

TOPPLING QADDAFI

Toppling Qaddafi is a carefully researched, highly readable look at the role of the United States and NATO in Libya's war of liberation and its lessons for future military interventions. On the basis of extensive interviews within the U.S. government, this book recounts the story of how the United States and its European allies went to war against Muammar Qaddafi in 2011, why they won the war, and what the implications for NATO, Europe, and Libya will be. This was a war that few saw coming, and many worried would go badly awry, but in the end the Qaddafi regime fell and a new era in Libya's history dawned. Whether this is the kind of intervention that can be repeated, however, remains an open question – as does Libya's future and that of its neighbors.

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LIBYA AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL INTERVENTION

Christopher S. Chivvis

RAND Corporation



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For my parents

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Foreword

Toppling Qaddafi is a detailed, carefully researched look at U.S. and NATO roles in Libya's war of liberation. It is also an attempt to draw lessons from that experience. This can only be done by relating this operation to past events and future contingencies. Chris Chivvis thus places NATO's war in Libya squarely in the line of post-Cold War humanitarian interventions that began in Somalia in 1991 and continued throughout that decade in Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. He also so notes its continuity with the U.S. air campaigns conducted in Afghanistan as well as in Bosnia and Kosovo. Rather remarkably, all four of those air wars achieved their objectives without the need for substantial U.S. ground forces or the loss of a single American pilot.

While the Libya intervention thus has many antecedents, it is also unique in one respect. In contrast to nearly every U.S. intervention since at least 1945, it involved no postcombat U.S. military presence – no occupation force, no peacekeepers, no trainers, no advisors, nothing. In this regard the Libyan operation was not a product of the relatively benign 1990s experience with humanitarian peacekeeping operations (the last three of which also occasioned no American casualties), but rather the more sobering consequences of the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, where thousands of American service members were lost and maimed. In this sense the “no boots on the ground” Libya operation is unprecedented, and as Chivvis indicates, this lack of any postvictory follow-through may yet prove its most controversial legacy.

Chivvis opens his account of NATO's war in Libya with an amusing survey of the Monday morning quarterbacking from across the American political and ideological spectrum that accompanied and followed these operations. In his concluding chapter he provides a much more comprehensive and thoughtful reflection on what the Libyan experience may mean for future U.S. policy, NATO cooperation, humanitarian intervention, the employment of airpower, the nature of postconflict stabilization, and, of course, for Libya.

The war in Syria has already occasioned more civilian casualties than the conflict in Libya. The Libyan precedent is already being cited by both those who favor a Western intervention in Syria and those who oppose it, most notably Russia, which clearly regrets having joined in authorizing the former intervention. If that earlier air operation was one step forward for liberal interventionism, Syria would seem two steps back. *Toppling Qaddafi* provides both a highly readable account of NATO's war in Libya and a carefully analytical basis for evaluating the relevance of this precedent for current and future conflicts.

Ambassador James F. Dobbins
Director, International Security and Defense Policy Center
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Washington, DC

Preface

When it began, I was among those skeptical about the 2011 intervention in Libya. To me, working in the Pentagon at the time, evidence of the many burdens the Iraq and Afghanistan wars had placed on our country was ever present. On the surface, another war hardly seemed wise. But further research, reflection, and many discussions with friends, colleagues, and those who were involved in the conduct of this intervention encouraged me to take a more positive view of what had been accomplished and why. This book does report some deficiencies in the conception and conduct of the war, but the picture presented is, on the whole, far more positive than I had envisioned at the outset.

The need to design cost-effective solutions to crises such as the one that occurred in Libya in March 2011 will be with us for many years. The study of what was and was not accomplished in Libya gives insight into both the limits and the potential for liberal intervention – the use of force to protect the basic liberal values of human rights, the rule of law, and constitutional government.

Funding for this book was provided in part through the RAND Corporation's continuing program of self-initiated independent research. Support for such research is provided, in part, by donors and by the independent research and development provisions of RAND's contracts for the operation of its U.S. Department of Defense federally funded research and development centers. The research was conducted within the National Security Research Division (NSRD). NSRD conducts

research and analysis on defense and national security topics for the United States and allied defense, foreign policy, homeland security, and intelligence communities and foundations and other nongovernmental organizations that support defense and national security analysis.

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Abbreviations

AFRICOM	U.S. Africa Command
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
CAOC	Combined Air Operations Center
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN)
EU	European Union
EUCOM	U.S. European Command
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
ICC	International Criminal Court
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
LIFG	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDU	National Defense University
NTC	National Transitional Council
OUP	Operation Unified Protector
RAF	Royal Air Force
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAR	search and rescue
SEAD	Suppression of Enemy Air Defense
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

STRATCOM	U.S. Strategic Command
TRANSCOM	U.S. Transportation Command
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WTO	World Trade Organization