar system was not followed by a direct military intervention but alternative intervention types, such as sanctions (Brown 2020).

Plausibility Probe

Due to a lack of publicly accessible information, there is little concrete evidence to make a direct link between US engagement and a state's national policy relating to petrodollars. There

is also limited academic literature focusing on this topic. Therefore, a plausibility probe of the single case study was selected to test the viability of further research. Harry Eckstein (1991) notes that a plausibility probe should be used in cases where one cannot accurately test a hypothesis, due to a lack of information for example. It instead shows the likelihood of a hypothesis being true or false to motivate further testing (Eckstein 1991). This thesis shall collect evidence to test whether the research hypothesis is likely or not – whether there is a plausible link between a shift away from the petrodollar system and US intervention. The analysis of evidence shall be guided following a holistic understanding of interventions but narrowed down by petroleum interests versus a humanitarian agenda. The motivations of four of the main NATO coalition members, namely the US, Britain, France and Italy, shall be examined in detail but the focus of the thesis is on the relationship between Libya and the US.

Empirical Data

Empirical data from secondary and primary sources, such as:

- Wikileaks, government websites, reports such as from the Congressional Research Service, Amnesty International and the Human Rights Watch
- academic literature (mostly from international relations, politics, and security fields)
- news media (while acknowledging news bias, unreliable sources, misinformation, and conspiracy theories, for example, some news coverage suggests this link (such as the Guardian) but does not support it with substantial evidence which can be misleading).

Data shall be collected based on the strategic 'petrodollar hegemony' explanation as well as the value based 'humanitarian intervention' explanation. This data shall be analysed and compared to make the assessment of plausibility. For the explanation on 'petrodollar

hegemony', data collection should be guided by Libya's shifts away from trading petroleum in dollars. In addition, restrictions on foreign access to the petroleum industry and other decisions which undermine the US oil security, or the petrodollar system shall be examined. In terms of the explanation on 'humanitarian intervention', data collection will be guided by the assessed need for such an intervention, the stated objectives of the foreign leaders and the mission as well as the broader context in which the intervention was situated. Other motivations will also be briefly explored to support the plausibility of the petrodollar motivation.

Data and Empirical Analysis

This section compiles and analyses the evidence for and against the humanitarian as well as the strategic motivations of the Libyan intervention to explore the hypothesis. It starts with a brief overview of the events in 2011. The subsections that follow study the evidence for and against the military intervention, focusing on uncovering evidence pointing towards a link between petrodollar hegemony and the intervention. Firstly, the humanitarian motivation is analysed, starting with the human rights abuses in Libya, then looking at which alternative solutions were sought for the crises. The second half deals with strategic motivations, particularly relating to the petroleum trade. It also examines the strategic interests of four of the NATO intervenors.

Overview of the Events

In February 2011 anti-government protests broke out in Benghazi following similar pro-democracy protests within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region known as the Arab Spring. The Gadhafi government responded with force to the protesters and refused to step aside for a democracy to replace him. The violent repressive measures taken against the revolutionists sparked international condemnation for the Gadhafi regime. This led to the international community to contemplate intervening. First the UN, in a unanimous vote, passed UNSC Resolution (UNSCR) 1970, which put strict sanctions in place against the Gadhafi regime (Chivvis 2015). This, however, did not stop the violence and the UN followed up with UNSCR 1973 which authorised a no-fly zone as well as "all necessary measures" to bring the violence against the civilians in Libya to an end (Chivvis 2015; UNSC 2011, p. 3). The only main limitation for the intervention stipulated by this resolution was the clause prohibiting an "occupation force" within Libya (UNSC 2011, p. 3). This second UNSCR voted in on the

March 17 was not a unanimous vote. Germany, as well as Russia and China, abstained from voting. However, the UNSC still had sufficient votes secured for the resolution to be passed (Glanville 2013).

Six days after UNSCR 1973 was passed, on the 23rd of March, NATO initiated its military operation called Operation Unified Protector (Anderson 2017). The agenda of the intervention shifted unofficially towards regime change and the targeting of Gadhafi, since it was decided that until Gadhafi was removed from power no alternative peace solution would be possible. That is not to say it would not have been possible to negotiate peace, but rather that limited avenues were pursued. Military means in the Libyan case were favoured over diplomatic means. This was partly due to the complicated domestic politics in Libya, in which the revolutionary opposition hindered negotiation after stipulating that Gadhafi's removal was a primary goal (House of Commons Defence Committee 2012a).

France was the first state to launch a military operation in Libya and this was followed soon after by a NATO coalition. The main participants of this coalition were the US, Britain and France with Italy and Turkey playing smaller roles (Taylor 2011). Although the US is sometimes relegated in articles to less of a lead role in the operation, this NATO operation relied heavily on US assets and thus the importance of the US cannot be overlooked (Chivvis 2015). NATO conducted airstrikes in Libya targeting "command and control centres" (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2016a, p. 4), which was sanctioned by the UNSCR 1973 "all necessary measures" clause (UNSC 2011, p. 3). However, since the protection of civilians was the priority, airstrikes have been criticised due to unintended civilian casualties. While NATO ensured that it would act to minimise civilian casualties as much as possible, it is still debatable whether such an option was wise, considering the overarching mandate to

protect civilians. Gadhafi's son as well as his grandchildren were killed during such an operation (House of Commons Defence Committee 2012a; Nuruzzaman 2015).

NATO supported the revolutionary opposition, the National Transition Council (NTC) in regime change efforts and in October 2011, Gadhafi was killed by rebels, allowing space for the NTC to take over. Despite the removal of Gadhafi, Libya remains to this day unstable and fraught by civil war. Furthermore, the instability in the state has opened a safe-haven for Islamic extremism, especially ISIS, which has further hampered the state (Anderson 2017; Vilmer 2016).

It is difficult to say whether the military operation is partly to blame for the state's current upheaval or whether, like NATO argues, Libya would have been much worse off had they not intervened. Due to the repressive and highly centralised nature of Gadhafi's regime, the state lacked critical social structures to help foster a transition into democracy. Furthermore, Gadhafi left a power vacuum that competing actors have attempted to fill (Ware 2018). Some scholars argue that without NATO support the revolutionary groups would not have been strong enough to face off against the pro-Gadhafi forces (Chivvis 2015; Martinez 2014). Previous attempts by revolutionaries to overthrow Gadhafi in the 1990s and again in 2006 yielded no results mainly due to a lack of sufficient support. Since these groups were regarded as Islamic, the international community was not prepared to help them. Both internationally and locally they were regarded as enemies under the 'War on Terror' banner. Gadhafi garnered much international support when he declared his intention to fight terrorism along with the West (Martinez 2014).

Gadhafi used this 'War on Terror' to repress local revolutionaries who were trying to overthrow his regime and was supported by the same foreign powers who later fought against him.

Gadhafi's regime shifted its strategy in the early 2000s to increase international cooperation and investment. Libya had suffered under international sanctions and was making a concerted effort to increase its international image and draw in foreign investment. Renouncing WMD, terrorism and increasing investment opportunities resulted in improved international relations (Zoubir 2009). This led to the West supported Gadhafi against his opposition, who he framed as terrorists. In early 2006 the police killed protestors during an anti-Italian rally that had turned into an anti-Gadhafi rally. Despite similar events occurring in February in 2011, the international community remained silent at this earlier display of human-right abuse. Three months later in May 2006, Libya began to restore its relationship with the US when it granted the US "9 out of 15 blocks put up for auction" for oil exploration (Martinez 2014, p. 251). This led to the reinvestment of US and other foreign firms into Libya. Additionally, Libya initiated infrastructure plans and constructed a new vision of Libya as a regional power. It was prior to the 2011 revolution becoming a stronger state and it had in 2008 an estimated $100 billion dollars in its reserve. Along with its new focus on making allies, another global oil crisis resulted in increased global attention on Libya (Martinez 2014).

The question arises then: what changed to make the international community turn on Gadhafi and support his opposition instead? That Gadhafi's regime had a track record of human-rights abuses was already well known but something changed that led the international community to stop overlooking this. There are multiple possible explanations, and it is likely a myriad of reasons that motivated the military intervention. The following sections look more in-depth at possible motivators for the intervention.

History that Shaped the Relations between Libya and the West

Considering the history between Libya and the West, especially with the US, it is unsurprising that the motives for the NATO intervention are questioned. In the 1980s the US led air-strikes into Libya in response to its supportive policies towards terrorist groups. Gadhafi made a name for himself, as an ardent supporter of terrorism globally (Banka 2017). Gadhafi responded to such claims in an interview conducted by SBS On Demand (2010) that he was anti-terrorism but pro liberation movements. His words were (translated from Arabic): "The West views liberation movements, as terrorist movements" (The Gaddafi Interview | SBS On Demand 2010, 04:42-04:46). This attitude matches his own actions within Libya, with his victory in the coup d'état in Libya in 1969 against the King. This is merely a note to demonstrate the complexity of the history. Due to this terrorist-supporter framing, Gadhafi became a western target under the West's anti-terrorism campaign (Banka 2017).

As mentioned, the US launched air-strikes in the 80s, and many argue these were directly targeted at removing Gadhafi. These air-strikes were controversial and led to debates among the US parliament about assassination laws. The Republicans at the time, were in favour of passing a bill that would allow the US to target leaders they deemed as a threat to global stability. However, this goes in opposition to international assassination laws, prohibiting such action (Banka 2017). According to an investigative journalist Seymour M. Hersh (1987) for the New York Times, French intelligence approached the US with an assassination plan for Gadhafi in the 1980s. The US, however, did not agree to the plan, due to the illegality of it. The journalist interviewed multiple high ranking US officials which gives his article significant substance (Banka 2017; Hersh 1987). Whether it is true or not however, is not on official record, therefore it is difficult to validate it without speaking directly with someone who was

involved. Such news reporting challenged the official narrative of the US for its actions in Libya and questioned its stance vis-à-vis state sovereignty and intervention.

As a consequence of the poor relations between Libya and the US in the 1980s, the US removed many of its assets from Libya including halting their petroleum production. This only resumed in the early 2000s, but on a much smaller scale, after Gadhafi formally apologised for his dealings with terrorists, the Lockerbie incident, rescinded Libya's WMD plan and started to propose economic and political reforms. Relations with the West gradually improved throughout the early 2000s as a result but in terms of oil trade, Libya and the US never returned to the same levels of production as in the 60s and 70s (Chivvis 2015; Zoubir 2011).

This controversial history along with the US' actions in Afghanistan and Iraq in many ways framed the scrutiny of the intervention into Libya in 2011 by scholars and journalists alike. It would be an oversimplification to blame the intervention on this legacy. The events in 2011 need to be analysed separately, while taking historical events into account which could have shaped behaviours of states and actors involved (Larsen 2011).

Indications of a Threat Against the Petrodollar Hegemony

This section looks at whether there is basis for claiming a threat against the petrodollar hegemony. For example, a Guardian news article claims Gadhafi's vision of the gold-backed Dinar as a main motive for the Libyan intervention, without providing substantiating evidence (Swanson 2011).

An African Union (AU) report published in 2009 after a 'First Congress for African Economists' explores the idea of an African currency backed by gold. The report suggested that selling petroleum in this currency would strengthen it significantly and be an "unmentioned

weapon in Africa's arsenal" (African Union Commission 2009a, p. 110). This was part of a grander idea for establishing a 'United States of Africa' which Gadhafi strongly advocated. The report mentions that Gadhafi "studied literature on corporate mergers and acquisitions" to help turn this idea into a reality (African Union Commission 2009a, p. 114). However, support for his vision of a united Africa with a united currency dwindled before 2011. The visionary idea appeared less ideal to other African leaders who noted the massive differences between African states as problematic for a truly united union (Ayittey 2010).

The Strategic Plan released by the African Commission for 2009-2012 entails no goals for a United States of Africa or a shared currency despite Gadhafi's vision (African Union Commission 2009b). Gadhafi was replaced, in 2010, as the chairman of the AU, reducing his ability to enact his plan (Ayittey 2010). Therefore, before the revolution even broke out in 2011, the possible threat posed by a united African currency that could have been used to trade petroleum with was diminishing. Gadhafi's vision remained but the threat, if it posed any to begin with, was weak.

A direct threat, therefore, due to a shift to a different petrocurrency or gold is not well substantiated. There are news articles written about it, but little evidence has emerged that shows an overt threat against the petrodollar. Gadhafi's nationalistic policies and his restriction on the petroleum industry are far more likely to have drawn attention from Western interests. Such policies could indirectly have impacted the petrodollar hegemony, through swaying petroleum prices, however, this would be minimal and unlikely to be perceived as a threat (Malachy 2014).

Human Rights Abuses in Libya

Since the official motivation for the 2011 intervention was due to humanitarian grounds, this section looks at some of the human rights abuses in Libya prior to the protests and during the protests in 2011 which justified the military response. This thesis is not trying to discredit the humanitarian crisis in Libya, but rather to analyse evidence to see whether strategic motivations, particularly a threat to the petrodollar system, was a substantial motivation for the intervention.

A report by Amnesty International (2010a) shows a shift towards more favourable relations between Libya and the international community, specifically the US and the EU. While Libya argued that this was partly due to improved human rights and moving away from being the "pariah state […] when gross violations of human rights took place" reforms in Libya have not been actualised (Amnesty International 2010a, p. 9). Amnesty International suggests that the EU and the US are not "using the opportunity to encourage reforms, [but] are turning a blind eye to the human rights situation in order to further their national interests, which include cooperation in counter-terrorism, the control of irregular migration, trade and other economic benefits" (Amnesty International 2010a, p. 9). This raises questions about the humanitarian motivation, such as why the West was willing to overlook human rights abuses before 2011 and only intervened in 2011.

Furthermore, it appears that both the secret intelligence of the United States, the CIA, as well as that of Britain, MI6, had a working relationship with the Libyan Security Service. A report by the Human Rights Watch (2012) reveals secret documents it uncovered in Libya showing correspondence between these intelligence services. These were mostly about the rendition of prisoners thought to be part of terrorist organisations. The CIA and MI6 were involved in the

imprisonment and torture of members of Ghaddafi's opposition under the banner of 'war on terror'. Consequently, both the US and Britain formed part of a network that helped prop Ghaddafi's regime up, despite being aware of the human rights abuses of this regime (Human Rights Watch 2012).

Gadhafi had a reputation for going after his opposition. Amnesty International reported that before the 2011 uprising there were "over 30 cases of individuals who have disappeared" (Amnesty International Press Release 2011a). The regional director of Amnesty International said that: "It appears that there is a systematic policy to detain anyone suspected of opposition to Colonel al-Gaddafi's rule, hold them incommunicado and transfer them to strongholds in western Libya" (Amnesty International Press Release 2011a). While none of this undermines the humanitarian motivation per say, it does question the degree to which the humanitarian aspect played a role.

Some scholars suggest that as international powers, some of the actors involved wanted to use the humanitarian intervention as a way of bolstering their image as a peace enforcer. The US for instance, could have seen Libya as an opportunity to involve itself belatedly in an African crisis, after the criticism it and other states received for their lack of response towards the earlier genocide in Rwanda (Larsen 2011). For example, two senior officials of the Obama Administration were outspoken against the lack of US action in African genocides preceding the Libyan crisis. Unlike President Obama and US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates, who were hesitant about intervening, these two officials, Samantha Power and Susan Rice, supported the idea of a military intervention. Susan Rice who was the US Ambassador to the United Nations at the time, was strongly influenced by the Rwandan genocide. Rice suggested a SCR that "would call for 'all necessary measures' to protect Libya's civilian population from harm – a diplomatic formula for military action" which Obama approved (Chivvis 2015, p.

19). It was therefore the US who introduced the controversial “all necessary measures” clause to UNSCR 1973 (Chivvis 2015, p. 19).

Amnesty International published a series of reports about the Libyan intervention, critical of the actions by the West. In one such report they discuss the inconsistency of foreign intervention in the MENA region which many scholars have also researched (Amnesty International 2011a; Binder 2015; Malachy 2014). The report contends that Western intervention based on human rights violations is complex, since these same governments have been dealing with weapons and ensuring petroleum trade before the Arab Spring protests, despite the human rights abuses that were reported already then (Amnesty International 2011a). Even in February, after the violence started in Libya, Prime Minister David Cameron was travelling throughout the MENA region “with a coterie of British arms manufacturers seeking to sell weapons to old allies” (Amnesty International 2011a).

Another example of the ‘inconsistency’ of the Western humanitarian motivation can be seen by looking at its reactions towards Bahrain and Saudi prior to the Libyan revolution. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton commended Bahrain for their democratisation process however did not condemn Saudi Arabia when it launched a military operation into Bahrain to hinder this process. The report argues in favour of geopolitical interests, mainly concerned with the stability of the region and therefore the stability of the petroleum trade as motivation for intervention, with the humanitarian aspect of lesser importance (Amnesty International 2011a). Although this does not explicitly imply that the Western intervention was mainly to secure petrodollar hegemony, it does question the strength of the humanitarian argument and open channels for alternative explanations.

Peaceful Solutions and Mediation Attempts

This section explores the alternatives to military intervention that had presented themselves at the time and looks at why military intervention, instead of peaceful options were favoured to further examine the motivations for the NATO intervention. Military operations are costly and potentially destabilising; therefore, their use may signal a move to protect strategic interests rather than humanitarian ones. This section examines this to uncover whether there is any weight to this argument.

The AU constructed a plan, called the 'roadmap' for Libya to transition into peace. Muammar Gadhafi agreed to the plan. Whether he would have complied with it is an unanswerable question, because soon after agreeing to the AU's plan, NATO launched its military operations. However, that such a plan existed in the first place undermines pillar three of the R2P doctrine that states that military means are a last resort option. International Crisis Group (ICG) in early March 2011, called for a negotiated solution rather than military means (Zambakari 2016). The ICG was familiar with the intricacies in the region and Gadhafi's Jamahiriya announced that "Western calls for military intervention of one kind or another are perilous and potentially counter-productive" (Zambakari 2016, p. 49).

Email correspondence of Hillary Clinton's released on Wikileaks show the stance of the AU. They demonstrate that the US was aware of the AU's position regarding Libya. However, mostly the emails provide a criticism for the AU for not condemning Gadhafi outright and for not fully supporting the coalition intervention, instead of acknowledging their role as a potential mediator (WikiLeaks - Email ID 8971 2011). Furthermore, Matthew P Walsh noted in one of these emails, sent on the 22 March 2011 that:

> "Gadaffi reached out to Bashir today to see if Bashir could connect with Koffi Annan and ask if Annan would be interested in mediating, assumingly between Gadaffi's camp, the rebels and the international community. Ghana President Mills raised this with INS today and Annan raised it. Nobody seems to know if Annan is following up on this or if we have a position. Our embassy in Ghana is going to follow up on their end" (WikiLeaks - Email ID 8971 2011).

It is unclear whether anything materialised from this email correspondence due a to lack of sources released to the public.

There appear to be various mediation attempts made both before and during the military operations trying to establish a peaceful solution to the Libyan crisis. The attempts, however, show a lack of coordination between international actors as well as conflicting agendas of both domestic and international actors. The UN asked Abdelelah al-Khatib to head the mediation, but in the initial few months his attempts to mediate with Gadhafi and the NTC was not fruitful. This was in part due to the lack of coordination between al-Khatib and the NATO operation. Twice al-Khatib tried to arrange a meeting with Gadhafi in Libya. It fell through both times. The first time, in mid-March, Gadhafi would only agree to the meeting if al-Khatib came alone, which al-Khatib declined. The second time, on the 7th of June, Gadhafi did not feel safe enough to leave his hiding place to meet al-Khatib due to NATO bombing (Bartu 2017; Mancini, Vericat 2016).

Likewise, the AU attempted to have a meeting in Tripoli on the 20th of March was also put in jeopardy "because the United States, Britain and France would not guarantee its security" (Bartu 2017, p. 180). Only late in the intervention was al-Khatib granted authority to coordinate the official mediation attempt, thus diminishing the competing agendas involved.

Demonstrating this lack of coordination is important because it provides evidence against the notion that NATO was deliberately sabotaging peace processes to further their own interests (Bartu 2017).

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Colonel Gadhafi as well as some of the key members of his administration, such as his son Saif Gadhafi. This follows international law and the principle of justice which includes a "fair trial" (Amnesty International 2011b), which forms part of the grander mediation attempt. It shows a move towards justice for the Libyan people while simultaneously respecting the sovereignty of the state. The "three ICC arrest warrants [were] issues on 27 June 2011" after an investigation found sufficient evidence for such action (Amnesty International 2011b). These reasons given were "two crimes against humanity – murder and persecution – committed since 15 February" and did not include previous crimes against humanity by the Gadhafi regime (Amnesty International 2011b).

This action by the ICC, which calls for justice through law, appears to be in contradiction to the motives behind the military operation by NATO which was inexplicitly targeting Gadhafi (Zambakari 2016). However, the track record of such an arrest warrant having practical effects on a crisis is weak. They appear to be more symbolic, whereas military action has the potential of showing immediate results. A previous arrest warrant was issued for the Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir for the crisis in Darfur. This warrant was issued in 2009, however, his status as head of state meant that many, especially the AU, argued for his immunity (Barnes 2011; Duursma, Müller 2019). The al-Bashir case has still not been settled (ICC no date). This is not an endorsement of how international law deals with crimes against humanity. The mechanisms, therefore, were lacking to bring Gadhafi to justice through an international court. This further

complicated mediation attempts, since there were few official channels available to remove Gadhafi from power peacefully (Barnes 2011; Duursma, Müller 2019).

This section demonstrated that not all peaceful mediation avenues were explored prior to or during the NATO intervention. It also showed the uncoordinated nature of the mediation processes as well as some of the complexities, such as the lack of confidence in bodies such as the AU or the ICC to bring immediate justice to Libya. NATO intervening despite the opportunity for mediation attempts does raise questions about the legality of the military intervention, considering that military options should be a 'last resort' (Ulfstein, Christiansen 2013; Xypolia 2022). Their existence, however, does not signify that the military intervention was solely to secure vital national interests such as the petrodollar hegemony or petroleum trade. Other explanation, such as the ineffectiveness of the peace processes, escalating violence and increased public pressure to address the humanitarian plight bear significant weight.

Strategic Motivations

The previous sections established that the humanitarian motivation was genuine and looked at pathways that were taken to resolve the crisis peacefully. However, humanitarianism was not the only nor perhaps even the primary motivator of the intervention. Since several key actors were involved in the intervention, this section shall address the interests of each to explore evidence for a petrodollar hegemony link. Obama declared in his presidential address about Libya that "when our interests and values are at stake, we have a responsibility to act" (Office of the Press Secretary 2011). He did not specify what the interests of the US in Libya were. He did however explain that it was the US' responsibility to foster democracy globally (Office of the Press Secretary 2011). Political leaders during the intervention were far less open about

national interests than they were about values. However, the national interests guiding the intervention are critical to understand the motivation on a more holistic level (Rabar 2011).

Despite the evident displays of violence and repression in Libya, the international community was divided in its decision for a militaristic humanitarian intervention. This division further questions the strength of the humanitarian motivation. Neither Russia, China, India, Brazil nor Germany supported the NATO intervention under the R2P doctrine. These are key international actors and their decision to abstain to vote for the UNSCR 1973 should not be overlooked (Rabar 2011). Although their abstention does not prove that strategic motivations outweighed humanitarian ones, it does question the strength of the humanitarian argument.

Furthermore, the legacy of the US war in Iraq had a strong impact on opinion about the Libyan invasion. Libya, however, is not Iraq and although a comparative study between the intervention into both states would be interesting, one cannot say that because the US acted in a certain way in Iraq, they would do the same in Libya (Chivvis 2015). Saif Gadhafi in the early stages of the 2011 Libyan revolution gave a speech in which he warned Libyan about foreign intervention, linking Libya directly to the events in Iraq. He said that "[t]hey want us to kill each other then come, like in Iraq" and to "[b]e ready for a new colonial period from American and Britain" (WikiLeaks - Email ID 24538 2011). Since the events in Iraq were still fresh in the memory of the public, such sensationalism is likely to have been impactful.

The privilege of hindsight shows, that the revolution in Libya, did have a dividing affect and plunged the state into civil war as Saif warned in his Speech. The extent of the extraction by foreign petroleum companies or the involvement of foreign states as an 'occupier' however did not emerge to the extent of his prediction. For example, due to the instability of the civil war many foreign companies began removing assets in 2014 (Pradella, Taghdisi Rad 2017;

WikiLeaks - Email ID 24538 2011). This implies, but does not prove, that foreign petroleum interests were not as strong as suggested by the Gadhafi government during 2011.

The link between petrodollar hegemony and the intervention can be explored indirectly through the differing production levels pre- and post-intervention. Libya has vital natural petroleum reserves which account for most of the Libya's revenue. Peak oil production was in the 1970s prior to international sanctions. These sanctions were put in place to scold Libya for pursuing WMD and aiding terrorism. American petroleum companies stopped production completely while European companies kept production at a minimum. Economic pressure on the Gadhafi regime resulted in a new approach to international relations. As mentioned, in the early 2000s, Gadhafi introduced reforms to move become a more agreeable international actor and open Libya up to investment opportunities. As a result, sanctions were gradually lifted and relations between Libya, the US and the EU started improving (Bahgat 2012; Zoubir 2011).

Initially foreign petroleum companies were eager to invest in this reformed Libya. Foreign companies, including American ones, resumed business leading to an increase in production again (Bahgat 2012; Zoubir 2011). This was despite being aware of human rights abuses in Libya, such as the violently repressed protests in early 2006 (Martinez 2014). However, this initial production increase was stifled by Libya's strong nationalistic policies which hampered the ability for these foreign companies to operate to their desired extent. Consequently, investment began to drop again after the initial boom in the early 2000s. Considering the importance of Libya's petroleum for the global market, these restrictive policies could have been seen as a threat to national governments in the US and Europe and contributed to the motivation for intervention. Such restrictions could have also hampered the petrodollar hegemony at the time, due to reduced trade flows impacting the global petroleum price and

been a motivation for intervention rather than Gadhafi's threat to move away from selling petroleum in dollars (Bahgat 2012; Zoubir 2011).

Petroleum companies opened channels of discussion with the NTC shortly after the 2011 revolution. They were keen to invest in Libya under a less restrictive regime. The NTC, despite being wary of companies that had strong ties with the Gadhafi regime accepted the apologies by these countries, such as from Italy, Britain and France and established new relations (WikiLeaks - Email ID 12566 2011). However, they were weary of approving new agreements until Libya had formed a new government. Some scholars are surprised by how quickly Libya started to increase production after the revolution, especially considering the damage to infrastructure that occurred and the political instability that followed the revolution (Bahgat 2012; Pradella, Taghdisi Rad 2017). That being said, the oil production by 2016 was still at less than a third of the pre-2011 production levels (Pirog 2016). This contradicts notions that the Western intervention was to destabilise the region to increase oil extraction.

The production level argument for the motivation of the 2011 intervention has little weight. Libya is highly dependent on its petroleum trade, and it is not unexpected that foreign companies would look to invest, once a restrictive regime has been removed. Foreign companies much like their home states are acting to maximise their opportunities. The reality that they are willing to work with Gadhafi despite his questionable view on human rights and then shift loyalties to the new government is unsurprising. They had no real loyalty to Gadhafi but were rather, loyal to their own interests. If they benefitted from the aftermath of regime change and the chaos that ensued, that is not sufficient proof that they were involved in sabotaging Gadhafi (Bahgat 2012; Pradella, Taghdisi Rad 2017).

The Interests of the Main Intervening States

This section is a continuation of the previous section addressing strategic motivations. It will look at the national interests which guided four of the main intervening states, starting with and focusing on US strategic interests. Since US interests have already been discussed in detail above, the subsection on the US is short. However, their interests interact with the other states and therefore are also woven in with the analysis of the other states.

The United States

Initial hesitancy by the US for involving itself in the Libyan crisis can be regarded as a sign that its national interests, including its petrodollar hegemony, were not significantly threatened. This is especially revealing considering the US's past behaviours in which it has acted decidedly to secure vital interests, such as in Iraq (Chivvis 2015).

Opinion polls conducted in the US showed that although there was sympathy for the plight of the Libyans, the support for another interventionist war requiring US assets was low. The Obama administration mirrored this view initially, with its condemnation of the violence but hesitancy to involve itself. As pressure to act began to mount, due to a deterioration of the situation in Libya, increased domestic pressure in the US, as well as increased international pressure, the US became increasingly more involved. French President Nicolaz Sarkozy was the main driver behind the military intervention into Libya. He and British Prime Minister David Cameron implored the US to take joint action and call for a no-fly zone. Additionally, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League called for a no-fly zone over Libya. It was at the request of the Arab League and the seemingly ineffectiveness of UNSCR 1970 on the Gadhafi regime, that the UNSCR 1973 emerged. This changed the game and invited foreign military action against Libya (Chivvis 2015; Rabar 2011).

The US did not view a no-fly zone as a favourable option. They argued that it would do little to stop the violence of the Gadhafi forces against the rebels due to their reliance on ground support and assets rather than aerial (Chivvis 2015; Dawson 2021). Robert Gates cautioned against the no-fly zone and military action by arguing it "could easily be perceived as further U.S. attacks against a Muslim country" (Chivvis 2015, p. 15). Obama too argued for restraint and pointed out the probable ineffectiveness of a no-fly zone. The endorsement by the Arab League of a no-fly zone was an important turning point. This allowed the West to enter the conflict with reduced fear of antagonising the main petroleum-exporters (Chivvis 2015; Rabar 2011).

Despite handing over the 'lead' of the operations to France and Britain, the US was, contrary to what superficially appeared, still very involved in the operations. Libya demonstrates "a new approach of the US to international affairs" which focuses more on covert operations (House of Commons Defence Committee 2012b, p. 5). This is partly because of fatigue for the support of foreign wars by the US electorate. A report found that US support was critical for the operation and that the "US was involved in all planning and deliberations regarding the campaign for the duration of the operation" (House of Commons Defence Committee 2012b, p. 6). Allowing France and Britain to take the lead compliments their earlier hesitancy to involve itself in Libya. Also, it shows a lack of concern for its national interests in Libya. The US had already removed significant parts of its petroleum industry after its clashes with Gadhafi in the 1980s and its interests lay more in fostering regional stability and aiding its allies, most notably France and Britain, than pursuing its own direct interests in Libya. That is not to say they did not have vested interest in Libya, rather that they were not perceived as vital (Bahgat 2012).

Britain

Britain justified its intervention through five different motivations. Firstly, that it was internationally sanctioned and legal, secondly that the intervention bolstered British leadership international, thirdly for humanitarian reasons, fourthly that regime change was necessarily to foster regional stability and lastly for national security reasons which were not adequately portrayed. The contradictions between these motivations hampered public support. The British public noted that there was an inconsistency between the humanitarian, the regime change and the national security motivations (Colley 2015; Dawson 2021).

The British public was critical at the time due to the recent interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan which left a legacy of scepticism in the liberal values of the British leadership. The public was quick to dismiss the ideas about humanitarianism in favour of petroleum interests. Furthermore, British dealings with authoritarian states like Saudi Arabia and China left the public doubting the validity of the humanitarian and regime change motivations. This is because the public noted the inconsistency with which Britain applied its humanitarianism and liberal compass. The framing, therefore, of the Libyan intervention as 'humanitarian' was not well received by the public and many believed western petroleum interests were a larger motivator. Without public support leading a military intervention like the one in Libya could severely damage the electorate success of the incumbent party. However, Britain did not need the support of the public since the main opposition, the Labour Party, supported PM Cameron's decision to act. Although public opinion does not concretely prove that Britain did intervene for strategic reasons rather than humanitarian ones, it does question the official narrative of the intervention (Colley 2015; Davidson 2013).

A transcript that was published showing a conversation with British Tony Blair and Gadhafi shortly after the violence broke out in Benghazi. Tony Blair had a working relationship with

Gadhafi from their interactions during Blair's time in office until 2007. Tony Blair, as a concerned individual, rather than acting as an official representative of Britain wanted to keep conversation channels open to try and negotiate a peaceful solution (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2016a; UK Parliament Archives 2011). Gadhafi told Tony Blair that the violence in Libya started due to the actions of Al Qaida Organisation in North Africa. His words were: "they were given instructions to attack police stations and to cause this disturbance" (UK Parliament Archives 2011). Gadhafi said there was a lack of reporting about the real on the ground situation in Libya at that moment. He calls for "all world reporters to come and see the truth" (UK Parliament Archives 2011).

A special report (2016) examining Britain's actions in Libya shows that Britain was aware of the role militant extremism played in the revolution. This report shows that militant extremism had a minimal impact and that the opposition to Gadhafi was started by "legal professionals and civil society activists" (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2016a, p. 2). Rather than starting the protests and revolution, the report argues that militant extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda and Daesh took "advantage of the instability in Libya since 2011" (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2016a, p. 2). However, they played a minimal role during the initial crisis in 2011, becoming more prominent later. The NTC formed the main opposition group at the start of the revolution, and it was made up of Libyans from various backgrounds, even from former members of Gadhafi's regime, tied together by a joined vision of a Libya free from Gadhafi (Chivvis 2015; House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2016b).

Another report by the United Kingdom (UK) Foreign Affairs Committee published in 2016 contradicts the public statements made by the British government claiming there was adequate intelligence to warrant a military intervention. It argued that the military intervention "was not informed by accurate intelligence" (Ware 2018, p. 7). Furthermore, it uncovered that "the threat

to civilians was overstated and that the rebels included a significant Islamist element" (Ware 2018, p. 7). The report declared that the British actions, along with France and the US "drifted into regime change" and that intelligence about the situation at the start of the revolution as poor and that "the threat to civilians was overstated" (Ware 2018, p. 7). The British government denied these claims in a subsequent report in which they were granted the opportunity to respond to the Foreign Affairs Committee (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2016b).

There is substantial evidence to question the quality of the British intelligence. Sir Dominic Asquith, a former Ambassador to Libya, who is well acquainted with the region, said that the "database of knowledge" in Britain about Libya "might well have been less than ideal" (UK Parliament 2016). That is not high endorsement for the intelligence gathering that informed British action. Furthermore, Professor George Joffe, from the Centre of International Studies at Cambridge University, argued that "people had not really bothered to monitor closely what was happening" (UK Parliament 2016). Again, these words do not inspire confidence in the quality of intelligence that Britain was receiving. Additionally, the Chief of Defence Staff Lord Richards of Herstmonceux admitted that the intelligence on militant extremism was inadequate. His words were: "We found it quite difficult to get the sort of information you would expect us to get" (UK Parliament 2016). Considering this, Britain should not have been so quick to shut down political avenues to peace.

Britain was one of the first states to support the NTC against the Gadhafi regime. According to a WikiLeaks correspondence between Hillary Clinton and an informant, Sidney Blumenthal, PM Cameron and President Sarkozy visited the NTC in September 2011 to establish their relations with the NTC (WikiLeaks - Email ID 12566 2011). At the top of their agenda was securing rights to petroleum access. They expressed to the NTC, that they should be granted

prime access due to their strong support from the beginning of the revolution. Britain had concerns about the NTC disfavouring its companies due to the good relations it had fostered in the preceding years with the Gadhafi regime and made an effort to appease the NTC. This demonstrates the strength of British petroleum interests, however, there is no evidence to show a link to the petrodollar hegemony (WikiLeaks - Email ID 12566 2011).

Tony Blair continued to emphasise during the phone conversation with Gadhafi the need for a peaceful political solution. Although records show that Tony Blair did try to use his communication channel with Gadhafi to advocate for a peaceful solution, then PM David Cameron was not optimistic about this plan. Instead of keeping this dialogue going, Cameron shut it down, arguing that the lack of cessation by Gadhafi was ground enough to believe he would not agree to a peaceful solution (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2016a).

Gadhafi's track record of repressing press freedom did not help his course, if he was being genuine about a need for better foreign reporting. There are numerous examples prior to the 2011 uprising which demonstrate Gadhafi's view about press freedom. In a public statement released in February in 2010, Amnesty International reported that the Libyan radio station 'Good Evening Benghazi' which questioned the Gadhafi regime was suspended and some of the employees were arrested (Amnesty International 2010b). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Gadhafi's words on the telephone to Tony Blair were questioned. Subsequent to the telephone conversation foreign reporters faced oppression in Libya. AliHassan Al Jaber from Al Jazeera was killed and reporters from the BBC were "detained, tortured and subjected to mock executions by Colonel al-Gaddafi's forces" (Amnesty International Press Release 2011b). These are just two examples of many persecutions against foreign reporters trying to do what Gadhafi asked of Tony Blair: to "portray the truth" (Amnesty International Press Release 2011b; UK Parliament Archives 2011).

While Muammar Gadhafi's words to Tony Blair may not have been the truth, it appears that Britain did not have an accurate picture of the threat level to inform its strategy. This does not, however, mean that Britain and its coalition partners planned the intervention to bring about regime change. There are numerous other explanations, for instance that it simply lacked a coherent strategy but was committed to the humanitarian plight. Most reports and engagements by Britain point towards a genuine interest in stemming the humanitarian crisis (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2016a; Ware 2018). However, other main interests in the intervention for Britain was the opportunity to demonstrate its leadership ability in an international setting as well as securing its petroleum interests (Colley 2015; Dawson 2021). No evidence emerged to suggest Britain's involvement was motivated by the protection of the petrodollar hegemony.

France

The French President at the time, Nikolas Sarkozy, faced public scrutiny around his weak response to the Arab Spring. It is suspected that he viewed the Libyan intervention as an easy way to increase his approval ratings. There is evidence to suggest that France, especially, had a vested interest in removing Gadhafi from power for national interests, including petroleum trade and used the humanitarian aspect as the face of the intervention (Larsen 2011).

Email correspondence between Hillary Clinton and Blumenthal, reveals that French President Sarkozy's actions in Libya were guided by five motivators. These are:

"a. A desire to gain a great share of Libya oil production,

b. Increase French influence in North Africa,

c. Improve his internal political situation in France,

d. Provide the French military with an opportunity to reassert its position in the world,

e. Address the concern of his advisors over Qaddafi's long term plans to supplant France as the dominant power in Francophone Africa" (WikiLeaks - Email ID 12659 2011; UK Parliament 2016).

None of these five motivators include a humanitarian aspect. This is especially significant in the information uncovered from UK parliament archives which shows that it was France that started the military operations as part of the coalition intervention (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2016a).

A UK House of Commons Report of an investigation into the Libyan intervention revealed that:

> "[t]here was confusion over the command and control of the operation in the early stages of the operation until NATO took command. We are particularly concerned at the apparent decision of the French Government to commence air operations without consulting allies" (House of Commons Defence Committee 2012a, p. 7).

This casts suspicion about France's actions. It appears that, instead of being concerned about a threat to the petrodollar system, France was concerned about its own national interests in the region.

Further intelligence communicated between Hilary Clinton and Blumenthal revealed that Gadhafi had accumulated a substantial store of gold which "was intended to be used to establish a pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar […] to provide Francophone African Countries with an alternative to the French franc" (WikiLeaks - Email ID 12659 2011). Blumenthal explains that French intelligence learnt of this plan and the gold store during the early stages of the revolution and wanted to act decisively to secure their national interests. It

appears that France rather than the US was motivated by their national interests relating to a currency shift (WikiLeaks - Email ID 12659 2011). This evidence is however not verified by any additional sources.

Further evidence uncovered on WikiLeaks reveals Sarkozy's diplomacy with the NTC to try to establish France as one of the main petroleum trading states in the reformed Libya. France wanted the NTC to allocate "35% of Libya's oil related industry for French firms" with their energy company TOTAL in mind (WikiLeaks - Email ID 12566 2011). Like Britain, France expressed its support for the NTC as a reason for such favouritism and pointed out that they were the first state to support the NTC (WikiLeaks - Email ID 12566 2011). This kind of behaviour is indicative of a resource scramble rather than concern about humanitarianism.

France's strong opinion about intervening influenced the US to act, which further undermines the strength of the humanitarian motivation (Chivvis 2015). The WikiLeaks correspondence demonstrates that the US was monitoring strategic interests by France and was aware of French concerns about a currency shift. However, due to constraints to access to information this evidence does not prove a causal link between this planned currency shift and US involvement in Libya.

Italy

At the time of the 2011 uprising, Italy had substantial vested interest in Libya which shaped its more moderate response. Italy and Libya had established solid working relations over the past decade. Libya was a considerable petroleum supplier to Italy. Also, its proximity as a neighbour meant that Italy was particularly interested in stability there, due to concerns about an influx of refugees (Croci, Valigi 2011).

The migration issue was one of Italy's top priorities regarding Libya, alongside its petroleum interests. Before 2011 Italy had a bilateral arrangement with Gadhafi's Libya about the management of illegal migrants (Bialasiewicz 2011). Libya was and is still a main transit state for migrants, which is an obstacle to Italy's security. The various agreements between Italy and Libya established since 2000 culminated in the Libyan-Italian Friendship Treaty of 2008 (Toaldo 2015). Part of this treaty entailed supplying the Gadhafi regime with equipment to help them enforce their own borders as well as joint patrol of the Mediterranean Sea. Despite the condemnation by the UN, the agreement also allowed Italy to send migrants picked up on their vessels in the Mediterranean back to Libya without having to offer asylum. The agreement also ran counter to the attempts by the EU to establish a regional migration policy (Bialasiewicz 2011; Kashiam 2012).

When Arab Spring started it was this fear of migrants which appeared the most salient in the press and amongst Italian politicians. Italy's actions affirm this priority. They, along with France tightened border controls in their countries, counter to the Schengen policy of freedom of movement (Bialasiewicz 2011). This shows that in terms of regional stability, Italy had little interest in overthrowing the Gadhafi regime. Libya was, pre-2011 willing to work with Italy to reduce migration. This argument does not show how much the humanitarian aspect motivated Italy's behaviour, but rather demonstrates that they had some vested interest in the Gadhafi regime (Toaldo 2015).

Gadhafi's Pan-Africanism policy was in many ways however also a contributing factor to Italy's migration struggle. Gadhafi opened Libya's borders to migrant workers from the region and the petroleum wealth attracted many foreigners, especially from Tunisia and Egypt who were looking for better opportunities. Despite the treaty with Italy, Libya did not manage its land borders which Italy regarded as problematic. It would be a stretch to argue this motivated

Italy's actions during the 2011 revolution, however. Rather, Italy was working as a self-interested actor trying to focus on minimising migrants during a time of crisis. While the humanitarian aspect certainly played a role, regional stability appears to have been their top priority (Toaldo 2015).

Mustafa Abdalla A. Kashiam (2012) argues that Italy's initial reluctance to get involved shifted when Italy started to experience internal pressure to involve itself in the humanitarian mission. He argues that it was external pressure from the US especially which drove Italy's intervention. Italy wanted to be seen as an active state within the international sphere and feared condemnation should they continue their 'neutral' stance towards Gadhafi. Once this shift occurred Italy became a significant actor in the humanitarian mission. This included taking part in patrols to enforce the no-fly zone as well as open bases up in Italy for NATO's use (Kashiam 2012).

Italy formulated a post-Gadhafi strategy for Libya to help promote the transition. Out of the four states mentioned France and Italy appear to have exhibit the strongest visions for post-Gadhafi Libya. This is unsurprising considering their proximity and concerns about regional stability. Italy announced their recognition of the NTC in April 2011, making them one of the first states to do so (Kashiam 2012). They started to negotiate with the NTC early on about their petroleum interests. Initially the NTC was hesitant to grant Italy access to Libya's petroleum due to Italy's support for Gadhafi (Kashiam 2012; WikiLeaks - Email ID 12566 2011). However, this hesitancy was short lived, and Italy has, since the 2011 revolution managed to increase petroleum production levels through the ENI company and currently has the strongest relationship with Libya out of the Western states (Pradella, Taghdisi Rad 2017).

Italy's position vis-à-vis the 2011 revolution is complex and sometimes contradictory. Their actions demonstrate the salience of their national interests over and above humanitarianism. Only after realising that they stood more to lose if they remained neutral, did Italy properly engage in the crisis. In discussions in Europe about how to respond to Gadhafi's violence against the protesters, Italy cautioned the rest of Europe against a hasty response listing fears about the consequences of a civil war, refugees, and economic hardship on Italy due to sanctions. Italy has much more tangible interests in Libya than the US, and Britain and this could have shaped its more moderate response vis-à-vis the other Western interveners (Croci, Valigi 2011). Perhaps the pressure to involve themselves by the US and other European states was to aid in maintaining the petrodollar hegemony, however no evidence was uncovered to support this.

National Interests versus Humanitarianism

After examining four of the main states involved in the NATO mission in Libya, it is evident that humanitarian motivations were secondary to securing national interests. It was not however, a threat to the petrodollar that emerged as the most prominent motivator. In fact, this appears negligible as a motivator. Instead, each of the four states had their own interests. France was the most driven to intervene, desiring to maintain regional stability, secure its influence over the North African region and ensure access to the petroleum industry remains open. Furthermore, Sarkozy saw the Libyan crisis as a way to bolster his credibility for the upcoming presidential elections. There was also some evidence to suggest France was concerned about a new Libyan currency backed by gold, however, there was only one source that suggested this which reduces the credibility of this argument. Britain's interests in Libya are vaguer. They did want to secure their petroleum interests but a major motivator for Britain was their role as an

international actor. They wanted to increase their credibility as a 'power' within the international community (Colley 2015; Larsen 2011).

The US had little vested interest in Libya due to its history with Gadhafi, however, saw regional stability as important, especially in support of their allies. It was only after pressure from France and Britain, that the US became a significant actor in the crisis. Lastly, Italy which had arguably the most vested interest in Libya was initially weary of involving itself in case it ruined its relationship with Gadhafi. When Italy realised however that it had more to gain if it opposed Gadhafi, it took a stance (Chivvis 2015; Kashiam 2012). This summary demonstrates the various national interests that motivated the intervention, alongside the humanitarian one. It shows that strong strategic interests coincided with the humanitarian motivation.

Conclusion

This thesis analysed the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 to examine whether there is a link between the military intervention and maintaining the petrodollar hegemony. It examined various sources, both primary and secondary and used a plausibility probe to test the likelihood of the hypothesis. The findings did not substantiate the hypothesis. The research found little evidence to suggest a link between the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 and the petrodollar system. Although Gadhafi did have a vision to establish a regional currency backed by gold, this did not pose a significant threat to the petrodollar in 2011 to warrant an intervention. Other African states were sceptical at the time about the consequences of this kind of currency. Furthermore, Gadhafi was no longer chairman of the AU, thus hindering his ability to bring such a plan to fruition (African Union Commission 2009a; Ayittey 2010). There was some evidence to suggest that France's actions were motivated by the potential currency shift, which their intelligence allegedly uncovered (WikiLeaks - Email ID 12659 2011). However, this intelligence is not corroborated by the majority of the evidence gathered which strongly suggests that the currency shift was merely a vision.

The covert nature of intelligence agencies and government decision-makers means that this thesis relied only on publicly accessible data. It gathered evidence from email correspondence from then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on WikiLeaks, reports from major international organisations such as Amnesty International and the Human Rights Watch as well as secondary sources such as journal articles. Due to this access to information restraint, it is not possible to prove or disprove the hypothesis concretely. However, the plausibility of a causal link between Gadhafi's threat to move away from the petrodollar system and the military intervention was found to be low.

This research questions the official narrative of humanitarianism in Libya and demonstrates that humanitarian interventions, even under the R2P doctrine involve complex and sometimes competing agendas (Bartu 2017). Despite not proving a link, this thesis uncovered significant evidence to show that strategic motivations, such as petroleum interests, regional stability and being seen as a powerful leader within the international community rivalled the humanitarian motivation.

The strategic interests of four of the main NATO members that took part in the intervention, the US, Britain, France, and Italy, were analysed to holistically probe the hypothesis. Of the four, France and Italy had the most vested interest, yet their actions regarding Libya differed drastically. While France pushed for military action, Italy was initially reluctant to involve itself in the crisis. The simplified explanation for this is that France stood more to gain from Gadhafi's removal while Italy had a working relationship with Gadhafi. France's hard stance against Gadhafi in many ways influenced other NATO states to join. Britain was eager to prove itself as a significant leader internationally and had petroleum interests (Colley 2015; Kashiam 2012; Larsen 2011).

The US, like Italy was initially hesitant to participate. They condemned the violence but had little interest in investing in a military operation. Pressure from France and Britain as well as from the Arab League convinced the US to join (Chivvis 2015). Their reluctance demonstrates that they saw no immediate threat to the petrodollar hegemony that needed to be addressed. While all states involved highlight humanitarian grounds as the official motivator, this appears to be a convenient narrative to create sufficient plausible deniability for these states to pursue their strategic objective: to remove Gadhafi (Chivvis 2015; Larsen 2011).

This thesis adds to the literature on foreign interventions into oil-exporting states. The research shows the complexity of decision-making in a humanitarian crisis. The multitude of actors involved, each with their own agendas was problematic and hindered an effective strategy. Furthermore, this complexity also fuelled mis- and disinformation since it is difficult to unbundle what was happening on the ground in Libya and what motivated the foreign interveners. The timing of the intervention, soon after the controversial US intervention into Iraq added to public scepticism about the Libyan intervention (Colley 2015).

A comparative study looking more broadly at interventions into oil-exporting states signalling a shift away from the petrodollar would add value to the discussion. However, such a study would also be limited by access to information. Furthermore, a comparative study on when the R2P doctrine is used and when not would not only shed light on the motivations for humanitarian intervention but also guide policy to improve humanitarian responses.

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