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# Rehabilitating a Rogue: Libya's WMD Reversal and Lessons for US Policy

DAFNA HOCHMAN

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On 19 December 2003, Muammar al-Qadhafi announced Libya's decision to dismantle all components of its nonconventional weapons programs. Concurrently, Qadhafi declared an abrupt halt to Libya's development of missiles with a range exceeding 300 kilometers and his intent to open all nonconventional weapons stockpiles and research programs to international inspectors.<sup>1</sup> Libya's acknowledgment that it was building chemical and biological, as well as nuclear, weapons marked a dramatic shift; for decades, Tripoli had unequivocally denied the possession of any such weapons when faced with Western allegations to that effect. In fact, as recently as January 2003, Qadhafi told an American reporter that it was "crazy to think that Libya" had weapons of mass destruction (WMD).<sup>2</sup> In a 2003 article directed at the US foreign policy community, Qadhafi's son and likely successor, Saif al-Islam al-Qadhafi, underscored Libya's continued compliance with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as well as the Biological Weapons Convention.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, with great confessional drama, Qadhafi now admitted to the international community that he had overseen the development of an active WMD program, with materials imported as recently as 2001. Thus, Qadhafi's WMD reversal poses a puzzling question: Why would a rogue leader decide to eliminate a WMD program that he recently had been pursuing?

The international community, including President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, immediately lauded Qadhafi's decision to seek rapprochement with the West.<sup>4</sup> The Bush Administration and analysts

outside the US government cited two principal reasons behind Qadhafi's decision. First, they argued that the United States had sent a strong message by invading Iraq in 2003, proving its willingness to use military force to deal with rogue states acquiring WMD. Libya must have been watching, they contended. Second, many argued that economic sanctions had successfully suppressed the Libyan economy. With a growing population, and potential revenue from undeveloped oil resources, Qadhafi might have decided to prioritize Libya's economic survival over WMD procurement.<sup>5</sup>

These two explanations, while plausible, have sidelined the role of deliberate, long-term US policies toward Libya that likely facilitated Qadhafi's WMD reversal. Three additional factors affected Libya's WMD reversal. First, in addition to the pressures exerted by the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, Qadhafi had reason to foresee greater security benefits to be gained by closer ties with the United States and the West. In particular, Libya's concern about al Qaeda influenced its desire to ally with the United States. Second, while seeking an end to the stifling US and UN sanctions for economic motives, Qadhafi also sought to end Libya's pariah status. Qadhafi's concern about his own reputation and Libya's international image and credibility motivated his decision. Third, the Pam Am 103 victims' families and their advocates on Capitol Hill wielded agenda-setting influence, strengthening the negotiating position of the United States vis-à-vis Libya. Each of these factors reflects one of three US foreign policy approaches applied toward Libya over the past 15 years. Each factor also yields implications for current and future US national security strategies, offering prescriptive lessons to policymakers confronting rogue regimes acquiring WMD programs.

Since 1969, when Qadhafi and his revolutionary guard staged a military coup against the US-backed King Idris, US-Libyan bilateral relations have vacillated between tense and nonexistent. Among the many contentious issues that have shaped US policy toward Libya in the past two decades, however, this article specifically focuses on the problem posed by the Libyan WMD arsenal and Qadhafi's decision to dismantle it. Of course, US security concerns are always interconnected; Libyan WMD proliferation is linked intricately to the country's support for terrorism, Libya's oil supply, inter-Arab relations, international trade, and other geostrategic issues. Furthermore, while the article focuses on the ramifications of three US foreign policy ap-

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proaches applied toward Libya, it does not address the use of US military force against Libya. This might seem strange, given that many Americans first learned about Qadhafi in the early 1980s. During that time, the Reagan Administration ordered a series of military attacks on Tripoli and Benghazi in response to Libyan terrorist plots. The United States has not chosen to exercise the military option against Libya since 1986, however. The article also focuses only on the policies toward Libya enacted by the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. These policies most directly laid the groundwork for Qadhafi's December 2003 announcement.

### *Assessing Libya's Security Interests*

Analyzing Qadhafi's decisionmaking through a security lens requires assessing Libya's relative capabilities, particular the extent of Libya's non-conventional weapons research and development programs. Prior to Qadhafi's 2003 announcement, outside experts and officials within both the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations disagreed internally about the size of Libya's arsenal.<sup>6</sup> When International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and US inspectors entered Libya in January 2004, they found that Libya possessed more extensive nuclear and chemical weapons parts than previously presumed. Inspectors found approximately 23 tons of mustard agents in one chemical weapons production facility and thousands of unfilled munitions.<sup>7</sup> Libya admitted to the IAEA in 2004 that it had acquired 20 preassembled P-1 centrifuges and the components for another 200; it also had constructed enrichment cascades.<sup>8</sup> Qadhafi also confessed that, in 2000, Pakistani nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan had assisted with the centrifuge enrichment program and had provided Libya with an actual nuclear weapon design.<sup>9</sup> All of this nuclear weapon activity violated Libya's obligations under the NPT, which it ratified and signed in 1975. Thus far, US and United Kingdom officials have found no evidence of a Libyan biological weapons program.

The significance of Qadhafi's 2003 decision becomes all the more enigmatic—and important to study—when it becomes apparent that the scope of Libya's WMD arsenal was significant, modernized, and certainly larger than some experts expected it to be. Qadhafi must have foreseen tangible benefits of international rapprochement in order to willingly disarm a recently modernized WMD program. Assuming that Libyan security was Qadhafi's central goal, Qadhafi's willingness to weaken state power by disposing of his nonconventional weapons poses a counter-intuitive enigma. One explanation is that Libya perceived greater danger in maintaining its nuclear and chemical programs than in destroying them. Indeed, those who argue that the 2003 Iraq war forced Qadhafi's hand assume that Libya must have worried that retaining its weapons programs would invite US military

action. But the 2003 Iraq war need not have been the sole factor shaping Libya's security reconsiderations.

It is not surprising that many consider the defeat of Saddam Hussein and his regime an influential factor in Libya's decision, given the political expediency of this contention. Arms control experts inside and outside of the government argue that the demonstration of US power—combined with US intolerance for Saddam's evasion of sanctions—demonstrated to other rogue states that the global superpower would rely on tactics as extreme as regime change to punish WMD proliferators. The Bush Administration highlighted this particular argument in its explanation of Libya's disarmament decision, arguing that the Iraq war had established a "punitive model," one that would induce other states to give up their WMD programs.<sup>10</sup>

Yet two major factual points challenge the contention that Libya's decision to disarm resulted from security considerations triggered by the 2003 Iraq war. First, Libya was not the only rogue regime attempting to acquire WMD in 2003. The "Iraq-war-as-punitive model" suggests that the Iranian and North Korean regimes would feel as threatened as Libya did. Yet Iran and North Korea, according to most analysts' estimates, reacted to the US confrontation with Iraq by accelerating their development of nuclear weapons. Syria, Sudan, and other states of concern also do not seem to be following Libya's lead, neither contemplating WMD disarmament nor seeking rapprochement with the United States. Of course, the Iraq war could still have played a role in Libya's decision to disarm even if other rogue states did not imitate its WMD reversal.

Second, and perhaps more telling, the chronology of US-Libya bilateral negotiations calls into question the importance of the 2003 Iraq war in shaping Libyan behavior. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, Libya first expressed interest in disarming in the mid-1990s. In 1997, for instance, the Clinton Administration successfully negotiated with Libya to destroy its chemical weapons plant in Tarhunah.<sup>11</sup> In 1999, according to multiple accounts by Clinton Administration officials, Libyan representatives offered to surrender WMD programs during secret negotiations with their US counterparts, including a formal offer by Qadhafi of rapprochement.<sup>12</sup> Nearly four years before the United States toppled Saddam's regime, therefore, the Libyans expressed willingness to discuss disarmament with the United States. Finally, Bush Administration officials have stated that before March 2003, Libyan officials had approached British and US officials and offered to begin negotiating a disarmament plan. Though US intentions to invade Iraq were clear by March 2003, the outcome—Saddam's defeat—was not. Thus, this chronology undermines the argument of those who would solely attribute Qadhafi's decision to the Iraq war's deterrent effect.

Additional security imperatives beyond the Iraq war likely influenced Libya's decision to disarm. Libya might have believed that closer relations to the United States could mitigate other threats, perhaps threats more dangerous to Libya than the loss of its WMD programs. In particular, even before 11 September 2001, Qadhafi had begun offering to cooperate with US officials in fighting al Qaeda cells in North Africa.<sup>13</sup> Libya has been at war with al Qaeda and its affiliates since at least the 1996 assassination attempt against Qadhafi by the militant Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). Shortly thereafter, Tripoli insisted that al Qaeda had inspired and financed the LIFG plot.<sup>14</sup> Qadhafi perhaps believed that renewed diplomatic ties with the United States would allow Libya to bandwagon onto the US-led Global War on Terrorism, seeking defense from al Qaeda. Alliance-formation with the United States was an enticing security objective that likely motivated Libya's decision. WMD disarmament became a means to facilitate this alliance.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, exactly a year after Qadhafi's reversal, in December 2004, the United States designated the LIFG as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the economic benefits of disarmament offered possible security gains to Libya. Qadhafi likely calculated the potential revenue to be gained from lifting both UN and US sanctions—from the influx of foreign direct investments and capital and from new international loans. This new revenue, when invested in Libya's vast oil industry, could be used to shore up Libya's conventional arsenal even as Tripoli comprehensively complied with its nonconventional disarmament. Economic development and growth can contribute to security, as increased state revenues enable new arms purchases. Therefore, even if Qadhafi was primarily motivated by security concerns, eliminating economic sanctions could have been a means of augmenting Libya's military power. We will soon see whether this prediction comes to fruition, if Libya chooses to spend its new revenue on its military.

Thus, the US war in Iraq need not have been Libya's sole security consideration or motivation. Rather, Libya likely conducted a cost-benefit analysis of its security situation and concluded that disarming enabled multiple security gains. On balance, these outweighed the costs of destroying Qadhafi's WMD arsenal.

### ***The Power of International Opprobrium***

The second most common explanation offered in the wake of Qadhafi's 2003 reversal focused on Libya's material interests. Both US and UN economic sanctions, imposed for almost two decades, had effectively isolated Libya from international trade and investment and successfully created economic incentives to disarm. Both sets of sanctions prevented Libya from importing the latest oilfield technology, making it impossible for Qad-

hafi to expand Libya's oil production. Some estimated that the sanctions cost Libya over \$30 billion in revenue.<sup>17</sup> Observers within the Bush Administration and experts in the private sector contended that Qadhafi finally acknowledged Libya's plummeting economy and sought to realize Libya's vast oil potential. Faced with a growing population and the failure of the state-run economy, Qadhafi recognized that the only solution to Libya's poverty was to open up Libya to international trade and investment. Indeed, evidence does suggest that Qadhafi, or at least his top advisors, understood Libya's predicament and chose to privilege economic interests over ideological or nationalist ones.<sup>18</sup> Qadhafi's son, Saif al-Islam, a doctoral student at the London School of Economics, has been particularly vocal about the need for Libya to embrace global capital and abandon its long-standing socialist economic policies.

Since 2003, speeches by Libya's prime minister and other officials suggest that the material incentives of lifting sanctions played a large role in Qadhafi's decisionmaking.<sup>19</sup> But the sanctions, imposed by global institutions, also generated nonmaterial incentives to disarm, particularly international opprobrium of Libyan behavior. As a result, Qadhafi sought to improve his image and that of his country on the national stage. He has long considered himself to be a charismatic leader of the developing world. By the late 1990s, however, Libya's deep international isolation had undercut Qadhafi's attempts to exert influence on both African politics and intra-Arab affairs.

Qadhafi has long believed that his unique blend of Marxist-Islamist revolutionary ideology, as well as his own model of revolution, should inspire similar revolutions throughout the developing world. After successfully leading the Libyan revolution of 1969, Qadhafi, in his "Green Book," called his revolution universal, based on "an international ideology, not a national one" and not "on [a specific] religion and nationalism, [but on] any religion and nationalism."<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Qadhafi attempted to export some of his revolutionary ideals, offering public support to revolutionaries such as Fidel Castro and Nelson Mandela. His lengthy speeches, fixtures since the late 1960s, exalted Libya as a model political system, one that would "bring salvation to the world."<sup>21</sup> In the wake of Qadhafi's dramatic 2003 reversal, his mouthpieces, the *al-Jamahiriyya* and *al-Shams* newspapers, echoed his typical bombastic style. They proclaimed that by making such a courageous decision, Libya would serve as a role model that would be emulated by great and small powers alike, in order to bring about a more civilized world free of the threat of WMD.<sup>22</sup>

Currently, Qadhafi's desire to assume the role of charismatic revolutionary manifests itself through his attempts to play a high-profile leadership

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***“Qadhafi’s willingness to weaken state power by disposing of his nonconventional weapons poses a counter-intuitive enigma.”***

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role within sub-Saharan Africa, where Libya continues to gain influence through financial and material beneficence. In 2002-2003, much to the dismay of the international human rights community, Qadhafi bullied the African members of the UN’s Commission on Human Rights and convinced them to select Libya to represent the African region, whose turn it was to chair that year’s commission.<sup>23</sup> Qadhafi’s petition of the African caucus to nominate his country to chair the UN’s premier human rights organization (in addition to being a tragic comedy) reflects his ambitions for regional African leadership. Qadhafi’s recent (and heretofore unsuccessful) efforts to mediate over the crisis in Darfur also exemplify these ambitions.<sup>24</sup> Libya’s efforts to secure a leadership role in African affairs provide salient examples of Qadhafi’s self-image as a charismatic political leader of the developing world.

Moreover, Libya is currently petitioning the US government to eliminate Libya’s name from the US State Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism.<sup>25</sup> President Bush’s executive order of 20 September 2004 formally lifted almost all previous orders establishing sanctions with respect to Libya. It did, however, maintain three residual sanctions imposed on Libya because of its designation as a state sponsor of terrorism.<sup>26</sup> Yet these additional designations are economically insignificant. With the major economic sanctions already lifted, US companies have established Tripoli offices with great celerity. Nonetheless, though the Bush Administration lifted nearly all of the measurable sanctions over the course of only nine months (December 2003 to August 2004), Libya remains dissatisfied. Qadhafi’s public statements and press accounts reflect his discontent that Libya remains on a list alongside states such as Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Sudan, and Syria.<sup>27</sup> Qadhafi does not like being associated with this group because of his sensitivity to Libya’s image in the international community.

Finally, Qadhafi likely took international norms into consideration, especially counterproliferation taboos against WMD. Either these norms compelled a change in Qadhafi’s behavior or he strategically realized that defying these norms could be self-defeating. A careful analysis of Qadhafi’s language in his December 2003 announcement and further speeches and public state-



ments explaining his decision reveals repeated references to international nonproliferation agreements. Qadhafi deliberately couched his decision to disarm in the norms of international WMD agreements and institutions. For example, the actual statement released by the Libyan Foreign Ministry on 19 December 2003 included a list of international conventions to which Libya promised to commit:

Libya has decided to limit its missile activities to missiles with a range consistent with that agreed under the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). . . . Libya wishes to reaffirm that it considers itself bound by the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Agreement on Safeguards, the IAEA and the Convention on Biological Weapons and that it accepts any other commitment, including the Additional Protocol to the IAEA, Safeguard Agreement, the Chemical Weapons convention, and the Biological Weapons convention.<sup>28</sup>

Qadhafi, ever concerned about image, wished his WMD disarmament to be perceived as an international endeavor, conducted through multilateral institutions such as the IAEA. Clearly, he wanted to avoid the impression that he surrendered to US bilateral pressure to disarm. In March 2004, Qadhafi displayed this deep concern about Libya's image. When the press reported that US ships taking away Tripoli's nuclear materials and equipment had publicly displayed the confiscated materials on deck, the Libyan government took offense. On 16 March 2004, a senior Libyan official registered this displeasure with the US government's display of Libya's former WMD materials: "Libya was quite unhappy with this dog-and-pony show because it hurts [Libya] domestically (and) in the Arab world. . . . It makes [Libya's disarmament] look like unilateral US disarmament of Libya, and [instead] Libya wants it recognized as disarmament under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and IAEA auspices."<sup>29</sup> These statements by Libyan officials explaining the WMD reversal indicate that Qadhafi intended to create the impression that the destruction of his arsenal was being done in conjunction with international procedures and norms, rather than as a concession to the United States.

During his first meeting with European Commission officials since his December 2003 announcement, Qadhafi expressed hope that Libya would become an example to other countries, encouraging other states to disarm: "Libya, which was in the lead and led the liberation movement in the Third World and Africa, now has decided to lead the peace movement all over the world." In typical fashion, Qadhafi does not fail to claim credit, adding: "The first step was taken voluntarily, out of [my] own will and volition, to discard all weapons of mass destruction programs."<sup>30</sup> Since December 2003, Qadhafi has been increasingly vocal about the need for international arms control regimes and international cooperation to fight terrorism. While these public

statements could very well be insincere, it is worth noting that a public leader successfully isolated by international institutions and regimes is now championing these very mechanisms en route to a restored public image. He has, ironically, become a spokesperson for the very norms and proliferation agreements that he audaciously violated for more than two decades.

### ***Powerful Domestic “Constraints”***

While the first two factors outlined above involved changing Libyan foreign policy calculations, a third factor, an element of US foreign policy, also influenced Qadhafi’s decisionmaking. The US government must often reconcile obligations to domestic interest groups with the demands of international relations. The executive branch faced this balancing role throughout the decade-long negotiations with Libya that preceded Qadhafi’s December 2003 reversal.<sup>31</sup> The tragedy of the Pan Am 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988 and the activism of the American victims’ families in the aftermath played a central role in US foreign policy toward Libya. Subsequently, the centrality of the Pan Am 103 matter became an important bargaining asset for the United States during its negotiations with Libya regarding its WMD programs.

The bomb aboard Pan Am 103 killed 270 people when it exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988. This act of terror produced the highest American death toll (189) of any terrorist attack in history before 9/11. A joint American-British investigatory commission, which published its findings in November 1991, pointed to Libya as the party directly responsible for the Pan Am 103 attack. Shortly after the tragedy, the families of these 189 victims emerged as powerful voices shaping US policy toward Libya, the Middle East, and counterterrorism. Having found sympathetic allies on Capitol Hill, they remain active and influential today.<sup>32</sup> These families, for example, successfully petitioned the White House to establish the Commission on Aviation Security and Terrorism in 1989, and the commission’s recommendations were largely implemented. In 1995, the family members successfully petitioned Congress to add Libya to a sanction bill initially intended only to strengthen US sanctions against Iran through penalties to non-American companies. The bill subsequently became known as the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA).

Therefore, it is not surprising that resolving the issues surrounding the Pan Am 103 terrorist attack significantly influenced US (and UK) policy toward Libya for much of the 1990s. The states of origin of most of the Pan Am 103 victims—the United States, Britain, and France—ensured the passage of three UN Security Council Resolutions, 731 (1992), 748 (1992), and 883 (1993). The three resolutions instructed Libya to: disclose all that it knew

about the Pan Am 103 attacks; accept the role of Libyan officials in the Lockerbie bombing; formally renounce terrorism; and pay compensation to the families of the Lockerbie victims.<sup>33</sup> The United Nations suspended sanctions in 1999 when Libya handed over government agents connected to the Pan Am 103 bombings. The US government immediately expressed opposition to the suspension, insisting that the multilateral sanctions should not be lifted until Tripoli had fulfilled all four of the UN resolutions' requirements. Libya's fulfillment of these four imperatives also became the necessary pre-requisite action for any Libyan dialogue with the United States.

The powerful influence of the Pan Am 103 family members highlights the role of pressures exerted by domestic actors in shaping US foreign policy. Scholars have argued that the greater the domestic constraints imposed on a government negotiator, the stronger his or her bargaining position and negotiating leverage on the international level. Indeed, the resolute red lines insisted on by the Pan Am 103 families strengthened the US negotiators' positions. During Libyan-US negotiations in 1992 and 1999, the Libyans offered to meet some of the US demands regarding transnational issues, including a reduction, however symbolic, of its WMD programs. But these Libyan advances were rejected by the US Administration on the grounds that the Libyan government had not yet fully resolved all four of the requirements of the UN Security Council resolutions. Ultimately, the Libyans offered a much more comprehensive disarmament concession in 2003.

According to former US Senator Gary Hart, the head of the Libyan intelligence services approached him in 1992 and offered to turn over the two Pan Am bombing suspects, later identified as Abdel Basset Ali Megrahi and Lamem Khalifa Fhimah. In exchange, Libya wanted a commitment from the George H. W. Bush Administration that preliminary discussions would begin regarding the lifting of sanctions and eventual normalization of US-Libyan relations. According to Hart's account, the State Department rejected any possibility of dialogue, insisting that no negotiations would occur until Libya showed proof of complying with the UN resolutions.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the UN demands were not part of the negotiations themselves, but rather a prerequisite Libya had to fulfill to earn a place at the negotiating table.

President Clinton's 1998 statement of his Administration's policy toward Libya underscored that the resolution of the Pan Am 103 issues remained the top priority in US-Libyan relations.<sup>35</sup> A year later, Libyan officials held secret discussions with Clinton Administration officials to convey Qadhafi's interest in normalizing relations. The Clinton White House again stated that no movement toward better relations was possible until Libya met its responsibilities stemming from the Pan Am 103 tragedy.<sup>36</sup> According to then-Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Martin Indyk,<sup>37</sup> al-

though the Libyans offered to negotiate eliminating their WMD programs in 1999, at that time the Administration was much more interested in securing compensation for the Pan Am 103 families. Indyk recounts:

In October 1999, Libya repeated its offer on chemical weapons and agreed to join the Middle East multilateral arms control talks taking place at the time. Why did we not pursue the Libyan WMD offer then? Because resolving the Pan Am 103 issues was our condition for any further engagement.<sup>38</sup>

The record reflects that the US refusal to negotiate with Libya over its WMD in 1999 subsequently strengthened America's bargaining hand. Shortly thereafter, Qadhafi handed over to a Scottish court the wanted Libyan suspects who had allegedly plotted the Pan Am 103 attack, where one was convicted and one was acquitted. This occurred without any US concessions. Furthermore, in 1999, Libya's offers regarding its WMD were somewhat limited—a promise to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and to open up its facilities to inspectors. Libya also expressed a strong preference for a multilateral forum to discuss its WMD status, rather than bilateral talks with the United States or the United Kingdom. While these offers are important, they are insignificant compared to Libya's far-reaching, comprehensive WMD disarmament of 2003. Driving a hard bargain in 1999 successfully upped the ante: Libya realized that window-dressing counterproliferation promises would not suffice. The Clinton Administration's resolve not to concede in 1999 until the Pan Am 103 issues had been satisfactorily addressed prompted Libya to offer more comprehensive concessions regarding its WMD in 2003.

While US negotiators in 1999 might have felt conflicted about relinquishing the chance to facilitate Libyan disarmament, ultimately their fealty to the concerns of the Pan Am 103 families positioned the United States to achieve greater concessions from Qadhafi four years later. As the Libyan example suggests, US foreign policy goals involving negotiations can be both shaped and enhanced by attending to domestic interests.

### ***Implications for Policymakers***

Thus, three causal factors, usually under-acknowledged in assessments of Qadhafi's decisionmaking, together contributed to Qadhafi's WMD reversal. It is difficult to impute relative causation without full access to Libyan government documents. Yet, based on the available evidence, these factors must be considered in analyzing Qadhafi's reversal, along with the prevalent explanations focusing on the Iraq war's effect and Libya's economic motivations. These three causal factors loosely correlate with three different US foreign policy approaches that American officials mobilized to encourage Libya to disarm. First, US policymakers understood Libya's security calculations, es-

pecially its concern about al Qaeda. Second, they exploited Qadhafi's obsession with his reputation through "naming and shaming" techniques. Third, they allowed a domestic group's interests to enhance US negotiating positions with Libya.

Disaggregating the approaches that cumulatively led to Libya's reversal yields important implications for future US security policy toward rogue regimes possessing or attempting to acquire WMD. First, a security analysis suggests that Qadhafi conducted cost-benefit security calculations and concluded that destroying his WMD made security sense. Whether or not the US invasion of Iraq played a dominant role in his cost-benefit analysis, Qadhafi conceived of his WMD reversal as an act of realpolitik. Debating the efficacy of the punitive model of the Iraq war is fruitless, as it is highly unlikely that future US foreign policymakers will order military force against one rogue regime simply to threaten or scare another one into disarmament. Nonetheless, rogue regimes choosing to disarm after making serious security calculations might be motivated by multiple causes. These catalysts include fear of an attack by a threatening hegemon, a desire to advance unrelated security goals by bandwagoning, pursuit of revenue to buy conventional weapons, or a recognition that their WMD arsenals are relatively inferior and therefore will never sufficiently threaten their adversaries. Regardless of the specific incentive and the specific cost-benefit analysis of security gains, the bottom line remains: WMD disarmament can be security-enhancing in the eyes of a rogue state leader. Giving rogues security carrots to disarm, therefore, is a useful strategy. Moreover, US foreign policy decisionmakers need to take into account that rogues with WMD, such as Iran and North Korea, do actually conceive of their WMD arsenals in defensive security terms, even if their articulation of the threats they feel seem specious to an American audience.

Second, international institutions and regimes such as economic sanctions can exert nonmaterial as well as material incentives and pressures. Materially, economic sanctions work most effectively when they are truly multilateral. In the case of Libya, for more than 15 years United Nations sanctions received wide international backing. As a result, Libya needed to confront and conduct dialogue with a range of foreign countries in order to eliminate the sanctions. Sanctions and IAEA inspections that are respected by some great powers while halfheartedly regarded by others do little to influence rogue behavior. This lesson regarding the power of international consensus is critical to confronting Iran and North Korea.

In terms of nonmaterial incentives, the case of Libya suggests that the norms bound up in international institutions are sometimes ignored and at other times effective. On one hand, Libya's record of violating nonprolifera-

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***“Additional security imperatives beyond  
the Iraq war likely affected Libya’s  
decision to disarm.”***

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tion agreements suggests that US foreign policymakers should review the various international nonproliferation treaties and conventions such as the chemical and biological weapons conventions, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the Missile Technology Control Regime. Libya’s intent to acquire WMD materials in violation of its treaty obligations clearly demonstrates how counterproliferation regimes, especially treaties with few means of enforcement, can do little to stop rogues intent on abusing them. The fact that NPT signatories such as Libya are not only investing and dealing in nuclear materials on the international black market but also tend to lie about their WMD arsenal calls into question the efficacy of these treaties. Moreover, the debate among US policymakers and arms control experts regarding the uncertain size of Libya’s armament program raises concern about the intelligence community’s precise knowledge of the scope of rogue regimes’ WMD arsenals. Finally, the revelations by Libya about Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan’s extensive smuggling ring should serve as a warning to US foreign policymakers. Current counterproliferation mechanisms are insufficient. These regimes—as well as international inspections and intelligence gathering—need to be updated to reflect the new role of renegade actors willing to participate in WMD smuggling. These unitary actors, from disgruntled Russian scientists to high-level figures such as Khan, might smuggle or sell dangerous materials in spite of their country’s best intent to abide by international nonproliferation agreements.

On the other hand, international norms regarding WMD are important mechanisms, capable of encouraging rogues to disarm and to cooperate. Norms can both pressure rogue leaders to reform and provide a road map for rehabilitation. US policies aimed at isolating Libya, applied from the 1980s through 2003, successfully exploited Qadhafi’s concern for his international image. Placing Libya on the State Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism effectively constrained Qadhafi’s ambitions—not only due to the material consequences of being placed on this list but also because such overt censure undermined his global standing. Ultimately, US policies that publicly critique the nature of a regime—“naming and shaming” strategies—can

be effective, especially if the condemnation is accompanied by international consensus. Attacking a rogue state's reputation is likely to be less effective without such consensus.

Moreover, when Qadhafi finally did decide to disarm, the prevailing global denunciation of illegal WMD possession allowed him to pitch his 19 December 2003 decision as a positive, progressive act. In announcing his reversal, Qadhafi did not need to appear as if he was buckling under US pressure. Because of scant press coverage of the actual US-Libyan talks that preceded Qadhafi's December 2003 reversal, he was able to use the language of international norms to spin his WMD disarmament as a heroic act of international cooperation. The fact that Libya continues to preach to other developing world leaders about the "dangers" of nuclear and other nonconventional weapons reflects the strength of the normative international discourse impugning WMD acquisition.

Third, an analysis of domestic interests reveals the powerful influences of an organized domestic lobbying group concerned with one particular US foreign policy. The Pan Am 103 families unquestionably shaped the course of US-Libyan bilateral relations and the timeline for rapprochement. Although in the case of North Korea, Iran, and Syria, similar domestic groups do not exist, the lesson that domestic lobbies pose constraints is especially relevant after 9/11. A new, powerful domestic lobby—the 9/11 families—has already changed domestic law and is currently involved in lawsuits against Saudi Arabia and in other counter-terrorism lobbying activities. The victims of a tragedy wield effective influence in our foreign policy bureaucracy, particularly if they ally with powerful legislators. In confronting other rogues such as Iran, US foreign policymakers sometimes contend with the families of US victims of Hezbollah or the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. (Both groups receive Iranian backing.) Given the continuous nature of the war on terrorism, there will likely be more American victims. If a future attack is connected to Iran, or if North Korea is found selling WMD materials to al Qaeda operatives, domestic pressures to confront the threat of rogues and their arsenals will likely intensify.

Each of these causal factors influencing Qadhafi's decisionmaking has been loosely incorporated into a US foreign policy approach applied toward Libya over the past 15 years. In the short term, two specific, more immediate "triggers" probably contributed to the timing of Qadhafi's announcement. First, in early October 2003, the United States allegedly intercepted an illegal shipment of thousands of parts of uranium-enrichment equipment bound for Libya. While Libyan officials already had approached Bush Administration officials six months earlier about Qadhafi's intent to disarm, the seizure in early October likely sealed his decision to dismantle his nuclear weapons program. Being caught red-handed seemed to have expedited Qad-

hafi's willingness to disarm and might have hastened the 19 December 2003 announcement.<sup>39</sup> Second, Qadhafi's concern about his succession probably influenced the timing of his decision. By all accounts, Qadhafi is grooming his son, Saif al-Islam, to replace him. Saif al-Islam might have urged his father to issue the disarmament decision as soon as possible, as Saif al-Islam himself has been a strong proponent of dialogue with the United States and the West.

While the above triggers are notable, they expedited an already ongoing process. The gradual rehabilitation of Qadhafi resulted from varied, long-term US foreign policy approaches. Ultimately, there is no clear formula prescribing the rehabilitation of rogues or a clear roadmap to generate voluntary disarmament. The Libyan reversal suggests that US policymakers should be mindful to appeal to a diverse array of possible approaches as a necessary, though not sufficient, first step.

#### NOTES

The author thanks Richard K. Betts for his feedback in the preparation of this article.

1. David E. Sanger and Judith Miller, "Libya to Dismantle Arms Program, Bush Announces," *The New York Times*, 20 December 2003.

2. Lally Weymouth, "On Saddam, Lockerbie, Bin Laden and Peace: An Inclusive Interview with Muammar Gadhafi," *The Washington Post*, 12 January 2003, p. B1. Weymouth interview quoted in Yehudit Ronen, "Qadhafi's Christmas Gift: What's Behind Libya's Decision to Renounce WMD," *Tel Aviv Notes, Moshe Dayan Center*, No. 93 (December 2003), <http://www.dayan.org/commentary/TAUNotes931.pdf>.

3. Saif Aleslam al-Qadhafi, "Libyan-American Relations," *Middle East Policy*, 10 (Spring 2003), 35-44.

4. On 21 December 2003 British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw lauded Qadhafi's "huge statesmanship" in a speech on Libya's disarmament decision. See "Libya Spies' Secret Deal to Reveal Terrorists," *The Observer*, 21 December 2003. President George W. Bush praised Libya's change of heart in his State of the Union address on 20 January 2004. See George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address," 20 January 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040120-7.html>.

5. For examples of these widespread arguments, see Patrick E. Tyler, "Libyan Stagnation a Big Factor in Qaddafi Surprise," *The New York Times*, 7 January 2004; and Michael Gordon, "Giving Up Those Weapons: After Libya, Who Is Next?" *The New York Times*, 1 January 2004.

6. See conflicting testimonies at congressional hearings on Libyan WMD programs. For example, Ambassador Ronald Neumann, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, and John R. Bolton, Vice President, American Enterprise Institute, Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, "U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Libya," 4 May 2000.

7. Sharon A. Squassoni and Andrew Feickert, "CRS Report for Congress, Disarming Libya: Weapons of Mass Destruction," Congressional Research Service, 22 April 2004, p. 3. See also "Libya Submits Initial Chemical Weapons Declaration," OPCW Press Release, The Hague, The Netherlands, 5 March 2004, [http://www.opcw.org/html/global/press\\_releases/2k4/PR8\\_2004prt.html](http://www.opcw.org/html/global/press_releases/2k4/PR8_2004prt.html).

8. See UN document GOV/2004/12, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya," 20 February 2004.

9. Squassoni and Feickert, p. 4. See also "A. Q. Khan," *Global Security News*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/pakistan/khan.htm>.

10. See "Press Briefings by Senior Administration Officials," The White House Newsroom, 19 December 2003; and John R. Bolton, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Testimony, "The Bush Administration's Nonproliferation Policy: Successes and Future Challenges," 30 March 2004.

11. See Martin Indyk, "The Iraq War Did Not Force Gadhafi's Hand," *The Financial Times*, 9 March 2004; and Flynt Leverett, "Why Libya Gave Up on the Bomb," *The New York Times*, 23 January 2004, for the two most important personal accounts of Libya's overtures to US government officials in the 1990s.

12. Indyk.

13. Christopher Boucek, "Libya's Return to the Fold," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, April 2004, p. 2.

14. Patrick E. Tyler, "In Changed World, Qaddafi Is Changing, Too," *The New York Times*, 20 December 2001.



15. Ronald Bruce St. John, "New Era in American-Libyan Relations," *Middle East Policy*, 9 (September 2002), 85-93; and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. General Envisions Libya as Possible Ally," *The New York Times*, 27 March 2004, p. A7.

16. US Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism," 27 April 2005, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/45392.htm>.

17. See Yehudit Ronen, "Libya," in *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, ed. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman (Tel-Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center, 2000), p. 397, for the economic analysis of Libyan sanctions.

18. "Libyan, US Officials Discuss Development of Economic Ties," *Great Jamahiriya TV* (in Arabic, trans. by World News Connection), Tripoli, 3 June 2004; and "Interview: Libyan Parliament Secretary on Rapprochement With US," *Al-Majallah* (London-based Arabic language news, translated by World News Connection), London, 18 January 2004.

19. See Geoff D. Porter, "The Faulty Premise of Pre-emption," *The New York Times*, 31 July 2004, p. A1; and Patrick Tyler, "Libyan Stagnation a Big Factor in Qaddafi Surprise," *The New York Times*, 8 January 2004, p. A1.

20. See Qadhafi's, *Thus Spoke Colonel Moammar Kazzaf* (Beirut: Dar Alawda, 1974.), pp. 48-53.

21. "Qadhafi Says US should Adopt Libyan System; Speech Covers Zionism, Oil, Terrorism," *Great Jamahiriya TV*, Tripoli, Libya, 31 August 2004.

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23. For more information on the controversy surrounding Libya's selection to chair the 2003 UN Commission on Human Rights, see Human Rights Watch, press release, "Protesting Libya's Nomination to the UN Commission on Human Rights," 17 January 2003, <http://www.hrw.org/update/2002/09.html#11>.

24. "Libya Country Report," *Economic Intelligence Indicator*, February 2005.

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26. See George W. Bush, "Message to the Congress of the United States," 20 September 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040920-6.html>.

27. Official US policy as articulated by the Department of State in November 2005 declares that "certain export controls remain in place and Libya remains on the state sponsors of terrorism list." See US Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, "Background Notes: Libya," November 2005, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5425.htm>.

28. "Communique of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya," appended to the "Letter from the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council," 19 December 2003, UN Doc S/2003/1196.

29. "Libya Insulted by U.S. Display of Recovered Nuclear Materials, Official Says," Reuters, 17 March 2004. Interestingly, the US State Department was sensitive to Libya's image concerns.

30. "EU/Libya: Ghaddafi Visits Brussels In Tripoli's Latest Step Coming In From The Cold," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 27 April 2004.

31. Robert Putnam first articulated this "two-level game" in "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games," *International Organization*, 42 (July 1988), 427-60.

32. Thirteen years later, the families of the 9/11 victims would follow the lead of the Pan Am 103 families, this time attracting a great deal of press coverage. The 9/11 families' efforts spawned large-scale changes in US policy, not only in countering terrorism at home and abroad but also in restructuring the US government. Both the authorizing legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security in 2002 and the bill establishing a Cabinet-level director of national intelligence to oversee all intelligence agencies in 2004 resulted from 9/11 family members' lobbying efforts.

33. See UN Security Council Resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992), and 883 (1993) at <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1992/scres92.htm>.

34. Gary Hart, "My Secret Talks with Libya, and Why They Went Nowhere," *The Washington Post*, 18 January 2004, p. B5.

35. President Bill Clinton, "Text of a Letter from the President to the Speaker of The House of Representatives and the President of the Senate," 31 December 1998, from the Bill Clinton Foundation's foreign policy papers, <http://www.clintonfoundation.org/legacy/123198-presidential-letter-to-congress-on-libya.htm>.

36. Leverett.

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38. Ibid.

39. "U.S. Nabbed Libya Nuke Parts," Associated Press, 1 January 2004.