A case of failed 'rehabilitation'? The biopolitics and geopolitics of military intervention in Libya

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the biopolitics and geopolitics of the Western-led military intervention in Libya of 2011. The Foucauldian concept 'dispositif' is deployed to grasp how a network of different international actors, practices, discourses, and technologies of power were oriented towards biopolitically securing the Libyan population prior to the intervention. The paper takes as an example the development practices of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which sought to secure the Libyan population through biopolitical technologies of governance like 'human security' and 'human development'. The paper argues that it is the apparent failure of these efforts, as shown through stagnated democratization and liberalization under Muammar Gaddafi's rule, which foregrounded the spectacular display of sovereign/biopower by Western governments during the military intervention. It is thus a failed 'rehabilitation' of the Libyan government, which led powerful Western governments to pursue their biopolitical *and* geopolitical objectives in Libya through more violent means.

Keywords: Libya, military intervention, biopolitics, geopolitics, security dispositive

Introduction

Within the field of international relations, scholars have argued that the contemporary security practices of Western liberal states incorporate both geopolitical and biopolitical orientations.[1] While geopolitics takes as its primary referent object 'territory', biopolitics is conversely oriented towards securing and promoting species life, and typically makes interventions at the aggregate register of 'population'.[2] Research on the geopolitics and biopolitics of Western security practices has led to important contributions on counter-terrorism,[3] global health security,[4] migration,[5] the environment,[6] and military intervention.[7] Moreover, Western governments' actions during the pervasive 'War on Terror' has brought this entanglement of geopolitics and biopolitics sharply into focus.[8]

This paper seeks to contribute to this existing literature by examining the biopolitics and geopolitics of the military intervention in Libya of 2011. While there has been a significant body of scholarship already written on the military intervention,[9] the ways in which Libya was already embroiled in biopolitical power relations with liberal actors prior to the military intervention has not been adequately addressed. This is a significant omission since efforts were indeed made to biopolitically secure the Libyan population prior to the Western-led military intervention (as with all 'underdeveloped' states), and we might also presume that the perceived outcome of these efforts would have had a bearing on the subsequent intervention itself. The case of Libya is, moreover, of great interest for a study of liberal biopolitics, since the disastrous results of the

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[1] Dillon 2007; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008.
[2] Foucault 2010.
[3] Elden 2009; Gregory 2008, 2010; Shaw 2013; Morrissey 2013.
[4] Braun 2007.
[5] Hyndman 2012.
[6] Grove 2010.
[7] Cairo 2006.
[8] Dillon 2007.
[9] Pack 2013; Davidson 2013; Glanville 2013; De Waal 2013; Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014.

Western-led military intervention suggest anything but the security of species life.[10]

To analyse the biopolitics and geopolitics of the military intervention in Libya, the paper deploys the Foucauldian concept of 'dispositif'. With its strategic function of securing and promoting species life, the biopolitics of security dispositif incorporates a network of heterogeneous elements, including actors, practices, discourses, and regulations.[11] The concept of 'dispositif' is particularly useful for our purposes since it allows us to grasp how liberal biopolitics brings into play powers of life *and* death.[12] This is closely related to how liberal biopolitics comprises a complex configuration of power which includes different technologies of governmental, disciplinary, and sovereign power. In so far as each modality aims to secure species life, they are also forms of biopower, but, crucially, they operate in different ways. Governmental power, for instance, is exercised through practices which aim to biopolitically promote species life from a distance. Yet it is the dual exercise of sovereign/biopower which has been most prominent in liberal military interventions.[13] Two things are crucial to note here about this deployment of sovereign/biopower: 1) it brings into play the liberal paradox of states "killing to make life live",[14] and (2) it suggests that states carry out military interventions due to a convergence of both biopolitical and geopolitical imperatives.

The paper analyzes a wide range of empirical evidence to explore the biopolitics and geopolitics of the Western-led military intervention in Libya. First, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reports, including the Human Development Report (HDR) and Arab Human Development Report (AHDR), are used to capture the attempts to biopolitically secure species life in Libya in the years leading up to the

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[10] House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee 2017.
[11] Dillon 2007.
[12] Prozorov 2013.
[13] De Larrinaga and Doucet 2008.
[14] Reid and Dillon 2009

military intervention of 2011. Second, for the military intervention itself, the paper turns to a range of official United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US) government documents, including statements, speeches, and interviews. It is deemed that these will reveal how Western governments constituted the events in Libya during the military intervention.

The paper shows firstly how efforts to biopolitically secure and promote species life in Libya prior to the Western-led military intervention of 2011 are understood to have failed. In this sense, it is perhaps most appropriate to speak of a 'failed rehabilitation' of the Libyan government. Yet the main argument advanced here is that the ways in which species life was constituted through these practices renders it amenable to a future exercise of sovereign/biopower by Western governments. Understood as both contingent and emergent, and spatially defined by circulation and interconnectivity, the governments of the UK, France, and the US intervene in Libya in order to channel the direction of this species life in line with their own biopolitical *and* geopolitical objectives. The article is brought to a close with some concluding remarks on how liberal actors work together to secure and promote species life.

The international liberal biopolitics 'dispositif'

Michel Foucault's work on biopower and biopolitics traced how 'species life' emerged as an object of political strategies within liberal societies.[15] Configurations of sovereign power experienced a profound transformation whereby the strategic imperative became to 'make life live'. Considering biopolitics to be a 'dispositif of security' offers the most nuanced account with the greatest analytical potential.[16] A dispositif is a particular arrangement or network of heterogeneous elements, which comprises "discourses, institutions, architectural structures, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific enunciations,

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[15] Foucault 1975.
[16] Dillon 2007; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008.

philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions".[17] As noted by Jeffrey Bussolini, it is not the individual elements which are of most concern, but the "particular arrangement" itself and its constituent relations. The arrangement of the dispositif is articulated with a "strategic function", which is precisely a "rational and concerted intervention in the relations of force, to orient them in a certain direction".[18] As such, the concept dispositif maintains a proximity with Foucault's theory of different 'technologies of power'; indeed, the security dispositif is essentially a complex configuration of sovereign, disciplinary, and governmental power.

While Foucault's analyses of biopower and biopolitics were almost exclusively situated within the boundaries of the state, contemporary authors have nonetheless used these concepts for analysis at the international or global scales.[19] Mitchell Dean incorporated biopolitics into a broader conception of a 'liberal international dispositif', which, being essentially an extension of 'domestic liberal government', encompasses a range of similar concerns: "its basis in an economic rationality, its governing through freedoms and rights, its biopolitical management of populations and the constabulary form of police".[20]

Other authors, such as Michael Dillon, have emphasized the 'biopolitical' dimension of any liberal dispositif of security. As Dillon explained, the strategic function of liberal biopolitics is to secure species life: it "regulates, strategizes, and seeks to manipulate the circulation of species life–by instantiating a general economy of the contingent throughout all the processes or re-productive circulation that impinge upon species existence as such".[21] Biopolitics responds to a particular problematization of security, whereby the principal concern and referent

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[17] Foucault in Bussolini 2010.

[18] Foucault in Bussolini 2010.

[19] Dillon and Reid 2001; Dillon 2007; Dillon and Lobo Guerrero 2008; Jaeger 2010; Aradau and Tazzioli 2020.

[20] Dean 2016.

[21] Dillon 2007, 9.

object is articulated as 'species life' itself. It is around this object that a whole series of power/knowledge relations are directed. For instance, governmental power is exercised through practices comprising political rationalities and governmental technologies. It is through these practices that subjectivities are constituted, all in the name of making 'life live'.

While species life is the referent object around which liberal biopolitics revolves, it is important to note that meaning can never be assigned definitively. It is rather contingent. Indeed, it is possible to show that what constitutes species life has undergone significant change in the contemporary period. For instance, in recent decades, the molecular and digital revolutions have been important events in the transformation of what 'species life' is understood to be.[22] Species life has come to be not only characterized by radical contingency, but moreover as an open system which is defined by a series of elements: circulation, interconnectivity, complexity, adaptivity, emergence, and becoming. It is precisely this radical contingency and emergence which makes species life dangerous, providing the imperative for liberal biopolitics to seek to secure it against itself. Dillon called this the 'emergency of emergence', which is akin to a 'becoming-dangerous', and which explains both the resonance of danger felt by Western societies in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the security responses which followed.[23]

If radical contingency is understood to be characteristic of species being, then we would not expect liberal biopolitics to secure it completely. In fact, "wrapping-up life, to preserve it from the vicissitudes of its contingent being, will assuredly kill it off".[24] This is the fundamental paradox of liberal biopolitics. Attempts to biopolitically secure life must therefore occur by managing contingency itself, and through technologies such as 'risk'.[25] A risk-based perspective on security is characterized by an attention to 'systemic characteristics' and generating 'populations at risk'

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[22] Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008.
[23] Dillon 2007.
[24] Dillon 2008, 314.
[25] Aradau, Lobo-Guerrero and Van Munster 2008.

– for example, the risk of disease or environmental hazard, but one might also add that of civil conflict or war.[26] It is not a case of eradicating the danger, thus, but rather of developing strategies "to embrace it".[27] The management of contingency thus becomes crucial for the biopolitics dispositif of security, and technologies of 'risk' help with managing an uncertain future–along with potential catastrophic events- by making it 'knowable and actionable'. In other words, 'risk' seeks to "identify, calculate, imagine, assess, prevent, compensate and mitigate the uncertainty surrounding 'incalculable' threats such as terrorism and pandemics".[28]

One way that liberal biopolitics has sought to secure, manage, and promote contingent and emergent species life in the contemporary period is through an international development-security dispositif[29] This comprises a regime of development programs and practices, which exercise power through what Foucault and others have identified as 'governmentality'. Governmentality refers to how populations are governed 'from a distance,' and that is, through governmental practices, and through definable political rationalities – for instance, neoliberalism – and corresponding governmental technologies which essentially put these rationalities into practice. Liberal notions of development have typically conceptualized species life in close concordance with liberal biopolitics more generally; that is, as characterized by radical contingency, emergence, adaptivity, circulation, and interconnectivity. Understood in this way, populations around the world have the potential to become dangerous if they are not managed correctly and remain in an underdeveloped state. Potential consequences of this could be civil war, terrorism, migration, disruptions to resource and commodity supply, and so forth. Human development can thus best be understood as a

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[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid..
[29] Duffield 2010, 56.

biopolitical technology of security for the ways in which it seeks to secure and promote species life in definable ways.[30]

One of the most prominent global development programs which has sought to secure and promote species life is the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Within the development discourse of the UNDP, the twin concepts of human development and human security – what is known as the 'development-security nexus' –comprise two fundamental pillars of this approach. Human security is understood as a prerequisite for development in so far as it provides the necessary conditions from which human development can flourish.[31] Yet, understood as a biopolitical technology of 'risk', we are more interested in how human security has functioned as a way in which to identify, calculate, and mitigate the series of risks and dangers which emanate from species life. For the UNDP, such risks do not merely pose a potential danger to 'underdeveloped' states, but also to the wider international community through the radical interconnectivity of species life. Thus, human security does not function simply "as a response to outside stimuli"[32] but rather to deal with the contingency of the future by making visible systemic deficiencies in the present so that they can be dealt with accordingly. The point here is to frame and order reality in such a way so as to render it amenable to governance and incite change.[33]

If human security has been used to make certain risks visible, liberal forms of 'human development' have been put forward as the effective means through which these risks are ameliorated. This means that certain institutional arrangements are promoted as acceptable, such as liberal democratic forms of governance and a corresponding free market economic system. These are promoted as the best arrangements for the cultivation of individual autonomy, choice and capability, been

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[30] Duffield 2010; Mezzadra, Reid, and Samaddar 2013.
[31] Ban 2010.
[32] Grayson 2011.
[33] Joseph 2012, 165.

understood as the best ways to secure populations and human life against its own radical contingency and emergence.

For all that, while development seeks to biopolitically secure and promote species life, one must recognize that it is still ultimately national governments who exert the most influence over what happens within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. This is a fundamental difference between governmental practices at the national level and those at the global level. Thus, governmental development practices such as those of the UNDP cannot biopolitically secure populations without also, in the first place, shaping the "conduct of conduct" of the governments presiding over these populations.[34] Responsibility must first be assigned to national governments, meaning that any future political upheaval or conflict may be subsequently attributed to the failures of the government in question.

The biopolitics and geopolitics of Western state security practices

Within the international liberal biopolitics dispositif being traced, the question remains as to where the state and sovereign power can be situated. First, as Mitchell Dean suggested, the status of the Western state must be relegated to that of merely one part of the wider network: "...for the sovereign, rather than the supreme power within a domain, must become one or several of the elements, entering into widely varying relations, having different and modifiable functions, and occupying shifting positions within a complex network or ensemble".[35]

Within this framework, the sovereign state becomes one element among many, and thus it is its *perceived* transcendence that must be explained. Far from being a unitary, homogenous, and all-encompassing entity, one that exists *a priori* as the unambiguous origin of political action, it turns out rather that the state is more accurately conceived as both *an effect* and an *instrument* of power. On the one hand, it is an effect, in so far as it emerges as the "contingent and provisional outcome of struggles to

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[34] Joseph 2009.
[35] Dean 2013, 87.

realize more or less specific 'state projects'".[36] Any appearance of state identity or state sovereignty can thus be explained as the "ontological effects of practices which are performatively enacted".[37] On the other, the state is an instrument deployed as part of political strategies in the sense that it "establishes a frontier regime that is defined by the distinction between inside and outside, state and non-state", and furthermore that it "operates as an internal division providing resources of power".[38]

To grasp how and why Western liberal states operate as constituent parts of a biopolitics dispositif, it is necessary to first appreciate how they are performatively constituted by manifold foreign and security discursive practices. When we look at these security practices, it is possible to see how they comprise a complex fusion of geopolitical and biopolitical elements.[39] Thus, security practices are infused with both, and it is through these practices that Western states have been constituted. For all that, while performativity can help to explain how the Western state is constituted in biopolitical and geopolitical terms, it is the notion of 'performance' which captures how these states act and exercise sovereign power at any given time.[40] For instance, while the Western state typically constitutes itself performatively as the defender of human rights, which in itself reflects a biopolitical and geopolitical orientation, it is the concept of 'performance' which explains why these states invoke human rights in some cases and not in others.

To show how the Western state constitutes itself performatively both in biopolitical and geopolitical terms, let us turn to the past US security strategy of 'integration', which was prominent during the height of the War on Terror period.[41] This strategy was a notable divergence from previous strategies, which emphasized the 'containment' of threats and dangers.

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[36] Jessop, cited in Lemke 2007, 51.
[37] Weber 1998, 78.
[38] Lemke 2007, 51-52.
[39] Dillon 2007; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008.
[40] Bialasievicz et al. 2007.
[41] Bialasievicz et al. 2007.

What is interesting here is how containment is no longer deemed to be a viable strategy in a globalized world where the radical interconnectedness of species life and the intensification of flows render contingent and emergent species life critically more dangerous.[42] Merely containing threats through exclusionary measures would logically only award 'dangerous bodies' greater room to grow in strength and potentially expand their capabilities. Through the geopolitical/biopolitical strategy of integration, however, varied efforts are made to spread the liberal values of human rights, freedom, and democracy around the World. This way, the spaces containing and sustaining dangerous life can be brought under greater Western control, truncating the scope and potential of any biopolitical threats emerging from species life therein.

Nonetheless, it is clear that this geopolitical/biopolitical strategy of integration has been anything but easy to achieve in practice. This is, in fact, to be expected; any species life that is characterized by contingency and emergence will always harbor the potential to become dangerous. The upshot of this is that any broad and longer-term strategy of integration must be supplemented by a range of security practices which can tackle and eliminate dangerous bodies in the short term. Any cursory appreciation of the counter-terrorism practices performed during the War on Terror period should suffice to illuminate this point. Western states have dealt with the 'dangerous bodies' of terrorist organizations through their direct elimination or 'neutralization', notably through drone strikes and targeted assassinations, where the Foucauldian biopolitical paradox 'killing to make life live' perhaps finds its greatest expression.[43] As Kyle Grayson noted, these practices entail "the individualization of danger to the extreme" and its identification as an "existential threat to the survival of the species".[44] For all that, even in such spectacular exhibitions of biopolitical violence, geopolitical reasoning and logics are never far from

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[42] Dillon 2007.
[43] Dillon and Reid 2009.
[44] Grayson 2012, 29

sight since to carry these strikes out one must first be able to dominate geographical space.[45]

Finally, returning to the liberal biopolitics dispositif, we can see how both Western governments and liberal institutions like the UNDP have an interest in spreading liberal democratic values to biopolitically secure species life (albeit for different reasons). Yet, what happens when governments fail to respond to the governmental practices of the UNDP and thus these efforts to secure species life are understood to have failed? In a sense, this is inevitable because of the uneven nature of the international.[46] At any rate, we can deduce that powerful Western states may revert to more coercive forms of disciplinary or sovereign power. Indeed, one might say that it is biopolitical technologies like development and human security that define "the conditions of exceptionality that assist in sovereign power's ability to authorize international interventions meant to secure human life".[47]

A case of failed rehabilitation? Libya and the Western biopolitics dispositif

Following the surrender of the Lockerbie bombing suspects at the turn of the previous century, Muammar Gaddafi and the Libyan government underwent a well-documented rapprochement with powerful Western governments.[48] This process developed in parallel to the annulment of sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council, and later those maintained unilaterally by the US government. A period of increased cooperation between Gaddafi and Western governments followed and was built around agreements on the key global security issues of the time: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the fight against international terrorism. Tangible progress in these very

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[45] Shaw 2013; Gregory 2011.
[46] Joseph, 2009.
[47] De Larrinaga and Doucet 2008, 517.
[48] Moss and St. John 2009.

areas would enable high ranking Western officials to hail an unprecedented diplomatic and foreign policy success story,[49] paving the way to greater economic ties and a range of lucrative investment opportunities for Western multinational corporations.

Yet for all the talk of 'rehabilitation' found in Western media and foreign policy circles, any reincorporation of the once 'rogue state' into the international community was never going to be straightforward.[50] Reports of a series of high-profile diplomatic aberrations, a notoriously difficult business environment marked by corruption, charges of human rights' abuses, and general feelings of antipathy towards the 'nature' of Gaddafi's regime by some Western officials,[51] all seemed to cast doubts on the prospects for any rehabilitation. All the while, the willingness of Gaddafi and the Libyan government to embark on a process of rapprochement with Western governments and international institutions meant they would at the same time open themselves up to greater levels of scrutiny, influence, and pressure from liberal minded international institutions and a global civil society.[52]

The rehabilitation of Gaddafi and the Libyan government would be dependent on their willingness and capacity to work with a range of heterogeneous actors to secure the Libyan population. That is, whether the Libyan government would successfully enact the political reforms necessary, in line with international liberal standards of human development and human security set by the network of liberal minded actors of the international development-security dispositif. A key part of this liberal biopolitics dispositif of security has been the development practices of UNDP, and during this period Libya was being regulated by two governmental tools in particular: the Human Development Report (HDR) and the Arab Human Development Report (AHDR). Despite claims to neutrality and objectivity, and assurances of an "unapologetically

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[49] Rice 2008.
[50] Macleod 2006; Moss 2008.
[51] Powell 2004.
[52] Human Rights Watch, 2009.

independent analysis",[53] the primary aim of the HDR and AHDR is to biopolitically secure populations in accordance with a distinctly neoliberal political rationality and a range of technologies which function to put that rationality into practice.[54] These governmental tools do so principally by generating knowledge about a country, in this case Libya, through an in-depth assessment of its performance in relation to a range of development indicators.

To biopolitically secure and promote species life in Libya, it is necessary to first make any deficiencies visible, and for this purpose, the HDR and AHDR ground their assessment on statistics. Statistics make both the Libyan government and the Libyan population quantifiable, and therefore measurable. It is the political/governance indicators which are of most interest here. It is perhaps no great surprise to find that Libya scored poorly in both the HDR and AHDR prior to the military intervention of 2011. Furthermore, there was very little progress detected throughout the period in question. In the HDRs from 2002 to 2010, for instance, there was little change in Libya's performance for the indicator 'institutional factors necessary for democracy'. Libya scored 0 for the political freedom/democracy indicator (the scale ranges from 0 [nondemocratic] to 2 [democratic]), and relatively poorly for civil liberties indicators such as human rights violations (3 on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the worst) and press freedom (64.5, where a lower score indicates more freedom).[55]

Besides statistics, the HDR and AHDR also utilized the governmental technique of 'benchmarking' in its assessment of Libya. Benchmarking allows for the performance of a country to be measured in relation to other countries; that is, it is through this mechanism that hierarchies can be erected between those countries like Libya, who are deemed to be critically deficient, and those others who find themselves in seemingly more advanced stages of development. A mechanism of competition is

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[53] HDR 2002.
[54] Jaeger 2010.
[55] HDR, 2010.

thus activated, and once Libya is contrasted with the benchmark, it can be situated in its purportedly rightful place in the hierarchy. Looking at the AHDR, we can see that Libya is situated among the worst of the poorly-performing Arab countries in the governance indicators, with barely any progress shown during the period 2002-2009. These include 'voice and accountability', 'political instability', 'government effectiveness', 'regulatory burden', 'rule of law', and 'graft'.[56] In so far as 'political freedoms and participation' are a crucial part of human development, Libya was understood to be in a state of significant underdevelopment during the pre-intervention period. In short, through the mechanism of benchmarking, it was expected that governance standards in Libya could be driven up,[57] thereby bringing about human development and securing the Libyan population biopolitically.

From the governance indicators mentioned above, we can see that attempts to govern the Libyan population are being made in accordance with a (neo)liberal benchmark or political rationality. 'Human development' is a 'human centred' approach which privileges the human capabilities of a population above all. Thus, in Libya, the HDR and AHDR aspired to inculcate individual freedoms in the country, while also curtailing state intervention and advancing "the need for well-functioning markets to enable individuals to exercise these choices".[58] In so far as "political freedoms and participation are part of human development, both as development goals in their own right and as means for advancing human development", it can be deduced that Libya was in a state of significant underdevelopment.

For all that, Libya's poor performance in terms of governance and associated political freedoms was not merely a question of (under)development. Since human development is intrinsically linked to human security in the HDR and AHDR, Libya's deficiencies in the former

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[56] AHDR 2009.
[57] Broome and Quirk 2015.
[58] Shani 2012, 105.

were logically the results of shortcomings in the latter. Moreover, the poor scores that Libya was awarded particularly in terms of institutions and rule of law suggest that it was the state itself which was responsible for both human insecurity and human underdevelopment. From the AHDR, we can see that this was a problem for not only Libya, but the Arab countries more generally. Being "a prerequisite for human development", the 2010 report concluded that "its widespread absence in Arab countries has held back their progress". Under 'seven dimensions of threat', it was the section on 'Arab State and human security' which seemed the most relevant for human security in Libya. Human insecurity, the report affirmed, is found "in countries that enjoy relative stability where the authoritarian state, buttressed by flawed constitutions and unjust laws, often denies their citizens their rights". Several factors such as "weak institutional curbs on state power" and "a fragile and fragmented civil society" combined to translate the state into a "source of risk to life and freedom" and a "major threat to human security".[59]

Yet it was not simply that the Libyan state was deemed to pose a threat to the human security of the Libyan population, but that the Libyan population themselves were being constituted as a population at risk. As a biopolitical technology of risk, human security attempts to deal with the contingency and emergence of species life by highlighting current systemic deficiencies and the potential for future risk. For instance, the governance deficiencies and stunted political development identified in Libya harbored insidious risks in so far as they could lead to the kind of civil unrest or civil conflict, which is the fruit of "an increasingly alienated and angry population, especially young people".[60] The identification and calculation of these potential risks in Libya, and the constitution of a vulnerable population, were necessary first steps in dealing with the radical contingency of species life, and once they were made visible, solutions could then be proposed to deal with them.

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[59] AHDR 2009.
[60] UNDP 2002.

Once species life was constituted as insecure in Libya, and therefore risk generated, the HDR and AHDR sought to mitigate those risks through the promotion of a neoliberal political rationality and associative governmental technologies. For instance, 'good governance' was put forward, aiming to transform the Libyan deficiencies through 'capacity building' and strengthening institutions to improve "the resilience of governments and people alike".[61] In conjunction, adaptive 'self-reliance' and 'empowerment' were being advocated. In terms of the constitution of subjectivities in Libya, the concept of 'empowerment' is crucial and refers to an array of actors from individuals to civil society groups and those in the private sector. It is moreover closely related to notions of freedom as capability, defined as "the ability of individuals and groups to engage with, shape and benefit from political and other development processes in households, communities and countries".[62] As a governmental 'technology of agency', empowerment, with its emphasis on autonomy and self-determination, shapes subjectivities for inciting changes towards strategic goals.[63] In this way, power is exercised at a distance, and, somewhat paradoxically, through freedom, as individuals and social groups are constituted as both the objects and subjects of power. For these reasons, it is most certainly a mistake to equate notions of empowerment with emancipation from power relations.[64]

The HDR and AHDR offer us important insights into how the liberal international development-security dispositif strove to secure the Libyan population during the 'rehabilitation' period. As biopolitical technologies of security, human development and human security both aimed to foster species life at the aggregate level of the Libyan population. This was based on a particular conception of species life which is understood to be contingent, emergent, in constant adaptation, and radically interconnected with other species life. Through neoliberal

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[61] Ban 2010.
[62] HDR 2010.
[63] See, for instance, Dean 1999; and Jaeger 2010.
[64] Dean 1999; Joseph 2013.

governmentality the radical contingency of species life in Libya was to be embraced, as this was understood to be the best way of securing it. In other words, security comes with greater freedom. It was expected that this promotes 'good circulation' in the shape of open markets and commodity flows, while containing 'bad circulation' in the form of migrant or terrorism flows. We could say that it sought to do this 'underwriting' risk by creating self-regulating subjects in Libya.[65]

However, seeking to secure any population, including the Libyan population, in these ways is anything but easy to achieve in practice. It is, of course, the government which exerts most influence over the territorial boundaries of the nation-state, and thus the effectiveness of these governmental technologies is related to acutely with this layer of political authority. Indeed, as recognized in UNDP discourse, it is the 'primary role' of governments to ensure that the structural conditions are in place for development and security.[66] In Libya, it was thus necessary to first discipline the "conduct of conduct" of the Libyan government in order to incite changes at the level of the Libyan population.[67] This amounts to a development logic of contractualism, conferring responsibility to dysfunctional governments for the adoption of reforms in line with normalized standards of governance in order to safeguard against future risks and, by doing so, ensure human security and human development. This is precisely the function of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) norm, which puts this logic of contractualism in place. We have tried to show, by zoning in on a key dimension of the international development-security dispositif, that these efforts to discipline the Libyan government and biopolitically secure the Libyan population were understood to have failed in the period leading up to 2011. Through this logic of contractualism, it is ultimately the Libyan government who must bear the responsibility for

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[65] Dillon 2008, 322-323.
[66] Ban 2010.
[67] Joseph 2009.

that. Any 'rehabilitation' of Gaddafi could, in turn, logically be considered a failure.

The biopolitics and geopolitics of Western military intervention in Libya

The emergence of anti-government protests in Libya during the early part of 2011 followed a similar trend to that witnessed in other states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). These protests would be met by a swift and violent response by Libyan security forces, initiating a conflict which would only gather pace, spread, and worsen in the months ahead. Early signs that the conflict in Libya was being understood in biopolitical terms came from how liberal-minded actors of the international liberal biopolitics dispositif constituted the violence in humanitarian terms. These actors generally constituted the Libyan people as a uniform, coherent, and unambiguous population that had been denied their human rights. Meanwhile, as the perpetrators, Gaddafi and the Libyan government were being held directly responsible for the situation and the reported human abuses occurring there. Western liberal leaders like David Cameron were unambiguous in their characterization of Gaddafi as "murderous", and the leader of a "barbaric" and "illegitimate" regime,[68] thereby constituting him in opposition to the purportedly moral, democratic, and rational Western 'Self'.

Yet it also seems clear that actors within this international biopolitics dispositif were relying on a 'truth discourse' about the nature of species life, and the 'vital' character of these living beings, to understand the violence taking place in Libya.[69] This was essentially the same conception of human life that we have already seen in the UNDP reports; that is, it was characterized by radical contingency and emergence in so far as it was deemed to be on a non-linear path undergoing continuous adaptation and change. The eruption of violence in Libya in 2011 was thus understood as a

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[68] Cameron 2011c.
[69] For biopolitics as a 'truth discourse' see Rabinow and Rose 2006.

manifestation of this contingency, and evidence of 'emergent' human life becoming dangerous. Yet it was not the Libyan population themselves who were being held responsible for the civil unrest and growing violent conflict; rather, Gaddafi and the Libyan government were at fault, since it is they who thwarted political liberalization, failing to implement the 'good governance' reforms necessary, thereby maintaining the Libyan population in a state of underdevelopment and insecurity. This was articulated perhaps most succinctly by then-UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon: "Our Arab Human Development Report has consistently chronicled the need for economic, social and political reform across the region. In particular, it emphasized what we have called a 'deficit of democracy' and the need for political leaders to address it. Now the situation has exploded onto the streets".[70]

If the violence in Libya was being understood as a consequence of the failure to biopolitically secure species life through processes of liberalization and democratization, it was the Western governments of the UK, France, and the US who would play a decisive role in the military intervention. First, they were the driving force behind the United Nations Security Council resolutions authorizing collective action.[71] Second, they had the capabilities to lead the subsequent military campaign,. Third, they played a leading role in the military strikes that would ultimately bring a change in the regime. The performance of sovereignty made by these powerful Western governments comprised a fusion of sovereign and biopower, exercised in order to 'kill to make life live'. To secure and promote species life in Libya, it was deemed necessary to remove the obstacles which had thus far been in the way. For that, Western leaders repeatedly insisted that Gaddafi "must leave",[72] and when these words were not heeded, an increase in the belligerent measures was duly made to force him from power and change the Libyan government. Gaddafi

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[70] Ban 2011.
[71] Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014.
[72] Cameron, 2011c.

symbolized a deviant form of life which must be eliminated to secure and strengthen 'species life' as conceptualized by liberal biopolitics.

To secure and promote species life in Libya, it was not only necessary for Western governments to remove Gaddafi but also to embrace its radical contingency and emergent properties. This meant dealing with the state of underdevelopment and insecurity that the Libyan population seemingly found itself in. The Western-led exhibition of sovereign/biopower in Libya was thus performed to provide solutions to the emerging situation and to guide species life in Libya in certain definable ways. Notably, these solutions, for the most part, reflected the governmental rationalities and technologies identified as operating in the HDR and AHDR. For instance, the emphasis placed on human rights, freedom, and democracy in official Western discourse mirrors the political rationality of (neo)liberalism, which undergirds UNDP development practices. A similar notion of 'development' is reiterated also, which is paradoxically expressed in terms of linear progress. While liberal biopolitics understands species life is being radically contingent and emergent, uprisings are often constituted as through a mythological teleology as a spontaneous yet natural and inevitable phenomenon. Thus, we find in official Western discourse poetic notions of a Libyan people emerging from their underdeveloped state in pursuit of their own 'destiny': "just as we continue to act to help protect the Libyan people from the brutality of Qadhafi's regime... so we will support and stand by them as they seek to take control of their own destiny".[73]

Furthermore, Western governments also constituted the subjectivity of the Libyan people in line with the technology of agency 'empowerment' already seen in the HDR and AHDR. As the leaders of the UK, France, and US repeatedly insisted, this was not a case of Western governments removing a recalcitrant leader and government by force; rather, the "limited" role and military action was merely to support a Libyan people who were fulfilling and realizing their own political development and

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[73] Cameron 2011a.

"destiny" of human rights, freedom and democracy. The Libyan population was thus being "empowered" as free, rational, and responsible subjects. Nonetheless, as NATO bombings escalated in the face of resistance by "loyalist" forces and a widely acknowledged "stalemate" on the ground, it became increasingly more difficult to deny the decisive nature of Western involvement. As a not insignificant side note, this articulation of the intervention would, by-and-large, absolve Western leaders of responsibility for a predictably chaotic aftermath.

There was, of course, nothing inevitable about this performance of sovereignty by Western governments in Libya. Charges of inconsistency in response to reports of violent repression elsewhere were compelling and would have to be dealt with. Responses to the 'Arab Spring', and other situations of human rights abuses around the world, for that matter, were certainly not uniform. For instance, Bahrain was experiencing its own insurrection, and yet criticism of this important US ally was lukewarm at best. Yet, through a performative understanding of state sovereignty, inconsistency is to be expected; states may try to achieve a uniformity in their foreign policy, but this is impossible as new contexts arise and governments are forced to juggle a plethora of different interests and logics, bilateral and multilateral relationships, and public opinion. Performativity emphasizes how Western states' performance of sovereignty for the military intervention in Libya comprised not only a biopolitical but also a geopolitical dimension. In short, it was important for Western governments to not only secure and promote species life in Libya, but also acquire a certain control over its territory to realize their broad range of political, economic, and security interests in Libya.[74]

Indeed, there was a broader geopolitical and geostrategic vision articulated by Western officials. "I am clear where British national interest lies," then UK Prime Minister David Cameron assured. "It is in our interests to see the growth of open societies and the building blocks of democracy

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[74] Northern and Pack 2013.

in North Africa and the Middle East."[75] Notable again was how the Libyan conflict and the identities of those involved were understood within the broader geographical and temporal parameters of the Arab Spring phenomenon. The constitution of this region of the world as a key geographical zone was, of course, to be seen in national security documents, where the dissemination of (neo)liberal notions of freedom and democracy throughout the globe was and is considered a key national security goal, both to mitigate key national security threats emanating from terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and also in facilitating the spread of global markets and the generation of greater wealth that this entails. It would be a truism to state that the spread of freedom and democracy throughout the Middle East has not always played out this way in practice, but this is not to say that the imposition of liberal democratic systems is not the preferred choice for Western governments. As Cameron put it, "that will enhance not only our own prosperity, but also our security and our safety as well".[76]

Interestingly, this performance of sovereignty by Western governments was made in conjunction with geopolitical reasoning vis-à-vis connections between Libya and the wider region. Echoing past geopolitical 'domino' logics, it was claimed that a failure to take decisive action in Libya could have produced a negative knock-on effect in other countries which had also been showing signs of liberal democratic transformations. An anti-domino logic emerged, whereby the original formulation is inverted to posit that one event in one country could restrict, stifle, and stagnate desirable events from occurring in neighboring countries. Speaking of events in Libya, Cameron put it like this: "We have seen the uprising of a people against a brutal dictator and it will send a dreadful signal if their legitimate aspirations are crushed, not least to others striving for democracy across the region."[77] In short,

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[75] Cameron 2011d.
[76] Cameron 2011d.
[77] Cameron 2011d.

Gaddafi had become not only an obstacle to liberal democratization in Libya, but potentially to the democratization of the entire region.

Finally, we can see how the geopolitical strategy of integration pursued by Western governments in Libya was also related to the spread of markets and the economic benefits this was assumed to bring. It was the imperative of promoting "good circulation" by way of free markets that was a key congruence between the governmental human development practices of the UNDP and Western liberal states. For then-UK Minister of Defence, William Hague, cooperative relations between the EU and the Arab World could be defined by the "way Europe acts as a magnet for positive change, encouraging really open market economies, the rule of law, an independent judiciary so that these things flourish in North Africa".[78] And again, not only would the emergence of a liberal democratic system and truly free markets in Libya benefit the Libyans, but that "once this fighting is over", this would be "the immense contribution that Britain and Europe again can make to the wider prosperity and stability of the world".[79]

Conclusions

Through the concept of biopolitics dispositif, it has been possible to explore how Libya was immersed in power relations prior to the military intervention of 2011, as well as how different liberal actors worked towards the shared aim of securing and promoting species life in Libya. The concept of 'dispositif' also allows us to grasp how biopolitics harnesses both powers of life, and powers of death. It has been shown how, in the reports of the UNDP, efforts to secure the Libyan population by inciting political democratization and liberalization prior to the military intervention were deemed to have failed. The lack of progress in key areas of governance and political freedoms suggests a 'failed rehabilitation' of Gaddafi and the Libyan government. Moreover, it was the inability or

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[78] Hague 2011.
[79] Hague 2011.

unwillingness of the Libyan government to implement these reforms which meant that they shall be held responsible for the civil unrest and violence of 2011, and the 'becoming-dangerous' of species life that this evidences. Western governments would thus embark on a military intervention to violently remove Gaddafi and the Libyan government, eliminating the 'dangerous bodies' posing a threat to liberal species life.

Yet the main argument presented in this paper is that the ways in which species life in Libya were constituted through these practices had significant import for the military intervention itself. On the one hand, the Libyan population was being constituted as underdeveloped and insecure in the HDR and AHDR (seemingly as a result of the failure to enact political reforms). On the other hand, this underdevelopment and insecurity implied that species life in Libya had the potential to become dangerous because its radically contingent and emergent properties were not being embraced, and its spatial propensity for circulation and interconnectivity was not being managed accordingly. Statements by Western officials during the Libyan crisis of 2011 show how the violence and instability in Libya of 2011 was being understood as the manifestation of these deficiencies and risks, but also a further opportunity for Western liberal actors to intervene in order to secure and promote species life in Libya. In other words, the constitution of species life in Libya as dangerous prior to the instability of 2011 prepared the ground for a dual-exercise of sovereign/biopower by Western governments, as they sought to harness its contingent and emergent properties and direct it in more 'natural' ways. It was through this exercise of sovereign/biopower, moreover, that Western governments pursued both their biopolitical *and* geopolitical objectives *vis à vis* Libya.

Finally, the case of the military intervention in Libya offers insights into the functioning of what we have called the 'liberal international biopolitics dispositif'. Firstly, the case presents further evidence of how global liberal-minded actors like the UNDP and Western governments cooperate with each other to secure and promote species life. In Libya, the objectives of these actors were essentially the same: the biopolitical

security and promotion of species life by intervening at the aggregate level of the Libyan population. The primary difference was in how power was deployed to achieve these aims. In the case of the UNDP, governmental power was the primary modality as efforts were made to secure the Libyan population by governing them from a distance (via the disciplining of the Libyan government). In the case of Western governments, spectacular forms of sovereign/biopower were used to ultimately eliminate any dangerous bodies who were deemed to impede the contingency and emergence of species life in the right (liberal) way. Secondly, the case of Libya shows the limitations of the international liberal biopolitics dispositif. With the social conditions present in a complex country like Libya, bringing about democratization and liberalization was clearly never going to be an easy or short-term objective for international liberal actors. The Western military intervention and regime change of the Libyan government brought this complexity sharply into focus, as seen from the enduringly chaotic and conflict strewn aftermath. This should serve as an important cautionary tale, illustrating that the implications and consequences of using different technologies of power to effect change can be very different.

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