

Dipartimento
di Scienze Politiche

Cattedra di International Relations

**Italy and France in the Libyan scenario: their clash as cause
and obstacle to the political stability of the country?
The relationship between the two states and the case of their
enterprises**

by Giuseppe Romano

Prof. Raffaele Marchetti
RELATORE

Giuseppe Romano 084322
CANDIDATO

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims to analyse the Libyan scenario and the conflicts and instability that have followed in the country since 2011, in order to assess whether the said instability was caused by the tensions between France and Italy, two countries that have shown great influence in the country along with big interests. It will be explained whether these tensions have led to the outbreak of the conflict and also whether they contributed to the following conflict and turmoil that Libya has witnessed from 2011 to the present day. The time span that will be considered will go from the end of the 90's and early 00's to the latest events that have occurred in April 2020, mostly considering the period from the end of the regime of Mu'ammar Ghaddafi in 2011 onwards.

The discussion and the elements of this research will depart from an historical framework, that will be analysed underlining the interests and agendas of both France and Italy and the reflection of these in the internal situation of Libya, that will always be central in the analysis. As a matter of fact, the dissertation will be "localized" in Libya but will also consider the internal and external issues concerning France and Italy, since these two countries are the protagonists of the whole work. The other international and local actors will be cited and inserted in the discussion, but their point of view will not be considered intensively, unless something related to these third actors reveals useful also for the purpose of this dissertation.

The dissertation will be divided in three chapters. The first one will analyse the period after the "rehabilitation" of Libya in the international community but before the 2011 conflict; so, the main point of this part will be the relationship of France and Italy with Ghaddafi before his defeat, as these interest will be the cause of their agenda in the post 2011 period. This part will be explained in the first paragraph of the said chapter, while a second paragraph will look to the 2011 conflict that deposed Ghaddafi, concentrating on the interests of France and Italy in undertaking this military intervention and their expectations

The second chapter, that can be considered the main part of the work, will analyse the period of time from 2011 to 2020. It will be divided in two paragraphs like the first one; the first paragraph will consider the time between the end of the 2011, with the start of the leadership of the National Transition Council, and the Skhirat Agreement when the Government of National Agreement was appointed as the legitimate government of Libya. This paragraph will contain first the succession of events and then the point of view of France and Italy in this period. After that, the time from the Skhirat Agreement until the present day will constitute the second paragraph, still with a first historical part and a following Franco-Italian point of view. This paragraph is by far the most relevant because in this period the

tensions between the two countries reach its peak, through the conflict between Fayed al-Sarraj and Khalifa Haftar.

The third and last chapter will be based on an *excursus* on the economic sector and on the relationship between French and Italian enterprises. The aim of this chapter will be mostly of ascertaining whether the instability of the country was also motivated by factors relative to the economic interests of the two countries and how the rivalry between France and Italy influenced their economic actors operating in Libya.

METODOLOGICAL NOTES

The main issue that have characterised this dissertation from the methodological point of view was the availability of well-structured sources. As a matter of fact, the time span about which this dissertation talks about is poorly documented by monographies or essays, probably because of the relative temporal closeness of the discussed events or because the Libyan conflict is still an open issue and this may have distressed the realisation of researches on the post 2011 period. For this reason, the vast majority of the sources and references of this dissertation comes from news articles for what concerns the historical part and from articles of geopolitical magazines for having a broad view of the events. In addition, the chronicle of events itself presented many unclear points, and needed to be exposed in a clearer way; for this reason there is always a succession of the events in each chapter before starting the analysis in order to make clear the real facts that have occurred. It can be said that a secondary objective of this dissertation was to make a clear and chronological overview of the events occurred in Libya since 2011.

The main elements used for this dissertation, as can be predicted by the last statement, are historical events that are then analysed in order to find a rationale that could give evidence of the behaviour of the several actors having a role in Libya, mostly France and Italy that are the subjects of the whole research. This is also the reason for the vast use of newspapers for having a confirmation of the events cited. However, great relevance has been given also to the economic factors, and for this reason the sources included also data banks, official documents from enterprises, statements of CEOs or businessmen, economic reviews made by sectorial sources and graphs or tables on the economic performance of the main subjects of the dissertation. The said sources, mostly the reviews, are sometimes contradictory and so need to be clarified or cross-checked. Other sources used are official documents like UNSC Resolutions, international treaties, memoranda of understanding or speeches and statements of political actors: these are primary sources that give immediate evidence of what is intended to say.

In the end, the analysis will have a predominant qualitative framework, because of the many articles, documents, essays and reviews found out. However, when possible, quantitative

elements will be added as they can provide a clear and univocal point of view, from which a statement and an analysis can be provided.

CHAPTER 1

Italy and France in Libya: their relations, their interests before 2011 and the outbreak of the conflict.

The following chapter will analyse the period before the Libyan conflict, focusing on the relations of France and Italy with Libya in the first paragraph. In addition, the 2011 NATO military intervention and the economic and political interests behind it will be discussed in the following one.

The present chapter is intended to provide the relations of the two countries in the north African state scenario in the period immediately before the 2011 conflict, focusing on political and economic aspects; for this reason, events occurred before 2000 are not going to be discussed in dept, but just cited when and if necessary.

1.1 THE INTERESTS OF FRANCE AND ITALY IN PRE-2011 LIBYA

In the last decades of the XX century the regime of Mu'ammar Gaddafi was internationally recognised as a supporter, ideologically and economically, of many anti-western and anti-Israeli terrorist groups, most notoriously, among the others, IRA¹ and the Black September Organization². In 1998 Ghaddafi agreed to allow for extradition of two terrorists who had been found guilty of the Lockerbie Bombing of 1988; previously the behaviour of Ghaddafi, unwilling to extradite or process the aforementioned terrorists, led to 3 UNSC resolutions³, each giving harder sanctions compared to the previous. The resolution 883 reaffirmed the previous twos and established the freezing of all financial assets "directly or indirectly controlled by the Government or public authorities of Libya⁴", along with many other restrictions.

The economic disaster⁵ that followed from the UNSC Resolutions obliged the *Rai*'s to give up his support to subversive and terrorist groups and try to rebuild the relations with the western countries. The new century brought a sort of distension in the relations of Libya with the rest of the western world; after granting the extradition of the two terrorists, he complied with the requests of Resolution 731⁶. The following condemnation of the 9/11⁷ attack was the

¹ BBC, *The 38-year connection between Irish republicans and Gaddafi*, 23rd Feb 2011; <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-12539372>

² R.B St.John. *Libya: From Colony to Revolution* (rev. ed.). Oxford: Oneworld, 2011: p 178

³ UNSC Resolutions 731, 748 and 883

⁴ United Nations Security Council, 11th Nov. 1993, Resolution 883. Paragraph 1

⁵ Lyn Boyd-Judson. *Strategic Moral Diplomacy*. In "*Foreign Policy Analysis (Vol 1)*". Oxford Univ. Press, 2005: p 73-97

⁶ UNSC, 21st Jan. 1992, Resolution 731. Paragraph 3

⁷ D. Kawczynski. *Seeking Gaddafi: Libya, the West and the Arab Spring*. Biteback Publishing, 2011: p 176

first of a series of actions that made clear the will from the Great Libyan *Jamahiriyah*⁸ to be recognised as an economic partner and a resource rather than a threat, mostly for and with the neighbouring European countries. Many meetings with western states leaders were organised in order to strengthen the image of a “rehabilitated Libya”, along with many cooperation and economic treaties signed. The most important for the purpose of this paper are the new relationships made with France and Italy in the first decade of the 21st century. For this reason, the discussion will proceed in two distinct sub-paragraphs, one for the Libya-France relationship and the other for the Libya-Italy ones.

Before starting, it is important to say that often the relationship of Libya with foreign actors develops through agreements regarding gas and oil. In fact, Libya is recognised as the country with the most flourish reserves of oil in Africa; the north African country was and still is the main country, up to US Energy Information Administration⁹, for what concerns the amount of petroleum reserves in Africa: in 2003 they amounted to 30 billion of barrels; the numbers increased to 39 in 2007 and to 48 from 2013 onwards, mostly because of discoveries of new oilfields. Regarding natural gas, in 2003 (and still now) Libya was the 4th African country for number of barrels of natural gas (46 billion). This huge amount of resources makes the export earnings of the country from oil and gas amount to the 69% of the total (OPEC)¹⁰; this is the reason why oil and international relations are so intertwined when discussing about Libya: a focus on the matter will be often provided during the paper arguments’ discussions.

1.1.1 LYBIA AND FRANCE IN THE 2000-2010 PERIOD

As said before, the foreign policy of the Gaddafi’s country in the begin of XXI century was one of reconciliation with the western powers, in order to secure Libya’s reputation in the international arena. One of the main interests was to strengthen the relationships with the trans-Mediterranean neighbours of France and Italy, who were mostly interested on the Libyan situation due to the closeness of their oversea neighbour.

For what concerns France relationship with Libya it is necessary to stress that Libya has never had a colonial bond with France, excluding the brief mandate that France had over the southern region of Fezzan (1943-1951) after the demise of the Italian troops in the African campaign of WWII , and their relationship has not been so friendly until 2000. If we compare France with Italy, the interests of France in Libya in the past century have never been matched with a real leadership in exploiting the resources of the country, as Italy did, thanks mostly to ENI, from the 60’s of the last century. It could be said that France has preferred other areas for showing their influence and power; in Libya the interest was most on freezing the situation,

⁸ The name that the Libyan republic had during the presidency of Ghaddafi (1969-2011)

⁹ EIA report on crude oil reserves; <https://www.eia.gov/international/data/country/LBY>

¹⁰ OPEC, Libya country outlook; https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/166.htm

maintaining the incumbent affairs made at the birth of the republic and before¹¹. However, this behaviour does not mean that France preferred a regime of *laissez-faire*: it is well known the concern of France in the late 60's for the initiative of the Italian ENI president Enrico Mattei, for example¹¹.

The first French Leader to undertake an official voyage to Libya since 1951 (the last one was Vincent Auriol¹²) was the former president Jacques Chirac in 2004. He met Ghaddafi in a Bedouin tent, and the French leader said that the meeting had the aim of "turning the page on a past of painful memories"¹³. His visit followed the visits of UK and Germany's prime ministers Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroeder. At the meeting the two presidents were accompanied by 15 businessmen representing French enterprises, who made many affairs and agreements in Libya mostly on the oil sector: the country was considered "a promising market" by Chirac.

Surprisingly, the French President that showed a great will to build a strong relationship with Colonel Ghaddafi's country was Nicolas Sarkozy, Chirac successor. In July 2007, Sarkozy visited Ghaddafi in Tripoli for the first time of its term as French President (that began in May 2007); the roots of the meeting can be found in the release from the Libyan Government of 5 Bulgarian nurses and 1 Palestinian doctor that were accused of infecting hundreds of Libyan children with AIDS and sentenced to life imprisonment to be passed in the country's jails¹⁴. The case created great tensions between the EU and Libya; Sarkozy intention was to resolve the dispute in order to undertake more contracts and agreements with Ghaddafi for France's sake. As a matter of fact, among the others, contracts concerning the sale of weapons (the EU arms embargo was lifted just in 2003) from France to Libya worth of 296 million of dollars¹⁵ (New York Times), mostly concerning anti-tank missiles, as then confirmed by EADS (European Aeronautic Defence and Space), were signed along with a deal for creating new drinkable water through nuclear technology¹⁶. The declarations of Sarkozy were enthusiastic, as he said to be pleased that Libya wanted to return to the "concert of nations" and he would help them to succeed on that.

A second visit, this time from Ghaddafi to Sarkozy, was made in December 2007 in Paris. The visit was the first for the North African leader in France and created a great amount of critiques and condemnation, mostly from people who did not like to host as an hero a man

¹¹ M. Giro, *Così Roma e Parigi possono mettersi d'accordo nell'Africa Settentrionale*. In "Dalle Libie all'Algeria. Affari nostri", Limes Rivista italiana di geopolitica, 2019, n.6: pag 208-9

¹² 16th President of the Republic of France

¹³ BBC, *France rebuilds ties with Libya*, 25th Nov 2004; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4037267.stm>

¹⁴ BBC, *HIV medics released to Bulgaria*, 24th Jul 2007; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6912965.stm>

¹⁵ New York Times, *EADS confirms an arms deal with Libya*, by N.Clark and S.Castle, 3rd Aug 2007; <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/03/business/worldbusiness/03iht-libya.4.6978620.html>

¹⁶ Times of Malta, *Sarkozy meets Gaddafi in Tripoli*, 26th Jul 2007; <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/sarkozy-meets-gaddafi-in-tripoli.10105>

who was addicted to violations of human rights; some of them came even from Sarkozy's executive, like the case of Rama Yade, the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights¹⁷. Besides that, there was the chance of signing other contracts worth 4,5 billion dollars, who added to the expected 10 billion worthy contracts signed in July, as reported by Time¹⁸. One of these contracts, a sale of 21 Airbus airplanes that was paid 3,2 billion from Libya will be the only one to be honoured and brought to a concrete realisation before 2011¹⁹. It has been reported by L'Express that the other contracts have remained death letter until the conflict that caused the destitution and death of Ghaddafi²⁰. This refusal to commit to the previous obligation, that was never justified but is typical of the uncertain behaviour of the Libyan leader, has produced a loss of 11,2 Billion dollars of expected contracts who had not been signed or paid. It is important to stress that an occurrence like that is a damage for the international reputation of the French government and diplomacy. As a matter of fact, many other states enjoyed the signing of several contracts, of whom the oil related one are the most profitable. In 2005, the US oil companies came back in business with Libya²¹, after 19 years of "exile", claiming and obtaining a major role in the Libyan production of oil: many concession for hydrocarbons and gas were given to the US from the Great *Jamahiriyah*. In fact, the French state company Total in 2010 was only the 7th foreign producer of oil in the country with a small 2,6% of total share of oil: the leader of this ranking was and is still now the Italian ENI, with 14%, followed by the American Marathon (12%), Austrian *Österreichische Mineralölverwaltung* (OMV) with 10%, Russian Gazprom (7,8%) and two other American enterprises, Hess and Conoco-Phillips, with respectively 5 and 3,3% of total production of oil and gas. It is important to note how the American enterprises in just few years have undertaken important affairs in the country. Considering exports of Libyan oil, France ranked 10th in the ranking of exporting countries²². These rankings change rapidly as the oil market is one with great competition and big economic interests, with many actors entering the market: many Chinese and Russian companies stepped into the Libyan market in the late 2010's, along with Spanish Repsol and British Petroleum²³. Moreover, they are important in order to stress the role that France had in Libya before the 2011 conflict; this role

¹⁷ Le Parisien, *Rama Yade: « La France n'est pas un paillason »*, by N.Segaunes and H.Vernet, 10th Dec 2007 <http://www.leparisien.fr/archives/rama-yade-la-france-n-est-pas-un-paillason-10-12-2007-3291409068.php>

¹⁸ Time, *When Sarkozy Met Gaddafi*, by B.Crumley, 10th Dec 2007; <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1693121,00.html>

¹⁹ Les clés du Moyen Orient, *De la normalisation de la politique étrangère Libyenne à la révolution et l'intervention de l'Otan*, by N.Klingelschmitt, 29th Apr 2019; <https://www.lesclesdumoyenorient.com/De-la-normalisation-de-la-politique-etrangere-libyenne-a-la-revolution-et-l-2888.html>

²⁰ L'Express, *Qu'a rapporté la visite de Kadhafi à la France?*, by M.Veron, 22nd Feb 2011; https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/qu-a-rapporte-la-visite-de-kadhafi-a-la-france_965242.html

²¹ The Library of Congress/ C.M Blanchard, *Libya: Background and U.S. Relations*. Lulu.com, 2013: pag 10

²² N.Amuer, *La Libye entre les intérêts de l'Occident et la résistance de Kadhafi*. In *Outre-Terre*, Ghazipur Publications, 2011, n 29: pag 299-308

²³ I. Tremolada, *Nel mare che ci unisce*. Mimesis, 2015: pag 44

is not a role of leadership as said and the affair concerning the contracts that remained dead letter just exacerbated such a position. France before 2011 had few to gain from Libya compared to other nations.

To come up with a conclusion, France did not benefit from the newly available Libyan market and this added to a feeling of having a weak diplomacy. This diminished Mediterranean power has been recognised as one of the causes of the great interest of France in the 2011 Unified Protector mission, aiming to overtake Ghaddafi and ensuring a new political framework to the country. These facts will be discussed in the second paragraph of this chapter.

1.1.2 LIBYA AND ITALY IN THE 2000-2010 PERIOD

The relationship between Italy and Libya are old and go back to the first colonial claims of the former Kingdom of Italy. Since the Italian-Turkish war of 1912 Italy occupied the regions of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the two coastal regions of the state nowadays known as Libya, a name that was given during the Italian occupation. The territorial leadership on the region was weakened by many local and tribal uprisings that made impossible to hold full control of Cyrenaica and mostly Fezzan until 1934, when finally the *Governatorato Generale della Libia* was issued. Italy will control the region as long as WWII. It is important to say that from 1947 Italy was marginalised in Libya, also due to the French and British mandate in the country, but the diplomacy of the Italian republic tried to improve its position, thanks mostly to the effort of ENI²⁴ (that started its activity in Libya in 1959) and the enlightened presidency of Enrico Mattei. The ban of the Italian community from Libya in 1970, decided by Ghaddafi who took power just one year before, was an obstacle in the relations between the two countries but the economic activities were able to go on and prosper. The relations in the second half of the century had been fluctuating, but the interests of Italy and of ENI continued whatever the struggle between Ghaddafi and the international community.

On the political field, one of the issues that always created tensions between the two parties and often gave to the *Ra'is* an excuse for threatening the affairs between the two has been the matter of the compensation from Italy to Libya for the crimes that colonisation brought to the north African country. Many meetings and agreements have been theorised since the 50's, but none could find a fair conclusion for the problem. The last of this series of efforts in order to come up with a solution of the problem was the so called *Comunicato Congiunto* (Joint Public Statement) Dini-Mountasser; the memorandum, made by the Ministers of Foreign affairs of the two countries, Lamberto Dini and Omar Al-Mountasser, referred to the responsibility of the Italian Republic for the damage brought by the

²⁴ I. Tremolada, pag 141

colonization and aimed to repair for that, offering compensation for the injured objects and persons, mostly due to bombings and mines in the fields: a proposal for clearing these field was also present. Moreover, a mixed Italian and Libyan company was foreseen, with public and private Italian enterprises; in exchange, Italy claimed the possibility to come back for the people obliged to leave the African country in 1970²⁵. Although the enthusiastic sensations of the Italian government, the agreement did not find concrete application, giving room to Ghaddafi to use the question of colonial compensation for future polemic debate because of the rights that the former colonizer was not conceding.

However, the missed chance of détente did not bring an escalation of tensions between the two countries: the agreement seemed to have been just delayed. A major reason is the eagerness of the Libyan leader to make new bonds with the western countries, as said before. Italy tried again to get close, in the political and diplomatic field, to Libya in two other occasions, in 2004 and 2008.

The former consisted in the visit of Ghaddafi in Brussels in 2004²⁶, invited by the then president of the commission, Romano Prodi, former PM of Italy. The visit was the first in Europe in 15 years for the North African leader, and the opinion was that a new agreement was up to be signed. However, the visit was the first of a series of meetings, in the same year, of Ghaddafi with many European leaders, as said in the previous sub-paragraph: he met Chirac, Schroeder and Blair among the others. The Italian leaders were afraid to lose their prominent role in the country, due to the increased openness of other actors in Libya, and of the possible economic and political interests following from that: Ghaddafi would have exploited all the chances of growth for his economic and political influence worldwide, coming from different actors. By the way, the Italy-Libya economic cooperation was flourishing, as will be said afterwards, but the uncertainty of the behaviour of the Libyan colonel obliged to find new ways and means in order not to lose the relationship with him and secure the Italian affairs in the Mediterranean country. A first proposal was to build an hospital as a gift from Italy to Libya, but Ghaddafi demanded more and, in the end, the proposed solution was the construction of an highway from the Tunisian border of Libya to the Egyptian one; the project and the realisation of the infrastructure would have been funded entirely by the Italian government. Up to the 2011 conflict just a small treat of the highway had been built²⁷.

²⁵ G. Rossi, *La collaborazione culturale tra l'Italia e la Libia oggi*, in: "Rivista di studi politici internazionali", n.266, 2000: pag 295-297

²⁶ K. Mezran, *Il segreto di Gheddafi*. In "Il Mare Nostro è degli altri", Limes Rivista italiana di Geopolitica, 2009, n 6: pag 1

²⁷ Il sole 24 ore, *La maledizione della «via Balbia»*, by G.Pelosi, 26th Aug 2011; <https://st.ilssole24ore.com/art/notizie/2011-08-26/maledizione-balbia-064013.shtml?uuid=AaJ484yD>

The latter occasion, with which an agreement finally came out for the colonization matter, is the Treaty of Benghazi of 2008, officially known as “Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation” between the Great Libyan *Jamahiriya* and the Italian Republic. The treaty was signed in August 2008 and ratified in February 2009 by the Italian Republic. Behind the realisation of the treaty it is evident the good relationship between Ghaddafi and the PM Silvio Berlusconi, even if it was more artificial and interest-rooted than real²⁸. The content of the Treaty is about a clear program of investments and mutual support between the two countries, different if compared to the vagueness of the 10 years before *Comunicato Dini-Mountasser*. The first 7 articles of the treaty refer to the provision of mutual aid and collaboration between the two country, along with non-interference in internal affairs; the articles from the 8th to the 23rd refer to the specific agreements that will arise between the two parts²⁹. The most important point, in article 8, refers to the amount of 5 billion USD that Italy will invest in infrastructural projects in Libya, in a 20 years span. The following articles refer to the establishment of a mixed commission that will coordinate the bilateral relationship, along with provisions about the collaboration (articles 14-23 of the treaty) in the energetic, economic, cultural, scientific, defence and police sectors. The treaty re-enforces the provisions of the 1998 *Comunicato* for example through article 11, about the readmission of people banned from Libya in 1970. In conclusion, the Benghazi Treaty is announced as the Successor of the 1998 one.

The feeling of a good friendship between Berlusconi and Ghaddafi, resulting in good affairs for both countries, was confirmed by the many official visits of Ghaddafi in Italy, the first being in Rome in 2009 and then in L’Aquila in 2009 during the meeting of G8; in 2010 another visit occurred, because of the FAO general meeting. The visit in Rome made possible the integration of the 2008 treaty with four other Memoranda,³⁰ even though created a huge debate due to the triumphal hospitality that was conceded to the Libyan leader. The debate was hard, but the convenience of these visits is undeniable.

In addition to the bilateral agreements made between the two countries, it is also beneficial for the analysis of the relations of Libya and Italy, here before 2011, a focus in the affairs of the Italian private enterprises undertaken in Libya, as has been made with France; with no doubt, the interests of the private sector always has reflections in the public sphere of a state. Here the private agreements arisen in the 2000-2010 will be cited briefly, but in chapter

²⁸ C. Gazzini, *Berlusconi-Gheddafi la vera storia di una strana coppia*. In “*Berlusconi nel mondo*”, Limes Rivista italiana di Geopolitica, 2010, n 6

²⁹ Legge 6 febbraio 2009, n. 7, “Ratifica ed esecuzione del Trattato di amicizia, partenariato e cooperazione tra la Repubblica Italiana e la Grande Giamahiria araba libica popolare socialista, fatto a Bengasi il 30 agosto 2008”

³⁰ Repubblica, *Gheddafi a Roma con l'eroe anti-coloniale*, 10 Jun 2009;

<https://www.repubblica.it/2009/06/sezioni/esteri/gheddafi-italia/gheddafi-visita/gheddafi-visita.html>

3 the focus will be exclusively on French and Italian enterprises operating in Libya. That said, the most important achievements for the Italian enterprises in Libya will be discussed.

First, regarding the energetic sector, the most important result of the activity of ENI in the country may be found in the realisation of the Greenstream pipeline. It is 520 km long and connects the Compression Central of Mellitah (Libya) with the Gas Reception Terminal of Gela (Sicily): it can transfer 8 billion m³ of natural gas per year.³¹ The pipeline is the result of the work of the Western Libyan Gas Project, a 50-50 participation joint venture, established in 1999, between the Italian ENI and the National Oil Corporation (NOC) of Libya, the state company that controls the oil firms of the country. ENI quota of the Greenstream project amounted initially to 75% but was reduced to 50% in 2010 (in order to give a fair share to NOC)³². Greenstream is the most important infrastructure for the transport of natural gas from Libya. In 2007, ENI signed an agreement with NOC in order to extend the contracts of the 6 concessions in the country up to 2042 for what concerns oil and up to 2047 for natural gas³³. Outside the energetic sector, the list of Italian enterprises operating in Libya in the 2000-2010 period is pretty long; among these there is Finmeccanica (now called Leonardo), that made good affairs through its connected societies, Augusta Westland and Ansaldo STS (now Hitachi Rail STS), the former operating in aeronautics and the latter in railways. In specific, Augusta Westland signed an agreement that would have produced the building of a factory for the assembling of helicopters plus a sale of 5 new helicopters³⁴, while Ansaldo STS obtained a concession worth 541 million euros for signal devices and telecommunication systems in the Libyan railways³⁵. Other Italian enterprises operating in Libya are Alitalia, Saipem, Telecom, Grimaldi among the others.

The Italian affairs present in Libya often needed to be counterbalanced with concessions to the Libyan partner; for this reason, it is important to note that many Italian firms had an amount of stocks held by societies tied with the Libyan government and the person of Ghaddafi, along with banks and investment funds. In more detail, among the governmental shares of Italian companies, in the period under analysis, Libyan funds held 5% of Unicredit, 7.5% of Juventus F.C (reduced to 1.5% few time after), 0.572% of ENI (worth 400 million

³¹ Comunicato Stampa Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi, 7th Oct 2004; <http://www.euroborsa.it/pdf/eni0117-59-2004.pdf>

³² Il sole 24 ore, *Le incognite sul gasdotto che nessuno ci può togliere*, by F.Rendina, 25th Aug 2011; <https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2011-08-25/incognite-gasdotto-nessuno-togliere-063850.shtml?uuiid=AaQ2hoyD>

³³ Comunicato Stampa ENI, 16th Oct 2007; <http://www.euroborsa.it/pdf/en0117-72-2007.pdf>

³⁴ Il sole 24 ore, *La Libia punta su Finmeccanica. Allo studio maxi-alleanza*, by M.Monti, 5th Jul 2009; <https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnLine4/Finanza%20e%20Mercati/2009/07/Libia-Finmeccanica-difesa-joint-venture.shtml?uuiid=19cb70ee-6963-11de-8c96-0772bb73edf5>

³⁵ Repubblica, *Ansaldo Sts, in Libia lavori per 541 milioni*, 23rd Jul 2009; <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2009/07/23/ansaldo-sts-in-libia-lavori-per-541.html>

euros) and 2.01% of Finmeccanica.³⁶ In a way, the influence of Italy in Libya came along with an influence of Libya in the Italian private sector.

The relationship between the two countries have brought mutual advantages in the analysed period, and the framework of partnership that had been created was universally seen as beneficial. Italy before 2011 held great influence in the Libyan scenario, while France was a sort of secondary actor in the field (although holding many contracts and agreements as well). The conflict was a bolt from the blue for the equilibria of the country, and its occurrence itself has been seen as a way to reshuffle things in Libya. This, that is one of the main questions to be answered by this paper, will be discussed in the next chapter.

1.2 THE 2011 CONFLICT: THE ROLE OF FRANCE AND ITALY

A great turmoil begun in 2011, in many north African and middle east countries, caused by an escalation of demands for civil rights and a more democratised society in many Arab states. The process is well known as Arab Spring, and many dictatorial and hybrid states of the area would be affected by it. Libya is among these, and it will experience great tensions and finally a civil conflict that in the end will cause the defeat and removal and the sudden death of Ghaddafi. The focus of the paragraph, for the purposes of this paper, will be on the role of France and Italy in the conflict, along with other actors, and most importantly in the new leadership and the new relationship created by it with the two countries.

As said, a movement demanding more rights, a more democratic form of government and less censorship over the media arose in Libya like many neighbouring countries (Egypt or Tunisia) and many other Arab nations. The uprising of the Libyan protesters was fuelled by the violent repression of the Libyan governmental troops against the first protests in the early 2011. The indiscriminate shootings operated by the Libyan army and police and the engagement of mercenaries³⁷ in order to suppress the revolt with more violence caused a great concern of the international community, firstly through NGOs like Human Rights watch or Amnesty International³⁸; then, also foreign states withdrew their support to the regime and condemned the management of the situation by the Ghaddafi government.

The turning point that made possible the foreign intervention in the Libyan conflict can be found in two resolutions of the UNSC, 1970 and 1973; both were proposed by France and the UK and made possible the following armed intervention by the western states in Libya, first autonomously and then under the coordination of NATO (operation Unified Protector).

³⁶ I. Tremolada, *Nel mare che ci unisce*; pag 16-18

³⁷ Al-Jazeera, *Gaddafi vows to crush protesters*, 28th Feb 2011;
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/02/2011225165641323716.html>

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Libya: Security Forces Fire on 'Day of Anger' Demonstrations*, 17th Feb 2011;
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/02/17/libya-security-forces-fire-day-anger-demonstrations>

Resolution 1970, along with expressing the concern of the UNSC for the repression and the violations of human rights perpetrated by the Ghaddafi's soldiers, imposed an embargo on the weapons coming in Libya from outside, a freezing on Libyan assets abroad and a travel ban³⁹; the arms embargo is still present (2020), even though several violations have been denounced over the years⁴⁰. After the noncompliance of Libya to the extent of the resolution and the worsening of the conflict with protestors that started to become rebels, creating the NTC (National Transitional Council) in order to guide the revolt against Ghaddafi, the UNSC strengthened the content of Resolution 1970 through the implementation of the Resolution 1973 in March 17; the latter resolution imposes a no-fly zone over the Libyan airspace and allows member states and regional organizations, independently but in cooperation with the UN Secretary General, to enforce the no-fly zone and the arms embargo as long as consenting to intervene in order to avoid violence over the civilian population of the Libyan *Jamahiriyah*⁴¹. France will be the first to start military interventions, through air strikes against military vehicles and strategic sites, on March 19, just 2 days after the UNSC Resolution allowed to intervene. Moreover, UK and USA started joint missions the day after, followingly called Operation Odyssey Dawn, using cruise missiles launched by submarines operating in the Mediterranean Sea⁴².

Italy would have preferred to avoid involvement in the military intervention; the PM Berlusconi did not want to "betray" the person that has been portrayed as a friend of him by the media and, in addition, was scared of losing the leadership on the energetic sector whether a new leadership would have overthrown Ghaddafi⁴³, as reported by the former ambassador Stefano Stefanini. The Italian President of the republic Giorgio Napolitano, on the contrary, has been considered strongly convinced of the necessity of undertaking a military attack against Ghaddafi, and pushed for its realisation; the President of the Republic is also the head of the Italian armed forces, even if a military intervention needs the approval of the executive. Berlusconi opinion was alimented also by the fact that one of the articles of the Benghazi Treaty of 2008 clearly expressed non-interference in internal affairs between the two nations, so Berlusconi would have not complied to a treaty that was so desired by him and brought so many advantages to the economy of his country. However, once the military intervention of the UN countries was allowed Italy did not want to remain the only western power to step

³⁹ UNSC, 26th Feb 2011, Resolution 1970

⁴⁰ ISPI, *Libia: se l'Onu getta la spugna*, 3rd Mar 2020; <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/libia-se-lonu-getta-la-spugna-25306>

⁴¹ UNSC, 17th Mar 2011, Resolution 1973

⁴² BBC, *Libya: US, UK and France attack Gaddafi forces*, 20th Mar 2011; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12796972>

⁴³ La Stampa, *Così decidemmo la missione contro Gheddafi*, by Stefano Stefanini, 13th Aug 2017 <https://www.lastampa.it/opinioni/editoriali/2017/08/13/news/cosi-decidemmo-la-missione-contro-gheddafi-1.34431222>

aside from intervention and offered great logistic support; as a matter of fact, Italy provided many military bases, like Sigonella, Trapani Birgi and Gioia del Colle ones, both for Italy's airplanes operations and for hosting foreign military Airplanes and troops⁴⁴. Also, the Italian navy was deployed in front of the Libyan shores⁴⁵. The Italian support was important, even if it was among the countries unwilling or at least uncertain to proceed with a military intervention, along with others like Germany that abstained from voting resolution 1973 and participating to the consequent military effort.

Italy could not refuse to align with others' intention to impede the repression of rebels by Ghaddafi; the will of remaining in good terms with the allies and the organizations like the UN and NATO (which importance in the operation will be relevant) was recognised as essential. Moreover, if Italy would have not participated, the creation of bonds with the new leadership that succeeded Ghaddafi would have been much more difficult, as NTC would have given privilege to whom supported them to get rid of 42 years of regime. In fact, Italy will be the third country to recognise officially the NCT as the legitimate ruler of the country.⁴⁶

From March 25 NATO decided to reunite the single NATO states active operations (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States) under its responsibility. Operation Unified Protector started and included the external support of non-NATO countries like Sweden, Qatar, UAE and Jordan⁴⁷. The support and interest of Arab states has been relevant, also in the nowadays ongoing conflict. The rebellion against the Libyan *ra'is* probably would not have succeeded without this international support⁴⁸, as the rebels had not as much military strength as Ghaddafi's troop; the continue pressure and sabotage against Libyan military targets was essential.

After some balance, with many win and losses on both Ghaddafi and NTC sides, in August the rebels took much terrain and conquered Tripoli. Many generals and ministers loyal to Ghaddafi defected and joined the rebels' side, along with many Cyrenaic and Fezzan tribes, that have also been much influent but have been controlled by Ghaddafi mostly thanks to the oil and gas earnings redistribution⁴⁹. The demise of Ghaddafi was inevitable. On October 20,

⁴⁴ Ministero della difesa, *Contributo Aeronautica Militare all'Operazione Nato 'Unified Protector'*; <http://www.difesa.it/Content/Pagine/ContributoAeronauticaMilitare.aspx>

⁴⁵ Ministero della difesa, *Operazione "Unified Protector"*; http://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Pagine/UnifiedProtector.aspx

⁴⁶ M.Ceccorulli and F.Coticchia, *Multidimensional Threats and Military Engagement: The Case of the Italian Intervention in Libya*, In "Mediterranean Politics", n 20:3, Abingdon-on-Thames, Routledge, 2015: pag 315,

⁴⁷ NATO, Operation, *UNIFIED PROTECTOR Protection of Civilians and Civilian-Populated Areas & Enforcement of the No-Fly Zone*, October 2011 report

⁴⁸ R. Erdag, *Libya in the Arab Spring*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017: Pag 32

⁴⁹ L.Bellodi, *Chi (non) controlla il petrolio (non) controlla la Libia*. In "Dalle Libie all'Algeria. Affari nostri", Limes Rivista italiana di geopolitica, 2019, n.6: pag 146

after the conquer of Sirte, Ghaddafi was captured and killed in an extremely violent way: the 42 years lasting hegemony over Libya was over.

As said before Italy was obliged to participate in a military intervention that was decided by others. The risk of losing terrain in comparison to actors which have contributed actively to the establishment of a new Libya was too dangerous: the Italian intervention was the only possible action. On the other hand, the role of France was much more active and France can be defined as the initiator of the process that brought to the military intervention; it is so necessary to analyse the actions of France in 2011 and try to understand the reasons of such interest in dethrone Ghaddafi.

The first thing to consider, as stressed in the previous paragraph, is the will of rehabilitating the influence of France in North Africa and in the perception of the French diplomacy in general. The international reputation of France as a whole surely improved as it succeeded on making other nations intervene, through the proposal at the UN Security Council that gave room to the intervention of NATO in the country. The scepticism of many nations (USA, Turkey, Italy etc.), expressed in the early stages of the repression of protesters in Libya in February, was overcome. The fact that China and Russia, that had no clear interest on deposing the regime of Ghaddafi also due to the increasing activism on the energetic sector in Libya in the years before, just abstained from voting resolution 1973 without vetoing them is interesting, as it expresses a tacit consent to the operation from both nations. France was leading, or at least initiating, an international military intervention for the first time since the Suez crisis of 1956. PM Nicolas Sarkozy probably was very pleased of this role.

The political matter is relevant, but also the economic question should be underlined, and maybe is more important in order to find a rationale behind the will of France and Sarkozy to depose Ghaddafi. The first thing to be considered are the economic affairs signed in 2007 but never honoured by the Libyan *Jamahiriya*. Sarkozy might have been concerned and even upset for the opportunity lost by his state and for the uncertainty of the actions of the Libyan leader, with whom now seemed impossible to have any new agreement for the French diplomatic machine. Nevertheless, French state-owned company Total accomplished many successes on signing agreements with NOC, two concessions in the Marzuq basin⁵⁰ and many exploration agreements. The activism of Total in Libya was rising; Tremolada even considers Total to be the second major oil operator in Libya⁵¹ before the uprising of the conflict ; the rankings about the oil sectors are often fluctuating, both for revenues and exports, providing that a company can gain higher ranks even with the acquisition of one concession.

⁵⁰Total, *Signature d'un accord avec la compagnie pétrolière libyenne NOC*, 17th Jul 2007
<https://www.total.com/fr/medias/actualite/communiqués/signature-dun-accord-avec-la-compagnie-petroliere-libyenne-noc-pour-le-renouvellement-des-contrats>

⁵¹ Tremolada, pag 41

By the way, Total was trying to find a prominent role in the Libyan market. Sarkozy may have wanted to reach the leadership of the sector, and great debate has been made about some possible secret agreements between NTC and the French executive. A scoop was reported by the French newspaper *Liberation* on September 1, and pointed out that Total would be awarded the 35% of total production of crude oil as an award for the support in the conflict and for the recognition of the NTC by France; as a matter of fact, on March 10 the French government will be the first to recognise the NTC as the legitimate ruler of the country, before Qatar and Italy doing so in April and many others since July. The source of the journal was a message whose address was the cabinet of the emir of Qatar, whose mediation seemed to be behind the affair⁵².

The news was denied both from NTC Media Coordinator Mahmoud al-Shammam and Alain Juppé, French foreign minister; however, Juppé added that, even though the document was false, France expected and knew that France would receive favourable attention from NTC once the conflict was finished, along with the countries that mostly pushed for intervention (e.g Great Britain)⁵³. The agreement seems a bit fictional, because the newly appointed Libyan government would have had the burden of annulling contracts with other foreign companies in order to give this share of production to Total; given the high competition in the sector, and the fact that an interference of the host state (Libya) in the market of energy would cause uncertainty in the said market and troubles that will be related to the remaining 65% share; some companies might have decided to invest in other countries because of the possible distrust toward the north African state, and a lower competition may cause a lower revenue for the State itself.

Some observers pointed out that the French interest in the war was also motivated by a will to get closer to some Arab nations, but this intended outcome was not fulfilled, as major players like Saudi Arabia decided to not participate and the participation of Qatar and UAE did not brought privileged contacts with those countries. On the other hand, the war worsened the relations with Morocco and Algeria, important French partners in the region, because of the escalation of tensions in the region and the flow of refugees that from Libya reached nearby countries, mostly Algeria due to the border between the two countries⁵⁴.

Italy tried to not stay behind through the initiative of the then CEO of Eni Paolo Scaroni; the Italian manager on April 3 was the first Italian to take a direct contact with the NTC. The intention was to secure good relationship either with the rebels and the regime, in order to

⁵² *Liberation, Pétrole : l'accord secret entre le CNT et la France*; by V.De Filippis, 1st Sep 2011; https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2011/09/01/petrole-l-accord-secret-entre-le-cnt-et-la-france_758320

⁵³ The Guardian, *The race is on for Libya's oil, with Britain and France both staking a claim*, 1st Sep 2011; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/01/libya-oil>

⁵⁴ F.Heisbourg, *The War in Libya: political rationale for France*. In *“Political rational and international consequences of the war in Libya”*, by D.Henriksen and A.K Larssen. Oxford Un. Press, 2016

hold the agreements signed previously; Scaroni pointed out that that was the good moment to show support to the NTC, but the outcome of the conflict, whoever the final winner, would never cause the expiring of the contracts stipulated with Ghaddafi: the clauses present in the agreements restraint the possible un-compliance of themselves⁵⁵. The main rationale behind this was the will of ensuring the normal flow of gas and oil coming from Libya through the Greenstream pipeline, amounting to a 6% of the Italian⁵⁶ energetic requirements. The meeting was confirmed in August by an agreement between Berlusconi and the president of the NTC Muhamad Jibril in Milan; the NTC was almost becoming the winner of the conflict and Italy wanted to secure its position. A memorandum of understanding was signed, which provided the de-freezing of the Libyan assets in Italy, a transfer of 350 million € to the NTC for the reconstruction of many gas installations damaged by the armed conflict; Italy wanted to push for the restart of the production mostly of Natural gas, harder to transport⁵⁷.

On September 1 France responded to the new Italy-NTC agreement by releasing 1,6 billion € of Libyan assets in France; the day coincides with the publication of the scoop concerning the presumed affair between NTC and France regarding favours to Total. The NTC was recognised by almost all the western countries by the end of 2011, and in these early stages it was premature to ascertain who has benefited most by the overthrow of Ghaddafi.

The first two foreign companies to restart production in Libya, interestingly for our research, are Total and ENI. Total on September 23 restarted production in the al-Jurf offshore platform, operated by Total but with a 37,5% share (NOC holds 50% and Wintershall the remaining 12,5%)⁵⁸. ENI responded restarting, on September 26⁵⁹, the production of 15 wells in the Abu-Attifel field, the first site discovered by ENI in 1960. Both companies, and along with the other foreign firms operating in the North-African country, restarted production at a lowered pace and it took some years even to get closer to pre-crisis levels of production. In the end, no clear actor, both among states and state-companies, seemed to have gained an advantage from the conflict, and this outcome could be checked only in the long run period.

Libya turned the “Ghaddafi page” and a new era started in 2011. However, the conflicts and tensions in the country did not finish, along with the different interests and political agenda of France and Italy. The new equilibria in the post war period are going to be analysed in the next chapter.

⁵⁵ Corriere della Sera, *Eni: Scaroni, da aprile ponte con la nuova Libia*, 24th Aug 2011; https://www.corriere.it/notizie-ultima-ora/Economia/Eni-Scaroni-aprile-ponte-nuova-Libia-Corriere-della-Sera/24-08-2011/1-A_000239767.shtml

⁵⁶ L.Pistelli, *Energia dal Nordafrica*. In “Dalle Libie all’Algeria. Affari nostri”, Limes Rivista italiana di geopolitica, 2019, n.6: pag 226

⁵⁷ Corriere della sera-Esteri, *Berlusconi incontra Jibril: «Pronti 350 milioni di euro per l'emergenza»*, by B.Argenterì, 25th Aug 2011; https://www.corriere.it/esteri/11_agosto_25/libia-incontro-berlusconi-jibril_994e0ba8-cf12-11e0-9639-95c553466c70.shtml

⁵⁸ G.Pelosi, A.Varvelli, *Democrazia e petrolio nella nuova Libia*. Fazi, 2012: pag 115

⁵⁹ Reuters, *ENI restarts production at Abu-Attifel field*, 26th Sep 2011; <https://www.reuters.com/article/eni-libya/eni-restarts-production-at-abu-attifel-field-idUSL5E7KQ1EY20110926>

CHAPTER 2

The post-2011 period: the clash between France and Italy, their interests and the role of other international actors.

Once that the causes and the historical events that have brought to the end of the Ghaddafi's regime have been explained, along with the interests and ambitions of France and Italy in the country, it is now possible to analyse the period that goes from 2011 to the present day. This will be the purpose of this chapter. The point of view of the research will be always on France and Italy, but the list of events that occurred on the internal Libyan leadership is important in order to understand the alliances of international actors with local ones. The relations of power and the international support to the various fronts will be fundamental in the development of this chapter.

Before starting, it is important to say that the chapter will be divided in two paragraphs, each referring to two periods of time; the first will refer to the early post Ghaddafi period until the Skhirat Agreement in December 2015, and some months after that, and will analyse the first confused stage of the new conflict, with many factions and actors involved. The second paragraph will analyse the period from the beginning of 2016 until today (early 2020) and will analyse mostly the clash between Fayeze al-Sarraj and Khalifa Haftar factions, and their supporters (focusing mostly to France and Italy). The latter paragraph is with no doubt more interesting for the purpose of this paper; as a matter of fact, in this period the diversified choices and agenda of France and Italy gives the chance of a wide discussion about the reasons and the interest that drove one or another political direction. However, the first part is as important as the second, because the roots of the situation that Libya is facing today come from the 2011-2015 period, and most of the occasions of economic rebuilt and dynamism started there. Like the previous chapter, the economic aspects will be always behind the discussion: without considering the economic affairs it is impossible to explain the relations of power in the Libyan scenario.

Many parts of this chapter may seem based on an historical framework; despite the fact that the purpose of this paper is not to consider the historical events that concerned Libya's internal affairs, the period underlined is very confusing and it is probably important to give a chronological succession of the events in order to understand better all the relations and actors that show up in the various stages of the period that is considered. This overview will be done in the beginning of each paragraph. The analysis of the relations of France and Italy will be briefly done accordingly, after the historical part.

2.1 FROM SIRTE TO SKHIRAT: THE EARLY POST-GHADDAFI PERIOD

This paragraph will be divided in two sub-paragraphs. The first will analyse the chronological succession of events that occurred from 2011 to the late 2015, while the second will analyse the actions undertaken by France, Italy and some other international actors. As pointed out in the introduction, a clear list of the events is needed in order to give an explanation of the situation of the nowadays conflict and because the period in analysis is tremendously confusing, and so a secondary effect of this paper's research is obtained: giving a brief summary of the events. The second sub-paragraph, on the contrary, will be devoted to things more related to the main objective of this research.

2.1.1 THE SUCCESSION OF EVENTS FROM 2011 TO 2015 IN LIBYA

The reconstruction of Libya after the so desired removal of Ghaddafi seemed to be a difficult path since the day one. This time span, that as said before is the first of two stages in which the second conflict within Libya has been divided for this paper's sake, is plenty of actors, events and actually a lot of confusion. The house of cards that Ghaddafi was able to build up in order to stabilize the country during his term in charge was teared down by the conflict that brought his leadership to an end, along with his life. The defections that occurred during this conflict by many factions loyal to him showed the political fragmentation of a country that seemed totally in the hands of Ghaddafi but, as many analysts recognised also before the conflict, was a melting pot of factions and tribes⁶⁰ that were kept calm by the advantages that the role of the leader of the Libyan revolution ensured to them. This multitude of actors was and probably is still the reason why a reconstruction and stabilization of the country is not possible without great compromises. For this reason, a brief overview of the most influent tribes is necessary as these actors are fundamental when trying to analyse the Libyan internal questions.

The tribes are divided firstly by their ethnic group, but also inside the same ethnic group there are a lot of different tribes and related militias; each tribe is associated to a portion of territory controlled militarily, giving little chance to its supervision by the central government. The most important tribe, amounting one million of members, is the Tripolitania based *Warfallah* tribe that has many members both in Tripoli and Benghazi. The tribes are often associated to the major cities (Benghazi, Misratah, Zintan etc) and often more than one tribe exist in the same city territory. The Zintan tribes are those that occupied Tripoli in 2011. In Benghazi, the local tribes' control was harmed by the rise of Islamism and Salafist tribes, and their role will be relevant also in the following stages. The Misratah tribes are the most

⁶⁰ C.Tinazzi, *Libia: la rivolta delle tribù*, Limes Rivista italiana di geopolitica, 24th Feb 2011

numerous and powerful city-related tribes and in the last years have been close to the al-Sarraj government; they are historical rivals to the Zintan ones.

These are some of the most important Arab-Berber tribes, but it is possible to find other ethnic group related tribes in different parts of Libya: those cited upon are just the ones associated to the most important northern cities, both in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Other tribes are the *Tuareg* ones, nomad people living in the south-west of the country, constantly in conflict with the *Tebu* Berber tribes, based in Fezzan like the Tuaregs; the role of these tribes is interesting as they control crucial areas for the country, those where there are the most important oil fields (Waha, Ghadames, al-Jurf etc). The last relevant faction is represented by the *Amazigh* tribes; *Amazigh* is the name with which Berbers call themselves; few “pure” Berber tribes control a relevant territory, mostly in small portions of the north-west of Tripolitania. However, the big Zintan tribes has mostly *Amazighs* among its members⁶¹.

The task of the NTC was difficult since the day one. The several militias had no intention to be controlled directly by the NTC, that wanted to create a national army in order to ensure national security; eventually the army, called Libyan National Army, was created but it could not take under its control most of the tribe militias. Many Ghaddafi-loyal factions still existed and fought against the Transition Government that was created, firstly guided by interim PM Mahmoud Jibril, and then by Abdulrahim El Keib in November; interestingly, the oil minister of his government before served as "chairman of the operator's management committee" for ENI⁶². The NTC tried to reconcile with some tribal factions, mostly Tuaregs and *Amazigh*, that in the 2011 civil war supported Ghaddafi.

However, the first real cracks in the legitimacy of the NTC came out in 2012. In January 2012, the Transition Council announced new elections, to be held in July. The new elections caused the end of the mandate of the NTC, that ceased its activity and dissolved. The new legislative body of Libya was the General National Congress, and Ali Zeidan became Libya's first elected Prime Minister. The new parliament was highly fragmented, but Zeidan gained a majority among moderate parties. Its' executive job will be enormously complicated.

As said, in 2012 tensions existing in the country exploded. The major issue that arose in 2012 and will be a constant until 2014 is the rise of Islamist movements and tensions created by them. Several factions started to create Islamist parties, represented in the GNC, aiming to establish *Sharia* along with terrorist fundamentalists groups, who started to be attracted from the Libyan vacuum of power in order to break in the country and gain a prominent role. No

⁶¹ Centro alti studi per la difesa, *Influenza geopolitica della Libia nel bacino mediterraneo*, in "68ª sessione di studio dell'Istituto Alti Studi per la Difesa", 2017: pag 36-61

⁶² Reuters, *Libya's NTC unveils new government line-up*, 22nd Nov 2011; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya/libyas-ntc-unveils-new-government-line-up-idUSTRE7ALOJM20111122>

affiliation or support existed between the Islamist parties and the fundamentalist factions and terrorist groups. The violent uprisings and protest were matched with criminal actions against both foreign and governmental actors; the event that mostly shocked the foreign powers, that had freed Libya from Ghaddafi's regime, was the killing of US ambassador Christopher Stevens, along with other 3 Americans, after an attack to the US consulate in Benghazi⁶³. The attack was made on the anniversary of 9/11 attacks, in 2012. The faction that was found guilty of that was *Ansar al-Sharia*. This Islamist group was the most important faction representing the extremist Salafists, before the ISIL appeared on the scene. The reaction of the international community was of concern and many diplomatic missions were suspended by the western states: UK and USA did it in 2014. The Italian embassy will be the only European one to stay open, but with many difficulties that in the end led to its closure in 2015⁶⁴.

The Islamist current that seemed predominant affected also the GNC; as a matter of fact, the Islamist parties gained the majority from the centrist ones. 2013 is the year were Libya seemed to fall under the Islamist powers' control. In June 2013, the politician Nouri Bousahmain, close to the cited parties, became the new president of the GNC, and in December a revised version of *Sharia* was imposed to Libya: the country main institution stepped into the hands of these factions, gathered in the LOTR group loyal to Bousahmain. A strong action occurred in March 2014 when the Libyan PM Zeidan was sacked by GNC due to his inability to impede the Tuareg tribes from selling oil autonomously; Zeidan represented the former centrist majority existing in the GNC⁶⁵. However, the assembly was compelled by its mandate to set up elections in July 2014.

Here, general Khalifa Haftar steps into the Libyan political scene with vehemence; on May 16 Haftar, former general of the Ghaddafi's army then passed to the rebel side in 2011, started "Operation Dignity". His aim was to retake important cities fell under Islamist rule, mostly Benghazi, whose violent scenario was neither considered by the central ruling body of the country; also non fundamentalist parties like the Muslim Brotherhood were considered terrorist by Haftar and his loyal troops, that actually corresponds to many troops of the Libyan National Army (LNA) and of the former Ghaddafian army. The second elections in two years for the country were made in this period of tension, when an open attack to the role of the anyway legitimate parliament was just made. The outcome of the elections saw a net loss of the Islamists, and the new parliament was called House of the Representatives and Tobruch was chosen as the seat of the newly elected parliament for reasons of security. Recognising

⁶³NY Times, *Libya Attack Brings Challenges for U.S.*, 12th Sep 2012;
<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/world/middleeast/us-envoy-to-libya-is-reported-killed.html>

⁶⁴Sole 24 ore, *Chiude l'ambasciata a Tripoli*, by G.Pelosi, 15th Feb 2015;
<https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/mondo/2015-02-15/chiude-ambasciata-tripoli-135628.shtml?uuid=ABEqNEvC>

⁶⁵Erdag, pag 34

the loss of influence resulting from the new legislature, the former majority parties refused to recognise the outcome of the elections and created a new parliament in Tripoli: they considered it the continuation of the previous, and so the Tripoli parliament was called “New GNC”. An armed conflict begun from this division between the nGNC oriented parties and the HoR that recognised Haftar as the leader of its army; here the LNA became the army loyal to the Tobruch parliament, and this allowed this chamber to claim for consideration in the following peace agreements because of the potential of its military forces. This conflict had immediate effect over the production of oil, and in the end of 2014 Tuareg and Misratah troops attacked and conquered the oil fields of Sharara, a great field co-owned by NOC and Repsol, from the *Tebu* tribes⁶⁶; as a reprisal the Zintan militias blocked the pipeline that departs from Sharara: it could transport 300000 barrels of oil per day. The city of Tripoli was immediately seized by Haftar allies like the Zintan itself, and many attacks, shootings and bombings happened in this phase, like the rest of the country. In October, a new obstacle to the two parliaments showed up: the Islamic State.

ISIL gained its first portion of territory when some terrorist cells in the city of Derna announced their affiliation to the terrorist group. This event alimented the fear of reviving in Libya the situation that yet happened in Syria and Iraq, where the IS succeeded on gaining relevant parts of territory. The rise of this third actor in the conflict determined a slowdown of the clash between the two rival parliaments, that recognised ISIS as a common enemy to be destroyed before setting their dispute. In February, the IS conquered the hometown of Ghaddafi, Sirte, and made several terrorist attacks and some of their sadly iconic beheadings of prisoners, shocking the international community. The feeling was of an incoming international mission aiming to defeat the IS; however, this did not happen. Italian PM Matteo Renzi said that Italy would not back another military intervention in the country⁶⁷.

A military operation actually happened; in May 2015 EU enhanced its first military mission, Operation Sophia (officially EUNAVFOR Med). However, the operation did not envisage a settlement of the conflict in the country between the two parliaments nor a strong action against ISIS. On the contrary, the operation’s aim was to enforce the scope of UNSMIL mission, issued by the UNSC, of ensuring the arms embargo issued in the early 2011 with the resolution cited in the previous chapter⁶⁸. The operation was necessary in order to control the uncontrolled flow of migrants coming from Libya that were not filtered by any Libyan body, due to the disorder of the country. Both Italy and France participated to the Operation through some of the war ships of their military fleet. This is a sign of the unwillingness of the

⁶⁶ Financial Times, *Libya’s civil war chaos draws in remote south*, by B.Daragahi, 4th Nov 2014; <https://www.ft.com/content/bcb1226e-62a9-11e4-aa14-00144feabdc0>

⁶⁷ Servizio studi del Senato, *Libia: una cronologia*, Nota Breve n 70, May 2015: pag 5

⁶⁸ UNSMIL, Mandate of the Mission, <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/mandate>

international community to do another military mission: the main purpose was to secure the southern border of the EU and try to afford the situation diplomatically. The only western country that still made air attacks in Libya were the US, making many raids against IS facilities, vehicles and individuals.

During this period, the highest fragmentation is reached and the need to centralise the power in the hands of a single body was indispensable. The New GNC was not legitimised by any state but held real power in Tripolitania and so a compromise between the two was needed in order to create a unique government. So, the late 2015 became the period of a cold reconciliation between the two parties, under the mediation of the UN. In October, the United Nations envoy for Libya, Bernardino Leon, announced that a national unity government was to be created⁶⁹. The designed Prime Minister was Fayeze al-Sarraj, a member of the Tobruk parliament, but representing the constituency of Tripoli, and former ministerial servant of the Ghaddafi's government. Sarraj can be seen as a person of compromise, being close to many parties in action; however, he is not a former military official, but an engineer and no army or tribal militia was loyal to him. By the way, in order to set the new government that would have overcome the clash between the two belligerent parliaments, a vote of confidence from both was needed.

The Italian diplomacy tried to capitalise the situation and gain some prestige through the organization of a conference in Rome on December 13. Representatives of the 5 permanent members of the UNSC were present, with also representatives of European states (Spain Italy Germany) and MENA states (UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey⁷⁰), along with the neighbours of Libya, that were very concerned of the Libyan situation and experienced negative effects on their internal affairs due to the instability of the country (E.G Mali after its civil war in 2012). The most relevant thing was that members of both parliaments were present, and they agreed on the proposal of appointing Sarraj as the new government's PM⁷¹. Great impulse for the realisation of the meeting came from the US, mostly with Secretary of State John Kerry, and by the Italian Government through its foreign minister Paolo Gentiloni.

The Rome Conference was followed by the Skhirat Agreement signed on December 17 at the Moroccan city of Skhirat; promoted by the Kingdom of Morocco, the agreement reaffirmed what has been said in Rome few days before. Signed by many members of the two parliaments, the Agreement established a nine members executive, with Sarraj as PM,

⁶⁹ The Guardian, *Libya national unity government announced by UN after months of talks*, 9th Oct 2015; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/09/libya-national-unity-government-announced-by-un-after-months-of-talks>

⁷⁰ Turkey is not always considered among the MENA countries

⁷¹ La Repubblica-Esteri, *Kerry a Roma: "Libia, governo di unità nazionale a Tripoli entro 40 giorni"*, 13th Dec 2015; https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2015/12/13/news/libia_kerry_a_roma_arrivano_anche_i_delegati_di_tobruk_e_tripoli-129371405/

supported by the legislative impetus of the House of Representatives in Tobruch as low chamber and another chamber to be voted as high chamber. The agreement was important as officially set the new Government of National Agreement, recognised by the United Nations as the only legitimate one⁷².

The path of the reconciliation in Libya seemed finally to be a clear, but the problems appeared soon; the newly formed government was not recognised by the presidents of both the HoR and the New GNC, Aguila Saleh Issa and Nouri Bousahmein. Sarraj had to propose a list of members to the two parliaments in order to legitimise itself. The House of Representatives refused and delayed all the possible proposals of Sarraj for many fictitious reasons. In the end, the GNA in March came to Tripoli to take office with a list of 18 members, proposed in February but rejected by the HoR. An important achievement was the support of 70 members of the New GNC, despite the unwillingness of its newly appointed president, Khalifa Ghwell⁷³. This endorsement led to the dissolution of the new GNC and its disappearance from the Libyan political scene: its members formed the Council of State, that in the Skhirat agreement was designed to be the high chamber of the new Libyan legislature⁷⁴.

The following step for the GNA was to find reconciliation with the HoR. As will be explained in the next paragraph, this will be impossible and a new conflict will arise between two parliaments: GNA versus HoR, Fayeze al-Sarraj versus Khalifa Haftar.

2.1.2 FRANCE AND ITALY IN THE 2011-2015 PERIOD AND THEIR AGENDA

The period from the end of the Ghaddafi regime until the contraposition between the Government of National Agreement and the House of Representatives is probably the less interesting for the sake of this paper. The reason behind is that the international community, with France and Italy behaving accordingly, was unanimously supporting the UN backed governments: first the “old” GNC, and then the first stages of the al-Sarraj executive. No relevant tensions stood between France and Italy, and the political debate did not consider an opposite road map for the strategy of the two countries, that will be so much different after that Sarraj took office in Tripoli. An important reason is that the leaders pushing for the military intervention were no more in charge in their nations; this is mostly true for Sarkozy, that lost the 2012 presidential election against Francois Hollande and could not be a part of the French role in the new Libya. Hollande’s main interest was to undertake a discreet attitude and not being linked with the consequences of the military intervention strongly desired by

⁷² Reuters, *Libyan factions sign U.N. deal to form unity government*, 17th Oct 2015; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-idUSKBN0U00WP20151217>

⁷³ ISPI, *Chaos in Libya: a background*; <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/chaos-libya-background-17108>

⁷⁴ Marsad Libya, *GNC members announce its “dissolution” and creation of the State Council*, 5th Apr 2016; <https://www.marsad.ly/en/2016/04/05/gnc-members-announce-dissolution-creation-state-council/>

his opponent Sarkozy. France started some low profile cooperation with Haftar, and so indirectly the HoR, mostly for special military operations since 2014 when, jointly with US and Algerine special forces, sent 3500 soldiers in order to attack the area, in the Ghadames basin, under the control of Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a terrorist leader close to *al-Qaeda*⁷⁵. This kind of actions might be seen as a preliminary entente between the two parties (Haftar and France), that, as will be analysed in the next paragraph, will end in a clear reciprocal support from 2016.

For what concerns the Italian side, Silvio Berlusconi resigned in 2011 and was succeeded by the technical government of Mario Monti until 2013 and then by the centre-left government of Enrico Letta. It has been already said before about the reserve from Berlusconi to participate in the 2011 conflict and of the external pressures that in the end made him do so anyway, mostly its advisors and the president of the republic Giorgio Napolitano, indicating that probably if he were still in charge the policies would not have differed much from the ones that actually were made by his successors. Monti and Letta attitudes were like the Hollande's one, and the Italian agenda coincided with the program set by the UN: firstly support to the GNC and secondly to an UN backed government was the common position, held not only by France and Italy but by all the international actors that were interested in the fate of the country.

Things changed a bit when Matteo Renzi became Prime Minister, that showed some interest in the matter. In the first stages, he pursued the same policies of the previous governments (its predecessor Letta came from the same political party and majority). He reaffirmed his loyalty to the plan of the UN of forming a unique government and pushed for the realisation of some conferences, like the 2015 Rome Conference along with Gentiloni. In 2016 he hosted a bilateral meeting in Venice with Hollande; the aim of this meeting was to find an agreement on the matter of *TAV*, the high-speed route that had to be established between Turin and Lyon. In addition, many issues that could be faced jointly were discussed, and the Libyan scenario was among these. The two leaders reaffirmed the importance of a national government and announced that they will cooperate in the patrolling and securitization of the southern frontier, mostly in the Libyan sector, that effected the two countries mostly because of the uncontrolled flows of migrants incoming⁷⁶. Operation Sophia was launched few months before and the line of the control of immigration rather than a strong action in the territory was still the preferred one. The meeting seemed to forecast the will of

⁷⁵ Laurence-Aïda Ammour, *L'Algeria vuole riunire la Libia*. In *"Dalle Libie all'Algeria. Affari nostri"*, Limes Rivista italiana di geopolitica, 2019, n.6: pag 73

⁷⁶ ANSA, *Vertice Italia-Francia a Venezia: Tav, Italia-Francia firmano protocollo per avvio lavori*, 10th Mar 2016; https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2016/03/08/vertice-italia-francia-a-veneziamanifestanti-no-grandi-navi-e-no-tav-su-barchini-respinti-con-getti-dacqua_f7844912-6054-4d22-859b-53aa05740c0e.html

a strong cooperation between the two states in order to overcome the tensions of the past. The Italian public opinion before blamed a lot the 2011 conflict and the French activism, so the Venice meeting intent was to show a good relationship between the two leaders that could signify a future without tensions between their nations. However, as will be pointed out in the next paragraph, the situation will be much different in the following months and years.

For what concerns the economical and investment side, the main purpose of the two countries, along with the many other foreign states' companies operating in Libya, was to secure the activities set before the 2011 conflict and try to restart their production. This is mostly relevant for what concerns oil and gas production, that experienced a great slowdown of output; at the end of 2015, after 4 years from the end of the conflict that overthrew Ghaddafi, the Libyan oil production fell to 362,000 barrels per day, 20 per cent of its 2011 level (NOC estimation). Two thirds of the said production were devoted to exports, so the international companies were highly affected by these losses⁷⁷. The exploration activities almost disappeared in this phase. The only thing that kept going was the cooperation of the foreign companies with the National Oil Corporation of Libya; despite many claims that it was under the influence of the Tobruch parliament, the Libyan oil corporation tried to stay impartial and to seek a resume of operations. The main issue was the fixing of many wells and facilities, that had to be restored in order to restart production at a relevant level. In addition, many oil fields were controlled by different militias, and fights between them had tremendous effects on the production (like the cited struggle between *Tuaregs* and *Tebu/Zintans*). ENI and Total were the first two companies to restart production, as said previously, and they tried to reach a pre-war level of production. However, this would have been impossible mostly because of the unsafe environment that has been created for economic activities. The period from 2012 to 2016 has been extremely negative also in economic terms, with Libyan GDP decreasing exponentially. New possible French and Italian investments in the country seemed to be pointless, and this pattern applies to all the foreign companies operating, or wishing to do so, in the country; as a matter of fact, Foreign Direct Investment in Libya, before and immediately after the 2011 conflict, passed from 2,5 Billion USD to 700 million, decreasing steadily until today, when the value is stable to almost 400 Million dollars.⁷⁸ These data are good indicators of the reluctance of the foreign companies of setting new investments in the country; this does not apply only to oil and gas services but also to construction, chemicals and other sectors that before 2011 were expanding a lot.

⁷⁷ Financial Times, *War and strife have cost Libya \$68bn in lost oil revenues*, 24th Jan 2016; <https://www.ft.com/content/4dc800de-c27a-11e5-b3b1-7b2481276e45>

⁷⁸ Index Mundi, *Libya net Foreign Direct Investment data*; <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/libya/foreign-direct-investment>

One of the purposes of this paper is to assess whether the contraposition between France and Italy fuelled the instability of Libya. Some roots for the support for one or the other faction may have arisen in this period, but it is difficult to ascertain that. In the analysed period no contraposition existed between the two countries and none gained something from the conflict proximate effects; this is mostly true in the economic sector, where the French and Italian firms lost time and money in order to restart production, even at a lower level than before. Both Total and ENI experienced a decrease of net income in the end of 2015, resulting from the loss of revenues from the Libyan energy sector that had its effects also to the price of oil, decreasing even more the companies' revenue. The net income decrease for Total was of 26% in the last quarter of 2015⁷⁹, while ENI lost 8.5 Billion in the same time span⁸⁰. This period was tumultuous and difficult for everything and everybody that lived or had affairs in Libya, both Libyans and foreigners. More interesting issues and clear struggles between France and Italy will arise from the mid-2016: they are going to be analysed in the next paragraph, with an explanation of their choices and the rationale behind them.

2.2 FROM SKHIRAT TO TRIPOLI: FRANCE AND ITALY BETWEEN HAFTAR AND SARRAJ

The following paragraph aims to list and analyse the events occurred in Libya from the Skhirat agreement until the present day (2020), always considering the pivotal role of France and Italy in the research. Like the previous paragraph, this one will be divided in two sub-paragraphs; the first will contain the events that occurred in the Libyan scenario, with the actions of France, Italy and all the other local, national and international actors having a role in the said period. The second will analyse what stands behind the choices and the actions of the two countries, in terms of interests, alliances and economic affairs, even if this last point will be expressed in detail in Chapter 3. The analogy in terms of structure with the previous paragraph is clear. Nevertheless, much more will be said in this second paragraph, because of the highly increased dynamism of France and Italy in the country and their opposite agenda, compared to the one in briefer 2.1.2 paragraph.

2.2.1 THE SUCCESSION OF EVENTS FROM 2016 TO 2020 IN LIBYA

After the Skhirat agreement many observers claimed that a pacification and stabilization of Libya was finally coming out. However, the rivalries and tensions, both on the internal and on the international sphere will emerge violently. The focus will be on France and Italy, but

⁷⁹ Financial Times, *Total accelerates spending cuts as it braces against falling oil*, by C.Adams, 11th Feb 2016; <https://www.ft.com/content/15943de2-d092-11e5-92a1-c5e23ef99c77>

⁸⁰ Financial Times, *Eni confident of profit in \$50 oil despite posting losses in 2015*, by J.Politi, 26th Feb 2016; <https://www.ft.com/content/007834a2-dc92-11e5-827d-4dfbe0213e07>

many other international actors will stake a claim in the Libyan conflict, and side with one or another faction in order to gain some advantage.

From 2016 onwards the clash between the UN backed GNA and the House of Representatives in Tobruch, supported militarily by Khalifa Haftar and its LNA, will break out. On March, before stepping into Tripoli, the GNA asked to the international community to stop dealing with any power but the GNA, as it is the only recognised by the United Nations⁸¹. Actually, the GNA opponent, the HoR, should not be undervalued as it has a strong and organised army enforcing their claims and interests. The bicameral purpose of the Skhirat agreement disappeared and two chambers were legitimising one or another of the two contenders: Sarraj and Haftar. The latter is a military guide, as the political initiative of the Tobruch parliament is mostly in the hands of its own MPs, mostly the president of the chamber, Aguila Saleh Issa, and the PM Abdullah al-Thani, nominated in 2014 after his separation from the old GNC. Interesting is the role of the National Oil Corporation, as it chose not to side with one of the two factions; however, this would have meant that when one faction conquered an oil field, NOC was obliged to cooperate with the said faction. This ultimately ends in a division of the earnings coming from oil and gas, making this resource even more demanded, as NOC will not impede the production for any of the factions that controls the oil fields⁸².

Haftar's army was in a position of continuous gaining in the struggle against the Sarraj government and the influence of the HoR in this moment was rising strongly. Suddenly the support of France for the Tobruch government came out, probably in an unintended way; in July 2016 a helicopter with three French soldiers on board was shot down in Benghazi by an Islamist terrorist group, causing the death of the soldiers⁸³. The event is relevant because no official confirms of French soldiers operating in Libya were done before (even if some voices of this circulated since February). Even more interesting is the fact that the soldiers were operating in support of the LNA forces loyal to Haftar, revealing that a clear cooperation existed between the French government and the army controlled by Haftar. The said event was embarrassing for Hollande who wanted to pursue its partnership with Haftar forces secretly; however, the bond between the two came out through this occurrence, and the GNA immediately asked why such special troops were operating in Libyan territory without coordination with its internationally recognised (but weak) government⁸⁴. Hollande tried to

⁸¹ BBC, *Libya conflict: Tunis-based unity government claims power*, 13th Mar 2016; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35796482>

⁸² M. Paolini, *Le occasioni perdute del generale Haftar e il nodo del Fezzan*. In "Dalle Libie all'Algeria. Affari nostri", Limes Rivista italiana di geopolitica, 2019, n.6: pag 139

⁸³ BBC, *Libya attack: French soldiers die in helicopter crash*, 20th Jul 2016; <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36843186>

⁸⁴ Newsweek, *Who is Khalifa Haftar, Libya's divisive general*, 22nd Jul 2016; <https://www.newsweek.com/khalifa-haftar-isis-libya-muammar-el-qaddafi-483246>

explain that France's priority was to combat terrorism in the country, but it seemed a not so convincing excuse.

This endorsement had a negative effect on France, being accused of pursuing its own interests in the country, but also on the Sarraj government. As a matter of fact, the support of the international community for the UN backed government appeared less strong than how has been thought before. In addition, the GNA had to face a new backlash. The Islamist forces coming from the old GNC that refused in April to be part of the new Council of State, Parliament of the GNA, were reunited in October under the control of the former GNC president Khalifa Gwell⁸⁵. The aim of the Gwell forces was to retake Tripoli from the GNA. This would have meant the end of the experience of the Government of National Agreement. However, these forces, called GNS after some months, never succeeded on retaining a relevant portion of territory, except some quarters of Tripoli for little time. The only relevant harm made to the GNA by this faction was the conquer of the Tripoli airport in 2017. However, a strong reprisal of the GNA forces eventually will make the Gwell loyal forces escape from Tripoli and they actually disappeared. For this reason, the Ghwellian faction will not be analysed in dept in this paper as it had no relevant power and influence in the country.

General Haftar tried to legitimise its position continuing its attack against the Islamic State. He has always claimed the role of Defensor of the country against terrorism and islamist fundamentalism, and that legitimised in a way him as the most influent military leader and accordingly his faction, the Tobruch parliament. Before facing the rival parliament, the LNA loyal to the HoR had to defeat the IS in order to take from them important portions of territory. Strong support was offered from some western states, notably US, UK and France as already said. France responded to the death of his soldiers through massive bombings against ISIS, in Benghazi and other sites⁸⁶. Italy, that had special forces operating as well like the other said countries, responded sending almost 100 regular soldiers along with doctors and support staff in order to provide humanitarian aid in the area of Misratah⁸⁷, whose militias (loyal to the GNA) were enduring in an hard fight against the IS; clearly the presence of the soldiers, first regular force deployed in Libya by a foreign country since the beginning of the conflict, had the role of controlling and supervising the region, that had to remain tied with the Sarraj government.

This support from Italy and the bombings and attacks against ISIS, mostly by the US, led to the first relevant victory for the GNA: the conquer of Sirte from the IS. However, the

⁸⁵ The Libya Observer, *GNC retakes parliament compound, High Council of State condemns*, 15th Oct 2016; <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/gnc-retakes-parliament-compound-high-council-state-condemns>

⁸⁶ P. Bergen, A. Sims, *Reported Strikes by France, Egypt and the UAE*. In "Airstrikes and Civilian Casualties in Libya", New America, 2018

⁸⁷ Reuters, *Italy ready to open hospital in Libya, deploy 300 soldiers and staff*, 13th Sep 2016; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-italy-idUSKCN11J1WC>

HoR refused to recognise the Sarraj government for the second time end so the prospective of a conflict between the two factions seemed inevitable. Sarraj could not capitalise the conquer of Sirte with a political gain. The first battle between the LNA and GNA loyal forces happened when the Haftar army conquered 4 oil fields in the Sirte Basin (Ras Lanuf, Sidra, Zuetina, Brega) from the Petroleum Field Guard, led by Ibrahim Jadhan; the said Guard is a militia loyal to Sarraj that aimed to conquer and defend the oil fields. Haftar reached an agreement with NOC in order to restart the production of the said fields; the said field are the most productive, so their control from the Tobruch parliament signifies a great revenue for the Haftar's faction. Haftar had to find a compromise with the NOC, that retained some order and reliability, despite the fact that in the first stages of the conflict he tried to establish its own corporation, independent and parallel to the NOC. The intact reputation of the NOC comes along with the ongoing activity of the Libyan Central Bank⁸⁸, that continued to ensure the payments for the energy affairs indistinctly to the two factions.

In the early 2017 ISIS was compelled to leave Benghazi under the pressure of islamist parties close to Sarraj. In this stage the HoR gained the support of Russia, that promised support to Haftar⁸⁹. Haftar could count also to the support of Egypt and its president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi; the reasons for this endorsement probably stand on the fact that the HoR controls firmly Cyrenaica, the eastern region near the Egyptian border, and the neighbour state authority does not want to have an open conflict near their territory, along with the relative instability that could lead to the proliferation of illegal activities near the country border⁹⁰. On the other hand, since March Turkey and Qatar start to sponsor some GNA attacks, for example the reconquer of Ras Lanuf and Sidra fields, due to the will to punish Haftar and the HoR for the rivalrous attitude toward the GNA, impeding an easy claim of power in the country to the Sarraj government⁹¹ and a consequent "stabilization".

Haftar gained the support of two Arab countries, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, often quarrelling with Turkey and Qatar⁹². These different endorsements to different factions can be easily explained from a reflection of local disputes to the Libyan scenario. It is possible to see a rationale behind the support of these nations, that try to side with the faction that

⁸⁸ New York Times, *Wider Chaos Threatens as Fighters Seize Branch of Libya's Central Bank*, 22nd Jan 2015; https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/23/world/africa/libyan-fighters-seize-benghazi-branch-of-central-bank.html?_r=0

⁸⁹ Reuters, *Russia turns to Libya with show of support for eastern commander*, by A. Lewis, 17th Jan 2017; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-russia-idUSKBN1510KT>

⁹⁰ ISPI, *Egypt's Security and Haftar: al-Sisi's strategy in Libya*, by G. Dentice, 2nd Feb 2017;

<https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/egypts-security-and-haftar-al-sisis-strategy-libya-16284>

⁹¹ Libya Herald, *LNA loses control of Ras Lanuf to Benghazi revolutionaries; Sidra also reported taken*, 3rd Mar 2017; <https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/03/03/lna-loses-control-of-ras-lanuf-sidra-also-reported-taken/>

⁹² G. Gaiani, *Che Libie saranno dopo la battaglia per Tripoli*, In "Dalle Libie all'Algeria. Affari nostri", Limes Rivista italiana di geopolitica, 2019, n.6: pag 130

eventually would win in order to gain favours once it will hold power; it is a rationale similar to the one exposed in the first chapter for the reasons of the French attack in 2011.

By the way, the United States of America wanted to stay in a detached position and decided not to side with any of the two parliaments but to cooperate with both in order to strike IS in their places of control. Barack Obama first and then Donald Trump since 2016 pointed out clearly that there would not be an endorsement of the US for anyone, as the only interest was destroying the terrorists. However, several times local and international powers will try to mediate with Trump in order to bring the American paramount military force to their side.

After the clash with the PFG, the LNA eventually succeeded on conquering and controlling the Sirte basin, allowing Haftar to move its attention to other objectives. In fact, in May the Haftar troops conquer Benghazi, fell under anarchy after the IS was expelled and where many local militias and terrorists loyal to *Ansar al-Sharia* were clashing for power. *Ansar al-Sharia* announced its dissolution just some days after, due to the lack of any external support and its previous separation from the IS partners⁹³.

On July 25 Emmanuel Macron, newly elected president of the French Republic, hosted in the castle of La Celle a meeting aiming to try to find a compromise between the two factions. Macron chose like his predecessor to support Haftar, even not publicly, but realised that the easiest solution would have been a government of national accord with Haftar having a role within it. The new UN envoy for Libya, Ghassain Salamé, was present in the meeting, along with both Haftar and Sarraj. This is the second occasion of meeting between the two after a meeting held in May in Abu Dhabi, that had no real effect⁹⁴. On the contrary, the La Celle meeting seemed to have ensured an important conciliation between the two leaders; a joint document was signed, declaring a permanent cease-fire, and actually posing the two parliaments in the same political ground. An entente was reached in order to have elections until one year, trying to resolve the dispute diplomatically. The meeting, as said, would have resolved the crisis in Libya, and the initiative of the French president was highly praised and recognised as fundamental. Moreover, the agreement seemed to advantage the Tobruch parliament and its allies (UAE, Egypt, Russia)⁹⁵ and so indirectly France. However, things will change rapidly, and in a totally different way.

In September, after some shootings between two militias in the city of Sabrata, French newspapers said that the reason of this clash between militias was the allocation of money

⁹³ Al Jazeera, *Libya's Ansar al-Sharia announces dissolution*, 28th May 2017;

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/libya-ansar-al-sharia-announces-dissolution-170528045219409.html>

⁹⁴ Al Jazeera, *Fayez al-Sarraj meets Khalifa Haftar in UAE for talks*, 2nd May 2017;

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/fayez-al-sarraj-meets-khalifa-haftar-uae-talks-170502140623464.html>

⁹⁵ Liberation, *Macron s'offre un coup diplomatique en réunissant les frères ennemis libyens*, by Célian Macé, 25th Jul 2017; https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2017/07/25/macron-s-offre-un-coup-diplomatique-en-reunissant-les-freres-ennemis-libyens_1586204

among them; the said money would have come from Italy as a secret payment for the control and detention of migrants, that, coming mostly from sub-Saharan Africa but also from Libya, were aiming to flow into Europe (through Italy). This agreement was never confirmed by any Italian source, but *Le Monde* also affirmed that the mediator between Italy and the militias was also the chief of the troops defending the ENI co-owned gas complex of Mellitah⁹⁶.

Whether an accord existed or not, the question of migrants is a fundamental reason, for the Italian side, to be concerned of the Libyan situation. In fact, Italy would be the first place of arrival for the boats of migrants coming from Africa, and the support to Sarraj lays mostly in the fact that the most flows of migrants should pass from Tripolitania, more developed in terms of ports and maritime infrastructure and for being close to the coast of Sicily, distant less than 500 km. Moreover, the Libyan national navy is and have always been loyal to Sarraj, and for this reason he would be more effective on enforcing a block on the flow of migrants. As a matter of fact, Italy, yet in February 2017, had signed a memorandum of understanding with the GNA after a consultation with its PM Fayez al-Sarraj. The text of the MoS is fully devoted on the control of the illegal migrants coming from Libya by the GNA, to whom Italy would provide logistical and technological support both to the Libyan navy and to the Libyan reception centres⁹⁷; the latter have been highly criticised for the bad condition that the migrant suffer there, making Italy being blamed of crimes against humanity⁹⁸. This deal was made also through the initiative of the new PM of Italy Paolo Gentiloni and his minister of interiors, Marco Minniti, who is a former agent of the Italian secret services.

Coming back to the events of late 2017, the pace of the conflict was clearly slower due to the cease-fire announced in La Celle. In the end of September, Haftar was invited to Italy in order to talk with the minister of defence Roberta Pinotti; this meeting can be seen as an intention of appeasement with him by Italy and much attention has been put on the control of the migrants flows but most importantly on the security of the ENI oil and gas fields under the control of the HoR⁹⁹. Even if the meeting was very discrete, almost secret, it confirmed the sensation of a reconciliation in the Libyan scenario both between the two rival parliaments and between Italy and France, that at least shared the conviction that the road to elections was

⁹⁶ *Le Monde*, *Les combats à Sabratha vont-ils bouleverser les équilibres politiques en Libye?*, by F. Bobin, 29th Sep 2017; https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/09/29/les-combats-a-sabratha-vont-ils-bouleverser-les-equilibres-politico-militaires-en-libye_5193625_3212.html

⁹⁷ *Memorandum d'intesa sulla cooperazione nel campo dello sviluppo, del contrasto all'immigrazione illegale, al traffico di esseri umani, al contrabbando e sul rafforzamento della sicurezza delle frontiere tra lo Stato della Libia e la Repubblica Italiana*: articles 1-2

⁹⁸ Amnesty International, *Libya: Renewal of migration deal confirms Italy's complicity in torture of migrants and refugees*, 30th Jan 2020; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/libya-renewal-of-migration-deal-confirms-italys-complicity-in-torture-of-migrants-and-refugees/>

⁹⁹ *Le Monde*, *La très discrète visite à Rome du maréchal Haftar, homme fort de l'Est libyen*, by J. Gautheret, 27th Sep 2017; https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/09/27/la-tres-discrete-visite-a-rome-du-marechal-haftar-homme-fort-de-l-est-libyen_5192210_3212.html

the best in order to ensure the end of the conflict in Libya. Also, the oil production increased a lot during 2017, reaching the level of production of 1,2 million barrel per day¹⁰⁰.

In December, Haftar announced that the Skhirat Agreement had expired¹⁰¹. Actually, it had a term of two years, but its provisions never realised. Haftar with this move affirmed that for every tentative of compromise government the HoR, that he represents, should have at least an equal share of power compared to the GNA in a new government. The new elections were expected in September 2018.

The two contenders focused their attention on the region of Fezzan, in order to obtain some advantages for the upcoming elections. The region has never been totally in the hands of one of the two, and the *Tuareg* and *Tebu* tribes were administering the area almost independently, taking the earnings coming from the oil fields that they control, even if their quote from the repartition of money was far lower than the two northern factions. Tuaregs and Tebu have always clashed between themselves, but in this time each one was controlling an area (Eastern Fezzan the Tebu, western the Tuaregs) and were also benefitting of the illegal gains of this grey zone: drug traffic and migrants traffic. Each faction was acting on its own, but some relations existed between the Tuaregs and the Sarraj government as the Tuaregs are fundamental for the control of the south-western border of Libya. On the contrary, the Tebu militias were considered terrorist by the France government, due to their claim for independence (*Tibesti* nation) in nearby Chad, whose president Idriss Deby is a strong French partner. This position held by the main European supporter of the Tobruch parliament obliged Haftar to fight against the Tebu with great effort¹⁰², as no compromise could be found.

On the other hand, Sarraj made some agreements with the Tuaregs and its position was strengthened by the announcement by Italy of establishing a military base in the city of Ghat¹⁰³. The aim of this mission was to ensure security along the borders of Fezzan and to support the Tuaregs in the region. Italy recognised the importance of Fezzan yet in December 2016, when a meeting in Rome posed the basis for the reconciliation of the Tebu tribes with *Ulad Suleiman*, Fezzan's Arab tribes, with the presence and approval also of the Tuaregs. Minister of the interior Marco Minniti was strongly interested in mediating with the various factions of the country, acknowledging that in their reconciliation stood the dream of stabilizing the country. However, the Ghat mission will never be set up and that will make

¹⁰⁰ OilPrice.com, *OPEC Output Reaches 2017 High As Libya Reaches 1 Million Bpd*, by Z. Calcuttawala, 30th Jul 2017; <https://oilprice.com/Latest-Energy-News/World-News/OPEC-Output-Reaches-2017-High-As-Libya-Reaches-1-Million-Bpd.html>

¹⁰¹ RFI, *Pour Khalifa Haftar, l'accord de Skhirat a expire*, 17th Dec 2017; <http://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20171217-libye-haftar-nations-unies-skhirat-gouvernement-union-nationale>

¹⁰² M. Paolini, pag 135

¹⁰³ L'espresso, *Perché il controllo del Sud della Libia è fondamentale per l'Italia*, by F. Bulfon, 7th Feb 2018; <https://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2018/02/07/news/perche-il-controllo-del-sud-della-libia-e-fondamentale-per-l-italia-1.318042>

arise a sense of abandon to the Tuaregs, that felt betrayed by both Italy and the GNA¹⁰⁴. Moreover, the announcement was strongly criticised by Haftar, that affirmed that the military base was aimed to a military intervention against him, using the pacification of the frontiers of Fezzan as an excuse¹⁰⁵.

On May 29, a conference was held in Paris, hosted by Macron, with both Haftar and Saleh for the HoR side and with Sarraj and the president of the Tripoli parliament, Khaled al-Mechri, for the GNA side. The meeting's purpose was to set a date for the elections, that was chosen on December 10 of that year (2018). In addition, the electoral law had to be decided in September and the LNA and the various militias supporting the two factions had to be unified in a national army. Ghassain Salamè praised the conference and was particularly satisfied of the French mediation¹⁰⁶. Exactly one month after that, the LNA conquered Derna, last city in the hands of islamist groups close to the IS.

In September, the House of Representatives approved the electoral law, pushing for the elections date to be consistent with the road map of the Paris conference. French and Italian position about that was just opposite, as France preferred a delay of the date up to 2019, while Italy would have preferred an earlier date, since August. Probably behind that relied the constant military success that Haftar was gaining, with his popularity that could just increase¹⁰⁷.

On November 9, Salamè announced that the date for elections had to be postponed to 2019 after some militias attacked, unsuccessfully, the city of Tripoli. Some speculations have been made for an Haftarian will behind the attack. Italy responded to the Paris conference in November by organising a meeting in Palermo, the *Conferenza per la Libia* (Conference for Libya) on November 12-13. The constant alternation between French and Italian meetings was confirmed by this event. The conference could not help in order to reunite the armed forces but showed the participation of the international allies of both factions, mostly the presidents of Egypt, Qatar, Tunisia, Algeria and Turkish vice-president, but also a delegation from Russia, with PM Medvedev present, France and EU Council with its president Donald Tusk¹⁰⁸. The conference had the utility of confirming the road map presented in the previous

¹⁰⁴ Agenzia Nova, *Libia: nuovo leader Tuareg a "Nova", "situazione nel sud è molto grave, l'Italia ci aiuti"*, 25th Sep 2018; <https://www.agenzianova.com/a/5bab89b6d5bd97.17965320/2083732/2018-09-25/libia-nuovo-leader-tuareg-a-nova-situazione-nel-sud-e-molto-grave-l-italia-ci-aiuti/linked>

¹⁰⁵ Repubblica, *Libia, la missione italiana a Ghat scatena i sospetti di Haftar*, by V. Nigro, 1st Jul 2018; https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2018/07/01/news/libia_la_missione_italiana_a_ghat_scatena_i_sospetti_di_haftar-200507918/?refresh_ce

¹⁰⁶ L'Orient-le jour, *Libye : accord à Paris sur des élections le 10 décembre, 29th May 2018*; <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1118120/libye-accord-sur-des-elections-legislatives-et-presidentielle-le-10-decembre.html>

¹⁰⁷ F. Petroni, *L'Italia, la Francia e la battaglia per la Libia*. Limes Rivista italiana di geopolitica, 4th Sep 2018;

¹⁰⁸ Il Sole 24 Ore, *Conferenza di Palermo sulla Libia: Haftar incontra Sarraj alla presenza di Russia ed Egitto*, 13th Nov 2018; <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/conferenza-palermo-libia-haftar-incontra-sarraj-presenza-russia-ed-egitto-AER0xqfG>

meetings, now more legitimised by the high presence of foreign leaders, but in reality had few real effects, like the Paris one in the end¹⁰⁹.

The conference was hosted by the new Italian PM, Giuseppe Conte, appointed in July after the Italian elections saw a great victory of the populist parties *Lega* and *Movimento 5 Stelle*. Since the rise of this new government, the division between France and Italy increased, mostly for very hostile declarations from the Italian side towards the neighbours. The leaders of the two parties, Matteo Salvini and Luigi Di Maio, since the end of 2018 attacked Macron, claiming that he was seeking just personal interest in the country and not a real stabilization. Moreover, the *Lega* leader, Salvini, accused Macron of wanting to undermine the ENI assets and concessions, that he would like to take for the benefit of Total through supporting the rival of Sarraj. The breakpoint was reached, in February 2019, when Di Maio met the exponents of the protest group *Gilet Jaunes*, considered a subversive group by the French government; this obliged Macron to recall his ambassador in Rome¹¹⁰: this was the first time that this occurs since Italy declared war to France in the first stages of WWII.

By the way, the cooperation between Haftar and France reached a new level when Haftar attacked many Tebu settlements in East Fezzan, causing the escape of these combatants to the Tibesti area of Chad. The French army attacked some of these militias that were escaping through air bombings¹¹¹. On February 22 the LNA conquered the area near the oil field of El Feel, cooperated by ENI with NOC, after the Tuaregs that defended it joined the Haftar army; Haftar ensured that no damage will be done to ENI staff and facilities¹¹². One week after, Haftar and Sarraj met in Abu Dhabi and confirmed the intention to go for elections¹¹³.

Despite that, in April general Haftar gave up any pacific intention and started the siege of Tripoli, that according to him would have meant the resolution of the conflict. However, the attack was not an easy one, even if the GNA troops had to retire up to the city of Tripoli. Sarraj responded by many attacks through artillery bombings on the Haftar troops. Since September the pace of the attack dramatically slowed down; Haftar maybe realised that he

¹⁰⁹ P. Messina, *Un flop diplomatico scongiurato: il vertice di Palermo sulla Libia*. Limes Rivista italiana di geopolitica, 14th Nov 2018

¹¹⁰ Reuters, *France tells Italy 'Basta!' - withdraws envoy after war of words*, by J. Irish and C. Balmer, 7th Feb 2019; <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-france-italy/france-tells-italy-basta-withdraws-envoy-after-war-of-words-idUKKCN1PW1GB>

¹¹¹ Repubblica, *Libia, il generale Haftar attacca nel Sud, il governo di Tripoli lo denuncia per "crimini di guerra"*, by V. Nigro, 10th Feb 2019; https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2019/02/10/news/libia_il_generale_haftar_attacca_nel_sud_il_governo_di_tripoli_lo_denuncia_per_crimini_di_guerra_-218796350/?ref=drac-4

¹¹² ANSAMED, *Libia: forze Haftar, a noi la sicurezza di giacimento Eni*, 22nd Feb 2019; http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/it/notizie/rubriche/cronaca/2019/02/22/libia-forze-haftar-a-noi-la-sicurezza-di-giacimento-eni_a281495e-1c25-40dd-ad0d-bd07301503c4.html

¹¹³ Le Monde, *En Libye, les pouvoirs rivaux se mettent d'accord pour organiser des élections*, 28th Feb 2019; https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2019/02/28/en-libye-les-pouvoirs-rivaux-se-mettent-d-accord-pour-organiser-des-elections_5429480_3210.html

was not as strong as he thought, and probably he expected that some militias loyal to Sarraj would have defected in order to join his side¹¹⁴.

The two sides were helped by the incoming weapons from abroad, sent by their foreign supporters, even though an embargo existed since 2011. Turkey and Qatar were confirmed to have violated the embargo, but also France and Russia probably did it¹¹⁵. This led to the reform of Operation Sophia, transformed into an operation for the patrolling of the coast because of illegal migration. Some ceasefires were succeeded by new offensives, mostly by the LNA, until 2020. In 2020 a new conference was held in Berlin, but despite the great presence of foreign leaders no credible solution nor sanction for the ongoing conflict was found¹¹⁶. In January Haftar put a blockade to many oil fields, causing a dramatic drop to Libyan oil production to a level never reached since 2011¹¹⁷. The new decade brought a new contender into the Libyan scenario; Turkey responded to the Sarraj request to enforce the treaties of security signed with its allies countries, by sending regular troops against the LNA¹¹⁸. UN envoy Salamè resigned after that he realised that the dreams of new elections were vanishing and the support of the foreign countries to the stabilization was inconsistent¹¹⁹.

In the moment when this paper has been written, the Turkish presence seems to have thrown away any other country aiming to show his force in the Libyan scenario; up to April, the GNA and the Turkish regular forces were reconquering many portions of territory that had been in the hands of Haftar since long time. After that Haftar had won so many battles, now seems that he is losing the war. This is happening during a mass disinterest of the major powers that seemed so influent in the country: Russia, that almost gave up its support to Haftar after the meeting of Vladimir Putin with Turkish President Erdogan¹²⁰, and mostly France, that now may feel to have chosen the strong party in the conflict. The force of Haftar now seems weaker than ever and the GNA forces may benefit of this unexpected external help in order to make a turning point in the conflict history.

The resolution of the problems, however, seems far and the global Coronavirus pandemic probably would divert the attention of the peace seeking forces from Libya. France

¹¹⁴ G. Gaiani, pag 126

¹¹⁵ G. Gaiani, pag 129

¹¹⁶ CNN, Libya summit calls for sanctions if ceasefire is violated, by M. Bell and A. Dewan, 20th Jan 2020; <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/01/19/world/libya-summit-intl/index.html>

¹¹⁷ Reuters, Southern Libyan oil fields face closure as pipeline blockaded, by A. Lewis, 19th Jan 2020; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-oil-fezzan/southern-libyan-oil-fields-face-closure-as-pipeline-blockaded-idUSKBN1ZIOD5>

¹¹⁸ Le Figaro, *Libye : Erdogan annonce le début du déploiement de soldats turcs*, 5th Jan 2020; <https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/libye-erdogan-annonce-le-debut-du-deploiement-de-soldats-turcs-20200105>

¹¹⁹ Al Jazeera, *UN envoy for Libya Ghassan Salame resigns, citing 'stress'*, 3rd Mar 2020; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/envoy-libya-ghassan-salame-resigns-citing-stress-200303071218017.html>

¹²⁰ Al Jazeera, *Putin and Erdogan call for Libya ceasefire*, 8th Jan 2020; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/putin-erdogan-call-libya-ceasefire-200108143840360.html>

and Italy, the two powers that for so long have been clashing over a supposed leading role in the country, now seem inactive and without any intention of making their move.

2.2.2 THE CHOICES AND EXPECTATIONS OF FRANCE AND ITALY FROM THE CONFLICT

In this brief subparagraph the evaluation of the clash between France and Italy will be made, at least for what concerns the political and geopolitical point of view. For what concerns the economic one, Chapter 3 will briefly assess whether this contraposition existed for the privates and the economic actors, connected to the two countries, operating in Libya. This subparagraph will also evaluate the reasons that brought the two countries to choose two different factions to support and why they clashed so long between them; the events told before will serve as the basis of this evaluation.

For what concerns France, the choice of endorsing Haftar is with no doubt a courageous one. As a matter of fact, no other EU state supported Haftar like France did, even if someone chose not to support anyone. The reasons for this endorsement are difficult to explain. One of the reasons can stand in the fact that France have overvalued the power of the LNA and thought that it would have won the struggle with the GNA easily.

In addition, France may have chosen the Haftar side because of the support of the neighbouring countries of Libya towards him. The HoR was supported by Egypt and its president al-Sisi, and Algeria and Tunisia chose to remain neutral, probably not to upset the Frenchs, at least according to the *Elysée*. It is important to note that North Africa and Sahel are among the places of highest influence for France, and this is confirmed by the good relationship that France has with many of these nations (Chad or Egypt). The relationship of France with Egypt has improved mostly because of the support for Haftar of the African country since 2014. However, some actors do not see Haftar as a trustful person and blame the fall of Ghaddafi for the destabilization that has brought, so indirectly they blame France. These countries are Algeria and Tunisia, who have always showed neutrality but claim a regional solution of the problem rather an extra-African one¹²¹. This inevitably makes them be suspicious of the French activism in Libya. By the French side, the leaders that chose to support Haftar, Hollande and Macron, probably thought of having a great support from these countries, probably unmatched by reality. In fact, the loyalty towards France is much higher from the sub-Saharan states of the so called *Françafrique*, that is a climate of subjection of the former French colonies to the European country. This exists for Chad, or Mali where France made a military intervention in 2012 (resolving few problems), but no more for the northern countries of the continent, enough rich and powerful to pursue an independent road map concerning foreign policy. However, even the support of the first countries is decreasing,

¹²¹ L.A, Ammour, pag 75

and the feeling of an interference on their internal affairs by the former colonizer is increasing¹²².

Another point that is worth to note is the matter of terrorism. France have sadly experienced more than other countries the return of terrorist attacks and the fear that they bring. For this reason, the French leaders always tried to bring the flag of the fighters against terrorism in the region, even exploiting the political advantages of this policy. Haftar fitted perfectly the character of the enemy of the terrorists, since his campaign against the islamist groups, “Operation Dignity”. Sarraj, on the contrary, was blamed of having contacts with jihadists, mostly the Tuaregs of the south that had an ambiguous relationship with al-Qaeda. For this reason, the choice of backing Haftar was easy for France. France exploited the power that the HoR had in Cyrenaica in order to make attack the Tebu tribes on nearby Fezzan by Haftar; it can be seen that France used the alliance with Haftar also for personal security scopes, like in this case¹²³.

In the end, the interest of France on supporting Haftar stands mostly in geopolitical reasons, wanting to pursue an independent foreign policy in the area, despite the opposite support of its European neighbours; since the US have chosen not to take a clear position in the situation, many countries like France felt free to follow their own interest in the country. The French course of action has never been localised in Libya but has always taken into account the effects that their choices in the country could signify for the region. Probably, the turmoil caused in Mali and Burkina Faso by the aftermath of the 2011 Libyan conflict have convinced the French authorities to pursue this regional interest.

On the other hand, the agenda for Italy has always been almost clear and straightforward. Italy wants to secure its assets in the country, that are very important. The choice of supporting Sarraj seemed an easy one also because his government was backed by the United Nation, and the international community seemed keen to support this line. Even when the situation turned out to be really complicate, Italy would have never changed side, as Sarraj ensured security for the southern coasts of Italy. Here the migrants issue is much relevant, and probably can be considered as the directive of the Italian foreign policy in the country. As said previously, the fact that the GNA controls Tripolitania gives much consistency on the support towards Sarraj. However, in some stages the Italian diplomacy seemed to be ambiguously close also to the Haftar side, like in the case of the meeting with minister Pinotti.

Another factor worth noting is the political debate and clash that has arisen since the mid-2018 between France and Italy. France has been blamed of the worst colonial and

¹²² M. Giro, pag 212

¹²³ M. Paolini, pag 139

imperialist guilts both in Libya and in the region; this was caused mostly by the two party leaders supporting the Conte government, that probably had to find a scapegoat in order to give value to their foreign policy ideas. The clash between the two nations was never a theme before 2018, when the conflict in Libya became a matter of France versus Italy, at least on the political arena. It is true that the French and Italian foreign policies have often clashed almost since the unity of the Italian state, with Italian *Risorgimento* hero Giuseppe Mazzini claiming that France and Italy were doomed to clash; however, the political skirmish between the two governments seemed something more related to partisan and ideological advantages rather than to an harsher relation between the two states, even if the contraposition really existed at least in terms of choices.

Drawing expectation about the future is complicate in this moment. Both countries have faced many defeats on the diplomatic ground, like with the various conferences that were succeeded by one made by the other country; the fact that both had to remain rigid on the support for their faction created this sense of contraposition. However, the role of other foreign actors like Turkey have showed that France and Italy are not the main contenders in the Libyan scenario, and their will is not strong enough to change the situation or to compel the Libyan actors to pursue it¹²⁴. What can be done by the two states is to cooperate and seek a stabilization of the country through the dialogue between them and a joint road map; this would mean that one of the two should give up the position taken for years, but this is the only way to keep an influence in the country, in order prevent the fall of Libya under the influence of unappreciated actors (Russia, Turkey). Losing the influence that the two countries have had on their southern border could reshuffle the balance of power of the Mediterranean Sea, and this is something that both countries would avoid.

The aim of this paper is to ascertain whether France and Italy contributed to make Libya an unstable country or, at least, whether they contributed to make this instability endure through their clash. In a sense, the struggle that existed between these two countries, at different paces and with many mediatic and political addictions, contributed at least to create a climate of uncertainty. However, this climate of instability would have continued anyway, given the many opposed countries backing one or another faction.

Another point to be considered is the contribution that the military support offered to their supporters. Assessing whether the military aid offered to the two factions, mostly by France, was decisive in causing the instability of the country is again hard to ascertain; France may be found guilty of having prolonged the military campaign of Haftar for personal reasons, mostly when the LNA tried to take some territories in the region of Fezzan. Moreover, the continuous transfers of arms that France have almost certainly made, but

¹²⁴ M. Giro, pag 214-215

probably Italy did as well, contributed to the continuum of the conflict. However, again, the contribution of other faction in this sense was far higher, mostly by the Arabian Gulf states and Turkey, whose massive arms transfers are well documented.

In the end, Italy and France are surely guilty of having caused a part of the instability in the country, mostly with their rivalrous diplomacy and the different position taken. Moreover, the support in terms of violations of the arms embargo is worth to be considered. However, with no doubt, a different agenda or even a joint one would not have resolved the situation in few time, firstly because of the fact that eventually they had not enough power compared to other countries and secondly because the Libyan scenario is unstable by its own, and this needs to be considered: Libya means tribes, militias, rivalries and conflicts. Probably no foreign power could overcome this situation even if it wanted to.

CHAPTER 3

The economic sector: another source of tension between France and Italy?

The last paragraph of the previous chapter analysed in depth the political consequences that the tensions between France and Italy had in the Libyan scenario. The aim of this chapter is to give an excursus about the economic sector and mostly the relationship between the economic activities of France and Italy in Libya; then, it will be assessed if the rivalrous attitude that the two countries showed one another occurred also between their economic activities operating in Libya. This chapter will be briefer than the others since the set of information that needs to be analysed is far less than the previous two chapters. The main focus will be on the comparison of the activities of Total and ENI, the two state-owned energy firms of the two countries. As a matter of fact, the two companies are the only two companies that have an almost similar stake in the Libyan market and then are comparable, even if ENI is more influent; other activities in other sectors could be less compared, firstly because the energetic sector is by far the most important for the Libyan economy and its foreign investors and secondly because in other sectors the Italian firms have a higher prominence in the country compared to the French one, mostly because of the continuous time where Italy made affairs with Libya when other firms were absent.

The chapter will be divided in two paragraphs, one with the list of activities and assets that France and Italy have, mostly focusing in the newly set after the 2011 conflict, and another paragraph evaluating whether the two countries have a rivalrous attitude in the economic sector that reflects from the political tension showed during the conflict.

3.1 FRENCH AND ITALIAN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP

The main economic activities and interests of France and Italy in Libya have been discussed in Chapter One, so repeating them may be a bit useless. However, it is important to list the main and to do a small overview mostly of the oil and gas sector assets. This paragraph will depart from the energetic sector activities, that are also the most relevant ones in terms of revenue and share for the affairs of France and Italy in the African country.

Before starting, it is important to say that usually the foreign companies operating in Libya, but also elsewhere, tend to create some joint ventures in participation with NOC in order to have a more efficient production and selling of oil and gas. NOC fully owns ten subsidiaries companies and has a participation on eight joint-ventures with foreign companies.

Total and ENI have both a participation in one of these joint ventures: France and NOC have created the Mabruk Oil Operations, while ENI co-owns with NOC the company Mellitah Oil and Gas¹²⁵.

For what concerns France, the energetic affairs are fully undertaken by the state energetic company Total. Total is a multinational with a major role in the world energetic market, with activities in many countries of the world. However, in Libya its influence is lower than many enterprises, mostly ENI, Wintershall and the American firms, at least before 2011. However, since the fall of Ghaddafi, it has made investments and asset acquisitions that according to many have made it the second foreign company operating in Libya, behind ENI. Total is active both in the oil and in the gas sector through the offshore field of al-Jurf and the onshore El Sharara field in the Murzuq basin¹²⁶. Total has made many agreements since 2018, when acquired a share of the Waha concession (16,33%) from the American company Marathon¹²⁷. That shows that Total has a great incentive in doing affairs more and more profitable in the country. As a matter of fact, the various firms operating in Libya can be divided in the ones wanting to leave the country and sell their assets and others that want to acquire the market share left by these. Total is among the latter ones. It should also be reminded that the production of almost all the oil and gas firms in Libya is below its potential, because of the many fields or platforms closed for security reasons; an example is the Mabruk field, owned by Total but closed because of the war.

ENI is the state-owned Italian company devoted to energy; its worldwide presence is important but lower than Total, at least in terms of revenue and assets. As said before, ENI is the main foreign company operating in Libya. After the conflict, it was the first firm to restart production and since then it has confirmed its leadership in the country. The conflict has brought some problems to the ENI fields but in the end none of the powers that contended for the leadership of Libya ever thought of damaging the affairs of ENI. The Italian company operates mostly in the oil and gas sector (the most profitable), that can transport to the refineries in Sicily and in the rest of Italy through the Greenstream pipeline or navy transportation, for what concerns oil. It is present in four of the nine oil areas present in Libya, more than any other company; these are the offshore platforms of Bouri, the El Feel field (also known as Elephant), the Abu Ettifel field in central Libya and the Wafa Gas field. The Greenstream pipeline connects the gas fields of Wafa and Bahr Essalam to the Mellitah treatment centre, and ultimately brings 5 billion cubic meters of Natural Gas directly to Italy

¹²⁵ R. Baltrop, *Oil and Gas in a New Libyan Era: Conflict and Continuity*. Oxford institute for energy studies, 2019: pag 11

¹²⁶ Total, Total in Libya, 10th Mar 2019; <https://www.total.com/libya>

¹²⁷ Reuters, Libya approves Total's purchase of stake in Waha concessions, 10th Dec 2019; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-oil-idUSKBN1YE20Q>

(via Gela, Sicily), but its potential could be up to 8 billion. In 2018 ENI signed an agreement with British Petroleum, a company that started to invest in Libya as a newcomer in 2010 just few months before the first Libyan civil war, that passed 42% of the EPSA (Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement) share to ENI¹²⁸; this shows the will of maintaining the leadership on the Libyan market, acquiring assets from companies that probably gave up from the intention of investing in Libya. ENI in 2019 could benefit from a production of 5 billion cubic meters of Gas and 37 million barrels of oil, being by far the biggest foreign producer in the country¹²⁹. At the beginning of 2020 ENI produced almost 13 million cubic meters of Gas per day¹³⁰, a lowered pace but still relevant if considering the fact that in 2020 the overall Libyan production fell to 400000 barrels per day, as reported by NOC chairman Mustapha Sanalla¹³¹. This is the darkest hour for the energetic sector in Libya since the 2011 civil war. The causes of this drop in production were the restart of the conflict, the blockade of many oil fields by Haftar and the following Sarraj counteroffensive.

Analysing the assets of the two companies, it is possible to note that both Eni and Total are aiming to stay in Libya in order to keep their presence there and try to expand the activities in the energetic sector. Both are present in all the countries of North Africa, where they try to avoid being connected with the foreign policies of their countries, that are also their owners. An example is the increasing activity of ENI in Egypt, despite the very bad relationship of Italy with the Egyptian government because of the case of Giulio Regeni, an Italian reporter killed in Egypt in mysterious circumstances, but with a probable governmental influence on his death; despite that, in 2019 the Italian company announced the discovery in the country of a huge gas deposit, called Zohr, that has the huge capacity of production of 76 million cubic meters of gas¹³². This confirms that the interest of ENI and Total are regionally based rather than nationally, with a main attention in all the north African countries. However, it should be said that the continuous turmoil in Libya has endangered and wasted many activities in the country for both companies.

ENI succeeded in mediating with both the contenders of the conflict, and so the problems that slowed its production were mainly related to the security of the fields and the struggles for their control among the various militias. Total, on the other hand, suffered a suspension of their activities in the country since the GNA Economy minister Ali Abdulaziz

¹²⁸ ENI, *Eni, BP e NOC firmano un accordo per ricominciare le esplorazioni in Libia*, 8th Oct 2018; <https://www.eni.com/it-IT/media/comunicati-stampa/2018/10/eni-bp-e-noc-firmano-un-accordo-per-ricominciare-le-esplorazioni-in-libia.html>

¹²⁹ ENI, *Le nostre attività in Libia*; <https://www.eni.com/it-IT/presenza-globale/africa/libia.html>

¹³⁰ S&P Global, *Libyan gas exports to Italy unaffected so far by oil blockade*, 21st Jun 2020; <https://www.spglobal.com/platts/en/market-insights/latest-news/natural-gas/012120-libyan-gas-exports-to-italy-unaffected-so-far-by-oil-blockade>

¹³¹ Financial Times, *Libya oil output set to collapse to lowest level since fall of Gaddafi*, by D. Sheppard, 22nd Jan 2020; <https://www.ft.com/content/bf045b36-3c4b-11ea-b232-000f4477fbca>

¹³² ENI, *Zohr*, <https://www.eni.com/it-IT/attivita/egitto-zohr.html>

Issawi announced that 40 foreign companies, of whom Total was the most relevant, had to renew their contracts with the GNA or they would have been banned. The move has been seen as a political move from the GNA, as the suspended companies were linked with countries that backed directly or had some relations with the HoR and the LNA¹³³. France was particularly hurt because also two other major French companies operating in the country were suspended: the telecommunication company Alcatel and the aero-spatial company Thales. Total so was obliged to renew its license, probably with a less advantageous one. This event can give a first evidence of the fact that Total did not benefit of the French initiative in the country, since its endorsement to Haftar gave enough problem to the state-owned energy company. If a comparison is made between the Total and ENI oilfields, it comes out that ENI was advantaged both by staying almost outside the problems of security related to its assets, and also by having more quality fields; for instance the al-Jurf offshore platform, that for long time was the only active production site for Total, is less productive than the contiguous ENI offshore site Bourri¹³⁴, resulting in a net leadership of ENI in the hydrocarbon production compared to Total.

Another factor that must be considered is that Total and ENI have no cooperation in any of the oil or gas concessions in Libya. The cooperation and the sharing of quotas of the oilfields is a common pattern in the oil and gas sector, given that a single company cannot benefit entirely of an entire basin or network of oilfields. This fact is even more interesting because ENI and Total do cooperate in other markets but not in Libya. For example, in Algeria ENI and Total have a strong collaboration in the exploration of the Algerian offshore¹³⁵. So, despite the fact that many politicians and media wanted to make seem Total and ENI two rival companies, mostly by the Italian side (E.G Salvini), in reality they behave in a climate of collaborative competition, like all the firms of the energetic sector. Cooperation is necessary mostly in the Gas sector because the flows of natural gas usually are not continue but variate over time, and so an activity of prediction is needed: this is mostly relevant for ENI, that in Libya gains more from natural gas than from petroleum¹³⁶.

Nevertheless, the lack of cooperation between the two companies in the Libyan scenario needs to be explained. Probably the two companies without the influence of their states would have cooperated in the country: Total for example cooperates with so many companies in Libya and shares concessions with many of them, like Repsol, Equinor, OMV or Conoco Phillips. The evidence of their collaboration in other markets and not in the Libyan one can

¹³³ North Africa Post, *Libya: GNA suspends operation licenses for 40 companies including French Total*, 10th May 2019; <https://northafricapost.com/30713-libya-gna-suspends-operation-licenses-for-40-companies-including-french-total.html>

¹³⁴ M. Paolini, pag 139

¹³⁵ L. Pistelli, pag 227

¹³⁶ M. Giro, pag 209

be explained as a reflection of political rivalries onto the economic field. As a matter of fact, it would be ambiguous if two countries that support two different factions would share the same oilfield, mostly because the military control of the oilfields has been a major objective for both Haftar and Sarraj in order to cut the economic funds of the opponent.

These facts underline a parallel work of Total and ENI in their activities in Libya, without clashes but with each company undertaking its own affairs independently. The same attitude exists in the other sectors of the Libyan economy in which the enterprises of the two countries are present. For example, Italy is present mostly with defence and mechanical companies, like Leonardo (former Finmeccanica) and its related societies, but also in truck and telecommunication ones like Iveco or Telecom; Leonardo is interested in the Libyan market mostly because of the interests towards some third states active in the country because of the conflict. The main partner is Qatar, that is a supporter of the GNA: good affairs have been made with the Emirate, and this is confirmed by the visits of Salvini and then of the President of Republic Mattarella in that country¹³⁷. Leonardo makes deals also with competitors of Italy in Libya, like with Egypt, demonstrating the non-interference of the state in the economic activities of its companies.

Another important Italian public enterprise is Fincantieri, the leader in the naval sector in Europe, that in 2018 announced a merger with the French company Chantiers de l'Atlantique, the French naval company; this agreement, that seemed more an acquisition than a merger, was obstructed by the European Commission, that wanted to open an investigation about a possible violation of the European competition laws, after pressures by Macron and by Germany; however, it now seems that the agreement will be done in the next months¹³⁸, after two years of discussions. This event is important since it can be noted that a cooperation exists between French and Italian companies, but often this is slowed down by the political actors; in this case, Macron was obliged to apologize with the then Italian PM Gentiloni, because this event was the first clear obstacle to the cooperation of the two neighbouring economies.

The Libyan sector of aviation, of the maritime and of the telecommunications is shared also by French companies, like the cited Alcatel and Thales. The latter is mostly interesting for the relationship with Italian enterprises, since Thales and Leonardo made two joint ventures (each one has a majority share in one of the two): Thales Alenia Space and Telespazio. Both companies are leaders in the production of satellites and satellite devices.

¹³⁷ Start Magazine, *Eni, Fincantieri, Leonardo-Finmeccanica. Tutte le relazioni Italia-Qatar e il dossier Libia*, by G. Gagliano, 22nd Jan 2020; <https://www.startmag.it/mondo/eni-fincantieri-leonardo-finmeccanica-tutte-le-relazioni-italia-qatar-e-il-dossier-libia/>

¹³⁸ Ship Technology, *Inside the Fincantieri-Chantiers shipyard deal: a boost or blow to competition in Europe?*, by Adele Berti, 11th Feb 2020; <https://www.ship-technology.com/features/fincantieri-chantiers-shipyard-deal/>

This demonstrates an important factor, that the French and Italian companies are always in a network of collaboration and often they work together. These cited are only the ones that operate in Libya, but the discussion could be expanded also to other sectors, like the intention of merger between the auto vehicles Italian company FCA with the French one Renault. However, the cooperation is mostly globally based, while in the local Libyan scenario they act mostly through independent policies, as already said.

The evidence that the cited economical activities signify in the relationship between French and Italian economic actors will be discussed in the next paragraph.

3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN FRENCH AND ITALIAN COMPANIES

After having done an outline of the main companies operating in Libya, it is important to assess whether a rivalrous attitude exists between them and if this is a cause or an effect of the tension that existed between France and Italy.

In the previous chapter it has been stressed how in Libya the French and Italian companies use to ignore themselves. Despite that, it is impossible to find a moment when two companies of the two countries clearly acted against the other. On the other hand, no French company cooperates with an Italian one, at least not in a relevant way. Therefore, it is clear that the way of doing business of the two countries' companies aims to non-interference, but also to indifference towards the other competitor. For instance, Total and ENI are both trying to expand their activities in Libya, and they are doing this through acquiring quotas and collaborating with third companies. No real relationship exists between them, but it is evident that they do not aim to clash: ENI is more powerful and would not be concerned of losing terrain on behalf of Total. Total, on the contrary, prefer to hold its assets and try to increase its presence whenever possible, conscious of not having leadership in the Libyan market. Moreover, it is pointless to expect an anxious behaviour or even a rivalrous behaviour towards ENI; as a matter of fact, Total collaborates with ENI in other markets, even more important and profitable than Libya, where Total has a broader influence than ENI, and both benefit from the cooperation keeping their affairs active. In addition, in Libya their affairs have also a different territorial presence, with ENI assets being mostly in Tripolitania, while the Total ones are in Cyrenaica¹³⁹. This can explain why the two energetic leaders have a parallel business, and this is also a further confirmation to why they supported different factions: to keep their assets safe.

If the other sectors are to be considered, it is possible to note that the same attitude exists. In the global scenario, French and Italian companies work together, make joint ventures

¹³⁹ R. Baltrop, pag 11

and joint investments, while in Libya they make their own businesses working on their own. The reasons for that needs to be explained.

Firstly, it must be said that this attitude is mostly a consequence rather than a cause of the rivalry between France and Italy in Libya and of the initiation of the conflict in 2011 and of the different endorsements of the two sides. If a rivalry would exist between the two economies, its effects would have a broader arena, with other places where the tension appeared clearly to anyone. In addition, a rivalry between French and Italian companies firstly is not confirmed by reality, and secondly would be something pointless: even if competition is always present, in many sectors, like the energetic or the technologic one, cooperation is necessary both for the R&D and for having a broader presence in the global market. If we consider that the Italian companies have a more consolidated presence in Libya, an open clash with the French ones will result in an isolation for the latter. Secondly, considering the first stages of the conflict, if the French activism in intervening in Libya was aimed to take an economical gain for the French companies there, surely this intention could be considered as a foolish one, after having said how much the companies of both states have lost because of the instability in Libya since 2011, or after the suspension of the license of the French companies. If there is a will to aliment the instability of the country, and this claim is already a weak one, the reasons could not be economical.

Therefore, once that it has been ascertained that the rivalry between France and Italy was not caused by economic reasons, it is necessary to explain why this separated economic road map occurred because of the rivalrous attitude of the two countries. The first thing worth noting is that the main companies operating in Libya are state owned ones, so in a way the state from which they depend may have an important piece of influence in imposing to its firms to do or not to do something. For what has been expressed in the previous paragraph, it is evident that the French government has showed to be keen to interfere in the policy of its own firms: an example is the obstruction made against the merger of Fincantieri and Chantiers. Italian companies, on the other hand, have remained more separated from the frictions of the Italian governments that succeeded over time, and this is shown by many situations like the openness to mediate and making affairs with actors opposed to the Italian supporters, like the HoR or Egypt. So, a different attitude can be found between the two economic policies of the two countries: the Italian one is more liberal, with the only concern of securing the economical assets present, while the French one is more statist, because of the will to ensure that the economic activities follow the directives of foreign policy. Obviously, it follows that also the Italian side, once that the French one is less disposal to make affairs, would choose not to cooperate but to look for other partners and affairs. In this way, the two

companies are compelled to ignore each other due to the tensions created by the states that control them.

In the end, in this chapter it could be seen how the economic actors of France and Italy are eager to work together, but in Libya this was impossible. The reason is a political one, since France has tried to control the economic activities in order to not advantage potential enemies, like Italy is for Haftar. The Italian side has a part of guilt, mostly because of the continue debate made by some political leaders, like Salvini when blamed Macron of aiming to steal the assets of ENI for the sake of Total¹⁴⁰; this is an expedient for creating political tensions, that often do not correspond with reality. Both countries have created the conditions for a non-cooperation between Italian and French companies that could have eased the situation and maybe could permit to the two states to get over their controversies.

Thus, the French and Italian companies in Libya are not rival but are compelled to change their behaviour because of the reflections of the rivalries of the governments that control them, in the most relevant cases.

¹⁴⁰ Le Point- Afrique, *Libye : la guerre de l'ombre entre la France et l'Italie*, by P. Forestier, 13th Nov 2018; https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/libye-la-guerre-de-l-ombre-entre-la-france-et-l-italie-13-11-2018-2270986_3826.php

CONCLUSIONS

To come up with a conclusion, over all the time span that has been analysed, that covers more than twenty years of time, several final considerations can be found.

First, it can be said with no doubts that the overthrow of Ghaddafi caused a fall into instability for Libya, probably unexpectedly for the powers of the Unified Protector mission, but ascertaining what would have happened if the foreign intervention would not have occurred is not the aim of this research. The first question that this paper aims to answer is about whether the intervention of France, that was the promoter for an intervention that eventually resulted decisive for the demise of Ghaddafi, was caused by the intention of targeting Italy, a potential rival in the country for its prominence. Through the elements provided in the first chapter it has been clarified that this was not the case, but the causes are mostly internal to France: the real clash between the two diplomacies started after. In addition, if France did not had the support of other major powers its initiative would be useless, so it is evident that all of them had thought that some advantages would come or at least that the intervention was the right solution for the country or for themselves, even Italy.

Secondly, the rivalry between the two countries started from the late 2015-early 2016, since before the participants of the intervention chose the line of a government backed by the UN, leaving to the Libyans the burden of seeking a stabilization. The said rivalry started since the split of the Libyan leadership in two fronts, with France and Italy supporting two different factions. The reasons for the different endorsements, that had been explained in Chapter 2, divided the two countries on their Libyan agenda, starting a clash that had its peak in 2018-19. The rivalry from 2016 onwards, as stated, has contributed to the instability but was part of a broader division between the supporters of the two competitors. Thus, it added instability to an already unstable scenario. What is utmost relevant is the fact that the power and the influence of France and Italy has been overrated, and this comes mostly by the events of the end of the last decade, that showed that other actors have much more will of being protagonists in the country rather than the two, like Turkey that alone is reversing a situation that in the years before seemed doomed to the win of Haftar.

Thirdly, it has been pointed out how the enterprises and the companies of the two countries operating in Libya have not alimanted this rivalrous attitude, and also instability in the country, but on the contrary can be considered victims of the events, and this is shown by the many companies that left Libya. ENI and Total have acquired new assets, but their production since 2011 has always been below the pre-conflict level. The instability of the country is not caused by the will of improving the gains of the economic actors of France and Italy.

Finally, the instability of Libya did not emerge from a previous tension between France and Italy, but surely was alimented by the following divergence that come out; a reconciliation of the two parties, that still retain some power, could have been useful for giving a different image of the scenario. However, the causes of the failure of the Libyan exit from dictatorship have deeper and older reasons, with internal ones that go from the intrinsic differences within the Libyan society to the different interests of economical nature of its factions, and with international ones that pass from the will of emerging in the Mediterranean arena to the reflection of local rivalries in the Libyan sphere. Reducing the question to a matter of France versus Italy would minimise the global interest and turmoil that this conflict has created and would exaggerate the importance of these two countries in comparison to other important actors.

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RIASSUNTO IN ITALIANO

L'obiettivo di questo elaborato è quello di analizzare la contrapposizione instauratasi in Libia tra Francia ed Italia, di spiegare quanto tale rivalità sia tra le cause scatenanti del primo conflitto libico del 2011 e, soprattutto, se il perdurare di conflitti e instabilità politica all'interno del paese nordafricano dipenda da questo fattore. La tesi si divide in tre capitoli che coprono un arco temporale di circa 20 anni. Maggior risalto verrà dato agli anni dal 2010 al 2020, ovvero dalle premesse e lo scaturire del conflitto del 2011 ai giorni nostri. Verrà analizzata la sfera della politica interna libica per capire le ragioni e le cause di suddetta rivalità, ma verranno evidenziate anche questioni interne ai due stati europei, in relazione alle loro mosse nello scacchiere libico, oltre agli altri attori locali ed internazionali che hanno avuto un ruolo centrale nella questione libica. Infine, ci si concentrerà sulle attività e imprese economiche operanti in Libia dei due paesi europei sopracitati, al fine di accertare se esista una effettiva rivalità tra gli attori economici dei due paesi o se degli effetti sulla sfera economica dipendano dalla loro contrapposizione politica e diplomatica.

La Libia ha attuato un riallineamento ed una riappacificazione con la comunità internazionale dopo le frizioni dovute all'accusa, perpetrata con buona ragione, di aver intrattenuto rapporti e di aver finanziato gruppi terroristici di stampo antioccidentale. Questo ha fatto sì che il paese guidato sin dal 1969 dal generale Mu'ammar Gheddafi fosse liberato dal peso delle risoluzioni ONU che, negli anni 90, imposero severe sanzioni alla Libia, rea di non voler smettere di supportare attività terroristiche e di non permettere la risoluzione di controversie legate alle stesse, come, ad esempio, l'estradizione dei colpevoli dell'attentato di Lockerbie, ai quali veniva concesso asilo in Libia. La nuova attitudine mostrata da Gheddafi all'inizio degli anni 2000, volta a ripulire la reputazione della Libia all'interno della comunità internazionale, ha favorito il rifiorire di rapporti bilaterali con molti stati occidentali, in aggiunta all'annullamento delle sanzioni imposte dalle Nazioni Unite. Francia ed Italia hanno sfruttato l'occasione in maniera diversa: l'Italia era presente in Libia sin dal 59 attraverso l'ENI e, d'altronde, la Libia era stata una sua colonia, prima della Seconda Guerra Mondiale. Questo ha fatto di lei il primo paese per attività economiche e per influenza in Libia. D'altro canto, la Francia, nonostante fosse stata una delle due nazioni insieme, al Regno Unito, a costituire il protettorato libico prima dell'indipendenza del paese, aveva seguito le altre nazioni occidentali, lasciando la Libia a sé stessa preferendo investire e coltivare relazioni con altri paesi; tuttavia, mantenne le precedenti attività economiche possedute nel paese.

L'Italia aveva cordiali relazioni con la Libia, ma spesso scaturivano tensioni riguardo la questione della compensazione dei crimini italiani nel periodo coloniale. Questo portò ad un primo trattato d'amicizia tra i due paesi nel 1999, il comunicato Dini-Muntasser, che rimarcava l'esigenza di una compensazione e di una stretta collaborazione tra i due Stati. Inoltre, questo documento funse da apripista per il Trattato di Bengasi del 2008, firmato da Gheddafi e Berlusconi, che portò ad una piena risoluzione della questione, insieme anche a vantaggi economici e collaborazioni utili tra i due paesi. Berlusconi fu

dipinto dai media di settore come un grande amico ed alleato di Gheddafi. Inoltre, l'ENI, maggior compagnia estera operante in Libia, ottenne il rinnovo dei propri contratti di gas fino al 2047 e di petrolio fino al 2042.

Anche la Francia riconobbe l'importanza di tornare a fare affari con la Libia e questo può essere evinto prima dalla visita dell'allora presidente Chirac a Tripoli nel 2004 e poi dalla riappacificazione tra i due paesi su alcune controversie legate al passato oscuro della Libia, attraverso una serie di incontri, nel 2007, tra il nuovo presidente Sarkozy e il dittatore libico. Durante questi incontri, tenuti a luglio e in dicembre, furono firmati molti contratti tra imprese libiche e francesi, dal valore di più di 10 miliardi di dollari. Tuttavia, la maggior parte di questi contratti non vennero onorati dalla controparte libica, ad eccezione di alcuni contratti dell'Airbus, portando ad una frattura tra i due paesi. Se si considera anche che la Total, principale compagnia petrolifera francese, non aveva un ruolo principale nel paese, essendo solo il settimo operatore estero, si può notare che la Francia, a differenza dell'Italia, si trovava in una posizione di secondo piano in Libia.

Nel 2011 lo scoppio della Primavera araba ebbe i suoi effetti anche in Libia. Grandi movimenti di protesta sorsero nel paese, chiedendo maggiori diritti civili; Gheddafi rispose con l'uso della violenza contro i rivoltosi, anche con omicidi sistematici e l'utilizzo di mercenari. La Francia si impegnò molto per farla pagare a Gheddafi attraverso la proposta di sanzionare la Libia e di creare un embargo ed una *no-fly zone* nei confronti del paese, misure ulteriormente rafforzate da due risoluzioni dell'ONU che consentivano ai paesi membri di far rispettare le disposizioni con tutti i mezzi necessari. La Francia fu la prima a rispondere alla chiamata attraverso degli attacchi aerei, corrisposta poi da altri paesi come gli Stati Uniti o il Regno Unito. Infine, gli sforzi unilaterali vennero uniti sotto l'egida della NATO con la missione *Unified Protector*. L'Italia si trovò così costretta ad entrare in questa operazione, contro un suo partner fidato, per evitare una discriminazione qualora un nuovo regime fosse stato instaurato, anche per proteggere i propri investimenti in tal caso. La missione ebbe i suoi frutti ed aiutò gli insorti a deporre ed uccidere Gheddafi e ad istituire un governo di transizione che avrebbe dovuto guidare il paese ad una svolta democratica.

Le motivazioni che spinsero la Francia a facilitare la sostituzione di Gheddafi con un altro corso politico possono essere diverse. Si può discutere della voglia di riscattare una politica estera deludente nel paese, o di mostrare la propria risoluzione dopo lo smacco dei contratti. Infine, l'obiettivo desiderato poteva essere quello di avere un interlocutore più vicino con cui stringere relazioni economiche molto più vantaggiose rispetto a Gheddafi.

Dal 2011 si trovò a governare il paese il Governo Nazionale di Transizione. Tuttavia, ciò non coincise con la fine dell'instabilità libica. Difatti, il governo di transizione, appoggiato da tutte le forze che contribuirono a deporre Gheddafi, dovette fronteggiare i problemi rappresentati dalla frammentazione del campo di forze libico in varie fazioni e tribù spesso in conflitto tra loro: la massima espressione di questo fenomeno sarà l'affermazione di vari gruppi islamisti e fondamentalisti in varie città della Libia.

Inoltre, il GNT non riuscirà mai ad unificare il suo esercito a causa delle rimostranze delle varie tribù che si opposero al regime. Nel 2012 le prime elezioni libere in Libia videro l'affermazione di una maggioranza moderata nel nuovo parlamento libico, denominato GNC (*General National Congress*) che, tuttavia a causa della frammentazione dello stesso, porterà alla ribalta una maggioranza filo-islamista, nel 2013. Mai come in questo caso sembrò che la Libia potesse cadere in mano a tali gruppi. Nel 2014, tuttavia, il governo si trovò a dover indire nuove elezioni, e qui il generale Khalifa Haftar comparirà nella scena attraverso la cosiddetta "Operazione Dignità", una operazione militare tesa a conquistare i luoghi sotto il comando dei gruppi più estremisti. Le elezioni videro una grande disfatta dei gruppi islamisti, che scelsero di uscire dal GNC e fondarne uno parallelo. In questo periodo entrerà in campo anche il sedicente Stato Islamico, che si rivelerà una seria minaccia per il paese. L'anno seguente, attraverso la mediazione dell'ONU, fu deciso di creare un governo di accordo tra questi due schieramenti. Il punto di svolta fu l'accordo di Skhirat, nel quale fu deciso che Fayez al-Sarraj sarebbe diventato il capo del nuovo governo, nonostante la contrarietà del presidente del GNC.

In questo periodo Francia ed Italia non faranno molte iniziative unilaterali, ma si atterranno alle disposizioni delle Nazioni Unite, tentando nel frattempo di ricominciare con le estrazioni di petrolio e gas, ferme da tempo a causa del conflitto, per non generare una grave perdita. ENI e Total saranno le prime compagnie a riprendere la produzione.

Nel 2016, il nuovo governo guidato da Sarraj prese potere a Tripoli. Tuttavia, il vecchio parlamento nato dalle elezioni del 2014 scelse di non riconoscere il Governo di Accordo Nazionale e decise di mantenersi avulso da esso, diventando la cosiddetta Camera dei Rappresentanti, con base a Tobruch. Questo parlamento poteva contare sul supporto di Haftar e quel che rimaneva dell'esercito nazionale libico, che comunque era la forza armata più strutturata al tempo.

Nonostante la contrapposizione politica tra i due parlamenti che si verrà a creare, entrambe le fazioni dovranno fronteggiare l'ISIS, che intanto aveva conquistato porzioni di territorio e città importanti come Sirte e, parzialmente, Bengasi. Molte potenze straniere contribuirono alla lotta contro questo nemico: in queste circostanze si scoprirà dell'appoggio tacito della Francia e del suo presidente Hollande nei confronti di Haftar, in contrapposizione a tutte le altre nazioni, Italia in primis, che supportavano il GAN su impulso dell'ONU.

Prima di potersi scontrare tra di loro, i due governi dovranno essere costretti a sconfiggere l'ISIS, con il quale non poteva esistere mediazione. La sconfitta dello stato islamico si delinea in quell'anno (2016), nonostante rimarranno sparuti luoghi di resistenza del califfato per i due anni successivi. Il primo confronto armato tra truppe fedeli ai due schieramenti avvenne nel bacino di Sirte, dove Haftar conquistò dei pozzi petroliferi molto redditizi che una milizia legata al GAN aveva conquistato dagli islamisti. La camera di Tobruch aveva ottenuto il supporto di altri importanti attori internazionali, oltre alla Francia, come Russia, Egitto ed Emirati Arabi. Sarraj, d'altro canto, era supportato da Italia, Qatar e Turchia e, formalmente, ma non nei fatti, dall'intera comunità internazionale attraverso l'ONU.

Dal 2017, il nuovo presidente francese Macron rinnoverà il suo supporto ad Haftar, ma riconoscerà l'importanza di una risoluzione del conflitto per vie diplomatiche. Per questo organizzerà molti incontri per cercare una mediazione, come il primo tenuto al castello di Le Celle nel quale verrà deciso di tenere delle elezioni per formare un governo finalmente unico per la Libia. L'Italia, invece, firmò un memorandum d'intesa con il GAN per il controllo e il blocco delle partenze dei migranti irregolari intenzionati ad andare in Europa.

Nel 2018, intenzionato a battere un colpo in vista delle elezioni che si sarebbero dovute svolgere a fine anno, Haftar iniziò un'operazione militare per strappare il controllo di alcune aree alle tribù Tebu del Fezzan orientale. Queste tribù rivali dei tuareg, che controllano la zona occidentale del Fezzan, sono considerate dalla Francia dei terroristi per la loro azione rivoltosa nei confronti del vicino Ciad. Per questo, l'operazione di Haftar in Ciad ha suscitato l'impressione di essere stata svolta per fare un favore all'alleato francese, che la supporterà anche militarmente. L'Italia, dall'altro lato, proverà a creare una base militare nella zona dei tuareg, vicini al GAN, ma non vi riuscirà.

Per cementare la riconciliazione tra i due parlamenti verranno organizzate due conferenze, una dalla Francia a Parigi e una dall'Italia a Palermo. Il 2018 rappresenterà l'anno di maggior tensione tra Italia e Francia, soprattutto a causa delle schermaglie mediatiche, spesso esagerate, causate dalle due nuove forze di governo italiane, la Lega e il Movimento 5 Stelle, e i loro rispettivi leader. Questo porterà al ritiro dell'ambasciatore francese in Italia. La data delle elezioni intanto slitterà per l'incapacità del GAN a controllare stabilmente il territorio della Tripolitania.

Tuttavia, l'operazione di Haftar nel Fezzan sarà solo la premessa a qualcosa di più grosso. Infatti, contravvenendo ai futuri piani per le elezioni, Haftar e il suo ENL cominceranno l'assedio di Tripoli, causando la fine del sogno di avere elezioni tra le due parti. Tuttavia, Haftar non riuscirà ad ottenere una vittoria a causa della resistenza del GAN.

Nel 2020 l'ingresso in campo della Turchia con le sue forze regolari ribalterà le sorti del confronto, causando una rapida ripresa dell'alleato Sarraj e mostrando la debolezza di Italia e Francia.

Per quanto riguarda l'analisi delle diverse ragioni delle scelte di Italia e Francia di supportare due diversi schieramenti, si può parlare di interessi diversi. L'Italia scelse Sarraj per il suo controllo sulla Tripolitania, regione vicina alle coste italiane, dalla quale può controllare più facilmente il flusso di migranti. Inoltre, la maggior parte dei pozzi e dei giacimenti dell'ENI in Libia si trovano in un'area sotto il controllo del governo di Tripoli.

La Francia, invece, sceglie Haftar sia per motivi geopolitici, principalmente per la vicinanza all'Egitto che si schiera con Haftar sin dalla prima ora, sia per motivi di interessi nella Cirenaica, sia perché Haftar si è sempre dipinto un paladino dell'antiterrorismo, portando la Francia a sfruttarlo per estirpare alcuni gruppi non graditi dall'Eliseo, come i citati Tebu, considerati terroristi.

Tornando al punto di vista principale di questa tesi, la rivalità tra Francia ed Italia ha sicuramente contribuito ad alimentare l'instabilità del paese. Questo è causato sia dalla assenza di una politica

comune, sia per lo sfruttamento francese dell'esercito di Haftar per scopi personali che hanno solo causato un prolungamento del conflitto, sia per le vendite di armi ai due schieramenti che quasi sicuramente sono avvenute da parte di entrambi i paesi, soprattutto la Francia, contravvenendo all'embargo sulle armi presente dal 2011. Tuttavia, questa rivalità fa parte di un quadro più ampio, dove molte forze straniere rivali tra loro hanno scelto di scontrarsi indirettamente in Libia, più la miriade di milizie e tribù presenti internamente al paese. Francia e Italia, se hanno contribuito all'instabilità, probabilmente non l'avrebbero impedita agendo diversamente.

L'ultimo capitolo di questa tesi riguarda il rapporto tra le aziende Italiane e francesi in Libia. Da quello che si può evincere, tra le aziende dei due paesi non esiste una aperta rivalità all'interno della Libia, piuttosto, tendono ad agire in maniera parallela. Difatti, esiste una grande collaborazione fuori dal paese tra aziende Francesi ed Italiane. L'ENI e la Total condividono molte concessioni, come in Algeria, e mostrano un atteggiamento usuale nel settore dell'energia, la cosiddetta collaborazione competitiva. Inoltre, molte aziende operanti in Libia provengono da partecipazioni congiunte di quote dei due paesi, come nel caso di Fincantieri che sta perfezionando la fusione col gruppo francese Chantiers de l'Atlantique. Tuttavia, in Libia, non esistono partecipazioni congiunte ed ogni azienda agisce per conto proprio, curando i propri interessi e non interferendo con l'altro. Questo può essere visto come una ripercussione della rivalità politica dei due paesi sulle proprie imprese, che si trovano costrette a cercare altri partner. Soprattutto la collaborazione tra ENI e Total sarebbe molto fruttuosa, ma essa probabilmente viene bloccata per ragioni politiche. Si può vedere come l'ingerenza della politica sulle attività economiche sia principalmente di parte francese, visto che l'ENI spesso opera in paesi che hanno pessime relazioni con l'Italia, come l'Egitto.

Infine, si può dire, senza dubbio, che l'instabilità libica non è stata causata dalla rivalità tra le due economie o per avvantaggiare una delle due, soprattutto perché tutte le aziende operanti in Libia hanno subito un calo di produzione e pesanti perdite. Tuttavia, è vero che le aziende dei due paesi in Libia hanno dovuto adattarsi a questo clima di tensione, a causa di forti commistioni politiche da ambo le parti che hanno impedito un riavvicinamento tra Italia e Francia in Libia attraverso l'economia.

Per concludere, si possono trarre tre conclusioni riguardo il conflitto libico e il rapporto tra Italia e Francia. Per prima cosa, l'intervento del 2011 non è stato mirato a colpire l'Italia indirettamente, piuttosto le ragioni dovrebbero essere trovate in motivi interni alla stessa Francia. Secondo, i due paesi si sono trovati ad appoggiare fazioni diverse per motivi diversi, e questo ha contribuito ad alimentare la loro rivalità; tuttavia, le ragioni non sono legate al voler prevalere l'uno sull'altro, ma, anche qui ci sono ragioni interne che hanno creato queste frizioni. Terzo, è chiaro come le imprese dei due paesi non siano state la causa né della rivalità né dell'instabilità libica, possono, invece, essere considerate vittime di esse: della prima per le gravi perdite economiche e della seconda per il mancato sviluppo di una collaborazione tra le imprese dei due paesi.

Infine, nonostante si possa dire che una politica comune delle due nazioni avrebbe potuto aiutare nell'ottica di gestione di una ipotetica rivalità, va detto che le due sono state costrette a scontrarsi dalle circostanze e sicuramente il loro ruolo è sullo stesso piano di altri attori internazionali, se non inferiore. Ridurre l'argomento ad una questione tra Italia e Francia sarebbe riduttivo e minimizzerebbe la complessità dello scenario libico e delle rivalità e tensioni internazionali che il conflitto ha causato.