

On the Great Power Intervention in the Middle East Upheaval and Political Trend in the Middle East

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Abstract: *During the political upheaval in the Middle East in 2011, the Western countries adopted a policy focusing on both military intervention and the so-called “humanitarian interference” in the Middle East countries. Europe, the US and other Western powers distorted the “legitimacy” authorized by the UN and took military means to impose regime change in Libya, seriously disrupting the order of international relations. Their intervention efforts in this have far exceeded the ones before the Cold War. In the Intervention, they tried to secure legalization of their intervention, to take collective intervention, as well as nurture and support the country’s opposition parties to cause the “civil war” approach as the model of intervention. Their intervention has been blatant, fraudulent, hidden, and mandatory. From the development trend, because of the importance of the geopolitical position and strategic energy position of the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Western powers’ pursuit of global*

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geopolitical interests, the Western powers' intervention in the Middle East and North Africa will continue. These countries will still be faced with the historical responsibility to oppose power intervention. Their self-development and ability to maintain their own security will continue to face serious challenges.

Key Words: *Forms of Intervention; Military Intervention; Humanitarian Intervention; Middle East Politics*

The modern Middle East and North African (MENA) countries have struggled to get rid of foreign aggression and intervention for more than half a century. However, they are still struggling to jettison outside interference. Western powers have intervened in the affairs of the MENA for a long time, and there are two main forms of intervention: military intervention and "humanitarian intervention." During the political upheaval in the Middle East in 2011, the Western countries adopted a policy focusing on both military intervention and the so-called "humanitarian interference" in the Middle East countries. Their intervention efforts in this have gone even farther than those used during the Cold War.

I. The Main Form of Western Interventions

Since the end of the cold war, the international balance of power has changed in favor of the Western countries. In this context, Western interventions in the Middle East countries became frequent. Over ten years ago, the U.S. launched the war in Afghanistan. Ten years ago, the U.S. and Britain started a war in Iraq. In 2011, in the war in Libya launched by NATO, "humanitarian intervention" was used as an excuse. And under the cloak of legitimacy, the military means were

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taken to impose regime change in Libya. The intervention efforts in this have even far exceeded those during the Cold War.

(A) Western countries to seek the legality of the intervention

Whether to undertake military intervention or the so-called “humanitarian” intervention in the political upheaval in the MENA, the U.S. and other Western countries paid much attention to obtaining an internationally recognized legitimacy. The legitimacy was mainly derived from the mandate of the United Nations (U.N.) and the relevant provisions in international law.

Given the lesson learned from the war in Iraq, which lacks legitimacy due to absence of the UN authorization, the U.S. and the Western powers were desperately seeking legitimacy for military action in Libya in the 2011. They paid attention and acted within the framework of the U.N., lobbying Russia and China to support the Libya intervention and pushing the resolution involving Libya to ultimately pass at the Council. And thus they obtained the legality of the use of force against Libya. When the U.N. Security Council passed resolutions 1970 and 1973, the West instantly used the banner of the U.N. Security Council to establish the “no-fly zone” over Libya to “protect civilians”, in the name of the “responsibility to protect”. On March 19, France deployed the first fighter to conduct the air strike code-named “Odyssey Dawn” on Libya, which was the prelude to the Western countries’ military intervention in Libya. Air strikes against Libya, in other words, were the means of war. The West has repeatedly stressed on the legitimacy of their military strikes, saying it was implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1973. Through their outcry, the military strikes against Libya seemed to really have some kind of “legitimacy” in appearance. From the specific content of the Security Council Resolution 1973, we could not find any words to

explicitly “authorize the use of force against Libya”. The text of the resolution pointed out that the no-fly zone was set in order to protect the civilians. The so-called wording to authorize the related member states to “take all necessary measures” cannot be interpreted as “authorizing the use of force” (Li, B., 2011).

About the legality of the UN authorization, does resolution 1973 allow intervention including force? In this regard, the international community has different interpretations. Vitaly Churkin, Russia’s Permanent Representative to the U.N., said, “Resolution 1973 is not the legitimate authorization to use force. The military actions of the Western coalition against Libya have been completely beyond the U.N. mandate, which is challenge to the authority of the U.N.” A Russian scholar pointed out: “The ‘humanitarian’ interference of the coalition in Libya is in fact not different from war.” (*Russian Independent*, 2011: March 8). The U.S. and Western military action in Libya constitutes a severe test of the current system of international relations. Forcing regime change in other countries is extremely prominent in the military intervention in Libya. The war in Libya is a typical case of the new Western interference doctrine, and of forcing regime change in other countries. However, this is never the intention of the U.N., but the wanton distortion of the intention of the U.N. resolutions by European and American powers.

Since the U.S. and the Western powers succeeded in the intervention in the internal affairs of Libya to overthrow the Gaddafi regime, they wished to copy the “Libya model” to Syria. On October 4, 2011 and February 4, 2012, twice they tried to pass the draft resolution in the UN Security Council to intervene in Syria’s internal affairs. In view of the painful lessons of the authorization of the U.N. on the military intervention in Libya, China and Russia twice vetoed the draft,

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which effectively prevented the Western countries from continuing to interfere in other countries' internal affairs and sovereignty and avoided the Security Council resolutions being misinterpreted, distorted or abused. Then the West immediately turned to get the draft resolution of the same content to the UN General Assembly to be voted on and passed, which of course, had no legal effect. Subsequently, the West submitted a resolution condemning the Syrian government for civilian repression in the UN Human Rights Council to impose severe political and public pressure on the Syrian government. All in all, a series of practices by the West were designed to seek international legitimacy for the use of force against Syria. After vetoing twice the Security Council draft resolution, on July 19, 2012, China and Russia again used their veto power to reject a draft resolution that the United Kingdom submitted to the Council to take sanctions against Syrian President Bashar Assad, which is the third veto from China and Russia in nine months to reject a draft resolution on the Syrian issue. This has played a decisive role in opposing the West's attempt to use force against Syria.

In addition, the U.S. and the West also paid attention to gain the legality recognized by the countries in the region, fighting for the support of the Arab League for Western military intervention. Qatar as an Arab brother actually sent aircraft to participate in the combat against Libya, and allowed the Libyan opposition radio station to broadcast from its territory.

The duration of the so-called "humanitarian" intervention against Libya coincided closely with the time when Bahrain suppressed people's protests. From the "dual attitude" of the U.S. and the Western powers towards large-scale political unrest of the same nature in Libya and Bahrain, it is not difficult to conclude that the U.S. based on its

own interests, implemented the so-called “humanitarian intervention”. So serious doubts about the impartiality of such interference have been raised internationally, for the interference acts clearly serve the geopolitical objectives of the U.S. and the Western powers.

(B) The U.S. volunteered to waive the “leadership” to command behind the scene

After “the multinational mass political unrest” happened in the MENA in 2011, the US-led Western countries have pushed and directed the intervention. Due to the relative decline of America’s power, it participated in the interventions, but did not take the lead. Instead France played the leadership role and assumed the role of “leadership” on behalf of Europe, in order to achieve great matters with the least soldiers and less spending, to steer away from risks in order to avoid an outcome like the one in the Afghanistan quagmire. Regarding military operations in the Libyan civil war, Obama has repeatedly said that the U.S. should play a “key auxiliary role”. From the outset, he clearly determined on “never taking the lead” and “limited intervention” strategy. He also said that the US would not send ground forces, and emphasized the shared responsibility of the allies in joint military intervention. The US provided intelligence and weapons support, while France and Britain fought tooth and nail.

As we all know, at first it was the US government that made the decision to use force against Libya, but it tried to play down its role in the conflict. In the beginning, a series of war-related issues were pending, because the war decision was hastily made by the Libyan opposition in the face of being wiped out by Qaddafi troops (Russian *Independent*, 2011: March 8). The depth of US intervention against Libya is thus evident. In the military intervention against Libya, the US has changed the mode of intervention in the past and stopped

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being alone in decision-making, acting, footing the bill, and enjoying the exclusive intervention “bonus”. In fact, the US was not really out of the leadership, but handed over the initiative to France, Britain and other European countries, calling it a “limited intervention”. When France, Britain and other European countries took actions, they all got the acquiescence and support of the US. Indeed they cooperated with each other well, and the US was actually playing a role behind the scene.

In dealing with Libya, the Obama administration highlighted the effectiveness of “multilateral cooperation”, allowing allies and partners to play a greater role, while turning NATO into a tool to implement neo-interventionism. This should be considered a significant achievement of Obama’s foreign policy. In this mode of intervention, the US paid the least cost of intervention, only spending \$1 billion, while in the war of Iraq and the war in Afghanistan, the total cost of the US was up to \$1.3 trillion.

In Syria, the US claims to adopt a “never-take-the-lead” strategy, highlighting the need for multilateral cooperation, that is to make France and Britain the leader, the main force and the vanguard. The practice of the US is mainly reflected in “using pressure to achieve change”, imposing comprehensive blockade and siege on Syria. On the one hand, it implemented comprehensive sanctions of trade, oil and weapons, and constantly increased the intensity of sanctions to weaken the strength of Bashar. On the other hand, it denied the legitimacy of the regime of Bashar al-Assad politically, imposed diplomatic isolation of Bashar, withdrew its ambassador to Syria, as well as maliciously smeared, vilified and bad-mouthed the government of Bashar al-Assad in public opinion. It attacked the Syrian government with strong public condemnation and deliberately

rumored that the Syrian government was “killing massively” with a lack of evidence, distorting the truth and damaging the international image of the government of Bashar al-Assad. Meanwhile, it chose not to report the truth about the opposition’s abuses.

(C) Support and foster the opposition of the country involved to create an intervention model featuring “civil war”

During the dramatic changes in the MENA, the West has made a great effort in arming the opposition in Libya and Syria, highlighting its intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. The West has been involved in fostering opposition forces, trying to integrate the opposition and transforming them into military forces able to confront the government and carry out anti-government struggles. In military strikes against Libya, although the Libyan opposition forces had already existed, they were weak and divided, and could not afford to compete with Qaddafi regime. Regardless of the norms of international relations, the West helped the Libyan opposition to quickly set up a provisional government, i.e. the Libyan National Transitional Council in the second largest city Benghazi at all costs to rival Gaddafi regime. Then it proceeded to send military advisers, weapons, communication technology equipment and supplies, intelligence support, and assistance to the Libyan opposition. It helped the armed opposition grow from small to large, from weak to strong, and break the lines of defense of the Qaddafi government forces one by one, finally occupying Tripoli and achieving regime change in Libya.

In the Iraq war, activities to foster Kurdish anti-government forces had also been implemented. Since the success of the intervention in Libya’s internal affairs, the Western powers tried to copy this model to Syria with the same practices. They helped legalize the status of the

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opposition in Syria. On February 24, 2012, more than 60 countries and international organizations, including the U.S., France, Germany, Turkey as well as the E.U., the Arab League, the African Union and the U.N., held the “Friends of Syria” international conference in Tunis, integrating a large number of Syrian opposition forces to recognize the largest opposition “Syrian National Council” to be the representative of Syria. They agreed to increase assistance to the opposition and called for unity of the opposition to end the rule of Bashar regime. The West also sought to arm the Syrian opposition “Free Syrian Army”. It is reported that the Free Syrian Army has obtained weaponry from the U.S., France and other Western countries, and even mastered the anti-aircraft missiles and other advanced weapons.

“Friends of Syria” international conference was also a contact group of countries and international institutions dominated by the West. The U.S. and some Western countries used the meeting to promote the process of “overthrowing Syrian authority”. Since February 2012, the “Friends of Syria” have met five times. ^① On July 6, 2012, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton participated in the third meeting of the meeting held in Paris by France. Hillary Clinton and French President Hollande echoed each other to openly require Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step down. The frequency of interventions in Syrian affairs can be described as intensive. The fifth international conference of the “Friends of Syria” was held in the Italian capital Rome on February 28, 2013, US Secretary of State Warren said at the meeting, the U.S. will provides the Syrian armed opposition battling with the Syrian army with “non-lethal assistance,”

^① The first meeting of the Friends of Syria was held on February 24, 2012, in Tunis, the second on April 1, 2012, held in Turkey, the third on July 6, 2012 in France, the fourth on December 13, 2012, held in Morocco, the fifth on February 28, 2013 in Italy.

including food and medical supplies valued at \$60 million. While the \$60 million in aid does not include weapons, this support is undoubtedly helping the Syrian opposition. So far, the US has provided \$385 million in “humanitarian” assistance to the Syrian opposition.

(D) Collective intervention

For the international community, the legitimate international intervention is needed. “Under normal circumstances, international intervention would damage national sovereignty, but international intervention is not necessarily bound to undermine national sovereignty. Considered from the point of view of the maintenance of international peace and security, moderate international intervention is sometimes indispensable. The collective security system of the UN has not ruled out international intervention, since the vast majority of the world’s countries are member states of the UN. Therefore, in order to eliminate the factors that endanger international peace and security, international intervention is sometimes difficult to avoid.” (Qi, S., 2012). International intervention under the collective security system, In fact, can also be understood as a collective act of self-defense, namely the irrelevant states collectively come forward to restore the peace and security of the international community. The most typical example in this regard is undoubtedly the 1991 Gulf War.

Since the end of the Cold War, international intervention, as a violation of international norms and enforcement action against the government or rebellion that disobeys the will of the international community, has increasingly been advocated by the West governments as an important means to avoid confusion and loss of control as well as to ensure collective security. And thus, international intervention has become an increasingly important phenomenon in

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international relations. In this case, even legal intervention by the UN or authorized by the UN, would inevitably interfere with disputes that are essentially within a sovereign state (Pu, P., 2000: 39).

The Gulf War is a recognized successful international intervention. It was undertaken within the framework of the Security Council. Troops were sent by dozens of countries to take military action against Iraq, which had invaded Kuwait. It is a collective self-defense established within the security system stipulated by the Charter of the UN. The outcome of the Gulf War was that Iraq was expelled from Kuwait and Kuwait's independence and sovereignty were restored (Qi, S., 2012). It can be concluded that moderate international interventions are necessary, and in accordance with international law. If there is no international intervention that constitutes the necessary constraints of national sovereignty, the sovereignty of each sovereign state will actually be faced with some potential security risks. However, regarding the Gulf War, what was hidden beneath the intervention of Western countries in the sovereignty of the weaker countries was their hegemonic agenda to change the Iraqi regime.

With regard to the Syrian crisis, some were adding fuel to the fire while some were pouring oil. In the political unrest in the Arab countries, the Western-led NATO and other international organizations became the main actors of international intervention. Collective interventions using the UN or in the name of the UN have become the main form, including economic sanctions, political pressure, military strikes and other means. On December 4, 2012, NATO decided to deploy Patriot anti-missile systems in Turkey, allegedly to prevent Syria from using chemical weapons and other extreme measures to fight back. On February 26, 2013, six sets of

anti-missile systems were deployed.^① NATO stressed that the move was only for defense, but Russia, Syria and Iran strongly accused the deployment as leading to regional instability. Facts have proved that since the “Patriot” came, the changed situation in northern Syria was not conducive to Syria.

The prevalence of the Western “neo-interventionism” in recent years is the abuse of international intervention and in essence, the proof of hegemony of the West with the view that the West was stronger than the East and the North was stronger than the South after the end of the Cold War. It is not accidental that neo-interventionism was recklessly abused in the Middle East. It was the result of the international imbalance of power after the end of the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US economic and military strength was unmatched. Therefore, in international affairs there has been a lack of effective counter and coercive power, thus contributing to its hegemony momentum.

II. Different Outcomes of Interventions

Non-interference in the internal affairs is the principle of basic internationally recognized norms of international law today. The principle of non-interference has become the code of conduct of international relations. However, in the upheavals of the Arab countries, “the defects of the foundation upon which international intervention exists - the system of collective security, have made international interventions easily manipulated by big countries and became an excuse for the big countries to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.” (Pu, P., 2000: 39). The degree of intervention

^① Two sets each from the Netherlands, the United States and Germany.

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of the US and the Western powers has determined the consequences of the intervention.

(A) The consequences of great power intervention

Western countries distorted the “legitimacy” authorized by the U.N. to take military means to impose regime change in Libya, seriously disrupting the existing order of international relations. Their intervention efforts in this have even far exceeded those during the Cold War. In the Arab political unrest in 2011, the downfall of four Arab regimes, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen demonstrated that international interventions now, compared to those in the past, no longer cling to the old form but have used a new guise. For example, there has been forceful external military intervention, namely the war mode, such as the military intervention in Libya by the West, which ultimately led to the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime. There has been those in power forced to hand over power and step down under pressure of the wave of protests, such as Mubarak who was forced to resign (Egypt mode). There has been peaceful settlement of the president stepping down, such as Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh who reached a compromise with the opposition in the intervention of the US and achieved a peaceful handover of power as well as a “decent” step down (Yemen mode). There have been supportive troops sent by the foreign countries in the region (Bahrain mode). There have also been countries that were imposed on pressure and about to change, such as intervention of the West in Syria with economic sanctions, political pressure and other means. It is not hard to see how, the effect of a violent political transition in which the current rulers stepping down was a precondition is not good. In the countries with the fall of the regime, the degree of the US-led Western interventions have different depth, intensity, strength and means.

Therefore the results are very different.

Since the end of the Second World War, the international community has put particular emphasis on a principle in dealing with international crises, which is to seek a political solution to regional disputes. Only when peaceful means run out can the Security Council authorize the use of force. Clearly, on the Libya issue, the international community did not try to solve the problem through peaceful means.

Since February 15, 2011, when large-scale demonstrations broke out in several cities in Libya, including the capital Tripoli, the U.S., Britain, France, and the EU broke off diplomatic relations with the Qaddafi government immediately. After that, they vigorously promoted the UN Security Council to adopt Resolution 1973 to impose sanctions on Libya and establish the “no-fly zone” in Libya. Until the fall of the Qaddafi, throughout the process, the US and the Western powers had played a decisive role. NATO’s full support of politics, economics and military for opposition, its direct participation in the war of Libya and its indiscriminate bombing against Qaddafi and his army destroyed the effective strength and morale of Qaddafi, providing critical guarantee for the final victory of the Libyan opposition (and later the transitional government). Accordingly, we can clearly see that the final collapse of the Qaddafi government was under the direct military intervention of NATO.

The blatant military interventions of Europe and the US against Libya were fraudulent, disguised and coercive. They did not care whether or not the country could accept this. Reflected by the war in Libya is that Europe and the US have updated the mode of military intervention in the internal affairs of the weak sovereign states, which directly affected the development and direction of the Libyan politics and started the track of Europe and the US changing other country’s

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regime, as well as the political future and processes with a direct means of warfare in post-Cold War era.

Power intervention refers to coercive forms of intervention. The intervention of the West in Libya is a power intervention, a coercive behavior that big countries bully a small country. Since 9/11 event, international interventions have had an increasingly evident feature of institutionalizing “humanitarian intervention”. Well-intentioned interventions and ill-intentioned interventions started to mix and intertwine. Even if it was an ill-intentioned intervention, in general, it would still be claimed to be a well-intentioned intervention and carried out under such name. Or, some of the opposition forces would be mustered, the goals of which “coincides” with hegemonic intentions, so that the hegemony can intervene in the situation under the banner of “human rights”, which to a large extent, has increased the difficulty of developing countries to fight against ill-intentioned interventions.

The power interventions of the US and other Western countries against Libya can also be shown in economics. “Libya’s overseas huge assets would be frozen to purchase military supplies for the opposition, which easily put financial power into a political force.” (Xiu, J., 2012: January 14). The abuse of international interventions by the Western countries is essentially a disguised manifestation of hegemony.

What the Libyan war wrote in the history of international relations today is much more than “a dictator overthrown by the joint force from inside and outside”, but the advent of a new international intervention model. In fact, since the first Gulf War in 1991, under the banner of the “responsibility to protect” and “humanitarian intervention”, the Western countries have been groping after the new

intervention model through practices. This model is to use the internal unrest of the sovereign state as the opportunity, to support the rebels as a cover, to use the U.N. resolution as a guise, to deploy aerial bombardment as a means, and to take “protecting civilians” as a moral excuse, so as to reach the goal of overthrowing a government. This new mode of intervention began in Iraq and Kosovo, but it will not end in Libya (Zhang, R., 2011: August 23). There is no doubt that the neo-interventionism has constituted a great threat to the security and sovereignty of countries in the Middle East. The so-called “humanitarian intervention” has nothing to do with humanity, such as the NATO bombing of Libya that resulted in a large number of civilian casualties.

Before the international community took the intervention mechanism as an integral part of a formal judicial system, the neo-interventionism is neither established on the basis of the law nor established on the basis of justice, but rather based on power. It is how few hegemonic countries legitimize their implementation of hegemonic behavior under the guise of legalism. It is a hegemony scheme under the guise of “human rights”, and has become the main threat to the world peace and international order at the beginning of the 21st century (Wu, F., 2010: March). After the end of the Cold War, all wars in the Middle East (the Gulf War, the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, the war in Libya) have all severely damaged the stability of the international system, and the Western powers all used military power as the means of intervention. “Neo-interventionism” is a concentrated expression of hegemonism and power politics. It is flagrant denial and confrontation against internationally recognized basic principles in international relations and the Charter of the UN. It is prominently aggressive, and is a serious threat to world peace.

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(B) Interventions of well intention and of peaceful means

“International intervention is a common phenomenon in international relations. In the era of economic globalization, reasonable international interventions by the UN and other international organizations are a necessary measure for the international community to coordinate the contradictions and show justice.” (Pu, P., 2000). Since the end of the Cold War, the frequency of international interventions carried out by international organizations has greatly improved. There is a clear distinction between intervention and interference. There are “power interventions” and “well-intentioned interventions”. Power intervention is an act of interference, and international interventions carried out by international organizations should be well-intentioned interventions, such as the Annan mediation principles of the Syria crisis. These well-intentioned interventions are necessary.

When the West and some Arab countries’ plan to overthrow the regime of Bashar Assad was thwarted, on February 23, 2012, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan became the Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the Arab League to mediate the Syrian crisis. On March 16, Annan proposed a “six-point peace plan” to resolve the crisis in Syria. After difficult mediation between the parties, the plan soon got a positive response from all parties. On March 21, the UN Security Council adopted a presidential statement to express unanimous agreement on Annan’s “six-point peace plan”^① and ask the Syrian

^① The Six-point Plan includes: commit to work with the Envoy in an inclusive Syrian-led political process, commit to stop the fighting and achieve urgently an effective United Nations supervised cessation of armed violence, ensure timely provision of humanitarian assistance to all areas affected by the fighting, and to this end, as immediate steps, to accept and implement a daily two hour humanitarian pause, intensify the pace and scale of release of arbitrarily detained persons, ensure freedom of movement throughout the country for journalists and respect the right to demonstrate peacefully as legally guaranteed.

government and the opposition to stop all acts of violence under the supervision of the UN, which provided a strong backing for Annan's mediation. On March 27, the Syrian government sent a letter to Annan, which expressed its willingness to accept his proposed "six-point peace plan". The Syrian opposition also accepted it, which made a political solution to the Syrian crisis possible. On April 12, all parties in Syria started to announce cease-fire. The situation in Syria seemed to be on the verge of a political solution.

On April 21, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2043 and decided to establish the UN Supervision Mission in Syria. Then the UN immediately sent 300 members of the international observation mission, responsible for overseeing the implementation of the ceasefire and cessation of violence. Annan's peace effort, however, was soon faced with severe challenges. Only after a few days of the cease-fire, the violation of the ceasefire commitments started to occur frequently and kept expanding. Especially since the Hula massacre occurred on May 25, the situation had deteriorated further. A series of incidents since the Hula massacre showed that the efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis within the framework of the UN had basically failed.

The intervention of the international community in Libya and Syria were the results of various objectives, some malicious, and some well-intentioned. Some intended to maliciously subvert the Arab regimes, and some tried to maintain the sovereignty of Arab States. China and Russia vetoed draft resolutions on Syria at the UN Security Council for three times, and did not agree with the external forces' military intervention in a sovereign state or regime change of another country. This resolute attitude stopped the West from trying to copy the Libya mode or Yemen mode in Syria, as well as opened a "window of opportunity for reconciliation" for the Syrian crisis to

reach a political solution.

The use of force against Syria also faced the challenges of timing and legitimacy. For the US, an election year was just around the corner. Wearing the aura of the Nobel Peace Prize, President Obama was seeking re-election and could not manage other things, while the US was also involved in three exhausting wars. The US and Europe are facing a severe economic crisis, as well as the constraints of the internal crisis of serious social unrest. The US will also need to transfer its strategic focus to the Asia-Pacific. All this has made it lack obvious enthusiasm about the use of force against Syria. Britain, France and other countries do not want to send peacekeeping troops to Syria in order to copy the "Libya model" there. They want to push the Syrian opposition to the front, but the Syrian opposition force is extremely limited. The Syrian crisis has then come to a deadlock.

III. Interventions of the West and the Future Political Trend

A lot of countries have been affected by the turmoil in the MENA under the intervention of the West. This is the intervention with the greatest range and depth since the 1990s. Facing strong Western intervention, the MENA to defend national sovereignty was exposed to an unprecedented challenge and the lingering Western colonialism. The following judgment can be made about the future situation in the Middle East.

(A) External forces will continue to interfere with the unstable Arab countries

International intervention is a common phenomenon in international relations. In the era of economic globalization, reasonable international interventions by the UN and other

international organizations are a necessary measure for the international community to coordinate the contradictions and show justice (Pu, P., 2000). The great power intervention in regional affairs, to some extent, is needed. However, the premise is to promote progress to help defuse the crisis, not to interfere in other countries' sovereignty and internal affairs. To aim at regime change in other countries would be a bigger mistake.

The intervention in the turmoil in Arab countries was conducted by multiple initiators and driving forces. There are international organizations such as the UN, regional organizations (NATO, the Arab League, the African Union and GCC), US, France, Britain and other Western powers as well as countries in the region such as Turkey, Iran and so on. The most intense intervention is military means, such as NATO directly sending troops to bomb Libya. The second most intense would be the method that the countries in the region sent troops to settle the unrest. For example, in the face of Shiite unrest in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates deployed more than 1,000 soldiers to quell the unrest. The third most intense way is for the Arab League and the GCC to promote the destabilized country's president to step down, and then carry out the restructuring of the new regime, such as in Yemen.

When dealing with the Syrian issue in the future, the above-mentioned forces will still play their respective roles. They will continue to use the pretense of "humanitarian" assistance to intervene in the Syrian security and sovereignty. The US intervention in Libya and Syria showed that the current international order, which is based on the Charter of the UN and takes the sovereign equality as its core, was subverted by the "humanitarian intervention" international mechanism.

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(B) The UN is committed to resolve the crisis through peaceful means

The UN is committed to the peaceful settlement of the crisis in Syria. The work of the U.N. can be broadly divided into two stages, the work of the Joint Special Envoy of the UN. Arab League Syrian crisis Annan and the work of Annan's successor Lakhdar Brahimi.

Since Annan's mediation led to a formal ceasefire between the Syrian government and the armed opposition to the Hula massacre on May 25, the fragile ceasefire only lasted less than one and a half months before the warfare broke out again. Annan's peace efforts to solve the crisis in Syria have repeatedly been frustrated, and his peace plan simply was not implemented by the parties in the conflict.

On June 7, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton issued a statement explicitly requiring Bashar al-Assad to hand over power and leave Syria. The international momentum to overthrow the regime of Bashar rose again. Syria's armed opposition, the "Free Syrian Army," said after the Hula massacre that they would no longer comply with Annan's six-point peace plan and attack the government forces again. The government troops and rebels were involved in fierce fighting in a number of areas. Both sides used heavy weapons and air force. Outside forces' momentum to overthrow the Bashar regime fueled the Syrian opposition and anti-government forces. They used a means of confrontation often to deliberately create disturbances, in order to stimulate the Syrian government to use force to suppress anti-government action, which was an attempt to trigger an external military intervention.

On August 2, 2012, five months after Annan's mediation of the Syrian crisis, Annan announced his resignation at a press conference in Geneva. Annan's departure meant that to mediate the crisis in Syria

would be more difficult, and the “six-point peace plan” he proposed would be more difficult to implement. Annan pointed out that the lack of consensus within the international community on the status of Syria has prevented him from effectively urging the Syrian government and the opposition to take the necessary measures to start the peace process. The UN Security Council failed to reach an agreement on the Syrian issue. Besides, the Syrian government and the opposition have not only strictly implemented the “six-point peace plan” he proposed. So the conflicts have escalated, and the conditions for the mediation mission have ceased to exist.

At the beginning of 2013, there have been two trends in the Syrian crisis. First, the armed conflicts between the Government and the opposition grew in intensity. Second, Brahimi, the Joint Special Envoy of the U.N. and the Arab League of the Syrian crisis put forward a political solution to the crisis in Syria late last year, which has been on the agenda, and kicked a high-profile start. Brahimi’s mediation in the Syrian crisis began at the end of last year; he twice went to Russia to discuss plans for peace talks. On December 29, 2012, he agreed with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov that the possibility to solve the crisis in Syria through political and diplomatic ways still exists.

The UN’s political solution include: sending security forces to Syria to monitor the ceasefire and the implementation of the transition plan and establishing a new government through elections. The UN’s political solution to the Syrian program can be summed up in two things, namely to avoid a military solution to the conflict and to establish the Syrian Transitional Government, to resolve the Syrian crisis through political and diplomatic means. The solution to the crisis is based on the *Geneva Communiqué*. The UN resolution implied that the wish for a political solution to the Syrian crisis is rising and

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the military risks are decreasing.

Before the tripartite talks among the UN, the US and Russia in Geneva on January 11 started, it caused international doubts. This was because Brahimi's statement on the 9th had cast a shadow over the political program of the UN. He said in the transitional government there would be no position for Bashar. On the one hand, Brahimi said military means cannot be taken to resolve the Syrian crisis. On the other hand, he has excluded the involvement of Bashar's government in the process of political settlement in the UN, which was equal to creating a paradox and self-destruction of the overall situation of political mediation. At the same time, his position also undermined the principles of the *Geneva Communiqué* in June 2012 reached by the parties, which suggested the formation of a transitional government in Syria, and all parties will be involved.

The details of the tripartite talks were not disclosed, but Brahimi also said that a Syrian family has been in power for 40 years, which seems a bit long, which makes the position of the UN show a clear bias. This statement revealed that he took Bashar al-Assad's stepping down as a prerequisite for political dialogue, which was bound to arouse fierce attitude of the government of Syria. The Syrian government immediately declared that the UN program had nothing to do with Syria. A simple truth is that whoever is trying to mediate cannot be prejudiced, or there would be a non-stop fighting. The first principle of mediation by the UN is justice. The second principle is to persuade warring sides to sit down and talk, while Brahimi's position was obviously biased. The Syrian government's comprehensive ability is much better than the opposition, and in this case, Bashar would absolutely refuse to step down voluntarily. Once deviating from the track of the rules of mediation, it is to destruct political solution to the

great cause.

Obviously, to resolve any conflicts, both parties in the conflict must participate in it. To make the necessary compromises, both parties finally would reach a solution acceptable to all parties. However, Brahimi's position resulted in a loss of cooperation with the Syrian government. In addition, Brahimi publicly supported the political solution by the "National Union" leader Muas al-Chatib and ignored President Bashar's political solution proposed on January 6, 2013, which was the main reason for the failure of the UN. There is no doubt that a solution was not involving the affected country or approved by the country is bound to fail to achieve results. At the same time, Brahimi's position also aroused international challenges for lack of justice. Facts have proved that Brahimi's mediation activities ended with no results.

In summary, Syria does not have the conditions and basis to hold a national dialogue to reach a political solution. Obviously, some Western countries and the Gulf countries have been brewing various programs of military intervention in Syria. The UN political solution, the Syrian government and the opposition are not on the same page, so it is extremely difficult for the warring parties to compromise and communicate. Therefore, a political solution to the Syrian crisis is facing a very difficult situation. Recalling the process of the UN promoting a political solution, from the first special envoy Kofi Annan's resignation in August 2012 due to his complete disappointment of the warring sides in Syria, it is enough to show how tough the current envoy Brahimi's future mission will be.

The UN has strict limitations on humanitarian interventions. It must meet six conditions to be implemented, i.e., legitimate reasons, right intention, last resort, legal authority, as well as appropriate and

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reasonable expectations. Only by adhering to justice can the good faith and fairness of the intervention be reflected and positive intervention outcomes achieved. This is an important criterion to guide and measure humanitarian interventions (Liu, & Dai, 2012). Syrian political crisis is far from over, in fact, Annan's plan for peace talks and Brahimi's program were never carried out. The UN efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis through peaceful means met many failures. Syria faces increasing risk of external forces intervention. The possibility of a solution within the framework of the six conditions is not optimistic.

(C) Western-dominated pattern in Middle Eastern affairs has not changed fundamentally

In the face of increasingly serious deterioration of the situation in Syria, great power intervention has obviously infiltrated the Syrian crisis. The latest news shows, on February 28, 2013, the US Secretary of State John Kerry announced "non-lethal weapons" assistance to the Syrian armed opposition. On March 1, 2013, the United Kingdom followed suit and said that they would provide assistance in the form of "non-lethal weapons" for the Syrian opposition. In the same day, the EU changed the policy of arms embargo on Syria to allow EU countries to provide armored vehicles, non-lethal military equipment and technical assistance for the Syrian opposition (*Reuters*, 2013: March 1). Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem sternly warned that if the US sincerely hopes for a political solution for Syria, it should not provide assistance to the opposition to hurt the Syrian people. The practice of the US to provide assistance to the Syrian opposition has also incurred the dissatisfaction of Iran. The Iranian government criticized the US, "If the US really feels sorry for the current situation in Syria, it should force the opposition to sit down at the negotiating

table to put a stop to the bloody conflicts.” Obviously, the behavior of the US, Britain and the EU is not conducive to a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Syria. It would instead encourage the opposition to continue to use violence. As we all know, any practices that provide assistance to a party in the conflict boils down to encouraging the conflict to continue.

In fact, the Syrian opposition is like the Libyan opposition, the strength of which is very weak and no match for the government forces. But backed by outside forces, the opposition has grown from small to big, from weak to strong. On the situation in Syria, as long as no strong foreign military intervention exists, it is difficult for the opposition to pose a deadly threat to the Bashar al-Assad regime in the short term. If a foreign military intervention happens, it is very likely that Syria will crash sooner or later. In other words, the decisive factor is whether there will be a foreign military intervention or not, which will be the one of the decisive variables that affects the future development of the situation in Syria.

It is clear that the Western countries are using the Arab internal political turmoil to remove their strategic opponents, as was especially clear in the war in Libya. The reason why France has become the vanguard of the force to overthrow the Qaddafi regime is that Qaddafi is a staunch opponent of the EU-Southern Mediterranean strategy advocated by France. The Libyan unrest happened to give France the perfect timing to topple Qaddafi and realize regime change in Libya. Clearly, the Western countries’ intervention in the affairs of Arab countries has been completely driven by their own interests and demands.

We can tell from the downfall of four Arab countries in the Arab political upheaval, as well as the dangers faced by Syria, that the

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Middle East political landscape has changed profoundly and a serious imbalance in the geopolitical structure has been created. While the external environment is more complex and harsh than before, the interior has also been demoralized.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there have been two landmark events in the Middle East: the war in Iraq, which completely broke the geopolitical situation in the Middle East and forced Iraq to exit the stage of history as a power in the Middle East, and dramatic changes occurred in the Arab world in 2011, which has destabilized over four Arab countries. The double spillover effects of the Iraq and the Arab upheavals have severely weakened the power of the Arab countries, and made the geopolitical situation in the Middle East even more unbalanced. The continuing political turmoil will remain for some time, and during this time, especially when Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iraq and other regional powers have exited the dominant position, there will be a vacuum in the dominant force in the Middle East. This endogenous chaos must provide an opportunity for other forces, which is also conducive to external great power intervention. At the same time, to avoid external military intervention and regime change, Syria will make greater efforts.

The American “neo-interventionism” is in accord with the new international environment of the post-Cold War era, which attempted to establish a new framework of international relations, whereby international interventions are used against dictatorship. And the US also tries to build a new system of international relations in accordance with the thinking of Western values and Western philosophy. Overall, there has not been a fundamental change in the Western-dominated world political situation. And future developments in the world still favor Western powers, not to the

benefit of Arab countries. How the West will intervene in Syria is still open to question within the international community.

(D) The MENA countries will continue to face the historic task against power intervention

Interference is the coercive and arbitrary intervention by one country in the internal or external affairs of another to impose some behavior on that other country. All sovereign countries in the world are strongly opposed to a foreign power to interfere in the affairs of national sovereignty. Even the US allies are firmly opposed to other countries that find fault and make irresponsible remarks with their own internal affairs. Nonetheless, in the current pattern of international forces, no state power can prevent the intervention of the U.S. and the Western powers. Why is the West always intervening in the internal affairs of the MENA? This is due to a lack of unity within countries in the region and their weak political, economic strength. Where there are hot spots, where there is Western intervention. For example, since the upheaval in Tunisia, the US has called for democratic reform in Tunisia, and provided funding for its pro-democracy movement. European powers immediately organized to provide support for the Tunisian election as well. There is no doubt that there are Western geopolitical interests and abundant energy resources needed by the West, which constitute the main driving force of Western intervention. Because the American political, economic, military and other comprehensive strength ranks first in the world, it has the conditions to conduct political, economic, military intervention actions. In the context of a serious imbalance in the international forces, the developing countries are in a very negative position, which is a serious challenge to the international community.

“Neo-interventionism” includes humanitarian intervention, a

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form of military intervention that is based on human rights or humanitarian justifications in order to compel the concerned country to change its policy, systems and even the form of government, with strong political overtones. So this military intervention is also called “humanitarian intervention”, which is different from the interventionism of the past. Interventionism in the past had strong military means, and the main purpose is to promote national strategic interests or security interests, while it does not put special emphasis on humanitarian grounds or political goals. The core connotation of humanitarian intervention is “human rights above sovereignty”, and theoretical basis is the “supremacy of human rights” and “limited sovereignty” which believes that sovereignty is no longer owned by the state or regime, but by the people. Also it advocates a “new humanitarian order” and thinks that the protection of racial, religious and ethnic minorities from conflict hazards and hostile rejection of the government is the responsibility the international community cannot shirk (Zhu, F., 2005).

The Western theory of “human rights” in neo-interventionism is bound to exacerbate the separatist tendencies within a number of developing countries. In accordance with the theory of the West “human rights are above sovereignty, democracy has no boundaries, any government cannot cover up its atrocities with sovereignty, and the international community has the right to humanitarian intervention on human rights violations in a country.” In today’s world there is the problem of separatism to different degrees within many countries. According to the theory of “human rights” of the U.S., when these ethnic separatists organize separatist activities and are suppressed by the government, it will be possible for the US-led NATO to use the pretext of “safeguarding human rights” and violate

other countries' sovereignty. The results will inevitably intensify the various regions secessionist activities. In the outbreak of the Arab political upheaval in 2011, the U.S. and Western military intervention caused great damage to the sovereignty of Arab countries, especially NATO's flagrant aggression against Libya. It did not only pose challenge to the sovereign will and the ability to safeguard their own peace and security of the Middle East countries, but also presented a huge challenge to the international community. Even if the international community has to take necessary interventions, then, should troops be sent by the U.N. Security Council peacekeeping forces or should NATO deploy aircrafts? This is a serious problem the international community had to think about and faced with. The "Libya model" manufactured by NATO in 2011, again created a bad precedent for intervention in the internal affairs of countries in the Middle East, and also set them into a security dilemma, a serious threat posed to world peace. The world is more turbulent because of this.

Those who have national interests that can be grabbed are the targets for Western interventions. The war in Kosovo in 1999, the war in Afghanistan 2001, the war in Iraq in 2003 and the war in Libya in 2011 are the result of Western intervention. In addition to the countries in the Middle East and North Africa, the separation of North and South Sudan is also a result of Western intervention, and the intervention was very specific. "In addition to political support, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided registration and voting materials for the Southern Sudan referendum on independence in January 2011, organized voter education as well as support for the South Sudan domestic and international observation matters. During the period from the referendum to the

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independence of South Sudan, the areas where USAID provided assistance for the South Sudan include: democracy and intelligence, hygiene and health, education, drinking water, road improvement, bridges, electricity and other infrastructures, as well as agriculture and trade." (Zhang, Y., 2012: 194). The breadth of interference can be described as exhaustive.

"In the contemporary world, human rights and the sovereignty disputes will certainly continue, accompanied by the existence of the state. The theoretical arguments on the relationship between human rights and sovereignty will not end." (Miao, L., 2006). To find a kind of balance between the two forces, sovereign states are faced with the arduous task of opposing foreign interventions. From the development trend, due to the important strategic position of geopolitics and energy, and the chase of the global geopolitical interests by the Western powers, the Western powers will continue to intervene in the MENA. The independent development and the ability to safeguard their own security of the countries in the MENA will continue to face serious challenges.

(E) Arab upheaval has changed an era

The far-reaching impact of the political unrest in the MENA in 2011 has far exceeded the estimates of the world. The political significance of the turmoil in the Middle East has been put on a par with the 1989 Soviet collapse in Eastern Europe. And its political significance and historical role was also compared with the national liberation movements in the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s. This "Arab revolution", compared to the one in the 1950s and 1960s, is similar in scale, but completely different in nature. In the 1950s and 1960s, the vigorous national liberation movements were against imperialism, colonialism and feudalism. The overthrow of Farouk in

Egypt, the overthrow of Faisal in Iraq in 1958 and the overthrow of Idris in Libya in 1969 all eventually led to the establishment of republics. And now the MENA upheavals are not “anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-feudalism”. They overthrew the corrupt government of the country, while the government was in nature a nationalist regime, the results of a large number of idealistic, ambitious young officers launching anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist revolutions to overthrow the old dynasty. Today, Tunisia’s Ben Ali has stepped down, Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak and Yemen’s Saleh have stepped down, Qaddafi has been killed, and Bashar al-Assad faces an uncertain future. But one thing worth pointing out is that the political system has not changed in Tunisia and Egypt, which is still republican regime. What has changed is only the government, and this replaced government was actually committed to working towards democracy. So the turmoil in the MENA does not resemble the national liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Even though they are both bottom-up mass movement, they are different in nature, and the difference is obvious.

The main line of the national liberation movement in the 1950s and 1960s was the struggle between the oppressed nation in colonial and semi-colonial areas and colonialism, imperialism. It is a powerful driving force to push history forward. And the current political turmoil in the MENA is mainly the struggle of the middle and lower classes people against their own government’s corruption, injustice, authoritarian, which is not colonialism and imperialism (of course, there are anti-hegemony factors, but not vital). Ironically, imperialism and colonialism are still flagrant here today. They interfered in the affairs of sovereign states in the Middle East, upgraded the Libyan civil war to the war in Libya. In this regard, the Arab upheavals have

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changed an era that once brought dignity and progress in the region. The political elites of that era have changed most of the country's political system for their family power in their long-term career in the ruling. They did not solve the issue of the country's political development, did not respond properly to the worldwide wave of democratization since the 1970s and did not pay attention to a series of livelihood issues the people urged to solve, which eventually will lead to serious and irreversible consequences.

Europe and the US intervention in the Arab upheavals lead to an epoch-making change in the MENA. A group of republics built up in the national liberation movements of the 1950s have fallen down. They have been replaced by regimes with Islamic political overtones. Therefore, a new theoretical problem is on the horizon. Is the Islamic regime that just came to power going to solve a series of livelihood issues which the republics failed to solve? Are those fairly stable monarchies able to solve the livelihood problems? The international community can only wait and see.

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