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## CUADERNOS DE SOFÍA EDITORIAL

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#### DOMINO THEORY FOR THE PROMULGATION OF INSTABILITY IN THE SAHEL REGION: POST GADHAFI ERA IN PERSPECTIVE

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#### Abstract

The paper models post M. Gadhafi spread of instability in the Sahel region through the lens of "domino theory". It offers a useful scale for analysing socio-cultural and environmental dynamics that transcend national boundaries, such as spread of insurgency and instability across national frontiers. It examines effect of the fall of Gaddafi regime and its consequential spread of instability, particularly it effects in the Sahel region, evident in Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Methodologically, it employs the use of descriptive analysis relying solely on secondary information for data generation and analysis. It concludes that as long as level of insecurity and instability is high, any project towards development will be hampered.

#### Keywords

Domino theory – Instability – Sahel region – Proliferation of weapons

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#### Introduction

Between the 1950s to 1980s the domino theory was a prominent theory. It states that where one country in a region comes under the influence of communism, ultimately the surrounding countries would follow suit in a domino effect<sup>1</sup>, see Fig. 1. To justify the need for American intervention around the world during and after the Cold War the domino theory was being used and applied by series of the United States governments.



Fig. 1

Domino Effect chain of the US during the Cold War under the influence of communism

The U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his speech described the theory during a news conference on April 7, 1954, when referring to communism in Indochina, although he never used the precise term "domino theory". The "falling domino" principle refers to an instance where a row of dominoes set up and the first one is knocked over and it is of a certainty that the result will be that the last one will go over very quickly. Consequently, you could have a disintegration at the beginning that would have the most profound influences<sup>2</sup> on the others. The "domino theory as applied in Southeast Asia" implies that if Vietnam and Laos succumbed to communism, then Cambodia would fall, and so on. With this understanding of a proposed physical problem, in the same vein and looking at Libya<sup>3</sup> as a country in the Maghreb region of North Africa, which inadvertently interprets that if Libya falls, then it will affect the bordering countries e.g Sudan to the southeast, Chad and Niger to the south. Observations of actual events, then, will enable us to make a judgement about the value of the theory.



Fig. 2 Possible Domino Effect of the Arab Spring (personal design by the author)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> P.T. Leeson y A.M. Dean, "The Democratic Domino Theory: An Empirical Investigation", American Journal of Political Science Vol: 53 num 3 (2009): 533-551.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> NPS. The Quotable Quotes of Dwight D. Eisenhower. National Park Service. 2013. Available at: https://www.nps.gov/features/eise/jrranger/quotes2.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> J. R. Tafotie y S. O. Idahosa, "Conflicts in Africa and major powers: proxy wars, zones of influence or provocative instability", Bulletin of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. Series: International Relations Vol: 16 num 3 (2016): 451-460.



Fig. 3 Hosni Mubarak facing the Tunisia domino effect

#### **Theoretical Framework**

Theories are lenses with which we can look through what and it is essential for understanding major events and pattern. There are various theories through which the spread of instability can be analysed or viewed, however this paper proposes the domino theory. The "domino theory as applied in Southeast Asia" by America to justify its intervention, implies that if Vietnam and Laos succumbed to communism, then Cambodia would fall, and so on. Peter T. Leeson and Andrea M. Dean West argue that, democratic dominoes do in fact fall as the theory contends. B. G. Mclachlan, G. Beaupre, A. B. Cox and L. Gore<sup>4</sup>, posits that the domino thickness has negligible effect on the domino motion. Patrick O'Sullivan is of the view that Domino theory, posits that the inspiration for violence spreads from one epicenter and proceeds from one neighboring country to another in contagious sequence. The counter position would be that political violence is a chance generated response to local circumstances<sup>5</sup>. C.P. Fitzgerald in dismissing "the fallacy of the dominoes," pointed to the basic significances of age-old rivalries among Annamese. Khmers, Thais, Burmese, Malays, Javanese and Filipinos, rather than communism, as a source of conflict<sup>6</sup>. R. Murphy questioned the domino theory as a reliable representation of Chinese intentions and doubted that adjacency was an effective measure of influence<sup>7</sup>. In the 7th edition, de Blij and Muller stated that domino theory to be: "Properly defined, the domino theory holds that destabilization from any cause in one country can result in the collapse of order in a neighboring country, starting a chain of events that can affect a series of contiguous states in turn"8. This is a however describe the general proposition about the chain of destabilization event of violent impulses.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> B. G. McLachlan; G. Beaupre; A. B. Cox y L. Gore, "Falling Dominoes: Problem. Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics", SIAM Review Vol: 25 num 3 (1983): 403-404.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> P. O'Sullivan, "Dominoes or Dice: Geography and the Diffusion of Political Violence", Journal of Conflict Studies Vol: 16 num 2 (1996).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> C. P. Fitzgerald, The Fallacy of the Dominoes. The Nation. 1965, pp. 700-712.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> R. Murphy, "China and the Dominoes", Asian Survey 6 (1966): 510-515.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> H. J. de Blij y P. O. Muller, Geography: Realms, Regions and Concepts, 7th ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1994).

#### Instability in Post-Gaddafi Era: Libya, Mali and Nigeria in Perspective

Since 2011 the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa has increasingly become characterized by a sequence of crises, ranging from terrorist attacks, insurgency, outbreaks of epidemics and threats to health due to infrastructural deterioration and disruption, and a general inability of states to exercise control over their territories<sup>9</sup>.

#### Influence of the fall of Libya's instability on Mali

The 2012 coup in Mali was triggered by the instability in Libya, which ultimately spread to neighbouring countries and other part of the region<sup>10</sup>. The said coup took place as armed rebellion was launched on 17 January 2012, which eventually managed to expel the army in northern Mali and by March 22 same year the military junta ousted the president of Mali from power. These events ushered Mali into a "state of emergency" and "guagmire" that threatened the neighbouring states security and stability. Prior to NATO invasion and ultimately the fall and death of Gaddafi, for more than two decades post-independence Mali had was seen as a model of democratic evolution in sub-Saharan Africa. Although the Malian state had experienced rebellion and threats of destabilization. However, the Libvan uprising, the fall of Gaddafi in 2011 and ultimately the instability as a result ignited and triggered the Mali's uprising. It's however imperative to note that, historically the Tuareg insurgents (carried out by the nomadic ethnic group, the Tuaregs, nomadic Berber ethnic groups in north-eastern Mali and parts of Libya) had rebelled against the Malian government in 1963 to 1964, 1990 to 1996, and 2006 to 2009 and in January 2012, respectively. These were as a result of the claim of marginalization<sup>11</sup>. However, before the Libyan crisis that eventually triggered the instability in the region, the presence of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) had been there. The conflict in Mali has had regional and international implications, with devastating consequences on stability in neighbouring states. Northern Mali had become a safe haven for occupation by Islamist extremist groups, posing a serious threat to Mali's and Nigeria's security and stability<sup>12</sup>. As intelligence reports supports the claim that AQIM provided Jihadist training to Boko Haram - which has wreaked havoc in Nigeria<sup>13</sup>.

#### Influence of the fall of Gaddafi on Nigeria's stability

Nigeria is rich in natural resources and is regarded as one of Africa's economic powerhouses. The catalysts of outbreaks of conflict in Nigeria arise from different internal reasons for example, religious conflict, ethnic and tribal conflict, political conflict/contestation, religious fundamentalism, etc. The fall of Gaddafi regime in Libya – 2011, nonetheless seems to have aggravated internal hostilities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> N. D. Danjibo, "The aftermath of the Arab Spring and its implications for peace and development in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa", Strategic review for Southern Africa Vol: 35 num 2 (2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> K. Aning; F. Okyere y M. Abdallah, Addressing emerging security threats in post-Gaddafi Sahel and the ECOWAS response to the Malian crisis. Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre: Policy Brief, 2012.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> A. Belik; N. Grebovic y J. Willos, Friction along Sahelian fault line: Azawad and ethnic conflict in Northern Mali. Canada: Privy Council Office, 2012.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> A. Arieff, Algeria: Current issues. US: Congressional Research Service, 2013. Available at: https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21532.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> D.J. Francis, Regional impact of the armed conflict and French intervention in Mali. Norway: Norwegian Peace building Resource Centre, 2013, p. 10. Available at: http://archives.cerium.ca/IMG/pdf/The\_regional\_impact\_of\_the\_armed\_conflict\_and\_French\_interve ntion\_in\_Mali\_.pdf

Boko Haram, an Islamic armed group operating in North-Eastern Nigeria, has intensified its operations since 2011, gaining momentum from the vulnerability of Nigeria's borders and instability in Mali as a result of the coup in 2012. Hesterman<sup>14</sup> posit that, in 2012, the growth in strength of Boko Haram in North-eastern Nigeria intensified ethnic and religious violence. Boko Haram tactics became more intense and sophisticated and it started making use of suicide bombers from 2011, which obviously suggested that it started receiving assistance from elements of other jihadist movements. Similarly, the bombing of the UN building in Abuja on August 24, 2011 indicates and showcase a new face of the group shifted focus from domestic attacks. However, outside the religious extremism and radicalism as a cause of instability in Nigeria, the Niger Delta region that produces oil which is the main source of revenue in the country has also being a contributing factor to the political tension in the country, with its level of unemployment and low socio-economic standard<sup>15</sup>.

Nigeria, as a heterogeneous society in terms of religious, ethnic and cultural pluralism, is prone to conflicts and it was easy for the Nigerian state to be easily affected by and from the Malian and Libyan crisis creating and increasing instability and conditions of hostilities. Instability in the above-mentioned states have prompted the rise of armed militias who have taken advantage of the vulnerability of the states.

#### **Brief Analysis**

C. J. Efthimiou and M. D. Johnson<sup>16</sup> gave a simplifying assumption of an initial configuration with the dominoes spaced in a straight line. Some of the assumptions of the authors of the "Domino Waves theory are as follows:

- The chain of rods is uniform. This means that all rods are identical and are equally spaced along a straight line.

- The collisions are head-on. This means that, all the rods are and remain aligned in the same line....... The higher the asymmetry, the more parameters are needed, and the problem becomes highly complicated.

The above illustration in uniformity of the chain of rods, depicts the boundaries of countries that are interrelated. While the head-on collisions and the alignment of rods on the same line represent the closeness of the boundaries and the interrelatedness of social, political and economic relationships. The effect of complications that follows the asymmetric impacts therefore defines the complications that follow... that the greatness of the impact will define the height of the complications that will follow the impact.

In the 7th edition, de Blij and Muller stated that domino theory to be: "Properly defined, the domino theory holds that destabilization from any cause in one country can result in the collapse of order in a neighboring country, starting a chain of events that can

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> J. Hesterman, Soft target hardening. Protecting people from attack (US: CRC Press, 2014).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> S.O. Idahosa, "Contemporary Arc of Instability in West Africa: A Case Study of Nigeria", Global Journal of Advanced Research (GJAR) num 3 Vol: 9 (2016): 884-894 y L. Ploch, Boko Haram - Emerging threat to the US homeland. Congressional Research Service. 2013, p. 15. Available at: https://homeland.house.gov/activities/hearings/boko-haram-emerging-threat-to-the-us-homeland <sup>16</sup> C. J. Efthimiou y M. D. Johnson, "Domino Waves. Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics", SIAM Review Vol: 49 num 1 (2007): 111-120.

affect a series of contiguous states in turn<sup>"17</sup>. This is a however describe the general proposition about the chain of destabilization event of violent impulses. "Neodominoism" would seem to come down to the simple proposition that violence and instability, whatever its complexion or form, is contagious and spreads to neighboring countries. This hypothesis creates some expectations about the geography of violent events. Peter T. Leeson and Andrea M. Dean West argue that, democratic dominoes do in fact fall as the theory contends. Their findings have potentially important foreign policy implications. The "lightness" with which democratic dominoes fall suggests that even if foreign military intervention aimed at promoting democracy in undemocratic countries succeeds in democratizing these nations, intervention is likely to have only a small effect on democracy in their broader regions.

Taking from Huntington's 'Third Wave' democracy, one could conclude that the revolution that engulfed the Arab states could in effect be considered a 'Fourth Wave' democratisation process, except for the fact that the aftermath was a movement that birthed political uncertainty, the spread of instability and its "effect" on neighboring countries. President Ben Ali after 23 years in power had to resign in the aftermath of the revolution. No doubt that the popular uprisings throughout the Middle East and North Africa was sparked by the success it recorded in Tunisia. The countries affected includes: Egypt, Libya, Syria, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen, etc. The uprising in Egypt, Libya and Yemen succeeded in ousting from office their dictators while the battle to remove Bashir Al Asad is still raging in Syria<sup>18</sup>.

However, the interpretation here will be limited to traditional instability in Libya, with the emphasis on the effect of the Libyan uprising because of its international intervention and its regional effect, and the spread of arms and instability after the conflict<sup>19</sup>.

# Domino Theory for the promulgation of instability in the Sahel Region: Libya as a Case

The analysis and solution given by B. G. McIachlan, G. Beaupre, A. B. Cox and L. Gore<sup>20</sup> of Stanford University, shows that a similarity rule can be derived for the speed of the wave of falling of dominoes under the following simplifying assumptions: the dominoes are equally spaced in a row; the domino width does not appreciably affect the domino motion; and, except at close spacings, the domino thickness has negligible effect on the domino motion. From the physics of the problem it is further assumed that the wave speed V is only dependent on the following parameters: domino spacing d, domino height h, and gravity g refer to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> H. J. de Blij y P. O. Muller, Geography: Realms, Regions and Concepts, 7th ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1994).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> N. D. Danjibo, "The aftermath of the Arab Spring and its implications for peace and development in the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa", Strategic review for Southern Africa Vol: 35 num 2 (2013).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> S. O. Idahosa, Libya's Contemporary Instability and its Effect on Regional Stability: Africa as a Case Study", African Studies – Yearbook (Moscow: RUDN University, 2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> B. G. McLachlan; G. Beaupre; A. B. Cox y L. Gore, "Falling Dominoes: Problem. Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics", SIAM Review Vol: 25 num 3 (1983): 403-404.



Fig. 4

For nomenclature. Therefore the wave speed is given by V = V(d, h, g), (B. G. Mclachlan, G. Beaupre, A. B. Cox and L. Gore<sup>21</sup>, emphasis is mine)

From the aforementioned analysis, the equal row spacing of the dominoes are the boundaries and the space between the government and countries, while the effect of the domino width not necessarily or appreciably affecting the domino motion is the initial stability of the country. Libya before the uprising and ultimately the intervention, was a stable and developed Africa nation. This means that the initial stability and development of the country did not necessarily stop the motion of the domino from taking effect. Consequently, the wave speed V (the spread of instability, i.e. borderline tribal groups and ethnicity (Tuareg, Hausa, etc) that cut across the affected countries) is only dependent on the following parameters: domino spacing - d (the boundary it shares), domino height - h (the height of the instability in the origin country), and gravity - g (the intensity to guarantee its spread) refer to the multiplication of the features - V(d, h, g) to arriving at the effect of the fall of Gaddafi regime (foreign and international intervention) and its consequential spread of instability in the region particularly it effects in the Sahel region, evident in Mali, Niger and Nigeria.

The fall of the Gaddafi regime and the further state of instability in Libya resulted in the spread and export of instability in the region. The current situation in the Sahel region can be called the culmination of a political instability including recurrent and common problems in Libya as its adverse effect are being felt in many countries in the Sahel region (such as Mali, Niger, Nigeria and others). Such kind of a political crisis is clearly demonstrated by the domino theory. The fall of one country produces a "domino effect" that destabilizes other countries in the region. One major player that has always been important in this space either by reasons of geopolitical concerns or by regional factor, is Libya. Although the "Arab Spring" was a revolution that ended most autocratic regimes in North Africa in 2011, it also signified the end of strong centralized governments that had enjoyed absolute control over their territories, a control which also extended to the wider region and had a stabilizing influence on other states. In a theoretical and practical agreement with the "domino effect", the tumultuous political developments created a range of new threats after the leaders of all three countries fell in 2011......<sup>22</sup>. The fall of Gaddafi as evident (in other

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> B. G. McLachlan; G. Beaupre; A. B. Cox y L. Gore, "Falling Dominoes: Problem. Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics", SIAM Review Vol: 25 num 3 (1983): 403-404.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> D. Gartenstein-Ross; N. Barr; G. Willcoxon y N. Basuni, Clingendael Report on The Crisis in North Africa Implications for Europe and Options for EU Policymakers. Nertherland Institute of International Relations, 2015.

countries), "brought a measure of instability and predictability to the Mediterranean<sup>23</sup>. Supporting the theory of a domino effect, Sputnik<sup>24</sup> in an interview asserted that the French media were quick to notice a direct link between Gaddafi's fall in Libya and an increased flow of arms to jihadist militants in Mali. Many experts believed that the arms had come from the armories of the fallen Libyan leader<sup>25</sup>. In a further analysis retired Brigadier General Dominique Trinquant in his submission, "What was really happening was the mercenaries, who once served Gaddafi, moved over to Mali from southern Libya. Small wonder that the jihadists were so quick to move in and fill the void," Dominique Trinquant said.

Further aspects that also demonstrate the domino regional effects of the Libyan crisis are:

• that heavily-armed tribal fighters had to return to their countries of origin to cause instability;

• the psycho-political concerns of some other regional countries, such as Algeria, regarding the intervention of European countries on the soil of a neighboring country; and

• the impact of the collapse of Gaddafi's regime on the wider region, which had in one way or another been dependent on Libya's economy as well as its diplomatic terms.

Security in the region remains precarious. The continued deteriorating state of political and security situation in Libya, the political impasse and persisting security challenges in Mali, the increasing number of terrorist attacks throughout the region, including those carried out by Boko Haram in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, and kidnappings for ransom, continue to have negative consequences on civilians<sup>26</sup>. Adding to the embarrassment of Western interventionists, up until then Mali had been something of the poster child for successful democratization and development in Africa. The magnitude of the Libyan intervention in Mali tell a cautionary tale about the disaster that unnecessary war can unbridle on an entire region<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> D. Gartenstein-Ross; N. Barr; G. Willcoxon y N. Basuni, Clingendael Report on The Crisis in North Africa Implications for Europe and Options for EU Policymakers. Nertherland Institute of International Relations. 2015.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Sputnik, Domino Effect: Gaddafi's Murder Unleashed Terror. Sputnik News. 2016. Available at: https://sputniknews.com/africa/201610211046578923-gaddafi-murder-terrorism/

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#### Conclusion

The causes of instability in post-Gaddafi sub-Saharan Africa have been theorised in this paper with the analysis of domino effect as it model and relates to the spread of instability and its dynamics in the region. It offers a useful scale for analysing socio-cultural and environmental dynamics that transcend national boundaries, such as spread of insurgency and instability across national frontiers. The paper agrees with Christine (2015) that, having a community split by a border increases the risk of war and makes conflict deadlier, this however can also be observed in the case of the Tuareq, etc ethnic groups in the region. Evidently, the domino scheme is the strong case and the more attractive formation to the imagination. This record of the contemporary hot spots provides for a factual basis for the exploration of the geographical dimension of linkages. Mapping the data provides quantitative evidence of the possible transmission process operating between neighboring states. The inability of Libya's militias and political parties to establish a functioning transitional government after Gaddafi's fall has continue to stir up increasing concerns about instability in the region and migration flows across the Mediterranean. Scholars and experts have pointed out that this state of quagmire has continuously put the migration pressure to remain historically high, with 170,000 migrants, primarily from Sub-Saharan Africa, crossing the Mediterranean from the Maghreb in 2016 (compared to 30-40.000 annually during the first decade of the 2000s) and an equally high number being registered by the IMO for the early quarters of 2017<sup>28</sup>.

It therefore concludes that: though the fall of Gaddafi was celebrated by Western powers as a form of democratization of the Libyan state and its peoples freedom, but in reality it birthed the re-surfacing of old theory of the spread of an ideology/instability i.e. "domino theory (once the first is knocked down, and it is of inevitability that the outcome of the last one is that it will go over very quickly)", which simply means instability not only in Libya but in the Sahel region; the fall of Gaddafi left a power vacuum that promoted the proliferation of extremist groups in Western Sahel, for example, the tenacity and ability of Boko Haram to wreak havoc, the possession of large quantities of weapons by the Tuaregs, which was eventually used it to carryout a rebellion in northern Mali and perform operations in Chad<sup>29</sup> etc. has ultimately being challenging the stability of the region; and when the Libyan economy bounces back – and oil production begins to flourish – there and then African migrants will be needed to rebuild the country. A stability, resilient and flourishing state and job market in Libya can effectively bring in stability to the region.

As long as level of insecurity and instability is high, any project towards development will be hampered.

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