"Perceiving Wolves in Sheeps' Clothing: Unintended Consequences of Coercive Humanitarian Interventions"

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Security dilemma logic posits that actions taken by a state to increase its own security may prompt reactions from other states that lead to a decrease rather than an increase in the original state's security. But what about actions undertaken not to enhance a state's own security, but rather in pursuit of moral objectives, such as protecting another state's citizens against human rights depredations? In this memo, I explore how and why even foreign policy actions that are largely "non-realist" by design and in intention—namely, humanitarian military interventions—can inadvertently trigger in third parties more threatening (re-)assessments of the intentions and/or capabilities of an intervening state or states.

The argument proceeds as follows: I first define humanitarian intervention and provide a brief description of the debate surrounding humanitarian military interventions; second, I present a theoretical framework that explains how and why coercive humanitarian operations might (adversely) influence bystanders' threat assessments of intervening states; third, I offer some preliminary hypotheses and associated predictions; and I conclude with a brief examination of what evidence from the 1999 Kosovo and 2011 Libya interventions suggests regarding the plausibility of the skeleton argument presented herein.

Humanitarian Military Intervention

Humanitarian military interventions (HMI) are military interventions, undertaken without the consent of the state's authorities, for the purpose of preventing [or ending] widespread suffering or death among their inhabitants.[1] HMIs entail the use of coercive military means in pursuit of socio-economic objectives: to keep civilians alive and communities functioning through the provision of basic goods and services. HMI have been commonplace since the end of the Cold War. In light of their decidedly mixed at best record of success during this period, HMI have engendered a great deal of debate and a prodigious multidisciplinary body of literature dedicated to exploring the pros and cons of using military force in pursuit of humanitarian aims.[2] These positions can be roughly divided into three camps—HMI proponents, HMI skeptics, and HMI opponents.

[1] Adam Roberts, "Humanitarian War: Military Intervention and Human Rights," *International Affairs* 69 (3) (1993): 429.
[2] A decade before this writing, the most comprehensive bibliography on the subject already contained over 3,600 entries. For details, see Taylor B Seybolt, "Humanitarian Intervention and International Security," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Within political science, HMI proponents tend to identify as liberals and constructivists. Proponents favor coercive HMI to protect non-combatants against genocide, mass atrocities and large-scale governmental predation against their citizens. As a general rule, proponents regard realist preferences for privileging state sovereignty norms over human rights norms as morally indefensible.[3] Indeed, the most vigorous HMI proponents, including advocates for the so-called "responsibility to protect" (R2P) doctrine, posit that state behavior ought to be driven by liberal norms and values and respect for certain universal human rights principles.[4] Thus states that fail to uphold those principles abrogate their rights to be free of foreign interference in domestic affairs, Article 51 of the UN Charter notwithstanding.[5]

Proponents' principle criticisms and critiques of HMI surround failures to intervene adequately, consistently or often enough. These failures are generally attributed to a lack of political will, because crises that demand coercive action tend to transpire in places that are either strategically unimportant to any great powers or particularly important to certain great powers. In both scenarios, there is little political motivation to accept the risks and bear the financial and human costs of intervention.[6] Few proponents have wrestled in a serious and sustained way with difficult questions about how military force can be effectively used for humanitarian ends or what might be the unintended consequences of such uses, a task that has been the main focus of HMI skeptics.

Although their paradigmatic roundhouses are more diverse, like proponents, skeptics favor HMI on moral grounds, but caution that these operations sometimes create additional and more enduring problems than they solve. Most concerning for skeptics are (potential) unintended negative consequences of HMI. In particular, skeptics observe, humanitarian interventions can exacerbate the very conflicts whose consequences they are supposed to address, by distorting local economic markets, feeding and protecting combatants and their families, creating spoilers, empowering warlords, and creating incentives for conflict recidivism.[7] So while skeptics believe HMIs are important and should not be eschewed, they should only be undertaken selectively, when they are likely to succeed and not inadvertently spark untoward knock-on efforts within the countries.

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[3] See, e.g., Terry Nardin, "The Moral Basis of Humanitarian Intervention," *Ethics and International Affairs* 16 (2) (2002): 57–70.

[4] ICISS, *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001).

[5] "The United Nations Charter": http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/.

[6] Stanley Hoffmann, "The Politics and Ethics of Military Intervention," *Survival* 37 (4) (1995/6): 29–51; see also Neal MacFarlane and Yuen Foong Khong, *Human Security and the UN: A Critical History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[7] See, e.g., Mary Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace or War* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999); Maley, W. (2002) Twelve Theses on the Impact of Humanitarian Intervention. *Security Dialogue* 33 (3) (2002): 265–78; Fiona Terry, *Condemned to Repeat? The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Alan Kuperman, "Suicidal Rebellions and the Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention," *Ethnopolitics* 4 (2) (2005): 149–73.

Most realists oppose most humanitarian military interventions. In addition to aforementioned sovereignty concerns, realists tend to chary for two reasons. The first is that these operations are viewed as potentially costly distractions that prevent states from focusing on their vital interests.[8] As Stedman put it in the early post–Cold War period—when HMI proponents had high hopes for what states, working through the newly "unshackled UN" could accomplish in this regard—demands for HMI could grow "until the United States and the United Nations ultimately take on tasks for which they are ill-prepared, leaving themselves embroiled in numerous internal conflicts without the will or resources to bring peace to any."[9]

Realists' second objection to coercive HMI is that these operations are inherently difficult and likely to fail. At best, even a large military force can do only a marginal amount of good. Moreover, this good can come at high cost, especially when intervention is occurring without the host government's consent, as is the case in R2P-focused military operations.[10] To succeed in a hostile environment an intervener must act quickly, devote considerable military strength to the effort, and be willing to risk soldiers' lives. Dominating the battlefield generally requires significant air forces and ground troops and a large logistical infrastructure to support them.[11] Rarely do governments commit the necessary resources for short-term success, much less for the long-term follow-on phase of rebuilding shattered societies. This shouldn't be surprising in light of the existence of the implicit moral contract between democratic governments and their military personnel that rests on shared assumptions about the ends to which national militaries will be used, namely the protection and advancement of vital national interests.[12] While governments occasionally are willing to put their troops in harm's way to protect other states' civilian and defend universal human rights, their first duty will be protection of their own forces rather than the protection of others' noncombatants. This puts interveners at a disadvantage against less risk averse and more highly committed adversaries. Consequently, the effectiveness of HMI perforce will be circumscribed as a result.[13]

In sum, despite the existence of a robust debate over—and wide-ranging views regarding the sagacity of—HMI, as yet generally unexplored, even by realists, is the question of whether and how coercive humanitarian military operations might affect relations between interveners and third-party bystanders.[14] This is arguably an important oversight in light of the fact that

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[8] See, e.g., Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," *Foreign Affairs* 75 (1) (1996): 16–32; and Schmitt and Donnelly (eds.), *Of Men and Material: The Crisis in Military Resources* (Washington: AEI Press, 2007).
[9] Stephen Stedman, "The New Interventionists," *Foreign Affairs* 72 (1) (1993): 2.
[10] Barry R. Posen, "Military Responses to Refugee Disasters," *International Security* 21 (1) (1996): 72–111.
[11] Taylor Seybolt, *Humanitarian Military Intervention: The Conditions for Success and Failure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[12] M. Cook, "Immaculate War: Constraints on Humanitarian Intervention," *Ethics and International Affairs*14 (1) (2000): 55–65.
[13] Colin Gray, "The RMA and Intervention: A Skeptical View," in C. McInnes and J. Wheeler (eds.) *Dimensions of Western Military Intervention* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 52–65.
[14] A limited exception to this claim is literature that speaks to certain great powers general skepticism of internal interventions, due to concerns about what precedents might be set with regard to intervening to protect beleaguered minorities, such as Uighurs in China and Chechens in the Russian Federation. NOTE: If I have missed some broader, relevant literature on the issues explored in this memo, by all means, set me straight.

proponents' principal complaint about HMI is that states don't do them often enough; skeptics' principal beef is that states don't do them well enough; and realists main concern is that doing them is hard and distracts from vital interests—but not that they actually might indirectly actively harm vital interests. In the next section, I offer a realist argument for how and why HMI, which are largely "non-realist" by design and in intention, may inadvertently trigger in third parties more threatening (re-)assessments of the intentions and/or capabilities of an intervening state or states. Such reassessments may in turn catalyze balancing, security dilemmas and other security-reducing effects.

Theoretical Framework

Security dilemma logic posits that actions taken by a state to increase its own security may prompt reactions from other states that lead to a decrease rather than an increase in the original state's security. This is a consequence of anarchic nature of the international system. Under anarchy, states cannot be certain about each other's present and future intentions. As a result, states tend to fear each other and harbor concerns that other states may have aggressive, expansionist aims. Simply put: anarchy generates uncertainty; uncertainty leads to fear; fear leads to balancing and other forms of power competition; which in turn activates a (dormant) security dilemma.[15] Of course, states' prevailing levels of fear and distrust are not static nor are all states are viewed as equally threatening in a given time period.[16]

States' threat assessments are derived from a variety of indicators from with observers can formulate predictions about a potential adversary's ability to inflict harm and its disposition to do so. One such indicator is military capabilities. Capabilities can reveal credible information both about a state's *ability* to engage in warfare and its *intention* to do so, insofar as a state's intentions reveal or are at least constrained by its military capabilities.[17] As Posen puts it: "When another power increases its capacities through either internal or external efforts, others have incentives to look to their own position. States behave this way not because they do understand the intentions of other states but because they do not."[18]

Attentive observers can infer a state's intentions from trends in that state's military capabilities relative to their own military capabilities. States under anarchy that seek to survive are wise to assume the worst about potential adversaries' intentions. How aggressive a state can (or will)

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[15] Robert Jervis, "Offense-Defense and the Security Dilemma," in Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis, (eds.), *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, 13th edition (Pearson, 2017), 104-24; Shiping Tang, "The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis," *Security Studies* 18 (3) (2009): 594-95.
[16] Ibid.
[17] As Glaser put it, "[A] state's military buildup can change the adversary's beliefs about the state's motives, convincing the adversary that the state is inherently more dangerous than it had previously believed." Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics* 50 (1) (October 1997), 78. See also Barry R. Posen, "European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity?," *Security Studies* 15 (2) (2006): 149-86.
[18] Ibid., 153 (Posen).

be is essentially a function of how its own capabilities stack up compared with that of potential adversaries—the prevailing balance of power. Thus assessments of the prevailing balance of military capabilities are likely to affect interpretations of benign or hostile intent. For example, if a state under observation already enjoys military superiority, then observers will perceive an increase in the observed state's military capabilities as clear evidence of aggressive intentions.[19]

Similarly, the magnitude of incremental increases or decreases in an adversary's military capabilities, in conjunction with how powerful an observing state perceives it to be, can serve as a credible signal of malign or benign intentions.[20] Inferences of malign intent can be drawn when "states acquire more weapons than observers feel are needed for defense."[21] The same may be said of the acquisition of weapons that are *different* than what observers believe are needed for defense as well as of weapons that appear to observers to decrease the costs and risks of offensive action, even if they do not shift the prevailing offense-defense balance.

Inferences of malign intent may also be drawn by observers in response to changes in the *nature* of a state's capabilities and/or how it uses its existing capabilities; for instance, via innovations in doctrine and war-fighting techniques. In short, all such capabilities-related changes and trends have the potential to shift observers' assessments of a state's intentions.

Certain kinds of non-capability-based actions are also useful to observers as sources of intelligence about states' intentions. As Jervis observes, "states do, in fact, pay special attention to actions that they believe would not be taken by a status-quo state because they feel that states exhibiting such behaviors are aggressive."[22] Attention may be paid because such actions are seemingly inexplicable absent current or further offensive intent. It may also be paid when such actions require states to either to sink costs or to credibly commit by tying their own hands.[23] Actions are considered costly if they necessitate that a state expend significant, unrecoverable resources or if they severely constrain the state's future decision-making.[24] As Yarhi-Milo points out, one form of costly signaling is in fact foreign interventions in the affairs of weaker states (as well as withdrawals from such interventions), observing that "a state's decision to spill blood and treasure in an effort to change the status quo is likely to be viewed as a costly, hence credible, signal of hostile intentions."[25]

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[19] Karen Yarhi-Milo, "In the Eye of the Beholder: How Leaders and Intelligence Communities Assess the Intentions of Adversaries," *International Security* 38 (1) (2013): 15.
[20] Jervis, "Offense-Defense and the Security Dilemma" 113-14.
[21] Ibid., 113.
[22] Ibid.
[23] See, for instance, Kelly M. Greenhill, "Of Wars and Rumors of Wars: Extra-factual Information and (In)Advertent Escalation," commissioned white paper for the Stanley Foundation/CISAC/Hoover Institution (December 2018).
[24] Yarhi-Milo, "In the Eye of the Beholder," 8.
[25] (ibid.), 16.

Threat Reassessments and HMI

Where, why and how do coercive humanitarian operations fit into this picture? Security dilemmas are by definition supposed to arise out deliberate, albeit ultimately counterproductive, efforts by states to increase their own security. HMI are not as a rule security-enhancing operations. Instead they are (at least ostensibly) undertaken in pursuit of moral rather than material objectives. Why then might altruistic missions activate threat reassessments and, in turn, trigger security dilemmas?

First, in security environments where state-to-state combat engagements are rare, HMI can provide observers with valuable intelligence, not otherwise readily attainable, about innovations in an intervener's capabilities and their employment. On one hand, this intelligence is arguably less valuable than would be data that could be gleaned from combat between (near) peers. On the other, it is quite often the only data upon which states long at peace (but always attentive to the possibility of future war) can draw.[26]

Moreover, faced with information that prompts a reassessment of an intervening state, third party observers have a narrow set of options: they can do nothing; they can engage in hard (military) balancing; they can engage in soft (non-military) balancing; or they can engage in asymmetric balancing, wherein weaker actors attempt to compete with stronger ones (militarily and non-militarily), by avoiding the stronger states' strengths and exploiting their weaknesses. In the post-Cold War world, where power asymmetries are profound, witnessing how interveners engage with weaker adversaries, as well as how weaker actors respond in ways designed to help compensate for their material shortcomings, can be quite instructive for outside observers, particularly vis-à-vis learning useful lessons about balancing against significantly more powerful potential adversaries.[27]

Second, because coercive humanitarian interventions are frequently marked by mission creep, over time expanding gaps between ex ante stated rationales for—and objectives of—military action and observable in-theatre behaviors are increasingly lain bare, raising fundamental questions about an intervener's current credibility and future intentions. Observers'

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[26] See, e.g., Aleksandr Khramchikhin, "Rethinking the Danger of Escalation: The Russia-NATO Military Balance," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (December 2018).

[27] For example, a useful distinction can be drawn between high tech and high-end warfare, particularly with respect to technological asymmetries. High tech refers to the qualitative aspect of a weapon, while high-end refers to the size and cost of a weapon. (Night vision goggles are, for instance, high-tech, low-end system, while a battleship is high-tech, high-end system.) High tech, low-end asymmetry can be very effective against a superior foe, and, in some instances, very cheap, high tech tactics can achieve tactical as well as strategic success. Thus, with regard to capabilities, HMI may provide bystanders with reasons for concern—prompting reassessment—as well as well as reason for hope—by relying on high tech, low end emulation and what Cunningham refers to as "strategic substitution". In the current environment, an obvious example on the "hardware" side is exploitation of information and communication technologies and networks and the creation of systems disruptions, denials of service, and conduct of infrastructural sabotage attacks. See Fiona Cunningham, "The Sources of Strategic Force Posture: Explaining Chinese Choices of Nuclear, Space, Cyber and Conventional Missile Posture," PhD dissertation, MIT (n.d.); and Matthews.

reassessments may in turn result in internal and external balancing as well as shifts in doctrine and force posture.

Third, because of the self-exculpatory and attribution error-fraught manner in which states tend to view their own behavior, intervening states may fail to comprehend the magnitude (or even the existence) of the reassessments their humanitarian operations have precipitated. Indeed, states routinely underestimate the degree to which they menace others,[28] and statesmen generally and wholly erroneously assume their signals are clearer than they are and could not be interpreted but one way.[29] One might imagine such tendencies could be particularly acute and even more likely when states are engaged in humanitarian operations that they do not believe should signal anything menacing to third-party observers, with such myopia leading to further deleterious and security dilemma-instigating effects.

Preliminary Hypotheses and Predictions

The theoretical assumptions and framework in the preceding sections give rise to the following hypotheses and associated evidentiary predictions:

H1: Bystander states use humanitarian interventions to update their assessments of interveners' capabilities.

H2: Bystander states use humanitarian interventions to update their assessments of interveners' intentions.

H3: Reassessments can trigger balancing behaviors in the form of acquire new capabilities, allies, updating doctrine and posture. Ironically, therefore, balancing in response to operations designed to provide socio-economic benefits may focus on improving the coercive capacity of observer states to impose socio-economic costs on intervening states.

H3a: The nature of HMI—generally stronger states intervening without consent in weaker ones—is also more likely to trigger balancing in the form of asymmetric or hybrid capabilities. This is the case for two related, but distinct, reasons. The first is that observers can learn how, and under what conditions, effective counter-measures by military inferior states can be employed. The first of one of necessity: observers (especially in the post-Cold War period) may be materially unable to match second is that

H3b: Interveners' failure to recognize that bystanders' behavior is driven by security-seeking

[28] See Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 69-72.
[29] Ibid., 187. See also Brian Rathbun, "Uncertain about Uncertainty: Understanding the Multiple Meanings of a Crucial Concept in International Relations Theory," *International Studies Quarterly* 51 (2007): 533-57.

responses to intervener behavior and thus may trigger or intensify security dilemmas by engaging in countervailing behavior.

The preceding hypotheses give rise to the following set of predictions:

First, the world's most capable powers should be most likely to reassess interveners following HMI, as they are the only states in the international system who can even consider such an effort.

Second, HMI that demonstrate the risks of an inability to deter an intervener should be the major proximate events stimulating reassessments and responses. We may find speech evidence that policymakers' behavior is a consequence of a reassessment of capabilities and/or intentions of the intervener following these coercive exercises.

Third, observers should seek to acquire organic capabilities to combat or offset the advantages of the intervener's new capabilities or doctrine. The capabilities sought by bystanders following reassessments should grant them some expectation of genuine countervailing capabilities. In the post-Cold War environment—when the intervener in question is generally the US—the capabilities sought will likely be of a hybrid or strategic substitution variety.

Fourth, we may find evidence of policymakers referring to the actual change in capabilities and/or to a pattern or patterns of threatening behavior, even if not directed towards the bystander, as the reason(s) for a change in their perceptions of the intervener's intentions. However, as Posen notes, given the competitive nature of international politics, leaders may conceal their motives in some situations and seek to avoid attracting undue attention before their responses are operational.[30]

Fifth, if security dilemma logic operates, we should find evidence that policymakers in the intervening state demonstrate no—or only a vague—awareness that their HMI(s) have catalyzed a response by one or more bystander states. They should instead attribute capabilities acquisition and/or observable doctrinal shifts to shifts in the observer state's/s' own intentions—towards expansionism and aggression. In short, defensive balancing by bystanders should be treated and conceived of as offensive revisionism by the intervener.

Preliminary (and very incomplete) Evidence

The humanitarian military operations in Kosovo (1999) and Libya (2011) were both significant developments in HMI realm. In Kosovo, consistent with evolving state practice, NATO alliance members offered an ethical justification for their operations, and, even though the 78-day air war was undertaken without authorization from the UN Security Council—where Russian and

[30] Posen, ""European Union Security."

Chinese vetoes would have ruled out military action—the operation was lauded by the then UN Secretary, as illegal but ethical and appropriate. In the case of Libya, at the time of the operation, it was hailed as a harbinger of things to come and cast as the first HMI undertaken in support of the "emerging" R2P doctrine. Though treated as non-strategic, morally motivated and militarily (if not politically) largely inconsequential by the principle intervener, namely, the United States, these two interventions appe.ar to have catalyzed (or at least, reinforced) threat reassessments and triggered large-scale asymmetric balancing, by China in the case of Kosovo, and by Russia in the case of Libya. What follows is a skeleton presentation of some evidence in support of these propositions

China and Kosovo

Available evidence suggests that the Kosovo campaign was determinative in China's decision to adopt space and cyber coercive postures.[31] Moreover, China's decision to establish a first-use cyber force posture was explicitly prompted by NATO's accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in the midst of NATO's humanitarian bombing campaign. While the Chinese recognized the power of information warfare—which exploited information to augment conventional warfighting capabilities—following the first Gulf War, the PLA did not consider cyber attacks an important part of information warfare until Kosovo.[32] In January 1999, for instance, CMC Vice-Chairman Zhang Wannian mentioned that future conflicts would involve the space and electronic battlefields, but made no mention of a cyber battlefield.[33]

All this changed in the aftermath of the Belgrade Embassy bombing on May 8, 1999. Beginning the day after the bombing, China's top civilian leader and General Secretary of the Communist Party, Jiang Zemin, instructed the CMC to strengthen the military to prevent future attacks on China. In an emergency Politburo meeting on May 9th, Jiang Zemin said, "we must speed up our own good work, and greatly strengthen our economic power, military power and the cohesion of the people." Kosovo intensified China's perceived need for strategic leverage in a limited conventional war if the US intervened, and it sparked a PLA-wide effort to improve China's current military preparedness and long-term modernization efforts, including China's increased investment in its conventional missile force. Cunningham reports that Chinese military leaders immediately sought to boost China's ability to "defeat a superior adversary from a position of weakness" by finding and attacking the US' own weaknesses. US dependence on computer networks both in war-fighting and as a society was one such example.

As Cunningham reports:

> Following the emergency Politburo meeting, CMC Vice-Chairman Zhang Wannian called an emergency CMC meeting to implement the Politburo's response to the bombing. Zhang

[31] Much of what follows is drawn from Cunningham's excellent dissertation. It is corroborated by other sources, however. Additional references needed if a paper were to result.

[32] M. Taylor Fravel, *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy Since 1949* (Princeton, N.J., 2018), 1993 chapter

[33] Zhang Wannian, Zhang Wannian Junshi Wenxuan, Selected Military Works of Zhang Wannian] (Beijing: Jiefangjun Chubanshe, 2008), 732–35, cited in Cunningham.

> ordered the PLA to ensure its stability and war preparedness, strengthen targeted (zhendui xing) training, speed up the development of shashoujian ("assassin's mace") equipment, and boost morale by studying the government's criticism of the United States. Jiang Zemin instructed the PLA to "advance and seize the development of national defense," which led Zhang to instruct the PLA to study the Kosovo war on May 11, 1999. The war served as a specimen of a local high technology war to guide long-term PLA modernization and training. But Jiang's instructions also prompted Zhang to take immediate steps to improve PLA war preparedness and chances of success, should a conflict occur in the short term. The PLA therefore studied Kosovo as a guide to both its own modernization and to identify U.S. weaknesses.
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> Furthermore, the idea of using computer viruses to counter a stronger, technologically advanced but dependent adversary emerged from PLA efforts to study the lessons of Kosovo. The PLA did not try to catch up with the U.S. military, but rather studied the successes and shortcomings of the Serbian forces attacking it. Zhang's instructions prompted a PLA-wide response to the increased U.S. threat involving changes to PLA doctrine, operations and training, and equipment, for which the AMS, GSD and GAD respectively took the lead. Among those organizations, the GSD's response emphasized cyber weapons.
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> For instance, a month after the Kosovo conflict ended, Zhang Wannian instructed AMS to develop military science as the "software" of the PLA, to complement the development of the PLA's equipment, its "hardware." The GSD Chief of General Staff, Fu Quanyou, organized a number of meetings after the Embassy bombing to formulate and implement a response to the incident. Fu coordinated a military technology small group of nine experts from across the PLA, including the GSD, GAD, Air Force, Second Artillery, and space experts, to study the Embassy attack. The group formulated recommendations for China's response, which Fu submitted to Zhang Wannian on May 31, 1999.[34]

In short, while the PLA had nascent cyber warfare capabilities before 1999, China did not opt to pursue cyber capabilities as a means of warfighting or instrument of coercion until what it observed and absorbed during the Kosovo HMI. The view of many in Washington about what drove China's adoption of these new capabilities and posture is rather different, however.

Russia and Libya

The US-led intervention into Libya was not responsible for Russia's massive conventional weapons modernization program, which commenced the previous year, but this HMI too seems to have been profoundly influential in impelling a reassessment of the threat posed by the intervener on a bystander state and, in this case, the threat posed to its leadership in particular.

[34] Cunningham, "The Sources of Strategic Force Posture,"

The Libyan HMI began on March 19, 2011 under the auspices of UN Resolution 1973, which authorized member states to "take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack." It was argued that, not only did Gaddafi endanger the momentum of the Arab Spring, which had recently resulted in the deposition of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, but he also was poised to commit a bloodbath in a Libyan city where a domestic uprising had started. Two days after the UN authorization, the United States and other NATO countries established a no-fly zone throughout Libya and started bombing Gaddafi's forces. Seven months later, after more than 6,000 airstrikes and 8,500 sorties by US-dominated NATO forces, rebel forces conquered the country and shot and killed Gaddafi, after beating and sodomizing him, a gruesome scheme captured on video and broadcast around the world.

Putin "was alarmed by the Obama Administration's embrace of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. And he was infuriated by the U.S.-led assault on Libya. In early 2011, as Libyans challenged Gaddafi, Putin was ostensibly offstage, serving as Prime Minister; his protégé Dmitry Medvedev was President, and made a crucial decision not to veto an American-backed U.N. Security Council resolution in favor of military action in Libya. In a rare public split, Putin condemned the decision, comparing the resolution to a "medieval call to the crusades." Putin said it's clear that:

> It allows anyone to do anything they want -- to take any actions against a sovereign state…. It resembles a medieval appeal for a crusade in which somebody calls upon somebody to go to a certain place and liberate it….Yugoslavia and Belgrade were bombed. Bush sent armed forces into Afghanistan. A far-fetched and totally false pretext was used to invade Iraq, and the entire Iraqi leadership was eliminated, even children in Saddam Hussein's family died…And now, it's Libya's turn -- under the pretext of protecting civilians. But it's the civilian population who dies during those airstrikes against (Libyan) territory. Where is the logic and the conscience? There is neither."[35]

Moreover, Gaddafi's fall greatly disturbed Putin. According to many, it was a key turning point in US-Russia relations—presaging the end of the so-called "re-set" and adoption of new techniques and doctrine to counter US unilateralism and aggression. As one observer put it, "I think he was particularly shaken by Gaddafi's fate and the images of Qaddafi being killed when he was found in a drainage hole someplace. He was even more determined after that point to draw a line and find ways in which he could undermine the ability of the United States to pursue what he saw to be a mistaken policy line.[36] According to multiple reports, Putin became obsessed with the gruesome video of the Libyan dictator's murder—watching the footage of his last minutes many dozens of times—and he blamed the US and in particular then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. For Putin, the US-led intervention in Libya was a "case study in Western

[35] Jill Dougherty, "Putin and Medvedev spar over Libya," *CNN,* March 23, 2011, http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/europe/03/21/russia.leaders.libya/index.html

[36] See, e.g., https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/10/25/putin-files-consolidating-power-pub-73557.

interventionism"—"a policy of regime change draped in the rhetoric of support for human rights."[37] Many sources report that Putin absorbed the death of Gaddafi as an "object lesson". "When [Gaddafi] was a pariah, no one touched him. But as soon as he opened up he was not only overthrown but killed in the street like a mangy old cur."[38]

When widespread protests broke out in Moscow the following month after charges of election fraud, Putin saw the hand of the US behind them.[39] Many inside and outside the Russian Federation assert that the Kremlin was convinced the US was laying the groundwork for regime change in Russia as well. While Moscow started worrying about Washington's hand in regime change during the Color Revolutions in Eastern Europe in the early 2000s, the Arab Spring and the Libyan operation provided strong reinforcement of that perception.[40]

In terms of speech evidence, in the midst of the operation, Putin offered a number of extended, caustic attacks on the NATO campaign, saying it violated the principle of sovereignty and the wishes of the Libyan people. He wondered aloud whether Western allies planned to fire missiles at all the world's "crooked regimes", asking sarcastically, "when the so-called civilized community, with all its might, pounces on a small country, and ruins infrastructure that has been built over generations – well, I don't know, is this good or bad?" Mr. Putin said. "I do not like it."[41]

Speaking in explicitly realist terms, Putin declared:

> After the dissolution of bipolarity on the planet, we no longer have stability. Key international institutions are not getting any stronger; on the contrary, in many cases, they are sadly degrading. Our western partners, led by the US, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. They have come to believe in their exclusivity and exceptionalism, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right. They act as they please: here and there, they use force against sovereign states, building coalitions based on the principle "If you are not with us, you are against us." To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the necessary resolutions from international organizations, and if for some reason this does not work, they simply ignore the UN Security Council and the UN overall.[42]

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[38] Evan Osnos, David Remnick, and Joshua Yaffa, "Trump, Putin, and the New Cold War," *The New Yorker*, March 6, 2017, online version.

[39] As Obama administration official Anthony Blinken put it, "He was thrown by the protests. He was taken aback by the passion of the opposition, and had to look for a place to point the finger. He pointed it at us." https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/putins-revenge/transcript/

[40] https://nationalpost.com/news/putin-slams-john-mccain-u-s-role-in-gaddafis-death

[41] Quoted in Ellen Barry, *"Putin Criticizes West for Libya Incursion,"* April 26, 2011.

[42] Interview in *Prague Post Magazine*, 2014.

In terms of direct Russian responses, many reports suggest that, like China, Russia decided to invest *even more* heavily in cyber capabilities and improve (still further) their public-private partnerships with hackers.[43] It further appears that Putin's decision to pursue aggressive asymmetric influence operations as a method of counter-balancing US influence may have been as a direct result of the Libyan operation, reinforced in spades by what happened in Ukraine a few years later.[44]

Further afield, while there is a wide array of strategic and security-related reasons for Russia's intervention in Syria, some believe Libya played a role here too, arguing the Syrian civil war was as "an opportunity to halt a trend that had started with the invasion of Iraq and continued through the downfall of dictators in Egypt and Libya." A former senior U.S. official who has interacted with Russians said, "There was this period of time when the United States, in Putin's view, was able to use international institutions to take on regimes that we found offensive, right through Libya, and Putin was determined to put a stake in the ground in Syria, to have Russia be at the table, and be able to resist the international community's efforts to continue this pattern of conduct." This claim seems to be supported, at least in part, by Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu's remarks that Russia's intervention in Syria "helped solve the geopolitical task of breaking the chain of 'color revolutions.'"[45]

[43] Add cites.
[44] Add cites.
[45] Osnos et al., "Trump, Putin, and the New Cold War,"