
Winning in Libya: By Design or Default?

**Michael W. Kometer
Stephen E. Wright**

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Ifri
27 rue de la Procession
75740 Paris Cedex 15 – FRANCE
Tel : +33 (0)1 40 61 60 00
Fax : +33 (0)1 40 61 60 60
Email : ifri@ifri.org

Ifri-Bruxelles
Rue Marie-Thérèse, 21
1000 – Bruxelles – BELGIQUE
Tel : +32 (0)2 238 51 10
Fax : +32 (0)2 238 51 15
Email : info.bruxelles@ifri.org

Website : www.ifri.org

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The authors

Michael W. “Meter” Kometer received his Ph.D. in Systems Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is a Principal Systems Engineer with the MITRE Corporation and a former Professor of Air and Space Technology at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell AFB, AL. He retired from the USAF as a colonel in 2012.

Stephen E. “Wilbur” Wright received his Ph.D. in International Relations from The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Tufts University. He is a Professor of Political Science and International/National Security Studies at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell AFB, AL. He retired from the USAF as a colonel in 2007.

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Abstract

The 2011 insurgency in Libya brought about the demise of Supreme Leader Mouammar Qadhafi. A NATO-led coalition operated to meet a unique United Nations mandate including an arms embargo, no-fly zone, and the requirement to protect the population from armed attack. While the United Nations Security Council resolutions did not direct regime change, many key political leaders saw it as a highly desired outcome of the conflict. This divergence in objective led to a lack of clear political guidance at the strategic level, which often translated into somewhat inconsistent military planning at the operational level. The authors contend that this confusion tends to demonstrate that the means as well as the final result were reached by default rather than by design. The gap that was experienced between policy and military operations may impact NATO's future operations and political cohesion. In turn, the Libyan case, which underlines the need to develop consistent strategy and military plans, may deliver insights for strategists and planners, especially for the air component.

* * *

L'insurrection libyenne de 2011 provoque la chute finale du Guide Suprême Mouammar Kadhafi. Suite à un mandat unique des Nations Unies, une coalition menée par l'OTAN est chargée de mettre en œuvre un embargo sur les armes, une zone d'exclusion aérienne et les conditions nécessaires à la protection de la population contre les attaques armées. Alors que les résolutions du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies n'avaient pas prescrit de changement de régime, de nombreux acteurs politiques considéraient cette issue comme souhaitable. Cette divergence en termes d'objectifs a suscité un manque de direction politique claire au niveau stratégique qui s'est souvent traduit par une certaine incohérence dans la planification opérationnelle. Les auteurs soutiennent que cette confusion tend à démontrer que les moyens mis en œuvre, tout comme le résultat final, ont été atteints par défaut plutôt qu'à dessein. Ce fossé entre décisions politiques et opérations militaires pourrait avoir un impact sur les futures opérations de l'OTAN et sur la cohésion politique de l'Alliance. Ainsi, le cas libyen, qui souligne le besoin de renforcer la cohérence stratégique et opérationnelle, vient offrir des leçons aux décideurs politiques et militaires, notamment en matière de puissance aérienne.

Introduction

In one of the final acts of airpower in the 2011 Libyan operation, the NATO coalition nicely encapsulated its contribution to the entire civil war. As the rebel noose tighten around his hometown of Sirte, Colonel Muammar Qadhafi put together a large convoy and made a desperate escape attempt on 20 October 2011. Sensor operators directing a US-owned Predator watched the convoy shoot at rebel positions on its way westward, headed toward Wadi Jarif, 25 miles away. Unaware of the actual identification of the vehicles' occupants, those in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) command and control chain nevertheless declared the convoy a threat to civilians in the city and designated it a target. The Predator pilots fired on the lead vehicle, causing the convoy to change directions. Simultaneously, a NATO Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) passed targeting information to a pair of French jets, one of whom hit the center of the convoy with two 500-lb laser guided bombs, leaving it shattered. Injured and shocked, Qadhafi and his guards and family left the stranded vehicles and tried to find cover in a nearby culvert. Eventually rebel forces found them and, controversially, dealt with them as they saw fit.¹

Over the course of the conflict, NATO airpower had become the protector and enabler to these same rebels, essentially acting as an air component for the rebel ground forces. Those planning and executing the early days and weeks of the US-led *Odyssey Dawn* (OOD) and the NATO-led *Unified Protector* (OUP) strove to remain within the bounds of the mandate given them by United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1970 and 1973. Indeed, it appears NATO-led air operations eventually helped to accomplish the UN mandate – and more. Although key political leaders in the North Atlantic Council (NAC) came to see regime change as inevitable and desirable, they denied this outcome was a goal of military action. However, as the Qadhafi convoy attack illustrates, the evolving political and military situation was such that the NATO-led coalition ended up facilitating regime change, doing so in a manner that caused many to believe that this outcome had been the intent all along – with strategic consequences.

¹ Ben Farmer, "Gaddafi's Final Hours: NATO and the SAS Helped Rebels Drive Hunted Leader into Endgame in a Desert Drain", *The Telegraph*, 22 October 2011, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8843684/Gaddafis-final-hours-Nato-and-the-SAS-helped-rebels-drive-hunted-leader-into-endgame-in-a-desert-drain.html>.

Did the results occur by design or by default? This paper will argue it was more the latter than the former, and will analyze why this happened and what we can learn from it.

In short, it happened because, unsurprisingly, in this “war of the coalition of the willing,” airpower’s ability to generate effects outpaced coalition consensus building as to overall policy and policy objectives. Policy to govern these efforts was, predictably, ambiguous in the beginning of the operation. The lack of clear guidance at the national/international political level was most felt at the operational level where airpower strategists and planners attempted to develop air operations to meet anticipated guidance. As it had done in the past, the powerful capabilities of airpower got out in front of the political headlights of the policy makers attempting to control efforts and outcomes in war.

The understaffed and inexperienced planners in NATO’s air component had all they could do to re-organize, man the combined air operations center 5 (CAOC 5) at Poggio Renatico, and generate air operations in the short time they had to prepare for OUP.² Initially, they relied more on standard operating procedures than on any conceptual framework linking actions to strategy. As the NATO-led coalition struggled to clarify its guidance and objectives, rebel forces struggled to coalesce and gain their own impetus against Qadhafi’s military. Focused on dismantling the Libyan integrated air defense system (IADS) and attacks on Tripoli to ‘keep Qadhafi’s head down’, CAOC 5 planners defaulted to procedure rather than a well-developed design that tightly linked stated purpose with operational activity. As a result, the deliberately planned air operations sent a misleading strategic message that lacked coherence with the task force’s stated purpose and the UN mandate.

Strategists and planners can learn much from this case study. At the strategic level, the need for policy to provide guidance and purpose to military action is an old lesson best highlighted by Clausewitz long ago. At the operational level, the need for planners to create coherent operational designs even when clear guidance is lacking remains more the rule than the exception, especially in wars for objectives other than national survival or vital stakes.³ This latter point is especially true when using a tool as powerful as airpower to achieve objectives like those in UNSCRs 1970 and 1973.

A better design might not have changed the outcome. That said, a coherent design could have aligned desired ends with the operational ways

² The paper will draw in elements from both Operations Odyssey Dawn and Unified Protector; however, the primary focus will be on OUP given the very short duration of OOD (six days) from its first operation until the handoff to the NATO-led coalition of OUP.

³ Keeping in mind that the stakes involved may indeed be survival/vital to some – the Qadhafi regime and the rebels themselves – while being something different to an international coalition more intent on security and stability. We use these terms to categorize political objectives and not to minimize the tragedy that underlies any use of force activity, whether intended for good or ill.



and means, providing the NATO-led coalition with a clear strategic communications message to more clearly align operations with ultimate purpose and avoid some of the negative strategic consequences. This paper will examine perspectives on success in Libya, show that these perspectives were not clear to operational planners in the beginning, analyze what happened as a result of this ambiguity, show the strategic consequences of the actions, and then discuss the importance of Libya as a case study for strategists and planners.

Perspectives on Success in Libya

There are many perspectives as to what constituted the eventual “success” in Libya. Two are discussed here and a third is highlighted, but not discussed in the text. The two perspectives we do discuss include those of the NATO-led coalition policy makers and those of their military contributors. The third perspective is equally important and that is the view of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are often present at the outset of a crisis, are often caught up in the violence of conflict, and are always critical to recovery from conflict and war.⁴

Most western political decision makers have assessed that the 2011 air operations in Libya were successful in outcome. NATO responded rapidly to a situation that threatened civilians, averted a humanitarian disaster by protecting those civilians, gave local forces the time and space to overthrow Qadhafi, and did it in a low-cost way that shared the burden among as many nations as possible, boosting NATO’s credibility as a source of stability in the process.⁵ Ivo Daadler, US Ambassador to NATO, and Admiral James Stavridis, Supreme Allied Commander-Europe, observed, “NATO’s operation in Libya has rightly been hailed as a model intervention.”⁶ President Obama captured the view of many Western leaders in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly stating:

This is how the international community is supposed to work – nations standing together for the sake of peace and security, and individuals claiming their rights. Now, all of us have a responsibility to support the new Libya – the new Libyan government as they confront the challenge of turning this moment of promise into a just and lasting peace for all Libyans.⁷

⁴ In a statement titled, “A Call to Congress for a Cease-fire in Libya”, US non-governmental organizations called for an end to the military intervention in Libya in August 2011, two months before the end of operations in Libya by the NATO-led coalition. This statement is representative of concerns expressed by NGOs with regard to operations in Libya. The statement can be found at <https://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1552/images/Libya%20Ceasefire%20NGO%20Statement.pdf>.

⁵ See Anders Fogh Rasmussen, *Secretary General’s Annual Report 2011*, available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_82646.htm.

⁶ Ivo Daadler and James G. Stavridis, “NATO’s Victory in Libya: The Right Way to Run an Intervention”, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2012, p. 2.

⁷ Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly”, (General Assembly of the United Nations), September

In military spheres, however, the analysis has been less glowing. Some writers have glossed over the actual difficulties at the operational level to claim that OOD exhibited a successful implementation of joint planning procedures to accomplish the military objectives of establishing a no-fly zone, protecting civilians, and transitioning to another command – eventually NATO.⁸ But these were interim goals at best, accomplished over the first two weeks of the conflict.

A preliminary analysis by Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA) found challenges to operations at the operational level. One key challenge involved the translation of shifting and uncertain strategic guidance into coherent operational plans. Another main task encompassed the formation of coalitions around under-resourced commands (in both OOD and OUP). A third difficult effort proved to be the protection of civilians without adequate ISR or a ground perspective. Finally, coalitions struggled with the sharing of information among their partners and in adapting command and control (C2) processes to the ad hoc coalition fight.⁹

Recent writings about OUP are similarly critical, often questioning whether the NATO alliance would be able to operate without substantial underwriting by the US. Indeed, the NATO analysis is that the US is the only nation that could contribute the critical ISR, electronic support, and tanker capabilities to conduct such an operation, much less a more intensive one. In addition, there were other shortcomings in the planning, staffing, and execution of OUP.¹⁰

This difference in assessment is one sign that there was a break in the chain from strategic guidance to operational planning to tactical execution. In textbook military planning, tactical action is undertaken to accomplish objectives, which in the aggregate attain policy goals. The strategists and planners hold this chain together, breaking the strategic guidance down into the tasks assigned to the forces. This is sometimes a very difficult job – one made more challenging when clear policy guidance is missing from the process.

21, 2011, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/21/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly>.

⁸ Gregory James, Larry Holcomb, and Chad Manske, “Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn: A Model for Joint Experience, Training, and Education”, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 64, 1st quarter 2012, p. 24.

⁹ Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA), “Libya: Operation ODYSSEY DAWN (OOD) Executive Summary”, September 21, 2011, p. 12.

¹⁰ Eric Schmitt, “NATO Sees Flaws in Air Campaign in Libya”, *New York Times*, April 14, 2012, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/15/world/africa/nato-sees-flaws-in-air-campaign-against-qaddafi.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&hp.

Translating Guidance into Plans and Getting Started

The challenge of translating guidance into plans began even before the US and its coalition partners commenced Operation *Odyssey Dawn* on 19 March 2011. The speed with which the UN called for action explains some of the guidance problems for the coalition responses. Just 11 days after riots in Benghazi initiated the crisis, the UN passed UNSCR 1970. This resolution established, among other elements, the requirement to initiate a very broad-based arms embargo and “to facilitate and support the return of humanitarian agencies and make available humanitarian and related assistance.”¹¹ Unfortunately, neither of these resolution elements provided objective outcomes, nor did they offer criteria for judging the success in meeting these demands.

Subsequently, the Security Council rushed to sign UNSCR 1973, doing so just 19 days after releasing Resolution 1970. These days proved critical as the delay in providing operational guidance to military forces left those forces to speculate as to potential missions. Unfortunately, Resolution 1973 was ambiguous as to the political change desired, failing to prescript a desired political change or endstate, despite the fact that several nations had already called for Qadhafi to step down.¹² Its primary goal for the operation was the protection of civilians and civilian populated areas from violence and/or the threat of violence, leaving planners with a mix of ambiguity and specificity. The resolution directed nations to protect civilians by “all necessary measures [...] while excluding an occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory.”¹³ In addition to the previously sanctioned arms embargo, this resolution authorized a no-fly

¹¹ United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1970 (2011)*, Report S/RES/1970 (2011), February 26, 2011, pp. 3-4 and 7. This resolution also called for referrals to the International Criminal Court, travel bans, and asset freezes. In an odd twist, the UNSCR is specific about the conditions and purpose of these three items.

¹² For example, on March 3, 2011 US President Obama stated Qadhafi had lost his legitimacy and therefore had to go. See Massimo Calabresi, “Obama on Libya: Gaddafi Must Go; All Options on Table”, *Time*, March 4, 2011, available at: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2057191,00.html>. Later in April, President Sarkozy, Prime Minister Cameron, and President Obama got together to make this a joint declaration, see “Allies: ‘Gadhafi must go, and go for good’”, *MSNBC*, April 15, 2011, available at: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42602914/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/allies-gadhafi-must-go-go-good/#.T1JzdsyTbgo.

¹³ United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1973 (2011)*, March 17, 2011, available at: http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions11.htm.

zone. For planners, these activities implied limited use of military force and restrictions to the use of force for those in the military. However, when combined with the phrase “all necessary measures,” it was obvious these limited military instruments would have to transform into something different.

This dichotomy in purpose in relation to outcomes and means prompted many questions. Beyond the targets ordinarily associated with a no-fly zone, what was a valid target? If air forces detected conventional armored forces moving toward a populated area, did the mandate authorize an attack? If these armored forces stopped outside the populated area or turned around in retreat, despite their hostile intent, would they cease being valid targets? How would aircrew separate the perpetrators from the victims? Was regime leadership a valid target if its forces were attacking the population? These were all questions military planners in both US European Command (EUCOM) and Africa Command (AFRICOM) were trying to answer.¹⁴ Therefore, both operations had to contend with the fact that political guidance did not prescribe the change necessary for the operations to be successful, but did prescribe to some extent the allowable actions for those operations. While this condition retained political maneuvering room for policy makers, it provided just the opposite of the military’s ideal: clear objectives and the leeway to accomplish them in the way the military commander thinks best.

This situation is not new – NATO has seen this before. For example, in operations in Kosovo in 1999, one of the NATO air component’s principal complaints was that the political end state was nebulous, while the direction from policy makers on what could and could not be done – given in the form of a target approval process involving political-level actor – was rigid.¹⁵ Military planners want policy makers to tell them the result(s) they should aim for, not how to do their job. However, particularly in coalition operations, the political situation is often so ambiguous that this clarity is unattainable. This condition is often most tenuous in the early days of a crisis and such was the case in Libya in 2011.

The US-led coalition faced several hurdles as it began to plan for operations in Libya. Monitoring the “Arab Spring” phenomena in North Africa, AFRICOM and its air component, 17th Air Force (17 AF), prepared to support the US State Department with non-combatant evacuations and humanitarian assistance.¹⁶ At almost the same time the UN released UNSCR 1970, 17 AF received its first planning guidance directing it to deliver plans to implement a no-fly zone (NFZ) “to AFRICOM and the Joint

¹⁴ Grant Bucks, *Airpower in Mass Atrocity Response Operations (MARO)*, Unpublished master’s thesis, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, Air University, May 2012, p. 59. Also JCOA, *Executive Summary*, p. 12.

¹⁵ John A. Tirpak, “Short’s View of the Air Campaign”, *Air Force Magazine*, Vol. 82 No. 9, September 1999, p. 45.

¹⁶ Margaret H. Woodward, “Defending America’s Vital National Interests in Africa” in a speech at the Air Force Association’s 2011 Air & Space Conference & Technology Exposition, National Harbor, MD, September 21, 2011, available at: <http://www.af.mil/information/speeches/speech.asp?id=671>.

Staff within 36 hours.”¹⁷ In just 21 days, this guidance would transform into the first airstrikes against Libyan forces in order to establish the NFZ and begin efforts to protect civilians. The challenge to planners remained the conundrum of protecting civilians “using all necessary measures [...] establishing a NFZ and arms embargo [...] excluding foreign occupation troops of any kind, anywhere in Libya.”¹⁸ All this with an endstate eventually defined as little more than, “until the international efforts are no longer required.”¹⁹

Compounding the guidance issue were limitations with AFRICOM and 17 AF. Prior to the Libyan crisis, Africa Command had focused on conducting security cooperation to build relationships and the capacity of other states in the region to combat extremism. This left them with a heavy mix of civilian manning and a poor organization for kinetic operations. In 17 AF, this mission focus translated into a smaller air operations center with less capacity, but all the responsibilities of a larger numbered air force. To overcome this limitation, 17th Air Force worked with 3rd Air Force to fill the gaps in C2 capability and personnel.²⁰ Fortunately, 3rd AF commander Lt Gen Gorenc and 17th AF commander Maj Gen Woodward had worked with Lt Gen Desclaux and Maj Gen Charaix during Exercise Austere Challenge 10, where they investigated AOC operations from dispersed locations. These relationships helped pave the way for work-arounds between coalition partners.²¹

Even with these work-around efforts, the nebulous task drove multiple planning endeavors. Originally planning only for a non-combatant evacuation operation, AFRICOM eventually produced multiple plans based on vocal or email guidance leading up to the eventual operations that included significant kinetic operations. Planners in AFRICOM were also extremely confused about the end state to which they were aiming, since they had no formal definition of this end state from higher up the chain.²² What strategic guidance did come left them almost as confused as before. Major General Margaret Woodward, 17th Air Force Commander, observed, “almost every day brought new planning guidance with new objectives, approaches and priorities.”²³ In fact, the strategic outcome set forth for Operation *Odyssey Dawn* proved little more than to transition the effort to someone else.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ From multiple paragraphs in UNSCR 1973. Margaret Woodward, “Defending America’s Vital National Interests in Africa”, *Air Force Speeches*, September 21, 2011.

¹⁹ Ralph Jodice, “Operation Unified Protector (OUP) Mission Brief”, presentation to School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, February 29, 2012. Hereafter referred to as Jodice, “Op Unified Protector (OUP) Mission Brief”.

²⁰ JCOA, *Executive Summary*, pp. 6-7.

²¹ Email exchange with John Shapland, Col, USAF, 435 AGOW/CC, July 12, 2012.

²² JCOA, *Executive Summary*, pp. 4-5.

²³ Margaret Woodward, “Defending America’s Vital National Interests in Africa”, *Air Force Speeches*, September 21, 2011.

Therefore, in just 21 days, the air component to AFRICOM put their plan into action. Their main mission was to set up a no-fly zone and then hand off the operation to someone else. Planners at Ramstein Air Base, Germany were familiar with the actions involved in taking down an integrated air defense system (IADS). Although this was made more complicated by the lack of information on Libya's forces because of the "friendly" status of Libya since 2003, they could at least get to work establishing the NFZ.²⁴ The main planned attacks were those on the IADS and its associated command and control sites – the targets necessary to set up a no-fly zone and gain and maintain control of the air in a secure manner. Cruise missiles from US and UK ships struck Qadhafi's air defenses to facilitate this effort.²⁵ Then B-2s from the US struck hardened shelters around airfields near Sirte.²⁶ By day three, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen had declared that the no-fly zone was in place.²⁷

Meanwhile, aircrews also executed dynamically tasked missions to target pro-Qadhafi forces that were obviously trying threatening Benghazi and Misrata, the main strongholds of rebel forces. The very first operations were actually a unilateral French attack on Qadhafi's military forces on 19 March.²⁸ Later that day, as US aircraft encountered radar-warning indications from a surface-to-air missile system in a convoy headed toward Benghazi, the aircrew engaged them as hostile. This became the cue for other fighters in the area to come and destroy dozens of tanks in the next hour.²⁹ They were able to halt the convoy before entering Benghazi; however, the troops surrounding Misrata entered the city and thus escaped further action from coalition aircrews, enabling them to continue shelling the city for weeks.³⁰ With the transition of operations to NATO at the end of

²⁴ James Holcomb, and Manske, 25. The US intelligence community had ceased to focus on Libya after Qadhafi gave up the pursuit of nuclear weapons. Thus, as the crisis exploded, the US lacked updated orders of battle for Libyan forces and detailed intelligence about pro and anti Qadhafi factions in Libya.

²⁵ Jim Garamone, "Coalition Launches Operation Odyssey Dawn", *Defense.gov.*, March 19, 2011, available at:

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=63225>.

²⁶ Steve Inskeep, "B-2 Bombers From Missouri Hit Libyan Targets", *NPR Morning Edition*, March 21, 2011, available at:

<http://www.npr.org/2011/03/21/134726240/No-Fly-Zone-Enforcer>.

²⁷ Tom Cohen, "Mullen: No-fly zone effectively in place in Libya", *CNN*, March 20, 2011, available at:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/03/20/us.mullen.libya/index.html?iref=NS1>.

²⁸ Col. Rich Howard, USAF, was an Air National Guard augmentee acting as the Chief of Combat Operations in the 3rd AF CAOC at the time. He describes being given 12 minutes notice of the strike by the French liaison. Apparently, President Sarkozy was concerned that Qadhafi's forces would reach Benghazi before any action could be taken if action remained in normal channels. Interview with Richard Howard, Col (USAF), Naval Warfare Center, Newport Rhode Island, June 21, 2012.

²⁹ Email exchange with Caroom Cameron, Lt Col, USAF, Chief of Current Operations (A3O) for 17th AF during OOD, July 12, 2012.

³⁰ Simon Denyer, "Libyan Government promises UN Access to Misurata", *Washington Post*, April 18, 2011, available at:

March and beginning of April, OOD was able to claim success in its mission.

The handover of operational control for Libyan operations from the US-led OOD to the NATO-led OUP proved difficult at best for the air component. The evidence shows NATO had significant difficulty planning its air operations for the first two months of OUP. Starting with a lack of manning and experience, the air component commander, Lieutenant General Ralph Jodice, struggled with a split operation with part of his air operations capability located at the Allied Air Command headquarters at Izmir, Turkey. Here, a strategy module produced daily guidance for air operations. The combined air operations center (CAOC – in this case CAOC 5) that would produce the air tasking order and monitor operations in conjunction with this guidance was located at Poggio Renatico, Italy.³¹ The total manning at CAOC 5 at the outset of operations was less than 100 people – far fewer than necessary to run a major air effort.³²

General Jodice realized he had to take drastic steps. Since most of the air operations would involve dynamic targeting missions rather than deliberately planned attacks, he decided to move his headquarters from Izmir to Poggio Renatico to gain better access to the information he would need to make the inevitable real-time decisions without slowing down operations.³³ As a result, while NATO was supposed to be receiving a command transition from OOD after only a 12-day notice, their air component had to re-organize and beef up its manpower in order to be capable of running major air operations. In particular, Jodice had to bring in ISR expertise from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, to develop dynamic targeting information 24 hours a day, a task the CAOC had been completely unprepared to handle.³⁴ He also had to import more than 50 communications people to help transform CAOC 5 for the increased responsibilities.³⁵ No wonder that, as air operations were supposed to start on 29 March, 2011, the Combined Forces Air Component Director was

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/libyan-government-promises-un-access-to-misurata-as-desperation-mounts/2011/04/18/AF7g3fzD_story.html.

³¹ Ralph Jodice, "Op. Unified", *op. cit.*

³² Email exchange with Ancel Yarbrough, Col, USAF, Coalition Forces Air Component (CFAC) Director for CAOC 5 during OUP, June 26, 2012. Col Yarbrough related he ramped up from 96 to 220 people by 3 April 2011 – in a matter of weeks. Of these, 30 were devoted to a standing air policing mission unrelated to OUP. To get an idea how few this really is, air operations in DESERT STORM in 1991 consumed over 1000 people in the Tactical Air Control Center (later called the AOC), and OOD operations used over 700 people at Ramstein Air Base, GE.

³³ Ralph Jodice, "Op. Unified", *op. cit.*

³⁴ Email exchange with Rachel McCaffrey, Col, USAF, HQ USAFE/A2 and CAOC 5 ISRD Chief during OUP, June 26, 2012. Col Yarbrough, the CFAC Director, talked to Col McCaffrey on April 5, 2011, then sent a formal request through NATO channels to bring her to Poggio Renatico to be the ISRD Chief, where she started April 10, 2011.

³⁵ Email exchange with Col. Shapland, July 12, 2012.

forced to call a halt to the transition, allowing NATO an additional day to shadow OOD operations before taking over responsibilities.³⁶

The air component commander and his staff had difficulty translating ambiguous political guidance into solid plans for air operations. General Jodice noted that it was the end of May, 2011— two months after NATO assumed responsibility for air operations — before the air component had a solid strategy for the operation.³⁷ Until that point, officers at CAOC 5 at Poggio Renatico worked amidst the re-organization and the development of communications and support arrangements to generate sorties to accomplish action aimed at an evolving interpretation of the mandate given them by the UNSCR 1973.³⁸ They had to do the best they could within the uncertainty, which means standard operating procedures undoubtedly played a big role in generating this action.³⁹

Even as their understanding evolved, planners had difficulty establishing clear ties between the air action and political goals. Unlike OOD planners, OUP planners did not have a prescribed end date in sight; there would be no handoff of responsibilities. Initially, the guidance to the air component was that the mission would end when the measures in place to protect civilians were no longer needed. After a Berlin Ministerial meeting on 14 April, the end state was refined to include the end of attacks and threats of attacks by the regime, the withdrawal of all forces that were threatening populated areas, and the immediate allowance of access for all humanitarian organizations.⁴⁰ In other words, NATO was to keep executing the mission until that mission was no longer needed — its mission tasking **did not** include a requirement to compel a political change.

Complicating air operations planning and execution was the increasingly difficult task to provide protection of civilians. As discussed above, OOD airstrikes had already targeted Libyan forces in the open. As a result, these forces withdrew into Misrata, Brega, and Ajdibiyah, significantly complicating the protection mission for both planners and aircrew. To deal with this mess, NATO's air component had only a fraction of the resources to which modern, US-led coalitions have become accustomed.

The challenge for strategists and planners proved daunting. Although they had assets like Joint Surveillance Targeting Attack and Reconnaissance System (JSTARS) and Predator remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs), they only had 2 RPVs and 150-170 sorties per day to cover an

³⁶ Email exchange with Col. Yarbrough, June 26, 2012. Col. Yarbrough related that the main cause was an incomplete legal transition of command and control authority to NATO.

³⁷ Ralph Jodice, "Op Unified", *op. cit.* Email exchange with Col. Yarbrough, June 26, 2012.

³⁸ Recall that the UN levied the requirement for a NFZ and the protection of civilians in this resolution. Email exchange with Col. Yarbrough, June 26, 2012.

³⁹ This interpretation is shared by Grant Bucks, *Airpower in Mass*, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁴⁰ Ralph Jodice, "Op. Unified", *op. cit.*



area the size of Alaska.⁴¹ The men and women at Poggio Renatico began to develop ways to deal with the problem, including getting approval to fire at troops in the cities using armed Predators. These procedures allowed for much faster decision-to-action speeds and the use of smaller weapons, reducing the potential for collateral damage. These efforts proved essential to the ensuing fight with Qadhafi regime troops, who sought to foil air operations by pulling close to the civilians.⁴²

⁴¹ Ralph Jodice, "Op. Unified", *op. cit.* Interview with Aaron Clark, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, February 29, 2012.

⁴² Greg Jaffe, Edward Cody, and William Branigin, "McCain visits Benghazi; Libyan rebels welcome armed drone aircraft", *Washington Post*, April 21, 2011, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/obama-authorizes-predator-drone-strikes-in-libya/2011/04/21/AFWELQKE_story.html.

The Unfolding Air Campaign

Meanwhile, the OUP air component continued its efforts to coerce Qadhafi and continue to pressure his regime.⁴³ This included continuing attacks on command and control facilities and other military targets in and around Tripoli. In retrospect, it is difficult to reconcile these attacks with the efforts to protect civilians, except to realize that there was a continuing call for “pressure” on Tripoli from the chain of command.⁴⁴ Presumably, this would have had the effect of coercing Qadhafi into realizing that he needed to step down and put an end to his threats. However, with hindsight this effort appears problematic as it became difficult to discern whether continuing military pressure on Qadhafi was a political imperative, or becoming a default endstate in and of itself.

NATO military leaders had several options or perspectives in terms of pressuring the Qadhafi regime. One possible viewpoint was to cut the troops off from their source of direction. Indeed, Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard, Commander of Joint Task Force *Unified Protector*, pointed to his assessment that “We know we’re having an effect – his forces are showing signs of confusion.”⁴⁵ However, this could just as easily have backfired, causing the regime troops to keep fighting when their leader desired a truce. Without strong political direction, military operations produced their own results – results that could have limited the options of policymakers.

⁴³ Ralph Jodice, “Op. Unified”, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ Ralph Jodice interview with Aaron Clark and authors, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, February 29, 2012. This “pressure” on Tripoli/Qadhafi started early in the crisis and persisted. US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice tied “pressure” with Qadhafi leaving Libya on March 1, 2011 (see David Morgan, “Rice: US will pressure Gaddafi until he leaves”, *Reuters*, March 1, 2011, available at: <http://www.reutersreprints.com>). “Libya: Tripoli air strikes keep pressure on Gaddafi”, *BBC News Africa*, March 22, 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12814748>. “Nato vows to keep pressure on Gaddafi”, *New 24*, June 28, 2011, available at: <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Nato-vows-to-keep-pressure-on-Gaddafi-20110628>. “Nato vows to keep pressure on Gaddafi remnants”, *Sofia Echo*, August 31, 2011, available at: http://sofiaecho.com/2011/08/31/1147818_nato-vows-to-keep-pressure-on-gaddafi-remnants.

⁴⁵ Leila Fadel, “Libyan Rebels Reject African Union Cease-fire Proposal”, *Washington Post*, April 10, 2011, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gaddafi-accepts-road-map-for-peace-proposed-by-african-leaders/2011/04/10/AFbrtuJD_story.html.

Another reason to pressure Tripoli would have been to try to coerce Qadhafi to accept a truce. This makes sense when, as in Kosovo in 1999, there is a defined political end state where the military's purpose is to coerce one party to the bargaining table to accept a political settlement. However, this type of political analysis of an end state had not been done at the outset of operations, either by planners for OOD or OUP. Nevertheless, it is telling that when Qadhafi offered a ceasefire in late April – without offering to step down – NATO refused to negotiate, demanding “not words but actions.”⁴⁶ While focused on a mandate to protect civilians, NATO's operations were most appropriate to forcing some type of political change, but no such acceptable change had been defined and expressly articulated to either the military arm of the coalition or the Qadhafi regime.

Of course, operations to protect civilians were continuing, including strikes by armed Predators inside the cities. However, it would be almost two months before the air component came up with a cogent plan to use its scarce resources in a coherent way to attack the regime forces threatening Libyan civilians. This plan would involve concentrating OUP's limited ISR assets in an area for a time to develop an accurate picture of activity there, then attacking the area with an enhanced situational awareness while moving the ISR assets to the next area.⁴⁷

The stalemate of April through much of June was more political than military in character with predictable results in terms of military operations. Looking back, the pundits at *The Wall Street Journal* appear highly prescient in their mid-April analysis observing, “The US, Britain and France still say their other goal is to topple Gadhafi, but the refusal of the NATO-led coalition to make his ouster central to the military effort has only made Gadhafi more likely to resist.”⁴⁸ The analysts went on to note that such indecision in the coalition, mixed with flagging international support made it likely that Qadhafi would play for time. With the US opting to “lead from

⁴⁶ Simon Denyer and Leila Fadel, “Gaddafi calls for ceasefire as NATO strikes Tripoli”, *Washington Post*, April 30, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gaddafi-calls-for-ceasefire-as-nato-strikes-tripoli/2011/04/30/AFWPndKF_story.html#.

⁴⁷ Email exchange with Yarbrough, June 26, 2012. Interview with Ralph Jodice, February 29, 2012.

⁴⁸ “The Libya Stalemate: What happens when America hedges its bets in a war”, *The Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2011, available at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704529204576256842836936566.html>. See Raf Casert, “Despite NATO rift, US holds to limited Libya role”, *The Guardian*, April 13, 2011, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/9594037>. See also Alex Spillius, “Libya: Mike Mullen admits stalemate could leave Gaddafi in charge”, *The Telegraph*, March 20, 2011, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8393938/Libya-Mike-Mullen-admits-stalemate-could-leave-Gaddafi-in-charge.html>. Florence Gaub makes NATO's political objective of getting rid of Qadhafi one of her six key strategic lessons learned. See her report, “Six Strategic Lessons from Libya: NATO's Operation Unified Protector”, *NATO Research Paper*, March 2012, available at: <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/>, pp. 4-5.

behind,” the NATO-led coalition struggled to find political leadership for the operation.

The US “lead from behind” decision requires to place it into context and to understand what this option might mean for the Alliance in the future. As challenging as the international environment was in early 2011, President Obama faced an equally difficult domestic political environment at home. A divided and war weary public was reflected by a similar condition within the US Congress. With presidential and congressional elections looming for 2012, the posturing on both the Republican and Democrat sides of Congress proved fractious for policy makers. Even within the Obama Administration the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and high-ranking general officers called for caution, while the President called for action.⁴⁹

Over the next few months, Obama’s domestic challenge grew. By June, members from both sides of the aisle in Congress were pressing the President about adherence to the War Powers Act. This act requires the President to notify Congress of operations if US forces are placed “into hostilities or situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated.” In fact, members of the President’s own party introduced legislation calling for a vote to halt support for US military operations in Libya.⁵⁰ These domestic political challenges limited the policy options available to the President. When coupled with ongoing major combat efforts in Afghanistan and residual operations in Iraq, policy makers found themselves in a difficult position and unable to commit US forces to a leading role in yet a third major conflict. In fact, as the acrimony over the War Powers Act illustrated, Obama’s ability to argue the US was only playing a supporting role deflected congressional concern enough that

⁴⁹ This tension began in early March and continued into the summer with concerns over the legitimacy and challenges of imposing a no-fly zone over Libya shifting to concerns over the War Powers Act. Martha Raddatz and Z. Byron Wolf in their article, “President Obama Wants Options as Pentagon Issues Warnings about Libyan No-Fly Zone,” *ABC News*, March 3, 2011, available at: <http://abcnews.go.com>. David E. Sanger and Thom Shanker, “Gates Warns of Risks of a No-Fly Zone”, *The New York Times*, March 2, 2011. Both discuss the divisions within the US as tensions built in Libya. Overseas journalists reported on this element of US politics, too. See the article by Nicholas Watt, “US defence secretary Robert Gates slams ‘loose talk’ about no-fly zones”, *The Guardian*, March 3, 2011, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/2011/mar/03/robert-gates-dismisses-no-fly-zone>. This article noted that part of Gates’ ire was aimed at British Prime Minister David Cameron for his calls in support of a NFZ operation in Libya.

⁵⁰ See “Libya and the War Powers Act,” *The New York Times*, June 16, 2011, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/17/opinion/17fri1.html>. In late May, Democratic Representative Dennis Kucinich introduced a resolution calling for a vote on the Libya intervention citing the War Powers Act as rationale. See Russell Berman, “House to vote on Libya”, *The Hill*, May 30, 2011, available at: <http://thehill.com/homenews/house/163839-after-years-of-war-house-holds-voted-to-check-military-action>.

support for the war could continue, albeit in a secondary role for the first time since World War II.⁵¹

With all that politicians and pundits said about “leading from behind,” one wonders if this option represents a major shift in US policy, or a ripple resulting from a beleaguered US administration. One could add the “pivot to the east” and Secretary Gates’ calls for European Allies to do more regarding their defense expenditures. Will US policy in Europe solidify in the “lead from behind” construct? Over 67 years of history says “no”; however, the current fiscal cliff panic in the US highlights the limitations in US power. The authors have no crystal ball to discern the future, yet note that US policies such as these tend to be Administration policy and not necessarily enduring US policy. At this point, the best the authors can offer is, “We shall see.”

The fact that two key NATO Alliance heads of state took leadership roles early on in the conflict eased the US decision to “lead from behind” and mitigated a lack of support by other Allies. Both President Sarkozy of France and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom provided early condemnation of the Gadhafi regime and his threats against Libyan citizens.⁵² Similar to Obama, President Sarkozy faced re-election in 2012. His support in April 2011, however, resided only in his ruling political party, while public opinion indicated a 70% disapproval rating.⁵³ For Sarkozy, the crisis provided an opportunity to look and act presidential and address an important electoral issue, illegal immigration from Africa, while correcting the tarnished image of France after French diplomatic blunders over the “Tunisian Spring”.⁵⁴ Unlike President Obama, Prime Minister Cameron received overwhelming support for intervention in Libya, at least from the House of Commons, which “voted by 557 to 13 to support UN-backed action in Libya.”⁵⁵ Although the six-hour parliamentary debate raised questions of cost, time, and legitimacy, Cameron convinced Parliament that the risk of a “failed pariah state” on Europe’s southern border was “too great to ignore.”⁵⁶ So, despite Sarkozy’s initial reluctance to rely on the

⁵¹ See the analysis by the International Institute for Security Studies commentary in “Libya win unlikely to convince war-weary US Congress,” *IISS Strategic Comments*, volume 17, August 29, 2011.

⁵² Please refer to the discussion in footnote 49.

⁵³ Paul Belkin of the US Congressional Research Service provided insightful analysis of French policy under President Sarkozy in his report titled, “France: Factors Shaping Foreign Policy, and Issues in US-French Relations,” *Congressional Research Service*, April 14, 2011, available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL32464.pdf>. See page 4 for specific details on Sarkozy’s public support.

⁵⁴ Soeren Kern, “Why France was so Keen to Attack Libya”, *Gatestone Institute*, March 23, 2011, available at: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/1983/france-libya-attack>.

⁵⁵ “The full list of how MPs voted on Libya action”, *BBC News*, March 22, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12816279>.

⁵⁶ Adrian Croft, “Cameron tries to calm fears over Libya operation”, *Reuters UK*, March 21, 2011, available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/03/21/uk-libya/britain/parliament-idUKTRE72K75B20110321>.

Alliance, the US and UK prevailed in their choice of NATO leadership for the operation.

Reflecting back on the events leading up to the Libyan conflict and the “lead from behind” decision, the question of political “design or default” collides with the question of whether these events represent an anomaly or a new paradigm that emerged from the crisis. It is hard to find “design” in the “lead from behind” option. Obama affirmed US leadership by taking over both the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts with little change from his predecessor’s policies; he took “ownership” of Afghanistan with the decision to surge US forces as part of a re-evaluation of policy and effort. However, he opted for NATO leadership as his domestic rivals challenged his political standing, while winding down one war, ramping up another, and in the middle of the greatest financial crisis since the 1929 depression. Perhaps “default” is too kind a term for the context Obama found himself in as the Arab Spring broke over North Africa.

To consider “anomaly versus new paradigm,” one could ask, “Would a “lead from behind” option be practical today?” With his recent re-election, Obama has a reinvigorated domestic mandate that has the opposition willing to consider compromise, the Iraq conflict is essentially over, and Afghanistan is, rightly or wrongly, winding down. Would he choose to “lead from behind” if a Libya-like conflict arose today? Could the European NATO allies take the lead as they prepare to enter another year of Euro crisis? What these questions illustrate is neither “anomaly” nor “new paradigm”; rather, they indicate the uniqueness of every crisis. In addition, with projected reductions in defense expenditures and smaller force structures, not arriving at some new paradigm in the future would be the anomaly.⁵⁷

So, as President Obama worked to contain the domestic challenge in the US, the political conundrum of Allies and partners fighting a stagnating conflict persisted into the summer. By the end of July, the NATO-led coalition had reason to be concerned as two of its primary members, France and the United Kingdom, hoping for a short war and a world without Qadhafi, now seemed willing to entertain a negotiated end to the conflict and the possibility of a Libya with the dictator still in power.⁵⁸ The African Union had been pushing for a negotiated settlement since May, especially after South Africa’s President Jacob Zuma visited Libya and

⁵⁷ In this regard, our conclusions are at odds with our colleagues at the Royal United Services Institute. In their Whitehall Report 1-12, the analysts concluded, “The events in Libya in 2011 will be instructive for many years to come, but as noted [in their report, Libya was] likely more a one-off case than as a model.” See Adrian Johnson and Saqeb Mueen (eds.), *Whitehall Report 1-12: Short War, Long Shadow – The Political and Military Legacies of the 2011 Libya Campaign*, London, The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, March 2012, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Jonathan Steele, “Libya’s stalemate shows it is time to tempt Gaddafi out, not blast him out”, *The Guardian*, July 26, 2011, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jul/26/libya-gaddafi-war-nato-ceasefire>.

Qadhafi, offering a proposal leaving unresolved the dictator's status.⁵⁹ The National Transitional Council rejected the offer.

By July 2011, the coalition air effort developed greater synergy with rebel ground operations. Many analysts have correlated this success to the introduction of Special Forces from Qatar, France, and the United Kingdom.⁶⁰ While such collaboration remains unconfirmed, Special Forces capabilities would have provided the air component and rebel ground units with a much needed means to communicate operational plans and requirements, facilitating military action against pro-Qadhafi forces.⁶¹ That is just what some have proposed happened. Rebels were able to attack Tripoli from three directions in a manner that implied some type of coordination that had not been present in the initial stages of the campaign.⁶²

In addition to Special Forces, both France and the UK deployed attack helicopters to the conflict. These forces primarily conducted precision strike missions against targets in and/or near population centers, providing close-in firepower, while mitigating concerns for collateral damage.⁶³ Over time, the pro-regime forces adopted tactics to "look like" anti-Qadhafi forces in order to avoid attacks from NATO jet aircraft. The helicopters were able to employ rockets, missiles, and guns in urban areas where pro-regime forces concealed themselves from coalition jet aircraft. These key contributions to the operation came as the coalition entered its third month of stalemate and provided an important complement to other coalition air forces.⁶⁴

It is also probable that the air component got better at finding and attacking the Qadhafi regime forces. In OOD, AFRICOM had approved the

⁵⁹ African Union, *Peace and Security Council Report No. 25*, August 2, 2011, available at: <http://www.iss.co.za/pgcontent.php?UID=31056>. Also see Li Zhihui, "Qadhafi's Situation is Increasingly More Difficult", *Xinhua Domestic Service*, May 31, 2011, from Open Source Center CPP20110531038008.

⁶⁰ Mark Urban, "Inside Story of the UK's Secret Mission to Beat Gaddafi", *BBC*, January 19, 2012, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16573516>.

⁶¹ Only the Qataris confirmed the presence of ground forces in Libya during the operation. See "Qatar admits it had boots on the ground in Libya; NTC seeks further NATO help", *Al Arabiya*, October 26, 2011, available at: <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/26/173833.html>. Also see "Qatar Admits It Had Boots on Ground in Libya", *DefenseNews*, October 26, 2011, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20111026/DEFSECT04/110260309/Qatar-Admits-Had-Boots-Ground-Libya>.

⁶² Karen DeYoung and Greg Miller, "Allies Guided Rebel 'Pincer' Assault on Tripoli", *Washington Post*, August 22, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/allies-guided-rebel-pincer-assault-on-tripoli/2011/08/22/gIQAeAMaWJ_story.html?nav=emailpage.

⁶³ See "Libya: British, French attack helicopters make first strikes", *Flightglobal*, June 4, 2011, available at: <http://www.flightglobal.com/news/articles/libya-british-french-attack-helicopters-make-first-strikes-357573>:

⁶⁴ See "Attack Helicopters Boost NATO Air Ops over Libya", *Aviation International News*, July 18, 2011, available at: <http://www.ainonline.com/aviation-news/ain-defense-perspective/2011-07-18/attack-helicopters-boost-nato-air-ops-over-libya>.

use of strike coordination and reconnaissance (SCAR) to allow aircrew to find and attack these forces on their own, outside a buffer from populated areas. Accustomed to having lots of ISR and ground troops in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, aircrews were initially reluctant to execute strikes on their own. Added to this, as discussed above, initially NATO had neither the organization nor the ISR capability to execute dynamic targeting, so it took some time for this to evolve as a mission.⁶⁵ This mission requires high levels of experience and expertise; pilots would have improved over time.

The opposition troops' organization and coordination seems to have improved over time as well. Partly due to the time bought by NATO efforts, the rebels had time to get better organized. Recruits got training and experience, new weapons, and better communications equipment while their leadership learned to coordinate better.⁶⁶ The three-prong attack on Tripoli mentioned above certainly seems to imply some progress in this command and control, as well as a deepening of trust between NATO and rebel people to allow some sort of information flow.⁶⁷ The slow pace of the campaign and introduction of special operations troops no doubt aided both the rebels' organization and information sharing efforts.

One thing that did not cause this increased effectiveness was a surge in air operations. The average daily sortie count for OUP did not decline significantly until September 2011 and did not go below 100 sorties per day until October, the last month of the operation.⁶⁸ Similarly, the average number of strike sorties remained consistent from a high of 60 per day in April (including the first day of operations on 31 March) to 44 sorties per day in August. The sorties per day average did not dip below 40 until October 2011. The targeting during OOD and the beginning of OUP rapidly moved from fixed, deliberate targets to dynamic targets in order to protect civilians from regime forces. Thus, the NATO-led coalition expended the bulk of its strike effort against Qadhafi's fielded forces.

⁶⁵ Exchange email with Caroom Cameron, July 12, 2012. Although the SCAR mission designation was first officially used in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in 2003, it is a legacy of other missions in past conflicts, such as the Killer Scouts in Operation DESERT STORM in 1991. When operating over hostile territory, aircrew need something besides friendly ground troops to designate targets. The solution has often been to task experienced pilots to perform armed reconnaissance, becoming familiar with an area, finding targets, and either destroying them or vectoring other aircraft in to do the job. See Mark Welsh, Lt Col, USAF, "Day of the Killer Scouts", *Air Force Magazine* 76, No. 4, April 1993, p. 67. Welsh went on to become General Welsh, commander, USAF during OOD and OUP, and he confirmed that the missions were very similar, Deborah Kidwell, email to author upon interviewing General Welsh, May 17, 2012.

⁶⁶ Evan Hill, "Libyan Rebels Get Organized", *Al Jazeera*, April 19, 2011, available at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/04/201141942947854663.html>.

⁶⁷ Karen DeYoung and Greg Miller, "Allies Guided Rebel 'Pincer' Assault on Tripoli", *Washington Post*, August 22, 2011, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/allies-guided-rebel-pincer-assault-on-tripoli/2011/08/22/gIQAeAMaWJ_story.html?nav=emailpage.

⁶⁸ Data extracted from the daily operational reports filed by NATO for OUP available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_71994.htm.



Regardless of the reasons, the increasing synergistic effectiveness between coalition air forces and rebel ground units, combined with the earlier focus on putting pressure on Tripoli, strengthened the impression that the NATO-led coalition was intent on facilitating regime change. No matter how hard the men and women in the air component tried to tie all their actions to the UN mandate to protect civilians, the perception of many in the international community was that they had gone beyond this mandate to actively assist the rebels in their cause of ousting Qadhafi.

Perceptions and Consequences

Does that matter? The fact is that political level decision makers in the US, UK, France, and other states in NATO were satisfied with the outcome. Whether regime change was initially a military objective or not, it was a political goal in the end. This conflict might have started “ugly,” but politically, it ended well.⁶⁹ So why does it matter that military action appeared to be aimed at that goal?

It matters first of all because the long-term effects of the campaign may have actually reduced US and NATO leverage in the international community. Some key political decision-makers and leaders of key national and international non-governmental organizations were not expecting the military action to aim at regime change. In a future conflict, NATO would have to overcome trust issues to avert active resistance to alliance and/or coalition objectives.

Although UNSCR 1973 passed the UN Security Council, it was far from a unanimous decision by the Security Council members at the time. China, Russia, India, Brazil, and Germany abstained from the vote.⁷⁰ Germany’s abstention was notable, as it indicated that NATO’s solidarity on the issue was at best fragile. Later, when the initial bombing of the campaign grew more violent than many expected, several states including Russia, China, and even the League of Arab States – which had called for the no-fly zone – expressed outrage at what they saw as unnecessarily aggressive military action that put civilians at risk.⁷¹

After the NTC had claimed an end to the war, there was additional outrage that the military effort had led to regime change. Some humanitarian organizations, which had fought for UNSCR 1973, called this result a “disaster,” as this result gave the impression they were complicit in

⁶⁹ Michael O’Hanlon, “Winning Ugly in Libya”, *Foreign Affairs*, March 30, 2011, available at: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67684/michael-ohanlon/winning-ugly-in-libya>.

⁷⁰ United Nations Press Release SC/10200, *Security Council Approves ‘No-Fly Zone’ over Libya, Authorizing ‘All Necessary Measures’ to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions*, March 17, 2011, available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10200.doc.htm>.

⁷¹ Ewen MacAskill, Ian Black and Nick Hopkins, “Coalition air strikes see waning support from Arabs, China and Russia”, *The Guardian*, March 19, 2011, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/20/libya-air-strikes-waning-arab-support>. Recall the earlier discussion regarding the African Union’s concerns and proposals for a negotiated settlement in Libya.

the effort.⁷² Of greater concern, Russia used it as an impetus to veto UN efforts to develop solutions and a resolution to the crisis in Syria several months later. Following the vote, where Russia and China were the only negative votes, Russian ambassador Vitaly Churkin claimed, “Some influential members of the international community unfortunately [...] have been undermining the opportunity for political settlement, calling for a regime change, pushing the oppositionists to power.”⁷³ Where the war in Libya should have served to deter other leaders and facilitate settlement in future intrastate conflict, it seems to have had the opposite effect.

Equally important is the potential that military results shaped policy in a manner that has far-reaching consequences, as military action can often overwhelm and/or shape policy.⁷⁴ For example, in 2001, following the 9/11 attacks and the declaration of a War on Terror, President Bush and the National Security Council had not decided exactly what to do about the Taliban in Afghanistan when the war started in October. There was still discussion of the possibility that the US could exploit internal fractures and impose a more moderate regime. However, when air attacks, directed by Special Operations Forces, gave indigenous forces like the Northern Alliance an asymmetrical advantage that overwhelmed the Taliban and forced them to flee Mazar-i-Sharif, Kandahar, and Kabul, there emerged a new, more expansive nation building strategy.⁷⁵ The US-led coalition (now NATO-led) assisted in the installation of a moderate government and supported it in governing the nation, which had shown itself so resistant to central government in the past. After the insurgency emerged in 2003-2004, once again military operations forced policymakers to alter strategy and in this case, to reduce their objective expectations for the war. NATO is still trying to extricate itself from this effort.

Of course, Libya is a different case as no Western troops are involved on the ground, therefore one can hope that the country will stabilize itself, but that would defy the odds. The Libyans seemed to take much more ownership in the revolution of 2011 than did the Afghans in 2001. It is possible the Libyan anti-Qadhafi leaders and the people will take ownership for transforming the 2011 success into long-term stability. When NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdul Jalil declared the NTC to be the legitimate

⁷² This sentiment was expressed vehemently by several members of a panel of humanitarian organizations at a conference on Libyan operations chaired by Harvard’s Carr Center for Human Rights, held at the Center for American Progress, Washington D.C., January 24, 2012.

⁷³ Paul Wood, “Russia and China veto resolution on Syria at UN Accessibility”, *BBC News*, February 4, 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-16890107>. Also see Florence Gaub, “Six Strategic Lessons learned from Libya: NATO’s operation Unified Protector”, *NDC Research Report*, March 2012, p. 5.

⁷⁴ This observation is not a new one; unfortunately, many examples abound. Classic historical examples include World War I and the militarization of policy resulting in tragic costs far exceeding any benefits of war. Military battlefield success can influence leaders to expand their objectives as occurred in the Korean War after the successful landings at Inchon and subsequent successes of the US-led UN forces.

⁷⁵ Michael Kometer, *Command in Air War*, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, Air University Press, 2007, p. 105.

government of Libya after Qadhafi's death on 23 October 2011, he called on Libyans to avoid hatred and show mercy.⁷⁶ Yet in the following six months, Libyans experienced strife that included armed factions and several tests to the legitimacy of the NTC. In addition to near continuous political turmoil, Libya has seen the emergence of fledgling terror networks.

At this writing, the NTC has decided to postpone the promised elections from June 2012 to July 2012, an indication that it is having difficulty registering voters and obtaining consensus on the details of the vote.⁷⁷ It is clearly too soon to tell whether the 2011 civil war will lead to stability in Libya or another call for intervention to stabilize a country on which western states depend for oil. Long-term stability is elusive when a dictatorship leaves a power vacuum.

In both examples above, airpower played a significant role – a role that was the difference between success and failure for indigenous ground forces. Airpower strategists, however, must recognize the power of their capabilities, realizing the tremendous power air operations has to overwhelm or push policymakers during the heat of battle. In the Libyan operation, one sees this dynamic contrasted in the two primary uses of airpower in the conflict in targeting dynamic versus deliberate targets. The dynamic targets attacked by the coalition air component were, for the most part, those directly threatening civilians or civilian-populated areas. NATO targeting of pro-Qadhafi forces, especially when directly threatening civilians, as in Benghazi, Brega, and other cities in Western Libya, received little condemnation from the international community. Efforts to sever regime troops' lines of communication, to attack regime troops in the act of shelling civilians, or to gain information to help separate victim from perpetrator were the actions responsible for airpower's greatest effects during the war. On the other hand, the deliberate focus on a wider range of targets, especially during the stalemate months, led to criticisms by relief agencies and many in the international community.⁷⁸

The deliberately planned air attacks have proven problematic for strategists and planners. From the initial wave of cruise missiles to destroy the IADS and then the many attacks on Tripoli, airpower went well beyond any stated policy or objectives and in a way pushed coalition strategy more than it was guided by it. Although the actions may have been in line with some of the more aggressive political rhetoric, military action carries a weight that can constrain strategy by shaping perceptions. For example,

⁷⁶ Rami al-Shaheibi and Slobodan Lekic, "Libya After Gaddafi: Leader Mustafa Abdul-Jalil Declares Liberation", *Huffington Post*, October 23, 2011, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/23/libya-liberation-gaddafi_n_1027138.html.

⁷⁷ "Libya: The Long and Formidable Road to Stability", *The Soufan Group*, May 4, 2012, available at: http://www.soufangroup.com/briefs/details/?Article_Id=288. David Kirkpatrick, "Libya to Delay National Election", *New York Times*, June 11, 2012, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/11/world/africa/libya-to-delay-national-election.html?_r=1.

⁷⁸ Recall the earlier discussion regarding the African Union and Russian complaints regarding the NATO-led air operations.

the US-led coalition established the no fly zone in a matter of days, yet the bombing of IADS and command and control nodes continued almost to the end of the operation in October.⁷⁹ As a result, these efforts sent a mixed message to Qadhafi and the international community that, despite its rhetoric, NATO was really trying to produce regime change.

Qadhafi was not coerced by attacks on Tripoli, so any claim that airpower coerced him are false. Instead, he was captured by the rebel forces that, in synergistic operations with airpower, defeated the once dictator's troops. There is a chance that attacks on command and control hindered Qadhafi's troops; however, the duration of the war and the timing of the momentum change suggest that attrition and the addition of special forces that could help the rebels take advantage of air attacks had more to do with the victory than lack of command and control. Similarly, the ISR, electronic warfare, SCAR, and other ground attack missions, reacting in real time to conditions on the battlefield, were the most significant contributions to this campaign.

The effect on NATO's leverage and the possibility that military action may have led policy do not negate the fact that the results of the air component operations produced desirable outcomes for policymakers. It is this dichotomy of purpose between policy and military operations that makes planning for combat operations so difficult for its practitioners. This tension between policymakers' desire for political maneuvering room and the military's craving for clarity of purpose and guidance is always at play. The power and options that air forces bring to the table for policymakers will continue to dictate that planners be prepared to deal with this intense bifurcation of objectives. What strategists and planners must seek, however, is to build strategy and plans by design, and not by default.

⁷⁹ Tom Cohen, "Mullen: No-fly zone effectively in place in Libya", *CNN*, March 20, 2011, available at: http://articles.cnn.com/2011-03-20/world/us.mullen.libya_1_moammar-gadhafi-coalition-forces-mission?_s=PM:WORLD. In its daily reports, NATO breaks out many of its target sets including IADS and IADS-related targets, as well as command and control targets. See NATO daily operational reports at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_71994.htm.

A Case Study for Planners and Strategists

While there are many strategic and operational lessons for civilian and military leaders, campaign and component strategists and planners should see from the text above the need for an approach to developing strategy and plans by design, rather than by default. This type of approach, had it been used in Libya operations, may have harnessed the desired effects of airpower to a strategy that considered long-term leverage, enabling policy to lead rather than be pushed by military operations. Granted, the time and expertise available may have rendered this extremely difficult in the Libya case. However, that does not reduce the value of the lessons we can learn from it – it merely demands that we remember time and expertise will continue to be variables to consider.

The desired results could have been facilitated by a “design” approach like that advocated in the US Joint Staff’s *Planner’s Handbook for Operational Design*.⁸⁰ This progression helps “the JFC visualize the operational environment, understand the problem that must be solved, and develop a broad operational approach that can create the desired end state.”⁸¹ In other words, this progression is from context definition, to problem definition, to resolution design. Strategists use this approach to guide the development of a solution (or multiple solutions) and the detailed planning needed to project power.⁸² Although the handbook talks mainly about campaign planning, ideally component planners would be intimately involved in this process, fostering agreement between the campaign plan and the supporting component plans. The Libyan campaign could have benefited from such a design process, especially with the ambiguous perspectives going into the conflict and the handoff from one coalition team to another early on in the crisis response.

⁸⁰ Joint Staff, J-7 Joint and Coalition Warfighting, *Planner’s Handbook for Operational Design* (Suffolk, VA: Joint Staff J-7 Joint and Coalition Warfighting) October 7, 2011. Available at: http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dod/opdesign_hbk.pdf.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

⁸² In US Joint doctrine, the commander’s approach serves to guide the Joint Operations Planning Process. The focus of the JOPP is on developing detailed solutions.

The context surrounding the Libyan conflict indicated it was a “war of choice” for less than vital interests.⁸³ It was evident from very early on that this would be a “coalition of the willing” instead of an effort dominated by one particular state. Statements by heads of state, while calling for Qadhafi to step down, stopped short of committing to actions necessary to effect regime change. Instead, there was call for consensus, invoking the need for legitimacy from the UN, the League of Arab States, and the African Union. Both NATO and the EU required authorization from these organizations before getting involved in the operation.⁸⁴ The less than vital interests in this case included the need for regional stability balanced against the desire to sustain the “Arab Spring.” Clearly Libyan oil production was on the minds of the European powers, some of which relied on Libya for a substantial portion of their crude imports.⁸⁵

However, the international community experienced some uncertainty about the Arab Spring, especially in determining legitimacy of governance, contributing to the situational context. The Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions were still new, and while democratic states wanted to promote the success of self-determination, they were also aware that allies in the region needed reassurance of their own security.⁸⁶ Accordingly, assessments of Qadhafi’s legitimacy rested not on any state’s desire for democracy, but rather on Qadhafi’s breach of the internationally recognized Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Stemming from a 2001 International Commission for Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) report, R2P had gained international acceptance as a condition of legitimacy by 2005.⁸⁷ Appeals to this concept were evident; for example, President Obama claimed “Instead of respecting the rights of his own people, Qaddafi chose

⁸³ The perspective here is that of the US-/NATO-led coalitions, keeping in mind that for the Libyan rebels and people, the interests were very vital and to many, survival in characteristic.

⁸⁴ Even after Qadhafi used his air force to bomb civilians in early March both NATO and the EU looked to these organizations for authorization, see Thomas Penny and Leon Mangasarian, “EU Wants Qaddafi Out, Sees Libyan Rebels as Partners for Talks”, *Bloomberg Business Week*, March 11, 2011, available at: <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-03-11/eu-wants-qaddafi-out-sees-libyan-rebels-as-partners-for-talks.html>.

⁸⁵ The following articles illustrate the concern for oil price volatility and how events in Libya drove peaks and valleys in oil prices during the war. See “Oil prices rise as Libyan unrest continues”, *BBC News*, March 7, 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12644002>. “Libya: oil price drops on hopes of end to conflict”, *The Telegraph* 22, August 2011, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/energy/oilandgas/8715374/Libya-oil-price-drops-on-hopes-of-end-to-conflict.html>. “Libya: oil price rises as fightback unsettles market”, *The Telegraph*, August 23, 2012, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8717796/Libya-oil-price-rises-as-fightback-unsettles-market.html>. Jonathan Fahey, “Oil Prices Fall After Qaddafi’s Death”, *The Fiscal Times*, October 20, 2011, available at: <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/Articles/2011/10/20/AP-oil-prices-fall-after-gadhafi-death.aspx#page1>.

⁸⁶ Byron York, “Gates: Libya not Vital US Interest. Clinton: Yes it is”, *The Examiner*, March 27, 2011, available at: <http://washingtonexaminer.com/politics/beltway-confidential/2011/03/gates-libya-not-vital-us-interest-clinton-yes-it/142814>.

⁸⁷ Grant Bucks, *Airpower in Mass*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

the path of brutal suppression... In the face of this injustice, the United States and the international community moved swiftly.”⁸⁸

Given the timing and circumstances of the civil war, it was also evident that this would not involve overwhelming military force, at least not from the US. In the United States, the discussion of the need for a no-fly zone was telling. The calls for a no-fly zone came most forcefully from Senator John McCain, who criticized the military for finding “reasons why you can’t do something rather than why you can.”⁸⁹ This comment came as a result of Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen attempting to dampen enthusiasm and manage expectations by testifying about the difficulty and limited utility of a no-fly zone. As a former Navy pilot, McCain knew as well as anyone that a no-fly zone would technically only be able to stop Qadhafi from using his aircraft against his people. However, he and others called for this option, pinning an acceptable label on a tenuous course of action – a label that had provided flexible maneuvering room, politically and militarily, for successful operations in the past. A no-fly zone was a way to “do something” using very flexible airpower capabilities that could then morph into whatever was needed as the crisis developed over time.

Internationally, the mixture of consensus-building and indefinite objectives led to a predictably ambiguous Security Council resolution. UNSCR 1973 contained language that meant different things to different people. It was confusing to the military planners as it lacked specificity as to desired endstate and conditions for success. Humanitarian organizations took a literal interpretation of the resolution, expecting the goal of protecting civilians to be the objective and the limitation to the use of military force. Certainly President Obama encouraged this sentiment when he said “we are not going to use force to go beyond a well-defined goal – specifically, the protection of civilians in Libya.”⁹⁰ But to some of the more aggressive policy makers, it was undoubtedly a way to give the military leeway to be aggressive without saying exactly that.

Given this context and ambiguous guidance, the problem facing planners was very nuanced. In this case, coalition planners could have defined the problem as ‘stop the killing of innocent civilians, contain the fighting at a low enough level that civilians are not put at further risk, and sustain the cohesion and legitimacy of the coalition long enough to see some political change that sustains the Arab Spring movement, while leaving NATO with increased credibility in its sphere of influence.’ Note this takes into account the need to protect civilians, but does not presume a

⁸⁸ Remarks by the President of the United States on the Situation in Libya, The White House, March 18, 2011, available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/18/remarks-president-situation-libya>.

⁸⁹ John McCain, quoted in Christine Delargy, “McCain calls for no-fly zone over Libya, criticizes Obama’s handling of situation”, *CBS News*, March 2, 2011, available at: http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20038372-503544.html?tag=contentMain;contentBody.

⁹⁰ Remarks by President Obama, March 18, 2011.

political solution that would end the conflict. International or national policy makers had defined no such end state by the start of military operations.

Since the nature of the political change that would end the conflict within these bounds was unknown at the time, military planners should have seen this as a case where military force would be applied to maintain the Libyan “system” dynamics at acceptable levels until the situation became clearer to political decision-makers. Unfortunately, this means they could not “aim” at a traditional end state, but rather one of condition where success depended more on political definition than on some finality of military operations. Such a problem definition would require very close integration of policymaker and military strategy and planning using the iterative elements found in operational design to ensure force applied was in keeping with desired political objectives. This kind of close civil-military integration and iteration did not occur, as indicated by the earlier discussion of the stalemate period of OUP. Time, the increasing effectiveness of air component operations, and the success of the Libyan rebel forces, eventually led to success, but at increased cost in terms of treasure, lives and expenditures, and prestige to the NATO Alliance.

At the risk of being accused of “second guessing,” those who faced this situation in its evolving context with all its problems, let us speculate on what operational design might have provided more coherence to the efforts in Libya. As we know, the crisis in Libya escalated rapidly as the Arab Spring movement moved across North Africa. Military strategists and planners need to realize that in such circumstances, they will be able to plan well in advance of political negotiations. Any strategies would require clear assumptions, defined success measures, and clear endstates – or at least well-defined end conditions that would end military action. The following two examples illustrate the operational design concept.

First, strategists could have set up the establishment of the no fly zone with varying endstates that included political “off ramps” for policymakers. Planners could have made one option the “no Libyan Air Force (LAF) flights” choice with targeting limited to LAF aircraft airborne and direct threats to coalition aircrew. This option looks like the NFZs of Operations Northern and Southern Watch of the 1990s. Planners could have built an escalation ramp to achieve air superiority, even air supremacy, if policymakers opted to increase their support to rebel ground forces. The termination criteria for the NFZ would be Libyan acquiescence to a “no fly” directive from the UN.

A second, more difficult challenge for strategists was the task to protect civilians. Here they could have broken the task into the mandate’s two components – civilians and civilians in populated areas. To protect these two aspects of the UN mandate, planners might divide the problem into two conditions – direct threat and indirect threat. To handle direct threats, planners could have focused on stopping pro-Qadhafi forces from attacks on civilians in the open, refugee camps, and towns/cities. Relying on local or general air superiority/supremacy from the previous task, close air support assets would have ensured on call response capability,

responding to surveillance and reconnaissance platforms. The endstate would have required policymakers to develop political agreement. Working together, the military task force would have merely set conditions by denying pro-Qadhafi forces the opportunity to attack civilians and the policymakers would have been forced to build the consensus required for political settlement.

If policymakers determined circumstances dictated escalation, then strategists could have built options that extended interdiction from the battlespace, to the marshaling points, the base of origination, or even leadership targets in Tripoli. Options in terms of the levels of escalation give policymakers the ability to pursue escalation dominance in the coercion of the adversary. The coalition did not achieve such a condition during the Libyan civil war and Qadhafi did not relent until he was killed in October 2011. A multi-level, multi-option coercion plan could have given policymakers, integrating efforts with their military forces, clear options and decision points to achieve the outcomes desired by design, not just by default.

For the airpower advocate, the operational design methodology can be a very uncomfortable journey. Traditionally, airpower thinkers have focused on how to create decisive effects that shorten, or even independently end, wars. The implications of the approach above are that the air component would be acting as an escalation force able to increase coercion on Qadhafi as directed by policymakers. We would expect to see some initial IADS dismantling, but not the massive cruise missile attacks that occurred early on in the campaign. In particular, attacks on Tripoli would have been limited and confined to the first couple days. Qadhafi should have been warned by such attacks that punishment would ensue if he did not call off his troops and allow the situation to stabilize. If required, later attacks on Tripoli would have served this escalation purpose, accompanied by social media and news media messaging linking the escalation rationale to the increased punishment. Air operations might not have differed much from their actual manifestation, using ISR, SCAR, EW, and information operations to 1) determine the extent to which regime forces were threatening civilians, 2) hinder or attack those forces, and 3) sustain international awareness. However, allowing policymakers to lead and dictate the pace of escalation could have apprised the international community of the fact that the NATO-led coalition was legitimately accomplishing its expressed purpose. Finally, with these nuanced operations as a backdrop, NATO may have been able to facilitate the use of limited ground troops – potentially even UN peacekeepers – strictly to help evaluate the threat to civilians.

One of the most important steps in this design approach is the need to deliberately alter the design when it becomes clear that the situation has changed. This action is part of the iterative process linking design with planning and is called re-framing. Planners need to acknowledge that operations affect the context of the situation, causing an evolution in the political arena even as they produced effects on the battlefield. They need to assess whether the situation has changed enough to warrant solving a

different problem.⁹¹ For example, if the political decision makers had refined their desires for political change to end the conflict, military planners could then have worked with them to effect this political change. The iterative and integrated approach in operational design works to ensure outcomes result from forethought, not serendipity.

Although planners did not acknowledge it, this type of shift actually occurred during OUP. With hindsight, the shift is discernible through several measures. First, there was a shift in formal recognition of the NTC. At the beginning of the conflict, the French were the only government that recognized the NTC as the legitimate government of Libya.⁹² By the end of July, both the UK and US had recognized the NTC. These formal recognitions freed up frozen assets for the rebels; however, these funds were not immediately available.⁹³ So France and Britain started sending arms and supplies directly to the rebels in late June – although both insisted that even the small arms were only for defensive purposes.⁹⁴

A second measure of the shift is that more direct involvement was also increasing, although admittedly in secret. In April, following the accidental bombing of a rebel armored position, Special Forces from the UK and France started coordinating with the rebels to de-conflict ground and air operations. This involvement eventually grew in focus, so that by August perhaps hundreds of Special Forces from Qatar, France, and Britain were actively advising the rebels and allegedly even acting as an information conduit with NATO.⁹⁵ But there was more direct evidence. In July, NATO Secretary General Fogh Rasmussen visited with Lt Gen Bouchard, and in a video teleconference with the air component the general asked him whether the military action had reached the limits of its leverage. Rasmussen replied that it had not.⁹⁶ Obviously, there was call for more aggressive action. Yet the strict interpretation of the military mandate for NATO remained in effect. Iteration occurred, but was ineffective at altering policy.

⁹¹ This assessment is different than that typical in military operations, where assessment aims to detect progress toward accomplishing a goal. Re-framing aims to detect whether the goal itself is still valid.

⁹² France recognized the NTC as the legitimate government of Libya on March 10, 2011, see Alan Cowell and Steve Erlanger, “France Becomes First Country to Recognize Libyan Rebels”, *New York Times*, March 10, 2011, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/11/world/europe/11france.html>.

⁹³ Sebnem Arsu and Steven Erlanger, “Rebels Get Formal Backing, and \$30 Billion”, *New York Times*, July 15, 2011, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/16/world/africa/16libya.html?pagewanted=all>. Nicholas Watt, “Britain Recognises s Libyan Rebels and Expels Gaddafi’s London Embassy Staff”, *The Guardian*, July 27, 2011, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/27/libya-transitional-council-london-embassy-hague>.

⁹⁴ David Jolly, “Britain Sends Supplies to Libyan Rebels”, *New York Times*, June 30, 2011, available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/01/world/europe/01london.html>.

⁹⁵ Mark Urban, “Inside Story”, *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ Andrew Forstner, Col, USAF, military aide to Lt Gen Jodice from July 2011 to present, email to author, 10 May 2012.

Conclusion

The 2011 civil war in Libya provides a case study that delivers many perspectives and lessons for strategists and planners, especially for the air component. It is a testament to the impact of airpower that a small force, averaging fewer than 200 sorties per day, fought a larger force, protecting the civilian population in Libya and enabling rebel forces to overthrow a ruthless dictator after over 40 years in power.

The lack of a clear mandate from the UN, slow maturing consensus among the US- and NATO-led coalitions, and the lack of clear guidance to direct campaign strategy, plans, and execution proved problematic to both policymakers and military planners. As a result, the campaign suffered from an extended political stalemate that left military forces without policy direction to give purpose to action. In this void, military planners relied on traditional target sets and pursued their destruction without coherent linkage to possible policy outcomes. In effect, the strategy defaulted to standard practices and, at times, placed military actions out in front of policymaking and coalition consensus.

However, in this type of political context, with limited consensus dictating caution, it may be appropriate that military action proceed slowly. The slow pace of the campaign – especially in OUP – dictated by the combination of ambiguous guidance and ill-preparedness allowed the rebels to get better organized and coordinated. The “victory” over Qadhafi in the end resulted from their actions, aided by NATO air operations, rather than solely from a massive air attack by interventionists. If this is true, less was probably better early on – provided it was still enough to protect civilians from mass atrocities.

Military strategists and planners at the CJTF/JTF and component levels can use the Libyan example as impetus to master the critical thinking methodology of operational design. This approach brings together elements that link planning to policy. These elements include developing a clear understanding of the situation and the environment in which the crisis exists. Next, the method requires strategists to develop a deep understanding of the problem, to include both its causal and symptomatic aspects. Then strategists use their gathered insights to develop an operational design to guide the planning process in the development of potential solutions. Critical to success is the iteration of all the above between leadership and strategists in order to link purpose with actions, allowing for the integration of these two critical aspects of strategy making.



Unfortunately, the efforts in Operations *Odyssey Dawn* and *Unified Protector* lacked depth in the ability to put this methodology into action. To their great credit, the men and women in these operations successfully carried the NATO-led coalition to success in Libya. In fact, some of the conditions that ensued *by default* – like the slow pace of the campaign to allow the rebellion to mature – should be considered by strategists for operational designs in the future. Had they been given the time and capability to implement a more deliberate design, they may have achieved a more comprehensive success in terms of enduring stability and international leverage.

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