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Social Media and the Transformation of the Humanitarian Narrative:
A Comparative Analysis of Humanitarian Discourse in Libya 2011 and Bosnia 1994

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Honors Thesis
Political Science Department
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May 7, 2013

Abstract

Within humanitarian discourse, there is a prevailing narrative: the powerful liberal heroes are saving the helpless, weak victims. However, the beginning of the 21st century marks the expansion of the digital revolution throughout lesser-developed states. Growing access to the Internet has enabled aid recipients to communicate with the outside world, giving them an unprecedented opportunity to reshape discourses surrounding humanitarianism. Through a comparative discourse analysis of Libyan Tweets, 1994 newspaper reports on Bosnia, and 2011 newspaper reports on Libya, this paper analyzes whether aid recipient discourse can resist the dominant humanitarian narrative and if that resistance can influence dominant discourse, fundamentally altering the humanitarian enterprise. I found Libyan Twitter users' representations of aid and aid recipients, as well as their use of disruptive images and humor, challenged the dominant hero-victim narrative and had a limited, but meaningful impact on mass media discourse.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, thank you to my advisor, Professor Wendy Weber, for your constant intellectual and emotional support. Your substantive feedback was invaluable, and your unwavering enthusiasm and faith in this project gave me the confidence and motivation I needed. Over the last four years, you have helped me find my passion, communicate my ideas, and channel my intellect in creative ways.

Thank you also to Professor David Blaney for your always-thoughtful input, especially during the early planning stages of this project. And thank you for instilling in me the deeper theoretical underpinnings of constructivist thought that inspired this research. In addition, I want to thank Professor Diane Michelfelder for providing me with incredibly thorough feedback on the final product and for always encouraging me to think creatively.

I'm also grateful for Professor Andrew Latham and my fellow honors students for being a beacon of support and encouragement throughout the year. Thank you especially to Jayne Discenza for reading drafts and offering such thoughtful feedback.

Finally, thank you to my friends and family for supporting me throughout this process. Thank you especially to John, Caroline, Danait and Laura for rooting me on; to Michael and Patsy for all the home cooked meals; and to my mother for being my rock of support and always encouraging me to think big.

Dedicated to my loving parents:
Julia Brooks Noble and John Francis Noble (1953-2010)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The end of the Cold War gave rise to a liberal humanitarian conviction that, at least for a moment, permeated consciences throughout the developed world. In the 1990s, the world witnessed a streak of humanitarian interventions in Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, East Timor, Sierra Leone and the former Yugoslavia.[1] Each intervention was shaped by a unique political context, but yet there was a prevailing hero-victim narrative. Whether the intervention was a success or a disaster, for national self-interest or genuine humanitarian concern, each intervention had a hero[2], a victim, and a villain. Affected populations were constructed as victims - as innocent women and children who were weak, vulnerable and in desperate need of heroic white men, which meant aid workers, peacekeepers, soldiers, and even civilian onlookers from abroad. Meanwhile, the target states of humanitarian aid, particularly their leaders, were characterized as irrational, tribal, and a threat to civility and peace. [3]

This narrative became so embedded within humanitarian discourse and commonplace understandings of aid that it influenced global mass media representations, as well as state and NGO humanitarian practices. The narrative shaped the way international actors understood and approached humanitarian crises: heroes should dominate, control and fix; villains should be killed, victims should be treated as passive

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[1] Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

[2] In some cases, like Rwanda, there was no real hero, but there were still failed heroes, actors who were suppose to be the hero, suppose to rescue the victims, but failed to act and thus betrayed their own identity. In discourses of Rwanda, there is still a normative judgment of the "heroes" – or Western states - for failing to fulfill their role within the humanitarian crisis.

[3] Anne Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention: Human Rights and the Use of Force in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47.

agents in need. While this hero-victim narrative may have turned the world's attention to atrocities abroad, even instilled a sense of the responsibility to protect, it also contributed to a harmful power dynamic between aid providers and recipients. As the dangerous narrative gains traction and becomes widely accepted, aid recipients could begin to internalize the prescribed victim-identity and accept their disempowerment as natural.[4]

Fortunately, the beginning of the 21st century marked the expansion of the digital revolution throughout lesser-developed states. Growing access to the Internet and mobile phones, as well as the emergence of Twitter, YouTube, text messages and blogs, enables aid recipients to communicate with the outside world. While there are still relatively low levels of access in developing states and even more communication barriers in times of political conflict, aid recipients are finding creative ways to make their voices heard, often with the help of their diaspora. Through global communication networks, aid recipients have an unprecedented opportunity to reshape discourses surrounding humanitarianism. With new voices contributing to humanitarian discourse, there is the potential for a revolutionary shift in norms, assumptions, and prescribed identities within the normative context of humanitarianism.

This paper explores how aid recipients with new communication technology can influence humanitarian discourse. Historically, humanitarian discourse manifests as a hero-victim narrative, so the real question is whether aid recipient discourse resists that dominant hero-victim narrative or reinforces it. Therefore, this paper analyzes how aid recipients represent themselves, others, and humanitarianism as a whole, compared to the defined identities and embedded power dynamics within the dominant hero-victim

[4] See: Kimberley Armstrong, "'Seeing the Suffering' in Northern Uganda: The Impact of a Human Rights Approach to Humanitarianism," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 42:1 (2008): 1-32.

narrative. After concluding that aid recipient discourse does resist the dominant narrative, this paper investigates whether such aid recipient discourse can influence the way mass media represents humanitarianism. If aid recipient discourse can change the greater humanitarian discourse, then it can change inter-subjective and systemic understandings of reality, shift the normative context, and in turn, influence the behavior of international actors in regards to humanitarian intervention.

To investigate whether the aid recipient voices can shift humanitarian discourse, I conducted a comparative case study of the Libyan civil war in 2011 and the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1994. I did a discourse analysis of 7,703 tweets from 11 different Libyan Twitter users reporting on the events in Libya during February, March, April and May of 2011.[5] I also conducted a discourse analysis of 307 articles on the Bosnian civil war from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *USA Today*, published in January and February of 1994. I compared my findings to determine how, if at all, aid recipients characterized and understood humanitarian intervention differently than the mass media in 1994.

Secondly, in order to determine whether Libyan aid recipient discourse influenced the larger, common humanitarian discourse, I compared mass media representations of Libya to the Libyan tweets and also to mass media representations of Bosnia. I analyzed 233 articles from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *USA Today* about the Libyan civil war, published in March and April of 2011. I attempted to identify ways the newspaper articles challenged the dominant hero-victim narrative similar to the aid recipient tweets, as well as ways they differed from mass media reports on Bosnia 20

[5] Libyan Twitter data set was provided by Steve Schohn from Recorded Future.

years earlier. I was also interested in seeing if the newspapers integrated aid recipient voices into their articles.

The Libyan civil war and Bosnian civil war provide the best comparison of humanitarian crises because in both there was severe internal political conflict, and as a result, NATO set up a no-fly zone and conducted air strikes against authoritarian regimes.[6] I use the empirical case studies of Libya and Bosnia to ground constructivist theories of discourse within the real world; these comparative case studies are meant to demonstrate whether, and how, discursive shifts can emerge from the ground up, transform larger discourses, and reshape our normative understandings.

To clarify the structure of my argument, I offer a brief road map. Chapter 2 establishes the constructivist framework that motivates my project. In it, I explain how normative contexts shape our understandings of reality by defining what's right, appropriate or even possible. Norms can be created by actors through a causal process or they can be naturally constituted, but this causation and constitution of norms can become muddled, leaving powerful actors to, consciously or unconsciously, shape normative contexts and have those norms, including prescribed identities, widely accepted as naturally true. After establishing the power of discourse and narratives in the shaping of normative contexts, I outline the content of the dominant hero-victim humanitarian narrative. I explain how international actors use the narrative to their advantage, while the narrative simultaneously shapes those actors' beliefs and behaviors.

Despite the humanitarian narrative's constitutive power, I argue there is still an opportunity for aid recipients to recognize and resist the assumptions and identities imposed by the dominant hero-victim narrative. With the emergence of new

[6] See further defense of case study selection on page 38.

communication technology throughout lesser-developed areas, even during humanitarian crises, there is now a global online network available for aid recipients to directly communicate with the outside world. Aid recipients now have the power to undermine traditional communication hierarchies and challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative, but the question remains whether aid recipients will take advantage of this opportunity and use their platform to challenge or simply reinforce the dominant narrative.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the comparative discourse analysis. It explains how the discourse analysis of the two comparative case studies, Libya in 2011 and Bosnia in 1994, effectively test whether aid recipients challenge and transform the humanitarian narrative. In this chapter, I defend the selection of my two case studies, the civil wars in Libya and Bosnia, and argue these two humanitarian crises are comparable. I explain the process of collecting the data sets of tweets and newspaper articles as well as the method I used to analyze these texts. Finally, I provide the historical and political background for the humanitarian crises in Bosnia and Libya because understanding the context of the discourses is necessary for an effective discourse analysis.

Chapters 4 and 5 investigate whether aid recipient discourse, broadcasted through Libyan Twitter users, resists the dominant humanitarian narrative. In Chapter 4, I analyze Libyans' construction of the self and the other, the aid recipient and the aid provider, in comparison with the mass media's construction of the aid recipient and aid provider in Bosnia. I first offer a brief overview of the civil wars in Libya and Bosnia and their respective humanitarian crises. I then compare the construction of aid recipients and providers in Libyan Twitter discourse to mass media's construction of recipients and

providers during the Bosnian crisis. The interdependent construction of the self and the other is central to the humanitarian narrative and its embedded power relations. In the representations of aid recipients, Libyans were characterized as highly political agents, even martyrs, leading the efforts against the Gaddafi regime, while Bosnians were characterized as desperate and weak. As for aid providers, mass media in Bosnia glamorized sources of aid, while Libyans tweeted criticisms of NATO and refused to come hat in hand for help, but instead, demanded their right to international aid.

In Chapter 5, I focus on three additional aspects of humanitarian discourse: images of suffering, use of humor, and representations of gender. These three categories are additional forms of aid recipient discourse that influence the identity construction of recipients and providers, as well as elucidate the ways aid recipients react and respond to the dominant humanitarian narrative. The images of suffering tweeted by Libyans are gruesome, disturbing and disruptive, while the images of suffering published in major newspapers in 1994 are pity provoking, relatable, and censored. In addition, Libyans, unlike mass media outlets in 1994, successfully used humor and irony to challenge the traditional power dynamics embedded in the humanitarian narrative through parodies, self-deprecation and satire. Finally, in terms of representations of gender, both Twitter and mass media from 1994 characterized female aid recipients as weak and in need of protection, which is a central tenant of the dominant hero-victim narrative. Thus, I found that Libyan aid recipients challenged the dominant humanitarian narrative, unlike mass media coverage of Bosnia, in their use of images of suffering and humor, but not in their representations of gender.

Chapter 6 examines whether the Libyan tweets influenced discourse beyond Twitter and transformed mass media's representation of the Libyan humanitarian crisis. I analyzed 2011 mass media coverage of Libya in comparison with the Libyan tweets and the 1994 mass media coverage of Bosnia. The 2011 mass media coverage of Libya did not challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative in its images of suffering or use of humor or irony. The structural limits on mass media kept it from publishing disruptive images and the formality of the forum left no room for satire or humor. Mass media in 2011 did, however, challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative's representations of aid and aid recipients much like the Libyan tweets did, and it did integrate the voices of Libyans. Unfortunately, while mass media did represent Libyans as highly political agents, the mass media then stopped talking about Libyans as aid recipients in a humanitarian crisis; they could not communicate the complex identities of aid recipients. The mass media did not depoliticize the narrative, but they did simplify it. I conclude that aid recipient discourse can influence mass media representations, but mass media will not represent recipients with multifaceted identities and will thus categorize them as soldiers or victims, but not both.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I conclude that aid recipient voices, as expressed by Libyan twitter users, did challenge the dominant hero-victim narrative and did influence, to some extent, the larger global discourse and common understandings of the humanitarian intervention in Libya. I explain that the changing discourse of humanitarianism is worthy of exploration because it is the catalyst for humanitarian policy reform. NGOs and governments are already beginning to try new policies that integrate aid recipients into

providing their own aid.[7] Cooperating with aid recipients for intelligence or coordinated networks to distribute aid are just the tip of the iceberg; a transformation in humanitarian discourse could open up whole new ways of thinking about humanitarian policy.

Ultimately, this paper seeks to prove that the dominant humanitarian narrative that the international community has grown familiar with is not the only way of making sense of humanitarianism. This paper suggests that aid recipients, who are often disempowered by violence, poverty and their own aid providers, may have an opportunity to control their own narrative and reclaim their own identities. There may be an opportunity for a massive, grassroots, and discursive rebellion against the oppressive normative contexts of humanitarianism.

[7] Sheila Kinkaid and Katrin Verclas, "Wireless Technology for Social Change," UN Foundation–Vodafone Group Foundation Partnership, 2008.

Chapter 2

Transforming the Normative Context of Humanitarianism: A Constructivist Framework

Understanding Normative Contexts

Shared values, beliefs, discourses and practices create particular normative contexts or common understandings of what is "good and appropriate."[8] Normative contexts create natural environments where certain actions are more or less desirable, likely or possible. The power of normative contexts is best understood through the lens of constitutive causality. As Ned Lebow argues, normative contexts influence ideas, norms and other political conditions to create channels of acceptable behavior and guide the interests of actors.[9] Some channels may be wide and flexible providing actors with a large range of options. Other normative contexts may be narrow and constraining; these channels have a more direct influence on actors' decisions. This paper focuses on the normative context of humanitarianism; it explores how historically contingent discourse and culturally determined roles and rules constitute the identities and preferences of donors, aid recipients and those watching from the stands. Humanitarian discourses form a normative context, which then defines actors and the range of acceptable decisions for actors to make.

Normative contexts change over time as a result of agent-driven shifts in international norms. Rationalist theories explain international relations through shifts in power; they assert that decisions in international relations are inevitable consequences of

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[8] Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society,* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 2.
[9] Richard Ned Lebow, "Constitutive Causality: Imagined spaces and political practices," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38 (2009): 214.

human nature or of the structure of world politics. These theories can only explain political phenomenon in reference to top-down structures and relatively static power relations. It is hard for rationalist theories to explain how the least powerful individuals can collectively affect change in major political structures, like states, NGOs and international institutions. Thus, they cannot easily account for the conscious and active manipulation of discourse as a method of resistance. By contrast, a constructivist perspective, creates a space for activist discourse and grassroots movements to shape normative contexts. If we appreciate the power and fluidity of normative contexts we discover that important things happen in the world because "people interpret actions and events in new, bold, and creative ways."[10] Discourses, originating from the least powerful, can shift the normative contexts that govern humanitarian practices.

Discourse is a method through which agents can change normative contexts. In this paper, discourses are not mere rhetorical framings of reality that shape perceptions and understandings; discourses are modes of thinking or "systems of meaning production" with narratives, texts, scripts and images that "enable us to make sense of the world."[11] Sometimes discourses combined with social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power, can even constitute knowledge itself. This definition of discourse blurs the distinction between discursive norms and material reality.[12] Discourses can emerge in many different forms, but this paper focuses on narratives as a form of discourse.

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[10] David Desller and John Owen, "Constructivism and the Problem of Explanation: A Review Article," *Perspectives on Politics* 3 (2005): 598.
[11] Laura Shepherd, "Veiled References: Constructions of Gender in the Bush Administration Discourse on the Attacks on Afghanistan post-9/11," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8 (2006): 20.
[12] Chris Weedon. *Feminist Practice and Postmodern Structuralist Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 108.

Narratives are "the codes that relate our normative system to our social constructions of reality and to our visions of what the world might be".[13] Narratives are stories that organize a series of events into a whole in an attempt to understand reality.[14] According to Robert Cover, who writes about the relationship between narratives and the law, "the very imposition of a normative force upon a state of affairs, real or imagined, is the act of creating narrative."[15] Cover continues to argue, "The intelligibility of normative behavior inheres in the communal character of the narratives that provide the context of that behavior."[16] This interpretation means all normative behavior is defined through narratives. Our behavior is only sane because we can locate it within a common script. Through manipulating and challenging that common script, actors can begin to reshape narratives, discourses and eventually normative contexts.

It may be easy to see the methodology of discourse analysis, in relation to the construction of identities and narratives, as far removed from real world policy, but this would be a failure to understand the methodological process in use. Lene Hansern explains:

> This research program is based on the assumption that policies are dependent upon representations of the threat, country, security problem, or crisis they seek to address. Foreign policies need to ascribe meaning to the situation and to construct the objects within it, and in doing so they articulate and draw upon specific identities of other states, regions, Peoples, and institutions as well as on the identity of a national, regional, or institutional Self.[17]

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[13] Robert Cover, "Forward: Nomos and Narrative," *Harvard Law Review* 97 (1983): 10.
[14] Jane Elliott, *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (London: Sage, 2005), 4.
[15] Robert Cover, "Forward: Nomos and Narrative," 10.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War,* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 5.

Thus, discourse analysis is an appropriate method of analyzing international relations, specifically humanitarianism, because international actors make real world decisions based on the identities, narratives, assumptions and other norms that are built up and solidified over time. Understanding the humanitarian narrative, and its potential transformations, is key to understanding humanitarianism in the real world.

These interpretations of discourse and narrative challenge commonplace understandings of reality because they assert that our understandings of reality are socially, culturally and politically constructed and reliant on inter-subjective knowledge. Discourses do not frame events to appear more or less legitimate; they define what is legitimate, what constitutes knowledge, what is right and what is wrong. Even if humanitarian discourses do not have such a radical influence on our normative behavior, it is still important to understand that narratives are inevitable and have the potential to define reality. We must critically analyze the process through which reality is prescribed because embedded in the construction of reality and "systems of meaning production" is power.

Causality and constitution are two seemingly distinct methods of explanation. Questions of causality focus on why and how physical or social phenomena happen, while questions of constitution are concerned with what something is, according to conceptual or logical necessity.[18] There are two important differences between causation and constitution. First, causal influences, whether natural or artificial, can be identified and blamed. By contrast, it is difficult to pin point what or who is responsible for constituted truths since they are, by definition, necessarily true as a result of layered historical accounts and the amalgamation of inter-subjective norms. Second, in the social

[18] Richard Ned Lebow, "Constitutive Causality," 3.

sciences, power plays a major role in causal relationships; power dynamics are often the go-to explanation for why and how things happen. However, power is less visible in the constitution of beliefs, practices or identities because constitution explains what something necessarily *is,* according to our shared experiences and beliefs. For example, most people do not question what power dynamics are embedded within linear logic because they see it as a natural phenomenon and don't know any alternative. Despite distinct definitions, causation and constitution intertwine and can be mutually reinforcing.

The overlap between the constitution and causation of discourse creates an avenue for powerful actors to shape constituted normative contexts in their favor. Ned Lebow explains the reciprocal and fluid relationship between constitution and causation in the context of constructing norms:

> Identities, metaphors, frames of references, concepts and analogies may start life as conscious inventions of actors used to justify and mobilise support for their goals. Even if they have prior existence, they may be used instrumentally by actors. Success, as in the cases of sovereignty or linear perspective, is likely to increase the availability and attractiveness of the identity or frame, enhancing its reach and power.[19]

Thus, constituted norms and causal influences can interact and even reinforce one another. Actors can generate images or texts that support the constitution of particular norms or ideas. If actors can directly influence the constitution of norms then power can have a causal influence in what society understands as a necessary truth. Actors construct discourses to serve their own agenda and with enough resources, political clout and far-reaching influence, the discourses can gain traction and become constitutive realities.

The most prevailing and intrusive forms of oppression become possible when the conscious influence of powerful actors is hidden under a guise of constitutive realities.

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[19] Ibid., 218.

The fear is that a consciously invoked discourse like the "The War on Terror" may, over time, become accepted as natural and a frame of reference through which actors define themselves and each other.[20] Norms and discourses that favor the powerful may become so ingrained that they are accepted as natural. Society may forget where the norms originated from or who created them. If society cannot recognize the source of the discourse, it is difficult to demonstrate how the discourse is a tool for a political or oppressive agenda. Worst of all, dominant discourses and narratives can become impossible to challenge because they eventually define people's identities and influence whom and what people recognize as legitimate[21]. Humanitarian discourse sits in the middle of the constitution-causality continuum, enabling certain kinds of behavior and making others more difficult. It is an identifiable discourse but also one that shapes the identities of donors, aid recipients, and all actors involved in the humanitarian enterprise.

Discourses can ascribe identities through a process of interpellation. Louis Althusser first used the term interpellation to describe the process by which ideology or cultural representation creates subjects. The process begins with one party 'calling out' or 'hailing' the other. The target of communication responds and thus recognizes she is the subject being referred to; she recognizes the social position of the hailer as well as the position the hailer attributed her. According to Dr. Karen Crinall, "if the response is cooperative, the person is considered to have adopted the assigned or assumed subjective position." [22] Interpellation is a continuous process; an individual's sense of self is

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 112.
[22] Karen Crinall, "Appealing for help: A reflection on interpellation and the intertextuality in the visual narrative of an Australian welfare campaign poster," *Current Naratives* 1 (2009): 16.

"constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak." [23] Interpellation is the "larger process whereby language constructs social relations for both parties in an act of communication and thus locates them in the broader map of social relations." [24] Within narratives, there are exchanges of discourse in which interpellation creates subjects; subjects become inseparable from their assigned identities. Interpellation is natural and inevitable, but certain cultural representations are harmful. When narratives ascribe inferior, weak, even subhuman, characteristics to the subject, subjects are in danger of internalizing the ascribed identity and accepting a subordinate status.

The Dominant Humanitarian Narrative

Humanitarian discourse centers on the humanitarian narrative, which has been constituted throughout history. Media, aid industries, states and international organizations help perpetuate the humanitarian narrative through propaganda, speeches, reports and the like, but the narrative is also produced through historical events, political tensions, academic debates, natural disasters, and many other factors outside of humanity's direct control. It is difficult to identify exactly how the humanitarian narrative was produced because it is in part constituted by reality – it's understood as natural and not a consciously created discourse. With that said, we can try to mark the evolutionary process that the humanitarian narrative underwent so as to better understand how it was formed and what it is.

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[23] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice,* 33.
[24] John Fiske, "Culture, Ideology, Interpellation," in *Literary Theory, An Anthology,* ed. Julie Rivkin et al. (Malden: Blackwell, 1998), 308.

The concept of humanitarianism is, at least in part, a noble and revolutionary idea. Michael Ignatieff describes the basic proposition that motivates the humanitarian narrative:

> [There] is only one metanarrative drawing cones of safety and zones of danger together: the humanitarian narrative. We are in one world; we must shoulder each other's fate; the value of life is indivisible. What happens to the starving in Africa and the homeless in Asia must concern us all because we belong to one species. The narrative, with its charter document – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – and its agencies of diffusion – the nongovernmental humanitarian agencies and the U.N. system – puts a strong priority on moral linkages over economic and strategic ones.[25]

At its core, the humanitarian narrative is a well-intentioned, moral argument that seeks to minimize global suffering. This idea that "we owe an obligation to all human beings by simple virtue of the fact that they are human" is a modern conception.[26] This universal empathy is not natural, but something cultivated through normative contexts. According to Ignatieff, "there is nothing intrinsic about the emotions stirred in us by the television pictures of atrocity or suffering. Out pity is structured by history and culture."[27] Therefore, the humanitarian narrative is a constructed, normative context.

The humanitarian narrative appears as a hallmark of moral discourse, characterized by righteousness, sacrifice, and service. But at the same time, the moral superiority of the humanitarian narrative becomes a hero-victim metaphor that perpetuates particular identities, assumptions and norms that do not only fail to reflect reality, but harm aid recipients and limit our understanding of humanitarianism and how to respond to atrocities. The narrative becomes harmful and constraining through its

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[25] Michael Ignatieff, "Television & Humanitarian Aid," in *Hard Choices: Moral Dilemmas in Humanitarian Intervention,* ed. Jonathan Moore (Landham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998): 288.
[26] Ibid., 287.
[27] Ibid.

construction of static identities that reflect major power imbalances. David Chandler describes the humanitarian narrative as a "moral 'fairy story'" with three components: "the hapless victim in distress," "the savior, the aid agency, the international institution or even the journalists covering the story," and "the villain, the non-Western government of state authorities."[28]

Aid recipients are represented as weak and helpless, which strips them of agency and, contrary to humanitarian ideals, strips them of their humanity. The humanitarian narrative characterizes aid recipients as weak and desperate so as to motivate external intervention – if recipients could help themselves or if they were not being treated like animals – then there would be less global interest in coming to their aid. Unfortunately, this narrative risks stripping aid recipients of "that which is most human about the victim: autonomy, dignity, and individual specificity." Through the humanitarian narrative, "victimhood is abstracted to a level of universal anguishes and pure animal emotions."[29] Aid recipients lose their personhood, or dignity, and are reduced to bare life.

Second, aid providers (and citizens within donor states) are characterized as heroic, all-powerful, and largely infallible. Ignatieff explains, "the stories we create always place us as their chief subject… so, our imagination is always susceptible to moral narcissism. The stories we tell lead us to think better of ourselves than we deserve."[30] He believes the humanitarian narrative makes those from developed states feel better because they can contrast their situation with atrocities abroad – they can take pride in the "civility" and safety. Moreover, the narrative makes donor populations feel

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[28] David Chandler, *From Kosovo to Kabul: Human Rights and International Intervention* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2002), 36-37.
[29] Denis Kennedy, "Selling the Distant Other: Humanitarianism and Imagery – Ethical Dilemmas of Humanitarian Action," *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* 411 (2009): 1.
[30] Ignatieff, "Television & Humanitarian Aid," 288.

more powerful because it tells them that they are actually capable of saving lives abroad or stopping the violence they witness, when in reality, such atrocities may be out of their control.

Orford refers to the hero of the humanitarian narrative as the knight in white armor – the "masculine character[31] associated with qualities such as potency and authority… that main controlling figure with whom the spectator is invited to identify."[32] She explains this imperialist character is "associated with attributes including freedom, creativity, authority, civilization, power, democracy, sovereignty and wealth." These humanitarian heroes become the epitome of moral superiority as they set out to save the helpless and the weak on the other side of the world.

Finally, the target states within the humanitarian narrative are characterized as chaotic, irrational and tribal. According to Orford, during the 1990s, target states were characterized by proponents of intervention as "racist and ruthless dictators, tribalism, ethnic tension, civil war and religious fundamentalism thrown up in a post-Cold War era" and thus in desperate need of help.[33] Similarly, Ignatieff points out that when states do not want to intervene they use a similar narrative, the chaos narrative, which represents target states as "meaningless disorder, upon which no coherent pattern can be discerned."[34] The target state's identity, assigned by the humanitarian narrative, pervades political debates, and is accepted as natural no matter whether the crisis warrants intervention. Target states are characterized as threatening or incapable in order to justify

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[31] Because the masculine-feminine dichotomy parallels the hero-victim relationship within the humanitarian narrative, it reinforces harmful gender norms that categorize women as weak and subordinate and men as powerful and in control.
[32] Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention,* 165.
[33] Ibid., 164.
[34] Ignatieff, "Television & Humanitarian Aid," 289.

intervention, and in either case, the states and their leaders are seen as irrational, chaotic, and tribal.

There may be other, smaller, characters within the humanitarian narrative, and some of these identities may at times overlap or slightly morph, but at the root of the narrative is an us-verse-them dichotomy. The international community defines itself through the creation of the other; it elevates its own status by characterizing the other as subordinate and in turn taking on the role of educator, savior, even colonizer. Orford explains, "The literature on humanitarian intervention treats those who lead or inhabit target states as the 'other' of the 'international community': as disordered chaotic, tribal, primitive, pre-capitalist, violent, exclusionary and child-like.[35] In the words of Gayatri Spivak, the humanitarian narrative consists of "white men saving brown women from brown men."[36]

While the humanitarian narrative is a discourse in itself, constituted through layered accounts of history, international actors can still consciously invoke it, or perpetuate it, in order to gain more power. It's important to understand the instrumental value of the narrative, so as to understand its real world consequences and the way it is further constituted over time. Mass media, NGOs, states and international institutions perpetuate it because it benefits them, or at least, they have learned how to take advantage of it.

First, mass media reaffirms the hero-victim narrative because it is simplistic and easy to sell. Mass media has limited time and resources to sell a story, and its decisions are largely driven by profit. Ignatieff explains "The distorting bias here is

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[35] Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention*, 47.
[36] Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 303.

sentimentalization, because sentimental art, by definition, sacrifices nuance, ambivalence, and complexity in favor of strong emotion. Hence, it is art that prefers identification over truth."[37] Ignatieff believes that media will fabricate identities at the expense of moral truth in order to sell stories. Television fails to coherently explain the political or diplomatic contexts that lead to famine, war crimes, or other humanitarian crises. "It has a tendency to turn these into examples of man's inhumanity to man; it turns them from political into natural disasters, and in doing so, it actively obscures the context responsible for their occurrences."[38] The media must also grab the attention of viewers and instigate intense emotions of sympathy or anger. Detailed stories of torture or a woman losing a child attract viewers and bolster the greater narrative that the victims are objects of pity and not agents of change.[39] In this way, mass media fabricates identities, depoliticizes recipients, and characterizes them as weak and desperate to elicit viewer's attention and sympathy, thus effectively perpetuating the dominant hero-victim narrative.

Humanitarian NGOs also entrench dominant discourse; they use the humanitarian narrative to gain political and financial support. The hero-victim narrative characterizes aid workers as courageous saviors and recipients as weak innocents with no basic rights or meaningful agency. If aid recipients have no agency, then NGOs can easily justify intervention as the only option. Moreover, donors are less likely to view aid recipients as threats, if they are characterized as weak and helpless. The hero-victim narrative hides aid recipients' political agendas in a façade of desperation and disempowerment in order

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[37] Ignatieff, "Television & Humanitarian Aid," 293.
[38] Ibid., 294.
[39] See also: Richard Wilson and Richard Brown, *Humanitarianism and Suffering: the Mobilization of Empathy,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

to attract more funding.[40] NGOs are in constant competition with one another for funding, so like mass media outlets, NGOs are motivated to tell stories that "sell." Daniel Roberts explains how Médecins Sans Frontières use the narrative to create an absolutist moral framework and remove complex politics from humanitarian discourse:

> MSF constructs a heroic persona for its members. Aided by the purity bestowed on the volunteer by way of the rhetoric of neutrality, the hero is counterpoised to the villain. […] Such a discursive counter-positioning of good and evil represents a kind of 'identity freezing' for both hero and villain, who are perceived to engage each other in a moralistic, high-stakes passion play. Meanwhile, the fate of the victims hangs in the balance.[41]

This narrative establishes a moral binary; there are righteous heroes fighting evil villains. There is no gray area or complex identities, and thus, the justification for intervention made it seem irrefutable. In this way, the de-politicization of humanitarian crises cultivates blind and generous donors, which strengthens NGO power.

International institutions also perpetuate the dominant narrative. H.L. Johnson conducted a qualitative analysis of UN publications and popular humanitarian discourse in order to investigate the relationship between media representations of refugees and maintenance of the north-south power divide. She concluded that, since the UNHCR institutionalized the international refugee regime, refugees have been racialized, victimized and feminized and all "within a discourse of depoliticisation of the refugee, denying the figure of the refugee the capacity for political agency."[42] International institutions can best justify intervention if politics is removed from the humanitarian crisis.

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[40] Daniel Robert DeChaine, *Global Humanitarianism: NGOs And the Crafting of Community*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), 85.
[41] DeChaine, *Global Humanitarianism,* 85.
[42] Heather Johnson, "Click to Donate: visual images, constructing victims and imagining the female refugee," *Third World Quarterly* 32 (2011): 1015.

Finally, powerful states use the dominant humanitarian narrative to justify tyrannical intervention and post-intervention practices. Donor states use labels, such as 'victims' and 'threats,' to justify stripping affected populations of their agency.[43] Orford argues "the heroic narratives of humanitarian intervention make it possible for practices of economic exploitation to take place alongside military intervention, and for both to be coded as humanitarian."[44] For example, in November 2001, First Lady Laura Bush delivered a radio address to the people of Afghanistan and used the "brutal oppression of women" to justify the US invasion.[45] She explained to the Afghan public that women were no longer imprisoned in their homes because of recent US military gains.[46] Bush invoked the dominant humanitarian narrative to justify what was a highly political invasion with the purpose of strengthening US national security. Therefore, the hero-victim narrative serves the interests of states and other powerful international actors. As a result, the narrative gains traction as a legitimate and true characterization of humanitarianism.

Overall, powerful actors produce discourses that shape the dominant narrative in their interest, but it's important to remember the narrative also exists independently of political agendas and can influence how powerful actors define their interests in the first place. Humanitarian norms and the interests of powerful international actors are separate but also mutually reinforcing, paralleling Lebow's comparison of constitution and causality. For example, when Laura Bush spoke out about the brutal oppression of women in Afghanistan, it may not have been a constant manipulation of the humanitarian

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention,* 159.
[45] Ghazi-Walid Falah and Caroline Nagel, *Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion, and Space,* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2005), 45.
[46] Ibid.

narrative to justify a political war; Bush may have given the radio address because the humanitarian narrative framed the way she saw and understood the intervention in Afghanistan. While actors may consciously manipulate humanitarian discourse, their beliefs and practices are all genuinely shaped by the discourse, the normative context of humanitarianism. The dominant humanitarian narrative is the invisible veil of constitutive causality because it is a tool for powerful actors to serve their own interests, often at the expense of others, but is also accepted as a constitutive truth and commonplace understanding. Therefore, powerful actors like the mass media, NGOs and international institutions have an avenue to shape the humanitarian narrative, but they are simultaneously constrained by it.

This dominant humanitarian narrative channels the behavior of states, NGOs and international institutions. Layered historical accounts, images and norms influence the decisions and policies of international actors. The narrative is ingrained in their epistemological understanding of humanitarianism. While there are policy debates among humanitarians, the general status quo approach to humanitarian crises is understood as the appropriate, and perhaps only, option. However, absent the dominant narrative, humanitarian policies might look very different. For example, states and NGOs might be more likely to consider viable strategies that require the heavy involvement of aid recipients. Historically, state and NGO problem solving fixates on what they can do to serve vulnerable recipients instead of how they can enable or utilize the recipients. Of course, over time, aid organizations have begun to understand the importance of empowering the populations their serve, but even that empowerment is often the goal of aid and not the means of providing aid. Aid providers do not think of all the ways in

which aid recipients could contribute to their efforts because they are chained to an understanding of humanitarianism that characterizes aid recipients as helpless. Recently, there has been an emergence of humanitarian policies[47] aimed at empowering and enabling recipients, but as long as the dominant hero-victim narrative is embedded within humanitarian discourse, our ways of understanding, interpreting and approaching humanitarianism will be constrained.

Through the naturalization, or widespread acceptance, of the dominant humanitarian narrative, the identities of aid recipients and donors become constituted through a process of interpellation. This process of interpellation leads to the naturalization of hierarchical and oppressive social relations. The narrative stereotypes aid recipients as desperate and incapable. When these characteristics are accepted and internalized, recipients have a disempowered sense of self. When aid recipients are "stripped of context and reduced to the most basic of rights, to pure animal emotions, they become personless—they lose their human dignity."[48] Aid recipients may internalize the imposed identity and grow to understand themselves as permanently inferior, dependent, and subhuman. While there are no empirical studies demonstrating

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[47] For example, crowdsourcing maps are being used to coordinate the distribution of aid and meet the urgent needs of aid recipients. See: "About Us," *Ushahidi,* 2013. http://www.ushahidi.com/about-us. The state department is also arming women in the DRC with cell phones so they can communicate the location of rebel groups to one another and the US. See: Alec Ross, "Social media Conquers the Third World," *Big Think* August 5, 2009.
[48] Kennedy, "Selling the Distant Other."

interpellation with aid recipients[49], there have been numerous studies confirming how racial narratives influence African American's own identity.[50]

The internalization of a prescribed identity means that the actors' interests, beliefs and desires become shaped by the dominant discourse, making resistance difficult.[51] Because discourse has the power to construct identities, it has the power to not just oppress individuals from the outside, but transform who they are and what their interests are. Lene Hansen explains:

> To theorize identity as constructed through discourse, and for policy to be dependent thereon, is to argue that there are no objective identities located in some extra-discursive realm… this implies a conceptualization of identity existing only insofar as it is continuously rearticulated and uncontested by competing discourse.[52]

Thus, a narrative that assigns a population an identity of disempowerment may be one of the most powerful tools of oppression because it does not just deny a group power, but actually makes them believe, act, and eventually *be* disempowered. Fortunately, the dominant humanitarian narrative sits in the middle of Lebow's continuum, meaning it has not become entirely internalized and accepted as natural.[53] We still hear academics, policymakers, and even aid recipients, identify the humanitarian narrative as something separate from descriptive reality; it is still possible to identify the way the narrative imposes false identities and metaphors because we have not full accepted it as a

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[49] Kimberley Armstrong's study of the IDP camps in Northern Uganda comes closest to documenting aid recipient interpellation, but in her analysis, she explains it's unclear whether the refugees have truly adopted a subordinate and helpless identity or if they are consciously performing for outsiders so as to attract more aid. See: Armstrong, "'Seeing the Suffering'," 1-32.
[50] Gwen Bergner, "Black Children, White Preference: Brown v. Board, the Doll Tests, and the Politics of Self-Esteem," *American Quarterly* 61 (2009): 299-332.
[51] Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 119.
[52] Hansen, *Security as Practice,* 5.
[53] Lebow, "Constitutive Causality," 236.

constitutive reality. While the humanitarian narrative's assumptions influence behavior, beliefs and norms, there is still space to maneuver and challenge those assumptions.

Despite interpellation, aid recipients' identities are not fully internalized so resistance remains possible. James Scott argues victims of domination may play the role of their assigned identity in order to survive, but they are also tactical and inspiring. Subjects of domination never fully internalize the narratives that devalue and stereotype them, but instead, adopt a 'double consciousness'. W.E.B. Du Bois describes double consciousness as "this sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."[54] If aid recipients can maintain their own unique understanding of reality, despite the dominant humanitarian discourse that surrounds them, then they still have a framework for resistance.

Resistant discourse can be hidden, but the most effective form of resistance is overt. Scott, who describes resistance in the context of slavery, believes that resistance to domination can be found in 'hidden transcripts' that exist in private life, like in the household or in religious and ritual life. Sometimes resistant discourse is also in open spaces but disguised as folktales, songs and jokes. Victims of domination "insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity."[55] However, slaves' quiet resistance to the master's hailing call may never be heard beyond the walls of the slave corridors. By contrast, explicit acts of rebellion, like revolts, often inspire other slaves to disobey, flee or challenge their master because the practice of resistance, once inconceivable, becomes possible. Confrontational discourses challenge the slave's natural subordination and

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[54] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 45.
[55] James Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance: hidden transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), xiii.

widen the range of possibilities. Thus, resistant discourses are most effective when masters have to confront them. Of course, these explicit acts of resistance, in the context of slavery, are also dangerous. The leader of a revolt often sacrifices her life in an attempt to challenge the normative context that legitimizes slavery.

Unlike slaves, aid recipients in the 21st century have a relatively safe forum to resist the dominant humanitarian narrative. Expanding access to the Internet provides aid recipients a forum to challenge dominant discourse through overt transcripts, while remaining anonymous when necessary. When aid recipients speak out on the instant global communication network they confront the powerful actors that perpetuate the dominant narrative including mass media, NGOs, states and international institutions. The emergence of new communication technology over the last 20 years gives aid recipients the *opportunity* to resist the master's hailing call; it provides victims of domination with a method to define their own identity.

The Emergence of New Communication Technology

Over the last ten years we have witnessed rapid global communication networks expand to all corners of the globe. Between 2000 and 2012, Internet has become increasingly accessible in lesser-developed states. Since 2000, the number of Internet users in Latin America has grown by 1,205.1% and the number of users in Africa has grown by 2988.4%. About 39.9% of the Latin American population is online, including 19.6% of Bolivia and 55.9% of Colombia. Only 13.5% of Africa is online, but the growth rates are skyrocketing. In 2000 the Democratic Republic of Congo had 500 Internet users. Eleven years later, there are 915,400 users, which may only mean 1.3% of the population

is online but also means there is a 1830.8% growth rate of internet access in one of poorest countries in the world. It is important to remember that aid recipients in Libya, with only 5.9% of its population online, used Twitter, Facebook and YouTube during the 2011 humanitarian crisis.[56] Aid recipients can communicate with the rest of the world even when Internet access is low.

However, despite the growth of Internet access, Internet users still represent a specific demographic. Karl Feld describes the demographic of Middle East and Northern African Internet social media users: "They use it in Arabic and English. Many are expatriates. They tend to be younger, male and single more often than the general telephone owning population. Most are highly educated and employed or students in middle and upper social classes."[57] Unfortunately, there are no class, gender or even age demographics for my data set because the Libyans Twitter users were largely anonymous, especially if they were in Libya or had family in Libya that could suffer retaliation from Gaddafi forces. With that said, it is likely my data set represents the demographic Feld describes. Moreover, the most desperate of aid recipients probably have much less access to the global communication network and thus their voices may not be fully represented in my qualitative analysis either. While aid recipient voices on the Internet may not yet be fully representative, the Internet usage statistics demonstrate there is a growing trend of Internet access in the most under-developed and conflict-ridden states.

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[56] "Internet World Stats: Usage and Population Statistics." Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2011, accessed April 15, 2012, http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm. "Internet usage data collected by Nielsen Online, International Telecommunications Union, GfK, local Regulators and other reliable sources."

[57] Karl Feld and Brittany Shanks, "Internet Media Use and Middle Eastern Public Opinion," D3 Systems, http://www.cicpo.gov.eg/Day1/Karl%20G.Feld.pdf.

Humanitarian crises hinder, but do not eliminate, aid recipient access to global communication networks. An organization called *Technology's Refuge* conducted a study composed of 30 interviews and 43 surveys with refugees, both male and female, from different regions of the world. Refugees were asked about communication in situations of conflict and dislocation. Many refugees cited unreliable telephones because war and violence often damaged communication infrastructure and disconnected phone lines. Refugees also reported that many existing telecommunication services required money they did not have. While there were many difficulties in accessing communication technologies during crises, the refugees did express some success in the use of mobile devices. Mobile devices were often an effective means of communication even if it required standing on a hill for a connection or sharing phones.[58] As the rate of Internet use and mobile coverage grows, victims are likely to gain increasing access to communication networks even during humanitarian crises.

In addition, many NGO aid organizations are working to increase Internet access in refugee camps. For example, internally displaced person camps in Northern Uganda were completely disconnected from the rest of Uganda and the world at large until an organization called BOSCO Uganda, which stands for Battery Operated Systems for Community Outreach, began to spread new communication technology throughout the camps in 2007. BOSCO, with the help of an organization called Inveneo, distributed specially designed PCs that can be powered by solar panels or bicycle pedals. These computers can access the web via long distance WiFi transmitters. BOSCO successfully

[58] Linda Leung, "New Issues in Refugee Research: Taking Refuge in Technology: Communication Practices in Refugee Camps and Immigration Detention," (Switzerland: UNHCR, 2011), 20-24.

brought many IDP camps online, including those in Gulu, Pabbo, Alero, Lacor, Coope, Jen'Geri, Unyama, and Pagak.[59]

Unfortunately, infrastructure is not the only barrier between aid recipients and access to the Internet. State governments often shut down the Internet in response to internal political conflict during a humanitarian crisis. Civilians use the Internet, including Twitter and Facebook, to organize protests and expose their states' internal affairs to the rest of the world. As a result, states experiencing political unrest have a strong incentive to block communication among their own people and with the rest of the world. Most authoritarian regimes have one state controlled Internet carrier and can easily slow it down or shut it off entirely. For example, in 2009 China shutdown cellphone and Internet services when there was unrest in the Muslim region of Xinjiang. Just this year, there have been severe Internet slowdowns in Bahrain and Iran as protests escalated, and Mubarak completely shut down the Internet in Egypt, severing its 20 million online users from any Internet contact with the outside world.[60] While some Internet shutdowns are just a response to political unrest, others are used to hide humanitarian crises from the outside world. For example, Internet was shutdown in Syria and Libya amid reports of brutal state violence against groups of civilians.[61] Perpetrators may block civilians from global communication networks to hide humanitarian crises and avoid international sanctions or interventions.

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[59] Tim Cocks, "Uganda Refugees Go Online," *Reuters UK*, July 12, 2007.
[60] David Crockett, "Is Forcing Open the Internet a Next Frontier for Humanitarian Intervention?" *TechChange*, February 18, 2011, accessed April 15, 2012, http://techchange.org/2011/02/18/is-forcing-open-the-internet-the-next-frontier-for-humanitarian-intervention/.
[61] Jim Cowie, "Syrian Internet Shutdown," *Huffington Post*, March 6, 2011, accessed April 15, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-cowie/syrian-internet-shutdown_b_870920.html.

As Internet shutdowns become a popular tactic to cover up humanitarian crises, donor states, NGOs and aid recipients have developed the power to override a state's control over Internet access. The US, for example, has many satellite and non-satellite devices that could force connectivity on a country against its wishes. States must be careful how they use these new tools since, without precedent, the imposition of Internet access could be seen as an act of war.[62] However, if states hesitate to open up communications, the "hacktivist" group Anonymous can intervene, free of state responsibilities. Anonymous helped Tunisian protesters break through barriers and access the Internet. Tunisians also sent Anonymous videos of atrocities happening on the ground, which the hacker group then posted on Youtube for the world to see.[63] Finally, aid recipients themselves find ways around state sanctioned Internet blackouts. Despite the Internet shutdown during the 2011 humanitarian crisis in Libya, citizens accessed the Internet "through dial-up connections and other ISPs," and quickly sent each other access codes for Facebook, Twitter and Google.[64] Aid recipients in humanitarian crisis find ways around poor infrastructure or government shutdowns in order to communicate with each other and the wider world through online networks.

Therefore, the global online communication network is a relatively effective method for aid recipients to speak out to the rest of the world. Internet access is growing

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[62] Spencer Ackerman, "U.S. Has Secret Tools to Force Internet on Dictators," *Wired*, February 7, 2011, accessed April 15, 2012, http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/02/secret-tools-force-net/.

[63] "Tunisia protesters use Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to help organize and report," *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 2011, accessed April 15, 2012, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2011/01/tunisia-students-using-facebook-and-twitter-to-organize.html.

[64] Melissa Bell, "Libya reports filter out despite Internet clampdown," *Washington Post*, February 22, 2011, accessed April 15, 2012, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/blogpost/2011/02/libya_reports_filter_out_despi.html.

in the poorest and most conflict-ridden states, and while many of aid recipients with Internet access represent a somewhat privileged demographic, the ongoing expanse of the Internet is still giving many aid recipients a voice in international humanitarian discourse when they were previously silent, distant subjects of humanitarianism. Humanitarian crises are a barrier to accessing the global network because infrastructure often falls apart and many people are displaced. However, aid recipients are still finding access during crises through online mobile devices and long distance wifi transmitters in refugee camps. State-mandated Internet shutdowns threaten aid recipient access, but donor states, hacktivist groups and aid recipients themselves are quick to find ways around state sanctioned Internet blackouts. Connecting with the outside world is difficult during a humanitarian crisis, but the expanse of new communication technology is making it easier, and for the first time, many aid recipients have a voice in global humanitarian discourse.

In the recent past, literature has addressed the role of new communication technology in the funding and coordination of humanitarian aid. In 2009 the UN published a 60-page report entitled "New Technologies in Emergencies and Conflicts: The Role of Information and Social Networks," which discusses how new technologies support NGO operations through the prevention, aid, and development stages of humanitarian crises.[65] The UN Foundation, alongside the Vodafone Foundation, also published a report called "Disaster Relief 2.0: The Future of Information Sharing in Humanitarian Emergencies." It analyzes how humanitarian, volunteer, and technical communities effectively communicated in the wake of the Haiti earthquake with the use

[65] Diane Coyle and Patrick Meier, "New Technologies in Emergencies and Conflicts: The Role of New Information and Social Networks," (United Nations Foundation, 2009).

of new technologies.[66] The discussion of new communication technology in humanitarianism largely centers on its use among humanitarian workers and its impact on the effectiveness of humanitarian aid. While there is some literature in response to the role of technology in the Arab Spring[67], there is no significant body of literature that looks at aid recipients' use of the new technology in the context of humanitarianism.

More authors discuss how mass media contributes to the dominant humanitarian narrative and constructs aid recipients as weak and helpless. For example, Heike Harting argues the spectacle of the African corpse is a western representation of the Rwandan Genocide that dehistoricizes and manipulates reality in imperialist ways.[68] Similarly, Richard Wilson discusses the dehumanizing ways in which NGOs use the media to mobilize empathy for their humanitarian goals.[69] However, such literature only discusses the western media's portrayal of aid recipients; it does not yet account for the emergence of citizen journalism among affected populations or how such populations represent themselves in global media. Current literature misses the significant point that, while technology usually develops in donor states, these technologies are now finding application and widespread use in lesser-developed states. The important development is how new communication technology, in the hands of those who suffer in humanitarian crises, may influence humanitarian narratives.

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[66] Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, "Disaster Relief 2.0: The Future of Information Sharing in Humanitarian Emergencies," (District of Columbia: UN Foundation, 2011).
[67] John Pollock, "How Egyptian and Tunisian youth hacked the Arab Spring: Streetbook,"*Technology Review* 114 (2011).
[68] Heike Härting, "Global Humanitarianism, Race, and the Spectacle of the African Corpse in Current Western Representations of the Rwandan Genocide," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 1 (2008).
[69] Wilson, *Humanitarianism and Suffering*.

The growth of new communication technology in less developed states has expanded participation in humanitarian discourse. The normative context of humanitarianism has always been shaped by the discourses of mass media, large NGOs, and powerful states, but now new voices with unique perspectives are emerging. With new communication technologies, those negatively affected by humanitarian crises now have the opportunity to tell their stories to the rest of the world. Governments, NGOs, and average citizens of donor states are beginning to listen to the stories of those suffering from natural disasters or violent regional conflict through expanded social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook or YouTube.

Despite the overwhelming structural powers of mass media, NGOs and states, aid recipient discourse can influence the dominant humanitarian narrative through two interrelated processes. First, aid recipients' stories are told as they unfold; they tend to be fragmented and express raw emotion. Their stories can attract global attention because "first-hand testimonies, visceral accounts, and graphic images help to dramatize and humanize stories, injecting emotion, and urgency into the stories of people's plight and pain." [70] Aid recipient discourse has power because it comes from people on the ground amidst a humanitarian crisis and at a time when mass media outlets usually have limited ground access. They are a source for the most up to date news about the crisis and have dramatic and shocking personal experiences that the international community desperately wants to hear. The influence of a particular discourse is often determined by the power of the speaker or the number of speakers promoting the same message. However, aid recipient discourse gains its influence from powerful stories of trauma and resilience.

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[70] Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen, *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), xii.

Second, aid recipient discourse circumvents traditional relations of communicative power. Stuart Allan explains:

> While corporate news organizations seek to expand market shares and colonize communication space around the globe, citizen journalism it seems has managed to insinuate itself inside corporate news packages while simultaneously staking out independent platforms of news delivery and world-wide dissemination. As citizen journalism progressively ingratiates itself into today's differentiated news ecology so inevitably it unsettles, reconfigures, or simply bypasses traditional hierarchies and relations of communicative power.[71]

Thus, mass media no longer monopolizes communicative power. Social networking sites that disseminate information 24-7 have challenged the traditional news filter. Discourses that interest or amaze the public can gain mass attention without money or infrastructure. Thus, aid recipients in humanitarian crises have an opportunity to challenge mass media, NGO and state strongholds over humanitarian discourse. The emergence of new communication technology has created a forum for aid recipient discourse, but only the content of that discourse will determine whether recipients actually challenge or transform the existing dominant narrative.

Aid recipient discourses through tweets, blogs or YouTube videos are not revolutionary simply by nature of the source or method of communication. The emergence of aid recipient discourse is not necessarily liberating or resistant to current normative contexts. Hansen explains:

> Subjective forms of knowledge can be used to destabilize established constructions of collective identity, but they might also be appropriated to reproduce collective narratives that discipline and distance the Other. They hold distinct possibilities and dangers when mobilized in a political context, as do all other forms of writing, but the key to analysis, as well as to political practice, is to understand their distinct form, authority, and attraction.[72]

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Hansen, *Security as Practice,* 64.

Thus, discourses of any form have the potential to re-entrench, break down or transform collective narratives that construct and alienate subjects. We should not assume aid recipients will use this new forum to challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative because they may have already accepted the narrative, and their victim identity, as natural, or they may believe the narrative is in their interest and that they benefit from being perceived as helpless victims.

For example, Kimberley Armstrong conducted research in the IDP camps in Northern Uganda and concluded that the displaced persons, when given the opportunity to speak out, reinforce the humanitarian narrative and embrace their role as the helpless weak victims. She explains that victims in Northern Uganda embrace their status as helpless victims in order to gain financing and political influence; they understood how the narrative functions and that aid providers want to play the role of the hero, saving them, the helpless victims. Northern Ugandans are aware that it is the image of their helplessness and suffering that mass media and NGOs can sell and that will bring more attention and funding to the IDP camps. After speaking with refugees in the IDP camps, Armstrong believes their stories are distorted to fit the victim identity assigned by dominant humanitarian narrative. She writes:

> In narrating their experiences, many of the people in the camps were playing out what they had come to understand as their role in interactions with foreigners, while at the same time defining the role of the interlocutor with whom they are speaking. […] In this way, the displaced people of northern Uganda have recognized themselves as symbols of suffering and objects of sympathy […] the population they are representing, namely the victims of violence, conflict, poverty, and corruption, has achieved no greater status or position.[73]

[73] Armstrong, "'Seeing the Suffering'," 3.

Thus, it is possible that aid recipients use new communication technology to strengthen, instead of deconstruct, the victim status enforced by traditional humanitarian narratives.

Therefore, the question at hand is how aid recipient discourse, as expressed through new modes of communication technology, differs from the dominant humanitarian narrative, if at all. My study analyzes the discourse of aid recipients through new communication technology in comparison with the more institutionalized humanitarian discourse espoused by mass media. By analyzing how aid recipients characterize themselves and other actors involved in humanitarianism, we can determine whether aid recipient discourse re-entrenches the hero-victim narrative or resists dominant discourse, the master's hailing call.

Chapter 3

Methodology:
Discourse Analysis of Comparative Case Studies

Case Study Selection

In order to determine the constructivist power of grassroots shifts in discourse, there must be an empirical analysis of discourse. The emergence of new communication technology has provided us with a unique research opportunity to see how discourse might be able to transform normative contexts from the bottom up. I chose to compare humanitarian discourse from the case studies of Libyan in 2011 and Bosnia in 1994 because in both there was a civil war, which received international attention, and in both, NATO set up a no-fly zone and conducted air strikes against the authoritarian regimes. Additionally, the two crises are separated by an immediate influx of Internet access in lesser-developed states, which enables us to compare humanitarian discourse with and without aid recipient voices within a relatively short and controlled timeframe. Documented humanitarian discourse from fifteen to twenty years ago can demonstrate what the dominant humanitarian narrative looked like before the emergence of aid recipient discourse through new communication technologies. This short time frame also limits the number of extraneous variables that could influence a change in humanitarian discourse.

Admittedly, there was a larger scale humanitarian crisis in Bosnia than in Libya. The International Committee of the Red Cross reports 200,000 people were killed in Bosnia, including 12,000 children. In addition, 50,000 women were raped and 2.2 million were forced to flee their homes. The Serbian attack against Bosnia and Herzegovina

civilians was a full-scale genocide.[74] By contrast, the death toll in Libya, while still highly contested, was much lower, between 2,000 and 30,000[75], with about 500,000 people displaced.[76] More importantly, most deaths in Libya were from the civil war and not the systematic killing of an ethnic group, though it is possible that absent intervention there could have been more widespread violence. Because of the larger scale attacks in Bosnia, the Bosnian civil war is often labeled a humanitarian crisis more often than the civil war in Libya, but in both states innocent civilians were deprived of basic resources and killed due to internal violence and both interventions were publically justified by the need to protect civilians.

Another key difference between the case studies of Libya and Bosnia is the political context in which they occurred. The Libyan humanitarian crisis took place in the context of the Arab Spring, a series of revolutionary uprisings across the Middle East and Northern Africa. It is possible Libyan aid recipients displayed more 'agency' (or were perceived as having more agency) than Bosnian recipients since their political agenda was all about self-empowerment. Of course, one could argue that the Arab Spring narrative emerged as a result of aid recipient voices being broadcasted throughout the world through new communication technology, in which case the political context of the Arab Spring is evidence of my argument and not a problem of alternative causality. At minimum, it is hard to understand the Arab Spring as a phenomenon completely independent of new communication technology and aid recipient agency. Thus, my

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[74] Haris Silajdžić, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Statement," New York: *United Nations* September 23, 2008 at 63rd Session of the General Assembly.
[75] Karin Laub, "Libyan estimate: At least 30,000 died in the war," *Associated Press* in The Guardian, September 8, 2011, accessed May 5, 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/9835879.
[76] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Norwegian Refugee Council, "Internal displacement in the Middle East and North Africa," *Global Overview* (2011).

research has the potential to prove that the agency of recipients, expressed through new communication technology, played at least some role in challenging the dominant hero-victim narrative.

It is also important to remember that aid recipients in Bosnia, while not part of a string of successful revolutionary movements, were fighting for freedom from the Yugoslav People's Army and for their own sovereign territory. Brendan Simms believes the closest parallel to the Libyan intervention is the Bosnian intervention between 1992-1995 because of the parallels between the Arab Spring and the collapse of former Yugoslavia. Simms, shortly after the Libyan uprising, argued:

> The wars of the Yugoslav succession were part of a general collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, while the Libyan revolt is part of the wave of Arab popular protest that has swept across North Africa and much of the Middle East over the past six weeks. Above all, the mismatch between the lightly armed rebels and the heavy weaponry of the regime makes a massacre possible if the dictator throws off all restraint.[77]

Therefore, there is a close parallel between the political contexts in Bosnia and Libya. While no comparison is perfect, the conflict and intervention in Bosnia best parallels the 2011 crisis in Libya. These two comparable humanitarian crises provide an opportunity to compare humanitarian discourses, from aid recipients and mass media, before and after the expansion of Internet access throughout lesser-developed states.

Discourse Analysis

The discourse analysis compares Libyan Twitter users' tweets reporting on Libya in 2011 with newspaper articles reporting on Bosnia in 1994. The study then compares newspaper articles reporting on Libya in 2011 with the Libyan tweets. My discourse

[77] Brendan Simms, "What Bosnia teaches us about the Middle East," *New Statesman,* March 4, 2011, 34.

analysis is based on original research of these primary texts. I received my data set of the Libyan tweets from research analyst Steve Schohn at Recorded Future because there is no longer any way to access all the Twitter users' full archives. I received the archives of 22 different Libyan Twitter users' tweets published from February to May of 2011.

While I had no choice to analyze tweets from any other time period, these four months best represent the discourse surrounding the Libyan civil war because they were the first four months of the conflict; include the transition from no international aid to full NATO involvement; and were the four months in which the Libyan civil war received the most international attention. I then narrowed the data set from 22 to 11 Twitter users who I could confirm were Libyan, and either in Libya or well connected to people in Libya. I included Libyans living outside of Libya because they shared the aid recipient identity and, most importantly, echoed the sentiments of actual aid recipients on ground who could not access Twitter but could communicate with friends and family abroad. The Libyan diaspora functioned as a megaphone for the Libyan community receiving aid in Libya.

Moreover, while most of the tweets were in English, I removed sporadic tweets in Arabic because I am ultimately interested in how the Libyan Twitter discourse communicates with the outside world and influences larger, dominant discourses, particularly the US media. Tweets in English are more likely to influence those dominant discourses. Finally, I deleted all re-tweets and all tweets linking to mass media news articles so as to make the data more manageable and to guarantee I am analyzing Libyan discourse and not mass media discourse quoted by Libyans. This left me with 7,703

tweets from 11 different Libyan Twitter users reporting on the events in Libya during February, March, April and May of 2011.

The second data set, newspaper articles from 1994 reporting on Bosnia, were collected through the Lexis Nexis archives of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. I limited my search to articles published in January and February of 1994 and that included the word Bosnia, Bosnian, or Sarajevo in the headline. This limited search produced a data set of 307 articles. I chose January and February of 1994 because key events took place in these two months that highlighted both the aid and humanitarian suffering involved in the crisis. In January, France called for NATO use of airstrikes and in February, the market place massacre takes place, leaving 68 dead and over 200 wounded in Sarajevo. Moreover, it is the time period that best parallels the Libyan humanitarian crisis because it was during these two months NATO began airstrikes and mortality rates best paralleled those in Libya.[78]

The third and final data set, of newspaper articles reporting on Libya in 2011, were collected through the Lexis Nexis archives of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. I limited my search to articles published in March and April of 2011 and that included the word Libya in the headline, which resulted in a data set of 233 articles. I chose the months of March and April to maintain a manageable number of articles to analyze but also overlap with the time period in which the Libyan tweets were published.

The discourse analysis of these three different data sets required a thorough analysis of rhetoric, content, assumptions, ideas, and other forms of meaning production.

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[78] Find timeline of Bosnian civil war at:
http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~bonne20s/majorbattlesmaps.html.

Prior to reading the texts, I established four areas of discourse in which I thought the humanitarian narrative could be entrenched or challenged: representation of aid recipients, representation of aid providers, images of suffering, and representations of gender. I then conducted a full comprehensive reading of all the data in search of other areas of discourse, in which the narrative could be reinforced or challenged. Through a close reading of the texts, I noticed Libyan tweets were challenging the humanitarian narrative through the use of humor, which then gave rise to a fifth area of discourse. In the all-encompassing reading of the texts, I also tried to identify general trends. After the full read through, I did a more targeted discourse analysis where I closely analyzed the text surrounding key search terms that represented the five discourse areas. The key search terms included victim, Libyans, martyrs, NATO, aid, image, photo, pic, haha, lol, joke, gender, women and men. The same search terms were applied to both the Twitter data set and the newspaper article data sets.

The two texts in comparison, tweets and newspaper articles, are structurally different. Tweets are short messages, limited to 140 characters each, that individuals can broadcast through Twitter, an online social networking site and micro-blogging service. These tweets can also link to online photos, videos or articles. While all tweets are public, only Twitter users who have selected to "follow" a particular user will see that user's messages on their man newsfeed. By contrast the newspaper articles are much lengthier, around 1,000-1,500 words and could be an opinion piece or basic news report. I am aware of these structural differences throughout the comparative analysis, though I found the only real meaningful consequence of this structural difference was the formality, or informality, in which the discourse was presented. Both forms of text express tone,

opinion, emotions, and rhetoric, debate with others, varied content, and other important elements of discursive analysis.

Thus, the technological revolution and expanse of the Internet over the last twenty years has enabled me to construct a study that can apply constructivist theories of discourse, narrative, and the nature of normative contexts to real world representations of humanitarianism. I selected two comparable humanitarian crises, dating before and after the expanse of the Internet, and then used a systematic method to analyze the humanitarian discourse within the tweets and newspaper articles reporting on those crises. This study tests whether discourses of resistance are possible within the normative context of humanitarianism and if those discourses can transform humanitarianism from the bottom up.

However, prior to analyzing the discourses surrounding the humanitarian crises in Bosnia and Libya, it is important to understand their historical and political contexts. The lack of two perfectly comparable humanitarian crises means it is especially important to be familiar with the historical and political contexts of each case study so as to take into account relevant differences between the two conflicts and make fair comparisons within the discourse analysis. Moreover, an effective interpretation of the texts requires an understanding of the context and position of the speaker. Finally, the dominant humanitarian narrative de-contextualizes the suffering, the fighting, as well as the identities of aid recipients, aid providers, and perpetrators, so it is important to highlight the overarching narratives from which they emerged. Thus, I will briefly outline the history, conflict, humanitarian need, and international response to both the Libyan and Bosnian conflicts.

Background: Bosnia-Herzegovina 1994

In the wake of Yugoslavia's collapse, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, a Partisan leader, became prime minister of the new independent communist state, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1946, he divided Yugoslavia into six Republics, some more ethnically heterogeneous than others. These new boundaries, and the decentralization of government, began to foster the ethnic tensions that would erupt into civil war decades later. The geographical history of Bosnia and Herzegovina was key to its internal conflict and humanitarian crisis in the early 1990s.[79]

In the post war economic boom, Bosnia's economy thrived as the epicenter of heavy industry. "Bosnia's rich mineral resources and an abundance of water made it an ideal location for heavy manufacturing… Bosnia saw rapid development in its mining, steel, aluminum, and hydroelectric power industries."[80] This economic development meant that by the 1990s, all production for the Yugoslav military, including weapons and munitions, happened in Bosnia, making it a key territory for the government of Yugoslavia.[81] Moreover, as Bosnia's economy grew, it became increasingly urbanized and ethnic groups were forced to mix. "By 1990 some 40% of Bosnian urban couples were ethnically mixed" and their children didn't identify with any particular ethnicity.[82] However, this intermarriage was taking place mostly among non-Muslims.[83] The

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[79] Robert Donia and John Fine, *Bosnia and Hercegovina: A Tradition Betrayed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 162.
[80] Ibid., 173.
[81] Ibid., 174.
[82] Ibid., 186.
[83] Steven Burg and Paul Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (New York: M.E. Sharp, 1999): 42

urbanization and wealth concentrated in Bosnia's cities created a tension between the rural and the urban, which contributed to the Bosnian conflict in 1992 and 1993.

While Tito successfully maintained control for many years, Slovenia and Croatia grew angry in the late 1960s due to economic discrimination and unfair distribution of federal resources. Croatians began to make a list of grievances and claimed they "were under-represented in the Bosnian Party organization and in all major political, economic, and social bodies in the Bosnian republic."[84] Tito quickly intervened to stop the rise of this Croatian nationalist movement – thousands of protesters were imprisoned and pro-Croatian publications were put to a stop or moved underground. However, in 1980 Tito died and there was no clear successor who could hold together the diverse regions of Yugoslavia.[85]

After Tito's death, the economy took a turn for the worst and Yugoslavia's central government institutions fell apart. In January 1990, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia failed to agree on a constitutional restructuring of Yugoslavia and the Party congress adjourned indefinitely.[86] Each of the six republics held elections in 1990, but federal elections never took place. The tension between the Serbs and other ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina began to emerge.[87] The Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) changed its mission and became an agent fighting for Serbian Nationalism.[88] Meanwhile, the 1991 war in Croatia was further strengthening nationalism among Bosnian Serbs. [89]

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[84] Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Hercegovina,* 183.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Egon Žižmond, "The Collapse of the Yugoslav Economy," *Soviet Studies* 44 (1992): 207.
[87] Burg, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 70.
[88] Jan Willem Honig and Norbet Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime,* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996): 71
[89] Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Hercegovina,* 220.

In March 1992, a full-scale war emerged in Bosnia, with both Croat and Serb forces trying to gain Bosnian territory.

The Serbs were much more powerful than any other ethnic group in Bosnia. "The YPA had about 90,000 troops in Bosnia: it controlled most armories and munitions stockpiles and could rely on over forty fighter planes, hundreds of tanks and heavy artillery, and many thousands more troops stationed in Serbia."[90] Bosnian forces were out-armed and out numbered. The Croats and Bosnians, both incapable of beating the Serbs alone, had a wary alliance through 1992 and the start of 1993, but then began fighting each other when the Owen-Vance Peace Plan gave certain Bosnian territories to the Croats.[91] "The Croatian-Bosnian fighting in 1993 was among the war's bitterest, accompanied by vicious campaigns of ethnic cleansing on both sides."[92] The YPA, fighting for the Serbs, was able to take over much of Bosnia within just weeks, including major land routes into the city of Sarajevo. Serbian forces would massacre Muslims and engage in mass artillery bombing of Bosnian cities.[93]

Serbian paramilitary groups created a humanitarian crisis, which included mass rape, internment, and murder.[94] Carpenter describes the process of Serbian attacks:

> Militiamen would begin by publicly torturing and executing the settlement's political and cultural elite. Of the remaining population, women, children, and the very old were typically permitted to flee or forcibly deported…Younger women were frequently singled out for rape… Able-bodied males between the ages of six- teen and sixty were sometimes also detained, usually to face torture, forced labor, and possibly death. However, adult males were instead frequently killed on the spot.[95]

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[90] Ibid., 239.
[91] Ibid., 251.
[92] Ibid., 252.
[93] Burg, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 173.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Charlie Carpenter, *'Innocent Women and Children': Gender Norms and the Protection of Civilians,* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006): 65.

The process of conquering territory and eliminating Bosnian Muslims was discriminate and highly systematic. By fall of 1992, there were over two million refugees fleeing Bosnia, which was about half of their total population in 1991.[96] Amnesty International, the US State Department and the International Court of Justice stated that Serbia "has been the initiator and principal perpetrator of ethnic cleansing," but the Croatian armed forces and Muslims have also committed atrocities in the name of ethnic cleansing.[97]

The international response to the Bosnian crisis was originally slow. Europe was divided on which ethnic group to support[98] and the US was hoping to avoid a costly and difficult intervention. The result was an approach of "containment through charity", which meant "trying to bottle up as completely as possible all this suffering and death, and, in their wake, to contain the mass movements of refugees as completely as possible with borders of Croatia and… Bosnia-Herzegovina."[99] Aid organizations set up refugee camps and began airlifting supplies into Sarajevo. By 1993, the UNHCR was providing more than 2.7 millions of Bosnians aid, spending almost a million dollars a day.[100] Instead of taking a strategic military position to bring a halt to the violence, the US and European states hid behind the curtain of humanitarianism, and its principles of impartiality and neutrality, to avoid direct military intervention.

Slowly, the UN and member states began to recognize humanitarian relief would not bring an end to the Bosnian conflict, and a more political intervention was needed. It

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[96] Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Hercegovina,* 245.
[97] Ibid., 246-247.
[98] Ibid., 226, 230. Germany supported the secessionist republic's right to national self-determination and demanded an end to the YPA's use of force. The rest of the Europe supported a united Yugoslavia because they feared Soviet influence on separatist movements.
[99] David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis,* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002): 126.
[100] Ibid., 136.

wasn't until October of 1992 that the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 781 to enforce a no-fly zone over Bosnia. In addition to their humanitarian relief, airdrops, and refugee support, they established international mediation by the Owen-Vance and Owen-Stoltenberg teams. They imposed economic sanctions against Yugoslavia and began creating war crime tribunals.[101] Eventually, the peace process was handed over from Owen and Stoltenberg to the US and Russian diplomats. The US pressured the Tudjman regime and threatened UN sanctions against Croatia if it continued to arm Bosnian Croats.[102]

In February 1994, the Serbs shelled a market place in downtown Sarajevo resulting in heavy causalities. The atrocity gained the attention of mass media and pressured the international community to take more immediate action in response to the Serbs. After the Sarajevo marketplace massacre, where 69 people were killed and 200 others wounded, the US and France agreed NATO "should be prepared to employ air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs." [103] Serbians tested NATO and used six aircrafts, violating the no-fly zone, to bomb a Bosnian government munitions factory. In response, NATO authorized US planes to take action and shoot down four Serbian aircrafts.[104] As a s result, the Serbians began to view NATO's threat as credible and started to cooperate. At this time there was also a NATO ultimatum demanding the Serbs withdraw heavy weaponry around Sarajevo, as well as EU's new demand for an immediate lifting of the siege of Sarajevo, where Serbs had been blocking food and supplies from entering the

[101] Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Hercegovina, 257.*
[102] Ibid., 262.
[103] Ibid., 268.
[104] Ibid., 270.

city.[105] The Serbs cooperated with UN and NATO ultimatums and the violence came to a cease. Ceasefires were quickly arranged and, by March, the Croats and Bosnians ratified an agreement to unite in a federation and merge their forces into a single army once again.[106]

The humanitarian crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina emerged from decades of complex ethnic tensions and a lack of centralized government. The violence that ensued led to the massacre, torture, rape and mass displacement of Bosnian civilians. In the first few years of the Bosnian war, the US and its allies relied on NGO and UN humanitarian aid to contain the crisis, so that they could avoid a costly military intervention. Eventually, the atrocities taking place forced the US, NATO and the UN to take action and help secure the region through military threats and negotiations.

Background: Libya 2011

The second case study of the 2011 Libyan Revolution should also be understood in terms of its complex political and historical context. In 1969, Muammar Gaddafi came to power in a coup to overthrow Mohammed Idris, a Sanusi leader who was accused of corruption, preferential treatment of Cyrenaica, and pandering to the West. At the beginning of Gaddafi's rule, Americans were asked to leave Libyan military bases, corruption decreased, and oil was equitably distributed throughout the state.[107] At first, religious criminal codes were reinstated - alcohol was banned, churches were closed, and

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[105] Burg, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 145.
[106] Donia and Fine, *Bosnia and Hercegovina, 268.*
[107] Lisa Anderson, "Religion and State in Libya: The Politics of Identity," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 483 (1986): 69.

the Koran became a governing text, but Gaddafi soon adopted a new ideological position that put traditional Islamic conventions on the back burner.

He published his new political ideology in three volumes of The Green Book and called it the Third International Theory, which, according to Gaddafi, is based on "religion and nationalism – any religion and any nationalism." He claimed it was an international doctrine in support of those opposing the status quo whether or not they were in Libya or even the Arab World. Gaddafi took on an increasingly international role, funding revolutions and regimes throughout Africa and the Middle East. For example, in 1977, Libya fought a four-day border war with Egypt and invaded Chad in support of rebel forces. He saw himself as "the king of African kings and the imam of Muslims," leading the fight against the capitalist West and bringing power to the Arab world.[108] With its newfound identity and Gaddafi's global reach, Libya was a fast rising power.[109] Its economy boomed without the help of any foreign loans. Women and blacks were given equal rights and welfare systems provided the public with free education and health care.[110]

However, many factions of Libya were skeptical of Gaddafi's platform. Libyan patriots were angry with Gaddafi's high spending on foreign involvements, while the religious establishment was furious with Gaddafi's abandonment of religious orthodoxy.[111] In 1977, Gaddafi established "The Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamajiriyya," which was suppose to function as a direct democracy, but instead just "concentrated power at the very top around Qadhafi, protected by a bevy of security

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[108] "Gaddafi as Orator: A Life in Quotes," *Aljazeera,* Oct 20, 2011. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/09/20119493450743624.html.
[109] Anderson, "Religion and State in Libya," 70.
[110] Dirk Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2012): 87.
[111] Anderson, "Religion and State in Libya," 70.

apparatuses and informal groups."[112] Like many other oil states in the region, "the legitimacy of the Jamahiriyya remained intricately linked to the regime's ability to provide a certain level of economic well-being to local citizens."[113]

So in 1988, when the United Nations and US imposed economic sanctions on the Gaddafi regime for the Lockerbie bombing[114] the Libyan economy began to crumble and resentment began to brew. Dirk Vandewalle explains:

> As the sanctions took hold, inflation soared, and the delivery of goods became erratic and unpredictable. The everyday lives of Libyans had become measurably more difficult… After three decades of centralization, of poor decision-making, of outright neglect, and of making economic development subject to the whims of revolutionary pursuits, Libya had developed intricate patterns of patronage that in effect constituted major political as well as economic liabilities…[115]

In fear of losing power to the masses, the Jamahiriyya distanced itself from terrorist groups and turned over the names of those involved in the bombing. Gaddafi made a speech in support of US intervention in Afghanistan and tried to revamp Libya's image in the international community.[116]

A decade later, mass protests, demanding a change in leadership and democratic representation, sprouted up in Tunisia and ignited what would become known as the Arab Spring – a wave of revolutionary movements throughout the Arab world, including

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[112] Vandewalle, "A History of Modern Libya," 170.
[113] Ibid.
[114] *See* "Colonel Gaddafi 'ordered Lockerbie bombing'," *BBC News* February 23, 2011. Gaddafi sponsored the Lockerbie bombing, an explosion in Lockerbie, Scotland that killed over 270 people including Americans. Gaddafi was also blamed for the 1986 bombing in a Berlin nightclub and often spoke out against Western forces. He often funded rebel groups against states supported by the West: "He called for a jihad by Congolese Muslims against the autocratic western-backed regime of Mobutu Sese Seko. In the 1990s, Gaddafi provided military training to vicious rebel groups in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and backed Tuareg rebels in Mali." See: Adekeye Adebajo, "Gaddafi: the man who would be king of Africa," *The Guardian*, 26 Aug. 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/aug/26/gaddafi-legacy-meddling-africa.
[115] Vandewalle, "A History of Modern Libya," 170-171.
[116] Ibid., 178.

Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria, as well as major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Sudan. While there had been longstanding democratic movements in many of these nations for some time, the Arab Spring was orchestrated by a younger, more tech savvy, generation. Phillip Howard describes the role of new communication technology in the Arab Spring:

> Social protests in the Arab world have spread across North Africa and the Middle East, largely because digital media allowed communities to realize that they shared grievances and because they nurtured transportable strategies for mobilizing against dictators[117]

The Arab Spring fostered transnational networks across Africa and the Middle East in support of democracy and revolutionary movements, which in turn, pressured governments and NGOs to aid revolutionary movements abroad.

Protests against human rights abuses, social program mismanagement, political corruption, and Gaddafi's rule, erupted throughout Libya on February 15, 2011. On February 27th, the National Transitional Council (NTC) formed to coordinate revolutionary efforts. [118] Unlike the protests in Tunisia and Egypt, young, well-educated members of the middle class did not drive the Libyan Revolution. Instead, it was underemployed young men with less access to education and information technologies than their revolutionary counterparts. Also, while there were trade unions and labor movements in Egypt and Tunisia to pressure existing regimes to step down, there was no organized opposition in Libya until the armed rebels began to organize themselves.[119]

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[117] Phillip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain, *Democracy's Fourth Wave?: Digital Media and the Arab Spring,* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013): 3.
[118] International Crisis Group, "Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East: Making Sense of Libya," Middle East/North Africa Report N°107, 6 June 2011, 24.
[119] Wolfram Lacher, "Families, Tribes and Cities in the Libyan Revlution," *Middle East Policy* 4 (2001): 143.

When revolutionary leadership finally came out of the woodwork, it was highly contentious. According to Wolfram Lacher, "The elitist nature of the revolutionary leadership and its detachment from the protest movement of the first weeks, as well as the rift between the northeastern elites and revolutionaries in Misrata or the Western Mountains, are obvious."[120] Lacher highlights the political tensions that emerged once success was in sight, but in its origins, the Libyan Revolution was a truly grassroots movement. Libya quickly moved from a state with no organized opposition to one with a mass opposition movement characterized by diverse interests, conflicting tribal loyalties and various social and political backgrounds.

By March, the peaceful protests had turned into a bloody civil war between rebel groups and Gaddafi's regime.[121] Libya was soon divided into rebel and loyalist controlled territories, and the NTC prepared for combat. Maya Bhardwaj explains the militarization of the NTC:

> Arms trade and mercenaries from regional allies such as Qatar and transnational businesses created mass militarization that tipped the balance from peaceful protest to armed civil war.... The ensuing lack of government monopoly over violence thus crucially allowed the NTC to militarize to counter bloody loyalist crackdowns. Militia formation and exploitation of tribal arms access allowed forces united by grievances to functionally achieve violence rather than being immediately subdued by loyalist military and security troops.[122]

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[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., 141.
[122] Maya Bhardwaj, "Development of Conflict in Arab Spring Libya and Syria: From the Revolution to Civil War," *The Washington University International Review* 1 (2012): 83.

Transnational support aided the NTC militarization and prepared them to fight loyalist forces. The NTC took over Benghazi as their de facto capital and began to slowly advance toward Tripoli and the Gaddafi compound.[123]

The humanitarian situation in Libya primarily consisted of violence against civilians and deprivation of basic supplies. There was a high death toll in just the first week of the crisis, which caught the international community's attention. Human Rights Watch reported that over the first four days of the revolution, at least 233 people were killed. The Gaddafi regime was killing peaceful protesters and arresting political activists. According to the Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, pro-Gaddafi forces used cluster munitions and targeted civilian areas. Throughout Libya, civilians were displaced due to the violence and shelling of cities. Many civilians, particularly women and children, became refugees and fled to Tunisia, Egypt or Chad to escape the conflict. Libyans also suffered from a shortage of basic supplies. Médecins Sans Frontières reported, "The delivery of supplies was heavily disrupted by the conflict resulting in shortages in water, fuel, food and medical supplies."[124] Finally, explosive remains in areas where there had been combat also posed a threat to peaceful civilians.

Unlike the crisis in Bosnia, the international community intervened in Libya rather quickly – "freezing financial assets and imposing travel bans and sanctions."[125] As reports leaked out about the murder of peaceful protesters and Gaddafi's promise to hunt down his enemies "from house to house, room to room, alley to alley,"[126] the

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[123] "More disciplined Libyan opposition force emerging," *USA Today,* April 1, 2011.
[124] "The Crisis in Libya," International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-libya.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Gregg Carlstrom, "Gaddafi clung to a fading reality," *Aljazeera,* May 21, 2012.

international community felt pressured to intervene.[127] After the imposition of UN sanctions and an arms embargo, UN Security Resolution 1973 authorized enforcement of a no-fly zone over Libya and empowered member states to "take all necessary measures… to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack." While the US led the enforcement of the no-fly zone at first, NATO soon took over.[128] NATO, including US forces, also provided military strategy, trained rebel fighters, and supplied the NTC with effective weaponry.[129]

In March and April of 2011, the Libyan military and other state institutions quickly began to disintegrate or defect in the face of the uprising because individuals' tribal loyalties[130] took precedent over their loyalty to Gaddafi. Moreover, most state institutions were weak to begin with since so much power was centralized around Gaddafi and his surrounding family.[131] The NATO no-fly zone, coupled with the continuous advance of armed and trained rebel fighters proved lethal for the Gaddafi regime. The history and political complexities of the Libyan revolution provides a framework for interpreting Libyans' tweets. It enables us to see diverse Libyan identities, desires, beliefs and arguments in context of the larger narrative, so, as readers, we can re-

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[127] There are various explanations for the timely intervention in Libya. While some argue intervention was fast because leaders in the Obama administration feared a repeat of Rwanda, others believe US intervention was motivated by retribution for the Lockerbie bombing, the need to promote democracy and the desire to gain access to Libya's oil. *See*: Clark A. Murdock and Becca Smith, "The Libyan Intervention: A Study in U.S. Grand Strategy," *Global Forecast,* 2011.
[128] "Libya: Nato to take command of no-fly zone," *BBC News* March 25, 2011.
[129] Bhardwaj, "Development of Conflict," 83.
[130] "Although the conflict should not be seen as a tribal civil war, tribal loyalties were highly significant in shaping the course of the uprising and subsequent war." Lacher, "Families, Tribes and Cities," 144.
[131] Ibid., 142.

contextualize and re-politicize the identities and conflicts that have been flattened by the dominant humanitarian narrative.

Chapter 4

Libya and Bosnia:
A Comparative Discourse Analysis of the Self and the Other

The first step in this discourse analysis it to compare how Libyans represent themselves and the other, the non-Libyan aid providers, with how mass media represents itself, and its other, Libyan aid recipients. This discourse analysis is what Lene Hansen refers to as the discursive encounter: "rather than comparing Selves, the study contrasts the discourse of the Self with the Other's 'counter-construction of Self and Other." [132] She explains:

> Most discourse analysis within and beyond International Relations has examined the construction of a national or regional, usually, Western or European, Self… These studies do not, however, address the discourses of the Other: how the Other constructs itself as well as the opposing 'West.' Studying discourses of both Self and Other… is significant in that it provides knowledge of the discursive and political room of maneuver of foreign policy issues.[133]

The discourse analysis presented here focuses primarily on the discourse of the Other (Libyan tweets), but in comparison to discourses of the Self (mass media in Bosnia), so as to see how these discourses clash in the increasingly interconnected world of new communication technology. Therefore, I will compare trends within aid recipient discourse, as expressed through Libyan tweets in February through May of 2011, with mass media newspaper articles about Bosnia archived from January and February of 1994.

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[132] Hansen, *Security as Practice,* 76.
[133] Ibid.

Representation of Libyan Aid Recipients: From Victims to Martyrs

The first category of discourse analysis is the way aid recipients represent themselves. In order to understand how Libyans' representation of aid recipients differs from the dominant humanitarian narrative's representation, there must be a clear understanding of the latter. A key component of the traditional humanitarian narrative is the de-politicization of aid recipients; they are characterized as disconnected to the political conflicts that surround them – innocents whose sole desire is to live out their lives in peace. The humanitarian narrative frames aid recipients as a-political victims caught in the crossfire, instead of active agents of change, because humanitarian workers cannot be seen as fueling the conflict or supporting a particular side. Neutrality and impartiality are core principles of humanitarianism, which require the construction of an imaginary humanitarian space, independent of historical or political context.[134]

Pierluigi Musarò argues that the humanitarian narrative forces actors to see humanitarian crises as arbitrary instances of mass suffering in a vacuum, removed from social, cultural, political or historical contexts. It is this framing of humanitarian crises that enables the de-politicization of aid recipients.[135] Aid organizations must approach the crisis through values of neutrality and impartiality; they must avoid blaming any party for the crisis so that they can maintain access to the area. Mariella Pandolfi argues the framing of the humanitarian space as an "emergency" and "depoliticized exception" characterizes humanitarian crises as unpredictable and detached from historical processes. The crisis is framed as something as chaotic and inexplicable as a natural disaster – without specific causes or solutions. Thus, aid recipients' voices are silenced

[134] Rieff, *A Bed for the Night,* 314.
[135] Musarò, "Living in Emergency," 15.

because they are understood as mere objects of suffering and not political agents within their own narrative.[136]

Therefore, if Libyan Twitter discourse is to challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative, it must re-politicize aid recipients. The tweets must demonstrate civilian engagement with the political conflict and blur the dividing line between the humanitarian and the political. The Libyan tweets accomplish this in two ways. First, Twitter provides Libyan aid recipients with a new avenue of political engagement that did not exist in 1994 during the Bosnian crisis. With the use of Twitter, Libyans can expose human rights abuses, organize protests and petitions, and provide essential intelligence to hacktivists[137] and NATO forces. Second, through Twitter, Libyan aid recipients can broadcast their active resistance, like mass protests and the armed Libyan revolutionaries, to individuals, organizations and states throughout the world. Similar civilian protests and armed civilian groups existed during the Bosnia crisis, but did not get as much coverage through US mass media news sources.

A. Twitter: a New Opportunity for Aid Recipient Activism

Libyan's tweets, especially early on in the conflict, exposed human rights abuses and acted as a catalyst for humanitarian intervention. For example, Almuktar exposed government violence against peaceful protestors through tweets like "20 killed after refusing to fire at protesters in Ras Lanouf earlier today #gaddaficrimes #Libya #Feb17"

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[136] Mariella Pandolfi, "Humanitarianism and its Discontents," in *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics,* ed. Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield, (Santa Fe: Advanced Research Press, 2011): 235-245.

[137] Hacktivists engage in the use of illegal, or legally ambiguous, digital tools in pursuit of a political agenda. *See:* Simon Lindgren and Ragnar Lundström, "Pirate culture and hacktivist mobilization: The cultural and social protocols of #WikiLeaks on Twitter," *New Media & Society* 13 (2011): 999-1018.

and "Clashes in Tripoli between protesters & Gaddafi forces, the protesters came out after the Magreb prayer & were faced by gunfire #Libya #Feb17."[138] Libyan users have a unique ability to expose human rights violations since they are there on the ground. By contrast, international media access was severely limited in Libya; news agencies had difficulty gaining entry in the country, as well as filming, once in Libya.[139] The Libyans, on the ground, blending in with the mobs or protesters, could see it all and the military did not censor their behavior like they might have done had international media been there. For example, feb17libya tweeted a video of an ambulance opening fire on unarmed protestors.[140] Moreover, such users can echo Human Rights Watch or UN reports of human rights violations within Libya so as to pressure outsiders to take action. For example, feb17libya also tweeted, "Human Rights Watch confirms #Gaddafi forces using cluster munitions on residential areas in #Misrata."[141]

Such reporting demonstrates that Libyan aid recipients are taking on a political role by exposing abuse and placing blame on specific parties. Additionally, reports of human rights violations supported intervention efforts. According to Omar Amer, a representative of the Libyan Youth Movement, "without social media, the global reaction to Libya would have been much softer, and very much delayed."[142] Libyans' engagement in the politics of the conflict motivated other states and NGOs to get involved. The recipients' use of social media attracted sources of aid, making the recipients key players in their own humanitarian relief.

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[138] Almuktar, Twitter post, March 4, 2011, 9:03pm, https://twitter.com/almuktar.
[139] "Libya attack – Sunday 20 March," News Blog, *The Guardian,* March 20, 2011, *http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/blog/2011/mar/20/libya-air-strikes-live-updates#block-3.*
[140] Feb17libya, Twitter post, April 22, 2011, 12:30pm, https://twitter.com/feb17libya.
[141] Feb17libya, April 15, 2011, 10:27pm.
[142] Jina Moore, "Did Twitter, Facebook really build a revolution?" *Christian Science Monitor,* June 30, 2011.

However, new communication technologies can also provide civilians in an intrastate conflict with a more activist avenue of political participation. Social media makes it easier for civilians to organize mass protests. Jina Moore, describing the role of social media in the Arab Spring, states:

> Facebook pages blared protest plans. Photographs were uploaded to Flickr, a photo sharing website, and video clips were hoisted onto YouTube. Protestors mapped their uprisings, and the violence that followed, adapting their online cartography in real time to reports gathered by text message and Facebook updates. To say nothing of all the tweeting.[143]

Twitter and other new communication technologies provide a method of mass communication and a way to build communities around a collective goal.

For example, The Day of Rage, a major protest in Tripoli, gained traction through Twitter. Thanku4theAnger tweeted, "New additional Hashtag for Libya is #May17... It's Tripoli's Day of Rage! MAKE IT TREND!"[144] The date of the protest was spread throughout the Internet, making it near impossible for any Internet user to overlook. Twitter user OmarAlmoktar even tweeted a "protest mapf" so that all Libyans could find out where the nearest protests were taking place and participate.[145] Moreover, Libyans living outside of Libya during the crisis used Twitter to organize protests abroad: Thanku4theAnger repeatedly tweeted, "Libyans Abroad! If you can, Organize a protest in front of your Libya embassy on MAY 17 in support of TRIPOLI's Day of Rage #FEB17 #LIBYA."[146] Finally, Libyans used Twitter to collect signatures for various petitions. Libyansrevolt tweeted, "Sign petition to #Pfizer directors to help halt distribution of

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[143] Moore, "Did Twitter."
[144] Thanku4theAnger, Twitter post, May 14, 1:27am, https://twitter.com/thanku4theanger.
[145] OmarAlmoktar, Twitter post, February 25, 5:21pm, https://twitter.com/omaralmoktar.
[146] Thanku4theAnger, May 14, 2011, 2:39am.

Viagra to #Gaddafi troops" with a link to an online petition.[147] Twitter enables mass collective action and thus gives power to unarmed civilians in humanitarian crises.

The Libyan tweets also demonstrate how recipients can use Twitter not just as a political tool for activism, but as part of a military strategy. Aid recipients on Twitter became a source of military intelligence for NATO and rebel forces, as well as hacktivist groups like Anonymous. Many twitter users, either in Libya or in constant communication with those there, gained intelligence regarding important targets to weaken Gaddafi forces. For example, Twitter user Libyansrevolt tweeted, "25.925474,14.442065 Mercenaries camp @NATO @NATOpress @UKMilOps… via @moooonlight22" as well as the coordinates of a military supply center to attack.[148] Similarly, twitter user Thanku4theanger tweeted, "@NATO Situation Critical Grad launchers 32.3103488N 12.5724792E" and "@NATO Plz Recon 31° 57' 6.74'' N 12° 19' 3.84'' E for G forces."[149] These Twitter users are not alone in providing NATO with key military intelligence to attack Gaddaffi forces. Storify, a social media tool to document social perspectives of historical events, includes a list of 100 different tweets sent to and used by NATO forces from Libyans on the ground or connected diaspora.[150]

Most importantly, the Libyans spouting military intelligence were heard and their information contributed to the success of the NATO intervention. "NATO intelligence analyst are turning to Twitter, YouTube and other social Medial channels to help

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[147] Libyansrevolt, Twitter post, May 5, 2011, 9:24pm, https://twitter.com/libyansrevolt.
[148] Libyansrevolt, Twitter post, July 9, 2011. Outside of data set time period. Collected from Storify.
[149] Thanku4theanger, Twitter post, 2011. Original source removed. Outside of data set time period. Collected from Storify.
[150] Antireb, "List of tweets sent to and used by NATO to bomb targets in Libya," Storify, 2011, http://storify.com/antireb/list-of-tweets-sent-to-and-used-by-nato-to-bomb-ta.

determine potential targets for Libyan airstrikes – and to assess their success."[151] Officials in NATO member states explained that online activity was being used as open source intelligence, and RAF Wing Commander Mike Bracken, the Libyan operation's military spokesman, said that Twitter was one of the open sources to form a better understanding of the situation on the ground."[152] NATO forces and Libyan rebel groups receiving direction from NATO used intelligence provided by ordinary Libyan citizens watching the conflict unfold from their windows. Libyan aid recipients, and their friends and family abroad, played a critical role in their own protection. The line between soldier and innocent civilian was blurred, humanitarianism became inseparable from the political conflict, and Libyans were political agents.

In regards to hacktivist attacks against Gaddafi forces, Libyan Twitter users again played a critical role. Almuktar tweeted, "The followin r websites wich gaddafi+his forces use 4 communications ie must be hacked:" followed by a URL link to a webpage with a long list of links to different Libyan websites.[153] Libyans, in and outside of Libya, best know how the government spreads its propaganda or maintains order, thus they are best suited to provide hackers with online targets to weaken Gaddafi's control over the Libyan people. Again, their voices were heard: all the parts of Gaddafi's media empire including the website for the Libyan Revolution Committees Movement newspaper, New Libya TV, a radio station set up and owned by Sayf-al-Islam al-Qaddafi, Libyan's satellite channel's website and Facebook page, and Allibya.tv went offline, or were

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[151] Tim Bradshaw and James Blitz, "NATO draws on Twitter for Libya Strikes," *Washington Post,* June 15, 2011.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Almuktar, March 21, 2011, 8:03pm.

defaced, by various hacker groups including Anonymous and Ktkoti.[154] Libyans on Twitter became ground soldiers for hacktivist groups around the world. They played a political role in taking down Gaddafi, even while they were in danger of being killed or running out of food and water. The "victim" and "soldier" identity existed simultaneously, complicating traditional understandings of humanitarianism.

B. Twitter: a New Method to Broadcast Aid Recipient Activism

The second way Libyans used Twitter to re-politicize Libyan aid recipients was by broadcasting their acts of civilian resistance throughout the Web. The humanitarian narrative depoliticizes aid recipients and thus mass media, operating within the normative context of the humanitarian narrative, fails to highlight acts of civilian resistance during humanitarian crises. For example, despite there being protests and a large citizen army in Bosnia in 1994, mass media focused its lens on NATO's efforts while characterizing aid recipients as non-political and passive. Libyans challenged this aspect of the humanitarian narrative because Libyan Twitter users highlighted civil resistance efforts like mass protests and advancements by rebel forces.

Mass media sources characterized Bosnian aid recipients as passive and removed from their political context. For example, only one article within the entire Bosnia mass media data set mentions any public protests. The one article that does is from the *Washington Post* and refers to a demonstration of 300 Muslims near the central Bosnian village of Biljesevo. The article briefly reports that "the protesters were demanding food and objecting to what they said was inequitable distribution of aid. The police shot over

[154] Mohit Kumar, "Libyan Satellite TV Website Hacked by Ktkoti and Most of Libyan media sites down!" *The Hacker News: Security in a Serious Way,* June 18, 2011.

the heads of the demonstrators, and they dispersed."[155] The coverage of this protest reveals Bosnians begging for more aid without having any political opinion on the conflict itself. They are characterized as rather passive and weak based on the report of them immediately dispersing at the sound of gunfire. Moreover, images in the newspaper articles about Bosnia depicted Bosnians in passive forms, mainly crying or praying while on their knees.[156] However, these articles and images misrepresent, or at least fail to show, the political interests and engagement of Bosnian Muslims.

Bosnians were not removed from the politics that surrounded them, and were activists towards their own regional peace. For example, in 1993 there was a protest between 50,000 and 100,000 Bosnians, of all national groups, who came out on the streets to protest. One speaker at the protest articulated their demands: "Let all the Serb chauvinists go to Serbia and let the Croat chauvinists go to Croatia. We want to remain here together. We want to keep Bosnia as one."[157] The protesters faced constant rounds of automatic weapons fire.[158] In addition, when the international community suggested Bosnians hand over Gorazde to the Karadzic Serbs in exchange for territory around Sarajevo, there was a wave of strong Bosnian protests and the negotiation quickly collapsed.[159]

The Serbian civilians proactively engaged in the politics of the conflict as well, especially through anti-war campaigns. In 1993, about 1,500 Bosnian Serbs held a

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[155] John Pomfret, "U.N. Operation in Bosnia Unraveling as Crises Mount," *Washington Post,* January 20, 1994.
[156] "In an Uneasy Bosnia Peace, a Pause for a Moment of Quiet Prayer in Sarajevo," *New York Times* February 28, 1994. Graphic. See also: Daniel Williams, "U.S. Backs U.N. Plan for Bosnia Airstrikes; Strategy Proposed to Counter Serb Artillery," *Washington Post* February 8th, 1994. Graphic.
[157] Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History,* (New York: New York University, 1994): 235.
[158] Ibid.
[159] "Bosnia's Triumph and Western Treachery," *Solidarity,* August 31, 1996.

massive demonstration in the streets of Belgrade, and were called traitors on Serbian television. Serbian civilians also organized a bi-monthly magazine called the *Republika,* and circulated leaflets, posters and advertisements "to mobilize against the war and send a message of solidarity to all those resisting it."[160] Moreover, many Bosnian Serbs protested by avoiding the draft. In 1993, 53,000-draft age Serbs from Bosnia and Croatia moved to Serbia, and the Bosnian Serb military courts had issued over 2,500 warrants for desertion. There was also a rebellion in Banja Luka where 1,000 soldiers took control of the town and demanded elections.[161] Bosnians were an active and politically engaged people despite the media representations of them as mere victims, removed from historical and political contexts.

Author Lene Hansen confirms the de-politicized narrative of aid recipients in the Balkan region. She argues the US and other NATO states needed to transform the "Balkan discourse" into "humanitarian responsibility discourse" and thus made a discursive move to "separate the 'equal parties' of the Balkan discourse into 'Balkan leaders' and 'civilian victims' and to take Western responsibility for the latter, while situating political responsibility exclusively with the uniform 'Balkan leaders.'"[162] This narrative enabled American and British governments to justify peacekeeping forces but not intervene militarily in support of the Bosnian government. She explains, "the construction of uniform 'Balkan leaders' read atrocities as 'Balkan' rather than as caused by a particular political or national group."[163] Thus, atrocities such as the massacres in Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Srebrenica were just a product of Balkan barbarism and not political

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[160] "Reluctant Soldiers," *Socialist Review* 189 (1995).
[161] Ibid.
[162] Hansen, *Security as Practice, 129*.
[163] Ibid.

actions that demanded the international community to take a side. Most importantly though, this narrative of the humanitarian crisis in the Balkans depoliticized aid recipients:

> The 'civilian victims' were equally depoliticized in that they were constituted without political designations or history – a political history that might, again, have destabilized the construction of 'all as equals' and their protection as secured through Western peacekeeping rather than military intervention… The [humanitarian responsibility] discourse cannot ask how 'victims' have been produced without resorting to a depoliticized and dehistoricized Balkan identity.[164]

Bosnian aid recipients, without a direct line of communication with the outside world, were shaped by the traditional humanitarian narrative, which stripped them of any political or historical identity.

By contrast, the political activism of Libyan aid recipients received overwhelming coverage due to Libyans' use of Twitter. The 2011 mass protests in Libya received coverage because Libyans spread photos, videos and constant updates regarding every protest within Libya's borders.[165] Libyans broadcasted their mass protests against Gaddafi through "cell phones, tweets, emails and video clips – capable of quickly capturing and broadly transmitting eyewitness accounts of domestic developments to the rest of the world."[166] Libyans, with the power to communicate with the rest of the world, broadcasted their struggles in hopes of attracting the attention of the international community. All eleven twitter accounts tweeted pictures and updates about protests in

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[164] Ibid.
[165] Ekaterina Stepanova, "The Role of Information Communication Technologies in the 'Arab Spring'," *PONARS Eurasia* 159 (2011). See also: Simon Cottle, "Media and the Arab uprisings of 2011: Research notes," *Sage Journal: Journalism* 5 (2011).
[166] Stepanova, "The Role of Information," 3.

Libya and abroad. People throughout the world couldn't use Twitter or Facebook without reading about the mass protests – a people's movement – to combat the Gaddafi regime.

Moreover, the Libyan tweets used rhetoric to characterize protesters as warriors, not mere civilians. For example, Libyansrevolt tweeted, "expecting further protests after Friday prayers tomorrow to be met brutally by regime. 'We will win or we will die' #libya #feb17."[167] His tweet characterizes protesters as individuals who are knowingly entering a war zone and willing to sacrifice their lives for a cause. The protesters are not surprised by a brutal attack – they are expecting it and are going out to protest with the aim of resisting government oppression and sacrificing their safety for something larger than themselves. This narrative of mass protests as a method of political activism is further entrenched by the use of the term "martyr" to describe civilians killed by government crackdowns on mass protests. Ten of the eleven Twitter accounts in the data set refer to fallen protesters, or even non-protesters caught in the crossfire, as martyrs instead of victims. Such a simple change in rhetoric quickly cultivates an activist identity for the Libyan aid recipients – politicizing them in the eyes of the international community and beyond.

The discourse of aid recipients in Libya, as expressed through social media sites like Twitter, demonstrated their political engagement with the conflict and direct support for a particular side. Unlike mass media coverage of Bosnia, which failed to highlight any real aid recipient activism, Libyans used Twitter to position aid recipients within the political and historical context, and characterize the aid recipients as political activists, martyrs, and even soldiers. However, Libyan's construction of the aid recipient identity is incomplete without an analysis of how they constructed the non-Libyan aid providers.

[167] Libyanrevolt, March, 3, 2011, 11:23pm.

Aid recipients, just like the mass media, define themselves through the other, so their self-identity is reliant on how they represent aid providers including international forces.

Representations of Aid: Fallen Knights in White Armor

Aid providers often steal the lead role in the humanitarian play. When the audience has seen enough images of malnourished children or shocking injuries, the photographer turns his lens toward the real protagonist. The aid workers, as well as international forces in cases of military intervention, are the saviors; they are risking their lives to save those in need. Media representations of humanitarianism elevate the aid providers and international forces to a god-like status. Such stories and photos tend to focus on doctors or soldiers, despite there being many more aid workers there for less glamorous tasks like sanitation.[168] Moreover, the media focuses on international aid workers, instead of local domestic aid providers on the ground. In short, "the characterization of the humanitarian is that of the hero: in this folk narrative, a glamorous image simply plays better."[169].

However, the aid provider and aid recipient are mutually constitutive; each is defined through differences with the other. Thus, the more aid workers are characterized as powerful heroes, the further aid recipients are defined as helpless. Pierluigi Musarò places this dichotomy of giver and receiver within the larger context of geopolitics:

> Within the neoliberal capitalistic logic, the donor is a sort of a God who can, thanks to its own money, save the life of a whole African family. The contrast between the holy smile of the proud white actress and the

[168] Jonathan Benthall, *Disasters, Relief and the Media* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1993): 190.
[169] Kennedy, "Selling the Distant Other," 1.

> expression of waiting of the voiceless black family reproduce a particular social hierarchy: Humanity is split into victim and rescuer. [170]

According to Musarò, the "humanitarian as hero" metaphor is reflective of a much larger trend in international relations that goes beyond a specific humanitarian crisis. The same power dynamic and depiction of white saviors was, and is, seen in discourses of colonialism.

Within the news articles covering the 1994 humanitarian crisis in Bosnia, heroic representations of aid providers were easy to find. First, the photographs from the newspapers promote the hero narrative. In the *New York Times*, there was a photo of Ukrainian United Nations soldiers giving sandwiches to Sarajevo children[171], while the *Washington Post* showed elderly residents standing in line at a Red Cross soup kitchen[172]. These photos emphasize the vulnerability of aid recipients by showing particularly vulnerable populations like the children and the elderly. Meanwhile, the UN and Red Cross are the one's providing for the weak and bringing order to what would otherwise be chaos.

Perhaps more powerful though, are the photos that manage to portray the power dynamic between the aid providers and recipients, as described by Musarò. For example, the *New York Times* published an image of a woman clinging to a United Nations ambulance that was evacuating her wounded husband from Sarajevo.[173] Similarly, the Washington Post published a photo of a Muslim women pleading with a U.N. soldier to

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[170] Musarò, "Living in Emergency," 27.
[171] John Kifner, "U.N. Commanders in Bosnia to make use of Technology," *New York Times,* February 15, 1994: Image on A1.
[172] Frank McCloskey, *New York Times,* February 19, 1994.
[173] "More Medical Evacuations from Sarajevo," *New York Times*, February 8, 1994*:* Section A; Page 1; Column 3.

take her out of East Mostrar after Bosnian Croat forces overtook it.[174] Both photos demonstrate the aid recipient's desperate dependence on the aid workers, while the providers of aid are shown as powerful characters in control of who will live and die.

Heroic representations of humanitarian workers and international forces elevate the ego and status of donor states and their citizens. Heroic representations of aid can help justify interventions and elicit additional aid because they make donor states, organizations and individuals feel good about themselves. Former Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, was quoted in the *New York Times* speaking on US intervention in Bosnia: "The fact that the United States is taking an active role is making a difference, because of our status in the world and our perceived ability, I feel a lot better." Christopher admits he derives a sense of pride and comfort from US exceptionalism and its role as global policeman and global caretaker. James Dawes explains, "it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the desire to help others from the desire to amplify the self, to distinguish altruism from narcissism."[175] Representations of aid workers as infallible miracle workers empower donor states and individuals.

However, because we define ourselves through the other and the ways we differ from the other, the empowerment of donor states comes at the expense of the disempowerment of aid recipients. An article covering the Bosnia crisis in USAToday manages to portray the stark contrast between aid recipients and aid workers when it describes the status of Sarajevo:

> A severed head and arms and legs ripped from torsos by the explosion lay among the debris. People moaning with shock milled aimlessly among

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[174] John Pomfret, "Bosnia Convoys Blocked; Muslim Protests, Croat Guns Halt Aid," *New York Times,* January 19, 1994. Image.
[175] James Dawes, *That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 122.

> rescue workers. Emergency room doctors, their white coats splattered with blood, yelled instructions as they rushed for gauze, medicines and bandages just delivered by foreign aid groups.[176]

In the text above, aid recipients lack purpose as they "aimlessly" mill around rescue workers. They are suffering from too much pain and desperation to have real agency and are instead like zombies – out of touch with the political realities that surround them. Meanwhile, the doctors are organizing the chaos, doling out orders and saving lives with the new foreign aid supplies. "When victims are… reduced to the most basic of rights, to pure animal emotions, they become personless—they lose their human dignity."[177] Aid recipients are reduced to bare life – media representations strip them of dignity and agency so that the aid workers are seen as powerful and, most importantly, needed.

It is important to note that while these discourses are problematic, that does not mean they don't reflect parts of reality. The scene in Sarajevo of aimlessly moaning victims and doctors with blood-splattered coats may be what the USAToday reporter saw, and the photos of aid recipients clinging to UN ambulances or begging at the feet of a UN soldier are real and should be shown. My criticism of the dominant humanitarian narrative is not that it in no way reflects aspects of reality, but that it uses selective observations to frame reality in a particular way, and the USAToday reporter likely saw and experienced the events in a particular way, as a result of the already established humanitarian narrative. While there are heroic acts of aid workers, there is a darker side as well. While providers of aid may sometimes save lives, that doesn't mean they never fall short of their mission or make a mistake. And while some aid recipients may be so incapacitated by their circumstance that they can't immediately take action, that doesn't

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[176] Tom Squitieri, "Killings shoe Bosnians war can get worse," *New York Times* February 7, 1994.
[177] Kennedy, "Selling the Distant Other," 1.

mean they lack political agency or that there are no other recipients involved in aid efforts or a resistance. The shift in discourse that is needed to challenge the traditional humanitarian narrative is not the removal of humanitarian discourse. Rather, humanitarian discourse needs to be complicated – the multifaceted identities, relationships, and issues involved should be explored from all angles. In 2011, Libyans began to do just that.

Tweets from Libyans during the humanitarian crisis of 2011 challenged traditional representations of aid by commanding, criticizing, and cautiously praising sources of aid relief, including humanitarian organizations and NATO. First, the Libyans' made demands for aid instead of pleading for it. Almuktar proclaimed, "Humanitarian Aids MUST be dropped by air on Zawya…" and "World govs, UN must come out for aid"[178] Similar rhetoric appeared in most of the Twitter accounts. Freetelw tweeted the hashtag, "#WhereIsNATO,"[179] and Thanku4theanger tweeted, "NATO needs to get its ass to Yefren. You have the damn coordinates of Gaddafi forces positions for the love of GOD!"[180] These demands stand in contrast to media coverage of Bosnia where aid recipients are portrayed as begging for help and headlines such as "Ivanisevic wins match; pleads for aid for Bosnia" are common.[181] The distinction between a demand and a plea may seem like a small semantic difference, but it represents two radically different philosophies of humanitarian intervention: charity versus rights based humanitarianism.

When aid recipients come hat in hand begging for help, humanitarian intervention is seen as a supererogatory moral act or gift, but the international community has no

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[178] Almuktar , March 5, 2011, 7:27am.
[179] Freetelw, Twitter post, March 31, 2011, 12:20pm, https://twitter.com/freetelw.
[180] Thanku4theanger, May 10, 2011, 10:51pm.
[181] Jarrett Bell, "Ivanisevic wins match; pleads for aid for Bosnia," *New York Times,* February 10, 1994.

obligation to intervene. By contrast, demands for aid demonstrate aid recipients are claiming a right to life and basic needs that they have by nature of being human, and that it is the responsibility of the international community to step forward and guarantee their human rights.[182] The discourse parallels the UN discourse in the Responsibility to Respect doctrine, released in 2005, which claims states have a positive obligation to intervene and protect civilians outside of their territory under certain conditions. However, instead of coming from the UN, the discourse is emerging from the mouths of aid recipients and with much less ambiguity.[183] If such discourses that attribute obligations and responsibilities to donor states became naturalized, it could shift the way states respond to humanitarian crises.

Further challenging the traditional hero-victim narrative, Libyan aid recipients critically evaluated one of their own main sources of military aid, NATO. Almuktar tweeted, "NATO ha[s] failed 2 keep the NFZ [No Fly Zone]" and that "NATO is absolutely useless, instead of cutting G's supplies its watching him get in reinforcements & allow him towards Bengazi&Ajdabya #Libya."[184] Twitter user, Libyanproud, also spoke out against NATO for not doing enough when he tweeted, "Power of #nato destroyed 2 tanks at best 8 today! All necessary measures my ass! #libya."[185] Finally, Tripolitanian took on the role of evaluator when he tweeted, "#NATO missed too many of their targets in #Tripoli last night – altho luckily no one was killed."[186] These criticisms of NATO deny heroic representations of international forces because they are

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[182] Charles Beitz, *The Idea of Human Rights,* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009): 46
[183] "2005 World Summit Outcome," General Assembly, United Nations (2005). http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/world%20summit%20outcome%20doc%202005(1).pdf.
[184] Almuktar, April 27, 2011, 1:26pm.
[185] Libyanproud, Twitter post, April 15, 2011, 11:15pm, https://twitter.com/libyanproud.
[186] Tripolitanian, Twitter post, May 11, 2011, 2:32am, https://twitter.com/tripolitanian.

portrayed, at times, as cowardly or inept. Moreover, these Libyan aid recipients challenge the notion that recipients must treat these international forces as their perfect saviors in order to receive their support. Instead, aid recipients can challenge, critique and evaluate international forces coming to their aid, which elevates the recipients from the status of helpless and voiceless victims.

While Libyans challenged the traditional narrative by voicing criticisms of NATO, they were still thankful for the help they received. Their messages of thanks, however, avoided characterizing NATO as an infallible savior. For example, Libyanproud tweeted, "Maybe #NATO isn't doing enough, but remember if it wasn't 4 coalition n then nato we wldnt be here ! Say thank u and then ask 4 more #libya."[187] On a similar note, he tweeted, "While I thank #nato for their efforts, I wish they wld take a faster approach 2 save #misratta #zintan #zuwara #sabha #alqilaa #azawiya #libya."[188] While the Libyans recognize NATO's sacrifice and is thankful for that, they also believe they deserve protection. With cautious appreciation, they manage to give thanks without bolstering the hero-victim narrative.

Libyans also challenged the traditional narrative by thanking internal sources of aid including their fellow Libyans working as doctors and police officers. For example, ChangeinLibya tweeted, "LET'S NOT forget the doctor rs that work 24/7 and see hundreds of cases in #Libya !! Thank you! #feb 17"[189] along with a picture of two Libyan doctors performing surgery on an injured Libyan. When ChangeinLibya shows appreciation for Libyan doctors he is breaking apart the myth that Libyans are helpless in and unable to care for themselves. Instead, Libyans are actively saving lives alongside

[187] Libyanproud, April 20, 2011, 6:08pm.
[188] Libyanproud, April 17, 2011, 6:08am.
[189] ChangeinLibya, Twitter post, May 8th, 2011, 10:56pm, https://twitter.com/changeinlibya.

NATO and coalition forces. The same Twitter user tweeted, "Benghazi's police officers – first group to graduate post revolution #libya #feb17" along with a picture of dozens of Libyan police officers standing around their white police cars.[190] This tweet demonstrates Libya is preparing for self-sufficiency and independence, which can help breakdown the narrative that outside forces will need to take on a paternal role post-revolution so that the state does not return to chaos. Such discourse emphasizing the state's independence and growth can make it more difficult for donor states to justify exploitive post-intervention practices

Finally, Libyans expressed ownership of NATO and the coalition forces. Libyanproud tweeted "nato isn't our liberator"[191] as well as "The giants revolt, bani walid and tarhuna RISE ! Here comes our libyan NATO!"[192] Libyanproud was aware the power dynamic NATO could create and wanted to let people know this was the people's revolution – not NATO's. However, instead of outright rejecting NATO or pretending it wasn't helping – he rooted for the "libyan NATO." He reframes NATO as something Libyan – or at least a product of Libyan's efforts. This rhetoric turns the entire hero-victim dynamic inside out by erasing any distinction between the two. In the same vein, Libyan tweets cheered on NATO: Libyansrevolt tweeted, "#Gadaffi Household: knock knock – who's there? NATO B*****!"[193] while Thanku4theAnger tweeted, "NATO on steroids tonight ☺."[194] The sense of humor and expressive enthusiasm demonstrate that the Libyans' appreciation is less like bowing to a savior and more like cheering on their

[190] ChangeinLibya, May 12, 2011, 11:22am.
[191] Libyanproud, April 9, 2011, 7:00pm.
[192] Libyanproud, April 18, 2011, 4:26pm.
[193] Libyansrevolt, May 1st, 2011, 1:39am.
[194] Thanku4theanger, May 13, 2011, 10:47pm.

favorite football team. This sense of ownership of NATO forces helps equalize the power relations between the intervening forces and aid recipients.

Chapter 5

Libya and Bosnia: A Comparative Discourse Analysis of Images, Humor and Gender

While the dominant humanitarian narrative centers on the relationship and interdependent identities of aid recipient and aid provider, there are other dimensions of humanitarian discourse that contribute to the hero-victim-villain storyline and perpetuate harmful stereotypes. In Chapter 5, I focus on images of suffering during humanitarian crises, aid recipient's use of humor to combat the dominant hero-victim and representations of gender within the narrative. These all represent additional ways in which Libyan Twitter users could reinforce, challenge, or transform the dominant humanitarian narrative. I contend the Libyan Twitter users use disturbing images of suffering and strategic uses of sarcasm to disrupt and critique the dominant humanitarian narrative, but these users still reinforce harmful gender norms implicit within the dominant narrative.

Images of Suffering: Disrupting Normative Understandings

Visual images of humanitarian crises acquire meaning through normative contexts, but they also have the power to shape and transform normative understandings of suffering, conflict and the humanitarian enterprise. Comprehending an image requires imagining the story it reflects. When we look at an image "we construct mental representations – mental models – of settings, situations, and people, as well as the

relations among them."[195] Images are not passively received, but actively constructed through the viewers' imagination and prior knowledge. Simultaneously, images contribute to individual understandings of the world. Images of humanitarian crises highlight some elements of suffering and suppress others in order to shape normative contexts, to frame "in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation."[196] All images, even those that are quickly forgotten, "serve as a source of information that audience members can incorporate into their understanding of the story immediately at hand or a larger narrative presented across days, weeks, or years."[197] This means images can alter normative contexts because they can force a narrative onto a viewer that is inconsistent with the viewers original understanding. When this happens, the viewer alters their beliefs, values or larger understanding of the world so as to accommodate the new narrative in front of her. Of course, images can also reinforce our normative understandings and further entrench certain beliefs. Different visual portrayals of suffering form different narratives, which can reshape, or further entrench, normative contexts.

Images of suffering have a unique influence on the construction of humanitarian narratives because they communicate "emotional information that is unlikely to be spoken or written by a reporter" or emotional information that is "impossible to

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[195] Rick Busselle and Helena Bilandzic, "Images in Readers' Construction of News Narratives," in *Images that injure: pictorial stereotypes in the media,* ed. Paul Martin Lester, (Westport: Praeger, 1996): 34.
[196] Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43 (1993): 52.
[197] Ibid., 31.

communicate in words."[198] Images can instantly communicate emotions through human faces and bodies. Rick Busselle explains, "We need no words to immediately interpret the sorrow on the face of a young woman standing over a flag-draped coffin. We immediately understand the desperation and anguish on the Sudanese mother's face as she cradles her malnourished infant."[199] Images can be more powerful than text because "they appeal to our imagination, play on our feelings and rouse us from our complacency: in other words, images stir our conscience."[200] Of course, the message of the image can be clarified or further reinforced by captions that lead the viewer to see the image in a particular way. Humanitarianism, in particular, produces powerful images of intense emotions that tap deep into the viewers' normative beliefs. Moreover, a photograph or video is better able to tell a story with characters, emotions, triumphs and losses, compared to text or quotes because the visual image sparks the viewer's imagination. The viewer, upon seeing an image, constructs a narrative based on their own assumptions, inter-subjective norms and understanding of the people and place depicted in the image. "Images not only add to or define a narrative by referencing events, but also independently convey narratives by showing immediate expressions of experientiality."[201] Thus, images of suffering play a uniquely powerful role in the construction and deconstruction of humanitarian narratives.

The blanket classification of "images of suffering" as vivid, emotionally laden and powerful fails to recognize the diverse reactions to the different ways death and suffering are displayed. John Newhagen argues that while there is a general assumption

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[198] Busselle, "Images in Readers'," 36.
[199] Ibid., 39.
[200] Gilbert Holleufer, "Images of humanitarian crises: Ethical implications," *International Review of the Red Cross,* (1996).
[201] Ibid.

that social turmoil, death and famine have the same powerful affect on viewers, this "strategy stops short of breaking down negative images into categories that might have discrete effects of their own."[202] Newhagen uses the approach-avoidance metaphor to explain different responses to emotionally evoking images of suffering. This metaphor applies the evolutionary fight or flight response to human reactions to images of suffering. Some portrayals of suffering, like those that tell a story or help the viewer relate to the subject of the image, may draw the viewer in emotionally and, in a way, attract the reader to see more suffering. Other portrayals of suffering, that make the viewer feel guilty, uncomfortable, or disturbed, trigger a flight response. Individuals might turn off the television at the sight of a disgusting image or turn away when an image provokes intense fear and discomfort. Of course, the categorization of images of suffering is not black and white. The important point made by Newhagen is that not all images of suffering are all the same, and different ways of portraying suffering and death can elicit different emotional reactions in the viewers.

In the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* articles reporting on Bosnia, images of death and suffering highlight aid recipients' feelings of fear and grief. Photos depict the injured being taken to hospitals, rows of dead bodies covered up in sheets[203], and most often, Bosnians with sad or hopeless expressions. These pictures depict Bosnians struggling to complete their daily routines with expressions of despair[204], often accompanied by a caption that explains the risk they take by just leaving the home. Many

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[202] John E. Newhagen, "TV news images that induce anger, fear, and disgust: Effects on approach-avoidance and memory," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 42 (1998).
[203] John Kifner, "Terror in Sarajevo; Sarajevans Mourn and Rage While Life and Death Go On," *New York Times,* February 7, 1994, Photo.
[204] Roger Cohen, "Sitting at War's HQ, Bosnian Serbs Talk of Peace," *New York Times,* February 24, 1994, photo by Agence France-Presse.

others illustrate the grief felt by Bosnians through pictures of mourning mothers[205] or tearful children. By contrast, in February of 2011, Twitter exploded with gruesome, disturbing images of bloodied faces and gun shot wounds. Libyans tweeted pictures of deformed faces[206] and dead bodies laying in pools of blood on the sidewalk, as well as videos of "peaceful protestors torn to shreds"[207] and "clean up crews in Misrata pick[ing] up decomposing bodies."[208] Other images show gaping wounds from high-caliber ammo allegedly used by African mercenaries. In sum, the videos and photos from Libyan's Twitter accounts depict extreme bodily injuries and the actual firing of weapons.

Image: A

Both images from Libya in 2011 and Bosnia in 1994 depict horrific images of suffering and death, but mass media photography of the Bosnian crisis shields readers from the more disturbing and grotesque images. Image A[209] to the right depicts the bodies of the six children who died while playing in the snow.[210] On January 22nd, 1994, shells exploded across a western Sarajevo neighborhood killing these six boys and wounding several others. This photo illustrates many elements of *NYT* and *Washington Post* photographs.

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[205] Rick Atkinson, "Sarajevo's Shell-Shattered Market Was 'Like a Butcher Shop,'" *Washington Post Foreign Service,* February 8, 1994, photo by AP.
[206] Feb17Libya, April 4, 2011, 3:56pm.
[207] ChangeinLibya, May 7, 2011, 9:56pm.
[208] Feb17Libya, April 25, 2011, 12:00pm.
[209] "Serbs Continue to Slaughter Bosniak Children in Sarajevo," *The Southeast Missourian,* January 23, 1994: p.5A at "Genocide in Bosnia." http://genocideinbosnia.wordpress.com/tag/sarajevo/.
[210] A local newspaper in Missouri published the image shown, not the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*, because only captions of graphics are preserved in digital archives.

First, the bodies are covered in blankets, which is the case in many of the other mass media photographs. The blankets shield the viewer from the gore and horror. With the exception of blood on the second boy's face, the children appear restfully sleeping. The reader knows they are dead but is not forced to directly confront that reality. The *Washington Post* depicted this same event, the shelling of six children, in an even more censored way. They published a photo of friends and relatives praying at a funeral for four Sarajevans, including "one of the six children killed while playing in the snow on Saturday."[211] Similarly, the *New York Times* covered the killing of the six children with a photo of neighbors walking past the park where the six children were playing when shells killed them. In the photo, the mother of one of the children and another women decorate the children's sleds with flowers. These photos sanitize the deaths and shield the reader from the real horror of the event.

What David Campbell calls the "disappearance of the dead" was evident throughout mainstream media coverage of Bosnia in 1994. At the time, BBC's guidelines about which kind of images could or could not be shown "effectively prevented images capable of representing the nature and the extent of ethnic cleansing from making it to the screen."[212] Martin Bell, BBC's principal correspondent in Bosnia, complained publicly about BBC's censorship of "good taste" caused BBC to "prettify and sanitize the war."[213] John Taylor explains how this is a systematic practice within mass media:

> The press errs on the side of caution in depicting death and destruction. It… uses the metonymic power of photographs to remove harm from flesh to objects. When the press decides to picture bodies, the imagery tends (with notable exceptions) to be restrained. Newspapers do not revolt

[211] John Pomfret, "U.N.: Bosnian Muslims Shorted on Aid," *Washington Post,* January 25, 1994.
[212] David Campbell, "Horrific Blindness: Images of Death in Contemporary Media," *Journal for Cultural Research* 8 (2004): 60.
[213] Ibid.

> audiences for the sake of it. On the contrary, disgust forms a small part of the stock-in-trade and papers use it sparingly.[214]

Mass media creates an aestheticized form of suffering for its readers. Mass media represents humanitarianism through distorted and censored images of suffering in Bosnia. This is consistent with the dominant humanitarian narrative because the viewers or aid providers are not forced to feel uncomfortable or guilty by grotesque images, but instead are given the opportunity to pity and feel sorry for aid recipients. Mass media maintains a positive image of the "Self" (or the aid providing population) within the humanitarian narrative.

David Campbell believes the disappearance of dead bodies from media coverage is dangerous because there is still a chance that pictures of graphic violence could be the basis for mobilization against atrocity and violence. "Bowing to the public pressure to be shielded from the pictorial representation of death, the media relies upon metaphoric and metonymic images which obscure the full nature and extent of horror… that might provoke a strong reaction."[215] However, Campbell is acutely aware that "how those photographs are used, and what contest is chosen in which to deploy them, is vitally important."[216] But in their absence, he notes, the harmful narratives and acts of atrocity have not ceased, so perhaps, "images of terror – used responsibly – can foster a climate in which terror is no longer tolerated."[217] Graphic and disturbing photos could be used as a method of resistance; they could challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative that

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[214] J. Taylor, *Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War*, (Manchester*:* Manchester University Press, 1998): 193.
[215] Campbell, "Horrific Blindness," 64.
[216] Campbell, "Horrific Blindness," 61.
[217] A. Rushdy "Exquisite Corpse," *Transition* 83 (2000): 77.

promotes a false understanding of suffering and mobilize actual support instead of fleeting sympathies.

Unlike mass media portrayals of the crisis in Bosnia, Libyan aid recipients used Twitter to post raw and disturbing photos of the violence during the 2011 crisis. Twitter user Thanku4theAnger tweeted a link to a Facebook photo album, which included Image B, and wrote, "Graphic Fresh photos from Zintan hospital today taken only a short while ago."[218] Gruesome and bloody hospital photos were common throughout the tweets from Libyan aid recipients. Graphic videos also spread across the web through different avenues of social media. Twitter user and Libyan aid recipient(s), Feb17libya, tweeted links to several disturbing videos. For example, Feb17libya tweeted, "Infant in hospital Misrata injured by indiscriminate firing by #Gaddafi forces. (EXTREMELY Disturbing & Graphic) http://bit.ly/hOitY1."[219]

Image: B

Gilbert Holleufer criticizes graphic images of suffering humanitarian victims, characterizing them as "an obscenity that tramples on human dignity."[220] This is a fair criticism since it's easy to see how horrific images could reduce aid recipients to "bare life" and entrench the victim-identity prescribed by the dominant narrative. However, this argument is less persuasive when the aid recipients themselves are the ones tweeting images of their peers and sometimes themselves. Moreover, just because extreme suffering might be part of the aid recipient identity, does not mean that sufficiently characterizes their identity. Holleufer tries to avoid the victim "bare life" identity by

[218] Thanku4theAnger, May 7, 2011, 6:15pm.
[219] Feb17libya, March 24, 2011, 10:34pm.
[220] Holleufer, "Images of humanitarian crises."

removing the horrific suffering from the narrative, but aid recipients could still challenge the dominant narrative by portraying their suffering *as well as* their political resistance and other facets of their identity within the humanitarian narrative.

Another criticism of such graphic photos is that they will result in a form of compassion fatigue. The fear is that if the public is constantly exposed to horrific images of death and atrocity, they'll become desensitized and the photos will no longer provoke their consciousness or inspire them to take action.[221] However, David Campbell disagrees and argues that the compassion fatigue that does exist is not a result of horrific images but of the intersection of three economies: "the economy of indifference to others, the economy of 'taste and decency' whereby the media itself regulates the representation of death and atrocity, and the economy of display governing the details of an image's production."[222] There are structural and economic constraints on the mass media industry, and these constraints lead to the censorship of suffering. Campbell argues that photos have the power to provoke and that the censorship of these photos "restricts the possibility for an ethical politics exercising responsibility in the face of crimes against humanity."[223]

Twitter is a method of producing and distributing images of suffering without being restricted by the economies Campbell discusses. Images shared through Twitter do not have to be in good taste or decent; there are no rules about how the image can be produced; and the Twitter user does not have to be concerned about whether the image will "sell". Because Twitter is a form of citizen journalism, it does not have the same

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[221] Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death,* (New York & London: Routledge, 1999).
[222] Campbell, "Horrific Blindness," 55.
[223] Ibid.

barriers to accessing conflict zones or refugee camps. Twitter may be an avenue for photos of suffering to reach the masses, without restrictions and censorship imposed by the media industry. Images of suffering broadcasted through Twitter could radically provoke the public and foster ethical politics in response to humanitarian crises.

Consistent with Campbell's argument, these graphic images from Libyan Twitter users may be so disturbing that they shatter traditional normative contexts and challenge the world's complacency in response to humanitarian crises. For example, Smith describes how *Without Sanctuary,* an exhibition of graphic lynching photographs, shakes individual's basic understandings of the world:

> These images are not going softly into any artistic realm. Instead they send shock waves through the brain, implicating ever-larger chunks of American society and in many ways reaching up to the present... Horrific as they are, these photographs are a kind of gift, the gift of knowledge, the chance for greater consciousness and caring.[224]

Much like the photos of the lynchings, the gruesome and disturbing images of suffering and death in Libya stun the viewer because there are images they are not exposed to through traditional media. The images from Libya cross a threshold of extreme suffering that makes viewers uncomfortable; the images show people worse things than they could ever imagine. Most of our normative contexts are not prepared to explain a man's gut lying next to him on the street. These images force people to alter their understanding of the humanitarian conflict and pay attention as opposed to the traditional representations of suffering that only draw readers' sympathy momentarily.

These disruptive images also challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative by altering the relationship between readers and images of suffering. Ignatieff explains the

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[224] Robert Smith, "An Ugly Legacy Lives on, Its Glare Unsoftened by Age," *New York Times,* January 13, 2000.

humanitarian narrative "creates sentimental stories that by making viewers feel pity also, and not accidentally, makes them feel better about themselves."[225] According to him, the dominant humanitarian narrative turns moral and political narratives into entertainment and drama.[226] Instead of focusing on the political context or actors that are causing the suffering, the media focuses on small stories of tragedy or miracles to keep the audience entertained without tackling the controversial debates surrounding the crisis. In part, the dominant narrative is designed to make people in donor states feel good about them selves and enjoy watching the drama unfold in front of them. However, the gruesome photos and bloody videos, tweeted from Libyan aid recipients, challenge this narrative because they do not shield their audience from grotesque and disturbing images. They interrupt the appeal of the humanitarian narrative because the photos are more likely to be sickening and scarring than appealing and intriguing. The donors' attraction to images of suffering inherent in the dominant humanitarian narrative is removed, and viewers are put in an uncomfortable position in which they must confront the realities of the conflict and their role in relation to the suffering on the page.

A common fear of promoting grotesque images of suffering and death is that such images deter readers from looking at or engaging with images of suffering, further separating them from the suffering subjects. However, it is not horrific images that distance the viewer from the suffering; it is the context in which the photos are presented. Sonia Sontag, in her later book on the power of photography, disavows her earlier argument about the harms of media saturated with images of suffering and admits that photos of suffering can have a powerful effect if used in the right context. "People don't

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[225] Ignatieff, "Television and Humanitarian Aid," 294.
[226] Ibid. 292

become inured to what they are shown—if that is the right way to describe what happens—because of the *quantity* of images dumped on them. It is passivity that dulls feeling."[227] Sontag believes that people don not turn off the TV when confronted with gruesome photos or nonstop images of suffering; they turn off the TV because the photos are presented in the context of an "intractable and irresolvable situation." TV viewers just see endless suffering and nothing they can to do stop it. When the conflict is portrayed as inevitable or irresolvable, they feel powerless, and are turned off by the suffering. Thus gore for the sake of gore may not grab the lasting attention of the public, but if the disturbing images are part of a campaign – if they call for specific, attainable and potentially effective action that will put an end to the suffering – viewers will see the disruptive images in a new way. If gruesome and disturbing images of suffering are shared within an activist context, they will not stifle communication between aid recipients and the rest of the world.

The raw gruesome photos from Libya take place in a context of political activism, because they are part of a grassroots effort to attract US military support and expose the realities of the humanitarian crisis. Sarah Joseph argues that Libyans used Twitter blogs and other forms of social media to expose their government's violent crackdowns on peaceful protests. She credits the quick transitions in Libya – from protests to civil war to international war – to the magnitude and fast-paced sharing of information through social media sources which mobilized global awareness and support.[228] Aid recipients are acutely aware that military support depends on how they sell the crisis. If they can demonstrate that the government is slaughtering civilians in the streets, the US

[227] Sonia Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others,* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002): 102.
[228] Sarah Joseph, "Social Media, Political Change, and Human Rights," *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review* 35 (2012).

government, as well as NGOs and other states, may experience both internal and external pressure to take action and come to their aid. Yusra Tekbali, a Libyan woman, explains that Libyans are acutely aware of the power of social media: "There's a gruesome video… on Facebook, where one man is shot in the face, while his friend records and yells 'Record it, Record this martyr. Show Al Jazeera.'"[229] Many of the Libyans tweeting repeatedly described their role in the revolution as getting out information and pictures so the rest of the world could come to Libya's aid.[230] The context in which the disruptive images of suffering are produced is one of mobilization and political action, and therefore is able to harness to power of disruptive gruesome imagery in such a way that challenges the dominant humanitarian narrative without alienating readers and donor states.

Images of suffering become weapons for Libyans to challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative. The images disrupt the normative context of humanitarianism and distort our traditional understandings. Similarly, Libyan's use of humor is a method to disrupt and distort the narrative. The Libyan Twitter users use humor in ways that force us to question the humanitarian narrative we are so familiar with.

The Use of Humor: Deconstructing the Humanitarian Narrative

The tweets from Libyan aid recipients are filled with jokes, snarky comments, humorous self-deprecation and satire. Satirical images and videos characterize the infamous Muammar Gaddafi, former ruler of the Libyan Arab Republic, as a pathetic fool. Simultaneously, Libyan Twitter users see humor in their own revolutionary movement, poking fun at their attempts to communicate in code and their own obsession

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[229] Justin Kaufmann, "A first-hand account of fleeing Libya," *City Room Blog,* Feb. 27, 2011. http://www.wbez.org/blog/city-room-blog/2011-02-27/first-hand-account-fleeing-libya-83066.
[230] Feb17Libya, Twitter account description, https://twitter.com/feb17libya.

with Twitter. In addition, their satire often takes the form of parodies of western cultural phenomena. For example, Gaddafi is ridiculed in parodies of Gene Kelly's "Singing the Rain,"[231] Rihanna's "Umbrella,"[232] and the introduction to the 1970s American sitcom, *The Brady Bunch*.[233] By contrast, the newspaper articles reporting on Bosnia are void of any humor. Such newspapers may have sparingly used humor in reporting on other subject areas, but they kept the conversation serious when discussing the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia and Herzgovina.

Of course, this discrepancy between humor in aid recipient tweets and major American newspapers is expected and appropriate. The use of humor by mass media sources would be seen as making light of an egregious atrocity. Meanwhile, aid recipients are less vulnerable to such criticism because they are the ones suffering. They are the ones experiencing the humanitarian crisis, so they can use humor without anyone doubting that they are making light of a serious situation. I do not intend to make a normative claim about how mass media sources should report on atrocities. Rather, I hope to highlight how this new form of humorous discourse through aid recipient tweets, challenges the traditional humanitarian narrative.

According to Anne Orford, the traditional humanitarian narrative characterizes aid recipients as passive weak victims, lacking power, agency and authority, who suffer at the hands of bullies and tyrants.[234] The depiction of them as weak and helpless, in turn, characterizes the oppressor, as well as sources of aid, as powerful and dominating, though in different ways. This power dynamic reinforces the disempowerment and oppression of

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[231] Dmgariany, Twitter post, March 2, 9:34pm, https://twitter.com/Dmgariany.
[232] Dmgariany, May 2, 2011, 9:00pm.
[233] Feb17libya, April 27, 2011, 2:49am.
[234] Orford, *Reading Humanitarian,* 171.

aid recipients. Recipients are characterized as passive actors incapable of resisting oppression and in need of rescue. According to Althussers' theory of interpellation,[235] aid recipients may begin to accept or internalize the passivity and helplessness that the dominant narrative ascribes to them.

However, the process of interpellation, as a result of the dominant humanitarian narrative, can be interrupted and resisted through satiric and subversive criticism. Judith Butler argues there are many ways to resist interpellation without taking up arms. She asks us to "'consider the range of disobedience that such interpellating law might produce,' such as refusal, parody or rupture."[236] When Butler claims there is a "slippage between discursive command its appropriated effect,"[237] she is arguing that there is an opportunity to resist the dominant discourses; satire can disrupt the normative assumptions and prescriptions of identities embedded within the dominant narrative. The Libyans' use of Twitter is a form of guerilla communication that challenges the power relations represented in the traditional humanitarian narrative. Guerilla communication, which aims to disrupt dominant discourses, "doesn't aim to destroy the codes and signs of power and control, but to distort and disfigure their meanings as a means of counteracting the omnipotent prattling of power… to detourn and subvert the messages transported."[238] In a way, guerilla communication uses the dominant discourse as a tool to criticize the normative structures the discourse normally entrenches.

The use of humor, through satire, self-deprecation, and parodies of western cultural phenomenon, challenges the prescribed identities and power relationships

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[235] Louis Althusser, "Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État," *La Pensée* (1970).
[236] Orford, *Reading Humanitarian,* 181.
[237] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (New York, 1993), 122.
[238] Luther Blissett and Sonja Brünzels, "What about Communication Guerrilla?" http://sniggle.net/Manifesti/blissettBrunzels.php.

imposed by the traditional humanitarian narrative. First, I will analyze how Twitter users use satire to laugh at their oppressors and therefore subvert traditional power structures of humanitarian discourse. Next, I will highlight how Libyans laugh at themselves, which portrays a complex identity instead of static victimization and forces a public reaction beyond mere sympathy. Finally, I will explain how Libyan tweets use Western cultural phenomena as a medium for their satirical attacks against Gaddafi, which blurs the distinction between the citizens within donor states and the recipients within the humanitarian narrative.

Libyan Twitter users laugh at their oppressor, which empowers them as active political agents capable of understanding and resisting sources of oppression. For example user Almuktar tweeted, "LOL[239], Gaddafi TV has claimed protests in London against gov cuts r actualy against the coalitions no fly zone enforced on gaddafi #Libya."[240] Similarly, he tweeted, "Gaddafi claimed in his speech yesterday that coalition missiles which tageted his Air bases were a bunch of fireworks haha ☺."[241] His statements, despite the misspellings and emoticons, are powerful political weapons. Almuktar and many other users are poking fun at Gaddafi and laughing at his desperation. This lampooning of Gaddafi is a form of resistance because "to laugh at the literal behavior of other characters in the social drama, is to change the truth value of what those characters do so as to undermine its seriousness, its claim to veracity, to authority, and so to call it into question."[242]

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[239] Lol is an abbreviation for "laughing out loud" commonly used on the Internet.
[240] Almuktar, March 26, 2011, 1:39pm.
[241] Almuktar, March 23, 3:01pm.
[242] Daniel R. White and Gert Hellerich, "Nietzsche at the Altar: Situating the Devotee," *Postmodern Culture* 6.1 (1995).

Moreover, jokes can be used to humiliate and thus further deride the authority of persons. Almuktar undermined the authority and dignity of leaders in the Gaddafi regime when he tweeted, "Gbagbos gone, thats one down and 3 to go, get your clothes on guys, you dont want to be caught in ur underwear do u ? #Libya #Feb17 ☺."[243] In addition, almost all of the Twitter users made fun of Gaddafi's televised speeches while in hiding. They tweeted things such as "The mad dog rants again 'the US UK and France will all be defeated' haha,"[244] "That guys is an absolute fool speaking nonsense..lol,"[245] and "is he reading that book in braille?"[246] Laughter delegitimizes authority and characterizes aid recipients as empowered political agents who are able to see through the government's tricks to maintain political stability and brave enough to resist and ridicule the source of oppression. It turns the power relationships assumed in the traditional humanitarian narrative inside out: aid recipients are the strong and tactical ones, while the oppressive regime is weak and pathetic. Not only are the tweets a form of resistance against the Gaddafi regime, but they are also, intentionally or not, a form of resistance against aid recipient identities prescribed by the traditional humanitarian narrative. Laughter is a powerful weapon against traditional normative contexts because "laughter breaks up, breaks out, splashes over…"[247]

Finally, a particularly peculiar form of satire making fun of Gaddafi was in the form of a YouTube video tweeted by IbnLibyafree[248]. The video entitled, "Angry Tweets

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[243] Almuktar, March 26, 2011, 1:39pm.
[244] Almuktar March 15, 2011, 9:58pm.
[245] Almuktar, Feb 20, 2011, 11:17pm.
[246] Libyansrevolt, February 22, 2011, 4:21pm.
[247] Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *La Jeune Né,* (London: Tauris, 1996): 33.
[248] IbnLibyafree, Twitter post, May 1, 2011, 5:09am, https://twitter.com/ibnlibyafree.

Presents Three Big Pigs,"[249] is a bizarre combination of the popular iphone application game "Angry Birds," in which users flick birds across their screen to knock out pigs, and the classic childhood story, "The Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf." The video shows the angry birds flying through the air trying to take out the pigs, which look like the ex-president of Tunisia, Ben Ali, ex-president of Egypt, Mubarak, and finally Libyan leader Gaddafi. The video alters the appearance of totalitarian leaders by depicting them as small green pigs with squeaky voices. The angry birds, representing aid recipients, attack as a mob and effectively defeat the first two pigs, but struggle to break through Gaddafi's shield of black umbrellas. After several failed attempts, a massive bald eagle, representing US intervention, destroys Gaddafi. The "level completed" sign then appears with a message that says "Stuck on a tricky level? Out of levels to play? Bring on THE MIGHTY EAGLE!"[250]

The video tells the story of humanitarian intervention but its absurd and satirical content transforms the classic story of the all-powerful US saviors into a more dark and complex comment on humanitarianism. The video's use of satire, strange metaphors and bizarre imagery forms a subtle critique of the traditional humanitarian narrative. V. Vale and A. Juno explain:

> Pranks are most admirable when they evoke a liberation of expression...and challenge the authority of appearances. While almost all pranks mock or undermine kneel-to-authority conditioning, some do more, by virtue of disclosing more levels of black humor and metaphor, or expanding our notions of reality by gifting us with a bizarre image or metamorphosis. At a single stroke a prank can dissect an intricate tissue of artifice, exposing a rigid behavioral structure underneath.[251]

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[249] Original source removed. See: "Three Big Pigs," uploaded March 28, 2011 by Egorzhgun. Find at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0i9acHS_zQ&feature=share.
[250] Ibid.
[251] V. Vale and A. Juno, "RE/Search Pranks," *Re/Search Publications* 11 (1987).

The humor and absurdity of the video sends the message that "this is play" and thus "these actions in which we now engage, do not denote what those actions *for which they stand* would denote."[252] In other words, "these actions do not mean what they would mean if they were serious."[253] Instead, the satire is a meta-message designed "partly to negate, undermine, distort, the meaning of the behavior referred to."[254] In short, the video's satirical representation of the traditional humanitarian narrative is actually a subtle critique of the traditional narrative itself.

The video turns the humanitarian narrative, which is widely recognized as legitimate and an accurate representation of identities during humanitarian crises, into a joke. The humanitarian narrative, when summed up in a three-minute video, seems ridiculous. We're forced to laugh at the representation of the evil and threatening villain since it's green pig with a squeaky, non-threatening, voice. The aid recipients are displayed as a mindless mob trying to take down the villain but constantly failing. This simplistic representation of aid recipients highlights the absurdity of many people's actual assumption that aid recipients are just weak mobs of mindless rebels throughout the regions of the Arab Spring. Finally, the representation of the US as the giant eagle that can easily be called on to come take down the villain in one fell swoop also reflects our traditional views of humanitarianism, but in a way that shows us the inaccuracy and absurdity of those views; we're forced to see how silly it is to assume the US can just easily be called on and immediately fix the conflict. The video exaggerates the

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[252] Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000): 180.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid.

humanitarian narrative so as to show us its flaws and force us to laugh at it, thus delegitimizing it.

While the Libyan Twitter users made many satirical comments about Gaddafi and even US aid, they also made fun of themselves. For example, during the Libyan crisis, #YouKnowYourArab emerged as a trending hashtag.[255] Twitter users were tweeting phrases like "#YouKnowYourArab when you're ready to die for democracy ☺" so as to unify around the Arab Spring. This trend quickly expanded beyond revolutionary sentiments and users began to talk about Arab speaking patterns and tea choices. Eventually Tripolitanian jokingly tweeted, "Arabs are trying to work on free speech, which is why we'll say #YouKnowYourArab not #YouKnowYou'reArab #democracy."[256] Likewise, twitter user Thanku4theanger tweeted, "Asked friend Tripoli where the weddings were (code for clashes), & they replied in the wedding venues? James Bond they're not ☺."[257] Thanku4theanger was making fun of the average Libyan citizens' attempts at engaging in revolutionary tactics like the secret communication of intelligence. Additionally, Libyanproud laughed at the widespread attention on Libya's internal conflict when he/she tweeted, "The ICC press conference will also be shown on jazeera sports 1,2,3 and on HBO, libyas biggest sporting event! ☺."[258] Despite the deaths and constant violence that took place during the Libyan crisis, these aid recipients were still able to laugh at the less dark parts of the crisis, including their own resistance efforts.

The aid recipients' humorous self-deprecation challenges the traditional humanitarian narrative in two ways. First, humorous self-deprecation reflects the

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[255] A hashtag in Twitter is used to mark keywords or topics of the tweet so that tweets can be categorized and searched for by subject area.
[256] Tripolitanian, April 26, 2011, 4:04am.
[257] Thanku4theanger, May 13, 2011, 7:49pm.
[258] Libyanproud, May 16, 2011, 7:21am.

recipients' complex identities, challenging the abstract and flat identity prescribed to them by the traditional narrative. In the humanitarian narrative, "victims are represented in abstract terms,"[259] but tweets in which Libyans are poking fun at themselves reflect character, a sense of humor, and self-awareness that the traditional narrative fails to capture. Representations of aid recipients as not mere victims but instead people with personalities, ideas, and wit, shatter stereotypical generalizations of aid recipients and force the world to see them as autonomous agents.

Second, humorous self-deprecation does not further victimize the aid recipients like mere self-deprecation would, but instead unifies and strengthens the aid recipient community. When aid recipients make fun of one another, they are not tearing each other down but actually building each other up. "Play fighting is not real fighting, the 'nip' is not the 'bite,' as Bateson remarks, though it uses identifiable aspects of the bite as an abstract sign indicating a meta-communicative bond, an understanding, between the players."[260] Thus, when a Libyan tweets a message making fun of other Libyans' ineptitude they are not entrenching the traditional narratives' characterization of recipients as helpless or weak. Because the message is satirical, it is not understood as a genuine criticism and, in fact, helps unify the aid recipient community because playful banter communicates a common understanding of shared-experiences.

Finally, Libyans' tweets of satirical parodies that critique Gaddafi through western popular culture blur the distinction between the recipient and the donor with traditional humanitarian narrative. Twitter user, Dmgariany, tweeted a youtube video,

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[259] Musarò, "Living in Emergency," 23.
[260] Daniel Ray White and Gert Hellerich, *Labryinths of the Mind: The Self in the Postmodern Age,* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998): 127.

"I'm Killing in the Rain."[261] The video shows Gaddafi sitting in his car with door open and holding an umbrella over his head for an unusually long period of time. Meanwhile, there is a voiceover of someone imitating Gaddafi singing the song "I'm Singing in the Rain," from the 1952 American musical comedy film starring Gene Kelly. The lyrics are slightly altered so that Gaddafi is singing about killing his people. Similarly, Libyansrevolt tweeted, "No time for jokes but: Gaddafi under his umbrella... ella... ella...." along with a video of the same scene of Gaddafi with an umbrella but to the tune of Rihanna's hit single, "Umbrella."[262] Clips of Rihanna's music video are mixed in with the video so that Rihanna's pop star appearance juxtaposes Gadaffi's less refined appearance. In addition, Feb17Libya tweeted, "The #Gaddafi Bunch -- Marsha Marsha Marsha" with a link to a picture of Gaddafi family members in the well-known opening sequence of the 1970s American sitcom, The Brady Bunch.[263] These many references to American culture are likely because these songs and movies have seeped into Libyan culture. However, intentional or not, such playful parodies may lead Americans to feel a stronger cultural bond with aid recipients. This challenges the dominant humanitarian narrative because it blurs the distinction between the self and the other, the recipients and providers (as well as citizens of provider states).

When aid recipients use American culture as a vehicle of communication, it erodes the difference between the aid recipients and donor state citizens. Anne Orford argues that the boundaries between the self and other are key to the humanitarian narrative. There must be a distance from the other so that the self can gain comfort and solace in the fact that they are unlike the other. Orford explains:

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[261] Dmgariany, March 2, 9:34pm. Video available: http://t.co/qdktBtk.
[262] Libyansrevolt, February 15, 2011, 2:17am.
[263] Feb17Libya, April 27, 2011, 2:49am.

> At stake in any representation of humanitarian crises and mass suffering is the self-image of the Western state, and now the international community, as sovereign, civilized, autonomous, powerful and humane. This self-constitution depends upon establishing a narrative in which the chaotic other is separate from the heroic self.[264]

The heroic self is defined in contrast to the other; the fact that the aid recipients are so different and alien to those individuals in the donor state is what uplifts donor state individuals and makes them feel powerful, humane and autonomous. The Libyans' use of American culture to speak out about the humanitarian crisis makes it more difficult for individuals in donor states to see a concrete distinction between themselves and the Libyan aid recipients. When Libyans are touting the same cultural values as the Americans it is more difficult for Americans to see the other as chaotic or incapable, and thus the Americans cannot in turn identify themselves as the powerful heroes. The satirical parodies tap into cultural bonds and shared experiences, thus obscuring distinctions between aid recipients and donor state citizens and deconstructing their interdependent identities imposed by the traditional narrative. Thus, Libyans' satirical use of western culture to communicate with the global community challenges the traditional normative context of humanitarian crises.

The use of images of suffering and humor were both tools to disrupt the humanitarian narrative. Libyan Twitter users could also challenge the dominant hero-victim narrative, which is riddled with gender stereotypes, by challenging traditional representations of women in times of conflict. By contrast, the Twitter users could reinforce the narrative by entrenching the gender roles that are embedded within the dominant humanitarian narrative. Thus, in order to evaluate all the ways Libyans could

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[264] Ibid.

use Twitter to challenge or reinforce the dominant humanitarian narrative, it is important to analyze the way their Twitter discourse represents women, and as a result, men.

Representations of Gender

At first glance, the Libyan tweets seem to challenge gender norms within the dominant humanitarian narrative by empowering women as revolutionaries instead of mere receivers of aid. Thanku4theanger tweeted about women protests in Tripoli and Misrata. He tweeted, "Women protest taking place in #Misrata right now. Literally haven't stopped chanting for a second for almost an hour now."[265] Tripolitanian and Feb17Libya also tweeted about numerous women's protests.[266] However, as established in earlier sections, aid recipients were empowered through Twitter discourse. Thus, we must try to tease apart empowerment of women as a result of the empowerment of all aid recipients versus empowerment of women as a result of a conscious deconstruction of gender norms. Deeper analysis of the tweets from Libyans demonstrates that the role of women in the revolution still reflects the gender norms and stereotypes found in the dominant humanitarian narrative.

Gender norms are deeply embedded with the humanitarian narrative. According to Ann Orford, humanitarianism, and international law as a whole, is often understood as a way to compensate for women's weakness. "As women are weak and the likely targets for violence, the role of international law and international lawyers is to protect them."[267] Women are constructed as weak, passive and in need of protection within the humanitarian narrative, or in other words, women have a hyper-victim identity compared

[265] Thanku4theanger, April 26, 2011, 3:58pm.
[266] Tripolitanian, April 26, 2011, 3:32pm. *See also:* Feb17Libya, March 27, 2011, 8:55pm.
[267] Orford, *Reading Humanitarian,* 57.

to male aid recipients. Women are associated with child-like characteristics and often placed in the same category of children in terms of vulnerability and dependency. Gender norms perpetuate the idea that men are to protect women, which simultaneously characterizes the men as the fighters and the women as the passive victims. This gender norm manifests in humanitarian policy so that adult women are presumed "civilian," while adult men are presumed, "combatants." Humanitarian discourse reinforces this gender norm by using terms like "women and children" interchangeably with "aid recipients".

Charlie Carpenter explains, "Gender ideas are embedded in both the category 'innocent civilian' and the category 'especially vulnerable.' These ideas exert constitutive effects on the discourse and regulative effects on the behavior of actors within the network."[268] Carpenter believes we have come to understand notions of innocent civilians or vulnerability through gender and associate those concepts with femininity. While international humanitarian aid agencies try to be neutral in their distribution of aid, most have policies to prioritize the protection of the "especially vulnerable" when there are limited resources. Despite overwhelming evidence that adult and adolescent men are most likely to be massacred, since they are potential soldiers, the vulnerable populations that aid organizations prioritize tend to be women and children.[269]

Bosnia is an example of this discriminatory distribution of aid based on gender. While women and children were more vulnerable to certain forms of violence, like rape

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[268] Charlie Carpenter, " 'Women and Children First': Gender, Norms, and Humanitarian Evacuation in the Balkans 1991-1995," *International Organization* 4 (2003): 663.
[269] Carpenter, " 'Women and Children First'," 662. See also: "Georgia: Chechen Airbridge Evacuation Complete," UNHCR Briefing Notes, 17 December 1999; "Yugoslavia/Kosovo: ICRC Assists Civilians Caught up in Clashes," *ICRC News*, 11 March 1999; and "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Over 300 Civilians Evacuated," *ICRC News,* 13 June 2001.

or sexual abuse, Carpenter argues they were less vulnerable to lethal attacks. When Serbs attacked a city, men were usually killed immediately, while women, children and the elderly were forced to relocate.[270] In April 1993, the UNHCR preemptively evacuated thousands of women and children from Srebrenica but left the non-wounded men behind. Two years later, when the town was finally taken, the Bosnian Serb Army killed 8,000 men including many who had never been soldiers and who had no gender-based advantage at survival when faced with indiscriminate shelling.[271] In December 1993, a UNHC field report described the UN's responsibility to protect the most vulnerable populations without specifying gender as a factor, but when aid organizations began evacuations, it was almost entirely women and children. "Of the 18,000 missing persons after the wars, the ICRC estimated that 92 percent were men and only 8 percent women."[272] The gendered definitions of civilian and combatant influenced humanitarian policy within Bosnia and, arguably, cost many men their lives.

Libyan aid recipient discourse in 2011 did not challenge this aspect of the humanitarian narrative, but rather, reinforced it. Libyans' themselves helped women and children evacuate dangerous areas, leaving men behind to fight. Libyanproud tweeted, "#dheba: 100's of Pickup trucks packed with children & women fleeing the #nafousa mountain."[273] Similarly, Thanku4theanger, tweeted "Luckily they managed to move the women/kids to other parts of Nafousa" and "1000 have arrived safely in Benghazi from Misrata today mainly wounded, elderly, women and children."[274] Libyans focused their own evacuation efforts on "women and children" because of the norm that these groups

[270] Carpenter, " 'Women and Children First'," 668.
[271] Ibid., 666
[272] Ibid., 662.
[273] Libyanproud, May 3, 2011, 11:35am.
[274] Thanku4theanger, May 13, 2011, 6:12pm.

are especially in need of protection and security. While adult men were not being systematically killed like they were in Bosnia, the men were still targeted more than women and children since they were more likely to be rebel fighters or a threat to the Gaddafi regime. Most of the deaths in Libya were a result of the regime suppressing rebel fighters. At minimum, women were certainly not in more danger than men such that they needed to be prioritized in evacuation efforts.

Further strengthening these gender norms, Libyans used the stereotype of women as innocent civilians to their advantage. When Libyans' tweeted about injuries or atrocities perpetrated by Gaddafi's regime against peaceful protesters, they often-focused on injuries to women. Libyanproud tweeted, "#gaddafi forces hv taken over the hospital area, injured civilians inc women and children in dire need of assistance !#nafoursa."[275] Feb17Libya tweeted, "#Ajdabiya doctor describes woman shot in chest 3-4 times, beaten cut & disfigured in last trimester of pregnancy."[276] This focus on harm to women makes sense because it's how they sell their cause as a humanitarian one and not just a political one. Because women are seen as innocent civilians, regardless of the actual truth, it is most advantageous for Libyans to broadcast injuries to women when trying to attract the world's attention and international aid.

Another common trend throughout the Libya tweets were reports of sexual violence against Libyan women. For example, OmarAlmoktar tweeted a picture with the message, "Woman cries for help, says abused by Gaddafi men."[277] And Tripolitanian tweeted, "Reports of hundreds of women raped by #Gaddafi forces in #Libya, their lives,

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[275] Libyanproud, April 25, 2011, 3:19pm.
[276] Feb17Libya, April 14, 2011, 8:13pm.
[277] OmarAlmoktar, March 26, 2011, 12:40pm.

ruined, families broken."[278] Similar reports of sexual violence were prevalent in mass media coverage of Bosnia; there were numerous stories of young girls getting raped.[279] When Libyans and Bosnians report sexual assault against women they are not just demonstrating how Gaddafi or the Serbs harm innocent civilians. Such reports characterize the men of Gaddafi's regime and the Serbs as animalistic and evil, and demonstrate how important women's sexuality, or purity, is within Libyan and Bosnian culture.

Sexual violence against women is often used by aid organizations to justify women as a vulnerable population. While instances of rape must be reported and broadcasted, focusing only on sexual violence against women is misleading. Such gendered discourse hides the fact that there were some reports of Gaddafi forces raping women and men. Feb17Libya tweeted a documentary translated into English and explained that it "speaks of #Gaddafi rapes of boys, girls, men, and women."[280] Unfortunately, Feb17Libya was one of the only Libyans to mention sexual assault as a problem for both genders. Similarly, experts claim male rape and sexual torture were weapons of war during the conflict in Bosnia and Croatia. While 20,000 women were raped from 1992-1995 during the Bosnia war, the number of males raped is unknown. Human rights activists in Bosnia claim "at least several hundred men were victims of this crime, but not a single trial, either at the Hague war crimes tribunal or in local courts, has focused solely on the rape of sexual abuse of men."[281] There may statistically be more

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[278] Tripolitanian, May 3, 2011, 6:13pm.
[279] Chuck Sudetic, "In Bosnia Again, a Grim 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" *New York Times,* February 17, 1994.
[280] Feb17Libya, April 17, 2011, 2:17pm.
[281] Dženana Karabegović, "Bosnia: Struggle to Overcome Male Rape Taboo," *Institute for War & Peace Reporting,* April 17, 2010.

women than men who suffer from war-rape, but it's important not to define rape as a women-only problem through our discourse.

Another reason for categorizing women as innocent and vulnerable in humanitarian discourse is their unique role as mothers. Carpenter explains:

> "Women have historically been associated with child rearing as well as with the civilian sector; indeed women's general exclusion from the formal armed forces as often been justified in terms of their roles as caregivers. Thus, the special protections that have accrued to women under the international humanitarian law have traditionally addressed primarily their specific needs as mothers rather than the broader difficulties they face as a result of gender hierarchies prevalent in society before and during armed conflict."[282]

"Women as mothers" is a constant theme within the dominant humanitarian narrative because it characterizes women as peaceful caretakers and not combatants. This caretaker role may seem to contradict the representation of women as helpless and in need of protection, but it's important to recognize that caretaker is different than protector. Women may be expected to care for wounded soldiers or cook meals for them, but they are not to engage in, or suffer, violence for men. This narrative of women as non-violent is dangerous because men are defined in contrast to women. Thus, civilian men are not seen as peaceful and are unfairly treated as combatants. Additionally, the women-as-mothers theme "suggests that women's needs can be boiled down to those specific to mothers" and "marginalizes the importance of fathering."[283] In the news coverage of Bosnia, many articles focused on the suffering that occurs when a mother is separated from her children.[284] And almost all reports of "suffering women" were either

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[282] Carpenter, "'Women and Children First'," 305-306.
[283] Ibid., 306.
[284] John Pomfret, "A Bridge of Fears and Misunderstandings Still Divides Sarajevo," *Washington Post* February 17, 1994.

about them being raped or losing their children to an attack.[285] Women within the humanitarian narrative during the Bosnian crisis could not have an identity independent of their role as mothers and wives in need of protection.

While reports on Bosnia highlighted the suffering of females only in terms of their roles as wives and mothers, reports on Libya highlighted the political resistance of females only in terms of their role as wives and mothers. Discourse from Libya tweets often celebrated the bravery or dedication of women involved in the revolution, but the discourse still focused on their roles as mothers and wives. For example, OmarAlmoktar tweeted, "Women in Misurata sent three of her sons out, and says: do not come back unless Gaddafi is dead, HOW BRAVE."[286] While I do not believe OmarAlmoktar intended this tweet as sarcasm, it could be interpreted as such by someone who did not believe in women fulfilling peaceful caretaking roles while men fought. Similarly, Thanku4theanger tweeted about how he was "talking with the wife of a martyr whose demonstrated every single day at the London Libya embassy since #Feb17."[287] He went on to describe her as on of the inspirational Libyan women whose "courage, fortitude and intelligence is second to none."[288] Not only are these women being celebrated for their sacrifices as mothers and wives instead of as Libyans, but it also seems like there's a lower standard or expectation for women revolutionaries compared to men.

While the tweets characterized women as peaceful caretakers, they also re-entrenched stereotypes of men as violent, strong and aggressive. For example,

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[285] *See:* Chuck Sudetic, "U.N. Seeks to Help Two Bosnian Boys," *New York Times,* January 14, 1994 and Nan Dale, "Croatia's Casualties, Bosnia's – and Ours," *New York Times,* January 16, 1994.
[286] OmarAlmoktar, February 27, 2011, 11:00pm.
[287] Thanku4theanger, May 13, 2011, 6:06pm.
[288] Ibid.

Libyansrevolt tweeted a video of men fighting in Kufra with the tweet, "this is what real men are about #libya #feb17."[289] Similarly, Thanku4theanger tweeted a video of a man on a hospital bed with serious injuries preaching about his desire to die for his country. Thanku4theanger commented on the video saying, "This is why Azzawyia will kick Gaddafi's ass. Men like this #EpicLibyanMan."[290] The tweets perpetuate the idea that all real men are combatants. They characterize men who are not on the frontlines getting shot as dishonorable or lacking in their masculinity.

The Gaddafi regime and pro-Gaddafi Libyans also harnessed the power of gender norms in strategic ways. Libyan Twitter user, Dmgariany, who was against the Libya revolution tweeted a video of a pro-Gaddafi rally in Sirte, Libya, Gaddafi's hometown.[291] It showed a large protest with singing and chanting. Everyone was dressed in green and waving green flags in support of the Gaddafi regime. Interestingly, though, everyone was either a woman or a child. Girls who looked as young as nine were making enthusiastic speeches into the microphone. The women and children ridiculed Nicholas Sarkozy, denounced the war, shot guns into the air, and praised their leader Gaddafi.[292]

Such a protest is strategic because women and children are symbols of peace and victimhood. In this way, pro-Gaddafi forces can characterize the revolutionaries as the violent perpetrators threatening innocent civilians and portray an image of Gaddafi as the protector of the civilian non-combatants. Had there been pro-Gaddafi men protesting and shooting guns into the air in a mob, the international community would see them as a threat to innocent Libyans and combatants within the humanitarian conflict. By contrast,

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[289] Libyansrevolt, February, 27, 2011, 7:11pm.
[290] Thanku4theanger, May 4, 2011, 11:45pm.
[291] Dmagariany, April 18, 2011, 7:43pm.
[292] Rayyisse, "Armed Women Syrte [17-04-2011]," YouTube Video, April 17, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d13-fqQQNy0.

the women and children protesters can gain sympathy from the international community and send an innocuous, non-threatening message to stop the revolution.

Of course, women can be used in other ways to draw attention to a humanitarian cause. The same anti-revolutionary Libyan Twitter user, Dmagariany, also tweeted, "#Women whip off shirts in #Qaddafi's support #Libya," with a link to an article about two RU-FEMEN Russian activists who stood outside the European Union in Moscow wearing Bikinis and holding mattresses with Gaddafi's portrait on them. The women claimed the intervention in Libya was because the EU leaders sleep on "awful, old mattresses" and thus do not get enough sleep."[293] As a result, they have health problems and are mad at the whole world. The women chanted, "Make Love, not War!" and "Mattress and breasts – forget about the war!"[294] While this is an extreme example, it highlights how women can be used as part of protests and revolutionary movements, be characterized as active political agents, but still reinforce harmful gender norms and stereotypes.

Ultimately, the gender norms embedded within the traditional humanitarian narrative are present in the Libyan aid recipient discourse just as they were present in mass media coverage of Bosnia. It may be the case that Libyans challenged other representations within the dominant humanitarian narrative, like that of aid providers and aid recipients, because such representations are limited to humanitarianism and not ingrained in them through their cultures. The static identities of aid recipients and aid providers perpetuated by the dominant narrative are easier to challenge because Libyans, who have not always been aid recipients, understand themselves as something different

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[293] "Women whip off shirts in Gaddafi's support," *Mathaba,* April 18, 2011. http://mathaba.net/go/?http://rt.com/news/features/libya-protest-undress-femen/.
[294] Ibid.

than the dominant narrative suggests. However, gender norms and stereotypes are so entrenched within Libyan culture and society, like most other places, and thus are more difficult to challenge. It is easier to resist the initial framing or constitution of identities imposed during a humanitarian crisis than reverse constituted understandings of gender that have long existed both within and outside of humanitarianism.

Therefore, Libyan Twitter users challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative's representations of aid recipients and providers, and further challenges the hero-victim narrative through disruptive images of suffering and subversive uses of humor and satire. Libyan Twitter users only fail to challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative in their representations of gender since they perpetuate the women-as-weak and women-as-mothers stereotypes that are integral to the dominant narrative and traditional humanitarian practices. The next step is to determine whether this Libyan Twitter discourse can influence larger discourses, specifically mass media representations of the humanitarian crisis in Libya.

Chapter 6

Aid Recipient Discourse Influences Mass Media

Now that I have established that Libyan aid recipient discourse challenges the dominant humanitarian narrative, the question is whether such discourse has the potential to transform the larger normative context within which humanitarianism operates. There can be discourses contrary to normative understandings, but if those discourses remain isolated within a particular subculture – be it Libyans or Twitter users – then they will never reshape the dominant narrative and transform the normative context of humanitarianism. Transformative discourse can start small and grow to infiltrate larger discourses and practices over time, eventually reframing our natural understandings.

In order to determine if Libyans' twitter discourse influences the broader discourse, I analyze 2011 mass media coverage of Libya in comparison with the mass media coverage of Bosnia and Libyan aid recipient discourse. This analysis shows the Libyan use of images of suffering and humor to challenge the dominant narrative did not transfer to mass media discourse. However, Libyan Twitter representations of aid recipients and aid providers, which challenged the dominant hero-victim narrative, did appear in mass media coverage of Libya. Moreover, the mass media coverage of Libya integrated aid recipient voices into their news reports and broadcasted Libyans' tweets throughout the world.

Overall, I determine that Libyan Twitter discourse influenced mass media representations of aid recipients and providers in the Libyan crisis, but mass media still cannot portray multifaceted identities. When Libyan Twitter users represented aid recipients as political activists instead of passive victims, mass media stopped paying lip

service to humanitarian aspects of the Libyan conflict, like the suffering of Libyans, and focused primarily on Libyans' political and military efforts. Mass media is ultimately restricted by its economic structure and must essentialize identities in order to tell a short and moving story.

Libyan images of suffering portrayed by mass media were much like the Bosnian images of suffering portrayed by mass media. Like the photographs taken during the Bosnian conflict in 1994, the photos of Libyans suffering were often of destructed property or injured children and fighters. While there were some images of suffering, there was nothing completely shocking, grotesque or deeply disturbing. Like in the photograph of the dead Bosnian boys killed while sledding, Libyan injuries and fatalities were depicted, but covered up with bandages or sheets. For example, one of the more powerful shots in mass media coverage of Libya is a photograph of a doctor leaning on the bed of a dying five-year-old girl with a shrapnel or bullet wound to her head.[295] The photograph did not show the girl's head or injury, but just her legs and the hopelessness of the doctor at her bedside. Similarly, another photograph depicted a four-year-old from Misrata with a shrapnel wound to the head, but his head was fully wrapped in bandages, which spares the audience from witnessing the shock and gore of his injury.[296] The nauseating and gruesome photographs of suffering that were constantly tweeted during the Libyan crisis did not appear in the major newspapers' articles on Libya.

Considering the absence of graphic photos from most major newspapers, there are likely official or unofficial publishing standards that determine what kind of photos are

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[295] C.J. Chivers, "In a Medical Tent in Libya, a Grim Procession," *New York Times,* April 18, 2011. Graphic A1. Photograph by Bryan Denton.
[296] C.J. Chivers, "Rebels Repel Assaults By Loyalists in Libya," *New York Times,* April 29, 2011. Graphic. Photograph by Bryan Denton.

appropriate to show the public. Newspaper outlets are held financially accountable by owners and investors and would be financially disadvantaged if they published gory images that turned off their readership. Thus, the disruptive imagery shared by Libyan aid recipients through Twitter may be unique to their ad hoc method of communication. While those disruptive images can still affect the way people think about suffering, the images may not gain enough traction to overcome traditional images of suffering since the mass media is restricted to images consistent with the dominant humanitarian narrative of suffering.

Additionally, the mass media reports on Libya lacked the same humor and ironic critiques that were common among Libyan Twitter users. This use of humor, much like the disruptive images of suffering, is limited to Twitter users because of the informal and grassroots method of communication that is Twitter. Libyan aid recipients do not have the same responsibility to remain serious like journalists do. Moreover, because the Libyans identify as members of the "suffering group" they stand in a better position to make light of the crisis and its surrounding politics compared to journalists writing from the safety of their own home or from the field but with the option to leave at any time.

While some of the Libyan Twitter users' discursive tactics did not appear in mass media discourse, mass media coverage of Libya did reconstruct the humanitarian narrative by challenging the static identities of aid providers and aid recipients within Libya. First, mass media newspapers representation of aid providers called into question the basic hero-victim narrative. In 2011, the mass media was much more critical of NATO and its role in Libya than was mass media in 1993. The coverage on Bosnia focused plenty on NATO forces and the no-fly zone, but the language was mostly

descriptive. Journalists reported on new NATO decisions and NATO missions, but rarely were they evaluative of NATO. When coverage of NATO was evaluative, it was usually positive. For example, John Kifner reported, "NATO threats of air strikes have stopped the fighting around Sarajevo and increased somewhat the sense of security, permitting people to line up for food at a public kitchen."[297]

Of course, it's important to recognize mass media in Bosnia was very critical of NATO and other international actors prior to the NATO intervention; media played a major role in mobilizing the international community to intervene.[298] However, the time period I analyze is after NATO has taken on its heroic role and began taking action. It may be that mass media was able to criticize NATO because it was failing to act out its role prescribed by the humanitarian narrative, but once NATO stepped into its role as the hero, criticism faded. Mass media coverage of Libya, on the other hand, continued to critique NATO even after NATO took on its role as hero and established a no-fly zone.

In 2011, mass media sources were critical of NATO's involvement in Libya and of NATO itself. Newspaper articles reporting on Libya referred to NATO as "heterogeneous"[299] and an "image of disarray"[300] that has an "aggressive image in the Arab world."[301] At the same time, most articles and editorials taking an evaluative stance on NATO criticized it for not doing enough and for being ineffective in what it does try

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[297] John Kifner, "Conflict in the Balkans; Serbs Apparently Use Sarajevo Arms on Two Cities," *New York Times,* March 1, 1994.
[298] Andrew Puddephatt, "Voices of War: Conflict and the role of the media," International Media Support, 2006: 7-8. http://www.i-m-s.dk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/ims-voices-of-war-2006.pdf.
[299] Lewis M. Simons, "Obama's America: No bullying; Is hands-off approach in Libya weak and deferential? Only if recasting the U.S. image in a positive way is a bad thing," *USAToday,* April 27, 2011.
[300] Karen DeYoung, "West steps up aid to rebels in Libya," *Washington Post,* April 21, 2011.
[301] Steven Erlanger, "G-8 Ministers Fail to Agree on Libya No-Flight Zone," *New York Times,* March 16, 2011.

to do.[302] One article reported, "there's a delay in reacting and lack of response to what's going on on the ground."[303] Another quoted a Libyan doctor who said, "though NATO planes were heard flying overhead, there have been few airstrikes against Gaddafi positions, leaving people in the town feeling abandoned and betrayed." [304] He characterized it as a no-safe zone instead of a no-fly zone.[305] Finally, mass media made sure to cover some of NATO's more embarrassing mistakes like when it accidentally attacked Libyan rebel forces. For example, after rebel tanks were shot at from the sky, journalists spoke with the rebels' commander, Abdul Fattah Younis, who said, "if NATO had attacked their tanks, it was a mistake, and if Gaddafi's airplanes had been allowed to strike them, it was an even bigger mistake."[306]

Not only did the newspaper articles criticize NATO, but they also demanded NATO work more cooperatively with Libyan rebel troops. For example, a New York Times editorial argued that NATO "should find a way to share relevant information with the rebels."[307] Moreover, representations of humanitarian aid were not limited to only international organizations; the media recognized the role of local Libyans within the humanitarian effort. For example, the Italian aid organization, Emergency, was introduced as an organization "helping Misurata's doctors."[308] Additionally, journalists reported on their conversations with Libyan rebels and the arrangements the rebels were

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[302] *See:* Elisabeth Bumiller, "NATO Steps Back From Military Intervention in Libya," *New York Times,* March 11, 2011. And Arthur L. Goldberg Larchmont, "To the Editor: Re 'NATO Steps Back From Military Intervention in Libya'," *New York Times,* March 11, 2011.
[303] "Grounded in Libya," Editorial, *Washington Post,* April 6, 2011.
[304] Joby Warrick and Liz Sly, "U.S. envoy arrives in Libya to seek ways to help rebels," *Washington Post,* April 6, 2011.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Leila Fadel and Simon Denyer, "NATO's credibility takes a hit in Libya," *Washington Post,* April 8, 2011.
[307] "Washington's Options on Libya," Editorial, *New York Times,* March 9, 2011.
[308] Chivers, "In a Medical Tent."

making with the international aid group, Doctors Without Borders, to bring in supplies and evacuate injured men.[309] The mass media coverage encouraged and highlighted cooperation between international aid organizations and the Libyans, which removes the image of the benevolent provider and helpless victim that is so integral to the dominant humanitarian narrative. Finally, a story of a Libyan countryman saving the life of a NATO pilot received a lot of attention in the press. A NATO plane malfunctioned over Libya. The pilot, who parachuted to the ground, was met by Libyans living on the countryside who embraced him and brought him to safety.[310] The hero-victim role we understand as inherent to humanitarian aid was reversed; the recipient became the savior for the helpless NATO pilot.

This critical perspective of NATO and empowered characterization of Libyans challenges the dominant humanitarian narrative that represents aid providers as flawless heroes there to save incapable rebels. It is difficult to prove Libyan's Twitter discourse played a direct causal role in the transformation of mass media discourse on Libya. However, as seen in the analysis above, many journalists communicated with, and received news from, Libyan rebels, doctors and civilians on the ground, which is likely due to improved communication technology. These new voices provide a more complex and critical perspective of the humanitarian aid they receive compared to traditional voices in humanitarian discourse – like governments and international institutions. Discourse, emerging from new communication technologies, gives journalists in mass

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[309] Elisabeth Bumiller and David D. Kirkpatrick, "NATO to Assume New Role in Libya," *New York Times,* March 25, 2011.
[310] "Libya crisis: US warplane crew rescued after crash," *BBC News,* March 22, 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12816226.

media new normative understandings of the humanitarian crisis, which leads them to challenge parts of the dominant humanitarian narrative.

The second way mass media coverage of Libya appears to challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative is through its representation of aid recipients. Civilian protests throughout Libya received much attention from the mass media. One photo in the *New York Times* depicted crowds of Libyans outside the courthouse in Benghazi while the rebel government began to take form[311], and another showed a Libyan in Benghazi cheering as "rocket launchers headed to the front near Brega."[312] Many other photos showed massive anti-Gaddafi protests where "Libyans waved signs describing Gaddafi as a genocidal butcher and displayed photographs of dead Libyans."[313] Pro-Gaddafi civilians were also shown as politically active and engaged. For example, one photograph depicted a woman carrying "a portrait of Colonel Qaddafi during a rally in his support in front of the Rixos Hotel in Tripoli."[314] Aid recipients are portrayed in mass media newspapers as empowered political agents fighting for freedom, or for the pro-Gaddafi protesters - stability, but either way, they are portrayed as engaged civilians, activists, and even fighters. Instead of discussing aid recipients as vulnerable, journalists are quoting John McCain, Senior United States Senator, talk about how exciting and inspirational it was to see Libyans protesting in the streets.[315] There was very little coverage of the suffering, victimization, or helplessness of the Libyan people. Through new mass media

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[311] Rod Nordland, "A City in Libya Takes Halting Steps to Democracy," *New York Times,* April 18, 2011. Photograph by Bryan Denton.
[312] David Kirkpatrick and C.J. Chivers, "Top Official Quits Libya as Rumors Roil Capital," *New York Times,* April 1, 2011. Photograph by Bryan Denton.
[313] Richard Leiby and Scott Wilson, "Arab League Endorse No-fly Zone Over Libya," *Washington Post,* March 13, 2011.
[314] Kirkpatrick, "Top Official Quits." Photograph by Moises Saman.
[315] Rob Nordland and Steven Lee Myers, "Chairman of Joint Chiefs Warns of Possibility of Stalemate in Libya," *New York Times,* April 23, 2011.

discourse, the Libyan aid recipients received admiration instead of pity – they were re-politicized just like they were through Libyan Twitter discourse.

The newspapers' rhetorical framing of aid recipients also challenges the dominant humanitarian narrative. While the journalists didn't go as far as the Libyans on Twitter, who used the term martyr to describe any Libyan killed by the Gaddafi regime, the journalists did avoid the term "victim" throughout most of their reporting. Interestingly, the only time the term victim was even used in a *Washington Post* article about Libya during the two-month period was when the author was making a comparison to the Bosnian crisis and he described the Muslim population of Bosnia as victimized.[316] These small shifts in rhetoric can begin to reshape global images of aid recipients in humanitarian crises.

Through empowering representations of aid recipients, mass media also reshaped what constitutes a justification for humanitarian aid; capable, not helpless, aid recipients best justify contributions of humanitarian aid. Ambassador Ali Suleiman Aujali, the official representative to the United States of the Transitional National Council of the Libyan Republic and the former Libyan ambassador to the United States published an article in the *Washington Post*. Aujali spoke on behalf of Libyans, exclaiming, "We will create a governing body that represents all Libyans. We will create a judicial system. We will create a free press. And we will ensure the delivery of basic services, such as health care, schools, roads and water."[317] Aujali is explaining that Libyans are willing to do the work, but that they need aid to get through the war. "We are literally fighting for our lives. All of our aspirations will mean little unless we get the help we need now." The

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[316] Stephen Rademaker, "First do no harm in Libya," *Washington Post,* March 11, 2011.
[317] Ali Suleiman Aujali, "How to help us free Libya," *Washington Post,* April 1, 2011.

plea for aid is not made in the context of hopelessness and desperation as seen in Bosnia and dominant narratives of humanitarianism. By contrast, Aujali's argument for aid is based on how much Libyans are fighting, sacrificing, and working to institute change. He is ensuring states that if they can help, Libya will stand on its own two feet again and will not be a constant burden on the international community. It is the agency and efforts of capable Libyans that warrant humanitarian assistance.

It is possible to argue that mass media's representation of aid and aid recipients is due to better communication technology and not due to how the Libyans used, and expressed themselves, through that new technology. However, the parallels between the ways mass media news sources and Libyans characterized aid and aid recipients should be sufficient evidence that the Libyan Tweets influenced mass media discourse. And at a minimum, we know Libyan Twitter discourse influenced mass media coverage of Libya to some extent because many aid recipients tweets were actually integrated into mass media reports.

Reporters acknowledged Twitter was continuously breaking news faster than the major news outlets. "Video clips that appeared online rapidly – ahead even of the news agency reports – were said to show demonstrations on Thursday night in the eastern town of Al Qatif."[318] However, news agencies were cautious about integrating a lot of the news reported through Twitter since it was difficult to immediately verify. Still, they did integrate some of the information tweeted from Libyans on the ground, especially footage of protests. For example, the *New York Times* reported, "a Twitter user, Chan'ad Bahraini, posted a link to this video and translated the protesters' chant as: 'Sunni and

[318] David Goodman, "March 10: Updates on Libya's Revolt and Middle East Protests," *New York Times,* March 10, 2011.

Shia are brothers - this homeland is not for sale.'"[319] Finally, all three newspapers recognized the importance of opening up communication networks within Libya to ensure "that Libyans can communicate with the outside world."[320] Media sources were willing and eager to broadcast Libyan aid recipient voices from the ground. If aid recipients continue to challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative through new communication technology, their voices will further reverberate beyond the Internet and throughout the world.

The above analysis indicates Libyan Twitter discourse did have some influence on mass media discourse. Libyans' representations of recipients and providers, which challenged the dominant humanitarian narrative, reappeared in mass media reports on Libya. However, in my analysis of mass media discourse on Libya, something seemed to be missing. While the newspaper articles talked about Libyans' protest movements and rebel fighters' successes, they rarely talked about the Libyans trapped in their homes, surrounded by violence, and unable to attain basic resources. While they briefly referenced civilians getting killed in protests, they rarely spent time highlighting the stories about innocent civilians being killed or injured by the state, nor did they focus much on the plight of refugees fleeing Libya. Mass media adopted Libyans' representation of themselves as politically active martyrs, but then stopped talking about their suffering or vulnerability.

Similarly, the newspaper reports on Libya focus primarily on NATO military efforts, including the maintenance of the no-fly zone and strategizing with rebel forces.

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[319] Ibid.
[320] Dan Gonzales and Sarah Harting, "Can You Hear Libya Now?" *New York Times,* March 5, 2011. *See also:* Paul Wolfowitz, "Time to Recognize Libya's New Leaders," *Washington Post,* April 2, 2011. And "Heated Debate on Options in Libya," *USA Today,* March, 2011.

Only a few articles talk about non-military humanitarian aid, and they are almost all about supplies that cannot be delivered for security reasons. There was much less discussion about humanitarian NGO aid efforts and refugee camps compared to the newspaper reports on Bosnia in 1994. It appears that while mass media was willing to stop glamorizing aid providers like NATO and even adopt a more critical stance toward them, they stopped talking about providers of non-military humanitarian aid.

By contrast, Libyan Twitter discourse was much more effective at representing aid recipients and providers with multifaceted identities. While they would tell empowering stories about rebel fighters and martyrs protesting, they also highlighted tragedies and suffering through images, anecdotes, and news updates. Libyan Twitter discourse, compared to the mass media reports, spent more time talking about the civilians' purely humanitarian needs and the aid providers that were not engaged in the civil war. Therefore, mass media may be structurally bound to stereotypes and the construction of flat, incomplete identities because it must sell a story, a narrative, of the humanitarian crisis. Ignatieff describes the limiting structure of media as a form of communication:

> It derives its revenue and influence from its capacity to make the delivery of information pleasurable. Pleasurable story lines are generally simple, gripping, and easy to understand. Now all moral life requires simplification, and all forms of moral identification proceeds by way of fictions. In framing up our moral world, we all seek for good guys and bad guys, innocent victims and evil perpetrators.[321]

Media must assign roles to all the characters in the story and construct relationships between them. Libyans' may have influenced the media to portray them as powerful, political agents, but not without a cost.

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[321] Ignatieff, "Television & Humanitarian Aid," 292.

If they are powerful political agents then they cannot also be suffering victims of a humanitarian crisis. Given the limits of mass media, the Libyans can pick one identity, or the other, but not both. This is difficult for Libyan aid recipients because while a powerful and political identity is necessary to protect them from harmful intervention and post-intervention policies, and to maintain their own self worth, recognition of their suffering and victimhood can be important too. The victim-aspect of Libyans' identity cultivates humanitarian aid outside of weaponry and military support; it can strengthen legal cases against the perpetrators; and it can help contextualize, and justify, the violence both for them and the international community. This is not all to say that the Libyan aid recipient discourse is ineffective or harmful in the way it influences larger humanitarian discourse. Rather, it's just important to note the limited ways Libyan Twitter discourse can influence larger discourse and the potential disadvantages to Libyans constructing empowered aid recipient identities.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Libyans' discourse through Twitter did challenge the dominant hero-victim narrative, and their discourse did influence, even if in limited ways, mass media representations' of the Libyan humanitarian crisis. While mass media discourse in Bosnia reflected the narrative of the altruistic heroes saving the helpless weak victims, the Libyan Twitter discourse represented aid recipients as empowered and politically engaged and represented aid providers as flawed moral characters obligated to intervene. The Twitter discourse also used disturbing images of suffering and humorous satire to disrupt the dominant humanitarian narrative, forcing us to question our assumptions and basic understandings of the Libyan conflict, human suffering and the humanitarian enterprise. The only areas of analysis in which the Libyan Twitter users did not challenge basic tenants of the dominant narrative was in their representation of gender; both Twitter users reporting on Libya and mass media news outlets reporting on Bosnia characterized women as weak and child-like with identities dependent on their role as mothers and wives.

The Libyan Twitter users' disruptive discourse went beyond the Twitter-sphere and even the World Wide Web. The way they represented the conflict and the actors involved came through in mass media reporting on the Libyan crisis. Newspaper articles from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *USAToday* did not use humor or disturbing images like the Libyan Twitter users, but they did represent aid recipients as empowered political agents and aid providers as imperfect agents, obligated to support

Libya's rebel movement. However, the media still stripped the crisis of complexity and nuance and only represented Libyans as political fighters instead of *also* suffering people, but this may be a structural feature of mass media that is difficult to overcome. Overall, Libyans within Libya, or at least in constant contact with family and friends within Libya, were able to harness the power of Twitter and alter humanitarian discourse in the context of the Libyan humanitarian crisis. They subverted traditional media hierarchies and were able to control their own humanitarian narrative.

Because discourse constructs normative contexts, and normative contexts have the power to constitute our understandings of reality, shifts in discourse, like the one highlighted in this paper, should, slowly and over time, lead to shifts in behavior. When assumptions and perceived identities within the humanitarian narrative change, it makes sense that those involved in humanitarian work – namely states and international aid organizations – will adapt their practices to fit their newfound understandings. However, it is too early to know whether Libyan Twitter discourse has influenced, or will influence, future state and NGO policy in relation to Libya. And it is certainly too early to know if the Libyan discourses of resistance will help reconstruct the larger normative context that is humanitarianism. In fact, considering all the confounding variables, we may never know whether Libyan aid recipients' voices and perspectives, after being broadcasted throughout the world, influenced the way states and international aid organizations approached the situation in Libya and future humanitarian crises.

With that said, it is important to realize the ultimate suggestion I make – that aid recipient voices could reshape normative understandings of humanitarianism and revolutionize the practice of humanitarianism – is not that radical. The normative context

of humanitarianism, often dictated by the dominant hero-victim narrative, can, and is beginning to, shift. The shift in common understandings of humanitarianism has already begun as a result of the technological revolution and the voices it has empowered.

State governments are increasingly cooperating with the diaspora from regions of conflict to gain intelligence and provide effective humanitarian aid. For example, "the State Department's Africa Bureau has been nurturing relationships with [Somali] diaspora communities in Seattle, Washington; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Columbus, Ohio."[322] The State Department receives feedback about which U.S. policies in Somalia are working and which are not. Moreover, because Somali diaspora sends $1 billion worth of remittances back to relatives in Somalia, which is about 85% of Somalia's GDP, the State Department believes that organizing the diaspora to fund community humanitarian projects could prove powerful.[323] Finally, President Barak Obama's "National Strategy for Counterterrorism" emphasizes the importance of working with the Somalia Diaspora to gain both intelligence and regional influence in order to combat terrorist groups in Somalia.[324]

The U.S. government has started working with aid recipients on the ground in regions of conflict to help them take part in their own humanitarian protection. For example, in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the conflict between the National Congress for the Defense of People (CNDP) and pro-government militias has

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[322] Donald Yamamoto, "The Untapped Power of the Somali Diaspora," *DipNote: U.S. Department of State Official Blog,* August 26, 2011.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Josh Richardson, "The Somali Diaspora: A Key Counterterrorism Ally," *Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel,* July 1, 2011.

left civilians suffering.[325] The CNDP are infamous for organized mass rapes of innocent civilians. In fact, two out of every three women in select regions of the DRC are survivors of rape.[326] Alec Ross, Senior Advisor for Innovation to Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, spear headed a program to provide women in the DRC with mobile phones so they can warn each other about upcoming rebel attacks. With this new technology, the women have created a network through emails and text messages to alert each other about rebel movements and attacks.[327] In this way, women in the DRC become protectors of one another; they are simultaneously giving and receiving aid. This kind of humanitarian policy reflects a radical transformation of humanitarian norms, including what we understand aid to be and how we understand the identities of women in the DRC.

International aid organizations have also been investing in new programs that integrate aid recipient voices and involve recipients in the allocation and distribution of aid. Many organizations have started using crowd sourcing to determine which areas are in most urgent need of aid and gain intelligence about the situation on the ground. For example, Ushahidi is a nonprofit organization that provides software for information collection and interactive mapping. The organization builds "tools for democraticing information, increasing transparency and lowering the barriers for individuals to share their stories."[328] It claims to be a "disruptive organization that is willing to take risks in

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[325] Rebecca Feeley and Colin Thomas-Jensen, "Beyond Crisis Management in Eastern Congo," *Enough* December 11, 2008.
[326] Jonathan Lewis, "To Brutalize or Not to Brutalize – That is The Question," *Huffington Post,* April 25, 2011.
[327] Ross, "Social Media Conquers."
[328] "About Us."

the pursuit of changing the traditional way that information flows."[329] This crowdsourcing technology enables aid recipients to report on the conditions and threats in their area so aid organizations know which areas are most vulnerable, least secure, etc. For example, during the 2011 elections in the DRC, there was a Ushahidi map tracking where there was limited media access, humanitarian needs, violence, suppression of demonstrations, corruption, etc.[330]

Similar crowd sourcing technology was used after the 2007 presidential election in Kenya. Following the election, there was an eruption of political and ethnic conflict. Oxfam funded the efforts of Kenyan human rights activists to create a text-messaging 'nerve center'. A UN report on Wireless Technology for Social Change stated:

> [The] center served as a vital tool for conflict management and prevention by providing a hub for real-time information about actual and planned attacks between rival ethnic and political groups. The text messages, sent in by human rights advocates, religious leaders, and others, were then relayed to local Peace Committees for response.[331]

Average citizens were also encouraged to use the text-messaging center to report any acts of violence because it enabled policemen or elders to quickly respond to incidents and quell the violence. According to rights activists in Kenya, this program effectively prevented many violent incidents in the aftermath of the election and may have preemptively countered devastating civil unrest. A local citizen learned about a pending attack against a camp for internally displaced people and sent a text to the 'nerve center.' As a result, the Peace Committee was alerted of the situation and was able to prevent the attack by talking with the parties involved.[332] The new communication technology

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[329] Ibid.
[330] "RDC Elections," *Ushahidi*. http://46.137.77.92/.
[331] Kinkaid, "Wireless Technology," 38.
[332] Ibid., 39-40.

enabled Kenyan citizens to play an integral role in averting a violent humanitarian crisis and empowered local leaders to unite and cooperate in an attempt to maintain peace and stability.

This mapping, generated by aid recipients, was also helpful during humanitarian crises as a result of natural disasters. For example, Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), or Telecoms Without Borders, is an NGO headquartered in France that uses mobile telecommunications to help reestablish communication networks in the response to and management of humanitarian crises. Immediately after the earthquake hit Peru in 2007, TSF set up telecommunication centers to enable local residents to contact family and friends and to direct international NGOs to where the need was greatest. Over 17 agencies and 1,400 families accessed TSF's services during its time in Peru.[333] Mobile phones were also useful during the floods in Bihair, India in 2008. Aid recipients used them to inform local administration about their situation, including the need and urgency for food and drinking water. Information about the status of affected areas helped the administration and humanitarian organizations take steps early on to deliver aid to the right areas.[334]

Additionally, aid recipients' use of mobile devices saved lives after the earthquake in Haiti. While the earthquake destroyed a lot of infrastructure, most cell towers remained intact. Tuft's Fletcher School set up the Ushahidi map for Haiti where anyone in Haiti could submit reports through text message or online. Haitians submitted reports about the location of fires, trapped people, medical crises, public health needs, security needs, and infrastructure damage. Aid recipients used the map to direct aid

[333] Ibid., 34-36.
[334] Katrin Verclas, "Mobile Phones and the Flood in Bihar, India," *Mobile Active* September 10, 2008.

organizations and make their needs transparent.[335] This new use of communication technology elevates the status of aid recipients because they can take a leading role in their own aid efforts; they direct aid organizations to certain locations and inform them about what kind of aid is needed.

Such information collecting technology can also be used to learn about aid recipients' experiences and what they think should be done to best bring peace and stability to their region. For example, Ushahidi, Souktel, Crowdflower, the African Diaspora Institute and Al Jazeera partnered to provide a forum for Somali citizens to share their opinions about the crisis in Somalia. Souktel had a SMS subscriber list of over 50,000 Somalis. They texted them, "Al Jazeera wants to know: how has the conflict of the last few months affected your life? Please include the name of your hometown in your response. Thank you!"[336] In response, they received thousands of texts about the struggles of regular Somali citizens and what Somali's think the international community could do. The organizations behind this program "hope that advocacy and lobby groups will be able to leverage the content generated by this project to redouble their efforts in response to the escalating crisis in Somalia."[337] Humanitarian and media organizations are organizing programs to empower aid recipient voices and include them in the international humanitarian dialogue.

It may be unclear whether the discourses of resistance emerging from Libya, and other places around the world, are primarily responsible for the shift in policy highlighted above. While my argument is that the *content* of aid recipient discourse is the catalyst for

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[335] "Haiti," Ushahidi-Haiti, Tufts University, 2009. http://haiti.ushahidi.com/#.

[336] "Amplifying Somali Voices Using SMS and a Live Map: #SomaliaSpeaks," *Ushahidi* December 8, 2011.

[337] Ibid.

this shift, it may be that humanitarian practices have begun to integrate aid recipient voices and work *with* aid recipients as a result of new communication technology and not the content of those communications. Most likely, and consistent with the theoretical framework I've provided, the shifts in humanitarian policy taking place in the last ten years are a result of the emergence of new communication technology, as well as, how aid recipients have reframed humanitarianism through their discourse. Ultimately, we cannot know what the world would look like if aid recipients, in Libya and beyond, had used new communication technologies to reinforce the dominant humanitarian narrative. At a minimum though, new communication technologies are reshaping the dominant humanitarian narrative to empower aid recipients. And at best, *aid recipients are using* new communication technology to challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative and empower themselves within the humanitarian enterprise.

I hope future research investigates whether Libyan aid recipients are unique in their tendency to challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative compared to other aid recipient populations. It would be interesting to know if this empowering aid recipient discourse is limited to Libyans, or revolutionaries within the Arab Spring, and not apparent in more traditional aid recipient populations. Interviews with different aid recipients in different kinds of crises could help us better understand how aid recipients understand the humanitarian narrative. Do they, on the whole, embrace their role as victims? Find the hero-victim story harmful or inaccurate? Or do they have an entirely different way of conceiving of humanitarianism and its surrounding discourses? Do aid recipients differ in their conceptions of humanitarianism and if so why? Additionally, future research should attempt to verify my argument through quantitative methods since

I lacked the time and resources to provide empirical verification of some of the larger discursive trends I observed within the data. Finally, future research should tease apart the ways new technology and aid recipients' use of new technology influences the humanitarian narrative. This could be done through a comparative study of two current humanitarian crises where aid recipients' voices are heard through social media, but the content of their communications are radically different.

Such future research may come to a less optimistic conclusion than the one I have arrived at here. However, even if aid recipient discourse is, in the long run, not enough to overcome the dominant hero-victim narrative that has been constituted throughout history, the recognition of this narrative, its power, its dangers, and its potential to transform are important to both academics and policy-makers concerned about the humanitarian enterprise. The recognition of the humanitarian narrative and the way it influences our behavior is key to self-reflection, as individuals, NGOs, media outlets, and even states. Only by recognizing the forces guiding our behavior can we hope to change our behavior.

And while we should be wary of the dominant humanitarian narrative and its harmful effects, it is also important to note that no matter how problematic the dominant humanitarian narrative might be, it is not a reason to give up on humanitarian efforts; it's a reason to continuously try to transform our understandings of humanitarianism so that we are free to think and build more innovative and empowering forms of humanitarian aid. The goal of this paper is not to crush the humanitarian idealism born out of the early 1990s, but to recognize that aid recipients may have the power to harness world's

attention and humanitarian concern in a way that empowers aid recipients like never before.

My analysis of Libyan Twitter discourse, compared with mass media discourse on Bosnia in 1994, has proven that there is at least the potential for aid recipient discourse to challenge the dominant humanitarian narrative, influence larger discourse, and, according to my theoretical framework, alter the normative context of humanitarianism, thus transforming humanitarian practices. The shifts in humanitarian policy we have seen so far may just be the tip of the iceberg. There may be radically different ways of aiding those suffering as a result of conflict or destitute economies that we cannot currently conceive of since we are trapped within a particular understanding of aid and humanitarianism. If aid recipient voices continue to challenge the dominant hero-victim narrative, disrupting our constituted realities, they may open our eyes to brand new perspectives and approaches to humanitarianism that better empower aid recipients and save lives.

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