The Regime Destabilization Framework: Deconstructing the Relationship between Regime Change and Humanitarian Military Intervention

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Abstract

The Regime Destabilization Framework: Deconstructing the Relationship between Regime Change and Humanitarian Military Intervention

The central argument of this thesis is that humanitarian military intervention will inevitably change or destabilize the political and security dynamics within the theatre it enters, and, in turn, will impact upon the relative strength of the host regime. To analyze the nature of this destabilization, the thesis offers a new tool: the Regime Destabilization Framework. Through this framework, the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change is re-examined by the study of two questions: What factors would have to be challenged in order for the regime’s power to change significantly? And, to what extent do the specific military actions within humanitarian military interventions challenge those factors? The framework seeks to demonstrate the specific impacts on military actions on the power dynamics within the target state, and in turn, on the stability of the host regime.

The application of the framework to the case studies of Northern Iraq (1991), Kosovo (1999) and Libya (2011) offers three key findings. First, a “humanitarian military intervention” is not an action in itself, but a series of actions under the umbrella of humanitarian protection. Each action can have a very different impact on the stability of the regime compared to other actions which would fall under the purview of humanitarian military intervention, and similarly the impact of specific actions can vary greatly based on the context. Second, while it is important to ascertain the impacts of individual military actions, it is also crucial to understand that they do not take place in isolation from each other: one action can have an impact upon the effectiveness of another action. Third, while
the actions of humanitarian military intervention may not directly challenge the regime’s position as sovereign authority of the state, they can create the conditions by which opposition or separatist groups within the state can gain enough power relative to the government to achieve the ends they had already been pursuing before the intervention (such as a change in government, or provincial autonomy).

Combining these findings with those from the individual case studies, the thesis further posits that in the course of humanitarian military interventions, “regime change” is by no means inevitable. Interveners, through deciding how to target and deploy military resources, ultimately have at least *some* agency over the extent to which the regime is destabilized. The thesis offers recommendations for further use and adaptation of the framework, and argues that these findings can contribute to research into the indirect impacts of humanitarian military interventions on the population within the target country.
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<tr>
<td>FIRC</td>
<td>Foreign-imposed regime change</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRY</td>
<td>The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia</td>
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<td>ICISS</td>
<td>International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty</td>
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<td>KFOR</td>
<td>NATO-led International Security Force in Kosovo</td>
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<td>KLA</td>
<td>Kosovo Liberation Army</td>
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<td>MAPRO</td>
<td><em>Mass Atrocity Prevention and Response Options: A Policy Planning Handbook</em></td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<td>NTC</td>
<td>National Transitional Council of Libya</td>
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<td>R2P</td>
<td>“Responsibility to Protect”</td>
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<td>UNGA</td>
<td>United Nations General Assembly</td>
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<td>UNMIK</td>
<td>UN Interim Administration Mission for Kosovo</td>
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Introduction

Humanitarian military interventions involve the threat or use of military force within a state’s territory by a state (or group of states), without the consent of the government of the target state, with a primary aim of preventing or ending mass atrocities in the target state. The relationship between such interventions and regime change is one of the most important but intractable issues in international relations. Yet it remains unclear how humanitarian military interventions actually affect the stability of the government of the target state. Efforts to evaluate the relationship are hampered by uncertainty over how specific military actions within an intervention impact on the ability of the regime (used here to denote the government of the target state) to maintain its relative power compared to other conflict parties. This thesis fills this gap and offers insights for policymakers to better understand the ways in which humanitarian military interventions impact power dynamics within the target state.

There are three main interpretations of the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change. The first posits that humanitarian military interventions are used as a *veneer* or “Trojan horse,” under which predominantly Western states can pursue regime-changing objectives in line with their own interests.1 The focus of such arguments tends to be on the stated or assumed motives of interveners, or to equate the outcome of an intervention with the interveners’ aims. For example, the violent ouster

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1 For discussion on state criticisms of regime change and humanitarian military intervention within the wider “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine, see: Alexander J. Bellamy, “Responsibility to Protect or Trojan Horse? The Crisis in Darfur and Humanitarian Intervention after Iraq,” *Ethics & International Affairs* 19, no. 2 (September 2005): 31-54.
of the Gaddafi regime by Libyan rebels shortly after the NATO-led humanitarian military intervention in 2011 has been held up by critics as a cautionary tale of the regime-changing motivations and destabilizing impacts of “military intervention under the pretext of humanitarianism.”

In the second interpretation, regime change is understood as a means for protecting populations when their own government is supporting or perpetrating mass atrocities. To Walzer, when an intervention is launched to stop a government that is “engaged in the mass murder of its own people,” then military intervening powers will “have to replace the government or, at least, to begin the process of replacement.” Rieff similarly argues that when populations are at risk from their own government, “interventions have to be about regime change if they are to have any chance of accomplishing their stated goal” of humanitarian protection. This possibility is recognized in the U.S. policy planning handbook, *Mass Atrocity Prevention and Response Options (MAPRO)*, which notes that response planners will need to consider “whether a Host Nation government can be a responsible partner to prevent mass atrocities or whether it is so culpable that an alternative governing arrangement should be pursued.” This can be understood as regime change pursued by – or heavily aided by – foreign interveners.

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3 Michael Walzer, “Regime Change and Just War,” *Dissent* 53, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 103-108 at 103.
4 Ibid., 104.
The third major interpretation posits that actions taken to protect civilians from harm may have the side-effect of the collapse of the host regime. In this understanding, the collapse of the host regime is an unintended by-product of actions not aimed directly at its removal. This interpretation is included in another U.S. policy planning handbook, *Mass Atrocity Response Operations* (MARO), which recognizes that a humanitarian military intervention could “unleash centrifugal forces in the country,” which “trigger the inadvertent collapse of the HN [Host Nation] government, particularly if the MTF [MARO Task Force] undertakes any military operations against the government or its security forces.” In this understanding, attacks against the government or its forces would be to disable its “capacity to harm its own people,” rather than to directly encourage the regime to fall: if the regime did fall, the role played by the intervention would have been the weakening of the government’s ability to inflict violence, which in turn would have reduced the government’s relative power within the state. This approach is backed by studies by Bellamy and Krain, which found in order to effectively end the killing of populations by the government, “external intervention must target the perpetrators and

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8 Ibid.
bring about their military defeat,”\textsuperscript{10} which may result in “some form of [regime] change.”\textsuperscript{11} However, Bellamy also found that in the vast majority of episodes of mass killing that end in regime change – almost three quarters – the change is “achieved by principally domestic opponents.”\textsuperscript{12} This interpretation therefore focuses on how interventions can change the power dynamics in the country, which in turn could create the conditions in which regime change could be pursued by domestic actors.

However, there is a gap in the literature on this relationship which means that all three interpretations miss a crucial analytical underpinning. There is a lack of research on how the specific military actions taken as part of a humanitarian military intervention can impact the host government’s bases of power. In turn, this means that analysis is missing on how humanitarian military interventions can create the conditions in which the target state and its government undergoes a significant change. This has important policy implications. Decisions made over whether and how to conduct humanitarian military interventions have profound impacts and carry high risks. In the best-case scenarios, such interventions can avert or halt mass atrocities; in the worst, they can destroy the structures of the state, create power vacuums, fuel civil wars, and prompt increased violence against


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid; See also Conley and Hazlett (2020) which found that of the 43 “very large mass atrocities” since 1945 with at least 50,000 civilian fatalities, in only 4 cases could the episode ending be principally attributed to humanitarian military interventions, “three of which involved regime change.” Bridget Conley and Chad Hazlett, “How very massive atrocities end: A dataset and typology,” \textit{Journal of Peace Research} (July, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319900912
populations. Even if an intervention has the immediate success of protecting at-risk civilians, its impacts on the relative power of the regime can lead to state failure, with spill-over effects that can destabilize neighboring countries too. It is therefore crucial that policymakers’ decisions are based on thorough analysis of the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change, to enable them to craft policies that maximize the likelihood that an intervention will protect populations from mass atrocities, while minimizing or mitigating the risks of making the environment in the target state even more volatile.

This thesis tries to close that gap. Fundamentally, an action with humanitarian aims should only be taken if the likely benefits to the target population outweigh the likely harm caused by the action itself. In order to make informed decisions relating to humanitarian military intervention it is necessary for policymakers to understand how such interventions are likely to affect the stability of the target state and, in turn, the population within. In order to make these estimations, policymakers need to know: first, the extent to which intervention itself is likely to directly deliver its objective of the protection of populations; and second, how the intervention is likely to indirectly affect populations by changing the power dynamics within the state. Scholars have contributed crucial insights on the first question. Studies, notably by Seybolt\(^\text{13}\) and Krain,\(^\text{14}\) have provided analytical tools to assess the effectiveness of past humanitarian military interventions in saving lives from the immediate mass atrocity threat.


\(^{14}\) Krain, “International Intervention and the Severity of Genocides and Politicides.”
The second question requires our understanding of how humanitarian military interventions cause or facilitate the destabilization of the established government and power structures within the state, and how such destabilization is likely to affect civilians. On the second part of the question – how civilians are affected by the destabilization of a regime through foreign intervention – we can glean insights from two adjacent fields of study, on the impacts of foreign-imposed regime changes (FIRCs) and the impacts of foreign military interventions on conflict dynamics. Several studies have found that FIRCs can endanger populations by making the intensification or triggering of civil conflict more likely. Peic and Reiter found that FIRCs make the onset of civil war more likely, specifically when they “undermine state infrastructural power” and “affect institutional change.” Downes also found a strong link between FIRCs and civil war onset, because FIRCs “generate grievances” between groups within the state, while simultaneously reducing the capacity of the state’s infrastructure to maintain order. Scholars have also studied the knock-on impacts on populations of foreign interventions that change the balance of power within the state. Wood, Kathman and Gent found that “changes in the balance of power in an intrastate conflict influence combatant strategies of violence.”

16 Ibid., 469.
17 Ibid.
incentivizing the conflict party whose power declines as a result of the intervention to use “increasingly violent tactics toward the civilian population as a means of reshaping the strategic landscape to its benefit.”

In his “moral hazard” argument, Kuperman posits that even the possibility of humanitarian military intervention increases the risk of violence against civilians, as it incentivizes rebel groups to escalate violence, in the hopes of prompting a response from their government which would make external humanitarian intervention more likely, and, in turn, increase the rebel group’s chances of gaining power relative to the government.

This argument – and those which contest it – offers policymakers resources to examine the impact of humanitarian military intervention on the behavior of domestic actors in the target state. The studies mentioned above also give policymakers insight into how FIRCs can impact on populations’ security.

However, the literature is missing a link at the intersection of these fields. While studies on FIRCs can help us understand the impacts of interventions that do aim for – or at least result in – regime change, and studies on the impacts of foreign military intervention can illuminate how changes in the balance of power can affect civilians, there is a lack of analysis on how humanitarian military interventions specifically impact the dynamics of power and the stability of the regime in the target state. This thesis argues that without this analysis, the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and

20 Ibid.
regime change cannot be understood. It then offers a novel framework to conduct that analysis.

**Contribution of the thesis**

I call this new tool the Regime Destabilization Framework, which analyzes the interaction between humanitarian military intervention and regime stability. The framework is based on two assumptions: first, that one basic aim of the host regime is to maintain and build its power; and second, that military intervention will inevitably have some impact on the dynamics between groups in the target country – belligerents, civilians, and government alike. For the analysis of how one relates to the other, we need to understand what a regime needs in order to maintain or grow its level of power within the state, and how the actions of humanitarian military interventions destabilize those factors and therefore the regime that they underpin.

The next stage of analysis deconstructs the two sides of the relationship – the actions of the humanitarian military intervention, and the host regime that is acted upon – in order to understand the interaction between them. Understanding the government in power in the target country at the time of the intervention to be the manifestation of the state’s sovereignty, the framework posits that maintaining a combination of the four pillars of statehood in the Montevideo Convention are necessary for the government to maintain its position as the de jure sovereign authority, or the de facto dominant political power within the state. Reflecting the conditions of violence and armed conflict that usually prompts, and follows, humanitarian military intervention, the framework includes two
further factors: adequate resources to fund and equip regime military forces, and military superiority over opponents.

The framework then compares these six factors that maintain the status quo, against the military actions that might be taken as part of an intervention, in order to evaluate how such actions may destabilize the host government’s power. It aims to understand how much destabilization each of the pillars can take before there is a significant change to the status quo.

Once the framework is explained, it is then tested on a hypothetical intervention (imagining that military actions outlined in MAPRO\textsuperscript{23} and MARO\textsuperscript{24} were enacted in Country X), before being applied to three case studies of past humanitarian military interventions: the US-led interventions in Northern Iraq (1991), Kosovo (1999), and Libya (2011).

\textit{Structure of the thesis}

Chapter 1 establishes the roots of the dilemma inherent in the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change, and outlines the key conceptual roadblocks that analyses of the relationship need to overcome. Chapter 2 explains the key characteristics of the Regime Destabilization Framework, and applies it to a hypothetical case of humanitarian military intervention. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I apply the framework to the three case studies: Iraq 1991, Kosovo 1999, and Libya 2011. The Conclusion offers three key findings. First, a “humanitarian military intervention” is not an action in itself,

\textsuperscript{23} Raymond et al., \textit{MAPRO}.
\textsuperscript{24} Sewall et al., \textit{MARO}.
but a series of actions under the umbrella of humanitarian protection. Each action can have a very different impact on the stability of the regime compared to other actions which would fall under the purview of humanitarian military intervention, and similarly the impact of specific actions can vary greatly based on the context. Second, while it is important to ascertain the impacts of individual military actions, it is also crucial to understand that they do not take place in isolation from each other: one action can impact upon the effectiveness of another action. Third, while the actions of humanitarian military intervention may not directly challenge the regime’s position as sovereign authority of the state, they can create the conditions by which opposition or separatist groups within the state can gain enough power relative to the government to achieve the ends they had already been pursuing before the intervention (such as a change in government, or provincial autonomy).

Combining these findings with those from the individual case studies, the Conclusion further posits that in the course of humanitarian military interventions, “regime change” is by no means inevitable. Interveners, through deciding how to target and deploy military resources, ultimately have at least some agency over the extent to which the regime is destabilized. The Conclusion also suggests how the framework could have useful applications in future research on the effectiveness of humanitarian military intervention in protecting civilians and saving lives.
Chapter 1

Humanitarian military intervention and regime change – the roots of the dilemma

Humanitarian military intervention is perhaps one of the most studied and enduringly divisive topics in international relations. As an issue that illuminates central tensions between ethics and politics, “realism and moralism,” and state sovereignty and individual human rights, debate on humanitarian military intervention also gains significant attention in the fields of philosophy and ethics, as well as international law. At the core of the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change is an inherent conflict: by intervening to protect human lives, the intervener risks displacing the government of a sovereign state and potentially putting more lives at risk. This chapter first outlines how this tension manifests in theoretical debates, then how it could manifest in practice. The final section of the chapter introduces three further roadblocks in

understanding the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change, which will be addressed in the Regime Destabilization Framework in Chapter 2.

The inherent conflict: in theory

The reason why the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change has no easy answers is because it is underpinned by the conflict between human rights and state sovereignty. Therefore, questions on the relationship force theorists and decision-makers alike to confront the very architecture and organizing principles of international relations. Within the international order associated with the Peace of Westphalia (1648) – which has been predominant in theories of interstate relations since – the focus is firmly on state-level security, and state sovereignty as an organizing principle of international relations.29 Traditional theories within international relations – particularly realism and liberalism – therefore start from the assumption that the state is the primary actor within international security, and that security rests on protecting states from external interference and ensuring their sovereignty.30 Reaffirmed in the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933) – which codified the declarative theory of statehood – according to this understanding of sovereignty the territory of a state is “inviolable” and “may not be the object of military occupation nor of other measures of force imposed by another state directly or indirectly or for any motive whatever even temporarily.”31 Similar provisions were made in the United Nations Charter (1945), which

30 Lechner, “Review: Humanitarian Intervention”
31 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (December 26, 1993), Article 11.
outlined norms of non-intervention “in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state” and a general prohibition against Member States’ employing “the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state,” except for in cases of states’ “individual or collective self-defense” or with the authorization of the UN Security Council.

However, over the latter half of the twentieth century, the development of international treaties, conventions and mechanisms to codify and safeguard human rights challenged state-centric understandings of security and inviolable sovereignty. In particular, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Genocide Convention (1948), and the United Nations Charter (1945) – the latter of which mentions human rights seven times – developed the notion of “human security,” which situates humans as the “referent object” of security, rather than states.

The notion of human security – and the fact that it calls into question whose rights, the state’s or the individual’s, should be privileged – prompts a dilemma with direct implications for humanitarian military intervention. Bellamy has posed this fundamental question as an issue of “whether a state’s right to be secure and free from external interference should be conditional on its fulfilment of certain responsibilities to its citizens, not least a responsibility to protect them from mass killing.” Given that interveners forcibly interfere in the affairs of a sovereign state in order to protect the lives and universal

33 Ibid., Article 2.4.
34 Ibid., Article 51.
human rights of individuals and communities within that state’s borders, humanitarian military interventions are, on the face of it, an act of privileging the protection of human lives above principles of non-interference.

However, architects of the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) doctrine bridged this gap in theory, arguing that sovereignty and human rights are not incompatible. Developing Francis Deng’s theory in relation to internally displaced people (IDPs) of “state sovereignty as a responsibility,” the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) sought to reconcile Westphalian state sovereignty with the need to respond to gross human rights violations that occur within another state’s borders. Within the R2P framework, instead of a justification to “control” populations, sovereignty is understood as the responsibility of the state authority to protect their “people’s most fundamental rights from egregious acts of violence,” specifically the four mass atrocity crimes of genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. After lengthy scrutiny and debate among Member States, a substantially revised version of the R2P doctrine proposed in the ICISS report was unanimously endorsed in Articles 138 and 139 of the UN General

41 For discussion of differences between ICISS Report and World Summit Outcome Document, see Breakey, “The responsibility to protect: Game change and regime change.”
Assembly’s World Summit Outcome document in 2005. The three pillars of the R2P posit that: each state has a responsibility to protect its own citizens; UN Member States should “encourage and assist” individual states to meet that responsibility; and in cases where a state is “manifestly failing” to protect populations, Member States should be prepared to take timely and decisive collective action. The nature of the action ranges from “non-coercive and non-violent measures” including “dialogue and peaceful persuasion” to sanctions, arms embargoes, and – should peaceful means be inadequate to protect populations – military intervention authorized by the Security Council, in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Despite the reframing of sovereignty under R2P, humanitarian military intervention remains a separate issue with its own specific challenges inherent in using force to intervene in another state. The interaction between regime change and humanitarian military intervention is embedded in this. However sovereignty is reframed in theory, the issue still remains that taking or threatening military actions in a state without the sovereign authority’s permission will – by design – alter the internal dynamics of another state in practice. Even if the intervener does not have any intention to challenge the host regime, the intervention itself could destabilize the regime to the point of its collapse.

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42 United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/60/1 2005 World Summit Outcome (September 16, 2005), Articles 138 and 139.
43 United Nations General Assembly, A/63/677 Implementing the responsibility to protect: Report of the Secretary-General (January 12, 2009), paragraph 51.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., paragraphs 56 and 57.
46 Ibid., paragraph 58.
How the conflict can manifest in practice

By intervening militarily to alter a series of events that are harming, or threaten to harm, civilian populations, the intervener inevitably destabilizes the dynamics of power within the target state. The humanitarian crises that trigger military intervention are rooted either in the host government’s action or inaction. The government and their armed forces may be directly – or through proxies – threatening or perpetrating violence against segments of the population. Alternatively, the government could be failing to act to protect populations from grave harm, either through incapacity or unwillingness. Therefore, external military intervention to protect those populations challenges the host government’s policy of action or inaction. In turn, this disrupts the relative power balance between the government, the population, non-state armed groups, and the government’s opponents within the host state.

This can manifest in several ways. In the most visible sense, military interventions to protect civilians from their own government or their proxies may inflict great harm on the government and their apparatus of control – their military forces and infrastructure – in order to reduce their capacity to harm populations. With a reduced military capacity, the government would have less ability to control population groups and suppress armed uprisings, which could leave space for existing or new opposition groups to gain relative power. This would be even more profound in cases where the military intervention involved directly empowering – through, for example, the provision of arms and logistical support – non-state actors within the state to defend populations against their government’s violence. In cases where an intervention does not directly target the government’s assets, but instead focuses on providing defensive protection to at-risk groups (for example,
through the establishment of safe areas or no-fly zones), the host government still loses relative power through the loss of control over that segment of the population. If the government’s power rests on its ability to oppress and kill population groups, an intervention that thwarts the government’s ability to inflict such harm will significantly weaken the government’s coercive power. Even in cases where the government is not directing or aiding the perpetrators of violence against population groups, but is unable or unwilling to protect those populations, military intervention could change the balance of power within the state by signaling to domestic opposition groups that the regime is vulnerable, and by demonstrating that the regime – despite being the state’s sovereign authority – is unable to control the relationship between its own territory and the interference of external forces.

Humanitarian military intervention therefore challenges the status quo which had created the conditions in which mass atrocities could be perpetrated or threatened against populations in the target state. This is the root of the difficult relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change: by nature, the intervention will impact, in some way, the political dynamics of the environment it enters. At the same time, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which specific changes – up to and including an entire change of government or regime – can be attributed to the intervention’s destabilizing impact. Within the literature, there is a significant dearth of analysis on the impacts of specific elements of humanitarian military interventions on the power dynamics within the target state. Absent this analysis, it is impossible to comprehensively evaluate arguments which portray significant political changes to the target state that happen after
or during an intervention as a direct result of – or even the primary aim of – the intervention.

*Three roadblocks to understanding the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change*

The relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change is therefore complex and fraught with a fundamental and intractable tension. However, there are three further roadblocks which hamper the debate on the relationship and require attention. First, there is no consensus within studies on this relationship on what is meant by “regime change.” Few studies offer a definition, and when state critics denounce “regime change” in, for example, meetings of the UN Security Council, there is no explanation of what they understand the term to mean. This is a subtle yet crucial gap: when humanitarian military intervention is criticized for its relationship with regime change, but there is no clarification on what the term denotes – or, indeed, what the implications of regime change are understood by the contributor to be – there is no shared conceptual basis for debate, and therefore scholars and state critics alike are liable to debate past each other.

Second, the term “humanitarian military intervention” is, similarly, used to denote a range of actions and approaches by different contributors to the debate. The military actions seem to be what state critics in particular take issue with, but when discussing intervention, all actions taken by states in response to a mass atrocity within another state are considered as a whole – even if they are diplomatic, political, or economic in nature, rather than military. This means that there is a missing step in the analysis of the impacts of humanitarian military intervention on the target state and regime. It is safe to assume
that a military intervention would only form one part – and, if properly used, the last resort – of an intervener’s response: military actions would be coupled and integrated with actions such as diplomatic statements or economic sanctions to deter the target government from their course of action. However, if distinctions are not made in analyses, and military actions are conflated with non-military actions, it is impossible to analyze the unique impacts of humanitarian military interventions on the political environment of the target state.

Third, there is little analysis on how humanitarian military interventions actually influence power dynamics within the target environment. This means that studies instead rely on assumptions that changes that happen in the target state after the start of the military intervention can be attributed to the intervention, without proper analysis of how specific actions may have brought about the conditions for such changes. Further analysis is therefore required relating to attribution, causality, and the interaction of specific military actions with other factors in the target environment.

Using a new analytical approach which seeks to draw together solutions to overcome these three conceptual roadblocks, the next chapter analyzes the impacts of specific actions within a humanitarian military intervention on the power of the sovereign authority in the target country.
Chapter 2

The Regime Destabilization Framework

While there are many illuminating studies on humanitarian military intervention and regime change separately, and important contributions on the relationship between the two, there are three crucial gaps. As outlined in the Chapter 1, two are definitional: there seems to be no consensus among state representatives, or among scholars, on what is meant by “regime change” within this debate; and, similarly, there is a lack of distinction within much of the literature between the impacts of humanitarian actions that are military in nature, and those that are not. The third gap follows from the first two: without clear understanding of what constitutes both humanitarian military intervention and regime change, analysis of the relationship between the two falls short. This means that scholars and policymakers alike do not have a common basis from which to assess the impacts of humanitarian military interventions on the regime in question.

This chapter offers a way to bridge these gaps, through a new analytical approach: the Regime Destabilization Framework. The central premise of this thesis is that humanitarian military intervention will inevitably change or destabilize the political and security dynamics within the theatre it enters, and, in turn, will impact upon the relative strength of the host regime. The framework offers a tool to analyze the nature of this destabilization by addressing two questions:

1. What factors would have to be challenged in order for the regime’s power to change significantly?

2. To what extent do the specific military actions within humanitarian military interventions challenge those factors?
The framework is designed to deconstruct the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change by analyzing the interactions between their constituent parts. The framework (shown in Figure 1) is made up of three components: the actions (the specific military tactics deployed as part of an intervention); the acted upon (the regime) and the relationship between the two. The chapter introduces each of the three components in turn, starting with the central relationship (how we can ascertain what can reasonably be understood as an impact of an action on the acted upon), and then breaking down the actions of intervention, and the pillars of control that make up the regime. In the final section of the chapter, the framework is applied to a hypothetical case study, before being applied to real case studies in Chapter 3.

Figure 1: The Fundamental Components of the Regime Destabilization Framework

- **ACTIONS**
  - Under umbrella of humanitarian military intervention

- **ACTED UPON**
  - Regime in the target state

- **RELATIONSHIP**
  - Likely impact
Understanding the relationship between “action” and “acted upon”

Actions taken as part of a humanitarian military intervention do not exist in a vacuum. While humanitarian military interventions will, by nature, alter the environments they enter, the environment itself is fluid. When there is ongoing armed conflict between state and non-state groups – which is usually the environment humanitarian military interventions enter – the intervention changes the dynamics of the conflict, but it does not control them. Therefore, a crucial problem in evaluating the impact of interventions on the target state is the difficulty of tracing cause and effect, and, in turn, establishing which outcomes can be attributed to the intervention. This is a central challenge in understanding how a humanitarian military intervention impacts the regime in the target state. It requires disentangling, as far as possible, the specific impacts of the intervention from wider changes that take place in the target state at the same time. This challenge manifests similarly in the debate on the effectiveness of humanitarian military interventions in protecting civilians from harm. In both cases, assessments of the impact of interventions often rest on counter-factuals, or how the situation would have developed had the intervention not happened. A compelling use of counterfactual reasoning can be found in Seybolt’s *Humanitarian Military Intervention*, which offers a model to determine “the effect of military intervention on the number of lives saved.”\(^{48}\) However, while Seybolt’s model includes comparison of causes and rates of death before and after the intervention, similar baselines for regime power and the dynamics within the political environment are far harder to quantify. Therefore, a different approach must be taken.

\(^{48}\) Seybolt, *Humanitarian Military Intervention*, 34.
The Regime Destabilization Framework has limitations, and it should be recognized that the framework cannot show causality between a certain action and a certain outcome; nor does it aim to. Instead, the framework analyzes the relationship between action and acted upon by attempting to map the plausible or likely impacts of military actions on the relative power of the host government. It therefore links military actions not to “regime change” outcomes, but to likely impacts on the pillars of the regime’s power. The framework links action and acted upon by analyzing: the specific impacts of military actions on a regime’s power; and the extent to which those changes to the regime’s power would have been possible without the elements added to the environment by the military actions. Though not explicit, a similar approach was taken in parts of Breakey’s study on the interaction between regime change and humanitarian military intervention.\(^\text{49}\) He argued that military actions such as the creation of no-fly zones can “weaken the state authority” by altering the “strategic topography of the military theatre” and “effectively sheltering rebel troops, defensive structures and lines of supply.”\(^\text{50}\) In this thesis, the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change will similarly be considered in terms of likely impacts of military actions on the dynamics within the military theater, and in turn, on the power of the regime.

*The actions: differentiating humanitarian military intervention tactics from non-military*

In the vast literature on the topic, some scholars use the terms “humanitarian intervention,” “armed humanitarian intervention,” and “humanitarian military

\(^\text{49}\) Breakey, “The responsibility to protect: Game change and regime change,” 29.  
\(^\text{50}\) Ibid.
intervention” relatively interchangeably. Many scholars clarify within their definitions that they understand humanitarian intervention to involve the threat or use of force – making the term synonymous, in their work, with “armed humanitarian intervention,” and “humanitarian military intervention.” For example, Holzgrefe defines humanitarian intervention as:

“the threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied.”

Similarly, Bellamy defines humanitarian intervention as “the use of force for humanitarian purposes without the consent of the host state,” and Roberts as “military intervention in a state, without the approval of its authorities, and with the purpose of preventing widespread suffering or death among the inhabitants.” However, in some studies, definitions either do not offer clarification, or consider humanitarian intervention to encompass non-military measures. Scheid therefore argues that the inclusion of “armed” or “military” within the definition is important, given that in the strictest sense of the word, an act of humanitarian intervention does not necessarily denote the use of force.

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54 Duncan Bell notes that “though humanitarian interventions do not necessarily require the employment of military force—as they could include, for example, the imposition of sanctions—the term refers normally to situations in which force (or the threat of force) is used.” Duncan Bell, “Humanitarian Intervention,” Encyclopædia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/humanitarian-intervention, accessed March 12, 2020.
In terms of the types of violent emergencies that humanitarian military interventions respond to, scholars offer different definitions. While some have argued that humanitarian military interventions should respond only to “mass killings,” “ethnic cleansing,” and “acts of genocide,” other definitions are broader, and include “egregious human rights abuses or widespread suffering,” and “grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals.” This thesis considers the credible threat or existence of mass atrocities to be a necessary precondition for humanitarian military interventions.

Whenever used in this framework, humanitarian military intervention will denote: the threat or use of military force within a state’s territory by a state (or group of states), without the consent of the government of the target state, with a primary aim of preventing or ending mass atrocities in the target state. In this way, the framework separates military actions from other forms of intervention – such as diplomatic or economic actions – in order to ascertain the specific or unique impacts of military actions on the host regime. If a state or group of states has reached the stage of conducting a humanitarian military intervention, non-military actions will inevitably be integrated as part of the intervening states’ overall strategy. However, non-military actions aimed at changing a regime’s behavior, such as economic sanctions, UN General Assembly and UN Security Council

58 Bellamy, “When States Go Bad,” 565.
61 Raymond et al., MAPRO, 119.
Resolutions,⁶² or speeches by senior leaders,⁶³ are fundamentally different from military actions, because they can – and often do – exist either as standalone strategies, or as precursors to military intervention. Therefore, in order to understand the additional impacts of military actions on the host regime, as opposed to the overall impacts of an international response to mass atrocities or the threat thereof, the framework focuses on tactics that would only be used in a military intervention.

In terms of the kinds of military actions that could be taken as part of a humanitarian military intervention, a detailed outline is offered in both MARO and MAPRO. Military actions in response to mass atrocities aim either to physically protect the at-risk populations, or to remove the capacity of the perpetrators to enact harm.⁶⁴ As shown in Figure 2, military actions within a humanitarian military intervention may include: establishing safe zones; deployment of troops to protect internally-displaced person (IDP) camps, high population concentrations, or along escape routes; arming victims or at-risk groups for the purposes of self-defense; providing logistical support, organization, training or arms to opposition groups; implementing no-fly zones; and conducting strikes against key military or government targets.⁶⁵ Within the framework, actions such as these – and their likely impacts on the regime – will be considered. The case studies will not provide an exhaustive list of military actions taken as part of the intervention, but will instead

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⁶² Ibid., 89.
⁶³ Ibid., 87.
⁶⁴ Detailed analyses of different strategic approaches to direct military intervention can be found in: Sewall et al., MARO, 70-87; and Seybolt, Humanitarian Military Intervention, 38-45.
⁶⁵ Sewall et al., MARO; Raymond et al., MAPRO.
highlight the key military features of the intervention, and assess their relationship to the host regime’s relative power.

**Figure 2:** The Regime Destabilization Framework with *military actions* included

**ACTIONS**

Under umbrella of humanitarian military intervention

**ACTED UPON**

Regime in the target state

**RELATIONSHIP**

Actions including, but not limited to:

- Establishing safe zones
- Deployment of troops to protect IDP camps or high population concentrations/along escape routes
- Arming victims/at-risk groups for self-defense
- Logistical support, organization and training to opposition groups
- Arming opposition groups
- No-fly zones
- Strikes against key military or government targets
The “acted upon”: Deconstructing the “regime”

The final element of the framework to establish is the “acted upon”: the host regime in the target country. Lack of clarity over the terms “regime” and “regime change” complicate and confuse academic and policy debates around the impacts of humanitarian military intervention on the target state. In the strictest sense, a regime can be understood as the “intermediate stratum between the government (which makes day-to-day decisions and is easy to alter) and the state (which is a complex bureaucracy tasked with a range of coercive functions).”\(^\text{66}\) The regime – as the “midrange concept”\(^\text{67}\) between a specific government and the state in which it operates – is therefore “the formal and informal structure and nature of political power in a country.”\(^\text{68}\) Put another way, it is the system that dictates “the rules of the game” for how decisions will be made and political power granted within a state.\(^\text{69}\) Regimes can be categorized according to the fundamental and predominant elements of their “rules of the game.” On the most basic level, differentiation can be made between regimes constructed predominantly around principles of democracy or authoritarianism.\(^\text{70}\) Further distinctions can be made between types of autocratic regimes, including, but not limited to: traditional authoritarian regimes (including absolute monarchies); totalitarian regimes; military regimes; and theocratic regimes.\(^\text{71}\)

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\(^{68}\) Ibid.

\(^{69}\) Ibid.

\(^{70}\) Ibid.

\(^{71}\) Ibid.
In its truest sense, then, a “regime change” requires the political “rules of the game” to change in a “systemic way,”72 or the predominant features of the regime to change enough to be considered a different type of regime altogether. Under this definition of the term, a regime can survive a change in government or executive leadership, so long as the set of rules by which the state is organized remains intact.

However, in popular usage, and in academic and policy debates relating to humanitarian military intervention, the terms “regime” and “regime change” are used far more broadly than this definition. “Regime” is often used to denote the government in power, the specific individual who leads that government, the period of time during which that person is in power, or the leader’s ideology.73 The word “regime” can also be used to denote moral or political judgement: it is most often used to describe governments perceived as repressive or illegitimate.74

Accordingly, definitions of regime change differ based on how each contributor to the debate understands and uses the term “regime.” These seemingly small semantic differences can present significant roadblocks in the debate on the impacts of humanitarian military interventions on host regimes, and prevent advocates and critics of intervention alike from engaging with the debate on the same terms and from the same conceptual base. For those who understand a regime as the rule of a specific leader, it follows that regime change would mean the removal of that leader from power, and the replacement with another. If you perceive a regime to be not only the head of government but the rest of the

72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
ministers of state, then you would understand regime change to be the wholesale removal of the administration, and replacement with another. If a regime is understood to also include the entire bureaucracy of government, then regime change would mean the removal of the leader, government, and bureaucrats acting under that government.

Within the debate on the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change, many questions remain on what constitutes “regime change.” McMillan and Mickler highlight that the debate needs more focus on how to define regime change, and in turn, “how to define problematic and legitimate external intervention in a state’s domestic affairs.” Even when scholars denote what they mean by regime change – for example, when Bellamy defines it as “changing of a government by unconstitutional means” – key questions remain. There is no consensus on: how much has to change in order for a regime change to have occurred; whether regime change requires the replacement of one regime with another, or if the displacement of the original government is enough to qualify; over what time frame the changes in the regime would have to take place; and whether regime change as it relates to humanitarian military intervention excludes domestic-led regime change. As a result of this definitional inconsistency within the debate, understandings of regime change could range from “simple changes in

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75 Nesam McMillan and David Mickler, “From Sudan to Syria: Locating ‘Regime Change’ in R2P and the ICC,” Global Responsibility to Protect 5, no. 3 (January 2013): 283 – 316 at 316.
leadership figures”77 to complete change in the system of government and its “patronage networks and other embedded power structures,”78 to name just two among many.

Finding a universal definition of “regime change” within this debate is therefore not realistic. The framework in this thesis takes a different approach. Instead of trying to ascertain whether or not humanitarian military interventions cause outcomes which would be considered regime change under various definitions, it instead posits that insights on the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change can be found through deconstructing the notion of the regime itself into its constituent parts.

For this part of the framework, we return to the notion of sovereignty as codified in the Montevideo Convention. If the government of a state is its sovereign authority, then it follows that it can be understood as the implementer and protector – during the time of its rule – of the state’s sovereignty. Therefore, by maintaining a combination of the four pillars of statehood in the Montevideo Convention, the instrument of state - the government – maintains the status quo of remaining the sovereign authority within the state. The framework considers the fundamental makeup of the regime’s power – and therefore what the military intervention is acting upon – to be: its ability to maintain authority over a permanent population; its autonomy over the territory of the state; its ability to enact policy as a government; and its ability to conduct international relations. Reflecting the fact that regimes that enact mass atrocities on their own populations usually perceive this use of force “as necessary…to hold onto or consolidate its power,”79 the framework includes two

78 Ibid.
79 Breakey, 29.
further factors: adequate resources to fund and equip military, and military superiority over domestic opponents. These elements make up the regime’s ability to retain their position as the sovereign authority, and can therefore be considered as the pillars of the regime’s stability that are threatened by humanitarian military intervention. Accordingly, they constitute the final part of the framework, reflected in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: The Regime Destabilization Framework with military actions and impacts on pillars of regime power included**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>ACTED UPON</th>
<th>Impact on the regime’s:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under umbrella of humanitarian military intervention</td>
<td>Regime in the target state</td>
<td>1. Ability to control a permanent population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actions including, but not limited to:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Autonomy over territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishing safe zones</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Existence as a government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deployment of troops to protect IDP camps or high population concentrations/along escape routes</td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Ability to conduct international relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arming victims/at-risk groups for self-defense</td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Military superiority over domestic opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Logistical support, organization and training to opposition groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Access to resources to support military and government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arming opposition groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No-fly zones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strikes against key military or government targets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RELATIONSHIP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likely impact</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the terms of the framework established, we can now compare the six factors that maintain the regime’s status quo against the military actions that might be taken as part of an intervention, in order to evaluate how such actions may destabilize the host government’s power.

**Testing the framework**

We can now apply the framework to a hypothetical intervention. Let the actions that form the humanitarian military intervention be a selection of policy options taken directly from *MARO* and *MAPRO*, and let the “acted upon” be the government of Country X. The state military, under the direction of the sovereign government of Country X, are perpetrating mass killings against a population group within a region of their state, under the guise of quelling rebellion. After protracted negotiations on the UN Security Council, debates in the UN General Assembly – and a series of non-use of force actions to coerce the regime into stopping the killing, which proved ineffective – the UN Security Council approves a resolution, authorizing a coalition of the willing to use military force to protect civilians within Country X from their own government’s forces.

A group of UN Member States form a mass-atrocity response operation. The mandate of the operation is adapted directly from the two military operational planning books written in conjunction with the U.S. military for this purpose: *MARO* and *MAPRO*. In line with *MARO*, the target end state of the intervention is that “widespread mass atrocity is stopped (or) prevented and is unlikely to occur in the future.”

Two different approaches are planned out: the first is primarily defensive in relation to government forces, and

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80 Sewall et al., *MARO*, 56.
focuses on providing physical barriers of protection to at-risk civilians. The second is primarily offensive in relation to government forces, and focuses defeating perpetrators or removing their capability to harm civilians. Let us apply the Regime Destabilization Framework to both approaches, to understand how they can have different impacts on the actions taken and, in turn, the host government.

The first approach has the following military actions as its key features: deployment of coalition troops to protect villages with high concentrations of at-risk populations, as well as to IDP camps and the escape routes to them; and the arming of at-risk civilians outside of those areas for self-defense purposes. We can reasonably postulate that the likely impacts of these actions on the regime’s six pillars of power may be as follows. Through the very presence of foreign military forces within the state, against the consent and will of the sovereign authority of the state, the host government’s autonomy over its territory is significantly reduced. Similarly, by virtue of being invaded, the host regime’s ability to conduct international affairs – or at least, its stature as an equal sovereign partner with the same rights to enter into international affairs with other countries – is also reduced. The government’s ability to control and govern over that segment of the population is, at least for the time that foreign troops block the government forces’ access to population groups, similarly reduced. Unless the territory which in which populations are being protected by foreign troops has a resource that is vital for the government to sustain itself and its military, these military actions are unlikely to reduce the government’s ability to resource, equip

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81 Most similar to MARO Approach 3: “Separation” (Sewall et al., MARO, 75) and Approach 4: “Safe Areas” (Sewall et al., MARO, 77); and to “Protection-Focused Limited Temporary Intervention” in MAPRO (Raymond et al., MAPRO, 113).
82 Most similar to Approach 7: “Defeat Perpetrators” in MARO. Sewall et al., MARO, 84.
and organize its crucial infrastructure of control. However, arming members of the population for self-defense can indirectly reduce the government’s military superiority over opponents, particularly given it may be difficult to separate non-combatants from current or potential members of opposition groups. By arming and giving safe haven to population groups, the military actions of the intervention could therefore decrease the host government’s relative military superiority over opposition groups. It would be reasonable to project that the overall destabilizing impact of these military actions on the government and the environment would be significant, but perhaps not enough – on their own – to cause the government to collapse, unless the government’s maintenance of control is absolutely conditional on being able to oppress and kill population groups. In this case, if the military actions were successful in thwarting the government from enacting mass atrocities on the population group in question, the host government’s continued rule would depend on it adapting how it exerts control.

The second approach has the following military actions as its key features: the remote or covert organization and equipping of established resistance forces within the state to undermine the host government, and the use of airstrikes against key military or government targets. We can assume that some of the impacts on the pillars of government power remain the same as in the first approach: by virtue of being the subject of a foreign intervention, the host government’s ability to conduct international affairs as an equal partner, and its relative autonomy over its territory is reduced. However, we can hypothesize that there would be different impacts stemming from these military actions. Unlike the first approach, this approach does not rely on the presence of foreign ground troops within the state, which could mean there is a less direct impact on the government’s
ability to have autonomy over its territories, populations, and access to resources. These military actions – if successful – could reasonably be expected to have a devastating impact on the government’s military superiority, thereby significantly changing the military balance of power within the target nation. Within this approach, one group of military actions directly encourages the increase in power and organization of non-state armed opposition groups, while the other set of military actions has the direct aim of reducing the military capability of the government. At the same time, successful strikes on key targets of the government’s infrastructure can be expected to reduce the government’s ability to make and enact policy decisions, thereby undermining its ability to act as the sovereign authority in the nation. If strikes on government military targets continue to the extent that forces are significantly incapacitated, while at the same time armed opposition groups have been given the space and resources to grow in strength, the military actions of the intervention may change the balance of power to the point of the collapse of the government’s military and political control. The regime may therefore be destabilized to the extent that the status quo of the current government being the sovereign authority is lost: the regime could then reasonably be expected to collapse.

Case study selection

Having demonstrated how the framework can be applied to a hypothetical case, the thesis now applies the framework to three case studies of U.S.-led/NATO-led interventions: in Northern Iraq in 1991; in Kosovo in 1999; and in Libya in 2011. As discussed in the Introduction, the interventions in Northern Iraq in 1991, Kosovo in 1999,
and Libya in 2011 provide important case studies with ample pre-existing data and analysis, on which the Regime Destabilization Framework can draw new insights.

These three cases were selected from the universe of humanitarian military interventions since 1945. While there is no definitive “list” of humanitarian military interventions – given the lack of consensus within the field on the definition and scope of such interventions – Dembinski, Gromes and Warner have provided a useful dataset of cases since 1945 which they consider to qualify as humanitarian military interventions.83 Informed by similar datasets on international military interventions (that are not necessarily humanitarian in nature),84 Dembinski et al. identify 35 humanitarian military interventions between 1945 and 2015. All three of my case studies were included in this list.

In identifying case studies for this thesis, I considered the key difference between my own definition of humanitarian military intervention and Dembinski et al.’s criteria for inclusion in the list: they argue that the non-consent of the government is not required in order for an intervention to qualify as a humanitarian military intervention.85 I therefore included only humanitarian military interventions from their list which included the non-consent of the host government. Further factors influenced my selection of case studies. Aside from being three of the most influential interventions in the development of

85 Dembinski, Gromes and Werner, 614.
humanitarian military intervention norms, these cases share several features that make them the most suitable historical humanitarian military interventions for this analysis.

First, in all three cases, the intervention took place in countries that had an established government in power at the time of intervention, which is a necessary starting point for the analysis of humanitarian military intervention on the host government. Second, all three interventions had the stated objective of protecting civilians from their own government’s actions, or the actions of instruments or proxies of the government. Analysis of these cases can therefore shed light on the question of how humanitarian military interventions impact on the host government in cases where the perpetrator or threat to civilians was the regime itself. Third, in all three cases the intervention was led by coalitions of NATO members, or by NATO as a collective. Analysis of the impacts of three NATO-led interventions on relative government power in the target state can go some way to evaluating claims that humanitarian military intervention is a veneer for Western-led regime change.

For each case study, the following chapters will outline the characteristics of the situation which prompted the military intervention, and will then highlight a (non-exhaustive) list of the crucial military actions within the intervention, coupled with observable changes in the regime’s behavior or power (for example, a change of government leadership). This interaction – between the actions and the acted upon – will be analyzed in light of the framework, to ascertain the extent to which such changes can be reasonably attributed to the intervention having impacted upon one or more of the six pillars of government power. The aim of the following three chapters is to re-examine much-studied past interventions from a new analytical angle, in order to shed new light on
the relationship between the intervention and the changes to the power dynamics within the target country during and after the intervention. Where relevant, the chapter also briefly highlights key non-military actions, and their interactions with, and differentiation from, the military actions and outcomes. My analyses draw on existing literature and data from a wide range of sources, and will particularly make use of Seybolt’s analysis of the interventions in Northern Iraq and Kosovo, as well as Gromes and Dembinski’s Humanitarian Military Interventions Dataset which, while based on a slightly different definition of humanitarian military intervention from my own, as discussed above, provides valuable analysis on the military actions taken in all three of my cases.

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86 Seybolt, *Humanitarian Military Intervention*.
Chapter 3

Northern Iraq, 1991 (Operation Provide Comfort I)

The situation

Following the 1991 Gulf War – in which Saddam Hussein’s army was defeated and expelled from Kuwait – the Iraqi Republican Guard (a branch of the Iraqi military) violently suppressed the rebellion of Kurdish separatist groups. By March 1991, Kurdish separatists had gained control of the majority of Kurdish territory in northern Iraq. During March, the government-directed Republican Guard staged a “radical military crackdown” in Northern Iraq to quell Kurdish separatist efforts, using “helicopter gunships against insurgents as well as civilians.” As a result of the violence, hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled their homes in Northern Iraq, towards Iran and Turkey. However, after Turkey closed its border with Iraq, an estimated 400,000 people were stranded in the mountainous border regions, prompting a humanitarian crisis.

Key actions of humanitarian military intervention: changes to the status quo for the regime

In early April 1991, a U.S.-led coalition launched a humanitarian military intervention, Operation Provide Comfort I. There were two interrelated imperatives: to stabilize the

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89 Ibid.
90 Seybolt, Humanitarian Military Intervention, 48.
91 Ibid.
humanitarian crisis among the displaced populations by providing secure delivery of humanitarian assistance,\textsuperscript{92} and to prevent the Iraqi government’s military forces from launching further attacks on the Kurdish population, in order for civilians to be “secure enough to return home.”\textsuperscript{93}

On the first imperative, military forces provided “improved sanitation and access to clean water… distributed tents and blankets to reduce exposure and distributed food to prevent malnutrition” in the “first crucial weeks” when other humanitarian actors – notably UN agencies and non-governmental organizations – were setting up programs.\textsuperscript{94} As part of this, coalition forces based in Incirlik Air Base in Turkey conducted airdrops of food and other supplies” in the border region.\textsuperscript{95}

On the second imperative, coalition ground forces – numbering, at the peak, between 14,000 and 15,000 troops – entered Northern Iraq to create a safe zone.\textsuperscript{96} Simultaneously, the coalition established a no-fly zone, using air power to “deter attacks by the Iraqi forces and to protect the air relief operations.”\textsuperscript{97} These two actions can be considered the key military actions of the intervention. Within the areas of the sovereign state’s territory covered by the no-fly zone and safe zone, the Iraqi government “was not permitted to have any troops in the ground security zone or to fly over it with helicopters or fixed wing aircraft,” and could have “ground forces but no aircraft in the no-fly zone.”\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 49.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{95} Stoll and Windisch, “Iraq (Kurds) 1991 – 1997.”
\textsuperscript{96} Seybolt, 50.
\textsuperscript{97} Stoll and Windisch, “Iraq (Kurds) 1991 – 1997.”
\textsuperscript{98} Seybolt, 146 – 147.
At the same time, Kurdish fighters had no limitations placed upon them, other than a prohibition of entering the safe zones with weapons.\textsuperscript{99}

The intervention achieved its immediate aims: the Iraqi Army and secret police “withdrew without fighting,” and once key cities within the Kurdish region were secured by coalition forces, many internally displaced people returned.\textsuperscript{100} Protected from the Iraqi army, Kurdish leaders and armed forces were able “to consolidate their hold on the north after Iraqi forces withdrew,” meaning that the Kurdish regions of Northern Iraq developed considerable de-facto autonomy.\textsuperscript{101} In 2005, an autonomous Kurdistan region in Northern Iraq was enshrined in the Iraqi Constitution.\textsuperscript{102}

\textit{Applying the Regime Destabilization Framework: An assessment of the relationship between actions and “acted upon”}

The two key military actions – the no-fly zone and creation of a safe zone by ground troops – created conditions under which the Iraqi government had significant limitations placed on their ability to maintain the status quo of their holding authority in the region. It is difficult to attribute the creation of the autonomous region of Kurdistan – which represents a change in the central Iraqi government’s control over segments of its territory and populations – directly to this humanitarian military intervention operation alone. Two further operations followed Operation Provide Comfort I – Operation Provide Comfort II and Operation Northern Watch – which continued to uphold the no-fly zone. Both had their

\begin{footnotes}
\item[99] Ibid., 147.
\item[100] Ibid., 50.
\item[102] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
own impacts on the government’s pillars of control: indeed, it was during Operation Provide Comfort II, in October 1991, that Iraqi troops were withdrawn from Kurdish regions in northern Iraq. Moreover, other factors within the environment – not least the agency and organization of Kurdish separatists – contributed greatly to the development of Kurdistan’s autonomy. However, the key military actions in Operation Provide Comfort I can be understood to have impacted the six pillars by which the host government maintained the status quo within the state, thereby creating the conditions allowing for a relative increase in power of the Kurdish separatist movement.

By creating a barrier between the Iraqi military and Kurdish populations, the imposition of a safe zone greatly reduced the Iraqi government’s ability to control and exert authority over the population in the region. By nature of thwarting the government’s ability to commit violence against civilians, the establishment of safe zones changed the regime’s status quo of exerting military superiority over rebel groups in the Kurdish regions, while the imposition of no-fly zones blocked the government’s ability to use its military resources to maintain their relative power. The decline in the Iraqi government’s military superiority gave relative power to Kurdish rebel groups in northern Iraq, who also benefited from fewer restrictions on the use of violence imposed by coalition troops. The key actions of the military intervention severely limited how the government acted within its own borders, and therefore reduced even further the regime’s positioning as a sovereign authority able to enter into pacific international affairs as a legitimate partner, which had already been reduced significantly by the Gulf War.

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103 Seybolt, 147.
The ability of Saddam Hussein’s government to maintain its status quo as the established authority in most of Iraq did not undergo a major change as a result of the military intervention: Saddam remained in power until his foreign-imposed ouster in 2003. This has been recognized by many scholars as a conscious decision by intervening forces in 1991 – particularly U.S. decision-makers – to maintain the overall political status quo in Iraq.\textsuperscript{104} This therefore suggests that the chosen military actions – no-fly zones and safe havens in the affected area – were estimated by intervening decision-makers to be tools that could have targeted impacts on the behavior of the regime, rather than being inherently destabilizing to the regime to the point that the status quo of its maintaining power was lost.

However, while the makeup and nature of the central government did not undergo significant changes, the polity that it was government of did change. The intervention created the conditions through which Kurdish rebel groups’ relative power increased, which in turn made their success in gaining autonomy for Kurdistan more likely. The major impact of the military actions of this intervention, therefore, was that they significantly limited the Iraqi government’s control over territories and populations in northern Iraq, enabling pre-existing separatist movements to gain leverage in their fight for autonomy that they may not have had without the intervention. Therefore, while the central government in power in Iraq did not change as an effect of Operation Provide Comfort I, the nature of the Iraqi government’s relationship with northern parts of the state – and, in

\textsuperscript{104} Carol McQueen, \textit{Humanitarian Intervention and Safety Zones – Iraq, Bosnia and Rwanda} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 31.
turn, the makeup of the polity over which the Iraqi government could exert authority – did undergo a significant change from the previous status quo.
Chapter 4
Kosovo, 1999

The situation

After coming to power in 1989, the Serbian government under President Slobodan Milosevic pursued policies to repress the Albanian-majority province of Kosovo, including the abolition of the status of Kosovo as an Autonomous Province of Serbia.\textsuperscript{105} After several years of non-violent resistance (including the establishment of parallel government institutions)\textsuperscript{106} which did not halt the state-led oppression, Kosovar-Albanian supporters of armed resistance formed themselves into the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the mid-1990s.\textsuperscript{107} By 1998, attacks by the KLA against Yugoslav security forces had escalated, and in response, there was an “increased presence” of Yugoslav armed forces, paramilitaries and police in Kosovo, who “began pursuing a campaign of targeting KLA combatants and Albanian civilians.”\textsuperscript{108} By August 1998, an estimated 200,000 – 500,000 Kosovars had been displaced due to growing violence against civilians perpetrated by Yugoslav forces,\textsuperscript{109} and in January 1999, forty Kosovar Albanians were killed by Yugoslav forces in the village of Racak.\textsuperscript{110} The United States’ diplomatic attempts to broker a settlement (the Rambouillet

\textsuperscript{107} Diekmann et al.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} O’Connell, “The UN, NATO, and International Law After Kosovo,” 76.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 79.
Accords) between the KLA and the Serbian government failed,\textsuperscript{111} despite the fact that NATO had threatened the use of force if the regime did not accept the terms.\textsuperscript{112} On 24 March 1999, NATO launched a humanitarian military intervention in the form of a bombing campaign – Operation Allied Force – without UN Security Council authorization.\textsuperscript{113} Once NATO’s bombing campaign began, the Serbian military escalated its campaign against Kosovar Albanians, and “implemented a plan to expel the Albanian population of Kosovo.”\textsuperscript{114} An estimated 10,000 – 12,000 Kosovar Albanians were killed by Serbian security forces, and over 90 percent of the Kosovar Albanian population fled their homes. Around 863,000 people became refugees in neighboring countries, while an additional 590,000 were internally displaced.\textsuperscript{115} The intervention has therefore been the subject of a great deal of analysis since, owing to the fact that the harm perpetrated by the regime against Kosovar Albanians increased after the intervention started, calling into question its effectiveness as a humanitarian operation.\textsuperscript{116} Scholars such as Seybolt have argued that it is likely that the level of violence in Milosevic’s campaign against the Kosovar Albanians would have increased without the intervention. The impact of the

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Diekmann et al.
\textsuperscript{114} Seybolt, 83.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
intervention was an acceleration and intensification of violence in the short term, allowing for an earlier ending to the episode of armed conflict.\textsuperscript{117}

\textit{Key actions of humanitarian military intervention: changes to the status quo for the regime}

NATO’s intervention took the form of a bombing campaign, with no ground forces deployed in Serbia or Kosovo.\textsuperscript{118} It had two objectives: to prevent the Serbian government and its armed forces from perpetrating mass killings and expulsions against Kosovar Albanians; and to "coerce Milosevic to accept a political plan for Kosovo’s autonomy."\textsuperscript{119} Unlike in the previous case study of Iraq in 1991, where the approach of the interveners was defensive in relation to government forces (protecting at-risk civilians), the Kosovo intervention followed an offensive approach, aiming to remove the perpetrators’ capability to harm civilians. Over the 78-day air campaign, NATO pilots flew 37,465 sorties, including 14,006 strike missions.\textsuperscript{120}

The \textit{key military actions} throughout the intervention were therefore airstrikes – using "aircraft, helicopters…and cruise missiles"\textsuperscript{121} – but the targets changed over the course of the campaign. In the first three days of the intervention, NATO conducted airstrikes against the host government’s air defense targets,\textsuperscript{122} as well as "airfields and military headquarters."\textsuperscript{123} Airstrikes were then also conducted on government “forces in

\textsuperscript{117} Seybolt, 83 and 249.
\textsuperscript{118} Diekmann et al.
\textsuperscript{119} Seybolt, 82.
\textsuperscript{121} Diekmann et al.
\textsuperscript{122} Seybolt, 82.
the field and against strategic targets in Serbia, such as petroleum supplies.”124 In the third stage of the campaign, targets for airstrikes expanded to include those which would “disrupt the government and demoralize the Serb population,”125 such as “the Ministry of the Interior, the Socialist Party headquarters and Belgrade’s government-run television station.”126

NATO’s military intervention ended on 10 June 1999 with the signing of an agreement with between NATO and President Milosevic’s government.127 As a result of increased security, many displaced Kosovar Albanians returned home.128 The agreement stipulated that the government must accept the withdrawal of government security forces from Kosovo, the “establishment of a framework for Kosovo to move towards ‘substantial’ self-government,”129 the presence of an international security force, and a UN-established interim administration in Kosovo. The latter two – which took the form of the civilian UN Interim Administration Mission for Kosovo (UNMIK) and the NATO-led International Security Force in Kosovo (KFOR) – were authorized on the same day by UN Security Council Resolution 1244.130 The KLA was also required to sign a disarmament agreement with NATO.131

Over the course of the intervention and in its aftermath, the relationship between the central government headed by Milosevic and the province of Kosovo underwent

124 Seybolt, 82.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Diekmann et al.
128 Seybolt, 85.
129 Seybolt, 82.
130 Diekmann et al.
131 Ibid.
significant changes. The terms of the 10 June agreement and UN Security Council
Resolution 1244 ended the central government’s “direct control over Kosovo,” and set the
groundwork for Kosovo to move back towards substantial autonomy.\(^{132}\) The 10 June
settlement enforced the terms of the Rambouillet Agreement, which demanded that
“Kosovo shall govern itself democratically through the legislative, executive, judicial, and
other organs and institutions.”\(^{133}\) This represented both a “considerable concession…from
previous positions enunciated by [Yugoslavia’s] government and parliament,”\(^{134}\) and a
seismic shift in the negotiating position of Milosevic’s government. After refusing to sign
the Rambouillet Accords just months before, Milosevic now agreed to much the same
terms.\(^{135}\) Therefore, after the agreement, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) lost its
ability to govern over the territory of Kosovo, and therefore lost its direct government over
the population of around 1,762,000, which represented almost 18 percent of the entire
population of the FRY.\(^{136}\) The relationship between Kosovo and the FRY – and the people
of Kosovo and what kind of regime they were governed by – entirely changed. In 2008,
the government of Kosovo declared independence.\(^{137}\) The loss of control over the territory
of Kosovo had wider-reaching implications for Milosevic. The region – which Milosevic
had referred to as “the heart of Serbia”\(^{138}\) and a “holy land”\(^{139}\) – was central to his historical

\(^{132}\) Ibid.
\(^{133}\) Ibid.
\(^{134}\) Roberts, “NATO’s ‘Humanitarian War’ over Kosovo,” 117.
\(^{135}\) Ibid.
\(^{136}\) Figure derived from Diekmann et al., which states that the population of Kosovo at the
time was 1,762,000 and the population of FRY was 9,908,000.
\(^{137}\) BBC News, “Kosovo MPs declare independence” (February 17, 2008),
\(^{138}\) Slobodan Milosevic (1995), quoted in O’Connell, “The UN, NATO, and International
Law after Kosovo,” 74.
\(^{139}\) Ibid.
formulation of the Serbian nation. Losing Kosovo therefore challenged the version of Serbian nationalism which was central to Milosevic’s ruling ideology.

The intervention did not result in immediate changes within the central government, but certainly destabilized Milosevic’s regime, and can be seen as an important factor leading to his ouster. He remained in power until his overthrow by a popular uprising just a year later, in October 2000. Milosevic’s indictment for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia – in part due to the actions of his government and military during the Kosovo intervention – completely changed the government’s ability to conduct international affairs while it was headed by Milosevic. The harm caused to the FRY by this, and in particular to the economy, has been cited as a key factor in the uprising to overthrow Milosevic.

*Applying the Regime Destabilization Framework: An assessment of the relationship between actions and “acted upon”*

The set of key military actions of the intervention – the use of airpower against government and military targets – was certainly effective in weakening and coercing the host government to a negotiating position where it would accept “a political plan for Kosovo’s autonomy.” The targets of the airstrikes are significant in understanding their

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143 Seybolt, 83.
impact on the government’s six pillars of control of the status quo outlined in the framework. Bombing campaigns against Serbian military targets within Kosovo were not believed to have had as major an impact on the government’s military superiority as first thought: once Yugoslav forces withdrew from Kosovo, NATO-led KFOR found that “the Yugoslav army in Kosovo had been much less seriously damaged” than intelligence reports during the height of the bombing had suggested.\textsuperscript{144} The greater direct impact of the bombing campaign was on the host government’s control and support of the population and access to resources, while the impact on the government’s military superiority was indirect and related to the relative increase in KLA power.

A key impact of the bombing was that it coerced Milosevic’s government to agree to autonomy for Kosovo, directly reducing the regime’s authority over the population and territory of Kosovo. However, the impact of bombing on the government’s pillars of maintaining power spread beyond Kosovo. The rest of Yugoslavia suffered “enormous damage particularly to its roads, bridges and industry after 11 weeks of increasingly intense bombing.”\textsuperscript{145} The impact of this on the host government was three-fold. First, attacks on infrastructure could reasonably be expected to have made it far harder for the regime to access and deploy its key military resources, weakening its capacity to maintain military superiority. This would only have increased during the bombing campaign’s focus on Yugoslavia’s petroleum supplies, which were crucial in keeping the military functioning. Second, attacks on civilian infrastructure, as well as on key infrastructure of the government (such as the Ministry of the Interior and the government’s television station)\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{144} Roberts, “NATO’s ‘Humanitarian War’ over Kosovo,” 117.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
undermined the regime’s ability to function as a government. Third – while within Kosovo itself the bombing campaign was believed to have “hardened Serbian opinion against the Kosovar Albanians and rallied [Serbian] public support behind Milosevic, at least initially”\textsuperscript{147} – airstrikes and the aftermath thereof that impacted on day-to-day life of Serbs in the rest of Yugoslavia can reasonably be expected to have challenged the government’s pillar of authority over that part of its population.

The dynamic changed the most by the military actions of the intervention was that between the Milosevic regime and the KLA. NATO lent legitimacy to the KLA (which had, only a few years previously, been designated as a terror organization by the U.S.)\textsuperscript{148} by working with and through KLA partners to gain intelligence on government and military targets.\textsuperscript{149} More importantly, the bombing campaign created the conditions whereby, as a result of the regime’s relative military superiority within the state decreasing, the KLA were effectively shielded, and able to grow in strength politically and militarily, in ways that they had been unable to without NATO’s intervention. The KLA certainly did not have the military capability to challenge the government without external support. While the government’s military force was an estimated 114,000 troops at the beginning of the intervention,\textsuperscript{150} as of 1997 Kosovar-Albanian militants are believed to have “possessed no

\textsuperscript{148} O’Connell, “The UN, NATO, and International Law After Kosovo,” 75.
\textsuperscript{150} Diekmann et al.
more than a few hundred weapons throughout the entire province.” Moreover, given that Kosovo was the poorest region of the FRY, political and military groups would not, it is reasonable to assume, have had access to the resources needed to challenge the central government.

The military actions of this intervention did not topple the government, but certainly defeated it, at least on the issue of Kosovo: the bombing campaign brought Milosevic to a position where he would agree to a settlement that he had previously rejected. Indeed, the intervention and the violent emergency that triggered it was ended by a non-military action: a diplomatic settlement. However, the conditions that made the settlement possible were military. The bombing campaign, through undermining the regime’s pillars of control, created the context in which the Milosevic government could not carry on their previous policy of refusal to reach a settlement on the autonomy of Kosovo. This, in turn, directly precluded the government from continuing the status quo of being the sovereign government over the province of Kosovo, thereby changing the fundamental nature of the relationship between Kosovo and the rest of the state.

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152 O’Connell, “The UN, NATO, and International Law After Kosovo,” 74.
Chapter 5
Libya, 2011

The situation

Protests in Libya during the Arab Uprising in 2011 began in Benghazi and quickly spread to other cities. Reports emerged of Gaddafi’s military using lethal force “against unarmed protesters in an unsuccessful attempt to quell the demonstrations.”\(^{153}\) Particularly violent clashes in Tripoli in late February led to the death of over 200 protestors.\(^{154}\) By late February the protests had escalated to armed conflict between Gaddafi forces and opposition groups, and in early March a coalition of rebel forces seeking Gaddafi’s removal established a governing body – the National Transitional Council (NTC).\(^{155}\) Rebel forces occupied several cities in the eastern province of Cyrenaica, and held Misrata in the northwest of the country.\(^{156}\) In response to the situation, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1970 on February 26, imposing an arms embargo, calling for an end to the Gaddafi regime’s “gross and systematic violation of human rights,” and referring the situation to the International Criminal Court.\(^{157}\) Gaddafi’s forces launched a counter-offensive against rebel groups, and retook most cities by the middle of March.\(^{158}\) In a speech in Tripoli in late February, Gaddafi claimed that his forces would retake the rebel

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\(^{154}\) Ibid.

\(^{155}\) Ibid.

\(^{156}\) Ibid.


\(^{158}\) Dembinski and Goxho.
stronghold of Benghazi and show “no mercy,” using language similar to that used by Rwandan genocidaires.\textsuperscript{159} Expectation of a mass atrocity, along with instrumental support from the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the African Union,\textsuperscript{160} enabled the UN Security Council to pass Resolution 1973 on March 17, authorizing Member States to take "all necessary measures\textsuperscript{161}" to “protect civilians and civilian populated areas.”\textsuperscript{162} The resolution authorized a no-fly zone, but precluded a “foreign occupation force.”\textsuperscript{163} On March 19, states including the US, UK and France launched a military intervention, which, by the end of March, was commanded by NATO.\textsuperscript{164}

\textit{Key actions of humanitarian military intervention: changes to the status quo for the regime}

From March to October, the intervention had important impacts on the conflict in Libya between forces loyal to Gaddafi’s regime, and opposition militias affiliated with the NTC. The intervening coalition took the following key military actions: the establishment of a no-fly zone, airstrikes on government targets, and arming and supporting rebels.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{159} Gaddafi “described protesters as drug-crazed “rats,” “cockroaches” and “cowards and traitors.” He left no doubt about his intentions as he promised to “cleanse Libya house by house.” Simon Adams, “Libya and the Responsibility to Protect,” \textit{Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect,} Occasional Paper Series, No. 3 (October 2012), 5.

\textsuperscript{160} Alexander J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, “The new politics of protection? Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and the responsibility to protect,” \textit{International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944–)} 87, no. 4 (July 2011): 825-850.

\textsuperscript{161} UN Security Council, Record of a meeting on the adoption of Resolution 1973, UN Doc S/PV.6498 (March 17, 2011).


\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{164} Dembinski and Goxho.

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
Over the course of the intervention, members of the NATO-led coalition flew over eight thousand sorties over Libya.\textsuperscript{166} Some scholars have noted that the no-fly zone did not have a great impact on the regime’s ability to attack civilian targets from the air, as the Libyan armed forces did not have “much of an air force to disable” in the first place.\textsuperscript{167} The greater impact of the no-fly zone was that it enabled NATO sorties to dominate Libyan airspace, from where they could launch attacks against government and military targets. From March 19 onwards, states including the US, UK and France “launched missiles against Libyan defense systems”\textsuperscript{168} and began attacking pro-Gaddafi military units from the air.\textsuperscript{169} An immediate attack on Benghazi by Gaddafi’s forces was averted: the ground forces and tanks stationed outside of Benghazi were largely destroyed by NATO airstrikes.\textsuperscript{170} However, Gaddafi’s remaining ground forces “displayed considerable resilience,” and – even after NATO strikes pushed them back from Benghazi in the east – they were able to continue their campaign of re-establishing control over much of Western Libya.\textsuperscript{171} NATO strikes were targeted against government military targets that were actively fighting in cities, in order to halt violence in civilian-populated areas: on 20 April alone NATO targeted and destroyed “25 tanks that were shelling civilian areas in Ajdabiya and Misrata.”\textsuperscript{172}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{166} Adams, 10.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 9.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Adams, 9.
\item \textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Airstrikes were also conducted against regime forces which were not in active combat – according to some reports, NATO strikes targeted forces that were retreating and were therefore not an immediate threat to civilians.\textsuperscript{173} Strikes were also conducted against regime forces in Sirte, Gaddafi’s hometown, where they had the support of the population and were not launching attacks.\textsuperscript{174} The aim of these strikes therefore appears to have been to weaken the regime forces’ capacity to launch future attacks, rather than to quell ongoing attacks. A few weeks into the intervention, the bombing campaign began to focus more on the regime’s “command and control” centers, particularly in Tripoli,\textsuperscript{175} to undermine the regime’s ability to conduct and organize military operations.

The other key set of actions within the intervention related to interveners’ support for rebel groups. While – in line with the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 1973 – regular ground troops from the key NATO states did not enter Libya, military advisors from intervening states were deployed throughout the campaign. In particular, British military and intelligence advisers helped the rebels “establish a command structure and defense ministry,”\textsuperscript{176} and special forces from the UK and France reportedly were deployed with the mission of training rebel groups.\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{175} Adams, 10.
\textsuperscript{176} Kuperman, “A Model Humanitarian Intervention? Reassessing NATO's Libya Campaign,” 114.
\textsuperscript{177} Adams, 12.
Beyond logistical and training support, members of the NATO-led coalition supplied rebel groups with arms. Despite the arms embargo – the enforcement of which was meant to be part of the NATO-led coalition’s mission – states including France and Qatar actively increased rebel groups’ access to weaponry. France allegedly supplied rebel groups with “assault rifles, rocket launchers and anti-tank missiles,” while Qatar went further, allegedly supplying NTC-affiliated militias with “20,000 tons of weaponry” over the course of the intervention. In direct contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 1973, the Qatari government later admitted to having deployed “hundreds” of troops to Libya to support rebel groups fighting against the regime’s military.

Over the course of the intervention, the changes to the host government’s power were drastic, ending in the fall of the regime and the death of Gaddafi. Rebel groups affiliated with the NTC regained ground over the summer of 2011, and by the end of August “were largely in control of Tripoli and other cities.” Militias associated with the NTC captured and killed Gaddafi on 20 October, declaring the conflict over on 23 October. The conclusion of the NTC’s campaign against the regime was directly facilitated by NATO-led forces: a series of airstrikes on Gaddafi’s convoy enabled rebel fighters to

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178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
180 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
capture and execute him.\textsuperscript{183} Through the UN, intervening states recognized this as the end of the conflict, ending the intervention on 31 October and recognizing the NTC as Libya’s legitimate governing authority in September 2011.\textsuperscript{184}

\textit{Applying the Regime Destabilization Framework: An assessment of the relationship between actions and “acted upon”}

The impacts of the intervention upon the stability of the host regime were profound: the episode ended in the decapitation of the Gaddafi regime and recognition by the United Nations of a different sovereign authority (which kept power for only 11 months).\textsuperscript{185} The initial stated aim of the military intervention was to protect civilians in Benghazi through the defeat or incapacitation the state perpetrators of violence. The military actions taken in pursuit of this objective impacted on the six pillars of the regime’s power. These destabilizing impacts became even more profound as the NATO-led coalition expanded its targets over the course of the intervention. Attacks on core functions of Gaddafi’s regime implied there had been a “mission creep”\textsuperscript{186} beyond removing the regime’s immediate capacity to harm civilians, and towards its overthrow. This section will first assess the extent to which military actions of the intervention facilitated the outcome of the fall of the

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
regime, before analyzing the impacts of the highly influential – and controversial – non-military actions on the course of the military campaign.

As a result of the prohibition on ground troops in Resolution 1973, there were no forces on the ground separating or buffering civilians from aggressors. Therefore, the impacts of military actions on the regime’s relationship with the population and control over territory were indirect, and a knock-on effect of drastic changes in the military balance of power. Airstrikes against Gaddafi’s military forces and resources – including against tanks and military compounds\textsuperscript{187} – directly reduced the regime’s military power, while also shielding rebel groups from attacks that those forces could otherwise have made. In conflicts between Gaddafi-loyalist forces and NTC-aligned militias, NATO forces often bombarded Gaddafi forces from above,\textsuperscript{188} improving the NTC’s “combat performance.”\textsuperscript{189} At the same time, by empowering rebel militias militarily with logistical and material support, the interveners directly increased the military might and organization of the opposition forces trying to topple the regime, thereby reducing the regime’s relative military superiority further.

Two particular impacts of supporting rebel groups militarily can be reasonably assumed. First, by supplying rebel groups with arms – or even, in the case of Qatar, arms and combat units – at the same time as killing or incapacitating regime forces with airstrikes, actions of the interveners went some way to neutralize the regime’s superior military resources. The year before the intervention, the Libyan “regular” armed forces was

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{189} UK HoC Foreign Affairs Select Committee, “Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK’s future policy options.”
estimated to have had between 76,000\textsuperscript{190} and 100,000\textsuperscript{191} personnel – not including mercenaries – along with tanks and heavy artillery.\textsuperscript{192} It is reasonable to assume that without the military actions of the intervening coalition, the collection of militias that made up the de facto military wing of the NTC would not have had the military resources or manpower to pose a credible threat to the government’s military. Second, the reasonable impact of the interveners’ (largely covert) actions to train and organize rebel forces must not be underestimated. At the time of the intervention, the NTC was a recently-formed umbrella organization of diverse opposition groups and militias from across Libya. Therefore, the military forces of the NTC were made up of a “myriad of loosely organized armed groups.”\textsuperscript{193} Without logistical support from interveners – including the facilitation of the creation of a command and control structure by British advisers, and the provision of telecom equipment by the United Arab Emirates\textsuperscript{194} – it is reasonable to assume that the capacity of the NTC to present an opposition that was coordinated enough to destabilize the regime’s military superiority would have been far lower.

The impact of the destabilization of the host government’s military superiority over opponents then had a knock-on effect on other pillars of the regime’s control. Rebel forces, with enhanced capability, weapons, and shielded by coalition airstrikes against their opponents, were better able to claim territory and gain control of the populations within. At the same time, regime forces’ ability to reclaim territory by force, and re-secure

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{191} Adams, 9.
  \item \textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
populations from rebel control, was seriously undermined by airstrikes which had weakened their military capability. The shift in relative military power within the theater also impacted on the regime’s ability to maintain the status quo of being the nation’s government, and being able to conduct international affairs. With increased military strength, NTC-aligned forces were able to gain control of Tripoli, allowing the NTC to insert themselves as the de facto government. By conducting military actions that directly supported rebel groups who had the explicit aim of toppling the Gaddafi government, interveners signaled that the regime was no longer the legitimate sovereign authority of Libya, thereby curtailing the regime’s ability to act as an equal player in international affairs.

In this case study, it is important to note several non-military actions which had a significant impact on the impact of the military actions and the stability of the regime. Inherently political decisions over which parts of Resolutions 1970 and 1973 to strictly adhere to undoubtedly affected the military theater. For example, by deciding to supply rebel forces with arms, despite the fact that they were meant to be upholding an arms embargo, the interveners allowed for the rebels’ relative access to military resources to increase, while the regime’s access decreased. In what has since come to be seen as crucial evidence of the true regime-changing motivations of the intervention, a month after the beginning of the military intervention, President Barack Obama, President Nicolas Sarkozy and Prime Minister David Cameron published an article, in which they stated that while the main aim of the intervention was “that of protecting civilians and not of removing

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Gaddafis,” it was nevertheless “impossible to imagine a future for Libya with Gaddafi in power.” Similarly, in the same week as the beginning of the airstrikes, UK Defense Minister Liam Fox suggested that the removal of Gaddafi should be an objective of the intervention, stating – hyperbolically, given the considerable opposition on the Security Council and beyond to imposing regime change in Libya – that “the international community wants [Gaddafi’s] regime to end and wants the Libyan people to control for themselves their own country.” As a result of UN Security Council 1970 of 28 February 2011, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Gaddafi, his son, and two key members of his government – the de facto prime minister and the head of intelligence. France recognized the NTC as the government of Libya a week before Resolution 1973 was adopted, and the UN later recognized the NTC as Libya’s legitimate governing authority on 16 September. All of these political actions signaled that the regime in Libya was no longer the legitimate sovereign authority, which gave justification for taking military actions which would destabilize the balance of power in favor of the rebels. This delegitimized the regime’s ability to maintain the status quo of forming the national government able to conduct international affairs, while at the same

197 Ibid.
198 Adams, 13.
200 McMillan and Mickler, 305.
201 Adams, 13.
202 UK HoC Foreign Affairs Select Committee, “Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK's future policy options.”
time creating the space and narrative of legitimacy for the NTC to step into the regime’s place.

The key military actions within this intervention had an instrumental impact on the host regime’s ability to maintain military superiority, and in turn on its capacity to uphold the other pillars of control central to its survival. The actions that most explicitly targeted the regime’s maintenance of power were not military in nature, but political. However, the military actions outlined above completely changed the military balance of power within Libya, creating the environment in which the domestic-led overthrow of Gaddafi’s regime was possible.
Conclusion

This thesis has argued that a humanitarian military intervention will have a destabilizing impact on the balance of power in the target state and, in turn, on the factors that allow the government in power to maintain the status quo in terms of their level of control. It has sought to demonstrate that, to understand the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change, it is not enough to focus on the motives of interveners, or to assume that changes to the power of the regime in the target country during or following the regime were necessarily attributable directly to the intervention. It has argued that deconstructing the terms “humanitarian military intervention” and “regime change” to better understand the constituent parts of both sides of the relationship can give insight into the attributable impacts of interventions on the stability of the government of the target country. To this end, the thesis has presented a new analytical tool – the Regime Destabilization Framework. This enables analysts to establish the key military actions of an intervention; what the government in the target state relies upon in order to maintain its position of power; and how the former can be estimated to have impacted on the latter.

Three insights on the relationship between humanitarian military intervention and regime change arise from this analysis. First, a “humanitarian military intervention” is not an action in itself, but a series of actions under the umbrella of humanitarian protection. Each action can have a very different impact on the stability of the regime compared to other actions which would fall under the purview of humanitarian military intervention. The impact of specific actions can also vary greatly based on the context, meaning that we cannot reach general conclusions from these three case studies alone about which military actions are most likely to destabilize a host regime to the point of its collapse. The primary
use of analyzing the impacts of specific military actions on the regime’s power is therefore to illuminate *how* humanitarian military interventions interact with power dynamics in the target state.

Second, while it is important to ascertain the impacts of individual military actions, it is also crucial to understand that they do not take place in isolation from each other: one action can impact the effectiveness of another action. For example, while arming domestic opposition groups to defend civilians and conducting airstrikes on government targets are two discrete military actions, the reduction of the regime’s military capacity would make the likelihood of opposition groups successfully defending against the regime’s military forces far higher. A similar mutually reinforcing relationship can often be seen between military and non-military actions, as in the case of Libya: one facilitates the conditions in which the other will be most effective.

Third, while the actions of humanitarian military intervention may not directly challenge the regime’s position as sovereign authority of the state, they can create the conditions by which opposition or separatist groups within the state can gain enough power relative to the government to achieve the ends they had already been pursuing before the intervention (such as a change in government, or provincial autonomy). In all three case studies, the government’s ability to maintain military superiority over domestic opponents became the key determinant of the stability of the regime. Losing military superiority, in all three cases, meant that the regime also lost control over resources, territories, and populations. From this, we can deduce that of the six bases of the regime’s control, actions that destroy the regime’s military superiority are the most likely to create conditions for the domestic power balance to significantly shift to the detriment of the regime.
Drawing these insights together, we can reach several further observations. In all three case studies, monumental changes either to the power of the host regime or to its control over parts of the state’s territory took place during, or immediately after, military actions of the intervention. In Libya, Gaddafi was killed by NATO-backed rebel forces and his government was driven from power. In Kosovo, Milosevic ceded direct control over the province of Kosovo, effectively creating the conditions for the separation of Kosovo from the rest of the FRY. The polity over which he governed changed, the ruling authority in Kosovo therefore changed, and a year later Milosevic was ousted from his position of power over the remaining territories and populations of the FRY. In Iraq, while Saddam Hussein’s regime remained in government until its overthrow by the U.S.-led intervention in 2003, Kurdistan gained de facto autonomy in the months following Operation Provide Comfort I, paving the way for its autonomy to be recognized in the 2005 constitution. The political structure of the region of Kurdistan and the state of Iraq, and the relationship between the two, therefore entirely changed.

We could conclude from these outcomes that humanitarian military interventions of any type will inevitably destabilize the power dynamics within the state, and in turn destabilize the host regime to the point of its collapse. But that conclusion does not reflect the agency that interveners have in controlling how and if they target the host regime in the course of their military actions, and in deciding the point at which to end military actions. An external military intervention into a state will inevitably change the power dynamics within the state, and in the case of non-consensual humanitarian military intervention, this shift in relative power will almost always be to the detriment of the host government. However, it does not necessarily follow that the outcome will be the collapse
of the regime or the separation of the state, unless the interveners make further decisions – once the regime is already weakened – that make such outcomes highly likely. While interveners cannot control the “centrifugal forces” that their intervention unleashes in the host environment, nor can interveners control the decisions made by conflict parties who have either gained or lost power as a result, interveners can control where they then direct their resources and military actions over the course of the intervention. Military actions are intentional, political decisions: interveners can choose to take or not take military actions which have a high probability of triggering the collapse of the regime. In the case of Iraq in 1991, decision-makers for the U.S.-led intervention chose not to pursue the military defeat and collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime. While the regime lost control over Kurdistan, it continued to form the government of the state of Iraq. In Libya, NATO-led coalition leaders made a series of political decisions to take military actions that would strengthen rebel forces to a point where Gaddafi’s ouster through military defeat was highly likely, even after the immediate threat the regime posed to civilians had been decisively mitigated. This culminated in the decision to facilitate the rebel forces’ capture of Gaddafi by conducting air strikes on his convoy. In Kosovo, interveners did not pursue the collapse of Milosevic’s regime through military defeat, but instead used military actions to weaken his government to the point of agreeing to a significant change to the FRY through a diplomatic settlement. Non-military decisions not directly linked to the intervention – such as the referral of Milosevic to the International Criminal Court – facilitated the downfall of his regime, after the military actions of the intervention had created the conditions in which its collapse was more likely. Based on these observations, we should instead conclude from

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the analysis in this thesis that in the course of humanitarian military interventions – which are, in essence, a series of political decisions about how to deploy military resources – “regime change” is by no means inevitable. The interveners, through deciding how to target and deploy military resources, and at which point to halt military actions which will further weaken the host government, ultimately have at least some agency over the extent to which the regime is destabilized.

The framework offered in this thesis does not attempt to conclusively demonstrate “cause-and-effect” impacts of humanitarian military intervention. Instead, it offers a different analytical angle from which to understand how governments maintain their control, and how the military actions of humanitarian military intervention can destabilize those factors. There are two opportunities for developing the framework further, and one key area for further research using the framework.

First, the framework could be developed to include analysis on which of the six pillars are the most important for the maintenance of control for the regime in question. For example, if a military intervention included strikes on the host government’s airbases, and the host government relied heavily on airpower to control populations, it could be assumed that the military action would have a more profound impact on the government’s relative power than if airpower had not been so central to their bases of control. If this step were added to the framework, we could gain greater understanding of which elements – if destabilized, by design or as a by-product of a military action – would be most likely, in turn, to destabilize the regime.

Second, as outlined in Chapter 2, the word “regime” is used broadly in this debate, and in this thesis has been used to denote the status quo – the government in power and the
basic characteristics of the state – in place at the beginning of the intervention. However, the framework could usefully be developed to further deconstruct the “regime” into three levels of analysis: the government and its apparatus of control; the “rules of the game” of how political power is distributed within the polity; and the sovereign state itself. From this we could understand how military actions of intervention impact not only the government of the day, but also the structures that allowed for such a government to gain power and inflict harm upon its populations. If we equate the notion of the regime with just an individual leader or government, we miss out on analysis of the systems that allow for their rule, or that necessitate their oppression and murder of civilians in order to maintain power. Introducing the three levels of analysis into the framework could help us better understand how interventions impact not only on the contemporary sovereign authority, but on the nature of power, governance and the political community within the state.

The findings of this thesis also prompt further research. This study has sought to understand how humanitarian military interventions affect the stability of the host regime. It has not covered questions of what effect such destabilization could have on the populations living within the state, which could be an important next step in better understanding the impacts, and effectiveness, of humanitarian military intervention. The insights on how humanitarian military interventions change relative power within the target state could be compared with existing analyses of the effectiveness of such interventions.
in protecting civilians,\textsuperscript{204} and the impacts of foreign-imposed regime change on civilians,\textsuperscript{205} in order to theorize, at the intersection of the three, the indirect impacts of regime destabilization on civilians within the target country. Part of this analysis could include weighing the likelihood of military actions of humanitarian military intervention effectively protecting civilians in the immediate term, against the likelihood of those military actions creating conditions that will endanger populations further in the future (through, for example, the triggering of a power vacuum or civil war). Such analyses could have important policy implications: if we are better able to understand the likely impacts of specific military actions on regime stability, and in turn the likely impacts to civilians of destabilization to the regime caused by intervention, then policymakers may be able to better understand how the negative consequences of military intervention may be mitigated, and how more lives can be protected.


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