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Was the UN-mandated, NATO-led operation in Libya a step forward or a setback for the norm? What implications - positive and/or negative - does the Libya operation carry for RtoP moving forward?

The operation in Libya was most definitely a step forward for RtoP, in that it allowed for the framework to be followed in a very clear example of multilateral military action taken as a last resort and for the purpose of protecting civilians. However, it isn't that simple. First, it is questionable whether the protection of civilians was the foremost concern of NATO, which appeared focused on regime change. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it demonstrated a real risk with a military intervention without civil society support or a civilian plan to allow for a safer society once the hostilities were over. The Libyan example shows us how crucially necessary it is to engage democracy-building and rights-related organizations with expertise and ability to provide support for the state being "liberated".

In states that have lived under dictatorship for decades, there is very little civil society to step in and begin rebuilding a just society. The reality is that in much of the world, the groups who are the most organized and ready to seize power are radical religious groups whose power poses a real risk to not only the population, but global security generally. Thus, we must learn from the Libyan experience that not only must military action be a last resort, but we must consider a step even further, which is the rebuilding of the broken society.