

“Cherry-Picked” Humanitarian Interventions: A Complexity Approach to Explaining Libya 2011



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Libya and the Arab Spring



Overview of International Response to Libya

- **February 22:** UN Security Council condemns violence in Libya and expresses “grave concern” over crackdown
- **February 26:** Resolution 1970 passed by UN Security Council
 - Referral to ICC, arms embargo, sanctions, travel ban, humanitarian assistance, further review of situation
- **March 12:** Arab League call for a no-fly zone
- **March 17:** Resolution 1973 passed by UN Security Council
 - Imposes “no-fly zone” over Libya, authorizes Member States to take “all necessary measures” to protect civilians
- **March 18:** coalition of international forces enter Libya

Research Puzzle

- Long history of selectivity in military humanitarian interventions
- Libya intervention
 - Resolution 1973 passed only one month after the outbreak of violence, with multilateral support
 - Why Libya and not Rwanda, Darfur, Congo, Syria?



Research Question

Given the selectivity of military humanitarian interventions in the post-Cold War era, what explains the swift and multilateral intervention in Libya in March 2011?



Intellectual Context

Theory	Explanation for Humanitarian Intervention
Rationalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-National security, economic, geostrategic interests- States are “black boxes”; unitary actors in the international community
Republican Liberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Domestic factors – non-state actors (i.e. NGOs)-Media influence (CNN Effect)- State legislatures
Constructivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-International norms-Responsibility to Protect Doctrine

Combined Theoretical Approaches towards Explaining Humanitarian Intervention

- Soderlund et al., 2008
 - Variables measured: media influence, public opinion, severity of crisis, pre-intervention “assessment of risk,” national interest
 - Conclusion: media coverage can tip balance in situations of indecision, but is not a determining factor in itself; a “interactive and complicated” relationship exists between variables
- Elbrich Algra, 2010
 - Variables measured: geostrategic interests, economic interests, media coverage, Congressional support, public opinion, international norm of humanitarian intervention
 - Conclusion: Geostrategic interests and Congressional support are most influential variables in United States’ interventions; the international norm of humanitarian intervention is weak and intervention in future crises is unlikely

So What? Why should we care?

- Implications for the international legal order
 - Lives at stake in current and future crises
 - Legitimacy of international law and the human rights regime
 - Selective enforcement undermines effectiveness of the international order



Why Study Libya?

- Practical Significance
 - Recent event
 - Outlier in terms of current theory
 - First case of humanitarian intervention after adoption of R2P at World Summit in 2005
 - Unprecedented multilateral support
 - Speed at which international action was taken



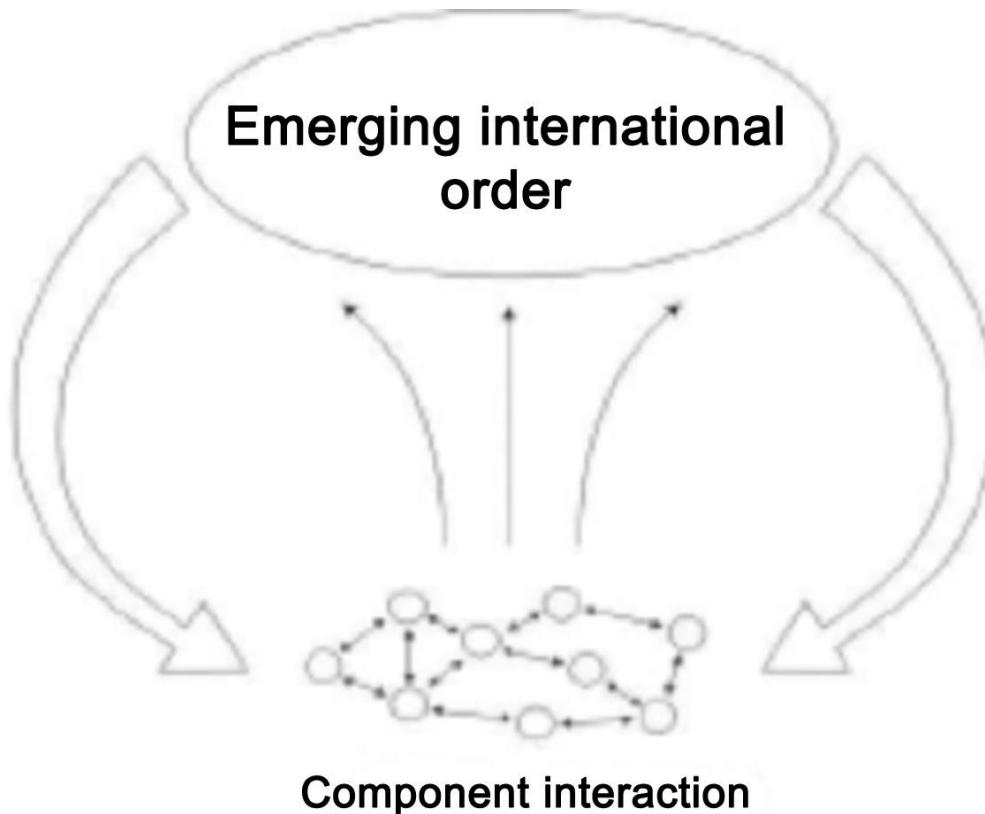
My Argument

A holistic and accurate understanding of why the international community intervened in Libya in 2011 can only be obtained through the adoption of a complexity approach to the study of international politics.

What is complexity theory?

- “An interdisciplinary field of research that seeks to explain how large numbers of relatively simple entities organize themselves without the benefit of any central controller into a collective whole that creates patterns, uses information, and in some cases, evolves and learns.” – Melanie Mitchell, *Complexity: A Guided Tour*
- Complexity theory in International Relations
- Complex systems
 - Self-organization
 - Non-linearity
 - Emergence

Emergence in Complexity Theory



Adapted from: R. Lewin, *Complexity: Life at the Edge of Chaos* (New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing Company), 1992.

A Complexity Model for Libya

John Holland, *Hidden Order* (1995)

Properties and Mechanisms of Complex Adaptive Systems	Explanation
Aggregation	The capacity for individual units to interact in a recurring pattern to accomplish a shared goal
Non-linearity	The condition in which small changes in a system's performance over time produce large differences in outcome. Reflects the shift in energy and action within the component units of the system toward accomplishing a shared goal.
Flow	The current of actions, materials, ideas, and people through a common arena that energizes interaction among the individual units.
Diversity	Specific types of individuals or units may respond differently to the same events in the flow of ideas and actions, and interact accordingly to generate new flow among the components.
Tagging	Facilitates the process of matching a unit seeking assistance with a unit providing assistance.
Internal Model	The set of shared assumptions upon which reciprocal actions among components of the system are based.
Building Blocks	Elemental units of performance that are used in creating a complex set of recurring interactions, such as communicative acts.

Research Design

- Methods
 - Single case-study approach
 - Process tracing
 - Counterfactual analysis
- Sources
 - Primary: newspaper articles, lectures, UN meeting transcripts, interviews
 - Secondary: journal articles, NGO and human rights reports

Two Major Findings

- 4 emergences of unique international orders
 - Significantly narrowed the path of available options, and drove the international community towards a military intervention
 - Occurred chronologically; each builds upon the next
- 5 essential system variables
 - Catalyzed emergences

Findings

Variables	Emergences
1. Qaddafi's threatening rhetoric	I. A change in discourse
2. The defection of members of the Libyan regime	II. Shift from rhetoric to action
3. Arab League and regional support for a no-fly zone	III. The crystallization of an international order for military intervention
4. Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice, and Samantha Power as key individuals	IV. A deadline for action
5. Qaddafi forces' imminent siege on Benghazi	

Emergence I

A Change in Discourse

- Loss of rational opponent – diplomatic negotiation is less plausible
- More moderate reactions are ruled out and support of regime is unacceptable
- Result: actors step up condemnation against regime, speaking out against Qaddafi specifically and not just the “violent situation”



Emergency II

Shift from Rhetoric to Action

- Action and not just talk is needed
- Condemnation of Qaddafi is not a sufficient enough response
- UN resolution needed to enforce tangible limits to Qaddafi's power
- Result: Libya kicked out of Human Rights Council and Arab League; Resolution 1970 unanimously adopted by the Security Council



Emergency III

Crystallization of an International Order for Military Intervention

- Military action is needed to halt atrocities
- Multilateralism is present, creating the opportunity for the international community to act together to stop the ongoing crisis
- Result: Security Council convenes on draft resolutions for military intervention



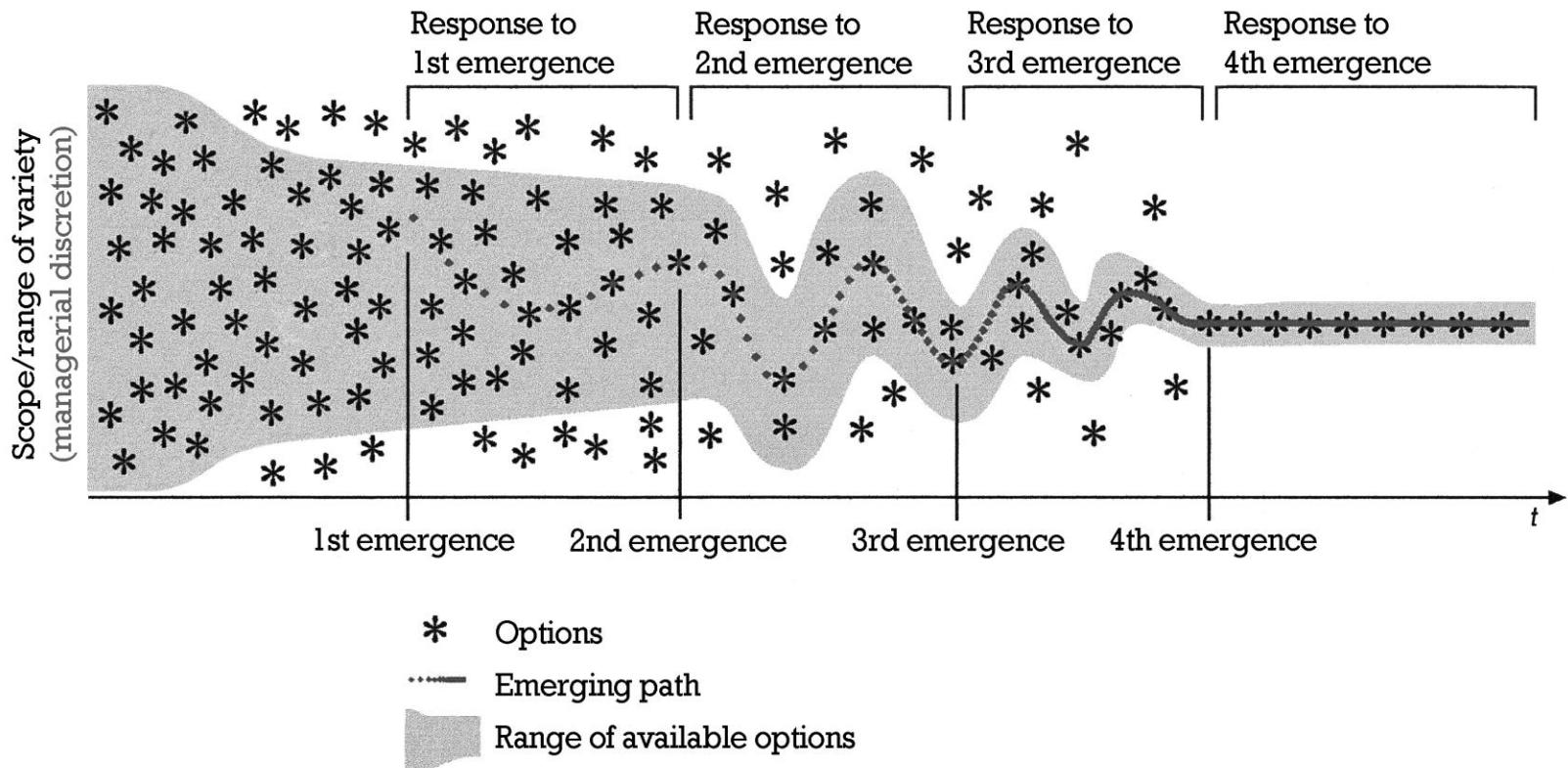
Emergency VI

A Deadline for Action

- Catastrophe is imminent but preventable
- Time to act is now or never
- Military action is the only viable option left
- Result: adoption of Resolution 1973



The International Community's Path to Military Intervention in Libya 2011



Adapted from: Jörg Sydow, Georg Schreyögg, and Jochen Koch. "Organizational Path Dependence: Opening the Black Box," *Academy of Management Review* 34, no. 4 (2009): 689-709, 692.

Broader Implications

- Implications for:
 - Theory
 - Methods
 - Policy

Moving Forward

- Future Research
 - Cross-case comparison
 - History and timing in humanitarian interventions

