

**Internationalization of the Libyan Conflict: Reinforcing Loops between Spatial Spillovers,
External Interventions and Systemic Escalation**

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Abstract

The paper addresses various cross-border, international and transnational aspects of the Libyan conflict over the period of 2011-2018. The author conceptually differentiates between horizontal, vertical and systemic dimensions of the Libyan conflict internationalization and explores various reinforcing links and feedback loops between them in larger regional settings.

Introduction

It is of no surprise that international, transnational and cross-border aspects of the Libyan conflict attract due scholarly attention and research efforts.¹ The conflict that started in 2011 and has gone through a number of metamorphoses ever since² was primarily triggered by domestic factors, most importantly, a combination of growing inter-tribal strife and the ensuing regional polarization on the one hand, and stagnation of the Jamahiriya's social and political model on the other hand. That said, from the very beginning the Libyan case has been what is usually described as internationalized internal armed conflict with external factors playing an evidently important role in its dynamics. Destabilization on the verge of state failure, linkages with the migrant crisis in Europe and with regional expansion of the Islamic State as well as al-Qaeda linked groups, external interventions by major regional and extra-regional powers both as supporting parties and as third parties, connectedness with many illicit networks across North Africa and the Sahel may seem to be a disparate amalgam of incongruent processes. However, on closer examination, they reveal strong correlations with each other.

I define internationalization of a conflict as expansion of its structure and dynamics in such a way that it acquires cross-border dimensions that may include but are not limited to geographic spread of hostilities or of its physical and social consequences, direct or indirect involvement of foreign actors (both state-based and non-state-based³), as well as any observable growth of the conflict's salience for outside stakeholders. Given this broad interpretation of the conflict internationalization phenomenon, what I strive to achieve in this paper is to reveal how various international, transnational and cross-border manifestations of the Libyan conflict happen to penetrate established state borders and affect a larger international system, but most importantly how multiple linkages between them form both reinforcing and counterbalancing loops.

¹ For one of the most recent collective contributions focusing on the role of external state-based actors, see: *Foreign Actors in Libya's Crisis*, ed. Karim Mezran, Arturo Varvelli (Milan: Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2017).

² For purposes of this research, under the "conflict in Libya" umbrella I consider all the major conflictual dyads and dynamics that have formed within Libya or include Libyan actors since 2011. I tend to adopt the following periodization of the conflict. The *first phase* encompasses the popular armed uprising against the Gaddafi regime in February 2011, followed by the first civil war, the NATO intervention and the subsequent dismantlement of the old order. The interwar period of October 2011 – May 2014 serves as a transition between the first and the second phase. The *second phase* begins with the second civil war, mostly concentrated around the struggle between the "Dawn" coalition and the "Dignity" coalition, or between Islamists and anti-Islamists, and lasts until the UN-led political process yields the Libyan Political Agreement signed in Skhirat in December 2015. The *third phase* (since early 2016) has covered the reconfiguration of the East-West divide, regrouping of corresponding political and military camps with further ascendancy of Gen. Khalifa Haftar poised against the internationally recognized Government of National Accord, stagnant implementation of the LPA, the rise and decline of ISIS, and intermittent attempts by various international actors to bring the political process back on track.

³ The latter may include not just independent non-state actors, but also ones that can be categorized as state-enabled, state-controlled and state-tolerated non-state-actors.

To this end, I employ an analytical matrix that I loosely define as the *integrated three-dimensional framework*. It is based on conceptual differentiation between the horizontal, vertical and systemic dimensions of armed conflict internationalization (hence the “3D” framework) as well as a variety of interactions between the three. Thus, it serves as a conceptual basis for my inquiry into the Libyan case. The following sections of this paper are structured in such a way that I consecutively describe each one of the three dimensions and apply them to the Libyan case looking for mechanisms, channels and factors behind this complex phenomenon. I then employ systems mapping to reveal and demonstrate how these various escalation processes form both positive and negative feedback loops within a bigger internationalization picture.

The three-dimensional analytical framework that serves as a conceptual foundation of this research is based on the following assumptions. The horizontal dimension (horizontal escalation) represents varied ways through which the spatial spread of organized violence (often originated on the sub-state level) affects the territory of other (usually neighboring) countries leading to consequences (usually destabilizing) for both the source state and the recipient state. The vertical dimension (vertical escalation)⁴ covers the processes by which either the structure of a conflict gets expanded to involve outside (external) actors normally as secondary (supporting) or third parties, or (often as a result of the former) the nominal level of conflict gets upgraded from intrastate to interstate. Vertical escalation is enabled either through an attack by a source state on the territory or subjects of one or more of its neighbors (*outward-directed vertical escalation*), or alternatively through intervention by a state-based external actor into the original internal conflict (*inward-directed vertical escalation*). Finally, the systemic dimension (systemic escalation) denotes the expansion of international systemic limits of original conflict by increased political stake, interest and/or attention of various international actors vis-à-vis the conflict in question, as well as by increased connectedness with other regional conflicts or with wider patterns of systemic power dynamics.

The proposed dimensions are conceptual constructs aimed at facilitating the analysis of conflict dynamics and are not intended to be interpreted literally. Multiple interplays between the three dimensions are also important because they can affect (stimulate or block) various dimension-specific factors through both reinforcing and counterbalancing systemic loops.

⁴ I also tend to employ the “escalation” term to denote directed processes that lead to internationalization, at the same time being fully aware that nominally *escalation* is a much broader concept that encompasses multiple aspects of growth in conflict scale and intensity. In this sense, I tend to divert from the way *vertical escalation* and *horizontal escalation* are traditionally delineated. *Vertical escalation* has traditionally referred to an increase in the intensity of violence, whereas *horizontal escalation* has been used to imply an increase in the number of actors involved, usually accompanied by inevitable geographic spread of violence – which is not exactly the way I use the two in this paper.

The Horizontal Dimension: Spreading Across Established Borders

Under the horizontal dimension, organized violence provoked by an internal armed conflict (which often may amount to civil war⁵) or its physical and social consequences spill over recognized national boundaries spreading spatially and producing destabilizing effects on other (mostly neighboring) countries.⁶

The most directly observable manifestation of horizontal escalation are spontaneous *cross-border spillovers of hostilities* in regions where state boundaries are porous, poorly guarded or just formed by natural barriers (such as mountains, waterways, etc.). However, more common in real conflict internationalization cases are direct and indirect *physical consequences (spillovers)* of domestic armed struggle that spread over national borders and affect neighboring countries. Such physical spillovers include flows of arms and mercenaries as well as of refugees that can not only undermine stability and put additional social and economic pressure on local communities straining their limited resources⁷, but also be subjected to militarization and radicalization⁸. In a civil war zone, rebels also strive to establish sanctuaries over the border in a neighboring country, either with the help (in case of rivalry), through neglect or merely due to incompetence (in case of state weakness) of latter's authorities which, among other things, has a significant effect on the prolongation of conflict⁹.

A violent intrastate conflict can also contribute to the destruction of physical infrastructure that stretches across territories of at least two countries and lead to negative economic implications for neighboring nations including decline of investment, emigration of skilled labor force, and even

⁵ In case it is accompanied by at least 1000 battle-related deaths over a calendar year as stipulated by the widely accepted UCDP operationalization (see: <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/>). The Libyan conflict (as a set of national and local armed disputes) passed this "civil war" threshold in 2011, and then annually in 2014-2017.

⁶ At the same time, firstly, it does not incur any change in the original intrastate status of the conflict since no conscious state-based action takes place that would violate other state's sovereignty thus transforming the conflict into a nominally interstate one. Secondly, under the horizontal dimension the conflict structure is perceived as remaining the same meaning that no external state actors get involved into the original dispute as either primary or secondary parties.

⁷ See, e.g., Seung-Whan Choi and Idean Salehyan, "No Good Deed Goes Unpunished: Refugees, Humanitarian Aid, and Terrorism," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30, no. 1 (2013): 53-75, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0738894212456951>; Myron Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration," *International Security* 17, no. 3 (1992-1993): 91-126; Beth Elise Whitaker, "Refugees and the Spread of Conflict: Contrasting Cases in Central Africa," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 38 (2003): 211-231, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002190960303800205>.

⁸ See, e.g., Robert Muggah, *No Refuge: The Crisis of Refugee Militarization in Africa* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2006); Stephen John Stedman and Fred Tanner, *Refugee Manipulation: War, Politics, and the Abuse of Human Suffering* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

⁹ See, e.g., Idean Salehyan, "Transnational Rebels: Neighboring States as Sanctuary for Rebel Groups," *World Politics* 59, no. 2 (2007): 239-241, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2007.0024>.

collapse of trade and entire sectors¹⁰. Finally, it can provoke degradation of regional ecosystems endangering the livelihoods of communities that live over the borders but are greatly affected by transnational environmental shocks.

That said, physical spillovers are not merely standalone manifestations of horizontal escalation. They can also function as constituent elements within the mechanism behind a larger phenomenon that is normally described as *conflict diffusion*, or *conflict contagion*. With respect to transborder spread of civil wars, *diffusion (contagion)* denotes a process by which an intrastate armed conflict in one country increases the likelihood of a similar conflict onset in another (usually neighboring) country¹¹.

Channels of transmission that serve as a medium of influence through which a target state is affected can be broadly categorized as falling under one of the three types. The first category is represented by the same physical spillover effects that were already described above. Flows of refugees¹², arms and mercenaries, cross-border activity by rebels, degradation of transboundary infrastructure do not only serve as destabilizing consequences per se but can also facilitate regional diffusion of violent internal strife. The second category encompasses various information-based channels of transmission, particularly linked to the so-called *demonstration and learning effects* (DLEs) that allow agents in one state to learn from and replicate the behavior of agents in another state even if these are not located in the immediate vicinity of each other¹³, which primarily includes learning by proto-rebels from ongoing civil wars as well as from victorious revolutionary governments¹⁴. Finally, the third category of transmission channels covers social-psychological connections established by various transnational identity-based ties such as ethnic, religious and ideological ones. Through such kin-based channels,

¹⁰ See, e.g., Reşat Bayer and Matthew C. Rupert, "Effects of Civil Wars on International Trade, 1950-92," *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 6 (2004): 699-713, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343304047433>; James C. Murdoch and Todd Sandler, "Economic Growth, Civil Wars, and Spatial Spillovers," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 1 (2002): 91-110, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002702046001006>.

¹¹ See, e.g., Halvard Buhaug and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (2008): 215-233, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2008.00499.x>; Fabrizio Carmignani and Parvinder Kler, "Surrounded by Wars: Quantifying the Role of Spatial Conflict Spillovers," *Economic Analysis and Policy* 49 (2016): 7-16, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eap.2015.11.016>; Lars-Erik Cederman, Luc Girardin, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Ethnonationalist Triads: Assessing the Influence of Kin Groups on Civil Wars," *World Politics* 61, no. 3 (2009): 403-437, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109000148>.

¹² See Daniel Krmaric, "Refugee Flows, Ethnic Power Relations, and the Spread of Conflict," *Security Studies* 23, no. 1 (2014): 182-216, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2014.874201>; Sarah Kenyon Lischer, *Dangerous Sanctuaries: Refugee Camps, Civil War, and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015).

¹³ See, e.g., Timur Kuran, "Ethnic Dissimilation and Its International Diffusion," in *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation*, ed. David A. Lake and Donald S. Rothchild (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 35-60; David A. Lake and Donald S. Rothchild, "Spreading Fear: The Genesis of Transnational Ethnic Conflict," in *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation*, ed. David A. Lake and Donald S. Rothchild (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3-32.

¹⁴ Christopher Linebarger, "Dangerous Lessons: Rebel Learning and Mobilization in the International System," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 5 (2016): 633-647, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343316653462>.

certain psychic and emotional states (e.g., the perception of threat) are transmitted between peoples residing across national borders but sharing common ethnic, religious or ideological background.¹⁵

Through the so called “domino effect”, diffusion can lead to destabilization of entire regions that become engulfed with conflict ranging from political instability to outright civil war.¹⁶ Such conceptualization was widely applied to describe the dynamics of the communist regimes’ collapse in Eastern Europe in late 1980s – early 1990s, as well as to explain the clustering of civil wars in Great African Lakes region through 1990s-2000s. More recently, the concept was adapted to address the wave of revolutionary events and violent civil conflicts that spread through the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region since late 2010¹⁷, of which Libya was a key “domino”.

The Horizontal Dimension in the Libyan Conflict: Regional Spillovers Leading to Contagion Across Africa and the Middle East

The Arab Spring reverberated across the entire region like a hurricane. Popular protests of late 2010 – early 2011 in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and some other MENA countries echoed each other and diffused rapidly across the region thanks to both social media and some of the traditional media that were sympathetic with the uprisings, such as Al-Jazeera. Both served as a universal means of communication transcending through the emerging public domain of the Arab-speaking world and producing the demonstration and learning effect from one case to another. In this diffusion scenario, Libya was both the target and the source of the regional contagion, learning from the events in Tunisia and Egypt while inspiring new developments in Syria and Yemen at the same time.

As with many other cases of the Arab Spring, initial optimism for peaceful and genuine political transition in Libya were soon shattered by the abysmal reality of the Revolution’s degeneracy and state failure. Spatial spillovers induced by the Libyan instability have been many, deadly and far-reaching. Although the immediate refugee outflows of Libyans following the escalation between Gaddafi and the armed opposition in 2011 was limited to Tunisia and Algeria, rather than Europe, the civil war led to a kind of anarchic situation in which the state could no longer control neither the country’s shoreline

¹⁵ See, e.g., R. William Ayres and Stephen Saideman, "Is Separatism as Contagious as the Common Cold or as Cancer? Testing International and Domestic Explanations," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 6, no. 3 (2000): 91-113, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537110008428605>; Cederman, Girardin, and Gleditsch, "Ethnonationalist Triads," 403-437; Erika Forsberg, "Transnational Transmitters: Ethnic Kinship Ties and Conflict Contagion 1946-2009," *International Interactions* 40, no. 2 (2014): 143-165, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2014.880702>.

¹⁶ Various metaphoric conceptualizations of diffusion draw similarities between armed conflict contagion involving sovereign states and contraction of infectious diseases by humans as well as with the spread of forest fire.

¹⁷ See Stephen M. Saideman, "When Conflict Spreads: Arab Spring and the Limits of Diffusion," *International Interactions* 38, no. 5 (2012): 713-722, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2012.726186>.

nor its land borders leading to the proliferation of activities of smuggling networks. The state disintegration and dysfunction of its security institutions made the situation even worse after Gaddafi had been toppled, transforming Libya's lawless territory into a major hub of illicit cross-border activities. Unlike other complex emergencies that tend to become major sources of global refugee flows (consider Syria as the most vocal example), the Libyan civil conflict opened operational space up for migrant smuggling businesses at the industrial scale making Libya a catalyst and a "logistic hub", rather than a source, of these migrations.¹⁸

These smuggling networks either generated or facilitated not just the flow of refugees (or migrants more generally), but also cross-border transfers of mercenaries (mostly, foreign fighters), arms and criminal activities. On a much greater scale than Gaddafi's instability had exported in the past to neighboring Sudan and Chad, the post-Gaddafi's Libya – with various degrees and to various extent – infected Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Tunisia Mali and Syria. What happened in Libya resonated in the entire Sahel, from Morocco in west to Somalia in the east, and could have created a trans-regional corridor controlled by the Islamic State linking Boko Haram in the lake Chad basin across the Maghreb to al-Shabaab in the Horn of Africa.

Contagion from Libya to Egypt was due to "permeability" of poorly guarded segments of the shared border to illicit arms, drugs as well as radical Islamist militants which at least since 2014 led to increased rate of terrorist attacks against military and civilian targets in Egypt, especially in the frontier region.¹⁹ The role of this contagion effect in the ensuing deterioration of security situation in the Sinai, despite geographic remoteness, should not be underestimated. Following a struggle with the rival tribes of Awlad Suleiman (in Sabha) and Zwayya (in Kufra), the Tubu armed groups managed to seize control over cross-border smuggling networks in Southern Libya and directed the flows of surplus weapons via trafficking routes in Sudan towards Northern Egypt and the Sinai.²⁰

Another aspect of these dynamics had to do with economic migration that used to alleviate the unemployment problem for Egyptians finding jobs in relatively scarcely populated neighboring Libya. Due to destabilization caused by the second civil war in Libya, the number of foreign workers from Egypt (1,5 million people and corresponding \$33 million in remittances a year by late 2013) had fallen

¹⁸ The systemic relevance of these processes that seem to have peaked in 2015-2016 – with hundreds of thousands of sub-Saharan African migrants trying to reach Europe through Libya by sea – will be addressed further down the text.

¹⁹ Mohamed Arafa and Mieczyslaw Boduszynski, "Understanding Egyptian Policy Toward Libya," *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*, March 28, 2017, <https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/understanding-egyptian-policy-toward-libya/>.

²⁰ Anders Holger, "Expanding Arsenal: Insurgent Arms in Northern Mali," in *A Small Arms Survey Group's Yearbook*, 2015, 175, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/A-Yearbook/2015/eng/Small-Arms-Survey-2015-Chapter-06-EN.pdf>.

twofold by early 2015.²¹ Egyptian workers that had to return home joined the masses of unemployed exerting greater burden on the already dreadful socio-economic situation. A kind of “reverse contagion” from Egypt to Libya complicated matters even more when Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s counter-revolution of 2013 and the ensuing campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood triggered political polarization and military mobilization in Libya with the “al-Sisi effect” inspiring the Libyan military brass while intimidating the Islamist camp in late 2013 – early 2014.²²

Contagion from Libya to Mali is what may be described as a “textbook case” of how horizontal escalation works. The link between the 2011 Libya and the 2012 Mali is indisputable. The “infection” occurred primarily via three channels – transnational ethnic ties among Tuaregs, movements of Jihadist foreign fighters, and the smuggling of arms from Libya’s arsenals.

Originally recruited from Mali and Niger in 1970s, Tuareg factions have been instrumentalized by the Gaddafi’s regime in its war efforts first in Lebanon in 1981-1982, then in Chad in 1986-1987 and, finally, against the domestic armed uprising in 2011. Tuareg units made up the renowned Maghawir Brigade, established in Fezzan’s Ubari in 2004, as well as part of the 32nd Brigade. However, since August 2011 hundreds of Tuareg fighters had started deserting the Gaddafi’s army and returned to their countries of origin, including to Mali, in fear of revenge by the new revolutionary authorities – a vulnerability exacerbated by Tuaregs’ ambiguous claim to Libyan citizenship. Some of these returnees, led by Col. Mohamed ag Najem, would soon organize to form the military core of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and launch an armed insurgency in Northern Mali.²³ Somewhat separate from Tuareg migrations, the al-Qaeda affiliated Ansar al-Sharia also sent scores of its fighters to Northern Mali in late 2012.²⁴

A reinforcing loop was soon established by the “reverse contagion” following the 2013 French-led intervention in Northern Mali with militant extremists escaping back to Fezzan.²⁵ The same is true for

²¹ Giuseppe Dentice, “Egypt’s Security and Haftar: al-Sisi’s Strategy in Libya,” *Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*, February 2, 2017, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/egypts-security-and-haftar-al-sisis-strategy-libya-16284>.

²² Tarek Megerisi, “Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia. Neighboring States – Diverging Approaches,” in *Foreign Actors in Libya’s Crisis*, ed. Karim Mezran, Arturo Varvelli (Milan: Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2017), 24.

²³ Wolfram Lacher, “Libya’s Fractious South and Regional Instability,” *The Small Arms Survey Group’s Security Assessment in North Africa*, Dispatch no. 3, February 2014, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/R-SANA/SANA-Dispatch3-Libyas-Fractious-South.pdf>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Samuel Laurent: «Le désert libyen est devenu un haut lieu de la contrebande et du terrorisme»,” *Radio France International (RFI)*, June 9, 2013, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20130609-le-sud-libye-nouveau-sanctuaire-le-terrorisme-islamique>.

Tuareg fighters who roved back and forth regularly between the Sahel and Libya's Ubari during 2012 and 2013.

Arms flows played an equally important role in this Libya-Mali contagion case. When both Tuareg fighters and Jihadist militants left Libya for Mali they did so with arms and weapons²⁶ either looted (for Tuaregs – obtained) from Gaddafi's stockpiles²⁷ or supplied by external sponsors of the armed Libyan opposition²⁸. Since 2012, in order to maintain resupply, various armed groups in Northern Mali have been utilizing trans-Saharan smuggling networks linked to illicit arms markets in Libya. The latter proliferated due to lax control by Libyan revolutionary brigades from Benghazi, Misrata and Zintan over not just light arms but also larger-caliber weapons including anti-aircraft auto-cannons and even MANPADS and their missiles.²⁹

Niger and Chad were not immune from the Libyan spillovers either. In these two cases, transnational ethnic ties among Tuaregs (south Libya – northern Niger) and Tubu (south Libya – northern Chad and Niger) played a major role. Prior to 2011, the Gaddafi regime cultivated ties with both Tuareg and Tubu rebels in Niger and Chad, supporting them against respective governments and recruiting them for regime's own needs. When things started to unravel in 2011, Gaddafi tried to reactivate those ties, however, most of the rebel leaders and soldiers eventually either deserted him or were unwillingly dispersed along Libyan-Chadian and Libyan-Nigerien borders³⁰, fomenting further instability in northern regions of the two Sahel countries.³¹

Contagion from the Libyan conflict beyond North Africa and the Sahel has been most evident with the war in Syria, although in this case the effect itself was the one of intrastate conflict escalation rather

²⁶ “Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Concerning Libya,” in *Letter Dated 15 February 2013 from the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2013/99, 31 (para. 144), http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/99.

²⁷ According to some accounts, over one million tons of weapons were looted after Qaddafi was toppled. See: Ian Drury, “Don't turn Syria into a 'Tesco for terrorists' like Libya, generals tell Cameron,” *Daily Mail*, June 17, 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2342917/Dont-turn-Syria-Tesco-terrorists-like-Libya-generals-tell-Cameron.html>.

²⁸ The UN Panel of Experts documented traces of Libyan stockpiles of ammunition that had been supplied by the United Arab Emirates to various revolutionary factions in 2011. See: “Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) concerning Libya,” in *Letter Dated 15 February 2014 from the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2014/106, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/106.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 31 (para. 119).

³⁰ Lacher, “Libya's Fractious South”.

³¹ In Chad, this development was aggravated by illicit weapons from looted Libyan arsenals that flowed southwards between 2011 and 2013 contributing to the militarization of Chadian Tubu communities. See: Jérôme Tubiana and Claudio Gramizzi, *Tubu Trouble: State and Statelessness in the Chad–Sudan–Libya Triangle* (Geneva: The Small Arms Survey Group, 2017), 13, <http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/SAS-CAR-WP43-Chad-Sudan-Libya.pdf>.

than of conflict onset. Streams of Libyan foreign fighters, mostly from the Islamist-dominated places like Tripoli, Benghazi and Derna, fed the Syrian insurgency with some of the earliest foreign recruits for groups preceding Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS.³² Ansar al-Sharia established the most effective recruitment network and trained a younger generation of Libyan and Tunisian fighters in camps around Derna and Benghazi before sending them to Syria.³³ Many of Libyan jihadis were initially in leadership roles within ISIS.³⁴ After Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS turned against each other, Libyans preferred to stay under the ISIS umbrella forming the Katibat al-Battar al-Libya (KBL) brigade.³⁵ However, since the second civil war in Libya started to take shape in the second half of 2014, many fighters returned to Libya bringing battle experience and ideological radicalization with them which contributed to further polarization of multiple Libyan factions as well as to the subsequent rise of ISIS in Derna and Sirte – another example of a positive feedback loop unleashed by the Libyan conflict internationalization.

The demonstration and learning effect as a channel of diffusion was also at work as the Libyan revolutionary authorities established contacts with Syrian rebels in autumn 2011, and later supplied anti-Assad factions with money and weapons. The latter were obviously inspired by the regime change in Tripoli and wanted to replicate the Libyan dynamics on the Syrian soil, including a foreign military intervention against the regime. Ultimately, this scenario has not been put into action, mostly because the Syrian government learned from the Libyan developments too and harnessed the potential of external support to its own benefit.

The Vertical Dimension: Involvement of Other Actors Expanding the Conflict Structure

Under the vertical dimension, external, mostly state-based, actors get involved either voluntarily or not (usually as secondary, or supporting, parties, but also as third parties) expanding the original conflict structure. At the highest level of vertical escalation, conflict's status may get upgraded from intrastate to interstate. At the same time, localization of hostilities may or may not expand geographically.

³² Aaron Y. Zelin, "Foreign Jihadists in Syria: Tracking Recruitment Networks," *The Washington Institute's Policy Watch*, no. 2186, December 19, 2013, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/foreign-jihadists-in-syria-tracking-recruitment-networks>.

³³ Hasnaa El Jamali and Laurent Vinatier, "There and Back: Trajectories of North African Foreign Fighters in Syria," *The Small Arms Survey Group's Security Assessment in North Africa*, no. 3, July 2015, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/G-Issue-briefs/SAS-SANA-IB3-Foreign-Fighters.pdf>.

³⁴ A prominent example is Abu Abdallah al-Libi, one of the main Libyan commanders in Syria, who was appointed as the Islamic State emir in the Idlib province. See: Bill Roggio, "ISIS praises slain commander who fought in Iraq, Libya, and Syria," *The Long War Journal*, November 27, 2013, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/11/isis-praised_slain_c.php.

³⁵ El Jamali and Vinatier, "Trajectories of North African Foreign Fighters," 7.

Voluntary involvement of outside actors in support of one of the primary parties of an internal conflict can be categorized as *intervention (inward-directed vertical escalation)*. In case of non-voluntary involvement, another (often neighboring) country becomes a victim of an attack by the state where the original internal armed conflict takes place – the process categorized as *externalization (outward-directed vertical escalation)*³⁶. According to Davies, domestic violent unrest increases the probability of both initiating a conflict abroad and becoming target of an attack by another state.³⁷ Trumbore argues that, at least with ethno-political rebellions, externalization is more common than intervention, and states dealing with internal strife are more likely to initiate the use force rather than to become victims of external aggression.³⁸ However, in absolute terms, intervention (or interference) by external forces into ongoing intrastate conflict is a much more common phenomenon, which is illustrated by the Libyan case as well as other cases from the region.

Various aspects of external interventions into civil wars have been thoroughly studied and reported.³⁹ Depending on intervention dynamics, it can result either in encouraging or suppressing the spread of original violent conflict. Forms (modes) of intervention vary from high level (high-cost, hard) involvement, such as direct military intervention, to relatively low level (low-cost, soft) involvement limited to just providing arms, logistical, financial, political, diplomatic or other kind of support to one of the primary parties, either overtly or covertly. Depending on intervenor's motivations, support is provided either to the central government (a group that currently controls the central government) or – when outside stakeholders see interest in a rebel victory – to the opposition group(-s). If support to the opposition takes the form of direct military intervention, an intrastate conflict is effectively transformed into an interstate one.

One of the most important aspects of the intervention mechanism is motivation behind external involvement. Every generic decision-making process about whether to intervene or not revolves around a combination of motivation and opportunity. Whereas opportunity is provided by an intrastate conflict itself (by debilitating a rival state and rendering it incapacitated), motivation can be based on a variety of considerations. Traditionally, motivations to intervene have been categorized as either *instrumental*

³⁶ I define *externalization* as deliberate actions taken by a state facing domestic rebellion that constitute effective violation of another (neighboring) state's sovereignty, normally in the form of limited or full-fledged military campaign.

³⁷ Graeme A. M. Davies, "Domestic Strife and the Initiation of International Conflicts: A Directed Dyad Analysis, 1950-1982," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 5 (2002): 672-692, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002200202236169>. At the same time, Davies' results (Davies, "Domestic Strife," 685-686) indicate that nonviolent conflict reduces such probability while increasing the likelihood of domestic repression.

³⁸ Peter F. Trumbore, "Victims or Aggressors? Ethno-Political Rebellion and Use of Force in Militarized Interstate Disputes," *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2003): 183-201, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2478.4702002>.

³⁹ For one of previous comprehensive state of the art overviews see: Patrick M. Regan, "Interventions into Civil Wars: A Retrospective Survey with Prospective Ideas," *Civil Wars* 12, no. 4 (2010): 456-476, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698249.2010.534632>.

(geopolitical interests, territorial ambitions, economic gains, domestic political agenda, etc.), *affective* (shared historic grievances, ethnic or religious identity, racial-cultural affinity, common ideological principals, etc.) or some combination of the two.⁴⁰

Recent research also suggests that traditional delineation between neutral mediation as a third-party conflict management strategy on the one hand and biased intervention by joining one side of a conflict on the other hand needs to be corrected towards a more integral understanding of third party strategies. Corbetta and Melin maintain that third party states that have vested interests in a civil conflict and possess appropriate resources are likely to adopt dual methods employing a mix of biased coercive and non-biased non-coercive strategies.⁴¹

If intervention happens, it is likely to prolong the duration of a civil war⁴², and to increase its intensity⁴³ as well as the likelihood of recurrence⁴⁴. Finally, according to Jones, the choice of strategy and timing of military intervention into a civil war has a fundamental effect on its eventual outcome with regards to whether the war becomes protracted or not and whether it ends with a government victory, a rebel victory or a negotiated settlement.⁴⁵

The Vertical Dimension in the Libyan Conflict: External Intervention by Regional and Extra-Regional States

Since 2011, foreign interventions (including small-scale meddling) in the Libyan conflict (mostly but not exclusively during the two civil war phases) have been multiple – of high and low intensity,

⁴⁰ See, e.g.: David Carment and Patrick James, "Explaining Third-Party Intervention in Ethnic Conflict: Theory and Evidence," *Nations & Nationalism* 6, no. 2 (2000): 173-202, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1354-5078.2000.00173.x>; Robert Cooper and Mats Berdal, "Outside Intervention in Ethnic Conflicts," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (1993): 118-142; Alexis Heraclides, "Secessionist Minorities and External Involvement," *International Organization* 44, no. 3 (1990): 341-378, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300035323>; Stephen M. Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2001); Idean Salehyan, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and David E. Cunningham, "Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups," *International Organization* 65, no. 4 (2011): 709-744, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818311000233>.

⁴¹ Renato Corbetta and Molly M. Melin, "Exploring the Threshold between Conflict Management and Joining in Biased Interventions," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, OnlineFirst, July 27, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002717720754>.

⁴² See, e.g., Seden Akcinaroglu and Elizabeth Radziszewski, "Expectations, Rivalries, and Civil War Duration," *International Interactions* 31, no. 4 (2005): 349-374, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050620500303449>; David E. Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution: How External States Can Prolong Civil Wars," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 2 (2010): 115-127, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343309353488>; Patrick M. Regan, "Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 1 (2002): 55-73, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002702046001004>.

⁴³ See, e.g., Bethany Lacina, "Explaining the Severity of Civil Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 2 (2006): 276-289, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022002705284828>.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Niklas Karlen, "The Legacy of Foreign Patrons: External State Support and Conflict Recurrence," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 4 (2017): 499-512, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343317700465>.

⁴⁵ Benjamin T. Jones, "Altering Capabilities or Imposing Costs? Intervention Strategy and Civil War Outcomes," *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2017): 52-63, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqw052>.

unilateral and multilateral, authorized and non-authorized by the U.N., nominally pro-government and pro-opposition, driven by both instrumental and affective motivations. *Forms/modes of intervention* have included political and diplomatic support to primary conflict parties, covert material and logistical supplies (including arms and munitions supplies), and – intermittently – direct military actions.

1. Forms/modes of external interventions

During *the first civil war phase* of the conflict almost all external intervention efforts were predominantly pro-opposition which was a major factor behind the eventual collapse of the Gaddafi's regime. *Politically and diplomatically*, France was the first and the most active rebel sponsor. President Nicolas Sarkozy was the first to call for anti-regime sanctions and for Gaddafi to leave office.⁴⁶ France and Britain were the first ones to established contacts with the oppositions' umbrella structure, the National Transitional Council (NTC), in March 2011. Soon France recognized the NTC as the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people, followed by Qatar. Moreover, France and Britain were the main masterminds behind establishing the *Friends of Libya* group (International Contact Group for Libya) to harness international support for the NTC against Gaddafi.

France also provided limited *covert material supplies and logistical support* to various Libyan factions, as did the CIA. But the most active role in this regard, extending to blatant violations of the UN-imposed restrictions, was played by Qatar which was the major anti-Gaddafi voice in the Arab world. Qatar supplied the rebels in Tripoli and Benghazi with food, medicine, fuel, arms and munitions, while also assisting in oil smuggling that benefited the NTC-affiliated groups.⁴⁷ Doha coordinated its military and logistical assistance to rebels through Islamist political and religious leaders such as al-Salabi brothers, Abd al-Hakim Belhaj and Al-Sadiq al-Ghariani among others.⁴⁸ Within the Arab world, Qatar also led political and diplomatic as well as information offensive against the regime, including via the pro-revolutionary colored Al-Jazeera coverage. Although the UAE, too, supported the anti-Gaddafi camp at the time, its arms supplies were of smaller volume and were directed to other local groups,

⁴⁶ "France's Sarkozy Says Gaddafi Must Go", *Reuters*, February 25, 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-france-gaddafi/frances-sarkozy-says-gaddafi-must-go-idUSTRE71O3U520110225>.

⁴⁷ "Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Concerning Libya," in *Letter Dated 17 February 2012 from the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011) Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/2012/163, 24-25 (para. 91-102), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7b65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7d/Libya%20S%202012%20163.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Andrew McGregor, "Qatar's Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who's on the Lists of Terrorists and Why," *The Jamestown Foundation's Terrorism Monitor* 15, no. 14 (July 14, 2017), <https://jamestown.org/program/qatars-role-libyan-conflict-whos-lists-terrorists/>.

mostly to Zintan Brigades in the west and to factions of Libyan army defectors in the east, while the coordination was done through secular political leaders such as the head of the NTC Mahmoud Jibril.⁴⁹

As for *direct military action*, not all anti-regime external actors were onboard with this scenario in the beginning. France, again, was among the first to introduce the idea of a no-fly zone, followed by Britain, while key military and political figures within the Obama administration still debated feasibility of such a move⁵⁰. The no-fly zone was eventually authorized by the UNSC Resolution 1973 of March 17, 2011, which also provided the sanction for direct military intervention by the coalition of Western and some Arab states. Russia's and China's abstentions from vetoing the resolution facilitated initial legitimization of the intervention.

The operation "Unified Protector" which lasted from March to October 2011 involved the forces of 14 NATO countries and 4 non-NATO allies (Qatar, UAE, Jordan and Sweden), but the military campaign was effectively carried out by the United States, Britain and France. The U.S. participation was relatively limited in scope and duration. On the ground, the scope of intervention went far beyond the UNSC Resolution 1973's mandate as it overtly pursued the regime change agenda, whereas the authorization to use force, in the resolution's wording, was limited to protecting "civilians and civilian populated areas".⁵¹

The *forms/modes of external intervention* during *the second civil war* were roughly the same except for direct foreign military action which was purely sporadic in 2014-2015. At the same time, the second phase (and the events that preceded it) witnessed a dramatic realignment and escalation of commitment by some regional actors vis-à-vis the new Libyan east-west divide, coupled by observable disengagement by extra-regional players (the U.S. and its European allies). This development had a profound impact on the conflict's dynamics driving its further internationalization.

Libya's fragmentation and polarization between the Western camp represented by the Islamist-controlled General National Congress (GNC) in Tripoli and the Eastern camp represented by the anti-Islamist House of Representatives and allied with Gen. Halifa Haftar (the "Tobruk government"), simultaneously, paved the way to and was facilitated by massive *covert military, material and logistical*

⁴⁹ Ben Fishman, "The Qatar Crisis on the Mediterranean's Shores," *The Washington Institute's PolicyWatch* 2830 (July 12, 2017), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-qatar-crisis-on-the-mediterraneans-shores>.

⁵⁰ Ed Hornick, "Arming Libyan Rebels: Should U.S. Do It?", *CNN*, March 31, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/03/31/arming.libya.rebels.analysts/>.

⁵¹ The UN SC Resolution 1973 Adopted by the Security Council at its 6498th Meeting, on 17 March 2011, S/RES/1973, 3 (para. 4), http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1973%20%282011%29.

support by major regional actors to opposing factions. In 2014-2015, the “Dignity” coalition (anti-Islamist, Haftar-led) received support primarily from Egypt and the UAE, while the “Dawn” coalition (Islamist, GNC-led) was sponsored by Qatar, Turkey and Sudan. A lion’s share assistance to the GNC was given by Qatar, as Turkey (consumed by the Syrian crisis’ spillovers) and Sudan mostly facilitated safe transit of Islamist fighters to Libya.

Political and diplomatic support to Cairo and Abu-Dhabi’s efforts as well as directly to the Tobruk-based government was provided by Saudi Arabia. In November 2014, the three countries organized a large-scale political and diplomatic campaign in attempt to ensure international legitimization of eastern camp’s institutions – the House of Representatives and the government of Abdullah Al-Thani.⁵²

As for *direct military action* by foreign powers on the Libyan soil, during the second phase, it was merely circumstantial and sporadic. In August 2014, the air forces of Egypt and the UAE bombed the locations of Islamist groups near Tripoli during a battle over the international airport between the Misrata Brigades and the Zintan Brigades. But other than that, main regional intervening powers preferred to act through their local Libyan proxies.

The post-Skhirat phase since early 2016 (the one of stagnant and flawed attempts at LPA’s implementation) witnessed gradual re-engagement by major European powers, primarily France⁵³ and Italy (mostly in a third-party capacity) and, on the other hand, an evidently passive attitude by the United States⁵⁴, especially so under the Donald Trump administration that seems to have lost any remaining political interest in Libyan state-building.⁵⁵

Contrastingly, since 2016, Russia has adopted an increasingly active hybrid interventionist approach in Libya as Russian government officials held a number of high-level meetings with Gen. Haftar lending him political and diplomatic support as well as further legitimization. In May 2016, Moscow’s Gosznak printed a batch of banknotes equivalent to 4 billion Libyan dinars for circulation in territories controlled by the al-Thani

⁵² Karim Mezran and Tarek Radwan, “The Libya Conundrum,” *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, January 20, 2015, <https://www.thecaireview.com/tahrir-forum/the-libya-conundrum/>.

⁵³ France’s attitude towards Haftar has evolved over recent years to become more open towards co-opting him into future Libya’s state institutions. See: “France under Macron signals shift in Libya policy, toward Haftar,” *Reuters*, May 18, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-libya-idUSKCN18E2UU>.

⁵⁴ After the tragic events of September 2012 when the U.S. consular facility in Benghazi had been attacked by the Ansar al-Sharia militants and Ambassador Stevens had been murdered, U.S. activities on the Libyan track were reduced to the very minimum with even routine initiatives subjected to additional scrutiny.

⁵⁵ Jeremy Diamond, “Trump, alongside Italian PM, Says No US Role in Libya,” *CNN*, April 20, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/20/politics/donald-trump-paolo-gentiloni/>.

government.⁵⁶ Bound by the 2011 UN-imposed embargo, so far Russia's policy falls short of providing direct weapons supplies to the Haftar's self-proclaimed Libyan National Army. However, there are grounds to believe that arms exported from Russia to Egypt (or Algeria) may then be re-supplied to the LNA with tacit Moscow's approval⁵⁷. At the same time, top-level Russian officials have also held meetings with GNA's Fayeze al-Sarraj, and generally Moscow prefers to maintain semi-official ties and communication links with most major stakeholders inside Libya.⁵⁸

During this latest post-Skhirat phase, the roles of regional supporting parties have become more nuanced and multi-dimensional. While still lending political and material support to the Haftar's LNA, Egypt and the UAE have also engaged in diplomatic activities trying to direct the Libyan political process in their own favor. Therefore, the recent practice of intervention by major regional and extra-regional players (Egypt, UAE, Qatar, Russia, and France), that has included both support to mediation attempts and unilateral opportunistic actions, vividly illustrates the Corbetta and Melin's conceptual notion that external actors with vested interest and adequate resources are likely to adopt mixed strategies combining both biased and non-biased interventions.⁵⁹

2. Motivations and opportunities for intervention

A consensus in the civil war intervention literature maintains that any specific instance of outside intervention into an ongoing intrastate conflict can be deconstructed as a combination of motivation and opportunity with both variables being equally important for a respective political decision to be taken.

Motivations for intervention of external state-based actors in the Libyan conflict have been based on a wide array of both *instrumental* and *affective* (as well as *mixed*) *considerations*. These include but are not limited to: economic and political opportunism, strategic international rivalry between major regional power centers, political ideologies within a larger Arab Spring context (Islamist vs. anti-Islamist), pursuit of policy leverage in the broader MENA region, projection of military power as an assertive political demonstration, diversion from domestic policy failures, as well as genuine humanitarian concern for civilian lives. Whereas during the first civil war diverse motivations of

⁵⁶ Henry Meyer, Caroline Alexander, and Ghaith Shennib, "Putin Promotes Libyan Strongman as New Ally After Syria Victory", *Bloomberg*, December 22, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-12-21/putin-promotes-libyan-strongman-as-new-ally-after-syria-victory>.

⁵⁷ Mattia Toaldo, "Russia in Libya: War or Peace?", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, August 2, 2017, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_russia_in_libya_war_or_peace_7223.

⁵⁸ Foreign minister Sergey Lavrov received prime-minister Sarraj in March 2017, while a number of political and military leaders from Misrata visited Moscow in June 2016 and April 2017.

⁵⁹ Corbetta and Melin, "Exploring the Threshold".

various intervening actors did not impede the convergence of policy objectives (centered in the agenda of regime change and political transition), during the second civil war the incompatibility of foreign actors' motivations came to the forefront preventing them from pursuing congruent policies and exacerbating domestic inter-Libyan frictions. For systematized overview of major foreign powers' interventions and motivations behind them, see Table 1.

<i>Intervening power</i>	<i>Conflict phase</i>	<i>Forms and directions of intervention⁶⁰</i>	<i>Motivations for intervention / non-intervention</i>
France	1 st civil war	PDS, CMLS (limited), DMI (full-fledged) – pro-opposition, anti-regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaddafi's independent African policies viewed as a zero-sum game vis-à-vis France's own interests in Africa; - improving own image in the Arab world due to France's large Arab minority; - Sarkozy's ratings in the run-up to the 2012 presidential elections
	2 nd civil war	disengagement, passive role, nominal support for UN-led political process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - growing apathy over failed state-building in post-Gaddafi's Libya
	post-Skhirat	PDS to GNA; support to the UN-led political process; re-engagement with all major actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Macron's increased activism in foreign policy (incl. Mideast) - competition with Italy over influence in North Africa
United Kingdom	1 st civil war	PDS, IS, DMI (full-fledged) – pro-opposition, anti-regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interests and views mostly aligned with the ones of France and Italy, but are less substantial with regards to own influence in North Africa
	2 nd civil war	disengagement, passive role, nominal support to UN-led political process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - growing apathy over failed state-building in post-Gaddafi's Libya
	post-Skhirat	PDS to GNA (limited); support to the UN-led political process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of coherent Mideast policy priorities post-Brexit; tension between EU-coordinated and independent foreign policy incentives
United States	1 st civil war	PDS, CMLS (limited), IS, DMI (limited) – pro-opposition, anti-regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interests mostly tied to the ones of the European and regional allies; - improving own public image in the wake of Washington's confusing reaction to the Egyptian revolution
	2 nd civil war	disengagement, passive role, nominal support for UN-led political process; SMA (limited to countering Islamic State)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - post-Benghazi-attack (Sept. 2012) shock and disillusionment; growing apathy over failed state-building in post-Gaddafi's Libya; - lack of interest in Libya as a strategic asset, lack of priority in the U.S. regional policies
	post-Skhirat		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overall strategic confusion over imperatives in the U.S. Mideast policy; - Trump's anti-Islamist inclinations
Russia	1 st civil war	cautious approach; abstention from blocking UN authorization of anti-Gaddafi DMI; effectively allowed DMI legitimization	In 2011 Russia did not oppose itself to the Western agenda, might have bargained own neutrality for concessions on other issues (WTO accession, missile defense in Europe, etc.); at the same time, Russia lost its investments under the Gaddafi-era military (Rosoboronexport) and energy (Gazprom, Lukoil Overseas, Tatneft) contracts.
	2 nd civil war	passive role, nominal support to the UN-led political process	Russia nourished strong conviction that the 2011 NATO intervention was in violation of the UNSC Resolution 1973's mandate and paved the way for turning Libya into a failed state.
	post-Skhirat	increasingly active hybrid approach; PDS and CMLS (limited, indirect) to Gen. Haftar and the LNA; nominal support to the UN-led political process; diplomatic engagement with all major local actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a mixture of political ambition, opportunism and recent anti-Western sentiments; - growing own influence in the MENA region at large since direct intervention in the Syrian conflict, ambition to consolidate its presence in the Mediterranean; - influence in Libya viewed as potential leverage over Europe; - increasingly close bilateral relations with Egypt under president al-Sisi; - historical preference for secular authoritarian (mostly, military-led) regimes in the region; - sympathy with the anti-Islamist agenda

⁶⁰ Acronyms used in this column stand for: PDS – political and diplomatic support; CMLS – covert military and logistical support; IS – information support (incl. propaganda); DMI – direct military intervention; SMA – sporadic military action.

Egypt	1 st civil war	non-intervention; domestic turmoil	New revolutionary authorities in Egypt sympathized with the agenda of Libyan rebels	
	2 nd civil war	PDS, CMLS (full-fledged) and SMA in support of Gen. Haftar and the Tobruk government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - al-Sisi's foreign policy as a reflection of domestic conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood; - anti-Islamist, anti-revolutionary agenda; - physical spillovers from Libya's instability (through shared border): - growing Jihadist threat in the Sinai and other regions inside Egypt 	
	post-Skhirat	PDS and CMLS to Gen. Haftar and the LNA; diplomatic engagement with the GNA; nominal support to the UN-led political process		
UAE	1 st civil war	PDS, CMLS (limited), DMI (limited) – pro-opposition, anti-regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaddafi's opposition to the Gulf monarchies' policies and ideological orientations ("anti-Imperialist", anti-monarchist, pro-Iranian, etc.); - management of the security alliance with the West 	
	2 nd civil war	PDS, CMLS and SMA in support of Gen. Haftar and the Tobruk government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - anti-Islamist, anti-revolutionary agenda; - strategic rivalry with Qatar, Libyan conflict increasingly viewed as a proxy war 	
	post-Skhirat	PDS and CMLS to Gen. Haftar and the LNA; diplomatic engagement with the GNA; nominal support to the UN-led political process		
Qatar	1 st civil war	PDS, CMLS (full-fledged), IS, DMI (limited) – pro-opposition, anti-regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - general sponsorship of the Arab Spring; - management of the security alliance with the West 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pro-Islamist, -pro-revolutionary agenda: - instrumentalization of political and financial support to Islamist movements throughout the region as part of foreign policy toolbox
	2 nd civil war	PDS, CMLS (full-fledged) and IS in support of the GNC-led government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strategic rivalry with the UAE/Saudi Arabia, Libyan conflict increasingly viewed as a proxy war 	
	post-Skhirat	PDS, CMLS (full-fledged) and IS in support of the GNA and various Islamist groups; nominal support to the UN-led political process		

Table 1. Forms and Motivations for Intervention by Major Regional and Extra-Regional Powers in the Libyan conflict, 2011-2018.

Opportunities for intervention is another important factor to take into account, as it serves as a “gating” variable, i.e. the more domestic and external opportunities to act there exist for political actors at the moment (in terms of costs, benefits and restrains), the more they will act on their motivations to intervene. This factor is particularly relevant for democracies since developed institutions tend to impose constraints on adventurist foreign policy action.

Libya's own debilitating civil war, its institutional disintegration and societal collapse laid fertile ground for predatory opportunism of its regional and extra-regional rivals at all phases of the conflict. However, the 2011 direct military intervention was not an inevitable scenario. The motivations of France, Britain and Qatar would have not been enough for the intervention to happen but for a combination of factors that had created political space (i.e. opportunity) for action in March 2011. The latter included: regional support by the Arab League where the anti-Gaddafi voices managed to overwhelm the more cautious ones, Russia's and China's abstentions from vetoing the UNSC Resolution 1973, estimated low costs and high feasibility of a military campaign⁶¹, and finally, seemingly low electoral risks in France and Britain as the two opposition parties – the Socialist Party and the Labor Party respectively – did not object the intervention scenario while France's public

⁶¹ Libya's territory is 90% desert operationally suitable for air bombing campaign. Jamahiriya's military capabilities, especially in air defenses, were relatively low. Finally, the operation did not require foreign foots on the ground as this role was reserved for local revolutionary factions.

opinion was sufficiently in favor of intervention (66%)⁶², even though in Britain it was expectedly more skeptical (only 43%)⁶³.

Assessment of the Obama administration's opportunities in March 2011 also allows to reveal why the U.S. role in the operation "Unified Protector" was relatively limited in scope compared with its European allies, and especially, with its own previous experiences in the region. Even before the campaign started, there had been no mass public support for military intervention in Libya. The public opinion was split over the issue of a no-fly zone (44% approved, 45% disapproved the idea), but was decisively against militarily engaging the Gaddafi's air force (77%) and arming anti-regime rebels (69%).⁶⁴ Congress was equally wary of Obama's Libya policy with the administration being criticized by both interventionists (for inaction) and non-interventionists (for undue interference). Yet another constraint on U.S. action was imposed by the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and, as yet, in Iraq, and the American public would have not been impressed should a promised end to the Iraq war have been accompanied by a start of another war in the Middle East with no clear exit strategy. As a result of these limited opportunities for action, the U.S. effectively ceded the primary role in the Libya campaign to its European allies.

3. Impact of external interventions on the conflict dynamics

The question of whether the foreign interventions affected the duration and intensity of the Libyan crisis seems disputable and may be the subject of both further inquiry and speculation. However, given that by mid-March 2011 Gaddafi's forces were on the verge of recapturing Benghazi, it is an open secret that, should there be no NATO intervention, the war, most likely, would have been over sooner rather than later, with rebels defeated⁶⁵ and potentially fewer casualties overall⁶⁶, though the latter is questionable due to divergent assessments of regime's intentions. Moreover, as the intervention was under way, the Western powers never offered Gaddafi a way out leaving him with no alternative to a

⁶² "Deux tiers des Français approuvent l'intervention en Libye, selon un sondage," *Le Point*, March 23, 2011, http://www.lepoint.fr/societe/deux-tiers-des-francais-approuvent-l-intervention-en-libye-selon-un-sondage-23-03-2011-1310165_23.php.

⁶³ "Intervention in Libya, and Public Opinion Around Our Involvement", *Ipsos MORI*, April 13, 2011, <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/intervention-libya-and-public-opinion-around-our-involvement>.

⁶⁴ Russell Heimlich, "Public Wary of U.S. Military Intervention in Libya," *Pew Research Center Report*, March 23, 2011, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2011/03/23/public-wary-of-u-s-military-intervention-in-libya/>.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Ben Barry, "Libya's Lessons," *Survival* 53, no. 5 (2011): 5-14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2011.621622>; Christopher S. Chivvis, "Libya and the Future of Liberal Intervention," *Survival* 54, no. 6 (2012): 73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2012.749632>.

⁶⁶ Alan J. Kuperman, "A Model Humanitarian Intervention?: Reassessing NATO's Libya Campaign," *Quarterly Journal: International Security* 38, no. 1 (Summer 2013): 134.

regime change scenario and thus basically pushing him to fight for own survival which undoubtedly prolonged hostilities and heightened its intensity.

A similarly directed correlation can be observed with foreign interference in the second civil war and onwards. Decisive support provided to the Islamist camp and the Haftar-led camp by Qatar and UAE/Egypt respectively drove the situation into further stalemate, the one of a delicate balance of power between the two primary parties neither of which was motivated to seek compromise. Even after the LPA was signed and the GNA established, as Mezran and Miller argue, certain regional and international actors, while rhetorically supporting the UN-led political process, on the ground have provided assistance to preferred local actors empowering some of them over others and thus undermining the UN mediation efforts.⁶⁷

The Systemic Dimension: Political Expansion and Penetration Through International System

The systemic dimension of conflict internationalization refers to expansion of its external systemic limits, or the scope that it occupies within a larger international system. When systemic escalation of an intrastate armed conflict takes place, its relevance grows penetrating through the system and affecting international relations, power balances and relationship structures on regional and even global level.

Firstly, the number of stakeholders (external players that have at least some vested interest in the conflict) increases which may include powerful international actors that are central to the system structure. Secondly, stakes associated with the conflict and its outcome may become higher for these external players leading to escalation of their commitment to relevant issues. Thirdly, it often (though not always) translates into bigger involvement of respective actors in the conflict transforming them into third parties or secondary (supporting) parties within the conflict structure. Forth, even when systemic escalation does not bring increased involvement of concerned outside actors within the conflict structure, it can still become a factor in international political dynamics and affect interstate relations at the systemic level by causing mistrust and tension or, on contrary, by stimulating security cooperation. Respectively, it can lead, among other things, to either dysfunction or progress in development of regional security arrangements. As a result of all these developments, the conflict gains

⁶⁷ Karim Mezran and Elissa Miller, "Flawed Diplomacy in Libya: How Mediation Has Acted as a Cover for Continued Chaos," *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, no. 28 (Winter 2018): 103-111.

more international attention and becomes progressively more salient on the international agenda, though it may nominally remain intrastate.

Potential for systemic escalation is particularly considerable when the conflict structure is linked to broader patterns of competition in international relations such as preexisting international rivalry dyads. Power dynamics within these dyads can become embedded into an intrastate conflict structure transforming it into a proxy war and, likely, exacerbating the rivalry itself. Another factor associated with systemic escalation is when the original dispute's object of incompatibility includes "broader" issues that are relevant at the systemic level.⁶⁸

Unlike the horizontal and vertical dimensions, the systemic dimension does not imply just one-off events, nor is it limited to one-way directional processes, but rather involves interconnectedness that can become long-standing. Interplay between internal conflict dynamics and systems-level dynamics – together with diffusion, intervention and externalization processes – can create linkages between different conflicts within a single region. This interconnectedness has been conceptualized as *regional conflict complexes*, or *RCCs*⁶⁹ where distinct conflicts become mutually reinforcing to the point that it is impossible to completely disentangle them and solve just one without addressing the entire regional dimension.⁷⁰ Connectedness in a RCC is maintained by links formed between actors and between issues – from different conflicts – as well as by a kind of shared pool of resources which strengthens belligerents' fighting capacities and creates reinforcing loops perpetuating the complex's lifecycle.

The Systemic Dimension in the Libyan Conflict: Driving International Rivalries in the Middle East, Maintaining Trafficking Networks in Africa

In February 2011, Libyan crisis' importance for the international community fit into the overall obsession and hopes associated with the Arab uprisings. But after the relatively bloodless revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt had led to what then seemed like a political transition, the escalation of hostilities between rebels and the regime in Libya started to absorb the international media's and political actors' attention. By late February 2011, the salience of the crisis (which turned to be the first full-fledged

⁶⁸ A good example would be the Palestinian-Israeli issue of control over the Temple Mount (Haram al-Sharif) in East Jerusalem which is salient for Muslim and Jewish communities the world over.

⁶⁹ See Peter Wallensteen and Margareta Sollenberg, "Armed Conflict and Regional Conflict Complexes, 1989-97," *Journal of Peace Research* 35, no. 5 (1998): 621-634, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343398035005005>.

⁷⁰ For alternative conceptualization consider Ansorg's *regional conflict systems* defined as "geographically determined area of insecurity, characterised by interdependent violent conflicts with a plurality of different sub-state, national or transnational actors". See: Nadine Ansorg, "How Does Militant Violence Diffuse in Regions? Regional Conflict Systems in International Relations and Peace and Conflict Studies," *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 5, no. 1 (2011): 174-175, <http://doi.org/10.4119/UNIBI/ijcv.112>.

civil war case of the Arab Spring) both at regional and global levels had grown exponentially. It was destined to put to test certain regional (the Arab League, the African Union) and global (the UN Security Council) security frameworks as well as emerging international norms (“the responsibility to protect”, R2P).

Systemic relevance of the first civil war was underscored by uncommonly tough positions adopted by major pan-Arab and pan-African institutions of which Libya was a member-state – the Arab League and the African Union. The Arab League that had traditionally maintained its commitment to the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs not only suspended Libya’s membership following the deadly escalation between the regime and the rebel factions, but also appealed to the UN Security Council for imposition of a no-fly zone and decided to cooperate with the NTC in view of “grave crimes committed by the Libyan authorities”.⁷¹ Syria’s and Algeria’s voices that objected to this strong anti-regime rhetoric within the Arab League were sidelined leaving Gaddafi with virtually no powerful advocates in the Arab world. Even more surprisingly, the African Union in its February 2011 communique condemned the regime for “the indiscriminate and excessive use of force” and urged to respect “the aspirations of the people of Libya” for democracy and political reform⁷², despite Gaddafi’s long-standing efforts at strengthening the Union’s international role as well as his economic assistance to some of Union’s members.⁷³

However, international obsession with Libya was short-lived. After Gaddafi was toppled and the NTC assumed full power to start a transition process, the systemic limits of the Libyan crisis started to shrink. It turned out that the global actors (Europe and the U.S.) had no viable plan for how to bring the country back together in the post-Gaddafi period. They were reluctant to take responsibility for Libya’s reconstruction, partly due to bitter experience of reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq, but mostly because Libya’s stability was not viewed as an indispensable element of their regional security interests neither as a strategic economic asset worth investing in.

Consequently, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) established in September 2011 did not provide for multinational peacekeeping force, and its mandate remained limited to just a political mission status. External state-based actors that were primarily responsible for the successful

⁷¹ Resolution. no. 7360 Adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States Meeting at the Ministerial Level, Cairo, March 12, 2011, [http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/Arab%20League%20Ministerial%20level%20statement%2012%20march%202011%20-%20english\(1\).pdf](http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/Arab%20League%20Ministerial%20level%20statement%2012%20march%202011%20-%20english(1).pdf).

⁷² Communique of the 261st Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, PSC/PR/COMM(CCLXI), February 23, 2011, <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/psc-communique-on-the-situation-in-libya.pdf>.

⁷³ Three of the Union’s members – Nigeria, South Africa and Gabon – also voted in favor of the UNSC Resolution 1973.

regime change failed to provide the new Libyan authorities with assistance on the issues most critical for state capacity – demobilization and disarmament of armed factions (revolutionary brigades, tribal militias) and formation of unified and effective army and police that would have restored the state’s monopoly on legitimate violence. Instead, external assistance was limited to economic aid, consultancy on public governance and civil society development programs.⁷⁴

At the same time, this disengagement by major extra-regional actors did not result in overall systemic de-escalation of the conflict. As Libya’s systemic relevance on the global scale waned, its systemic relevance on the regional scale re-emerged embedded into wider patterns of rivalry in the Middle East – a development that may be described as transformation of the Libyan conflict’s systemic limits. As a result, the crisis re-escalated in 2014 as a second civil war which, this time, was to become an element within a larger regional system of the Qatar-UAE confrontation.

From the very beginning of the Arab Spring, despite the tactical anti-Gaddafi alliance, the two Gulf monarchies of Qatar and the UAE (plus the like-minded Saudi Arabia) maintained divergent positions on popular uprisings in the Arab world. Whereas Qatar was the biggest sponsor of revolutionary movements and provided vital support to Islamist political parties in Egypt (Freedom and Justice Party) and Tunisia (Renaissance Party, or Ennahda) that succeeded to the toppled dictatorships, the Emirati and the Saudi elites viewed the Arab Spring as a threat to stability and legitimacy of their own regimes. This confrontation was not so much rooted in the revolutionary vs. counter-revolutionary ideological orientations, as it proceeded from regional political and historical rivalry between the two ruling clans – the one headed by Abu Dhabi’s Al Nahyan family and the other headed by the Qatar’s House of Thani. Qatar’s regime, still, is conservative, and its pro-revolutionary tenet coupled with overt and covert support to political Islam throughout the MENA region has been for the most part used as a mere instrument of Doha’s increasingly assertive and independent foreign policy.

Nevertheless, the two regional power centers – the UAE-Saudi camp (allied with Bahrain, Egypt and Israel) and the Qatari camp (allied with Turkey, Sudan and various Muslim Brotherhood affiliated movements) – have developed strikingly different positions on many regional issues, such as political struggles in Egypt, opposition to Iran’s expansion, relations with the Palestinian Hamas, separatism in South Yemen, military presence in Somalia, and, not to a lesser extent, Libya’s second civil war. Along these lines, local clashes between Islamist and anti-Islamist forces in Libya that had exacerbated since

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Saskia Van Genugten, “The Gulf States: Channeling Regional Ambitions in Different Directions” in *Foreign Actors in Libya’s Crisis*, ed. Karim Mezran, Arturo Varvelli (Milan: Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2017), 50; Mattia Toaldo, “Europe: Carving Out a New Role”, in *Foreign Actors in Libya’s Crisis*, ed. Karim Mezran, Arturo Varvelli (Milan: Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2017), 58.

2014 resonated with the systemic rivalry between Qatar and the UAE. The July 2013 counter-revolutionary coup by army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi supported by the UAE effectively brought Egypt back from Doha's to Abu Dhabi's orbit and hence erected a solid bastion for anti-Islamist forces in Libya.

As a result, the 2014 systemic escalation led to the incorporation of a nominally intrastate conflict into pre-existing contours of regional power struggles creating a typical *proxy-war structure*. At the same time, these regional developments had no correlation with global power dynamics, as Russia's limited engagement and the U.S. continuous disengagement with Libya in the post-Skhirat era have not evolved into any kind of substantial Russian-American proxy struggle, unlike it happened in Syria.

Another way to address the systemic dimension of the Libyan conflict internationalization is to look for possible *connectedness* with other conflicts in North Africa and the Sahel. This transborder connectedness has facilitated the formation of at least two regional conflict complexes (RCCs) – the Libya-Chad-Sudan complex and the Libya-Niger-Chad complex.

The *Libya-Chad-Sudan RCC* actually predates the Libyan revolution. It was manifest in the 1980s and then during the Chad-Darfur crisis in 2003-2010, however, the collapse of the Gaddafi regime and the ensuing chaos of the first civil war destabilized southern Libya to such an extent that it became an attractor for armed opposition militants from Chad and Darfur as well as for Sudanese “janjawid” militia fighters. Facilitated by transnational Chadian-Libyan communities residing in South Cyrenaica, these movements led to the re-emergence of a regional market for cross-border mercenaries (as well as to proliferation of trafficking and banditry) fomenting permanent instability in northern Chad and Sudan.⁷⁵

Exploiting this lawlessness, armed opposition groups from both countries established “safe havens” in south Libya raising potential costs of pursuing them for the Chadian and Sudanese central governments. Adding to the political layer of this regional complexity, Sudan and Chad have supported opposite sides in the Libyan conflict. Whereas the former is sympathetic with Islamist groups and would prefer to see a friendly regime in Libya, the latter is primarily concerned with anti-Jihadist agenda and would prefer to secure its northern borders from roving armed militants.

⁷⁵ Tubiana and Gramizzi, “Tubu Trouble”, 11-13.

The *Libya-Niger-Chad RCC* has been facilitated by transnational ties between Tubu communities and is primarily maintained by regional arms trafficking network. Since Tubu armed groups reside along Libya's southern borders, they have been able to establish themselves as guardians of local oilfields, including the Sarir Field in Cyrenaica and the Elephant Field in Fezzan. Foreign oil companies operating in Libya had no choice but to enter into direct arrangements with these Tubu units which strengthened the latter's control over the vast border region with access to neighboring Egypt, Sudan, Chad and Niger. As a result, the Tubu managed to take over lucrative contraband and arms trafficking from the Tuareg, whose sway over these networks had gradually eroded.⁷⁶ High demand for weapons across African warzones, access to a broad sample of arms and munitions from Libyan stockpiles (both Gaddafi's and foreign-supplied), a web of tribal alliances stretching across the Sahel-Sahara have transformed Fezzan into a major regional hub for illicit arms.⁷⁷

The newfound economic and military power of the Libyan Tubu attracted many of their Chadian and Nigerien brethren to join their ranks, and at the same time allowed to expand their role in the smuggling economies of Northern Niger and Chad. These strengthened Tubu cross-border ties linked to illicit regional trafficking networks present a significant challenge to the Nigerien and Chadian governments that may see their authority undermined and state institutions weakened in northern areas of their respective countries.

Another example of how a war economy creates transborder connectedness and drives transnational criminal networks is fuel smuggling from Libya. Heavily subsidized fuel⁷⁸ has been smuggled out of the country through its porous land borders for decades, however, due to collapse of the state and proliferation of armed militias following the 2011 civil war, local warlords and international criminals managed to expand these businesses to industrial scale. Consequently, sea routes for fuel smuggling from Libya's west coast to Europe (via Malta) and to Turkey have been established, while numerous militia leaders that are in control of criminal syndicates have accumulated vested interests in the black economy of "commodities" including not just fuel, but also weapons, drugs and cigarettes as well as human trafficking.⁷⁹

Correlations between the Three Dimensions

⁷⁶ Mark Shaw and Fiona Mangan, "Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition: Profits and Losses", Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, February 24, 2014, <http://www.usip.org/publications/illicit-trafficking-and-libya-s-transition-profits-and-losses>.

⁷⁷ Holger, "Expanding Arsenal", 176.

⁷⁸ Fuel price on the black markets may be as low as \$0.03c. per liter.

⁷⁹ Mark Micallef, "Europe Should Help Get Fuel off Libya's Fire," *Institute for Security Studies*, May 16, 2018, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/europe-should-help-get-fuel-off-libyas-fire>.

The distinction between different dimensions of internationalization is analytical and serves mostly conceptual purposes. Processes taking place within each of the three dimensions exhibit cross-dimensional links and correlations with each other. Many, though not all, of those correlations are mutually reinforcing meaning that escalation along one dimension is likely to trigger simultaneous or consecutive escalatory dynamics along another dimension or even both other dimensions.

The horizontal-vertical and vertical-horizontal directed connections are among the most commonly observed interdimensional linkages. The risk of civil war contagion from a source state (horizontal escalation) threatens interests of a neighboring state prompting the latter to consider intervening in order to reduce this risk and protect own interests by curbing hostilities in the former.⁸⁰ Kathman argues that state's motivation for intervention into a civil war lies not only with its narrow interests related to the conflict at risk of contagion, but especially so with its wider regional interests that might be affected by such diffusion.⁸¹ In theory, such military intervention, if successful, creates a counterbalancing loop containing diffusion of the initial conflict, i.e. halting horizontal escalation. In practice, however, it is anything but guaranteed. Multiple destabilizing effects of external military intervention into a civil war exacerbate rather than pacify its dynamics consequently leading to greater spatial spread.⁸²

Identifying various connections between the vertical and systemic dimensions can also contribute to further conceptualization of the *proxy war* phenomenon. On the one hand, a generic proxy-conflict structure can be regarded as a result of intervention (inward-directed vertical escalation) by two external powers (that often happen to be engaged in strategic rivalry vis-à-vis each other) in support of the opposite sides of an intrastate conflict. On the other hand, such symmetric structure can also be an element (both the process and the outcome) of systemic escalation within a larger international system. The two aspects normally create a reinforcing loop: strategic rivalry projects itself onto a regional conflict contributing to its escalation and “proxy-fication”, while an internationalized internal conflict

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Dylan Balch-Lindsay and Andrew J. Enterline, "Killing Time: The World Politics of Civil War Duration, 1820-1992," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2000): 615-642, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00174>; Jacob D. Kathman, "Civil War Contagion and Neighboring Interventions," *International Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2010): 989-1012, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2010.00623.x>; Douglas Lemke and Patrick M. Regan, "Interventions As Influence," in *The Scourge of War: New Extensions on an Old Problem*, ed. Paul F. Diehl (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), 145-168.

⁸¹ Jacob D. Kathman, "Civil War Diffusion and Regional Motivations for Intervention," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55, no. 6 (2011): 847-876, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002711408009>.

⁸² One of the ways out of this counterbalancing vs. reinforcing dilemma is through disaggregating between various types of intervention. Peksen and Lounsbury maintain that hostile interventions (in support of the opposition) increase the likelihood of conflict contagion to neighboring countries, whereas supportive interventions (in favor of the government) have a pacifying effect reducing the risk of contagion on the regional scale. See: Dursun Peksen and Marie Olson Lounsbury, "Beyond the Target State: Foreign Military Intervention and Neighboring State Stability," *International Interactions* 38, no. 3 (2012): 348-374, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2012.676516>.

tends to attract external interests and can further intensify a rivalry at the systemic level. Not surprisingly, as revealed by Findley and Teo, when one's strategic rival has already intervened in an ongoing civil conflict on the side of the government, the risk of one's own intervention on the side of the opposition increases by roughly eleven times. In the same way, when a rival intervenes on the side of the opposition, the probability of own intervention on the side of the government increases by nearly four times.⁸³

The remaining part of the paper addresses these and other interdimensional connections that establish and maintain both positive and negative feedback loops within the internationalization of the Libyan conflict.

The Vertical-Systemic Nexus: Strategic Rivalries and Foreign Interventions in the Libyan Conflict

During both the first and the second civil wars, external interventions by state-based actors on the one hand and systemic escalation of the Libyan conflict on the other hand formed several steady reinforcing loops. In March 2011, with the relevance of intra-Libyan strife growing exponentially across the Arab world, it was this systemic escalation (reflected in official positions of regional international institutions) that had opened the gate for the NATO-led military intervention. With its strong anti-Gaddafi message, the Arab League virtually suspended its traditional non-interference policy which had been one of the tenets of its cherished vision for a regional order. Even macro-regional collective security mechanisms such as the African Union's Non-Aggression and Common Defense Pact of 2005, which obliges the state parties to "provide mutual assistance towards their common defense" and "respond by all available means to aggression or threat of aggression against any member state"⁸⁴, failed to prevent a major multilateral military action against a long-standing regime of one of the pact's state parties. Thus, the Arab League and the African Union effectively provided political legitimization, if not a direct sanction, for foreign intervention in the Libyan intra-state conflict in the Middle East and Africa. These systemic considerations could have also tilted the balance for the still hesitant Obama administration in favor of the decision to intervene.

⁸³ Michael G. Findley and Tze Kwang Teo, "Rethinking Third-Party Interventions into Civil Wars: An Actor-Centric Approach," *Journal of Politics* 68, no. 4 (2006): 833-835, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00473.x>.

⁸⁴ African Union Non-Aggression and Common Defense Pact, Adopted by the Fourth Ordinary Session of the Assembly Held in Abuja, Nigeria, January 31, 2005, https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7788-treaty-0031_-_african_union_non-aggression_and_common_defence_pact_e.pdf.

A different kind of vertical-systemic connection could be observed in the dynamics of the second civil war. The originally local feud between the Islamist GNC-led camp and the anti-Islamist Haftar-led camp had grown embedded into wider structures and patterns of regional power struggles centered around the geopolitical and ideological rivalry between Qatar and the UAE (joined by Egypt). The two strategic protagonists came to be so much consumed by this zero-sum competition inside Libya that the former's intervention in the form of covert military and logistical support to one camp was immediately reciprocated by the latter's symmetrical intervention in support of the other camp. The result was a kind of strategic stalemate, bloody but not hopeless for protagonists and not mutually hurting enough, as the external sponsors kept pouring military assistance to their local proxies.⁸⁵ This Libyan impasse raised the stakes and escalated commitments for both Qatar and the UAE creating a reinforcing escalatory loop and contributing the conflict "proxy-fication".

The Horizontal-Vertical Loop: External Interventions to Contain Physical Spillovers of the Libyan Crisis

In the Western discourse employed to justify the 2011 military intervention, an important role was attributed to the threat that potential physical spillovers from the civil war could have constituted to Libya's neighbors and to Europe. British and French officials pointed at 180,000 "displaced migrant workers" who had left Libya since February 20, 2011⁸⁶ and warned about immediate risks that these externalities posed to EU nations due to geographic proximity. In turn, the Obama administration expected "thousands of additional refugees across Libya's borders" that would put "enormous strains" on "fragile transitions in Egypt and Tunisia".⁸⁷

Intervention by Egypt in the second civil war in support of the anti-Islamist camp, to a large extent, had to do with the very real threat posed by jihadi militants trickling from Libya through the vast unsecured border to western Egypt and towards the Sinai.⁸⁸ To curb these spillovers, president al-Sisi ordered airstrikes by the Egyptian AF against militant positions inside Libya and also appealed for the international community to suspend the UN arms embargo for the Tobruk-based government. Though

⁸⁵ This assistance continued despite the June 2016 UNSC resolution which authorized a naval operation by the EU aimed at enforcing the Libya arms embargo in the Mediterranean.

⁸⁶ "Development Secretary visits Libyan Tunisian border", UK Government's News Story, March 4, 2011, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/development-secretary-visits-libyan-tunisian-border>.

⁸⁷ Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya, Washington, DC, National Defense University, March 28, 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya>.

⁸⁸ In one of initial episodes, 21 Coptic Egyptian hostages in Libya were executed by militants allied to ISIS, followed by a series of suicide bombings at Coptic churches inside Egypt over the next years.

this latter request was rejected by the EU and the U.S., it did not prevent Egypt from providing covert military and logistical assistance to the Haftar-led forces.

These and other similar interventions aimed to contain physical spillovers (refugees, arms, foreign fighters, etc.) of the Libyan conflict beyond the country's borders were intended to form a counterbalancing loop, the one that would halt original manifestations of horizontal escalation. However, as argued in this paper as well as in literature on civil war intervention in general, the practice of such interventions, especially those in support of the rebels against the government, often yields the opposite result creating yet another reinforcing loop in conflict's internationalization. Although external interventions in both the first and the second civil wars in Libya could have limited the localization of hostilities in the short run, the long-term consequences provoked by these interventions were to inevitably intensify the spatial spread of instability across the region.

The Horizontal-Systemic-Vertical Loop: Spatial Spread, Systemic Threats and International Responses

Some of physical spillovers and risks of contagion from Libya were so severe and far-reaching that they not just concerned the neighboring countries but evolved into transnational threats at the systemic level. These developments were mostly related to the regional expansion of ISIS and the European migrant crisis. Both were a result of horizontal diffusion processes and for both Libya was not a source but rather a catalyst, however, over time, they have come to be major systemic challenges for the MENA region as well as for Europe and beyond, and thus have required coordinated responses by the international community triggering a new wave of activism and engagement on the Libyan track. As in 2011, Libyan instability has once again acquired global systemic relevance increasing the incidence of external interventions.

In 2011, the proliferation of al-Qaeda (e.g., Ansar al-Sharia) that feeds on chaos and instability was a direct consequence of the first civil war. In 2014, the emergence and expansion of ISIS in Libya was facilitated not only by the second civil war, but also by rapidly unfolding events in the Levant. Transfer of foreign fighters was a major transmission channel for this contagion, but equally important was the demonstration and learning effect that urged many radical Islamists in North Africa to replicate ISIS ideology and modus operandi, and to pledge allegiance to the "caliph". In October 2014, the Islamic Youth Shura Council in Derna along with several other radical groups swore allegiance to the Islamic State and thus effectively transformed the Libyan conflict structure and its international political salience by bringing the threat even closer to Europe's borders. For the international community the

situation was complicated by the fact that choosing between the “Dawn coalition” and the “Dignity coalition” as potential partners against ISIS would have meant taking sides in the civil war.

In February 2015, ISIS militants captured Sirte and its surroundings – the hometown of Gaddafi – that would later become the main ISIS stronghold in Libya. By the end of 2015, the militants controlled territories stretching hundreds of kilometers from Sirte, while also establishing cells in Benghazi, Tripoli, Sabratah and other cities. About 70% of ISIS fighters in Libya originated from neighboring Tunisia, Egypt, Chad and other countries⁸⁹ making Libya a major jihadist hub in North Africa and underscoring yet another regional connectedness. According to the Department of Defense’s estimate, by April 2016 there were 4,000 to 6,000 ISIS fighters in Libya.⁹⁰

The ISIS threat would not have reached the systemic level but for the European migrant crisis that magnified it. Since after the fall of the Gaddafi regime that had served as Europe’s de facto border guardian, migrants from all over the Middle East, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa started to arrive in Libya in hundreds of thousands hoping for onward transit to Europe via the Mediterranean. Established trafficking networks that span dozens of countries and have grown to become a billion-dollar industry facilitated this trade serving as conduits of instability. The city of Agadez in central Niger along the so called “central route” (the Niger-Libya corridor through which the vast majority of African migrants poured into south Libya) came to be known as a major smuggling hub in the Sahara Desert embedded within the larger illicit segments of the Sahel economy.⁹¹ Although Libya is not the country of origin, but rather a transit zone, for most of these migrants, it was the destabilization and state disintegration brought by recent armed conflicts that rendered central government incapable of protecting over 4,300 km of Libya’s land borders with its six neighbors.

Whereas initially in 2012-2013 trafficking networks through Libya had been formed around Syrian refugees who’s purchasing power allowed these illicit businesses to emerge, since 2014 the main “market” shifted to concentrate on sub-Saharan Africans, poorer but also less demanding in terms of human trafficking conditions. This is where it had become truly ugly, and the world was shocked by the November 2017 CNN’s report of migrants from African countries being auctioned off at Libya’s

⁸⁹ Christine Petré, “Keeping the Islamic State in check in Libya,” *Al-Monitor*, April 12, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/04/libya-government-process-tripoli-growing-isis-concerns.html#ixzz4fGXiDO30>.

⁹⁰ Transcript of the Department of Defense Briefing by Gen. David M. Rodriguez, April 7, 2016, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/715846/departement-of-defense-briefing-by-gen-david-m-rodriguez/>.

⁹¹ Peter Tinti and Tom Westcott, “The Niger-Libya Corridor: Smugglers’ Perspectives,” *ISS Paper* 299, Institute for Security Studies, November 2016, https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/paper299_2.pdf.

“slave markets”.⁹² According to the director of the attorney general's office in the GNA, investigations into smuggling networks established that the trafficking ring extended as high as to include leaders of migrant detention camps, members of security services, and even embassy officials from African countries based in Tripoli.⁹³

The two issues – the IS expansion and the migrant crisis – are to be considered together, as massive irregular migrations via the Mediterranean serve as a channel for jihadist infiltrations to Europe. The problem was magnified by open borders within Europe and contributed to social tension in European cities and to the rise of right-wing populist movements in the European politics, which underscores the systemic relevance of these developments. Not surprisingly, external interventions aimed at stemming spillovers from Libya, again, appeared on international agenda.

To counter the ISIS threat, since early 2015, the U.S., France, the U.K. and other western powers started conducting reconnaissance flights over jihadist-controlled areas in northern Libya and deployed special operations forces there.⁹⁴ Over the entire 2016, western military advisors trained fighters from the GNA-allied Misratan armed militias which in May that year were reorganized under the *al-Bunyan al-Marsous* umbrella. Until mid-2016 U.S. raids against ISIS militants in various Libyan locations had been sporadic, limited and mostly unauthorized by the Libyan authorities.⁹⁵ Since August 2016, however, following a request from the Fayeze al-Sarraj government, Pentagon initiated a full-scale counter-terrorist operation to dislodge ISIS from Sirte and other major cities across the country. The Sirte area was cleared of ISIS by December 2016, while the LNA led by Gen. Haftar took steps to counter jihadist presence in Cyrenaica in the context of its overall anti-Islamist campaign. Because of these interventions, ISIS in Libya, though not defeated entirely, was severely degraded and had to regroup southwards to the towns of Kufra and Sabha.

⁹² Nima Elbagir, Raja Razek, Alex Platt and Bryony Jones, “People for Sale - Where Lives Are Auctioned for \$400,” *CNN*, November 14, 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/14/africa/libya-migrant-auctions/index.html>.

⁹³ “Libya Issues Arrest Warrants for Over 200 Suspected Human Traffickers,” *The New Arab*, March 15, 2018, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/3/15/libya-issues-arrest-warrants-for-over-200-suspected-traffickers>.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., “French Special Forces Waging 'Secret War' in Libya: Report,” *Reuters*, February 24, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-france/french-special-forces-waging-secret-war-in-libya-report-idUSKCN0VX1C3>; Ruth Sherlock, “British 'Advisers' Deployed to Libya to Build Anti-ISIL Cells,” *The Telegraph*, February 27, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/12176114/British-advisers-deployed-to-Libya-to-build-anti-Isil-cells.html>; Missy Ryan, “U.S. Establishes Libyan Outposts with Eye toward Offensive Against Islamic State,” *The Washington Post*, May 12, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-establishes-libyan-outposts-with-eye-toward-offensive-against-islamic-state/2016/05/12/11195d32-183c-11e6-9e16-2e5a123aac62_story.html.

⁹⁵ Such as the February 2016 strike on the ISIS training camp in Sabratah that had been used by the jihadists to prepare for terrorist attacks against Tunisia.

It is to be emphasized that, despite the waning interest and poor engagement with the Libyan crisis on other issues, the U.S. felt pressured to intervene decisively and substantively on the ISIS front because inaction in Libya could have undermined Washington's efforts to defeat the group in Syria and Iraq. In 2018, the DoD arranged for building \$100 million new facilities at a Nigerien base in Agadez that would allow the U.S. Air Force to operate armed drones against extremists in Africa.⁹⁶ Though located in Niger, the operational range of new facilities are to allow combat missions against ISIS remnants in Libya as well. Coincidence or not, as mentioned earlier, Agadez also used to be a major hub for human trafficking networks stretching from sub-Saharan Africa to the Libyan coast.

Collective responses by regional actors to counter the systemic threat of human trafficking in Africa have been limited. On May 31, 2018, Libya, Chad, Niger and Sudan signed the N'Djamena protocol that is supposed to strengthen cross-border security cooperation among the four neighboring countries, including mixed border patrols, joint operations management center and mandate for seeking external assistance aimed at targeting transnational criminal activities, particularly trafficking and smuggling.⁹⁷ Other than that, there have been few to no initiatives to counter the migrant crisis by regional actors themselves, leaving the primary responsibility to the EU and its member-states.

EU's own intervention to stem migration from North Africa was belated, but still changed the dynamics on the ground, at least to some extent. The focus was on co-opting Libya's neighbors to serve as Europe's de-facto external borders. In Niger, the EU exchanged millions of euros in development aid for criminalization of human trafficking and crackdown on the smuggling hubs of Agadez and Dirkou. This must have driven the central route trafficking network underground but has not yet led to an overall reduction in the Mediterranean migrant traffic to Europe.⁹⁸ Another major step by the EU was a maritime policing and capacity-building initiative, Operation Sophia. Its mandate included training of the Libyan Coastguard and navy in intercepting migrant boats and caravans, combatting human smugglers and assisting with implementing the UN arms embargo on Libya. As seen on Fig. 1, these and other collective efforts by the EU at large helped to significantly reduce the number of monthly arrivals via the Mediterranean route as compared with the peak of the crisis in mid to late 2015, however, in 2016-2018 the pace of improvement slowed down, and the EU has so far been unable to completely stem this wave of migration.

⁹⁶ Lara Seligman, "Shadowy U.S. Drone War in Africa Set to Expand," *Foreign Policy*, September 4, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/04/shadowy-u-s-drone-war-in-africa-set-to-expand/>.

⁹⁷ Mustafa Fetouri, "Will Libya's Newly Signed Border Security Agreement Change Anything?," *Al-Monitor*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/06/libya-chad-niger-sudan-border-security-human-trafficking.html>.

⁹⁸ Omar Saley, "Niger's Migrant Smuggling Hub Empties after EU Crackdown," *Reuters*, January 31, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-niger-migration-agadez/nigers-migrantsmuggling-hub-empties-after-eu-crackdown-idUSKBN15F13Q>.

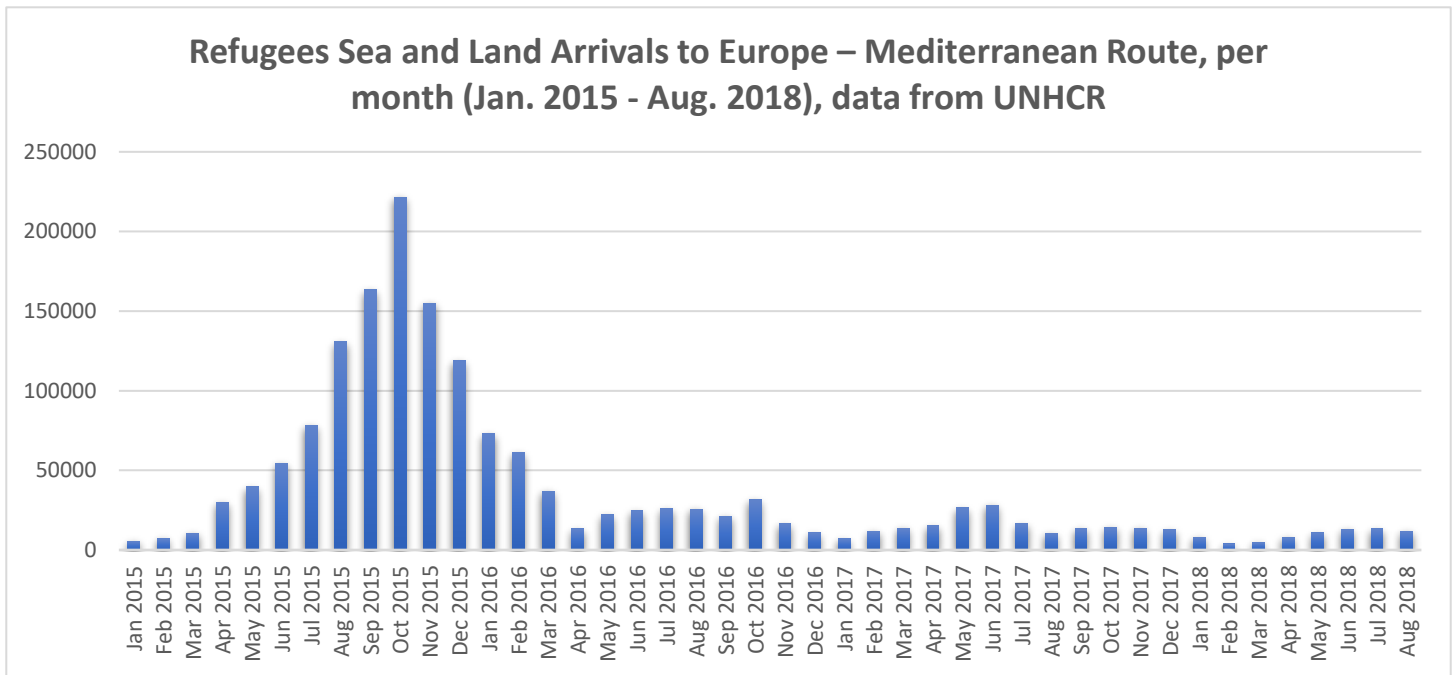


Fig. 1. Refugees Sea and Land Arrivals to Europe – Mediterranean Route, per month (Jan. 2015 - Aug. 2018), data from UNHCR⁹⁹

Some individual member-states of the EU that have been most affected by the crisis and/or have traditionally maintained vested interest in Libyan affairs took steps of their own, some unilateral some coordinated with pan-European institutions. France under president Macron has become particularly active on the political track arranging two high level meetings between prime-minister Sarraj and Gen. Haftar in June 2017 and May 2018. Still, this diplomatic, generally non-biased, intervention by Paris has hardly changed anything in the Libya's stalemate, despite the two factions agreeing to a seemingly impracticable plan to hold peaceful elections by December 10, 2018 and abide by the results.¹⁰⁰

Recent interventions by Italy have been much more consequential in terms of affecting the dynamics on the ground. According to the Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Libya, signed in February 2017, the GNA pledged to strengthen control over migrant flows in exchange for funding provided by Italy.¹⁰¹ On some occasions, Italy sent its patrol boats to Libya's territorial waters for monitoring and off-shore policing. In December 2017, Rome and Tripoli formed a joint unit consisting of intelligence, coastguard and justice officials from both countries tasked with combatting smugglers

⁹⁹ "Mediterranean Situation," The Refugees Operational Portal by UNHCR, accessed Sept. 2, 2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>.

¹⁰⁰ John Irish and Marine Pennetier, "Libyan Factions Agree to December 10 Elections at Paris Talks," *Reuters*, May 29, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-meeting/libyan-factions-agree-to-december-10-elections-at-paris-talks-idUSKCN1IU188>.

¹⁰¹ Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the State of Libya and the Italian Republic, signed on February 2, 2017, https://eumigrationlawblog.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/MEMORANDUM_translation_finalversion.doc.pdf.

and human traffickers. In March 2018, following a joint investigation by Libyan and Italian prosecutors, Tripoli issues arrest warrants for over 200 suspects allegedly involved in a migrant smuggling network.¹⁰² Most controversial, the Italian intelligence service is rumored to have co-opted Libyan militias involved in human trafficking in a bid to stem migration via the Mediterranean route. More specifically, militias from Sabratah that “are widely known to have run a major human smuggling operation abruptly halted their activities and instead turned to policing”.¹⁰³

As a result of these proactive interventions by Rome, the period since July 2017 has witnessed a dramatic drop in the number of arrivals from North Africa to Italy. As seen on Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, sea arrivals registered at Italy’s Sicily abruptly declined 2016 to 2017 judging by month-to-month comparison, and then remained suppressed over the entire first half of 2018. Though it probably has not overhauled the EU migrant situation at large, it still represents an impressively effective unilateral intervention that has induced a local counterbalancing link to physical spillovers from Libyan instability.

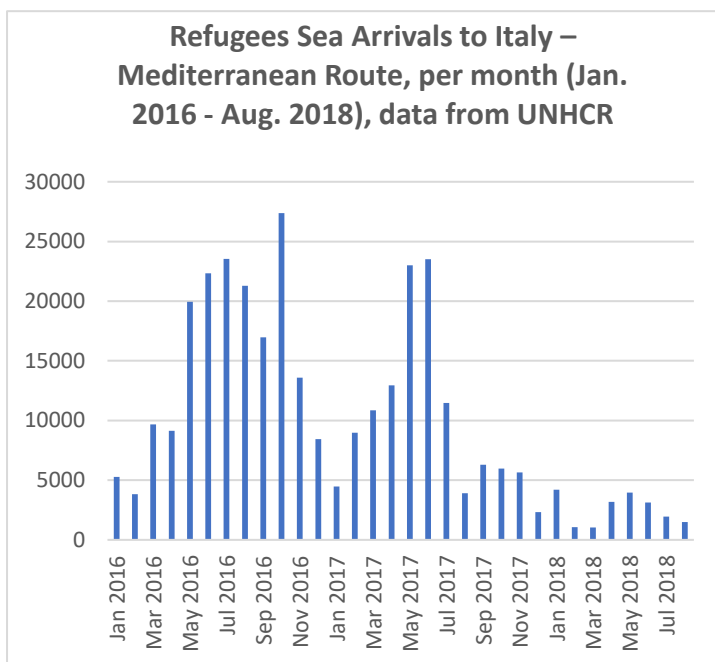


Fig. 2. Refugees Sea Arrivals to Italy – Mediterranean Route, per month (Jan. 2016 - Aug. 2018), data from UNHCR¹⁰⁴

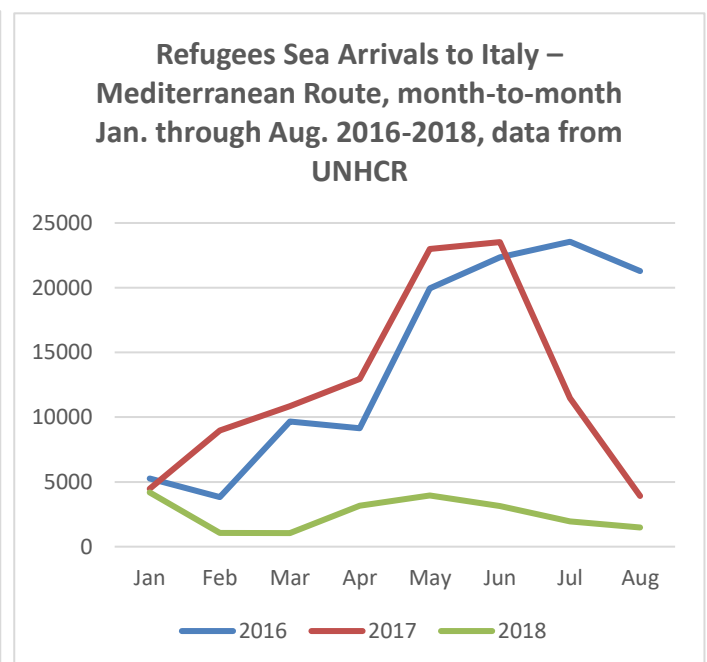


Fig. 3. Refugees Sea Arrivals to Italy – Mediterranean Route, month-to-month Jan-Aug (2016-2018), data from UNHCR¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² “Libya Issues Arrest Warrants”.

¹⁰³ Mark Micaleff and Tuesday Reitano, “The Anti-Human Smuggling Business and Libya’s Political End Game,” *ISS North Africa Report 2*, December 2017, 3, <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/nar2.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ “Mediterranean Situation: Italy,” The Refugees Operational Portal by UNHCR, accessed Sept. 2, 2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

That said, somewhat effective international responses to Libya-related threats that seem to have given birth to at least limited counterbalancing loops between systemic and vertical escalations and the original horizontal spread, may still produce negative side effects. Pressured by the international community to decisively address the problems of ISIS and Europe-bound migration, the GNA had to concentrate its limited resources on these two fronts and virtually neglected other domestic issues essential for restoring the country. Besides, co-optation of armed non-state gangs as local anti-smuggling proxy force as well as international attempts to speed up the political process to ensure border security at any cost may have an adverse effect on the long-term prospects of state-building in Libya.

For a visualized overview based on systems mapping of interdimensional connections that have driven the internationalization of the Libyan conflict, see Fig. 4.

Systems Map of Interdimensional Links in Internationalization of the Libyan Conflict

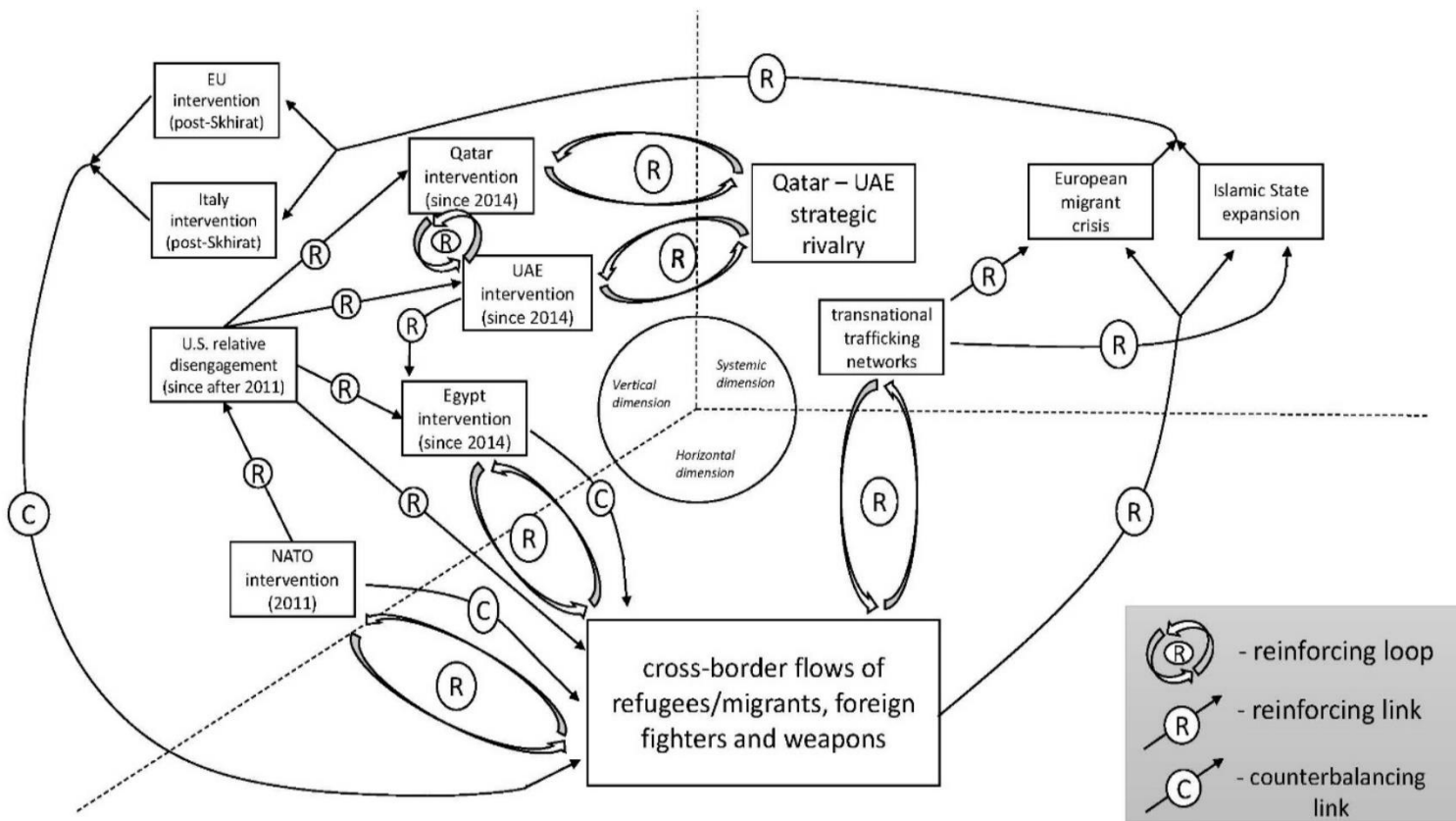


Fig. 4. Systems Map of Interdimensional Loops and Links in the Internationalization of the Libyan Conflict

Conclusion and Avenues for Further Research

Over the course of its life cycle, the Libyan conflict (to be more precise, Libyan conflicts) has experienced escalations along all three of the dimensions conceptualized in this paper. The spatial spread (horizontal dimension) was facilitated by mostly uncontrolled flows of refugees, foreign fighters (mercenaries), and arms bringing destabilization to neighboring countries and producing discernable contagion effects on Egypt, Mali, Niger, Chad and Syria. External interventions (vertical dimension), such as direct military action, covert arms supplies, political and diplomatic engagement by the U.S., France, Britain, Russia, Qatar, the UAE, Egypt and other countries were mostly opportunistic, driven by instrumental and, to a lesser extent, affective considerations, and have most likely prolonged the conflict instead of containing it. The systemic escalation (systemic dimension) resulted in the conflict's political salience for a wide array of international stakeholders and affected major strategic rivalries in the region, most importantly, the one between Qatar and the UAE. It also helped establish and maintain connectedness within such regional conflict complexes as Libya-Chad-Sudan and Libya-Niger-Chad.

These developments were not isolated from each other, on contrary, many of them exhibited interdimensional links and correlations. Strategic rivalries at the systemic level and external interference in Libya formed a vicious circle contributing to the “proxy-fication” of the conflict. Spatial spread of violence and its externalities motivated powerful regional actors to intervene, while the most consequential of these contagious spillovers generated risks of systemic significance (expansion of ISIS and the European migrant crisis) thus forcing international actors to intervene despite the negative learning from the 2011 experience. Most, though not all, of these links have been reinforcing in relation to one another representing positive feedback loops and connections.

These results also underscore the critical importance of transnational channels that link intra-Libyan dynamics with developments in the Middle East, but most importantly, in North Africa and the Sahel. Cross-border Tuareg and Tubu communities, transnational jihadist groups, ideologically driven revolutionary movements and other factors played a major role in transmitting ideas and experiences, establishing and maintaining connectedness, and spreading instability. The Libyan case also demonstrates, firstly, intrinsic ties between socio-political processes in Africa and the Middle East bridging the analytical divide between the two regional domains, and secondly, complex interplay between local, national and regional dynamics in these two regions

I see vast potential in further application of the three-dimensional analytical framework adopted as a conceptual basis of this research. It can be instrumentalized at both region-specific and country-specific level to study other regional realms of conflict internationalization including but not limited to Mali, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan. Revealing mechanisms and channels responsible for spread of violence that originates at substate level beyond established national borders helps to identify key country-specific, region-specific and system-specific drivers that are to be addressed in order to block and prevent intractable complex emergencies.

At the same time, this conceptual approach needs to be regarded as merely a first approximation of integrated understanding of the phenomenon. Further analytical integration is required between the three dimensions by bringing together state-based and non-state actors, their affective and instrumental motivations, opportunities and mobilization strategies, transmission channels, institutional and systemic constraints as well as other elements into a coherent internationalization mechanism so that we can fully understand how it functions under different structural and contextual conditions.