



## THE POMED WIRE

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### POMED Notes: Libya One Year Later

On Wednesday, the Cato Institute hosted a panel discussion called “Libya One Year Later” featuring Professor **Diederik Vandewalle** of Dartmouth College, **Jonathan Hutson**, Director of Communications for the Enough Project, and **Benjamin H. Friedman** of the Cato Institute. **Malou Innocent** of Cato moderated the discussion.

For full event notes, continue reading below or click [here](#). Professor Vandewalle began by outlining two categories for evaluating Libya since the fall of **Muammar Qaddafi**: first by **the process of state building from almost no prior institutions, and secondly in forming consensus to govern these new institutions**. Vandewalle said the initial chaos has diminished somewhat, but its legacy is the emergence of fault lines, such as the east-west divide. Vandewalle credited the National Transition Council, however, for being able to make necessary compromises even in spite of their weak institutional capacity. Despite the fractured image of Libya, Vandewalle argued that **the central government is gaining traction, as is the idea of federalism, and that the militias’ power is diminishing**. Vandewalle’s overall assessment is that **“the glass is half full,” as Libya has benefited from what he called “clear-eyed leadership.”** Drawbacks that he saw, however, were threats by Libya’s history of “not playing by the rules” and the lack of a strong national identity, which currently is dominated by an Islamic identity.

Jon Hutson followed by calling the repercussions of intervention in Libya a “call to humility” due to the far-reaching consequences of such action. Hutson discussed the principle of “Right to Protect” (R2P) and questioned its application in Libya, saying that **instead of intervention being a last resort as envisioned, Hutson said it was used in Libya as a “quick resort.”** Hutson also contrasted Libya with U.S. inaction in Syria as well as in Sudan where mass killings and ethnic cleansing have also been reported. The question, Hutson argued, that should be posed is **what short of intervention, but greater than doing nothing, can be undertaken**. As a part answer, Hutson discussed the work of the Enough Project, and **the use of private satellites and other non-governmental ways of monitoring situations to report crimes against humanity, and thus “deny deniability” for dictators**.

Ben Friedman spoke last and refuted President Obama’s rationale for intervention. First he said it was an effort to support U.S. allies for whom Libya was a vital interest and who had also helped the U.S. in Afghanistan. Friedman called this dangerous, saying the U.S. should not **“have war for allies but instead allies for war.”** Second, Friedman critiqued the idea that intervention would stem destabilizing refugee flows, arguing that intervention proved even more destabilizing, and with the coup in Mali, **succeeded only in reducing democracies in the world by one**. Next he discussed the rationale of intervening to install liberal democracy, calling it a long shot in Libya as it lacks necessary institutions. Lastly, Friedman dismissed the humanitarian rationale, **saying the facts on the ground pointed to no special human rights imperative, adding that intervention only prolonged a civil war and created more insecurity**.

Professor Vandewalle then answered a question about federalism in Libya, explaining its historical roots in 1950’s politics. For the East today, Vandewalle said federalism means autonomy which has no historical basis in the 50’s constitution. **Vandewalle added that the old federalism was abandoned in order to integrate Libya’s oil resources**.

On a question on R2P, Jon Hutson argued on the importance of measuring results as you go along, while being mindful of the effects of secondary consequences of war, such as displacement. Ben Friedman

followed this by criticizing a **“myth of neutrality” that the government adheres to, arguing it would have been better had the U.S. come out for the ouster of Qaddafi.** This, he argued, would let you use overwhelming forces as opposed to aiding rebel groups to “make it a fair fight,” which only prolongs the conflict.

Vanderwalle also addressed a question on Libya’s upcoming elections, saying he believes they will take place and that the delay was only the result of logistical concerns. He also **said he’s not sure it matters who wins since he sees the selection of the constitutional committee as overshadowing it.**

Vanderwalle did say, however, that he thinks the Islamists will do well, but his concern is how the 120 non-party seats in the new body will function and if they will align with certain parties.