

Briefing Memorandum

**The intervention in Libya as coercive diplomacy:
Why didn't Gaddafi accept the international community's demands?**

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Introduction

With waves of people's movements and political change sweeping through the country, in February the conflict in Libya between the Muammar Gaddafi's regime and rebels intensified, and the nation fell into civil war. On March 19, a multinational force led by European countries and the US began a military intervention in Libya. The operation took longer than initially expected. At one point, the impasse was growing longer and there was no end to the conflict in sight, but with the rebels' invasion of the capital, Tripoli, on August 20, the Libyan civil war appears to be winding down. On one hand, the five-month military intervention by the multinational force undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the rebels' fight until they were able to subdue Tripoli. On the other hand, the countries engaging in the military intervention were unable to convince Gaddafi to accept their demands that he cease attacks on civilians and resign, even though they steadily increased the pressure on him.

Why is it that the intervention by the multinational force, continually adding pressure over this long period, was unable to bring about Gaddafi's voluntary acceptance of the demands? If more intense air raids had been carried out, for example, was it possible that Gaddafi would have accepted the demands?

This paper attempts to consider those questions by using insights from coercive diplomacy. Considering the matter from the perspective of coercive diplomacy, it is possible that a reason Gaddafi did not voluntarily accept the demands is that military action by the multinational force did not effectively bring pressure proportionate to the demands being made of him. Of course, the demands may have been unacceptable to Gaddafi from the start. However, assuming that it was possible for Gaddafi to have accepted the demands, this paper will point out reasons that he could not be brought to do so.

Coercive diplomacy and the nature of pressure

Coercive diplomacy is an attempt by one side to force the other side to move in a desired direction by making demands upon them and adding pressure by threatening military action or carrying out limited military action. The intervention in Libya can be seen as having the structure of

coercive diplomacy in that it used the pressure of military action to attempt to force Gaddafi to take action desired by European countries and the US. Obviously, it is unknown at this time whether the countries that carried out the military intervention were attempting to use coercive diplomacy. However, regardless of the intervening countries' intentions, it is possible that by making demands and adding the pressure of military action they were unintentionally creating the effect of coercive diplomacy and that Gaddafi could have voluntarily accepted those demands.

In analyzing the intervention in Libya, this paper will apply ideas on the nature of pressure in coercive diplomacy: the difference between pressure of punishment and that of denial. One often sees classification of pressure as punishment or denial used in discussion of deterrence, and it is often used in discussion of coercive diplomacy as well. Punishment involves threatening a party with penalties for an action it is carrying out. The penalties have a cost higher than the benefits that the party derives from the action. Denial involves threatening to prevent the party from deriving the benefits it expects from its current action. In either case, the pressuring side attempts to convince the party that based on the overall cost-benefit calculus, accepting the pressuring side's demands would be more beneficial (or less costly) than continuing the current action. Obviously, the distinction is conceptual and pressure usually has aspects of both types in practice.

Assuming pure pressure of punishment, no matter how much pressure one side applies, it cannot directly achieve its goals. Take, for example, a child that throws a tantrum because he wants a new toy. At a shopping center, even though his mother has told him she will not buy a toy, he demands that she do so and begins throwing a tantrum. In this case, the child is "punishing" his mother by embarrassing her with his tantrum and "pressuring" her to buy it so he will stop. However, no matter how much the child cries, his mother still has the final choice on whether to buy the toy or not. The longer the tantrum, the higher the "cost" to the mother in terms of embarrassment, but still it is her choice whether to buy the toy.

In contrast, with pressure of denial, the pressuring side can enforce its demand by force if it fully carries out its threat. For example, suppose a big brother demands that his little brother hands over a toy. The little brother, of course, can resist this demand, but if he does, his big brother can take action by taking the toy away from him by force. In other words, from the pressured party's point of view, if it resists the pressure, not only will it have incurred the cost of doing so, but the matter may end with the pressuring party achieving its demand anyway. Therefore, if the pressuring side can realize a credible threat of denial, it can apply pressure that the other side will feel urgent.

Military intervention in Libya

The countries intervened to Libya applied various pressures to Gaddafi, including economic sanctions and sending military advisors to the rebels. At this time, it is not possible to grasp their entire extent. This paper will focus on the type of pressure thought to have the greatest weight in the

intervention, i.e., military operations by the NATO-led multinational force.

The military intervention was carried out based on the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 that was adopted on March 17. The resolution authorized UN member countries “to take any necessary measures” to protect civilians from attack and to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya. However, the resolution specified that the action taken to protect civilians was not to include sending an occupying force. Furthermore, the resolution called for strict enforcement of the arms embargo on Libya specified in Security Council Resolution 1970 on February 26.

The multinational force has carried out military operations in order to fulfill three missions. They are suppression of Libyan air defenses and air patrols in order to achieve a no-fly zone, marine inspection and interdiction to enforce the arms embargo, and air raids on Gaddafi government ground forces and military facilities in order to protect civilians. What was the nature of the pressure that these actions applied to Gaddafi in light of the demands to halt attacks on civilians and to resign?

Regarding the demand to halt attacks on civilians, establishing a no-fly zone and carrying out air raids constitute pressure of denial. Government air attacks on the rebels for a time had been effective, but the establishment of a no-fly zone made them impossible. Moreover, government tanks and artillery used to attack the rebels could be destroyed from the air, so if the government did not halt its attacks on the rebels, air raids could force it to do so. In addition, air raids on military facilities in Tripoli destroyed their command functions, making it difficult for the government to carry out military operations. Thus, pressure of denial was achieved. It can be construed that the multinational force was trying to induce the Gaddafi forces to halt their attacks by making them realize that they would not be able to subdue the rebels because of the multinational force's military action.

In order to realize pressure of denial for the purpose of regime change versus Gaddafi, who was clinging to power, it would have been necessary to create a credible threat that an invasion by ground forces would remove him by force. In the case of Libya, this kind of pressure could have come from the insertion of NATO ground forces or from the prospect of the rebels seizing control of the entire country. Regarding the insertion of NATO ground forces, chances seemed slight, both because NATO countries were forced to take on a heavy burden through operations in Afghanistan and because sending ground troops would require another Security Council Resolution. The rebels, meanwhile, were alternately advancing and retreating, and indeed at one point the government forces seemed to have the advantage as they counterattacked. The rebels in fact had strengthened to the point that they were able to take Tripoli, but perhaps to Gaddafi, who had successfully subdued rebels many times, it did not seem that these rebels would be able to get so far.

The arms embargo, establishment of the no-fly zone, and air raids made it difficult to counterattack in order to prevent the rebels from advancing, so in that sense they could constitute pressure of denial on Gaddafi clinging to power. As discussed above, however, if Gaddafi did not

fear the entire country would be overrun by enemy ground forces, then the action of the intervening countries would be pressure of punishment. In other words, without an invasion by ground forces, the defiant Gaddafi could not be directly removed by the arms embargo, establishment of the no-fly zone, and air raids. If he failed to resign, the cost would be punishment by continued air raids on destructible targets. Thus, to Gaddafi, no matter how long the multinational force's military action continued, it could not force him out, so he felt no particular urgency to accept that demand. He may have been enduring the military action while trying to wait out the intervening nations until they could no longer maintain it.

Conclusion

This paper has considered from the perspective of coercive diplomacy the question of why the European and American led military intervention did not induce Gaddafi to voluntarily accept its demands. Insights from coercive diplomacy indicate that a possible reason is the nature of the pressure placed on him by the multinational force's military action. The multinational force's military action constituted pressure of denial in terms of the demand to halt attacks on civilians, but pressure of punishment in terms of the demand to resign. Thus, to Gaddafi it may have seemed possible that the multinational force's action could not directly oust him, so he could ride it out and survive.

It may have been very difficult to change the fact that insertion of NATO ground forces was extremely unlikely. In light of such contextual elements, it is likely that creating a situation in which coercive diplomacy could succeed would have been difficult. One may therefore conclude that there was little possibility of inducing Gaddafi to voluntarily accept the demand that he resign.

Of course, the explanation offered by this paper is nothing more than a speculative hypothesis. In the future, as the facts regarding the intervention in the Libyan civil war by European countries and the US become clearer, various points of discussion will be considered and verified. When that happens, the question of why Gaddafi could not be induced to voluntarily accept the demands will be worth considering. The prolonged civil war took many lives and laid waste to Libya. In addition, operations took much longer than the intervening countries initially expected, placing a heavy cost on them. The knowledge gained by considering whether there was any point at which it was possible that Gaddafi could have been induced to resign voluntarily and bring the civil war to an end may provide useful hints for the next time there is an intervention in a humanitarian crisis. (Completed August 30, 2011)

The purpose of this paper is to respond to reader interest in security issues while promoting better understanding of NIDS. A "briefing," of course, is a background explanation. Our hope is that this paper will help readers to better understand the complex security issues. Note that the views expressed in this paper do not represent the official opinion of NIDS.

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