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The Responsibility to Rebuild in Libya: A call for comprehensive reform amid post-intervention paralysis

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the Responsibility to Rebuild (R2R) implementation in Libya following the 2011 NATO intervention, the first explicit application of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. Through comparative case study analysis, it evaluates whether the international community fulfilled its rebuilding obligations by comparing Libya's pre- and post-2011 conditions across political governance, economic stability, and social welfare indicators. The analysis applies normative success criteria based on International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty principles and empirical measurement using proportionality. Findings reveal that despite multiple international initiatives, efforts have remained fragmented, short-term and insufficient. Over a decade later, Libya has worsened indicators compared to pre-intervention conditions. The article proposes six reforms to strengthen R2R: prioritising local legitimacy and inclusion; rebuilding institutions and security; advancing economic redistribution; ensuring transitional justice; deepening international responsibility; and introducing normative follow-up mechanisms. Libya's case offers urgent lessons for future post-conflict interventions and R2P's credibility.

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Introduction

In 2000, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan profoundly asked: 'If humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica - to gross and systematic violations of human rights that affect every precept of our common humanity?'.¹ This question highlighted the tension between state sovereignty and humanitarian intervention in the face of mass atrocities. For decades, the world had repeatedly witnessed horrific atrocities while the international community stood paralysed by legal, political, and institutional constraints.

These concerns resurfaced in March 2011, this time when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorised military intervention in Libya under the banner of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), with the declared aim of protecting civilians from mass atrocities being carried out under Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi.² Seven months later,

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Gaddafi was dead, and NATO declared mission accomplished and withdrew from Libya without any reconstruction or post-intervention agenda.³ Over a decade later, Libya remains trapped in civil conflict, institutional collapse, and humanitarian crisis, raising questions about the intention and consequences of the intervention.

Critically, the intervention generated widespread criticism. Although it succeeded in its immediate goal of preventing mass atrocities by the Gaddafi regime, the failure to follow through with rebuilding has been widely linked to Libya's continued instability.⁴ Regional repercussions reverberated across the Sahel and Mediterranean through weapons proliferation that destabilised Mali and other neighbouring states, intensified migration crises, and terrorist expansion into ungoverned spaces.⁵

Critically, the intervention damaged international consensus on R2P itself, generating widespread dissatisfaction among numerous scholars and global actors. As scholars document, there were more instances of R2P consensus in the UNSC before Libya than have occurred since, indicating the intervention represented a turning point that damaged rather than advanced humanitarian protection norms.⁶ Foreign leaders such as Russia and China have viewed the Libyan case as confirming their suspicions that Western powers manipulate humanitarian norms for regime change purposes, fundamentally undermining future R2P applications.⁷

Understanding this failure requires examining R2P's normative foundations and the gap between its principles and selective application in practice through the Libyan case. In response to the UN failures to stop atrocities in Rwanda in 1994 and in Srebrenica in 1995, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001 created the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which was later unanimously endorsed at the 2005 UN World Summit.⁸ R2P holds that every state has the primary responsibility to protect its people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and that the international community must assist or intervene when a state manifestly fails in this duty.⁹

The doctrine includes three important elements: the Responsibility to Prevent, the Responsibility to Protect, and the Responsibility to Rebuild after the intervention. Underlying the doctrine was a shift in the understanding of sovereignty, moving from the right to control to a responsibility to protect national populations. R2P focuses specifically on protection against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.¹⁰

In theory and practice, however, the third element, the Responsibility to Rebuild, has attracted far less academic and policy attention than prevention and protection. This neglect has had critical consequences for post-conflict stability, reconstruction, and the long-term legitimacy of humanitarian interventions.¹¹

The 2011 military intervention in Libya provides a significant case study of the Responsibility to Protect, as it marked its first explicit application authorised by the UN Security Council.¹²

This article addresses three central research questions:

- (1) To what extent did the international community meet its Responsibility to Rebuild in post-intervention Libya?
- (2) How do Libya's post-2011 political, economic, and social conditions compare to those before the intervention?
- (3) What reforms are needed to strengthen the Responsibility to Rebuild in future interventions?

To answer these questions, the article proceeds as follows. First there is discussion of the methodology, followed by the conceptual framework for the analysis, including definitions and success criteria, both normative and empirical, for the assessment of R2R. These are based on the conceptual foundations of R2R as framed by the ICISS. The next section reviews the scholarly literature on R2P, including discussion of R2R and the legacy of the Libyan intervention. Thereafter is a fourth section assessing the application of R2R in Libya, analysing international initiatives launched after 2011. This is followed by a comparative analysis of Libya's political, economic, and social conditions before and after the R2P intervention. The sixth section identifies critical failures in Libya's rebuilding process. Finally, the article proposes six policy and normative reforms to strengthen R2R implementation in future post-conflict contexts.

Libya's crisis is inherently an African issue, deeply rooted in regional dynamics, historical legacies, and governance challenges. It also holds global significance as it tests the credibility and practical effectiveness of the international norm R2P. This article seeks to contribute to ongoing debates about the limitations of R2P and the urgent need to strengthen the R2R element of the doctrine.

Methodology

In seeking to answer the research questions, this article employs comparative analysis of pre- and post-intervention Libya in order to examine the implementation and outcomes of the Responsibility to Rebuild (R2R) in the case of Libya. The comparative approach is particularly useful because it allows examination of whether post-intervention efforts contributed to sustainable recovery or rather, to instability. Pre-2011 baseline conditions and post-2011 conditions are systematically compared across the same indicators to determine whether conditions improved, stagnated or deteriorated, to evaluate the effectiveness of R2R implementation in practice. The article examines major international initiatives launched after the 2011 intervention, documenting both their stated objectives and assessed outcomes. This allows comparison between intended R2R commitments and implementation results.

The original research design anticipated primary data collection through interviews with Libyan government officials and relevant stakeholders; however, this proved unachievable in practice. Ongoing security conditions and the absence of responses from contacted parties, despite the author's regional familiarity and native Arabic proficiency, made fieldwork and remote participation unfeasible. Therefore, primary data collection was not possible. Secondary data collection instead formed the basis of the research.

Data sources included United Nations Security Council resolutions, UN agency reports, international policy documents, assessments from multilateral and bilateral initiatives,¹³ peer-reviewed scholarship, and reports from established international organisations and research institutions. The desk review encompassed publicly available documents spanning 2010–2025, capturing both the pre-intervention context and the full post-intervention trajectory. Multiple independent sources were consulted and cross-checked.

Libya is the first and only explicit R2P intervention to reach the post-intervention phase. As such, it is the primary empirical test of R2R implementation offering valuable insights into the potential and the challenges of post-conflict rebuilding under R2P.

The Responsibility to Rebuild: A conceptual framework

The following section examines R2R's conceptual framework as articulated in the ICISS report and subsequent UN documents, establishing the principles against which the post-intervention trajectory of Libya is evaluated in this article.

The Responsibility to Rebuild is the international community's duty to support full post-conflict recovery. This includes rebuilding infrastructure, restoring political institutions, reinforcing the rule of law, and stabilising the economy. The original ICISS formulates R2R as follows: 'to provide, particularly after a military intervention, full assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation, addressing the causes of the harm the intervention was designed to halt or avert'.¹⁴ It highlights that recovery rests on the recognition that ending conflict does not in itself secure peace; it must be followed by deliberate, inclusive, and well-planned efforts to rebuild the state.¹⁵ In this context, the ICISS report clearly states that 'if military intervention is to be contemplated, the need for a post-intervention strategy is also of paramount importance'.¹⁶ Likewise, the United Nations has emphasised that ending armed conflict does not automatically secure peace; post-conflict strategies must prevent a return to violence. For example, a UN panel in 1998 stressed that post-conflict peacebuilding requires integrated efforts, from reinforcing national institutions to reintegration programmes, to 'avoid a return to conflict and create conditions most conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery'.¹⁷ In short, R2R is both a moral duty and a practical necessity. Without sustained rebuilding and development, societies risk falling back into the 'conflict trap' of recurring violence.¹⁸

The R2R concept originates from the United Nations' recognition of the need for a structured and systematic approach to rebuilding war-torn nations. The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document emphasised the importance of international support in post-conflict reconstruction a concept that evolved through subsequent global discussions affirming the duty to help states 'build capacity to protect their populations' and to assist in recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation.¹⁹ For instance, UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon's 2009 implementation report stressed the importance of turning 'words into deeds', urging concrete measures for rebuilding after intervention.²⁰

Despite its critical importance, R2R remains marginal in both academic and policy debates and the least developed element of the Responsibility to Protect framework. While the ICISS report had outlined a broad framework that included criteria for when and how to intervene, as well as responsibilities to prevent and rebuild,²¹ the World Summit Outcome Document narrowed R2P's focus to four specific crimes: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.²² This excluded the more detailed principles for military intervention and left post-intervention obligations poorly defined. Bellamy argues that narrowing the scope made R2P more politically acceptable; however, it weakened the doctrine's legal force on post-conflict reconstruction and damaged its long-term credibility.²³

Gareth Evans also highlights this concern, insisting that the international community must not only react to crises but also take proactive steps to support justice, reconciliation and development in the aftermath. In his view, rebuilding is not merely about restoring what was lost but about creating legitimate institutions where they never existed.²⁴

Defining and measuring success for R2R

For the purposes of this study assessing whether the international community fulfilled its Responsibility to Rebuild in Libya, it is important to define what 'success' for R2R means. This is complex because R2P incorporates ambiguity 'to facilitate building consensus', making empirical measurement challenging.²⁵ This article therefore defines success both normatively and empirically.

Normatively, R2R success is defined according to the ICISS framework and the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document. Success requires not only ending conflict but ensuring 'development through governance, accountability, and respect for human rights'.²⁶ Specifically, R2R encompasses rebuilding infrastructure, restoring political institutions, reinforcing the rule of law, stabilising the economy, and establishing conditions for sustainable peace.

Empirically, R2R success is measured in accordance with the view of international law scholars, wherein an act of war is held disproportionate if the damage it does is excessive to the measure of peace it can reasonably hope to achieve.²⁷ Achieving success in this context follows the principle of proportionality. This means the international community must have reasonable prospects for rebuilding from the outset of an intervention, translated into a practical probability of accomplishing reconstruction objectives without escalating conditions.

Therefore, R2R success, it is here argued, can be measured through comparison of Libya's conditions before and after the 2011 intervention using specific indicators across three dimensions: political governance, economic stability, and social welfare. These dimensions align with ICISS principles and international post-conflict reconstruction standards, and are measured via indicators as outlined below.

Political governance indicators

These indicators capture the extent of political participation, institutional development, and state integrity. They include; election cycles and voter turnout, to assess political engagement and the functioning of transitional institutions; constitutional progress and government formation demonstrating Libya's attempts to establish legitimate authority through successive interim bodies; the presence and influence of armed militias indicating the level of state fragmentation and weakened central authority; the level of foreign interference such as external military and political involvement, potentially shaping Libya's trajectory; the country's place on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) measuring changes in perceived state integrity and levels of public-sector corruption; and transitional justice and accountability measures showing the extent to which post-intervention institutions prosecute those responsible for crimes committed during and after conflict.

Economic stability indicators

These indicators evaluate the resilience or deterioration of Libya's economic situation during the transition. They include, for the purposes of this study: oil production levels to measure state capacity, export revenues, and public spending; gross domestic

product (GDP) indicating total economic activity; unemployment rates, including youth unemployment, to reflect labour-market conditions; gross national income (GNI) per capita, to reflect changes in living standards over time; regional distribution of government spending to assess equity and the state's ability to distribute resources fairly; and public expenditure allocation, especially devoted to development projects, measuring the capacity to invest in long-term reconstruction.

Social welfare indicators

These indicators reflect access to essential services, population wellbeing, and broader human-development conditions. They include: the Human Development Index (HDI) providing an integrated measure of life expectancy, educational attainment, and standard of living; life-expectancy, infant-mortality rates, and literacy levels to demonstrate long-term public-health and education outcomes; access to healthcare, education, and basic services to measure the functioning of state institutions in delivering essential public services; and internal displacement figures to reflect the scale of humanitarian stability.

While individual indicators have methodological limitations, together, these three dimensions provide a structured approach to measuring Libya's post-intervention trajectory. That is, success requires sustained improvement across political governance, economic stability, and social welfare. This comparative framework allows assessment of a critical question: Did the intervention under the Responsibility to Rebuild translate into improved conditions on the ground? Before turning to the analysis evaluating the Responsibility to Rebuild's effectiveness in practice, the article will consider the wider discussion on R2P and R2R in the literature.

R2P and R2R: The backstory via a literature review

The Responsibility to Protect emerged from decades of debate over humanitarian intervention, state sovereignty, and the duty of the international community to prevent mass atrocities. Following the horrors of Rwanda and Srebrenica in the 1990s, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty introduced R2P in 2001, fundamentally reframing sovereignty as responsibility rather than absolute authority.²⁸ The doctrine was unanimously endorsed at the 2005 UN World Summit, establishing that when states fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, the international community must assist or intervene.²⁹ However, the 2005 formulation significantly narrowed the original vision of the ICISS. As Alex Bellamy notes, the World Summit Outcome Document excluded detailed intervention criteria and left post-conflict obligations poorly defined, weakening the doctrine's operational clarity.³⁰ Thomas Weiss argues that R2P suffers from an inherent tension between its moral aspirations and selective application in practice, with states favouring short-term military action over sustained post-conflict engagement, noting that in fact '[t]he World Summit set aside peacebuilding (or included it as part of prevention, thereby downgrading it).³¹ This scholarly consensus identifies a critical gap between R2P's humanitarian rhetoric and its implementation.

Within the R2P framework, the Responsibility to Rebuild represents the most neglected element. The ICISS report emphasises that 'if military intervention is to be contemplated,

the need for a post-intervention strategy is also of paramount importance', defining R2R as the duty 'to provide, particularly after a military intervention, full assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation'.³² Despite this normative foundation, R2R has been largely absent from academic and policy discussions. Outi Keränen argues that R2R has been systematically marginalised in both policy and academic discourse, noting that 'despite its critical importance to preventing relapse into conflict, the responsibility to rebuild remains the least developed pillar of R2P'.³³ Stylianos Stathopoulos argues that while R2R carries normative significance, the way it is framed may unintentionally undermine post-conflict reconstruction by imposing excessive burdens on intervening states, potentially discouraging future humanitarian action.³⁴ Peter Hilpold examines R2R through the lens of *jus post bellum*, arguing that post-war societies require sustained support to avoid relapse into chaos, yet the international community has been consistently reluctant to commit to peacebuilding activities.³⁵ Outi Donovan's work on Libya illustrates this pragmatic failure, demonstrating that the application of R2R has been applied very differently from the ICISS' original intentions, leaving post-intervention contexts vulnerable to an institutional vacuum and renewed violence.³⁶ These scholars collectively identify a fundamental weakness: R2R lacks dedicated institutional mechanisms, binding commitments, and enforcement frameworks that would ensure consistent implementation.

The 2011 Libyan intervention demonstrates these theoretical and practical challenges. Libya marked R2P's first explicit invocation for military action, with UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973 authorising measures to protect civilians from Gaddafi's brutal crackdown.³⁷ Initial responses praised the intervention as R2P's 'coming of age', with NATO's Operation Unified Protector successfully preventing the massacre of Benghazi's population.³⁸ However, this narrative soon gave way to a more critical reassessment.

A growing body of scholarship identifies the Libyan intervention as a case where R2P authorisation was exploited to pursue regime change objectives that exceeded humanitarian mandates. Alan Kuperman's influential critique characterises the intervention as 'a model of failure', arguing that NATO exceeded its civilian protection mandate to pursue regime change, prolonging the conflict and increasing civilian casualties sevenfold while exacerbating humanitarian suffering and weapons proliferation.³⁹ Aidan Hehir identifies Libya as exemplifying R2P's 'permanence of inconsistency', noting that strategic interests – particularly regarding oil, regime change and regional influence – shaped intervention far more than humanitarian principles.⁴⁰ Alex Bellamy and Paul Williams observe that while the intervention addressed immediate threats, the lack of post-conflict planning created conditions for Libya's descent into a failed state.⁴¹

The international community's reluctance to engage in meaningful state-building efforts following Gaddafi's death exposed the implementation gap of R2P doctrine. Western powers, particularly the United States, explicitly rejected nation-building responsibilities, with President Barack Obama later acknowledging that 'failing to plan for the day after' was among his presidency's worst mistakes.⁴² Ethan Chorin highlights how, after regime change, NATO and other foreign actors retreated from meaningful reconstruction, raising questions about whether the military intervention was driven more by geopolitical objectives than purely humanitarian ones.⁴³ Ramesh Thakur emphasises that the Libya case damaged consensus on R2R, with Russia and China viewing the intervention as precedent for Western manipulation of humanitarian norms.⁴⁴

The African Union's marginalisation throughout the process reinforced postcolonial critiques that R2P enables neocolonial interference disguised as protection.⁴⁵ Libya's post-2011 trajectory (marked by governance deterioration, militia proliferation, institutional collapse, economic devastation, mass displacement and ongoing civil conflict) demonstrates what happens when international actors prioritise military intervention while neglecting sustained rebuilding commitments. As Jess Gifkins notes, there were more instances of R2P consensus before Libya than have been seen since that intervention, suggesting the intervention represented a turning point that deepened rather than resolved debates over humanitarian intervention's legitimacy and effectiveness.⁴⁶

Indeniably, these debates call for the urgent need to strengthen the conceptual foundations and operational implementation of R2P, including the Responsibility to Rebuild.

The Libyan case: R2P in practice

As noted above, the 2011 Libyan intervention marked the first explicit invocation of the Responsibility to Protect by the UN Security Council. UNSC Resolution 1970 (26 February 2011) 'recalled the Libyan authorities' responsibility to protect its population' and imposed sanctions,⁴⁷ while UNSC Resolution 1973 (17 March 2011) authorised all necessary measures to protect civilians⁴⁸ and paved the way for NATO's military campaign Operation Unified Protector through airstrikes and the enforcement of a no-fly zone.⁴⁹

The intervention was invoked in response to a humanitarian crisis that emerged from Libya's 2011 uprising. Inspired by the Arab Spring protests that had successfully overthrown leaders in neighbouring Tunisia and Egypt, demonstrations against Muammar Gaddafi's authoritarian rule began in Benghazi on 15 February 2011, triggered by the arrest of human rights lawyer Fethi Tarbel.⁵⁰ The protests quickly escalated into armed conflict as Gaddafi's security forces responded with deadly force, using tanks, artillery and airstrikes against civilian protesters.⁵¹ By 22 February, Gaddafi delivered a nationwide televised speech condemning protesters as 'rats' and 'cockroaches', vowing to cleanse Libya 'house by house' with 'no mercy'.⁵² The regime's brutal crackdown resulted in thousands of civilian casualties, sparking widespread international condemnation and urgent calls for intervention to prevent further atrocities.⁵³ The escalating violence and imminent threat of mass killings in opposition cities created the context for invoking R2P, as the Gaddafi regime was deemed to have failed in its responsibility to protect its own population from crimes against humanity.

The international community's response under the Responsibility to Prevent materialised through UN Security Council Resolution 1970, adopted unanimously on 26 February 2011.⁵⁴ Resolution 1970 imposed comprehensive non-military measures, including an arms embargo, travel bans and asset freezes targeting Gaddafi and his inner circle, and referred the situation to the International Criminal Court. The resolution also called for freedom of media and access to information to counter state-controlled propaganda.⁵⁵ However, these preventive measures proved insufficient as Gaddafi's forces continued their violent campaign against civilians. The regime's defiance of Resolution 1970 and the deteriorating humanitarian situation, with the Libyan regime engaging in systematic attacks against its people, necessitated more robust protective measures.

UNSC Resolution 1973, adopted on 17 March 2011, authorised military intervention under the Responsibility to Protect, demanding 'an immediate ceasefire' and authorising

UN member states to 'take all necessary measures' to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack.⁵⁶ This resolution provided the legal basis for NATO's Operation Unified Protector, which commenced on 19 March with enforcement of a no-fly zone and airstrikes against Gaddafi's military infrastructure. The NATO-led military campaign conducted over 26,000 sorties and approximately 10,000 strike missions between March and October 2011.⁵⁷ While the intervention succeeded in preventing the fall of Benghazi and protecting civilians from imminent massacre, it became increasingly controversial as critics argued that the mission had exceeded its civilian protection mandate to pursue regime change.⁵⁸ The death of Muammar Gaddafi on 20 October 2011 in Sirte marked a decisive turning point.⁵⁹ NATO officially concluded Operation Unified Protector on 31 October 2011, just eleven days after Gaddafi's death,⁶⁰ despite urgent appeals from the African Union and international observers for sustained engagement to support Libya's transition.⁶¹ This rapid withdrawal, following the achievement of the immediate military objective, exposed a fundamental gap between the intervention's humanitarian rhetoric and the limited commitment to post-conflict stabilisation and rebuilding. This distinction is critical: was this a protection-oriented intervention requiring sustained engagement to establish security conditions, or was this a regime change operation, concluded when the targeted leadership was removed?

International efforts in line with the UN's R2R norm

Be that as it may, in the aftermath of the 2011 intervention by NATO, international actors intervened to stabilise Libya, launching multiple initiatives aimed at institutional recovery and security reform. These included the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the UN Peacebuilding Fund's Joint Civic Education and Dialogue Project, various UNSC resolutions to support Libya's political transition, and the Stabilisation Facility for Libya (SFL) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In addition, there were numerous African Union efforts to assist with Libya's reconstruction, as well as programmes under the auspices of the European Union and various bilateral actors, as outlined below.

UNSMIL was established by UNSC Resolution 2009 in September 2011, to help Libyan authorities restore security, promote the rule of law, and facilitate political dialogue, constitution drafting and elections.⁶² One of the primary duties of UNSMIL, which remains active 15 years later, is upholding human rights and strengthening democracy, as well as fostering dialogue among the various factions in the country, working towards a peaceful resolution to ongoing conflict.⁶³ However, UNSMIL's efforts have been criticised for their limited effectiveness in addressing the deep-rooted divisions within Libya and missing the importance of actors on the local level. Critics argue that the mission focused on high-level political negotiations and often neglected grassroots reconciliation and the inclusion of local communities.⁶⁴ Former UNSMIL adviser Omar Hammady warned that rushing political deals and elections 'without substantial progress for ground-level capacity building, decentralisation, and reconciliation' could undermine legitimacy.⁶⁵ One of UNSMIL's significant achievements, however, was its role in mediating the Skhirat Agreement in December 2015, which led to the formation of the Government of National Accord (GNA) to address Libya's post-Gaddafi political fragmentation and restore political stability.⁶⁶ UNSMIL provided essential mediation and support throughout

the negotiations, helping to bridge divides between rival factions. Despite these efforts, the Skhirat Agreement has been widely criticised for its top down approach, which failed to address the underlying causes of Libya's political fragmentation.⁶⁷ As a report from the International Crisis Group highlighted in 2016, the agreement was largely driven by international actors with limited input from Libyan stakeholders, leading to a lack of local ownership and legitimacy.⁶⁸ This lack of inclusivity has been cited as a key reason for the agreement's failure to achieve lasting peace.

Alongside political talks, the UN Peacebuilding Fund launched the Joint Civic Education and Dialogue Project in April 2012 to assist Libya in its transition to democracy during the country's first post-Gaddafi elections.⁶⁹ The initiative included educational campaigns across various regions through forums and workshops to bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds to discuss governance and electoral processes.⁷⁰ Election monitors noted that public awareness appeared to have increased; there was a 62% turnout in the 2012 election, when approximately 1.7 million voters cast ballots.⁷¹ Notably, however, voter turnout dropped significantly in subsequent years, with only 18% of the total eligible population voting during the 2014 parliamentary elections, suggesting a sense of detachment.⁷² Critics argue that civic education efforts emphasised short-term objectives, such as boosting turnout, without addressing deeper structural challenges like institutional fragility and militia influence.⁷³ These programmes, it has been observed, typically fail to bring lasting results in post-conflict environments unless integrated with reforms that help rebuild trust in government.⁷⁴

Following the 2011 intervention, the UNSC passed a series of resolutions aimed at facilitating Libya's political transition and preventing further destabilisation. Resolution 2009 (2011) established the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) (as mentioned above).⁷⁵ Resolution 2040 (2012) extended UNSMIL's mandate to include support for democratic governance and national reconciliation.⁷⁶ In response to renewed hostilities, Resolution 2174 (2014) broadened the scope of sanctions to include individuals disturbing peace and called for an immediate ceasefire and inclusive political dialogue.⁷⁷ Resolution 2259 (2015) formally endorsed the Libyan Political Agreement, recognising the Government of National Accord as the legitimate executive authority.⁷⁸ In the years that followed, the UNSC passed numerous additional resolutions, yet their impact remained limited. Deep political fragmentation, the proliferation of armed groups, and rival foreign interventions repeatedly undermined implementation. As Rodger Shanahan observes, UN resolutions frequently lack 'the enforcement mechanisms needed to address the realities of fragmented societies where armed groups have gained significant power and external actors pursue competing agendas'.⁷⁹

In 2016, the UNDP launched the Stabilisation Facility for Libya (SFL) to support local governance, rehabilitate critical infrastructure, restore essential services, and strengthen the legitimacy of transitional authorities.⁸⁰ For example, early projects in Benghazi, Kikla, and Ubari focused on returning displaced people and securing essential services. By mid-2018 the SFL had implemented 64 projects rehabilitating schools, health centres and utilities, and supplying equipment to local authorities.⁸¹ Notable accomplishments include the restoration of Tripoli Central Hospital and the reopening of the Misrata power plant, which improved access to basic services for thousands of citizens.⁸² The SFL mobilised over \$44 million by 2017 to expand its operations.⁸³ A further \$25 million was added in 2019 to stabilisation activities.⁸⁴ The SFL was praised for delivering services

quickly. However, independent reviews found that it often focused on short-term visible results rather than long-term sustainability. An independent evaluation of the SFL noted that while the facility engaged with communities and led quick-impact stabilisation activities, 'it did not focus directly on enhancing the capacity and performance of local municipalities'.⁸⁵

The African Union also launched a Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) initiative for Libya in 2012, aiming to facilitate national dialogue, reconciliation, and institution-rebuilding.⁸⁶ However, the AU's role remained limited due to weak financial and logistical support, restricted access on the ground, and the dominance of UN and European Union-led frameworks. According to a 2017 analysis by the Institute for Security Studies, the African bloc found itself 'sidelined by other international actors'.⁸⁷ This frequently overshadowed 'African and regional solutions to African and regional problems'.⁸⁸ Although the AU planned in 2012 to organise a national reconciliation conference for Libya, this commitment was only fulfilled in February 2025, when Libyan stakeholders signed the National Reconciliation Charter during the AU Summit.⁸⁹ This exposes both the AU's persistent marginalisation in international diplomacy and the long-delayed realisation of African-led peacebuilding in Libya. The failure to integrate African and regional actors clearly turned R2R into a fragmented, externally driven process, cut off from local and regional realities.

The European Union contributed mainly on security and migration. In 2013, the EU launched the European Union Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM) to support authorities in securing the country's land, sea, and air borders and to draft a National Border Security Strategy.⁹⁰ However, EUBAM's presence and work was interrupted many times due to security evacuations. By mid-2014 the mission had relocated to neighbouring Tunisia, and from 2015 onward it conducted all operations from outside Libya.⁹¹ These repeated security disruptions left EUBAM with little room to operate, and the mission struggled to achieve concrete results under such circumstances.

Indeed, a major focus of international aid was migration control. Through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, over \$313 million [€266 million] was allocated between 2014 and 2018 to upgrade detention centres, assist migrants, and support Libyan border management.⁹² Yet, international observers raised serious concerns over persistent human rights violations, arbitrary detention, and mistreatment of migrants, indicating a failure of legal protection.⁹³ Indeed, a 2017 report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights criticised European interventions which had 'done nothing so far to reduce the level of abuses suffered by migrants' in Libya.⁹⁴ In short, despite hundreds of millions spent, Libya's migrants remained trapped in a 'cycle of abuse' with no effective legal protections. This outcome reflects the limitations of externally funded programmes when implementation depends on local authorities who are themselves responsible for the violations being documented.

Beyond multilateral programmes, various bilateral and regional interventions further complicated Libya's reconstruction initiatives. The United Kingdom, for example, launched a \$71.66 million [£62.5 million] Security, Justice and Defence programme (2013 - 2016) that emphasised police training and civil society capacity-building. However, this initiative had to be stopped when Libya's security situation deteriorated and British personnel were withdrawn from Tripoli in 2014.⁹⁵ Many other similar projects

had the same end. As a result, Libya saw many short-term projects but very few large-scale sustainable development commitments.

It is important to highlight that these initiatives do not represent the full scope of international engagement in post-2011 Libya. However, they were selected for their visibility, scale, and alignment with the goals of institutional recovery and security reform under the Responsibility to Rebuild by the international community. While these programmes reflect the international community's recognition of R2R obligations, their fragmented nature, short timelines, inconsistent funding and limited coordination often weakened their long-term impact.

To assess the relevance and success of these initiatives, the article now turns to examine the impact they had on the country's political, economic, and social recovery. Comparing Libya before and after the 2011 intervention offers a clearer image of the impact of international efforts in support of the country's recovery.

Assessing R2R success via three indicators of Libya's pre and post-intervention status

As noted in discussion of the research methodology, the three indicators under focus in this assessment of Libya's reconstruction prior to and following the intervention under R2P in 2011 are political governance, economic stability and social welfare.

Political governance

Under Muammar Gaddafi's 42-year regime (1969–2011), Libya was a centralised authoritarian state with power concentrated within an elite circle and no tolerance for political opposition.⁹⁶ Political pluralism was outlawed by Law 71 of 1972, and opposition was repressed through the activities of Libya's 'Revolutionary Committees' to ensure ideological compliance.⁹⁷ Decision-making remained with Gaddafi and his small inner circle, while formal institutions like the General People's Congress existed only to formally approve decisions.⁹⁸ Political rights and civil liberties were virtually non-existent: independent media and civil society were banned, and security services repressed critics through surveillance, arbitrary arrests, torture and disappearances of regime opponents.⁹⁹ By 2010, Freedom House rated Libya 'Not Free' (the lowest score) due to the absolute ban on political pluralism and harsh penalties for any form of dissent.¹⁰⁰

Despite its repressive nature, the regime maintained a degree of internal stability relying on tight control of the military, the suppression of opposition groups, and the strategic use of oil wealth to sustain loyalty, neutralise opposition, and create a superficial appearance of national unity.¹⁰¹

After the R2P-sanctioned NATO-backed military intervention in 2011 and the fall of the regime, Libya quickly descended into fragmentation and chaotic transition. The initial post-revolution optimism surrounding the interim National Transitional Council (NTC) quickly gave way to conflict between rival political factions.¹⁰² In July 2012, the newly elected General National Congress (GNC) replaced the NTC as the provisional parliament.¹⁰³

While elections were held again in 2014, growing public disillusionment and escalating violence have since delayed further democratic processes. Turnout in 2014 was low and

results were disputed. The GNC's allies in Tripoli refused to step aside, while the House of Representatives (HoR) established itself in Tobruk in the east.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, Libya split into two rival governments in 2014. Amid fighting, the UN formed the Government of National Accord in early 2016. However, The HoR (and its allied general Khalifa Haftar) refused to recognise the GNA's authority, and Libya remained divided with parallel administrations.¹⁰⁵ In March 2021, Abdul Hamid Dbeibah was sworn in as prime minister of a new government of national unity, charged with unifying state institutions and preparing for national elections in December 2021.¹⁰⁶

As of June 2025, however, no national elections had taken place since the indefinitely postponed December 2021 vote amid disagreements over electoral rules and political consensus.¹⁰⁷ The political situation has been further degraded by the proliferation of armed militias that operate independently of the state and often exercise control over key areas and economic infrastructure.¹⁰⁸

Libya's post-intervention fragmentation has also been shaped by extensive foreign interference. Turkey and Qatar provided military and financial support to security factions in western Libya backing the Tripoli-based GNA. In early 2020, Turkey formalised its support by signing a security agreement with the GNA and deploying troops, military drones, and intelligence resources to help defend Tripoli from eastern forces.¹⁰⁹ On the opposing side, Egypt and the UAE backed General Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) forces in the east, contributing to an environment of parallel authorities and polarisation.¹¹⁰ Russia increased its involvement by sending hundreds of mercenaries from the Wagner Group in support of Haftar's LNA.¹¹¹ These Russian fighters, while technically private, operated with the Kremlin's approval and were involved in combat operations, drone warfare, and guarding key infrastructure.¹¹²

These external actors, each pursuing different strategic interests, have transformed Libya into a proxy battleground, undermining national reconciliation efforts. External interventions deepened divisions by empowering certain factions at the expense of others. This led to prolonged conflict rather than reconciliation and raised questions about whether interventions under R2P can truly lead to lasting reconstruction. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) reveals the scale of this deterioration. Libya's CPI score deteriorated from 22 out of 100 points in 2010, ranking 146th of 178,¹¹³ to 13 by 2023, ranking among the world's most corrupt countries at 173rd.¹¹⁴ The country's fall on this corruption index underscores the unfulfilled promises of the 2011 revolution to establish accountable, democratic governance.

Libya's failure to establish accountability mechanisms constitutes a critical marker of post-intervention governance collapse. Under Gaddafi, judicial proceedings were arbitrary instruments of regime control; however, international legal frameworks have failed to address transitional justice. In 2011, once the R2P intervention had ended, the UNSC referred Libya to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which commenced investigations into crimes committed since February 2011.¹¹⁵ Yet, as of June 2025, no trials had proceeded before the ICC.¹¹⁶ Domestic prosecutions reveal institutional dysfunction rather than accountability. In 2015, a Libyan court sentenced Saif al-Islam Gaddafi – the son of the former leader and considered by some as the heir apparent – to death in absentia; he was released in 2017.¹¹⁷ Libya's judiciary is fragmented, and appears unwilling or unable to conduct meaningful investigations into serious violations, with military courts prosecuting civilians under 'terrorism' charges without fair trials.¹¹⁸

Economic stability

Libya's economic trajectory has closely mirrored the country's political turbulence. As discussed above, under Gaddafi the country operated a centralised, oil-driven economy that, despite its flaws, maintained stability.¹¹⁹ By 2010, oil revenues accounted for 73% of GDP, 95% of export earnings and about 93% of public revenues.¹²⁰ The state used these resources to provide cheap water, electricity and fuel, helping maintain relatively high living standards among the Libyan population, even though inequality and corruption remained widespread.¹²¹

The 2011 NATO-backed intervention marked a turning point. In the immediate aftermath, Libya's GDP decreased by 60%, and oil production collapsed from 1.77 million barrels per day in 2010 to just 22,000 barrels per day in July 2011.¹²² Although the economy briefly rebounded in 2012 as oil production returned to near pre-intervention levels, continued armed conflict and governance vacuums have meant repeated knocks to the sector.¹²³ According to Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC), oil production fell from 1.2 million barrels per day in late 2019 to around 100,000 barrels per day in mid-2020, for instance, resulting in approximately \$10 billion in financial losses.¹²⁴

Ordinary Libyans have suffered the consequences of this instability through job losses, inflation and poor public services. The unemployment rate, which had declined to 13.5% by 2010, rose sharply post 2011, reaching 19% by 2012, with 48% of youth unemployed.¹²⁵ As of 2023, unemployment remained high at around 19%.¹²⁶

GNI per capita also fell from \$11,560 in 2010 to just \$7,570 by 2023, highlighting the worsening quality of life for Libyans.¹²⁷ Regional inequality within Libya has also deepened. Tripolitania, home to the capital Tripoli, receives up to 65% of government spending, while Cyrenaica, which hosts most oil infrastructure, receives only about 30%, and the Southern Fezzan region just 5–6%.¹²⁸ Development spending has been extremely low. In 2022, only 1% of total public funds went to development projects, while 48% was spent on public sector salaries and administration, much of which included militia.¹²⁹

Social welfare

Under Muammar Gaddafi's rule, Libya experienced notable advancements in human development indicators. Fuelled by oil revenues, the regime built a comprehensive welfare state that offered free education, healthcare, and extensive subsidies for basic goods. By 2010, Libya ranked highest in Africa on the Human Development Index (HDI). According to the African Development Bank, life expectancy increased from 63 years in 1993 to 74.5 years and infant mortality dropped from 160 per 1,000 births in 1970 to just 19 in 2001.¹³⁰ Adult illiteracy was reduced from 26.6% to 12.6%.¹³¹ Access to primary healthcare was near universal, as primary care clinics and hospitals proliferated, childhood immunisation reached almost 100%, and clean water and sanitation improvements extended across the country.¹³² These gains occurred under severe political repression, but even so, they led to real improvements in the quality of life for much of the population.

In the aftermath of the 2011 intervention, Libya's human development trajectory sharply declined. The World Bank and UNDP reported a sharp decrease in access to public services, especially in conflict-affected regions. Prolonged violent conflict, political

fragmentation and economic collapse led to a deterioration in Libya's HDI score, reflecting declines in life expectancy, access to education and the standard of living.¹³³ Vital infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and water systems were severely damaged.¹³⁴

Over 300,000 people were internally displaced without adequate shelter, healthcare, or access to education.¹³⁵ While UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Médecins Sans Frontières, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the International Organisation for Migration, launched emergency programmes addressing trauma care, mental health, and community relief,¹³⁶ humanitarian interventions have been fragmented, inconsistent, and heavily concentrated in urban centres like Tripoli and Benghazi.¹³⁷

Libya's education system has also been destabilised. Armed conflict led to the closure of hundreds of schools, and shortages of qualified teachers.¹³⁸ Displaced children have been the most affected, with many unable to access formal education.

The path to reform: Strengthening the Responsibility to Rebuild

In the aftermath of the NATO-led intervention, R2P has been widely criticised both at the conceptual level and in its implementation, including with regard to the post-intervention Responsibility to Rebuild.

First, the intervention by NATO evolved from civilian protection into regime change, exceeding the UN mandate under the Responsibility to Protect and exposing how the doctrine can be exploited for geopolitical purposes. Second, having achieved regime change, the intervening states largely abandoned Libya without fulfilling reconstruction obligations as outlined under the broader R2P doctrine, demonstrating that the regime change agenda did not include genuine commitment to post-conflict recovery. This dual failure undermines the credibility of R2P and highlights why reform of the doctrine is needed.

In Libya, which was the first case where the UNSC explicitly invoked the doctrine,¹³⁹ R2P addressed the immediate crisis but was not followed by consistent rebuilding efforts as envisioned by the ICISS. The fact that foreign leaders acknowledged that 'it was impossible to protect Libyan civilians' without overthrowing Gaddafi¹⁴⁰ was problematic for the doctrine, which was not established to bring about regime change. Then, with regard to R2R, after Gaddafi's fall international actors largely withdrew; in particular, the administration of US President Barack Obama explicitly stated that nation-building was not among the objectives of the intervention in Libya.¹⁴¹ The absence of a coordinated, well-resourced and inclusive rebuilding strategy left the intervention incomplete and Libya unstable.

When R2P was adopted, the responsibility to rebuild was conceived as a fundamental element, an 'obligation ... not just to prevent and react, but to follow through and rebuild'.¹⁴² Yet, this third element has remained underdeveloped in theory and practice. Unlike humanitarian responses to other crises, there is no dedicated agency or mechanism charged with implementing post-intervention reconstruction when R2P is invoked.¹⁴³ This gap leaves a dangerous vacuum of responsibility. In Libya, this meant fragmented international engagement.

A critical shortcoming in post-2011 Libya was the lack of coherent international coordination in reconstruction. Multiple actors such as the UN, regional organisations, individual

states and NGOs initiated numerous efforts without strategic coordination.¹⁴⁴ UN officials themselves stated that Libya had become ‘a textbook example of foreign interference’ rather than effective peacebuilding.¹⁴⁵ Parallel programmes by various agencies overlapped or contradicted each other due to poor coordination.¹⁴⁶ Coordination was ‘mostly carried out in an ad hoc manner’, with no official platform to align stabilisation projects across Libya, meeting only a fraction of Libya’s rebuilding needs.¹⁴⁷

In addition, efforts to disarm and integrate militias likewise failed. Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, a core component of the Responsibility to Rebuild, was incomplete and poorly executed.¹⁴⁸ Many armed groups were hired by both Libyan and external actors.¹⁴⁹ By 2013 the Libyan security sector had ‘effectively lost control to increasingly independent militia groups over vast parts of the country’.¹⁵⁰ Capacity-building efforts, such as training programmes by the EU and UN, were inefficient in a politically divided environment under heavy militia influence.¹⁵¹

External interference further complicated Libya’s rebuilding process as competing regional and global powers supported different rival militias, pursuing different agendas. The UN panel on sanctions repeatedly documented that all sides, including Turkey, the UAE, Egypt and Russia, had violated the arms embargo, prolonging the fighting.¹⁵² Rather than receiving unified international support under a coherent R2R mandate, Libya became a proxy battleground for geopolitical rivalries.

Lastly, Libya exposed the significant weaknesses in the R2R accountability mechanisms. No international commission or tribunal was ever established to investigate NATO’s actions or the abuses of allied rebel factions. According to Amnesty International, quoted in 2021, ‘for a decade, accountability and justice in Libya were sacrificed in the name of peace and stability ... those responsible for violations have enjoyed impunity and have even been integrated into state institutions’.¹⁵³ Victims of militia crimes (torture, rape, killings) still await justice, and foreign sponsors have faced no consequences for their roles. After NATO ended its military campaign, states involved were not bound to support Libya’s recovery and reconstruction, leaving it unstable and lacking means to hold responsible parties accountable. In the view of Alan Kuperman, the intervention ultimately allowed Libya to become a failed state.¹⁵⁴

Recommendations for R2R reform

The Libyan experience indicates that rebuilding after an intervention is an essential condition for sustainable peace, national recovery, and the prevention of relapse into conflict. Without a coherent and inclusive post-conflict rebuilding strategy, international intervention may contribute to a further deterioration of the situation which had elicited the calls for protection under R2P. This highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive reform of the Responsibility to Rebuild. The following six actions, grounded in the Libyan experience, are proposed areas for reform, to strengthen the the operational, legal and normative capacity of R2R.

First, reconstruction strategies must prioritise local legitimacy, inclusion, and meaningful social reconciliation.¹⁵⁵ This requires more than symbolic consultation; it demands the full participation of local institutions, civil society organisations, tribal leaders, and youth in shaping post-conflict recovery. Libya’s externally driven, top-down approaches weakened the legitimacy and impact of rebuilding efforts, as international actors prioritised

political deal-making with national elites over meaningful engagement with local communities, leaving rebuilding processes disconnected from the populations they were intended to serve.¹⁵⁶ As a result, they produced unstable outcomes, low public trust, and ongoing conflict. Just as crucial is the systematic involvement of regional organisations such as the African Union and the Arab League, which have both geographic proximity and contextual understanding.¹⁵⁷ Integrating such institutions into the implementation of R2R frameworks would strengthen local legitimacy and preserve cultural relevance of rebuilding efforts.

Second is the rebuilding of institutions and security, which must include a full DDR programme. These efforts should be integrated in all post-conflict mandates. Libya clearly illustrates the severe consequences of incomplete DDR, as armed groups retained autonomy, contributing to the ongoing violence and instability. Establishing a unified and coherent security structure must be prioritised to prevent the fragmentation and militia dominance that has characterised post-2011 Libya.

Third, economic reconstruction and development strategies must target structural inequalities, ensuring the transparent and equitable distribution of national resources. The uneven allocation of Libya's oil revenues, for instance, intensified regional disparities and undermined national stability. Economic diversification is equally important; reforms must lead to reduced reliance on single-resource economies that remain highly vulnerable to global market fluctuations and internal disruptions, as demonstrated in Libya.

Fourth is the area of transitional justice and legal accountability. Despite widespread documentation of abuses under the Gaddafi regime, including torture, forced disappearances and systematic repression, many perpetrators have never been held accountable. A strong transitional justice strategy must include legal action to investigate and prosecute these crimes, ensuring that past abuses are addressed. Libya's post-intervention experience highlights the dangers of neglecting accountability, as abuses persisted unchecked, undermining public trust.

Fifth, reinforcing international responsibility and strategic commitment is crucial. It is essential to codify R2R obligations clearly into international law, with binding commitments defining sustained responsibilities for intervening states, including explicit long-term engagement timelines and funding mechanisms. Libya's post-intervention abandonment shows why reconstruction must be a legal obligation under international law, not just an option. To ensure transparency and continuous international engagement, establishing accountability measures, such as appointing a UN Special Rapporteur for Post-Conflict Reconstruction, would be highly beneficial.

Finally, R2P normative reform must incorporate follow-up mechanisms to address significant gaps in oversight and implementation. Institutionalising clear monitoring structures, possibly by expanding the mandates of bodies such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission, would greatly enhance accountability and effectiveness. It is also vital to build regional partnerships by involving organisations like the African Union and the Arab League. Their involvement helps ensure local legitimacy, cultural relevance, and more responsive reconstruction efforts.

In sum, these recommendations aim to address the critical gaps and limitations revealed by Libya's experience, offering a more coherent, accountable and sustainable approach to future R2R applications.

Conclusion

This article critically evaluates the implementation and limitations of the Responsibility to Rebuild in post-intervention Libya through a comparative study of Libya before and after 2011, when intervention was deemed necessary under the Responsibility to Protect doctrine in order to stop gross human rights violations against Libyans by the Gaddafi regime. It examines both the application of R2R principles and the long-term outcomes across political, economic, and social indicators. Employing both normative criteria (based on ICISS principles) and empirical measurements (through the principle of proportionality), the study indicates that there is a clear misalignment between the humanitarian aims of the R2P doctrine and post-intervention realities. The findings indicate that while the 2011 NATO-led intervention under R2P successfully prevented the immediate continuation of atrocities, it was not followed by a sustained commitment to rebuilding. In explicit terms, the international community failed to fulfil its responsibility to rebuild in Libya.

Although several international initiatives emerged following the intervention, these were often short-term, poorly coordinated, and lacking local ownership. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), originally mandated to assist Libya's transitional authorities, was criticised for its externally driven top-down approach that neglected meaningful local participation.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, UNDP's Stabilisation Facility for Libya (SFL), launched in 2016, was similarly criticised for prioritising short-term visible achievements over sustainable governance reforms. Moreover, the international community's inconsistent engagement was further undermined by competing foreign interests, which deepened internal divisions and significantly hindered unified reconstruction efforts.¹⁵⁹

The comparative analysis of Libya's political governance, economic stability, and social welfare pre- and post-intervention clearly demonstrates that Libya experienced substantial deterioration across all indicators. Politically, Libya's political governance deteriorated from a centralised authoritarian state to a fragmented and externally dominated landscape, with competing governments, widespread corruption, collapsed institutions, and growing regional inequalities. Economically, key indicators such as GDP, GNI per capita, and oil production declined sharply, while public services and welfare systems all but collapsed due to prolonged violence and displacement. The population's overall human security and welfare worsened, undermining the protective aims of the original intervention. These findings demonstrate that the principle of proportionality, as defined in this article, was not upheld. Indeed, post-intervention conditions deteriorated markedly below pre-intervention baselines across all three measured dimensions – political governance, economic stability, and social welfare – indicating that the costs of the intervention were excessive relative to any protection secured. A protection doctrine cannot claim legitimacy if it leaves the affected population worse off than before it was invoked, and Libya's post-intervention record over more than a decade is a clear illustration of this failure.

In this light, the article proposes six areas for reform. These include steps for empowering local actors, granting them legitimacy and inclusion; enforcing institutional and security reform; ensuring economic redistribution and development; securing justice and accountability; defining international commitment through binding post-

intervention frameworks; and reforming R2P to include follow-up mechanisms and regional partnerships. These recommendations are drawn from the Libyan experience, offering grounded insights into how to strengthen the Responsibility to Rebuild to achieve lasting peace. This discussion is particularly relevant in contexts across Africa where vulnerabilities to conflict and instability persist. The international community is called upon to prioritise and strengthen the R2R in order to fulfil its humanitarian commitments.

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