CHAPTER 4

"They Will Laugh at Us"

Coaxing Libya to Confess

This chapter explains Libya's decision-making about its nuclear program when it faced compellence from the United States and the United Kingdom. From 1980 onward, the US and others sought to compel Tripoli to abide by its NPT commitments. Until 2003 Libya defied coercive demands and made consistent efforts to build a weapon. It was coerced by the very states whose threats had motivated its clandestine nuclear program. Libya's compliance with their demands in 2003 warrants explanation.

I find that from 1998 to 2003 Libya defied compellent demands over its WMD program because it perceived a lack of credible coercive assurance, not because it perceived compellent threats to be insufficiently credible or painful. Efforts to overcome the assurance dilemma finally led to Libya's ultimate concession. The 1998 disentangling of UN and US sanctions to apply to different demands—Lockerbie and WMDs, respectively—allowed Libya to concede one issue at a time. The secrecy of talks in 2003 kept spoilers, such as hawkish US advisers and Israeli leaders, out of the bargaining process. And Tripoli held on to information that it thought would incriminate it and anger its coercers until US and British spies shared the extent of their knowledge of Libya's WMD programs. New Libyan admissions consistently followed this pattern of confessing only what coercers knew already. The assurance dilemma lens helps to explain Libya's acquiescence in 2003 as well as the failure of coercion for years before (see table 4.1).

Prior to 1998, however, the assurance dilemma receives less support because it is not a sufficient explanation for Libyan defiance. At the time, the United States' main goal in its relations with Libya was the destruction of the Muammar Qaddafi regime. From 1986 to 1998, therefore, Libya defied coercion because of its correct perception of US intent. As discussed in chapter one, a coercer may undermine its own coercive strategy by making maximalist demands of a target. This is a problem of demand

Table 4.1 Libya

Date	*Concessions*	*Threat credibility*	*Threat severity*	*Assurance credibility*	*Consistent with assurance dilemma?*
1980	No	Low	Low	–	–
1986	No	High	High	Low	✓[a]
1995	No	High	High	Low	✓[a]
1998	No[b]	High	Medium	Low	✓
2001	No	Higher	High	Low	✓
Mar. 2003	No	Higher	Higher	Lower	✓
Dec. 2003	Yes	Higher	Higher	High	✓

[a] While the assurance dilemma is not invalidated, the magnitude of coercer demands is a better explanation for the failure of coercion until 1998.

[b] This table only considers nuclear-related concessions, not Libyan support for terrorism.

magnitude. Target defiance is not due to a lack of coercive assurance but to a lack of bargaining space. The United States therefore had to change its goals, not its strategy. Only after the US dropped its goal of regime change did it confront the assurance dilemma, and Washington had to communicate that it no longer sought to use force against Libya unconditionally.

My research relies as much as possible on Libyan perspectives of US and British coercion. Statements from Qaddafi himself are the most salient evidence, supplemented by the statements of top officials such as Musa Kusa, Abdul Rahman Shalgham, and Qaddafi's son Seif al Islam Qaddafi, his father's counsel and likely heir. For similar reasons, I place particular emphasis on Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer's accounts of the Libyan nuclear program—her access to interview Libyan officials prior to the toppling of the Qaddafi regime contributed to her comprehensive history of Libya's nuclear investments and bureaucratic organization.[1] I add to this history a focus on interaction between Libya and the international community putting pressure on the regime and explain variation in its efficacy over time. Libyan perceptions are also often filtered through interlocutors. For example, I use primary documents from the IAEA, which became involved in the Libya nuclear issue after the secret nuclear program was revealed publicly in 2003. I supplement these documents with secondary accounts. I do not rely on US documents as few are yet available to scholars. US records are also unlikely to provide ample details on the case since the matter was handled with such secrecy in the US government. Negotiators did not receive formal orders: "No national security decision directives, no Presidential Finding, no State Department cable with negotiating instructions," recalls William Tobey, a member of George W. Bush's National Security Council (NSC) staff.[2] Moreover, the fate of Libyan government records after the 2011 civil war and military intervention is unknown.[3]

Improving Existing Explanations

The conventional wisdom of the Libyan case myopically focuses on threat credibility. After the invasion of Iraq and toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the story goes, another mercurial dictator in the Arab world with WMD ambitions feared that he was next on the US invasion list. After years of insufficiently credible threats of severe punishment, US threats of military force were so highly credible in 2003 that Muammar Qaddafi finally gave in. The lesson: flex your muscle to scare your enemies into submission.

This narrative that the Iraq War cowed Qaddafi into concessions was later exaggerated.[4] It was a legacy of the war nurtured by the Bush administration itself. Running for reelection in the context of emerging revelations about intelligence failure in Iraq and a gathering insurgency, President George W. Bush especially sought to connect the Iraq War to successful Libyan disarmament during the 2004 presidential election campaign. In the first presidential debate against Senator John Kerry, Bush highlighted the victory: "I hope to never have to use force. But by speaking clearly and sending messages that we mean what we say, we've affected the world in a positive way. Look at Libya. Libya was a threat. Libya is now peacefully dismantling its weapons programs. Libya understood that America and others will enforce doctrine."[5] Vice President Dick Cheney, in his debate, similarly called the Libya deal "one of the great by-products . . . of what we did in Iraq and Afghanistan."[6] He often referred in his campaign stump speech to the mere "five days" between Saddam's capture and Libya's announcement. "Moammar Ghadafi, in Libya," Cheney asserted, "watched what we did in Afghanistan, watched what we did in Iraq, and five days after we dug Saddam out of his hole, north of Baghdad, Ghadafi went public and announced he wanted to give up all of his WMD—all of his weapons of mass destruction, get out of the nuclear business."[7] Tough US threats and bold action had cowed Qaddafi. The implication is that until 2003 coercion failed because threats were not credible or severe enough.

As I show in this chapter, the invasion of Iraq increased the credibility of US threats, but that alone was insufficient. The assurance dilemma remained, and Qaddafi still defied these spikes in threat credibility until he received assuring signals that concession was worth the gamble. The most extreme version of the connection between Iraq and Libya is the folklore that Saddam's capture led days later to the Qaddafi deal, but the record of secret bargaining suggests that Qaddafi was ready to concede his nuclear program prior to Saddam's capture, and, in fact, seeing Saddam pulled from a hole on television caused Qaddafi to balk at disarmament. He only came around after another phone call with his coercers.

Some standard histories also argue that Qaddafi had no real nuclear program and traded away nuclear "junk" for carrots. Braut-Hegghammer

writes that due to insufficient indigenous expertise, "the Libyan nuclear weapons project is better described as a plan than a program."[8] Hymans agrees that despite its "dalliance" with the A. Q. Khan network, Libya was "defeated by the fine print on his purchases, which read 'some assembly required.'"[9] Supply-side disruptions certainly impeded Libyan progress on nuclear weapons. Owing to proliferation concerns, many nuclear suppliers refused to conduct business with Libya. The Soviet Union, for example, canceled plans to sell Tripoli a 440-megawatt pressurized water reactor in 1986 at least in part because of Mikhail Gorbachev's concern about Libyan proliferation.[10] Indeed, IAEA reports do reveal how much Libyan scientists struggled to master nuclear technology and develop expertise. A lot of what Libya received from the black market were useless, first-generation centrifuges that Pakistan could not get to work.[11]

Yet the available evidence of Libyan perceptions of coercion shows few signs of such thinking. Qaddafi thought the program was real, valuable, and advancing. He held genuine ambitions to possess the bomb. Although it made halting technical progress, Libya continued to throw money at its nuclear program. Despite purchasing some nuclear junk, other black-market shipments were serious, especially later in the decade and into the early 2000s, including Chinese warhead designs, some second-generation centrifuges, and converted uranium hexafluoride (UF6) to feed into them. Libya's ambitions are clear in its investments. Tripoli spent hundreds of millions of dollars to try to solve its technical problems. Early on it sought to buy a bomb outright from Pakistan or China. As late as 2002 it purchased weapons designs and a turnkey uranium-enrichment facility from A. Q. Khan. In 2003 Libyan leaders believed they were just a few years away from building a nuclear weapon. Indeed, in the aftermath some experts realized that the Libyan program had been more advanced than they appreciated.[12] Libya might never have figured out how to build a bomb. We cannot know now. But the underlying policy and investments pursued right up until the end of 2003 were consistent: pursuit of the bomb. Libya indeed had to be compelled out of its nuclear ambitions. The evidence is much stronger that Qaddafi was coerced and, critically, assured.

This chapter begins by reviewing the origins of Libya's nuclear program and interest in the bomb. It then describes the nature of international compellent demands directed at Tripoli and shows that while Libya's leaders perceived coercive threats to be credible after 1986, they chose to defy because of the perception that the United States sought nothing less than regime change. The chapter subsequently examines Libya's decision-making in the late 1990s and early 2000s, zooming in especially on the critical bargaining over WMDs in 2003. The evidence reveals how scaling back its demands still resulted in US failure to compel nuclear concessions from the Libyans because leaders in Tripoli perceived that concessions would not preclude punishment. In 2003, finally, a US and British coercive strategy

aimed at signaling coercive control to surmount the assurance dilemma convinced Tripoli to give up its nuclear ambitions and seek an end to compellent punishments.

Libya's Nuclear Program

Muammar Qaddafi came to power in a 1969 coup. The following year, he began Libya's nuclear weapons program. Initially, the ambitions were motivated by pan-Arab nationalist prestige and a desire for regional status as a leader of the Arab world, as well as the hope of achieving "strategic parity" to nullify the Israeli nuclear deterrent and open a window for further Arab conventional aggression against Israel.[13] Libya was not threatened by Israel per se, only in the sense that it identified with the anti-Israel Arab cause and supported pro-Palestinian groups. In 2004 Qaddafi claimed of the program, "In 1969 and early 1970s we did not reflect on where or against whom we could use the nuclear bomb. Such issues were not considered. All that was important was to build the bomb."[14]

In the early 1970s Qaddafi irritated the United States and many European countries by nationalizing foreign assets, including oil fields.[15] A resulting surplus of oil revenue—aided by a surge in oil prices—allowed Qaddafi to finance his nuclear ambitions. The initial strategy was twofold: attempts to directly purchase a nuclear warhead and financing foreign nuclear programs. Libyan representatives approached China (1970),[16] Pakistan (1977), and India (1978) about buying a bomb outright. None agreed. Qaddafi also sought to fund an Egyptian nuclear weapons program. His discussions with Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser were ongoing when Nasser died, and his successor, Anwar Sadat, killed the prospects of such cooperation when he came to power. Libya did, however, contribute funds to the Pakistani nuclear program. From about 1973 until about 1979, Libya contributed $100 million to $500 million to the Pakistani nuclear program in exchange for "full access" to it.[17] Instead of "full access," Libya seems to have only received scientific training for some personnel.[18]

The strategy was supplemented with attempts to cover a clandestine nuclear weapons effort with a civilian nuclear power program. Libya asked the IAEA for early-stage nuclear assistance in the early 1970s—uranium exploration and mining, research, and exploring a nuclear energy program.[19] From 1978 to 1981, Libya also imported 2,263 metric tons of yellowcake uranium ore from French mines in Niger (much more than required for any foreseeable uses), declaring only one thousand tons to the IAEA.[20]

Libya shopped around for a reactor supplier in the 1970s, ultimately finding the Soviet Union to be the most receptive. On the heels of signing a major conventional arms deal with the Soviets in 1974,[21] a sign of an expanding security relationship, Libya purchased in 1975 a Soviet

ten-megawatt IRT-1 research reactor. It became operational at Tajoura in November 1983.[22] Under pressure from the Soviet Union, applied as a condition to its supply of the research reactor, Libya ratified the NPT in 1975.[23] Safeguards came into force in July 1980.

Further reactor deals ultimately fell through. Libya was turned down by the United States in 1975, France canceled a prospective deal in 1976, and China turned it down in 1978.[24] Libya then sent a delegation to Moscow to request a heavy-water reactor, a heavy-water plant, and a spent-fuel reprocessing facility. "According to one senior Soviet official," Braut-Hegghammer writes, "it was obvious to both parties that this was intended to be a military program."[25]

At the end of the 1970s, Libya's nuclear weapons program was flailing, spending a lot of money in many strategic directions. An IAEA expert assistance mission to Libya, meant to help the Libyans develop their peaceful nuclear science and technology, noted how the Libyan civil program was lavishly funded but lacked scientific experts. The report noted the "very ambitious plans for the development of nuclear sciences in Libya" but a "severe shortage of trained personnel."[26] The vast scope of the investments had been made "without a clear idea of the type of investigation to be performed and the results to be expected" as "equipment is installed, but is idling because of the shortage of personnel."[27] In sum, its investments clearly indicated Libya's weaponization ambitions, but scientists in the nuclear program struggled to make progress toward the bomb.

Compellence Begins

Libyan relations with the United States soured in the late 1970s, and the 1980s saw a series of tit-for-tat escalations. Tensions erupted with US air strikes on Libya in 1986 and the Lockerbie bombing in 1988. The nuclear weapons program continued throughout. This section assesses the evolution of coercive pressure against Libya in this period and how it was perceived by the regime. Until 1986 Tripoli did not perceive US threats to use military force to be credible. Thereafter, the goal of US coercion was the end of the Qaddafi regime—a demand too extreme to succeed whether or not it was paired with credible threats.

1980: NONCREDIBLE THREATS BEGIN, LIBYA DEFIES

The 1980–86 period is no real mystery for theories of coercion. Libya simply did not perceive compellent threats over its nuclear program to either exist or to be credible. The United States had initially tried to get along with the Qaddafi regime. Libya was a source of crude oil for the US market, and the US provided access to technology and other goods. The US even shared

CIA estimates with Qaddafi about internal threats.[28] But within a few years of his taking power, his anti-Israel policy and support for international terrorism had caused a rift. In 1977 the Carter administration foiled a Libyan plot to assassinate the US ambassador in Egypt over his role in the Camp David peace talks.[29] President Carter imposed partial sanctions ("trade restrictions") and put Libya on its list of state sponsors of terrorism, the first such list, in 1979. He also closed the US embassy in Tripoli in 1980 (the building having been burned in an anti-American protest in 1979).[30] Sanctions, however, were not linked explicitly to nuclear issues.[31]

I code 1980 as the beginning of Libya's perception of a red line on nuclear weapons development, when nuclear safeguards came into force. IAEA inspectors monitored Libya's nuclear facilities to ensure they were used for peaceful purposes only. Nonetheless, there is some evidence to suggest that Libya did not perceive any credible threat of punishment in the early 1980s. To begin with, Tripoli believed that it could obtain fissile material for nuclear weapons from nuclear reactors purchased from the Soviet Union. This would have been a poor proliferation strategy, as any diversion of nuclear material from a safeguarded facility was liable to be caught. Libya did not seem to appreciate that risk.[32] More importantly, Qaddafi placed faith in the backing of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had indeed been a friend to Libya. In 1981 Tripoli and Moscow inked an extensive agreement that included, Braut-Hegghammer writes, "contracts for conventional arms, technology transfers—including nuclear technology—and a promise of Soviet support if Libya were subjected to foreign aggression."[33] Thus, relying on its Soviet patron, Libya had less to fear from its coercers.

Libyan leaders accordingly plowed ahead with the nuclear program. Beginning in the 1980s Libya tried to get serious about the gas centrifuge path to uranium enrichment. Throughout the 1980s Libya sought gas centrifuge technology, a modular uranium-conversion facility, and two mass spectrometers (to help build centrifuges) and engaged in uranium-conversion experiments. From 1981 to 1983 Libya sought assistance from Romania in constructing a heavy-water nuclear reactor. Romania was tempted by the money, but the deal never closed.[34] In January 1984 the Libyans sought assistance from A. Q. Khan for the first time, but Khan declined this first offer because they did not have the capability to scale up their efforts.[35] In 1984 they conducted plutonium-separation experiments at the IRT-1 research reactor using imported natural uranium (violating safeguards). Libya sought to purchase a "hot cell" facility for plutonium reprocessing from Argentina; US pressure killed this deal. Libya also sought a uranium-conversion facility with help from a Belgian firm from 1981 to 1984; US pressure killed this deal as well. But in 1984 Libya and Japan signed a deal for the supply of a modular uranium-conversion facility.[36] Components arrived in 1986 without instructions for assembly. (Suffering from a lack of expertise, the facility remained unassembled until 1998. Some of the equipment was

supposedly used in "cold tests" [i.e., without uranium] in 2002.[37]) Finally, in 1985 Libya sent some of its imported yellowcake uranium to "an undisclosed nuclear weapons state" where it was processed into UF6 and other compounds and sent back to Libya in the same year.[38]

Simultaneously, Libyan and US forces engaged in a series of provocations and punishments as the Reagan administration began to direct more of its attention to Qaddafi. In September 1980 Libyan jets fired at US reconnaissance aircraft over the Gulf of Sirte, asserting their extended claim of territorial waters. In August 1981 Libyan jets again fired on US aircraft in the Gulf of Sirte, and US F-14s shot down two Libyan jets in response, killing one Libyan pilot. And in March 1986 Libya fired six missiles at US aircraft in the Gulf of Sirte. In response, the US sank one Libyan vessel and destroyed a coastal SA-5 missile site.

While the issue at stake in these early 1980s military clashes was ostensibly freedom of navigation in international waters, a litany of disputes drove Washington's ire with Tripoli. Qaddafi had nationalized the oil industry and kicked out American businesses, become cozy with Moscow, and promoted anti-American riots.

In parallel to its military posture, the United States imposed economic pressure. It instituted an embargo on Libyan crude oil in 1982 and extended it in 1985 to include refined petroleum products. Libyan citizens were banned from studying nuclear science in the United States, and in January 1986 the Reagan administration froze all Libyan assets in the US and imposed additional unilateral sanctions. What had been a piecemeal effort at economic coercion coalesced as comprehensive sanctions with Reagan's January 1986 executive order.[39] The sanctions later expanded in 1992 and 1996.[40]

This time, Qaddafi's response came in the form of terrorism. On April 5, 1986, Libyan-backed terrorists bombed a West Berlin nightclub frequented by US military personnel. Three people died, including two Americans, and two hundred were injured, including seventy-nine Americans.

1986: CREDIBLE THREATS BEGIN, LIBYA CONTINUES TO DEFY

The Libyan perception of US military threats changed in 1986. On April 15 the United States conducted air strikes on terrorist camps and military facilities in Libya. The strikes hit one of Qaddafi's homes and allegedly killed one of his children. Such deep US air strikes revealed to Libya that it could not rely on the Soviet Union for protection. This was in addition to the already underway souring of Soviet-Libyan relations, including the demise of prospective reactor-purchasing deals. US threats to use military force on Libyan territory were now more credible.

The threat credibility lens would predict a corresponding greater willingness to make concessions. But Qaddafi still defied. The nuclear program

and clandestine research at Tajoura continued apace and went further underground.[41] Just after the raids, components for the uranium-conversion facility began to arrive clandestinely in 1986, and Libya stored them in hidden facilities around Tripoli.[42]

Libya's continued defiance of compellence no longer stemmed from noncredible threats but from the magnitude of its coercer's demands. Targeting Qaddafi outright in 1986 signaled that the Reagan administration was in pursuit of regime change rather than coercion to change Qaddafi's behavior. A demand to commit suicide allows for no bargaining space. US intelligence assessments from the time corroborate this perception of US intentions. A 1984 CIA assessment doubted that Qaddafi could be compelled and concluded that "no course of action short of stimulating Qaddafi's fall will bring any significant and enduring change in Libyan policies."[43]

Additionally, Libya's motivation for its nuclear program shifted after 1986 in a way that suggested a fear of regime change. The Libyan nuclear program became motivated by a desire to deter US aggression. After the 1986 strikes, Qaddafi said, "The Arabs must possess the atomic bomb to defend themselves." He further explicated this thinking in 1990, saying, "If we possessed a deterrent—missiles that could reach New York . . . [the US] and others [would] no longer think about attack. . . . We should have a nuclear bomb."[44] Braut-Hegghammer writes that "the new focus on national security following the American air strikes in 1986 strengthened the Libyan regime's commitment to its nuclear project," citing an interview with a senior Libyan official.[45]

Across the board, Qaddafi was not cowed by direct US punishments. He continued to pursue nuclear weapons, claim extended sovereignty in the Mediterranean Sea, and support terrorism. He planned and executed the Lockerbie airplane bombing on December 21, 1988, and the bombing of a French airliner over Niger on September 19, 1989, which killed 259 and 171 people, respectively.

1988: LOCKERBIE INTRODUCES MORE IMPEDIMENTS TO COERCION

The Lockerbie bombing cast a pall over all US-Libya relations for a decade and became an impediment to counterproliferation coercion by causing the United States to cling to its goal of regime change in Tripoli. Of the 259 people killed in the Lockerbie bombing, 189 were US citizens—many college students returning home for Christmas vacation. The American public rallied behind the Lockerbie victims, empowering a lobby of grieving families. Washington's position could not soften in public.

When the US and the UK indicted two Libyan intelligence agents in November 1991 for plotting the Lockerbie bombing, they made five

demands of Libya: (1) surrender the suspects for trial, (2) accept responsibility for the suspects' actions, (3) disclose everything you know about the bombing, allowing access to witnesses, (4) compensate the victims' families, and (5) cease all support for terrorism.[46] The UNSC imposed multilateral sanctions in 1992, having given Libya three months to comply with the demands. Sanctions further tightened in November 1993.

Tripoli's perception of maximal demands prevented this additional pressure from contributing to a bargain between Libya and its coercers. Lockerbie had introduced a powerful new interest group in American domestic politics that sought justice. After the January 1992 UNSC vote to impose sanctions,[47] for instance, the Bush administration rebuffed a Libyan outreach for dialogue due to pressure from the Lockerbie victims' families.[48] Sanctions could not be lifted or weakened unless the Lockerbie issue was fully resolved and compensation paid. Congressional passage of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act in 1996 was a direct result of the lobbying of victims' families.[49] Lockerbie had to be settled before the demand for regime change could be scaled back and bargaining space could reemerge.

1990s: LIBYA "REINVIGORATES" ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM

At the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, Libya began to amend its proliferation strategy. Its economy was stagnant.[50] Qaddafi experienced an unsuccessful military coup attempt in 1993. Sanctions were hurting, and Tripoli wanted relief, but it did not want to go all in for rapprochement with Washington and give up its nuclear program. Qaddafi gave his advisers leeway to probe the possibility of opening up the country economically. He understood WMDs to be an impediment to such liberalization, and he appeared willing to negotiate them away. Yet he also feared unconditional punishments. Qaddafi therefore pursued a dual-track approach: probe for the possibility of rapprochement but build nuclear weapons in case of failure.[51]

In 1989 the Libyan nuclear program was reorganized under the leadership of Matuq M. Matuq, a nonscientist regime insider whom Qaddafi trusted. Matuq embraced the black market for nuclear procurement, continuing to focus on the gas centrifuge uranium-enrichment path to the bomb.[52] Taking note of the 1981 Israeli strike on the Iraqi Osirak reactor, Libya sought to keep its illicit procurement activities quiet and keep enrichment sites secret and mobile. Matuq reconnected with A. Q. Khan and purchased P-1 centrifuges in early 1991. Soon Libya had a disagreement with the Khan network and refused to pay because the P-1 centrifuges were outdated.[53]

In 1995 Libya decided to "reinvigorate its nuclear activities" and turned again to Khan.[54] In 1997 it ordered twenty complete L-1 (P-1) gas centrifuges and most of the components for another two hundred centrifuges. By

1998 Libya had assembled its uranium-conversion facility. In late 1999 or early 2000 Libya acquired two new mass spectrometers and in September 2000 acquired two L-2 (P-2) advanced centrifuges.

Why did Libya double down on its nuclear program just as it was coming under greater pressure from its coercers? A threat credibility lens would predict a greater willingness to make concessions. The evidence instead suggests that Libya continued to defy because of the magnitude of US demands. Libya was quite clearly stung by its experience feeling out the Bush administration in 1992. The imposition of UN sanctions convinced Libyan officials that their coercers would never relent. "It is now known that Libya attempted to offer giving up the nuclear weapons programme to the US before United Nations (UN) sanctions were imposed in 1992. However, the cool reception these attempts were met with suggested that no rewards would be given for abandoning the nuclear proliferation efforts," writes Braut-Hegghammer, citing an interview with a senior official in the Libyan General People's Congress.[55] And another senior official learned the following lesson: "After Libya was accused of the Lockerbie attack in 1992, officials began to fear that Washington and its allies would attempt to overthrow the regime. Libya would not benefit from giving up its nuclear weapons project in this context, and potentially had a lot to lose in light of the entrenched conflict with the West," Braut-Hegghammer writes, citing an interview with a formerly central figure in the Revolutionary Committee system.[56] This was an accurate reading of US intentions. Washington would not take yes for an answer with Qaddafi in power.

Direct Coercive Bargaining between the US, UK, and Libya, 1998–2003

In the late 1990s and early 2000s Libya began to speak directly with its coercers. When in 1998 the United States and Libya began to resolve the issue of Lockerbie, Washington scaled back its demand for regime change in Libya. This reduction in the magnitude of its demands opened the possibility of a coercive bargain over the nuclear issue. Nevertheless, Libya continued to defy. Once the US goal changed, it encountered the assurance dilemma. While Libya sought to remove the punishment of painful sanctions, insufficient coercive assurance that Qaddafi would not be punished anyway impeded bargaining. Moreover, the record shows that the United States sought to overcome the assurance dilemma—by disentangling demands, managing spoilers, and sharing knowledge—before Libya agreed to concede its nuclear ambitions. I walk through each of these signals in turn, including how each was implemented by coercers and perceived by the Libyan leadership. The analysis focuses especially heavily on 2003, when secret talks over the nuclear issue were deepest and led to a breakthrough.

DISENTANGLING LOCKERBIE AND WMDS

By the late 1990s, two major issues impeded sanctions relief for Libya and better relations with the United States: Lockerbie and WMD proliferation. Libyan support for terrorism had subsided in the 1990s, but the issue was still very much on the table in the form of accountability for the Lockerbie bombing. Ron Suskind reports that the Clinton administration handled Libya discussions with "utmost secrecy" because "families of the Lockerbie victims had long since organized into a fierce, somewhat unruly advocacy group, lobbying for arrests, sanctions, and anything else that would amount to a facsimile of justice. Notice of a dialogue with the monsters from Tripoli would have summoned a righteous explosion."[57] It was politically costly to even negotiate with Libya. William Burns, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, recalls that during a session at the State Department with Lockerbie families, "one furious mother" told him, "Go to hell with your Libyan friends."[58]

Libya's coercers effectively disentangled the issues by tying Lockerbie concessions to UN sanctions relief and WMD concessions to US sanctions relief. In August 1998 the US and UK offered through the UNSC that UN sanctions would be lifted if Libya surrendered its two Lockerbie suspects for trial in The Hague. But US sanctions would remain tied to the WMD program.[59] And US officials communicated this to Libya.[60] At the time, Washington saw this as a practical solution. It was moving to resolve the Lockerbie compensation issue before the multilateral sanctions regime fractured; Russia, China, the Arab League, and the Organization of African Unity had been insisting that the United States accept Libya's Lockerbie compromise offer.

Libya complied in April 1999, handing over the two suspects, and UN sanctions were suspended.[61] As the assurance dilemma predicts, when coerced over multiple entangled issues, targets like Libya lack the necessary coercive assurance to concede on any individual issue. The demands had to be disentangled by being tied to separate punishments.

The resolution of the Lockerbie issue did allow the United States to scale back its demands on Libya. Regime change was no longer the end goal of coercion. Washington was free to pursue a coercive bargain with Qaddafi still in power. Crucially, while the United States eliminated its demand for regime change, it maintained its threat of regime change if Libya did not comply with other demands. Convincing Libya that it had in fact abandoned its goal of regime change was now the impediment to coercion.

Secret US-UK-Libya talks then began in May 1999,[62] in which Qaddafi was feeling out the possibility of a deal to give up his nuclear program, but he remained skeptical. During direct talks with their US and British counterparts, according Braut-Hegghammer, Libyan officials "had to balance their efforts to strike a deal . . . against the risk that Gaddafi could pull back

from their proposed agreement."[63] Qaddafi was not yet committed to concessions, even though he felt the pain of economic sanctions.[64]

SUSPENDED TALKS AND 9/11

Direct talks continued in fits and starts. Negotiations were suspended by the US for fear of leaks during the 2000 presidential election, and then the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, reoriented US foreign policy. This episode is important to examine as it refocused US policy on the threats of terrorism and WMDs. In this context, compellent threats to Libya over these issues would have theoretically increased in their credibility.

After 9/11 Qaddafi did perceive a spike in the credibility of US threats, yet he expanded his nuclear program—evidence inconsistent with the threat credibility lens and consistent with the assurance dilemma. Bush administration officials assessed that "Qaddafi understood what Saddam didn't: that 9/11 changed everything."[65] Libya's foreign minister, Abdul Rahman Shalgham, recalled that in 2001 President Bush used the Algerian president as an intermediary to communicate that "either you get rid of your weapons of mass destruction or he will personally destroy them and destroy everything with no discussion."[66] Qaddafi supposedly asked "every Arab leader in his rolodex" to help him convince Washington that Libya was opposed to terrorism. He also offered to help the United States with counterterrorism intelligence.[67]

But the nuclear program continued and grew. Qaddafi did not perceive credible enough assurance to dispose of his insurance policy in the face of compellence. In late 2001 or early 2002, Matuq paid A. Q. Khan $100 million to $200 million for a turnkey gas centrifuge plant with ten thousand P-2 centrifuges. The plant was supposed to be completed by June 2003.[68] The Khan offer included blueprints for a Chinese warhead design, UF6 feed material, installation, and training. Libya did receive the designs, technology, and "several cylinders" of UF6 in 2001 (shipped on a Pakistani airplane).[69] Libya further imported through Khan approximately sixteen kilograms of other uranium compounds in 2002. By then Libya had one nine-centrifuge cascade operational, and two other nineteen- and sixty-four-centrifuge cascades were partially completed.[70] From May to December 2002, Libya conducted two successful tests of its centrifuges but without UF6 inside.

Meanwhile, after 9/11 the Bush administration had picked up secret talks again with the Libyans in October 2001. William Burns was in charge of the negotiations and recalls that he was "careful to reiterate the main lines of the positions conveyed earlier by [Assistant Secretary of State Martin] Indyk" that "the lifting of U.S. national sanctions, built up since the Reagan-era conflicts with Qaddafi, would depend upon Libya giving up its nuclear and chemical weapons programs."[71] The talks bore fruit on

counterterrorism cooperation, as Tripoli had already abandoned its support for terrorism.[72] They also reached further agreement on compensation for Lockerbie victims' families.[73] But in the fall of 2001 Burns still found his Libyan negotiating counterparts—Musa Kusa, Abdelati Obeidi, and Adbul Rahman Shalgham—to be reticent on the nuclear issue and "nervous about hidden agendas from us."[74] He felt the need to emphasize "that there was no ulterior motive in this—we had no interest in regime change."[75] Then in October 2002 UK prime minister Tony Blair wrote to Qaddafi about opening negotiations on Libya's WMD program.[76] He waited for a reply.

BARGAINING OVER WMDS IN 2003

Seif al Islam Qaddafi broke the silence in early 2003 by reaching out to British intelligence (MI6), asking it to intercede with Washington. Tripoli was, he said, interested in "clearing the air" on WMDs.[77] Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet and his counterpart from MI6 briefed Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bush on the overture from Libya.[78] Blair then convinced Bush at a March Camp David meeting on Iraq to be willing to negotiate with Libya on WMDs. As Lockerbie and terrorism concerns subsided as major impediments to rapprochement, the US, the UK, and Libya were poised for a breakthrough.

Its coercers were credibly and severely threatening Libya. Decades of sanctions prevented Libya from expanding its oil production and left existing oil infrastructure rusting.[79] William Burns describes how "the energy sector was starved for investment, and the country's infrastructure was in shambles."[80] As a result, Libya produced half as much oil in 2003 as it had at its peak in the 1970s.[81] Economic punishment was indeed painful. Inflation reached 50 percent in 1994. In 2003 unemployment was 25 percent.

Negotiations began in March 2003—before the US invasion of Iraq.[82] The first trilateral meeting was held in April. Yet Qaddafi began to be scared that negotiations were a trap. Seif al Islam Qaddafi recalled to *Time* magazine that his father "'suspected an ambush' by the West: getting him to give up his only deterrent but withholding diplomatic rehabilitation."[83] "When Bush has finished with Iraq, we'll quickly have a clear idea of where he's going," he told *Le Figaro* in March. "It won't take long to find out if Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Libya will be targets as well. . . . Bush isn't logical. You can't tell what he's going to do. So you have to be ready for anything. Today, nobody can say: 'I will or won't be a target.'"[84] Braut-Hegghammer reports, citing an interview with Seif al-Islam Qaddafi, that "as talks intensified in early 2003 the Libyan leader feared that it could be a trap, and that there was a hidden agenda at play aiming for the overthrow of his regime."[85] Libya's coercers had just invaded another "rogue" state, Iraq, under the banner of counterproliferation. Graffiti in Tripoli read: "Today, Saddam. Tomorrow, Qaddafi."[86] The war certainly got the Brother Leader's

attention. But speaking with his foreign minister, Shalgham, Qaddafi said in response, "They will laugh at us and document that we have WMD. They implicated Saddam Hussein and they want to implicate us too."[87]

It was, rather, the assurance dilemma that proved to be the difficult impediment throughout direct bargaining. Over the course of 2003, the United States and the United Kingdom came around slowly to offering coercive assurance signals. Early in the clandestine talks, Bush administration officials did not seem to grasp the need for coercive assurance. "The Libyans asked for non-aggression pacts and other security guarantees," Gordon Corera writes. But the US and UK responded that Libya had to give up its WMDs "before anything would be guaranteed."[88] Later they were more assuring. Table 4.2 lists the meetings that took place. The following sections review these efforts to communicate coercive assurance.

Table 4.2 Meetings with Libyan officials

Date	*Location*	*Participants*	*Notes*
Mid-Apr. 2003	Geneva	Kappes, Allen / Kusa, unknown Libyan diplomat	First meeting; near miss with Israelis; not much progress
Late May 2003	Europe	Kappes, Allen / Kusa, Seif	Not much progress
Aug. 2003	Europe	Kappes, Allen / Kusa, Seif	Not much progress; invitation to meet Qaddafi directly
Early Sept. 2003	Tripoli	Kappes, Allen / Qaddafi	First meeting with Qaddafi
Oct. 7, 2003	Tripoli	Allen / Kusa, unknown Libyans	Sharing of *BBC China* intercept
Oct. 19–29, 2003	Libya	Technical experts	"Technical visit" #1
Nov. 20, 2003	Bay Tree Hotel, Cotswolds, UK	Kappes, Allen / unknown Libyans	Sharing of A. Q. Khan recording; letter from President G. W. Bush
Dec. 1–12, 2003	Libya	Technical experts	"Technical visit" #2
Dec. 16, 2003	Travelers Club, London	Joseph, Kappes, Allen, William Ehrman and David Landsman (UK Foreign Office) / Kusa, Abdul al-Obeidi (Libyan ambassador to Rome), Mohammed Azwai (Libyan ambassador to London), three other unknown Libyans	Discussing content of the statement
December 18, 2003	Phone call	Blair / Qaddafi	After Saddam's capture

MANAGING SPOILERS

As theorized, targets of coercion as a practical matter need to know that they are bargaining with the right coercer(s) and that either domestic or international spoilers with independent abilities to inflict pain are not likely to punish them after they comply. Isolating spoilers from the bargaining process also has the benefit of signaling the sincerity of a coercer's willingness to strike a coercive bargain short of regime change. If regime change were the goal, spoilers would be more useful to include.

The Libyans first expressed their fears of bargaining with the wrong coercers in 2003 when they observed that secret communication channels did not reflect a unified willingness to strike a deal within its coercers' governments. When the Libyans, according to Corera, "insisted that they meet with someone who was not an undercover intelligence officer and of sufficient authority to show that the UK government as a whole was committed,"[89] the British arranged for a senior diplomat to deliver Qaddafi a pledge of good faith. Tony Blair sent a letter with "a high-ranking subordinate" to Tripoli and promised a "positive response" from the Washington and London if Libya disarmed. The Libyans appreciated the gesture.

Later in negotiations, the United States sent a similar signal. When Libyan concessions seemed within reach in December 2003, the highest-ranking US delegation yet, traveled to meet the Libyans. Stephen Kappes and Robert Joseph circumvented official travel procedures to secretly travel to London and work with their Libyan partners on language for Libya's concession statement. According to Bush administration official William Tobey, Joseph's attendance was meant to "signal to the Libyans that President Bush himself endorsed the effort."[90]

Secrecy, too, helped to keep the right actors in the know and spoilers at bay until the parties struck a coercive bargain. While well-positioned spoilers can also undo agreements after they are reached, they can more readily impede them before coercion succeeds. Managing spoilers until coercion succeeds is still valuable for communicating coercive assurance. President Bush gave the Libyan negotiation portfolio to CIA director George Tenet to ensure secrecy. Not even Donald Rumsfeld or Colin Powell were to be told about it.[91] Tenet delegated to Kappes, the deputy director of operations at the agency.[92] As this choice was explained by Tobey, "it is easier to keep the secret domestically if the CIA is in charge. The State Department is not good at deep secrecy."[93]

One Bush administration official known, including to the Libyans, for his uncompromising attitude was the then undersecretary of state for arms control and international security affairs, John Bolton. Bolton had wanted President Bush to name Libya as a member of the "axis of evil" in his January 2002 State of the Union address, but UK foreign secretary Jack Straw and David Manning, later the British ambassador to the United States,

convinced Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell to keep Libya out. Bolton also pushed for greater sway over Libyan relations but was kept out of the loop on purpose. Senior British officials reportedly pressed for Bolton's sidelining.[94] IAEA director general Mohammed ElBaradei similarly reports that he learned after the Libya deal was concluded that the "reason for the extreme secrecy governing the Libyan negotiations was to protect the talks from U.S. hard-liners. The fear, I was told, was that they might have tried to torpedo a peaceful resolution of the Libyan case. So they were informed only when the deal was done."[95] The White House, "uncharacteristically, sidelined the administration's neoconservative wing" from the Libya portfolio, according to Flynt Leverett, a member of the Bush administration's NSC.[96] Bolton knew nothing of the Libya deal until after the December 19, 2003, Libyan agreement was announced.[97]

Indeed, the US and UK governments were remarkably quiet about coercive bargaining with Libya.[98] When in January 2003 the CIA and British counterparts briefed George W. Bush and Tony Blair on the activities of the A. Q. Khan black-market network and Libya, it had been roughly a year since US and British intelligence identified Libya as a Khan customer. Until that point, the CIA publicly reported to Congress rumblings of nuclear activity in Libya but nothing more.[99] In the crucial year of 2003, US leaders and intelligence agencies made no public mention of its discoveries about Libya's cooperation with the Khan network. In its semiannual report to Congress in June 2003, the CIA wrote only cryptically that Libya "continued to develop its nuclear infrastructure" during the previous six-month period. It referenced only innocuous developments, namely cooperation between Libya and Russia at a known nuclear research center and "various technical exchanges through which [Libya] could have tried to obtain dual-use equipment."[100] The CIA said nothing publicly about Khan and Libya, despite the extensive intelligence it had amassed on that link. Neither did US officials mention the matter or hint at ongoing dialogue. Only after the fact, the CIA tacitly admitted that it had withheld certain information from the public about Libyan activities. In January 2004, after Libya made its concessions, the CIA issued an update on Libya that revealed the hidden bargaining.[101] The CIA report also referenced Khan for the first time.[102]

A similar dynamic played out internationally to keep the Israelis from learning about secret US-UK-Libyan talks and acting as a spoiler. Israeli participation, insistence on humiliating terms, or, worse, air strikes had the potential to doom coercive bargaining. An Israeli military strike would have been difficult but possible. A 1985 air strike against a PLO headquarters near Tunis had demonstrated the long reach of the Israeli air force in North Africa. Over a decade earlier, in September 1973, Ariel Sharon had bragged in the Knesset that Israel could hit "any target in the Arab world including Libya."[103]

Tobey recounts an awkward encounter in a Geneva hotel just prior to the first trilateral meeting in April 2003. As Kappes and his British counterpart sat waiting for the Libyans to arrive, former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barack entered the breakfast room. "While Kappes watched the Israelis apprehensively, his British colleague raced to head off the Libyans and direct them to another room on the hotel's top floor," writes Tobey.[104] Israel was in the dark about the Libyan nuclear program. Israeli intelligence completely missed Khan's smuggling network until the US shared intelligence to about it and not until 2002. Still, the United States insulated one of its closest allies from what it learned about Libya's activities specifically. After Libya disarmed, the scope of Libya's activities came as a shocking surprise to Israeli intelligence.[105] Indeed, after the fact, Israeli leaders angrily demanded of Washington an explanation for why Tel Aviv had been left out of the loop. An Israeli Knesset committee report condemned its intelligence community for its ignorance but also the United States for its actions:

> Israel was surprised to discover that Libya, under Muammar Qaddafi, has been intensively engaged in the development of a military nuclear capability. . . . The intelligence services of the USA (and of Britain) did not share with their colleagues in Israel in real time their recent and significant exposures of the Libyan nuclear program, and even concealed from the State of Israel the steps taken vis-à-vis the Libyan regime in the apparently successful attempt to bring about the liquidation of its nuclear industry.[106]

The United States (and Britain) declined to let Israel—even a select group of elite officials—in on its information.[107] Washington prioritized coercive assurance vis-à-vis Libya. This isolation of the bargaining process mattered both for its practical elimination of potential spoilers and for the signal it sent about the coercers' serious intent to strike a deal.

SHARED KNOWLEDGE

Specific knowledge of Libya's nuclear program also afforded the United States the opportunity to assuage the Libyans' concerns about revealing new information through their concessions. As Corera put it, "the Libyans were nervous about revealing what they had procured (even though it was far from operational), because they feared that their opponents could simply walk away from secret negotiations and use the information as a pretext to attack."[108] In the early 2000s, US and British intelligence officials began to penetrate Khan's global black-market network. They identified Libya as a Khan customer seeking centrifuges and weapon designs.[109] The CIA circulated classified estimates inside the US government regarding Libya's weapon activities. In late 2001 the CIA moved up the date by which Libya might be able to "produce enough weapons grade uranium for a

nuclear warhead."[110] In February 2002 US intelligence intercepted a conversation between Khan and Matuq, the Libyan official in charge of the secret nuclear program. The two men discussed importing centrifuges to Libya and their plans for uranium enrichment.

As early as 2001 and 2002, William Burns hinted as part of broader negotiations with Musa Kusa, Libya's intelligence chief, that the United States was aware of a secret Libyan proliferation. "I made clear that we had solid evidence [that Libya had active WMD programs]," Burns recalls.[111] Yet, without specifics, denial was the watchword for a long time. Prior to WMD negotiations beginning in March 2003, Libya's foreign minister had publicly denied having a nuclear weapons program in January, calling such concerns "CIA propaganda."[112] The same denials echoed at Kappes and his British colleague's first meeting with Qaddafi in Tripoli. To show that security from US aggression was on his mind, a Bush administration official hypothesized, Qaddafi picked as the location for the meeting the very office where US bombers had targeted him in 1986.[113] After a fifteen-minute diatribe about the West, Qaddafi expressed a desire to "clean the file."[114] When Kappes asked about Libya's WMD program, however, Qaddafi "angrily denied having such weapons."

Six months into secret talks, Libya's coercers caught Tripoli red-handed. According to several accounts, the CIA used its sources inside the Khan network to identify a shipment of centrifuge equipment from Malaysia aboard MV *BBC China*, bound for Libya.[115] In October 2003, in conjunction with the Proliferation Security Initiative, an informal network of states that cooperate to disrupt the illicit transfer of nuclear technology, the CIA and MI6 intercepted the ship in the Italian port of Taranto. As expected, they found five forty-foot shipping containers containing centrifuge equipment, labeled on the German-owned ship's manifest as "used machine parts."[116] The United States and the United Kingdom removed the offending shipping containers and then sent the *BBC China* back on its way to Libya.

The question now was how to play this ace. It could have been used as a hammer, to come down hard on the Libyans and prove to the world that they were up to no good. This is certainly what some in the Bush administration preferred. Aware of the interception but unaware of the talks, John Bolton planned to hold a press conference hailing the seizure of the *BBC China*. But those who knew about ongoing negotiations thought better of it. Robert Joseph, the NSC's senior director for counterproliferation strategy, argued that the intercept should be kept secret to use as leverage in the negotiations. NSC adviser Stephen Hadley concurred. "Bush and Blair determined that the *BBC China* intelligence would advance the negotiations if we kept it secret and conveyed it privately to the Libyans," recalls William Tobey.[117] Tenet explained, "We were reluctant to make too big a deal of it at the time, hoping that we could use the incident to drive home to

the Libyans that we knew all about their plans and to give them greater incentive to renounce all their WMD."[118] Tenet effectively gagged Bolton.

Four days after the secret interception, the British acted to assure Qaddafi. They dispatched Mark Allen, the senior British intelligence officer involved in the secret talks, to make Qaddafi aware of the seizure. Allen contacted Musa Kusa and sought an urgent meeting to discuss the nuclear program that Libyan officials had continued to deny existed. Kusa accepted. On October 7, Allen and Kappes flew to Libya and shared with Kusa their proof of Libya's centrifuge program.[119] Kappes reportedly told Kusa, "You are the drowning man and I am the lifeguard."[120]

The strategy worked. Libya perceived the *BBC China* interception as pressure with credible coercive assurance. Seif al Islam Qaddafi later reported (as written by Tobey) that "the firm, but discreet way in which the U.S. and Britain handled the incident had reassured his father that London and Washington were acting in good faith, rather than creating a pretext for military action."[121] The fact that the intelligence was not made public assured the Libyans. To *Time*, Muammar Qaddafi's son recalled that while the seizure added pressure on Libya to come clean, the lack of bullying by MI6 and the CIA reassured his father. "We realized that we were dealing with friends and sincere people," he said.[122] Members of a US congressional commission wrote that the seizure of the *BBC China*, which constituted "definitive proof" of Libya's wrongdoing, "served as a critical factor in Tripoli's decision to open up its weapons programs to international scrutiny."[123] A British parliamentary report investigating British intelligence performance regarding WMDs drew the same conclusion: "The discoveries made enabled the UK and US Governments to confront Libyan officials with this evidence of their nuclear-related procurement at a time when Libya was still considering whether to proceed to full admission of its programmes."[124]

Libya relented on inspections ("technical visits"), and a secret team flew to Libya within two weeks. Sharing intelligence had made the Libyans more willing to admit their guilt. But their caution remained. At the visit, which lasted ten days (October 19–29, 2003),[125] the Libyans "provided additional information about their missile and chemical weapons programs" but continued to dissemble about much of their nuclear program. They argued that they only sought nuclear power. The inspectors concluded, according to Tobey's account, that their Libyan counterparts "had not been instructed to speak freely or 'come clean.'"[126] Additionally, at this first technical visit, Tenet writes that during a personal encounter with Kappes, Muammar Qaddafi asked "if the United States would really fulfill its commitments if he renounced his WMD programs." "'Yes sir, the president is a man of his word,'" Kappes replied. "'But if he feels his word has been dishonored . . . well, he is a very serious-minded man.'"[127]

After the *BBC China* incident, Tenet recalled, "we repeatedly surprised them [Libya] with the depth of our knowledge. . . . US and British intelligence officers secretly traveled to Libya and asked to inspect Libya's ballistic missile programs. Libyan officials at first failed to declare key facilities, but our intelligence convinced them to disclose several dozen facilities, including their deployed Scud B sites and their secret North Korean–assisted Scud C production line."[128]

That US and British intelligence officials shared their secret knowledge in these ways is made more interesting by the risks such sharing posed to ongoing intelligence-gathering missions. For instance, the CIA's plan to intercept the *BBC China* and catch Libya red-handed risked its most prized informants. US and British policymakers accepted that the interdiction would likely cause key sources to lose access to further information about the Khan network. Before the seizure, the CIA warned its informant inside the Khan network, Urs Tinner, and other sources that Khan would likely suspect that a mole was in his network if the United States intercepted the *BBC China*.[129] But the United States and Britain apprehended the components on the ship anyway.

The pattern of shared knowledge leading to concessions repeated itself. On November 20, 2003, US and UK negotiators confronted the Libyans with additional intelligence. At a "tense meeting" in a small Cotswolds hotel, the CIA presented its recording of a bugged conversation from February 2002 between Khan and Matuq in Casablanca.[130] Tenet writes that Kappes and his British counterpart communicated, "Look, we know you guys purchased a centrifuge facility."[131] After the fall of the Qaddafi regime, British journalists uncovered a Libyan transcript (in Arabic) of this meeting. According to the document, Kappes first told Musa Kusa that the United States and the UK knew of Libya's uranium-enrichment program, including "everything that was talked about—the amount of uranium, 10 tons, and the centrifuge equipment."[132] Kappes then handed Kusa a CD with the recording that he said proved Libya's nuclear program was for "military and not peaceful purposes."[133] The Libyan account, quoted by journalists, further captures that Kappes went on: "Maybe in other circumstances and in other times, this information [on Libya's nuclear plans] could be used adversely. . . . Maybe Powell could talk about it in the UN," referencing the Bush administration's public campaign to justify the forthcoming invasion of Iraq.[134] The *Times* of London emphasizes that Kappes "quickly reverted to focusing on how the goal was to restore relations with the Tripoli regime."[135]

Kappes then delivered a message to Qaddafi direct from President Bush conveying his "personal desire for friendship." In the meeting, Kappes stressed Bush's sincerity. "The President has not sent any letters lately so it is a very important decision for him to write," Kappes said, "This is the strongest sign for the President to be personally involved."[136] Libyan negotiators agreed to a second on-site technical visit.

The second technical visit took place on December 1–12, 2003.[137] The Libyans were much more forthcoming. They admitted to having nuclear weapons ambitions, revealed the UF6 cylinders acquired from Khan, and surrendered their designs for a nuclear warhead. These admissions satisfied the CIA and MI6. True to a pattern of this case, these technical visits were kept secret from the IAEA.[138]

Shared knowledge consistently convinced the Libyans that concessions would not reveal substantially more than their coercers already knew. More acquiescence followed each disclosure.

THE END GAME

At this point in coercive bargaining, the parties were inches from concluding a deal, but fate sent one more curveball. On December 14, 2003, US troops in Iraq pulled Saddam Hussein out of a hiding hole. The manhunt for the toppled dictator had ended at a farm near his hometown of Tikrit. Cameras recorded his capture.

The signal was strong, and Qaddafi received it. But the capture of Saddam had the counterproductive effect of exacerbating the assurance dilemma with Qaddafi and making him rethink gambling on concession. Libya again balked, suggesting a postponement of the upcoming concession announcement and asking for assurances that the US would not pursue regime change. Qaddafi feared once more that the US would be after him next, personally, WMDs or no WMDs.

Blair decided to place a personal phone call to Qaddafi on December 17.[139] As Tobey recalls the end game, "Bush and Blair wanted to know how to push Qaddafi over the hump and reassure him. The call was intended to push Qaddafi over the hump."[140] He recounts the call as follows:

> To improve their chances, Tony Blair called Qaddafi at midday, London time. Qaddafi expressed two concerns, perhaps inadvertently revealing his underlying motivation for abandoning his banned weapons programs. First, he said he did not wish to appear to have capitulated to Washington's demands. In light of Saddam's capture only days earlier, comparisons between Iraq and Libya would be inevitable, he complained. Second, he feared that the United States would attack Libya if it acknowledged possessing proscribed weapons—paradoxically, the reverse of Washington's view of the matter. Qaddafi added that because he disliked the wording of the draft statement, he wanted his foreign minister to make the announcement.[141]

Blair responded with an explicit assurance. If Qaddafi was "clear and explicit about Libya's possession of the WMD programs and his determination to eliminate them," Blair told him, "the United States and Britain would respond positively in return."[142] The call lasted thirty minutes.

Afterward, Blair called Bush. Both leaders agreed that after hearing Qaddafi himself come clean and pledge to dismantle his WMD program, each would make reassuring statements welcoming the decision and looking forward to better relations.[143]

Finally, after last-minute back-and-forth over the precise language, on December 19, 2003, Libya announced that it would abandon its nuclear weapons program, destroy its chemical weapons stockpile, declare activities to the IAEA and allow inspections, destroy missiles with ranges over three hundred kilometers and payload over five hundred kilograms, and join the Chemical Weapons Convention. "Libya has decided, with its own free will, to get rid of these substances, equipment and programmes and to be free from all internationally banned weapons," Foreign Minister Shalgham said on radio.[144] Qaddafi endorsed the statement afterward with a single written sentence.[145] "Qaddafi's 'endorsement' was satisfactory," Tobey said. "Sometimes you don't get everything you want, but we were generally satisfied."[146]

President Bush and Prime Minister Blair made complementary statements. Blair "applauded" Qaddafi's "courageous decision" and noted that "Libya's actions entitle it to rejoin the international community."[147] Bush's remarks communicated both the threats and assurances that yielded Libyan compliance, saying, the United States had "sent an unmistakable message to regimes that would seek or possess weapons of mass destruction. Those weapons do not bring influence or prestige. They bring isolation and otherwise unwelcome consequences"—a threat. Bush continued, "And another message should be equally clear: Leaders who abandon the pursuit of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, and the means to deliver them, will find an open path to better relations with the United States and other free nations"—a coercive assurance.[148] The United States had, in Bush's words, "clarified the choices left to potential adversaries."

Aftermath

By September 2004 all materials acquired from the A. Q. Khan network had been shipped out of Libya.[149] President Bush lifted most US sanctions on April 23, 2005. The United States restored full diplomatic relations with Libya on May 15, 2006. By the end of June, Libya was officially removed from the list of states designated as sponsors of terrorism. Libya was elected to a term on the UNSC in October 2007.

Bush and Blair had a vested interest in cultivating the legacy of the "Libya model." According to Tobey, "they talked about this explicitly at Camp David. They had an interest in convincing others that Libya's was a good path to follow."[150] Robert Joseph concurs that US and UK leaders wished to "send the powerful message that, if these countries also were to

abandon WMD programs, explicitly and verifiably, there would be benefits."[151] In other words, they wanted the Libya case to help mitigate the assurance dilemma in coercion against future proliferators. William Burns's overall reflection on the case is consistent with such a view:

> Afghanistan was evidence enough of our determination and capabilities after 9/11. Moreover, the track record we built up with the Libyans, on the foundation of what the previous administration had pursued, underscored that we were focused on changing behavior, not the Qaddafi regime, and that however difficult the choices and the pathway for the Libyans, our word could be trusted. Sanctions had taken a long-term toll. Qaddafi's political isolation in the international community was tightly sealed. He needed a way out, and we gave him a tough but defensible one.[152]

Yet this goal of shaping a constructive legacy—a Libya model—was undermined in the years to come. First, Bush administration officials themselves seemed to be unable to agree on the right lessons. "There was a lively debate within the Bush Administration about why Qaddafi had acted," Burns further recalls, "with Vice President Cheney and other hawks drawing a direct connection to Iraq and the demonstration effect of Saddam's removal."[153] As an insurgency intensified and no evidence of a WMD program could be found in Iraq, it became quite tempting to connect the Libya success to the Iraq intervention. The story helped rescue the Iraq adventure from ignominy, even if it did by sleight-of-hand distort the original justification for the war.

Second, the meaning of the Libya model changed dramatically when only eight years later the Obama administration reneged on the 2003 bargain and intervened in Libya's civil war. While the United States had not put a formal security assurance in writing, the United Kingdom did. Building their new relationship, Libya and the UK signed a "Joint Letter on Peace and Security" on June 26, 2006. The letter specified that each country "will refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of either state" and committed to "settlement of their mutual differences through dialogue and direct negotiation and peaceful and friendly means."[154] In 2011 the UK reneged on these codified commitments. Through the lens of the assurance dilemma, the United States also reneged on a coercive assurance in 2011 when it ultimately helped to topple Qaddafi.

The key question for a study of the assurance dilemma is why the Obama administration felt it wise to renege on the United States' assurance. What arguments were made in the White House? Fascinatingly, rather than debating whether or not to renege on a 2003 nuclear bargain, the issue seems to have come up negligibly during the Obama administration's deliberations about Libyan intervention in 2011. Instead, the immediate

humanitarian crisis crowded out the issue. Many advisers argued that the dictator was about to massacre his own people and the US and NATO had a responsibility to intervene. *New York Times* coverage of the 2011 decision reports that "no one in the Situation Room debated what message the decision to turn on Colonel Qaddafi might send to other countries that the United States was trying to persuade to relinquish their weapons, according to interviews conducted later with more than a half-dozen people engaged in the discussion."[155] More research will be needed as official documents become available, but for now we have several corroborating memoir accounts of the series of meetings between President Obama and his national security staff debating the intervention—including by Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice, Samantha Power, Ben Rhodes, William Burns, and President Obama himself.[156] These accounts point to one conclusion: the 2003 bargain was a nonfactor in 2011 decision-making. As the president went around the table at a crucial meeting, listening to principals argue for and against intervention—Robert Gates, Joe Biden, Thomas Donilon, and William Daley against; Clinton, Rice, Power, Rhodes, and Antony Blinken for—none appear to have raised the 2003 context or nuclear nonproliferation at all. Only once President Obama polled the backbenchers in the room did the nuclear issue enter the discussion (though even NSC staffers present reportedly also favored intervention[157]). Still, they did not argue about the assurance dilemma or that conditions were different or that the deal was moot—they simply prioritized other issues over it, such as atrocity prevention and support for democracy in the Middle East. Only three accounts of the deliberations—Burns's, Powers's, and the president's himself—even mention nonproliferation. "A few younger staffers expressed concerns that a military action against Libya might have the unintended consequence of convincing countries like Iran that they needed nuclear weapons as a hedge against future U.S. attack," writes Obama without further discussion.[158] The conversation pivoted instead to the benefits of supporting regional protests for democracy. Rather than recall the 2003 bargain, many accounts express frustration that Qaddafi in 2011 remained a mercurial and brutal dictator. Burns's memoir credits Qaddafi with sticking "to his part of our deal on terrorism and the nuclear issue" but laments that he "continued to rule with weirdness and repression."[159] "This was not a man who was going to meet our demands," Rhodes writes ambiguously.[160] He had to go.[161]

Prior to the first bombs falling, President Obama publicly offered Qaddafi "one last chance" to pull back his forces and respect Libyan protestors. Unsurprisingly, Qaddafi was unbowed. The intervention was at this point foregone, and any final ultimatums lacked assurance. "The Pentagon was prepared and awaiting my order to begin airstrikes," writes Obama.[162] Qaddafi did not last much longer.

The Assurance Dilemma in Libya

Libya's coercers succeeded in concluding an agreement to verifiably eliminate Tripoli's nuclear weapons program in December 2003. During the negotiations, Qaddafi was continually concerned that the US and the UK intended to disarm him and attack. Indeed, 9/11 and the Iraq War caused Qaddafi to hold fast to his nuclear ambitions because they underlined the credibility of threats without supporting complementary coercive assurances. As secret negotiations dragged on, however, the US came around to understanding that it faced an assurance dilemma and needed to assuage Libyan fears. Indeed, negotiations were deadlocked until credible threats were paired with coercive assurance that convinced Qaddafi to make concessions.

For a long time, however, regime change was the US goal. From 1986 to 1998 Libya defied coercion because of its accurate perception of US maximalism. Demands of such great magnitude undermine coercion by eliminating bargaining space. Only after the United States dropped its goal of regime change did US-Libya relations encounter a coercive assurance problem, during which time Washington took pains to signal that it no longer sought regime change. Earlier, from 1980 to 1986, Libya defied coercion because it did not perceive that US threats to use military force were credible. It believed that the Soviet Union would protect it against Western aggression.

"Qaddafi only came around to conceding to pressure incrementally," recalls William Tobey. "He needed to be brought along."[163] Libya's coercers did so by disentangling demands, managing spoilers, and sharing their knowledge of Qaddafi's guilt. First, Lockerbie accountability was resolved and taken off the table before Libya agreed to WMD concessions. This had two key effects: allowing the United States to scale back its demands of regime change (resolving the problem of demand magnitude) and disentangling UN and US sanctions over the two issues of Lockerbie and WMDs, which had resulted in Libyan concessions on neither stake. Applying each punishment to a different demand in 1998, however, contributed to Libya's decision to concede one issue at a time, as one stake did not impede the other. Moreover, even in 2003 the Bush administration had to consider how to disentangle stakes to provide sanctions relief. As Tobey recalls, "WMD, terrorism, and human rights sanctions were all interwoven. The Bush administration debated how to decouple these sanctions and provide some relief on the WMD issue after the announcement."[164] It helped that Bush and Blair wanted to provide relief as a means of upholding the Libya model as a path worthy of emulation by other isolated states.

Second, Libya's coercers managed spoilers both internationally and domestically, keeping veto players in the dark who could act independently

to prevent a coercive bargain. Internationally, the United States maintained coercive control by freezing Israel out of the coercive bargaining process. Domestically, the United States relied on the secrecy of negotiations with Libya to keep hard-line opponents out of the process. Bargaining with Libya was unacceptable to some members of the Bush administration and members of Congress backed by the lobby for victims of the Lockerbie bombing.

The UK was a partner to the United States in negotiations and not a potential spoiler. It would accept bargains acceptable to Washington. Between the two coercers, the United States dominated Britain in terms of leverage. US sanctions mattered most to Libyan revival. As W. Q. Bowen writes, "while the British government certainly fulfilled a pivotal role in the secret negotiations, and provided the Libyans with a bridge to the Americans, only the United States had in its gift what the Libyans most sought: an end to American sanctions and reengagement with Washington."[165]

Although these efforts by coercers to signal coercive control are clear, we have less direct evidence that these signals were received in Tripoli. Perhaps the best indication that the Libyan leaders were concerned with coercive control was when they asked for signs that they were bargaining with the right members of the US and UK governments. Both the United States and the United Kingdom, at different times, responded by sending messages from their heads of state and sending high-level representatives to assure the Libyans of sincerity.

Third, the Libyan case affirms the utility of shared knowledge to overcoming the assurance dilemma. "Qaddafi genuinely feared that if he admitted to his WMD program we would use force against him," recalls Tobey.[166] The United States and Britain therefore chose to share intelligence with Libya—chiefly that related to the seizure of the *BBC China* and recordings of conversations with A. Q. Khan.

The Libya case also provides a good test of the relationship between the credibility of threats and assurance. The fact that Libya perceived credible threats and severe punishments but did not concede until coercers bolstered their assurance affirms the necessity of assurance in coercion. Moreover, when perceptions of threat credibility spiked, the target's demand for coercive assurance remained. Two instances in the Libya chronology allow us to see this relationship: the invasion of Iraq and the capture of Saddam Hussein. At these two moments, the military threat from the United States increased rapidly, and Tripoli's leadership responded by demanding credible assurance that Libya would not suffer the same fate. Qaddafi was indeed afraid, and he was more willing to take a concession gamble. But he was not immediately compelled into concessions. Libya continued to import black-market nuclear infrastructure until late 2003. Qaddafi saw the US and UK make the case for war against Iraq based on WMD proliferation, and he feared that coming clean about his own program would only

hand over the case for war against him. Later, the capture of Saddam increased the severity of the threatened punishment to Qaddafi personally.[167] But again the timing of this spike in threat severity suggests that it was on balance counterproductive for coercion. Qaddafi was indeed fearful, but after Saddam's capture he balked one last time on a deal that was virtually completed. The Libyans had fully revealed the most secretive elements of their nuclear program in early December—before the United States captured Saddam. Blair spent another thirty minutes on the phone with Qaddafi, assuring him that his fate would not be the same.[168] Of course, neither knew that Qaddafi's fate in just eight years would actually be worse.