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**Libya: The Pursuit of National Interests through The Cases of Italy,
United Kingdom, and France.**

Prof. Rosario Forlenza

SUPERVISOR

Prof. Pasquale Ferrara

CO-SUPERVISOR

Michele Pertosa 641352

CANDIDATE

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1. ITALIAN'S HISTORICAL, ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC TIES.

1.1. Historical background: the colonialist program and the fascist era.

Since the birth of the Kingdom of Italy, the relationship between Italy and the African coasts has been of great importance since they represent the two shores of the Mediterranean sea. This is especially true in the case of Libya, both for its geographical proximity and for the historical ties that bind them. The closeness among the countries is clearly perceived by the distance of 355 Km between the Sicilian island of Lampedusa and Tripoli. Moreover, Libya has always been present in the Italian foreign policy, both during the Kingdom of Italy led by the Savoia dynasty, the twenty year period of Fascist rule and throughout the Republican period. However, this territory's significance for Italy is accompanied by its perennial instability; this feature can be shown in the temporal coincidence that marks the beginning of the Italian colonial period in 1911 with the invasion of Libya, seeking *"un posto al sole"* – "a place in the sun", and the death of Ghaddafi exactly one hundred years later, in 2011. *"As in a terrible and specular irony, if the Italian militant activism of that time corresponded very few successes on the ground, the essentially passive approach (or reaction to the actions of others) held by Rome did not produce better results".*¹

The Italian colonial adventure starts on the one hand because of the desire not to be absent from the partitioning of the African continent by the European superpowers; on the other hand, the government was pressured by the need to solve social and demographic problems, especially finding an outlet for the overabundance of the proletarian population.

Above all, however, it was the establishment of the French protectorate in Tunisia that, by cancelling the hopes of peaceful Italian penetration into the country, encouraged subsequent governments to more energetic action in the African regions which weren't yet part of the other European sphere of influences. The prospect of Italy controlling both coasts of the Street of Sicily, the hearth of the old *Mare Nostrum*, conflicted with the British Empire plan in the Mediterranean area. This is due to the fact that Italy would have developed the domination of the channel which links the Eastern and Western Mediterranean basins. That is why the British backed the French government claim over Tunisia. Consequently, in 1881, France, through the action of its Prime Minister Jules Ferry, opted for the intervention in Tunisia. Thus, the North African state, disputed between Italy and France, became a French protectorate by treaty.

¹ A. Folco Biagini, *Tripoli, Italia, La politica di potenza nel Mediterraneo e la crisi dell'ordine internazionale*, p. 8, Castelvechi, 2020.

As a result, from the Italian perspective, what has become known as the Tunis Slap, convinced the government to begin a colonial policy. Thus, this foreign policy failure led to the resignation from office by Benedetto Cairoli, the Italian Prime Minister, on 29 May 1881. Therefore, in 1882, Italy began its penetration into Eritrea.

The 29 of September 1911, the new government held by Giovanni Giolitti declared war to the Ottoman Empire. The Italian military penetration in those territories prompted the emergence of hostile movements to the aggressors among the natives. The resistance movement had a deeper meaning for the locals, since they weren't only claiming their independence, but their struggles were also blending religious beliefs and moral duties; the *jihād* against the foreign invader was an extraordinarily common principle between the local populations. This is because all the north African territories were targets of the expansionist ambitions of the European colonial powers: Algeria in 1830 and Tunisia in 1881 fell under French control, then the British occupied Egypt in 1882. Hence, the only territories left in the Mediterranean shore of Africa were Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the desertic region of Fezzan, all three of them Ottoman *vilayet* 'administrative divisions'.

It is worth to have a look at the international relations system of the time, since the big powers' foreign policy choices cannot be split from the balances of international alliances. The Italian Kingdom aspired to introduce itself as an effective actor in the 'European concert', so as to emerge from the position of international isolation. This took the form of the Italian presence in the international commissions set up to resolve the political and territorial issues that arose after the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878. Finally, in 1882 Italy joined the Dual Alliance formed by the German Empire and Austria-Hungary in 1879. An important boost for the Italian decision to join this defensive alliance has evidently been the above-mentioned Tunis slap by the French; thus, the need to register diplomatic support could explain the ratio about the alliance with the historical oppressor, still occupying the Italian lands in the North-East '*terre irredente*', especially Trento, Trieste and Istria. From this moment on, the Italian foreign policy developed in two directions: in the Balkans, where Austria-Hungary and Russia were very active, and in the Mediterranean. Both the Balkan area and North Africa were subject to Ottoman hegemony and desired by the European powers, willing to give the *coup de grace* to the 'sick man of Europe'. In 1882, the Italian colonialist policy officially begins with the purchase of Assab, Eritrean port in western coast of the Red Sea. Then, between 1884 and 1885 the town of Massawa was conquered under Agostino Depretis government; later Italy obtained the protectorate over the Somalian Sultanates of Hobyo, Majeerteen and Abgaal and Geledi. The Italian Colony of Eritrea was founded in 1890 and the Italian Somalia Colony in 1908. However, the intertwining of the two chessboards of the Italian foreign policy led the new Giolitti government to decide to declare war against the Ottomans in Libya in September 1911. In particular, a factor of concern for the Piedmontese statesman was the possible willingness of the German empire to begin a colonial policy in the Mediterranean. After the start of the conflict, the Italian troops occupied the Dodecanese islands. The Italian propaganda for intervention was exemplified by journalists such as the nationalist Enrico Corradini,

who debated about "Italy's Desire" and "Tripoli's Moment", accompanied by patriotic music pieces such as "*Tripoli bel suol d'amore*" – "Tripoli, beautiful soil of love".

So, fifty years after the unification of the Italian peninsula, the Libyan war was set off in order to realize its Mediterranean vocation through the conquest of the coveted 'fourth shore', (Romano, 1977) so as to have 'a place in the sun' in accordance with the status of a great European nation. The Italian military intervention suffered more difficulties than expected; for instance, in the battle of *Shar al Shatt* the Italian army has witnessed the biggest slaughter of soldiers prior to World War 1, since 503 Italians were killed. It is worth to mention the Italian technological development, especially in the fields of aircrafts and radio transmissions, which facilitated the conquest of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in one year of military operations. Guglielmo Marconi himself was charged with the task of equipping the aircraft with radio and two-way radios, capable of communicating immediately with ground targets. The 1st of November 1912 at Ain Zara, in Tripolitania, Tenente G. Gavotti dropped four explosive devices against Ottoman positions; this was the first aerial bombing operation, even if its effects were more psychological than destructive.

The 18 of October 1912, through the signing of the treaty of Lausanne, or Ouchy, the Ottoman Empire conceded its rights over Tripoli and Cyrenaica to Italy. Thus, the latter established its civil and military administration over these territories; consequently, it put an end to the Arab and Ottoman resistance, reflected by the figures of Umar al Mukhtar and Ismail Enver Pasha. An amnesty was issued for the Arab population that had participated in the conflict; Italy paid compensation to the Sublime Porte for the loss of territories. However, Italy didn't return the occupied Aegean islands. The 9th of January 1913 the two military governorates of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were constituted, both subjected to the dependences of the ministry of the Colonies. From Tripolitania, the Kingdom of Italy started its penetration in the desertic area of Fezzan. Hence, the conquest of Libya in 1911-1912 "*guaranteed Italy the international prestige to which it aspired and which the defeat at Adua, in Ethiopia, in 1896 had obscured. Libya therefore took on the characteristics of a promised land, fertile and rich in water, the 'fourth shore' where one could go, just beyond the Strait of Sicily, an expedient to stem the massive overseas emigration that had marked those early years of the 20th century*".²

The key to understanding the Italian commitment in Libya has been interpreted in various ways; Benedetto Croce perceives Giolitti's decision as deeply related to the changing international context. The Tunis slap delivered by the French in 1881 and then the second Moroccan crisis prompted in 1911 in Agadir between Paris and Berlin have brought Rome the awareness of not being able to escape its ambition to project its influence in the Mediterranean without a clear foreign policy action. In conclusion, the Italian victory against the dying

² A. Folco Biagini, *Tripoli, Italia, La politica di potenza nel Mediterraneo e la crisi dell'ordine internazionale*, Castelvechi, 2020, p. 25.

Ottoman Empire produced deep consequences both in the domestic and foreign policy. The colonization of Libya began in 1911, as depicted in this brief introduction, and lasted until 1943 when the fascist regime collapsed on itself.

The advent of fascism on the Italian political scene led to a new period in Libyan affairs. The imperialist policy developed by Benito Mussolini gave a strong relevance to the Mediterranean area; hence, Libya would play a prominent role. The first strong divergence from the preceding liberal governments was the determination of defeating the local resistance morally and militarily. Between the 1923 and 1932, Italy pushed for the effective conquest of the Libyan territory, which witnessed a strong presence of the *Sanusiyya* in Cyrenaica, an Islamic order; in fact, the head of this organization held the title of Emir as recognized by the British and by the Italians. This was so because of the Accord of al-Rajma of October 1920, in which the title of Amir of Cyrenaica was granted to Idris al-Sanusi, “*allowing him to administer autonomously the oases around Kufra, Jalu, Jaghbub, Awjila and Ajdabiya*”.³ The conflict with the indigenous forces lasted from 1923 to 1932, the harsher battles were fought in the mountainous area of Jebel Akhdar, where the resistance movement of Umar al Mukhtar was tougher. In 1930, the Italian troops conquered the Fezzan region. One year later, the last stronghold of the resistance, the oasis of *Kufra*, was occupied. The fascist colonialist policy continued its path by merging the protectorates of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the newly conquered Fezzan in 1934 forming the new colony of Libya; then, Italo Balbo was then appointed as Libyan Governor General. The Marshall of the Air Force pursued the work started by his predecessors, the former Governors of Tripolitania Emilio De Bono and Pietro Badoglio, that is the mass peasant colonization of the African colony. The shifted political milieu, meaning that the fascist’s policy preference wanted to direct the main efforts towards the prestige of the project rather than being interested in the costs and troubles of colonization in a vast and desert area, gave Balbo more space of maneuver than his forerunners.

So, the Libyan territory had to be used as an outlet for thousands of landless farmers who otherwise emigrated to foreign lands might reclaim their own farms.⁴ Politicians and diplomats like Di San Giuliano and Sonnino, supported population colonies as a method to sustain Italy's diplomatic aims in the Mediterranean and to appease the state's social discontent. Socialists as Antonio Labriola also shared these thoughts, perceived as tools to finally put an end to emigration. Without a colony like Libya, Italian emigrants would be distributed to the five corners of the planet, where they could never hope to gather in such high numbers as to establish a new homeland. Exactly because of this, “*emigrants ... would no longer be emigrants*”⁵ as they would “*populate a new patria*”.⁶ However,

³ D. Vandewalle, *A history of modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 28.

⁴ C. Segré, *Italo Balbo and the colonization of Libya*, p. 143, 1972.

⁵ A. Labriola, *Scritti vari di filosofia e politica*, Bari 1906, p. 439.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

strands of civil society were against a conceptualization of a colonialist policy in these terms; for instance, even Count Giuseppe Volpi, Tripolitania Governor from 1921 to 1925, and Baron Franchetti, the planner of the Eritrean colonization during the Crispi government, were uncertain about the feasibility of mass colonization; the environmental conditions were much more difficult than in Eastern African plateaus. Undoubtedly, “*state aid would be justified in Libya since the colonization would be in the national interest*”,⁷ but the Libyan problem would be far more intricate and costly than the actions in the Horn of Africa. These opinions, underpinned by economic concerns weren’t fitting with Mussolini’s ambitious objectives. As the former head of the Italian nationalist Association, Luigi Federzoni, wrote in a private memorandum in 1927 to Mussolini, the issue of Libyan colonization was not an end in itself. The dilemma of colonizing Libya was truly a foreign policy conundrum; it would have led to the ultimate aim of having “*part of Africa's Mediterranean shores Italian in fact as well as in law*”.⁸ In order to fulfill this elaborate project, Balbo, in May 1938 revealed his plan for the *Ventimila*: each year for five years in succession 20,000 colonists would have been settled, and the long- term goal was having 500,000 Italian inhabitants in Libya by mid-century. “*Between 1936 and 1942 Italy would spend two-thirds of its investment in Libya on land reclamation and agricultural development, in anticipation of further settlement*”.⁹ This boost of Italian emigration served to achieve the fascist strategic design, linking together several aspects: obtaining an Italian Fourth shore under the legal aspect; the intensive colonization would also have signified that the integration would be a reality, not just mere legislation; then, “*the transfer of extensive manpower to the colony would strengthen Italy's military-strategic position in the Mediterranean*”;¹⁰ moreover, the fascist ideology of economic self-sufficiency ‘*autarchia*’ matched well with these policies. The migration of landless peasants would also conform to the old mantra of “land to the peasants” - “*la terra ai contadini*”.

However, all the fascists plans and investments in the *Africa Settentrionale Italiana* faded at the beginning of the second global conflict. Between 1941 and the end of 1942 this land witnessed the clashes between the Axis forces and the Allied ones. With the defeat of the Italian and German troops in the second battle of El-Alamein between the end of October and the beginning of November 1942, the British occupied Cyrenaica and Tripolitania and the French captured the Fezzan. As a result, the Italian dream of the ‘fourth shore’ could be said to have ended bitterly. Consequently, Idris al-Mahdi al-Sanusi, the Emir of Cyrenaica, who backed the British at the outbreak of the hostilities, returned to Bengasi where he established his government. The Great Powers that prevailed in the 2nd World War; Great Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union, started to pursue their interests in the three Libyan regions. The defeated Italy still held legal sovereignty over Libya, but the former Allied countries agreed that Italy would need to relinquish its sovereignty. As stated in treaty of peace with Italy

⁷ C. Segré, *Italo Balbo and the colonization of Libya*, 1972, p. 144.

⁸ US National Archives, *Official Records of Italian Government Agencies (1922-44)*, T-586 (II34) 070574.

⁹ D. Vandewalle, *A history of modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 32.

¹⁰ C. Segré, *Italo Balbo and the colonization of Libya*, 1972, p. 151.

in Section IV-Italian Colonies in Article 23.1: “*Italy renounces all right and title to the Italian territorial possessions in Africa, i.e. Libya, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland*”, and Article 23.3: “*The final disposal of these possessions shall be determined jointly by the Governments of the Soviet Union, of the United Kingdom, of the United States of America, and of France within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty, in the manner laid down in the joint declaration of February 10, 1947, issued by the said Governments, which is reproduced in Annex XP*”. The four powers, however, couldn’t agree on the future setting of the three provinces. The issue was ultimately submitted to a Four Power Commission that arrived in Libya in 1948. By that time, the general political consensus of the Libyan population in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania leaned towards the unity of the country; in fact, the Commission stated the almost unanimous appeal of independence by the local population. The dynamics between the two new superpowers prompted by the Cold War progressively intruded upon the growing power struggles. After three years of virtual diplomatic stalemate, the Libyan matter about the disposal of the former Italian colonies, was passed on to the United Nations General Assembly on 15 September 1948.

Nevertheless, the Italians still struggled to gain back some kind of influence in the area; the newborn Republic tried to pursue again its ancient ambition through the diplomatic work of the Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza with Ernest Bevin, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The two countries were striving to prevent a United Nations decision; hence, in May 1949, they signed the Bevin-Sforza plan, proposing ten-year trusteeships for France in Fezzan, for Great Britain in Cyrenaica, and for Italy in Tripolitania. Then, all of Libya would be granted independence at the end of ten years. On the other hand, intense protests in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania have shown one of the few tangible accords between the two main centers of power. It was now clear that there was a strong internal opposition to split these lands in trusteeships for the provinces. Furthermore, a resolution based on the Bevin-Sforza plan was defeated in the United Nations General Assembly. Since the resolution was voted paragraph by paragraph, “*in plenary session, a vote of 33 in favor of Italian trusteeship over Tripolitania, with 17 against and 8 abstentions, fell one vote short of the required two-thirds majority. The combination of Arab-Asiatic and Soviet bloc votes defeated this paragraph*”.¹¹ Thus, the Libyan issue was referred to its Fall 1949 session. By that time, the overall attitude among the Four powers and within the U.N. General Assembly had shifted to plans for actual independence for the three united provinces. Thus, in September, Great Britain had already unilaterally opted to appoint Sayyid Idris as the ruler of Cyrenaica; hence, any speculation about independence had necessarily to drive the Emir into a privileged position so as to guard British and western interests. Five months later even France set up a transitional government in Fezzan and created a Representative Assembly. By that time, the General Assembly had started to draft a resolution to decide upon the means and

¹¹ B. Rivlin, *The Italian Colonies and the General Assembly*,: International Organization , Aug., 1949, Vol. 3, No. 3, University of Wisconsin Press, p.467.

timing of Libyan independence as a unified country. Finally it adopted a resolution on 21 November 1949, stipulating that the country would become independent no later than 1 January 1952. Libya finally achieved its independence on 24 December 1951. As Vandewalle notes, the variation between the solution of the Libyan institutional structure suggested by the Bevin-Sforza plan and final U.N. General Assembly resolution “*was clearly influenced by unfolding larger political and economic concerns. Great Britain and the United States seemingly concluded, in the context of the Cold War, that an independent Libya would serve their interests better.*”¹² That’s because Libya as a United Nations trusteeship wouldn’t have been able to establish military bases and promise outside powers access to them, nor to keep existing bases; while, as an independent nation this would have been possible. It is worth to quote the words of the first US ambassador to the United Kingdom of Libya, Henry Villard: “*A glance at the map shows the strategic value of Libya ... without which there might have been little interest in the emergence of an Arab kingdom in North Africa ... if Libya had passed under any form of United Nations trusteeship, it would have been impossible for the territory to play a part in the defense arrangements of the free world*”. Ultimately, the three western powers, now in open confrontation against the Soviet enemy, agreed that the U.S.S.R. should be kept from gaining a foothold on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, the southern flank of the Atlantic Alliance.

The colonialist program of the Italian Kingdom, by now the Italian Republic, had pushed for the establishment of the ‘*Quarta Sponda*’, which had been centered less on economic interest than on national pride, and as an outlet for surplus population. The native Arab population was not included in the colonial institutions; therefore, differently from Egypt or Tunisia, the colonial economy had not created any strong local commercial or agricultural classes whose fortunes had been tied to colonial interests.¹³ Ultimately, only 10 years after the end of the Italian colonialism, Libya thus became an independent nation under King Idris rule. However, the different historical regions continued to hold different views and had remained focused largely around local interests: the suspicion between the Sanusi factions in Cyrenaica and the Tripolitania’s inhabitants disallowed the spurring of a nationalist ideology that could have prompted such a national path to complete the process of independence. In fact, mainly in Tripolitania, the people persisted in recognizing themselves with family, tribe or at most as part of ‘*ummat al-Islām*’, the Islamic community of the faithful. Notwithstanding this, the western Alliance had, for strategic reasons and Cold War concerns, opted for the creation of the United Kingdom of Libya. A kingdom composed by the two northern regions whose interests and stances differed significantly; moreover, the third province, Fezzan, had barely appeared into the negotiations. Here's why, finally, “*in a sense, the United Kingdom*

¹² D. Vandewalle, *A history of modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 39.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

*of Libya was an accidental state: created by, and at the behest of, Great Power interests and agreed to by the local provinces who feared other alternatives”.*¹⁴

1.2. Enrico Mattei and ENI's role: the energy policies.

*“I am like Francis Drake: a privateer in the service of my country”;*¹⁵ this is how Enrico Mattei depicted himself in an interview with Eugenio Scalfari and Arrigo Benedetti. Mattei has to be considered as one of the key figures in Italian foreign policy after World War II. In fact, he became the protagonist of the emergence of a new strategy, much more attentive to the defense of national interests and energy independence. His line can be traced back to the policy of the most advanced sectors of the ruling class of left-wing Christian Democrats, like Giovanni Gronchi and Amintore Fanfani, and some socialists of those years. He disrupted the world of hydrocarbons by closing agreements of great importance with third world countries, initiating political alliances with the leaders most hostile to the forces of the West. Eni's activity was involved mainly in Morocco, Libya, Jordan, Egypt, Iran and Algeria. The strategic significance of ENI, in particular its activities in Libya from the '50's to nowadays, has been its importance as agent of economic growth during Italy's 'economic miracle'. In fact, this state-owned enterprise has been a crucial player in the transformation of the country, started as a result of the Second World War ending. So, the Italian Republic managed to renovate itself from a mostly agrarian nation to an industrial state thanks to the supply of a cheap source of energy to the Italian industry through Enrico Mattei's presidency. The profound changes that occurred just in a decade can be displayed by the data; for instance, in the 1951 Census, 42 percent of the people were employed in *"agriculture, hunting and fishing"*; this statistic grew to 57 percent in the southern regions. Ten years later the agrarian sector covered the 30 percent of the population, while 38 percent was hired in the industry sector and 32 percent in services.¹⁶

Moreover, Eni had a huge impact on the Italian postwar history not only for economic reasons, but even because of political and cultural motivations. In addition to the successes of state entrepreneurship in supplying the national industry with energy that is alternative to the international oil cartel, the postwar political history cannot be grasped without observing the impact of state-owned enterprises, of which ENI is the one of the principal of the newborns, in the mechanism of consensus-building in a very cleaved political environment. ENI, the largest of the new public's industrial creations, *“presents an all too clear example of the interweaving*

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

¹⁵ E. Scalfari, F. Rosi, *Il caso Mattei: un corsaro al servizio della repubblica*, p. 58.

¹⁶ P. Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988*, London, 1990, p. 219.

*(compenetrazione) of economic and political interests that has marked the history of Italy's mixed economy".*¹⁷ The creation of ENI from AGIP in 1953 marks the representation of the state's decision to compete against private capital. The political origins were rooted in the *Códice di Camandoli* (the Camandoli principles), drawn up by a group of Catholic intellectuals who met in 1943, just before the collapse of the Fascist regime, at a religious retreat in *Camandoli*, Tuscany. This assembly debated about the standards that should structure the country's economic sphere after the war would be over; between them there were men who were to become notorious political figures of the Italian 1st Republic: Giulio Andreotti, Giorgio La Pira, Aldo Moro, and Paolo Emilio Taviani. At the heart of the *Códice* were the theories of Catholic solidarity together with socialist ideals.

ENI and the government of the Kingdom of Libya initiated interactions during Mattei's presidency. The first concession application by AGIP Mineraria (Azienda Generale Italiana Petrolio - General Italian Oil Company) was submitted on May 5 1957, encompassing three areas of 18,858, 17,464 and 9,051 square kilometers located in the desert of Fezzan. The Libyan prime Minister, Ben Halim, had *"exerted a continuous pressure to present as quickly as possible the celerity as possible the concession requests related to some areas generically indicated by him personally on a map of the country and located in the territory of Fezzan"*.¹⁸ The particularity of Eni policies, brought by the start of Mattei's presidency in March 1953, consisted in the different kind of economic interactions between producing and consuming countries. Usually, the other western companies sealed contracts involving 50% of the profits to the producing country; the revolutionary formula applied by ENI allocated to 75% of the profit the producing country instead of the typical 50%. This different profit share was distributed as follows: 50% directly into the state assets while the residual 25% was meant for the local oil company. This method allowed ENI not only to raise the producing countries' income, but also to become the source of technological development in third world countries that had never experienced it before.

This is especially true for the Libyan case, where the heritage of the Italian colonialism brought to a particular lack of technical development for the nation as a whole. This allowed ENI to enter the oil business by giving third world countries the keys to their own development. The new energetic policy pursued by ENI immediately ran into disagreement of *"the British and American majors, as soon as they learned that AGIP Mineraria was signing an agreement to obtain concessions in Libya, threatened the government to stop their drilling in the Arab country if ENI or its subsidiaries entered the Libyan oil market"*.¹⁹ In addition, even the new Libyan Prime Minister, Abdul Majid Kubar, was not interested in obtaining contracts that would assure fairness between the parts in the resources exploitation: the concerns dealt more with personal gains, for instance through another

¹⁷ F. Carnevali, *State Enterprise and Italy's "Economic Miracle": The Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi, 1945—1962* *Enterprise & Society*, JUNE 2000, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 249-278, Cambridge University Press p. 251.

¹⁸ ASEN, *Fondo ENI, Direzione estera, Libia*, b. 91, f. 2229, *Situazione attuale dei permessi in Libia (nota del dott. Jaboli)*, 28/04/1957.

¹⁹ ASEN, *Fondo ENI, Direzione estera, Libia*, b. 92, f. 2231, *Lettera dell'Ing. Nanni all'Ing Crosti*, 14/02/1958.

formula, that of *'bacscisc'*, the tips that allowed agents of western oil companies to obtain the best concessions. The underlying purpose of this United States and Great Britain refuse, as M. Cricco infers from sources coming from the ENI's Historical Archives, was the strategic significance for the Anglo-Americans to locate and control an important source of oil located west of the Suez Canal; a too desirable outlook to be questioned by the alternative method shaped by the former Christian-democrat partisan. However, in 1958 the Italian company's stubbornness managed to find an intermediary cited as Othman, who obtained a meeting of some ENI officials with the Prime Minister Majid Kubar. The Libyan government declared itself as interested in starting a partnership because of the company excellent technological reputation; likewise, *"for the more favorable conditions than those that the Libyan government had been able to obtain from other companies currently operating"*.²⁰ So, ENI through its private company CORI 'Compagnia Ricerca Idrocarburi', decided to apply for a concession in Cyrenaica, thus gaining Concession n. 82 comprising an area of about 30,000 square kilometers between the oases of *Gialo* and *Jaghub*. The discovery of the so-called *"Rimal Oil Field"* along with the advantageous formula developed by ENI's President led the Libyans to grant directly to AGIP two new concessions in 1966: the No. 100 and 101. Apart from research activities, ENI obtained contracts for building infrastructures for distributing methane from Libya to Italy for 20 years. In May 1969, the company brilliant results led to another deal between AGIP Mineraria and the Libyan government, which allowed the former to acquire three new authorizations adjacent to Concession no. 100, covering around 20,000 square kilometers. The arrangement provided that the Libyan State oil company, LIPETCO (Libyan General Petroleum Corporation), owned the mineral rights in these territories; however, AGIP would have participated in the extraction processes, thus sharing the profits with the LIPETCO in a joint venture. This agreement, signed in 1969 in Tripoli, determined that ENI's task comprised promoting Libyan economic development, which covers the building of infrastructures, refineries and even a system of service stations as to boost the Libyan domestic market. Furthermore, it *"represented a sort of life insurance for ENI's interests in Libya during the following years, under the government of Muammar Gaddafi. When the Colonel came to power in September 1969, in fact, he decided to use oil as a political weapon and began a long tug-of-war with the oil companies operating in Libya, including ENI"*.²¹

It is a fact that, through the renowned "Mattei formula", in the '50's ENI started and then kept remarkable relationships with the North African oil-producing nations during the next decades. Eni policies have found particular prosperity with Libya, both during the United Kingdom of Libya established in 1951 and then after the coup actuated by Muammar Qhadafi in 1969. Thus, the activities started in Libya represented the first solution to the oil supply problem, the strong Italian need to find valid solutions to the growing internal energy demands,

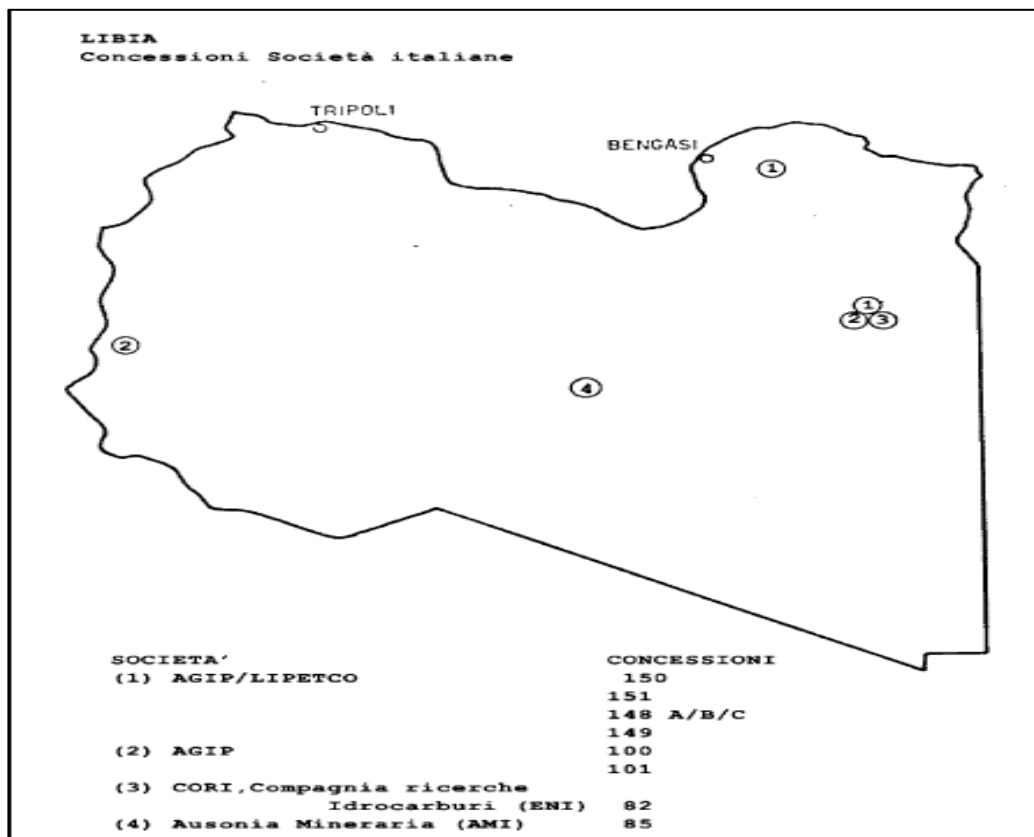
²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ M. Cricco, *L'ENI in Libia: dal Trattato Italo-Libico del 1956 ai negoziati degli anni Settanta*, Nuova Rivista Storica, 2014, p. 561.

due to the '*miracolo economico*' which changed the Italian economic outlook in a decade, projecting the young Republic towards the technological and industrial development. Moreover, the importance of this relation with the former Italian 'forth shore' also concerns the strategical aspect: Libya's geographical proximity to Italy and the important opportunities granted to the Italian oil firm and its consociates led to the securement of important contracts. These agreements would develop the Libyan scarce infrastructures; a country that, until the discovery of oil fields in 1959, was still the "*scatolone di sabbia*" of Italian colonial memory, as defined in 1911 by Gaetano Salvemini.

In conclusion, the relations between ENI and Libya led to the finding of important oil fields; the peculiarity of the "*Mattei Formula*", being convenient for the producing nations, persuaded Libyan leadership to give directly numerous concessions to AGIP.

Enrico Mattei died prematurely in a mysterious plane accident in Bascapé, near Pavia, the 27 of October 1962. Mattei took off from Catania to return to Milan on a twin-engine Morane Saulnier. However, the decease of the first ENI President, the architect of the Italian industrial development through a state-owned company, didn't stop ENI from pursuing its strategic interests. In fact, in May 1969, the signing of a new treaty between AGIP and Libyan government granting the Italian Company three new permits and a participation agreement between the Libyan State owned Company and the AGIP, envisaged the two actors sharing of profits through a joint venture. This combination of a policy convenient for the producing states and the principle of participation encouraged the entry into force of the 1969 agreement, where ENI was authorized to keep the 50 % of its assets under the new rule. The ENI-Libya collaboration new important results also during the Seventies, in the framework of the two main agreements between Libyan and Italian Governments, signed respectively in 1974 and 1975, and thanks to the new concession obtained by the AGIP in the Libyan offshore area north of Tripoli in 1978.



Source:

Secretariat of President Eugenio Cefis, N.U.A. E85, Dossier on Libya for Dr. Cefis by Dr. Briatico, 12/09/1969; M. Cricco, L'ENI in Libia: dal Trattato Italo-Libico del 1956 ai negoziati degli anni Settanta, Nuova Rivista Storica.

ENI,

1.3. Gaddafi revolution and the legacy of Italian colonial past.

Apart from the energy policies pursued by Enrico Mattei in Libya, which started during the rule of King Idris, former Emir of Cyrenaica, the rise of the figure of Muammar Qaddafi is fundamental as to understand the development of Italo-Libyan relations. Several factors concurred to the overthrow of the King: he didn't succeed in pursuing a real transition from a society profoundly linked to the tribal belongings to a more modern state; moreover, the huge and rapid inflow of oil revenues derived from the discovery of oil fields in the last years of the '50's produced bribery; furthermore, the United Kingdom of Libya international position about the Arab-Israeli conflict, boosted by the Six days war in 1967, clashed with the growing Arab nationalism feelings advanced by the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Gaddafi's admiration for the Egyptian leader is clearly mentioned by Libyan itself: *"Tell President Nasser we made this revolution for him. He can take everything of ours and add it to the rest of the Arab world's resources to be used for the battle"*.²² Thus, the failures of the

²² D. Vandewalle, *A history of modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 79.

monarchy led by the Sanusi leader led a group of young officers to take the power while King Idris was in Turkey for medical treatments. Even, during 1 September 1969, when the Libya Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) took the power, the King's praetorian guard units did not intervene to stop the overthrow of the monarchy; another motif of the kingdom's frailty. The leader of the Revolutionary Command Council as *primus inter pares*, Qhadafi, was 27 years old at the time of the golpe and along with all the other officers of the Council represented a great break with the past rulers, since they all came from the Libyan middle class and belonged to less influential families than those allied with the Sanusi government. Almost all the "Free Officers" had the rank of captain at the time of the regime change. Apart from the different social background, the most striking difference among the young Libyan officers and the old Sanusi rulers was their political ideology: *"It was clear that Libya's military rulers were inspired by Arab nationalism and by a resentment of the West's role in regional politics. They also seemed determined to chart a new political course for Libya within the Arab world and within the world at large"*.²³

The pillar of the new ideology that would have created the new Libya, the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya as declared in 1977 by the General People's Congress, is portrayed in Muammar Qhadafi's Green Book, published in 1975: *"In the Jamahiriya, no one is elected. There are no elections, I repeat, there is no representation. Ah, what traditionalists you westerners are! You only understand democracy, the republic, the antiquities! You are not ready for the new era, the era of the masses"*.²⁴ This judgement hinted at a total refusal of representative democracy, since any type of representation is automatically an imposture, because it represents a part of the total, therefore not the people as a whole.

However, the regime change in Libya inserts in a changing international context and in a dangerous domestic condition in Italy. As it regards the international level, the achievement of strategic nuclear parity between the two superpowers, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I), which led to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) and even the Sino-Soviet clash unexpectedly achieved those general conditions of the international system to which Italy had constantly aspired to endorse its foreign policy among the Balkans and the Mediterranean area. Hence, this general *détente* in the relations between the Western and the Eastern blocks, condition that would have prompted the chance for a firmer Italian status in the area, clashed with the internal situation. Italy is a net energy importer, thus the oil price shock in 1973, produced by the Yom Kippur war in 1973 caused a great damage to the Italian economy; consequently putting an end to the economic expansion cycle started at the end of the second global conflict. The economic recession marked the halt to foreign policy ambitions aiming at the growth of the Italian political status; now the ultimate goal became the internal stability

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 76.

²⁴ Muammar Gheddafi, *Libro Verde*, GOG edizioni, 2020.

of the country. This is true also because in the last years the Italian Communist party (*PCI*) witnessed a strong increase in the political consensus, extremely dangerous for the stability of the Atlantic Alliance as a whole; moreover, the Hot Autumn in 1969-1970 (*Autunno caldo*) observed great strikes in the factories, adding therefore another element to the perennial Italian political instability. In order to have a better understanding of the Italian international politics, it's worth to deal with a central political figure in those years; Aldo Moro, Foreign Affairs minister from August 1969 to July 1972 and from July 1973 to November 1974. So, the relations between the Italian governments and the new head of the Libyan state shall be understood by connecting them with the internal societal cleavages and the international environment. *"As it was for Francesco Crispi, foreign policy was for Moro an instrument to be used to achieve national objectives: he conceptually linked the renewed dialogue with the Arab countries and, therefore, with the post-colonial world and the various liberation movements, to the historical compromise"*.²⁵

As it concerns the power struggle between the two superpowers, the activism of the Soviet Union in Middle East and North Africa resulted in the opening of a new front against the Western block; this has been made possible thanks to various agreement between Moscow and countries such as Algeria, Egypt and Syria. Furthermore, the regime change in Libya and the consequent ideology of Third-Worldism and pan-Arabism underpinning the self-proclaimed Colonel Ghaddafi's vision of the state threatened the Atlantic Alliance. Within this framework, the Soviets aimed to exploit the *"Arab passions against the West in order to strengthen and make their presence irreplicable ... Libya, therefore, was a serious reason for concern, not only for Italy, but for the whole Atlantic Alliance, because it was an immense strategic platform overlooking the Mediterranean and most of Africa"*.²⁶ In the meanwhile, the strong anti-colonialist rhetoric implemented by Ghaddafi ended with the expulsion of the Jews and Italians the 21 July 1970 through a special law according to which they were forced to leave Libya by 7 October to *'regain wealth stolen from the Libyan people by Italian oppressors'*. Nevertheless, as Leonardo Palma points out, to prove the purely propagandistic spirit of the expulsions there was also the fact that the ENI and FIAT businesses were not included by the Revolutionary Council among the properties to be confiscated from the Italians.²⁷

From the Italian side, the snub didn't lead to an excessive cooling of the relations, since the Libyan impetuosity always met an approach oriented to tolerance and perseverance, personified by Aldo Moro. The tolerant approach chosen by Rome also included favors to Col. Ghaddafi, especially through the activities of the Italian Intelligence service, SID, *'Servizio Informazioni Difesa'*. The political directives given to SID were those of "saving Italian

²⁵ A. Folco Biagini, *Tripoli, Italia, La politica di potenza nel Mediterraneo e la crisi dell'ordine internazionale*, Castelvechi, 2020, p. 64.

²⁶ *Archivio Centrale dello Stato – Fondo Aldo Moro, ACS-FAM, 1970.*

²⁷ A. Folco Biagini, *Tripoli, Italia, La politica di potenza nel Mediterraneo e la crisi dell'ordine internazionale*, Castelvechi, 2020.

interests in Libya" and "preventing Eni from being thrown out" of oil activities; thus, these objectives had to be achieved through displays of trust and friendship towards Ghaddafi. To this aim, because of intelligence delivered by *Farnesina* and SID, in January 1970, a plan of internal rebellion developed by the "Black Prince" Abdullah Ben Abdid, the deposed King nephew, was foiled: the mercenaries were taken as soon as they landed in Libya. In addition, one year later, a group of Libyan people linked to the Senusi monarchy, represented by Umar El Shahli, former Counselor of King Idris, attempted to break into the Tripoli fortress-prison called 'Hilton' to free some political prisoners; the ship *Conquistador XIII*, which should have transported the rebels in Libya, was seized in the port of Trieste by Colonel Roberto Jucci, head of the SIOS Army 'Operational and Situational Information Service', who delivered the insurgents to the head of the Libyan secret police, Major El Houni. (Folco Biagini, 2020; Panorama, Rossella May 1986; Il Riformista, Guzzanti April 2021) Hence, these events allowed the relaxation of relations between the two nations, making the 1971 meeting between the two statesman possible.

The clearest example is the meeting on 5 May 1971 between Ghaddafi and the Apulian academic, the first after the expulsion of the Italians from the Libyan soil. The distension between the countries was made explicit by agreements involving the Libyan oil in exchange for technology and weaponry; these kind of agreements with Libya, openly anti-Israeli, didn't meet the U.S. enthusiasm, however the diplomatic skills arranged by Giulio Andreotti during his first term as president of the Council managed to appease the Americans. In 1972, he had played a crucial part "*in paving the way for new agreements between the Libyan oil company and ENI, facilitating the sale of M113 tanks, produced by Oto Melara, and other armaments desired by the Libyan government*".²⁸

Likewise Moro acted very appeasing with the Libyan regime: his policy design required the stability of the vital oil interests in the former '*quarta sponda*' through ENI and its subsidiaries; moreover, he did not want to jeopardize the traditional policy of friendship with the Arab world. Therefore, he proposed a form of privileged cooperation between the countries that would have offered the right tools for the North African state development such as specialized workforce in the petrochemical sector and advanced technology for the construction of industrial plants. On the other hand, the Italians would have achieved privileged conditions in the oil and methane supplies. The bizarre meeting between Moro and Ghaddafi in 1971 thus launched a season of negotiations about economic agreements between Italy and Libya. These talks led to the signing, in 1974 and 1975, of two fundamental agreements for the economic and commercial relations: the Jalloud-Rumor protocol of 1974, signed on February 24, named after the names of the two prime ministers; Jalloud rested in office from 1972 to 1977, while Mariano Rumor replaced Andreotti as President of the Council in July 1973. This protocol is also referred to as the "*framework agreement for economic, technical and scientific cooperation between Italy and Libya*". During the talks, ENI was mentioned as the flagship of the negotiations, underlining the company maximum

²⁸ M. Bucarelli L. Micheletta, Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche, Studium, 2018, p. 22.

willingness to take on more commitments in Libya. The other agreement, signed on April 28, 1975, resulting as well from the talks of 1971, involved the Italian AGIP and the Tripoli government. *“It dealt with the expansion of the oil exploration of the Italian company on Libyan soil that, on the sidelines negotiations, provided for the assignment to SNAM Progetti of a contract for the construction of a refinery near Tobruk, confirming the intensification of economic and commercial relations between Italy and Libya”*.²⁹ Thus, by offering technical assistance for the development of the ‘enigmatic oil State’, ENI received a series of rewards securing its privileged condition and the granting of numerous contracts. In this way, through patience and perseverance, Italy managed to defend its core interests in Libya, despite the peculiarities of Colonel Ghaddafi and Washington reticence about the friendly approach towards the Arab world, hostile to Israel.

In fact, as Bucarelli and Micheletta point out, apart from the importance of the intense economic collaboration between Italy and Libya, the core element of political relevance is the everlasting effort in maintaining Libya in the non-aligned position, in between the two blocks. Ghaddafi actually has always been very clear about its political ideology, depicted in his Green book. This ideological distance from Marxism has been used by Andreotti to develop a personal relationship with the Libyan head of state: *“l’uomo non è libero se non possiede la casa in cui abita e il mezzo su cui si muove”* - *“man is not free if he does not own the house in which he lives and the vehicle on which he moves”*, a sentence quoted by hart to Qhadafi in a private meeting in February 1984. Thereby, the Italian effort aimed at maintaining Libya distant both politically and economically from Moscow; that is because on that depended not only the solid economic presence, but especially the Italian military security. *“It was necessary to prevent Libya from slipping into the Soviet camp from a political and military point of view and to avoid that Moscow would find points of support for the installation of naval or nuclear bases in Libyan territory”*.³⁰

The Italian attitude towards the former colony should be framed within the broader Mediterranean policy set by Rome; this policy target turned out to be a particularly difficult purpose during the phases of recrudescence of the ‘cold’ conflict. This is especially true during the increasing tensions between when the Italian government was planning to install the Euro missiles and the nuclear missile base in Comiso, Sicily. The Libyan fears, that would have perhaps led to the sliding into the Soviet camp, were always answered by Italian authorities with guarantees. For instance, the cruise missiles in Comiso were pointed only towards the U.S.S.R.; moreover, the cruise missiles have a range of 2500 km, thus they could also have reached the Libyan soil from the Federal Republic of Germany or Great Britain.

The Italian politician usually repeated a dry sentence so as to explain to his allies the necessity of maintaining good relations with all the neighboring countries: *“You don't choose your neighbors”*.³¹ Therefore, coherent to

²⁹ ACS, AAM, b. 124, f. 18, *Visita a Roma del Primo ministro di Libia Jalloud, 25-28 aprile 1975*.

³⁰ M. Bucarelli L. Micheletta, Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche, *Studium*, 2018, p. 28.

³¹ A. Negri, Andreotti amico degli arabi, da Arafat ad Abu Abbas, 6 maggio 2013, *Il Sole 24 Ore*.

the Italian strategy in the Mediterranean, it was vital to find a *modus vivendi* to negotiate with Tripoli, one of the most important strategic partners. Apart from the political precariousness, the Italian diplomacy strived to safeguard not only the energy supply from north Africa, but also the mass of economic interests. In fact, in 1983 Tripoli was Italy's eighth largest customer, since the 30% of Libya's imports came from Italy. The total trade between the two countries corresponded to the 50% of the trade dimension between Italy and the U.S. In addition, *“a gigantic amount of business that generated another problem to be solved: there were still unpaid Italian credits for 100 million dollars for commercial operations and 500 million for works carried out by Italian companies. As a consequence of this massive Italian economic presence, there were also about 14,500 Italian citizens working on large Libyan infrastructures, whose safety should not be jeopardized”*.³²

In conclusion, within the framework of the pursuance of the Italian national interest, developed through statesmen such as Giulio Andreotti and Aldo Moro, the violent anti-colonialist propaganda pursued by Ghaddafi continued to represent a "lesser evil" compared with a Sovietized or a destabilized Libya. This second prospect would have endangered the strategic security, the commercial activities and even the Italian citizens resident in the former colony.

1.4. Berlusconi governments and the “special and privileged” relationship.

The international position of Libya from the second half of the ‘80’s became almost unbearable. The Reagan election in 1981 as U.S. President marked the start of an hardline attitude against Ghaddafi’s regime. The North African’s state reputation reached at an all-time low since the international community slowly but effectively isolated the regime from a political, diplomatic, and economical point of view. In fact, as Vandewalle notes, the years between 1986 and the end of the century represented the most difficult years the regime ever faced. That’s because Libya was listed as an international terrorism’s supporter: for instance, in December 1985 both the airports of Rome and Vienna were attacked, addressing Israeli targets, which killed 19 and injured around 140 people. In January 1986, a comprehensive trade embargo against the Jamahiriya was set up. The apotheosis of Reagan administration’s aggressive policy was reached during the 15 and 16 April 1986, where Tripoli and Benghazi were shelled by the United States, in the so-called *Operation El Dorado Canyon*. This military action has been pursued as a retaliation, in addition to other terroristic actions, for the bomb placed at the discothèque La Belle in West Berlin on 5 April 1986, a place usually frequented by U.S. soldiers, where three people were killed and 229 were wounded. The U.S. administration believed the Libyan intelligence and Libyan embassy as the responsible for the attack. The bombing on Libyans soil deeply shocked Ghaddafi, but still he announced that he had *"won a spectacular military victory over the United States"* and the state was officially renamed the *"Great*

³² M. Bucarelli L. Micheletta, *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, Studium, 2018, p. 32.

Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya".

In addition to the two airport and disco attacks, the most tragic Libyan's contribution to terrorist acts involved the dramatic explosions of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, in Scotland, in December 1988 and of the French UTA 772 airliner in Niger nine months later. These events subjected the Jamahiriya to an extension of US unilateral sanctions, and to the imposition of United Nations multilateral sanctions starting in April 1992. Thus, Libya, politically isolated, was also declining in economic terms: the drop of oil prices starting in the early 1980s, in combination with the dramatic plunge in 1986 when the Reagan administration imposed its first set of sanctions.

Since the 95% of the "oil state" global revenues derived from oil exports, the curbs on imports clashed with Ghaddafi's attempted ideological restructuring of its economic and political base, laid down in the first and second section of the Green book. This restructuration in a more liberal key, the so-called *infitah*, would have led to a greater diversification of the economy through a series of liberalizing economic reforms. Thus, in May 1987, the Brotherly Leader and the Guide of the Revolution announced the start of the "*Revolution within a Revolution*".

The apotheosis of the liberalization campaign was the sensational announcement in June 1988 of *Al-Wathiqat al-Khadra al-Kubra lil-Huquq al-Insani 'Asr al-Jamahir* (the Great Green Charter of Human Rights in the Era of the Masses). The "*Green Charter, if fully implemented, would in effect have put a halt to, and reversed, the arbitrariness and unpredictability of the country's revolutionary decade. Article 2 of the Great Green Charter recalled the earlier revolutionary directives on private property, and declared it 'sacred and protected'. There were further references to accountability for everyone, much in the same vein as the earlier criticism of the Revolutionary Committees*".³³ This effort made by Qadhafi aimed at bringing greater reliability and accountability; it should be recognized as a reaction to the multi-facet crisis that the revolutionary regime was suffering. "*The old certainties of Arab nationalism, of opposition to the West at all costs, and of regional integration schemes, had all disintegrated. The ideological aspirations that had once been cornerstones of the revolutionary regime's rhetoric had been countered, neutralized, and often reversed, by regional and international actors*".³⁴ However, this strive for liberalization through the establishment of the Great green Charter lacked substantial measures: for instance, it did not contain any guarantees accepting an actual political opposition. This could be understood in light of the Libyan revolution's ideological ambiguities, mirrored in the Green Charter variety of remedies combined with the anxieties about keeping the holds of political power. In fact, the more the opposition to the Jamahiriya grew over time, the more the guarantees enshrined in the Charter were weakened. This can be glimpsed by Qadhafi's reaffirmation at the General People's Congress in March 1990 about the separation between formal and revolutionary authority, so as to corroborate the inability to keep

³³ D. Vandewalle, *A history of modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 142.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 137-138.

the promises made in the Great Green Charter. Those assurances would actually never be allowed to influence or reduce the Libyan control apparatus' power, since the division between formal and revolutionary authority proved the people's limited institutional control over their country's ruler. In effect, unless the Libyan leadership authorizes it, there is no public accountability guaranteed; the General People's Congress (GPC), reflecting the formal institution for governing, has control neither over the security or justice organizations, nor over the General People's Committee (GPCO), the intermediary between the masses and government leadership. Hence, in spite of the attempted institutional liberalization, the Revolutionary Leadership made all decisions without being accountable to anyone. In sum, *"whatever corrective actions were taken after 1986 did not in any way constitute a retreat from control by the country's Revolutionary Leadership"*.³⁵

In April 1992, six years after the comprehensive trade embargo, the United Nations extended an economic embargo, which lasted seven years, after Libya refusal to turn over suspects involved in the bombing of the U.S. plane in the Scottish skies. These multilateral sanctions blended with existing conditions within the country, proved to be incredibly harmful. The situation was difficult: Libya's economy grew only 0.8% a year during the sanctions period, and the Libya's GDP per capita decreased from \$7,311 to \$5,896. The combination of the sanctions scheme composed by the unilateral ones set up by Reagan administration and the multilateral ones established by the U.N. and the additional difficulties, proved insuperable. As mentioned above, the ideological and political revisions required after 1986 rupture with the U.S. presented massive challenges. At the very core of his vision of Libya, as well as his vision of the African continent and of international politics as a whole, laid the confrontation with the West; he often employed subversive tactics to deal with the supposed reactionary regimes. Qadhafi carried out those challenges, encompassing links of economic and political issues while leaving the essential control structures of his regime in place. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya managed to outlast these various tasks; therefore proving *"once more the resilience and powerful tools rulers of oil states possess to contain and circumvent political dissent, international actions, and economic hardships for a considerable amount of time"*.³⁶ However, the unintentional effect of the Libyan answers against the pressures from the West was that by the end of the '90's Qadhafi's revolution's strength had essentially been dissipated, leaving internal disaffection and external lack of trust.

Italy and Libya reached the lowest level of relations in 1986; that is because Libya launched a missile near the Sicilian island of Lampedusa. This worrying action was taken as a retaliation for the above-mentioned US bombing of the two most populated cities, Benghazi and the Libyan capital, ordered by President Ronald Reagan. Even if *"the aircraft had not taken off from Italian bases nor flown over Italian territory... according to Qaddafi,*

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 150.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 141.

they had made use of the US transmission station situated on the island".³⁷ Moreover, it was still present an old quarrel about the Gulf of Sidra, claimed to be a historic bay by the Libyans, therefore within its national waters. The 6th Fleet of the United States navy, headquartered in Naples, however, transited and exercised in that Gulf, provoking Libyan protests.

Apart from the picturing of Libyan worrying situation, the Italian most important political figure who dealt with Qhadafi has been Silvio Berlusconi, Prime Minister in four occasions: from May 1994 to January 1995; from June 2001 to May 2006 for two terms; then, from May 2008 to November 2011. The Italian interests in Libya, apart from the international tensions, still required to be handled through relying on the Revolutionary institutions: hence, it was necessary again to pass over some oddities so as to preserve the economic and strategic interests.

Qhadafi's peculiarity and the continuous references to the colonial past did not cease, even in particularly turbulent times. For instance, during his first visit to Rome in 2009 he wore in plain sight a photo sewn in chest portraying Umar al Mukhtar; the hero of the anti-colonial resistance in Libya, killed during the fascist rule. Thus, the Libyan leader never abandoned the taste for provocation and, despite the good relations with Italy, since his first appearance he has chosen to characterize the official visit with unmistakable allusions to the age of Italian colonialism.

Some bilateral agreements were signed between the parts, so as to reach an understanding about a number of topics; nonetheless, several matters remained unanswered. For instance, on the one hand there were Libyan demands for reparations for the colonialism damages; on the other hand, the Italians claimed the credits for works that was carried out in Libya but the bills had not yet been settled. In addition, a bilateral agreement on the fight against terrorism, organized crime and illegal immigration was signed in December 2000, and came into force in December 2002. Two additional Protocols were signed in December 2007, but implementation did not follow. Apart from bilateral agreements, there was a need to develop a framework agreement, in order to coordinate the various joint activities, still absent.

The necessity for a normalization of the relations was reached on August 2008, with the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation signed in Bengasi. Prime Minister Berlusconi and the Libyan leader was cheered by the Italian as a guarantee of 'more oil and less migrants'.³⁸ This agreement was portrayed, at least on the Italian side, as the final settlement of a more than four-decade-long conflicting relationship.³⁹ The main conditions of the agreement were already generally covered on 4 July 1998 Joint Communiqué Dini-Mountasser,

³⁷ N. Ronzitti, *The Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya: New Prospects for Cooperation in the Mediterranean?* *Bulletin of Italian Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2009, 125-133, p. 126.

³⁸ *Il Manifesto*, 31 August 2008.

³⁹ *Time for a new generation*, *The Economist*, 28 August 2008

signed for Italy by Lamberto Dini, the head of Farnesina for four different ‘*Ulivo*’ governments during Prodi, D’Alema I and II and Amato II. This ‘*Comunicato Congiunto*’ would serve as a basis for an agreement with broader political scope, but it was never sent for parliamentary ratification because of the usual ups and downs in the relations.

Surely, the advancement in the bilateral relations fulfilled a scenario of mutual interest in which Italy, in 2008, was Libya's leading commercial trading partner, ahead of Germany, China, Tunisia, and France. As Parenti illustrates: “... Suffice it to say that by the end of 2008, trade with Italy had grown by 30% compared to the previous year, reaching more than 20 billion dollars”.⁴⁰

About the formal excuses for the past problems: “*In the name of the Italian people, as head of the government, I feel it my duty to apologise and express my sorrow for what happened many years ago and left a scar on many of your families*”.⁴¹ These were Berlusconi’s words just landed in Bengasi, when he also handed over the Venus of Cyrene, which had been taken to Rome in colonial period.

The treaty of Bengasi is divided in three parts: general principles; closing with the past and ending the disputes; and partnership.

The first part concerning the general principles, points to the regulation of the bilateral relations: among other things, it arranged the condemnation of the Italian colonialism and envisaged the respect of the principles of the UN Charter and of human rights, even though in accordance with “*their respective legislations*”. Thus, the first part should be seen as a ‘*complete and moral acknowledgement of the damage inflicted on Libya by Italy during the colonial era*’.

The second part instead dealt with the Italian companies credits for activities carried out in Libya after the forced expulsions of the Italians. The precise sum of the credit was not quantified in the text. Instead, no compensation was envisaged for the goods confiscated from Italians in 1970. Furthermore, Libya even achieved to be paid back for 5 billion dollars through investments in basic infrastructure projects; thus Italy would pay around 250 million dollars for 20 years. The major project being a coastal motorway between the Egyptian and Tunisian borders. This section, undoubtedly the most burdensome, should have been solved through resources “*to be raised through an increase in IRES (Imposta sul reddito delle società), the tax on company income, of firms operating in the field of hydrocarbon research and development, headquartered in Italy, and with a capitalisation of over €20 billion, basically ENI*”.⁴² Additionally, from the Italian side, the payment of the sums still due to Italian companies, usually quantified as €620 million, has not been laid down anywhere, nor the time

⁴⁰ Parenti F. M. *La dimensione geoeconomica e geopolitica nella recente evoluzione dei rapporti tra Italia e Libia, Bollettino della società geografica italiana, Serie XIII, vol. III, pp. 31-40, 2010, p. 33.*

⁴¹ M. Fetouri, *Libya gave the world a unique treaty which should be copied by all ex-colonial powers, Middle East Monitor, August 29, 2019.*

⁴² N. Ronzitti, *The Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya: New Prospects for Cooperation in the Mediterranean? Bulletin of Italian Politics, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2009, 125-133, p. 128.*

period within which they should be paid back. Thus, since Italians obligations and responsibilities are considerable and have been written down in the treaty, what gains could it get from this normalization? Another controversial query concerns Italian people expelled after the 1969 golpe, for which no compensation is envisaged in the treaty; moreover, until the entry into force of the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation, Libyan law excluded them from entering the country. Right now, Article 11 requires the former colony to grant them visas for tourism, work or other purposes; this is true not only for the ones expelled, but even for the ones who voluntarily left the country before the 1970 expulsions.⁴³

Ultimately, the third part concerned partnership in the cultural and scientific, economic and industrial, energy, defense, non-proliferation and disarmament sectors, as well as the fight against terrorism and the control of irregular immigration. The third part of the treaty was perceived as core to the Italian interests in the area; so valuable that *“it entailed accepting practically all the onerous economic demands of the Libyan counterpart”*.⁴⁴

The importance of this chapter, even if mainly of a programmatic nature, lays on the fact that one of the most important topics in the bilateral relations has been, since the last decades, the migrations of people from Africa, using Libya as departure to arrive in Italy and then in Europe. In fact, this section of the treaty, about partnership and immigration, deals with this issue. As Morgese points out, it envisioned *“the construction of ‘reception’ facilities in Libya and the joint patrolling of the territorial sea and the high seas behind the African country”*.⁴⁵ Consequently, the 2008 treaty was meant to “move” the Italian maritime frontier to locations legally outside their jurisdiction; for instance, in Libyan territorial waters or international waters near them.

Ronzitti frames it as the most ambitious part of the Treaty, even if mainly postulating programmatic objectives: it does not allocate any funds, except for the fight against illegal immigration. Cooperation is envisaged in many sectors: culture, science, economy, industry, energy, defense, non-proliferation and disarmament, the fight against terrorism and illegal immigration. However, the most noteworthy obligation for Italian interests, apart from the programmatic spirit of the other commitments, relates to the fight against illegal immigration, especially via the central Mediterranean sea. Article 19 is related to this matter: on the one hand, *“previous agreements and protocols on immigration, in particular those stipulated in 2007, are to be implemented, and the approximately 2000 km of Libyan coast patrolled by mixed crews on patrol boats provided by Italy. Six patrol boats were supposed to enter into operation on 15 May 2009. On the other, Libyan land borders are to be controlled by a satellite detection system jointly financed by Italy and the European Union”*.⁴⁶

⁴³ A. Varvelli, A., *“Il Trattato Italia-Libia e il nuovo contesto economico libico”*, ISPI Med Brief no. 8, Milan: Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 23 September 2009.

⁴⁴ G. Morgese, *Italia, Libia e questione migratoria*, Università degli studi di Bari Aldo Moro, February 2020, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 130.

Finally, the Treaty of Bengasi marks the conclusion of long negotiations on diplomatic normalization between the two countries, also corresponding with the end of sanctions on Libya. This achievement is important, since the slags of the colonial heritage have long conditioned Italo-Libyan relations, intermittently causing frictions. Unquestionably, the Treaty has contributed to create a much better environment for bilateral relations, concluding the disputes related to Italian colonialism, even if with high costs for Italy. Ronzitti, in 2009 commented that for an actual assessment about the capacity of this treaty, “*much will depend on the internal dynamics of the Libyan regime, and the evolution of its regional policies and its relations with other international actors*”.⁴⁷ The developments of the last decade show that the implementation of the treaty provisions did not go as envisaged.

In conclusion, throughout this chapter, the Italian’s historical, economic and strategic ties have been analyzed, focusing especially on the colonialist program and the fascist era, the figure of Mattei and ENI’s role and on the “special and privileged” relationship established by the treaty of Benghazi in 2008. Thus, in the classic dilemma about the foreign policy action between 'stability or democracy', Italy has always chosen the former, helping to strengthen the Gaddafi regime more than anyone else. Recent events are just the latest chapter in the story.

2. THE UNITED KINGDOM AND LIBYA: THE ESSENTIAL SECURITY LINK.

2.1. The Senussi regime, “direct Libyan player”.

As shown in the previous chapter, the territories that would become the United Kingdom of Libya became the target of Italian ambitions in the first half of the Twentieth century; thus avoiding the traditional Franco-British rule in the Middle East and North African area.

Since the 1930’s, the British interests in the region were mainly focused on Egypt since they regarded it “*as almost the centre of the world but this position came to be increasingly menaced by Italian moves in Libya as London and Rome clashed over Mediterranean and East African affairs*”.⁴⁸ The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, and the subsequent entry of the Fascist Italy in June of the following year, led the Libyan territory to be the theater of the clashes between the Axis and the Allied forces, in the so called Western Desert Campaign. The struggle between the two contenders reached a turning point in July and between October and November 1942, as the first and then the second Battle of El Alamein imposed a decisive defeat on *Generalfeldmarschall*

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 132.

⁴⁸ R. J. Worrall, *The strategic limitations of a Middle East client state by the mid-1950s: Britain, Libya and the Suez Crisis*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30:2, 309-347, 2007, p. 312.

Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps and the Italian troops. This change led to the end of the North African Campaign in May 1943. Hence, the British succeeded in stemming the Axis spread on the strategic Egyptian territory, especially the Suez Canal. The importance of this military victory has been exemplified by the then British Conservative Prime Minister, Winston Churchill: "*it may almost be said, before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein we never had a defeat*".⁴⁹ Thereafter, the Allied counteroffensive occupied the Cyrenaican and Tripolitanian regions. These military events led the United Kingdom to emerge, as Dario Cristiani says, as '*a direct Libyan player*'. In addition, the British trained Libyan fighters who championed the Allied cause against the Axis offensive. As such, "*the UK enjoyed a very close and strong relationship with the new country and was one of the major allies of the Senussi monarchy*".⁵⁰ British planners sought to make use of the Eastern Libyan region as a peacetime spot for armed forces; in November 1944 Britain was allowed to place significant militaries in Cyrenaica '*without resentment*' because the population's attitude was favorable, since it perceived the British as '*liberators*' from Italian rule.⁵¹

Hence, the construction of the new Libya after the tragic happenings has been underpinned and upheld by British political and strategic interests that grew out of the North African desert campaign. London was striving for a unified Libya which could be used as a platform to control the Suez canal, essential for the commercial routes. In addition, there were anxieties about a possible growing Soviet influence in the area; in fact, Moscow was claiming to the United Nations trusteeship of Tripolitania in September 1945. These concerns matched with the Truman administration needs, especially in 1948 after interactions with the Soviets over Eastern Europe worsened. Thus, the United States and the United Kingdom came to an agreement which assumed an independent Libya, merging again together the various differences of the Western and Eastern part of the desert country, as the fascist rule did in the previous decades. The creation of an independent state was, however, a prerequisite to acquire the right to maintain military bases in the new statal entity. So, Libya, principally a creation of British strategic requirements from the fragments of the Italian colonial era, Libya in the 1950s has been the location of an intense conflict for influence between Nasser, the Soviet Union and the Western powers. "*Although the Libyan monarchy survived the challenge, the regime's dependency on Western protection was exposed along with a narrow Anglo-American conception of the country's importance to the regional Cold War that was increasingly irrelevant to the wider political agenda in the Middle East*".⁵²

⁴⁹ W. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate. The Second World War*. New York: Bantam, 1950, p. 603.

⁵⁰ D. Cristiani, *UK Libya: the consistency of being selective*, Analysis No. 238, March 2014, p.3.

⁵¹ ADM 1/116219, DC (44) 19 (Revised), *Future Policy in Cyrenaica*, Note by CCAO for the Defence Committee, 13 Nov. 1944.

⁵² S. Blackwell, *Saving the King: Anglo-American Strategy and British Counter-Subversion Operations in Libya, 1953-59*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jan. 2003, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 1-18, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., p. 1.

However, the pact between the two countries so as to have a new state fitting their own needs and interests has been labeled as “*an unblushing venture of military and economic imperialism*”.⁵³ In order to pursue their project, the figure of Muhammad Idris, already recognized as the Emir of Cyrenaica by the British, was central to their hopes of federating the new entity, created in 1951. Idris was respected by virtue of his anti-Italian nationalism; moreover, he was backed by an authoritarian federalist monarchy, as established by the new Constitution.⁵⁴ King Idris, as expected, pursued a helpful external policy towards the Western block. In fact, “*As well as signing the Anglo-Libyan treaty, in the following year an agreement with the Eisenhower administration confirmed American military base rights in return for economic aid. The British and the Americans also undertook to provide development aid, though Libya remained an economically backward country largely dependent on external financial assistance*”.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the United Kingdom of Libya was created in December 1951. As Blackwell points out, having a look at the Middle Eastern and North African region at that time, Libya stands out as an anomalous state, since the growth of regional nationalism and the Cold War dynamics wouldn't have envisaged a Libya so close to the Western sphere.

However, the Anglo- American foreign policy's preferences in Libya exposed their reliance on conservative rulers who were nonetheless more and more overwhelmed by the population sympathy for nationalistic and pan Arabist ideals. During the '50's, both the White House and Whitehall looked at the country ruled by King Idris “*as an essential link in their plans to defend the Middle East. From a British perspective this was as much down to their wish to retain a capability for military intervention in Egypt as fear of an attack by the Soviet Union*”.⁵⁶

So, during the Senussi regime, Libya's importance was mainly related with the British interests in Egypt; essential especially for the reason that British troops would be neighboring their wartime deployment zones in Egypt on the possible outbreak of a conflict between the 'West' and the 'East' blocks. The Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), concerned about the possibility of not being allowed to move the troops towards the Egyptian border in case of the outbreak of a war, envisaged that their “*ability to maintain a firm hold in the Middle East would be destroyed*”.⁵⁷ Thus, the Libyan situation was strongly linked with the Egyptian one, where the obstacles were growing since the Egyptian politicians had turn out to be devoted to the British forces' withdrawal. The unpopularity of foreign military garrisons, linked to the concept of the erosion of a country sovereignty, was mainly due to the popular perception of them being regarded as ‘*a badge*

⁵³ W. R. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, The United States and Post-War Imperialism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.305.

⁵⁴ C. A. Nallino, *La Costituzione del Regno Unito della Libia del 7 ottobre 1951*, *Oriente Moderno*, Ottobre-Dicembre 1951, Anno 31, Nr. 10/12, Istituto per l'Oriente, pp. 177-192.

⁵⁵ S. Blackwell, *Saving the King: Anglo-American Strategy and British Counter-Subversion Operations in Libya, 1953-59*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jan. 2003, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 1-18, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁷ AIR 20/2463, COS (48) 21st Meeting, Middle East, 11 Feb. 1948.

of servitude'. The garrisons in the main cities were "perhaps the most visible [and] . . . the most politically intrusive, that is, most threatening to a host's sovereignty and dignity, just because it often includes a large-scale and permanent presence and, no matter what the actual purpose, is suggestive of an 'occupation' of sorts".⁵⁸ Exactly because of these feelings, in 1947 the not-yet King Idris expressed his desire for the British troops to depart from the Libyan main cities. Moreover, the Libyans stressed the withdrawal of British troops that much because they were located in the exact bases used by the former Italian colonizers, who used them for the purpose of responding to disorders breaking out in the main municipalities. Therefore, the withdrawal from the military bases around the cities was seen as the necessary *quid pro quo* for a stable foreign military presence in Libya. One British representative in the Cyrenaican government advised: "We know from our own experience in Egypt and Iraq what this kind of incitement, if allowed to proceed unchecked, can produce. At this very moment we see its results disastrously exemplified in Persia and most embarrassingly in Egypt and Iraq".⁵⁹ These feelings of antipathies all over the area meant British officials possessed a sense of urgency throughout 1951 to formalize the position of British forces in Libya. The Chiefs' advices were that the security of tenure in Libya was of the uttermost importance essentially because "there is nowhere else for the Army to go in the Middle East".⁶⁰ However, when Libya became independent, on December 1951, there was still no compulsory agreement about the stationing of the troops on Libyan soil. Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden proposed to the Cabinet, in March 1952, the creation of a military camp in the *Jebel*, in Cyrenaica, so as to become the new British garrison in Libya. Eden's anxieties were reassumed by his declarations in 1952: "Unless there is tangible evidence in the immediate future of progress in evacuating buildings in the main towns, particularly Benghazi ... we shall lose Libyan goodwill, seriously jeopardise our chances of negotiating satisfactory long-term military facilities and generally build up for ourselves an atmosphere similar to that which arose in Egypt".⁶¹

Eloquently, a Military Accommodation Board was set up in order to release some of the buildings in Benghazi used for military purposes, so as to reduce the friction points among the counterparts and to conclude the treaty negotiations in the best way possible. However, according to R.J. Worrall, "this was too little too late";⁶² throughout the negotiations the Libyans told the British representatives that the time limit of the treaty had to be reduced from 25 to 20 years since that was "the maximum duration acceptable to Libyan parliamentary opinion. The 25-year duration desired by the British would now be exceedingly difficult especially as the 1948 Anglo-

⁵⁸ R. Harkavy, *Bases Abroad: The Global Foreign Military Presence* (Oxford: OUP 1989), pp. 110–11.

⁵⁹ FO 371/90332, S. Perowne, Ministry of Interior, Government of Cyrenaica, to Ravensdale, 16 April 1951.

⁶⁰ AIR 20/8203, Ministry of Defence Principal Administrative Officers' Committee, PAO/P (51) 51, *Accommodation in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, Note to the Chiefs of Staff*, 15 Aug. 1951.

⁶¹ CAB 129/50, C (52) 73, *Libya: Evacuation of Towns by H.M. Forces*, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 11 March 1952.

⁶² R. J. Worrall, *The strategic limitations of a Middle East client state by the mid-1950s: Britain, Libya and the Suez Crisis*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30:2, 309–347, 2007, p. 315.

*Jordanian treaty provided a precedent of 20 years while Washington's agreement with Saudi Arabia only ran for ten years".*⁶³

The unit was to be temporarily housed in Libya but this soon transformed into a state of permanence as the time never seemed suitable to execute the original deployment idea in Middle East, closer to the possible clashes sites. So, in February 1953 the British had to agree to a Libyan council of ministers' decision for a 20-year treaty, since as stated before, there was no other regional location left. Yet, signing such a bilateral agreement seemed to be going against the prevailing trend of opinion within the Middle East by this time. On February 1953, Eden memorandum on Egypt pointed to the fact that the future British foreign policy in the enlarged Mediterranean area could not be implemented with the old tools, "... [as] the tide of nationalism is rising fast ... Our strategic purposes in the Middle East can no longer be served by arrangements which local nationalism will regard as military occupation by foreign troops".⁶⁴ The next day Eden exposed a paper to the Cabinet on the Anglo-Libyan bilateral treaty indicating the pursuit of the old ways for safeguarding their influence in all the area. Nevertheless, the paper presented a revised draft text of the treaty from the one agreed by the Cabinet in 1951 with two significant modifications: the duration of the treaty had been reduced by 5 years; then, even more significantly, an exchange of letters about the Arab League was introduced because Libya was expected to join the organization of the Arab states in the next weeks. Therefore, Anthony Eden thought it was "*desirable before then to bind her at least [sic] morally to the proposed relationship with us*".⁶⁵ That's why they had to agree to these changes, because the general perception assumed that a now or never stalemate had been achieved; thus, the government had to agree on the Libyan interpretation on the key discrepancies. Certainly, the request to pull British troops out of Tripoli and Benghazi was tough: on the other hand, the idea to position one armored division in Libya in the Jebel was estimated to cost £20 million. Because of the limitations of local labor and resources, the time span envisaged to finish the building of the Jebel encampment was 20 years, exactly the length of the treaty. Nonetheless, the English government decided that a permanent agreement was still useful. However, it was clear that British pulls had a lower impact in the region. Notwithstanding its limitations, London regarded the conclusion of the bilateral treaty in an positive way: "*The conclusion of this agreement would have a beneficial effect throughout the Arab world and would be a valuable precedent for similar negotiations with Arab countries in the future...*".⁶⁶ Another positive aspect of the conclusion of this legal treaty could be that this was the first conclusion of an agreement of this kind; the previous years witnessed the failures of the revised treaty with Iraq

⁶³ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁴ CAB 129/39, C (53) 65, *Egypt: The Alternatives, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 16 Feb. 1953.

⁶⁵ CAB 129/59, C (53) 67, *Treaty with Libya, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 17 Feb. 1953.

⁶⁶ CAB 128/26, CC (53) 43rd Conclusions, *Treaty with Libya*, 16 July 1953.

in January 1948 and the loss of the treaty with Egypt in October 1951. In fact, reaching an agreement with an Arab country could be used advantageously from a political perspective, pointing out to the rest of the Arab world that Libya was perfectly happy to provide military bases without feeling to be a colony or to have lost its sovereignty. On 29 July 1953, Britain finally concluded with Libya the Anglo-Libyan Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. As Blackwell notes, the treaty marked the peak of a continuous British effort since 1945 to assure its strategic rights in the new kingdom. On the other hand, despite the apparent optimism, the actual advance in the negotiations had been possible because of the British waiver of its desired necessities to secure the treaty. On October 1953, the Libyans approved the treaty; from the British side, on 30 December 1953, Lloyd presented to the Cabinet a memorandum on the Anglo-Libyan treaty and its attached military and financial agreements.

The new bilateral agreement's main limitation, as said, dealt with Article 4 of the treaty where the reference to the Covenant of the League of the Arab States had replaced the initial suggestion of an exchange of letters. According to Worrall, this point was an error for the British side: "*If Libya's precise usefulness had been to provide a base for future intervention(s) in Egypt if Nasser 'got out of line' then the actual letter of the treaty strongly suggested that such moves would be difficult to sanction as Egypt herself was a member of the Arab League*".⁶⁷

In the context of overall British strategy in the Middle East, Libya's status was enhanced following the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement in 1954, since it settled the dispute over the presence of British forces in the Suez military base system that had tormented London's plans for a regional security system: in peacetime the troops had to be withdrawn, still they held the right to return in case of war against Moscow. Thus, the Anglo-Libyan agreement acted as insurance in providing an alternative base for British forces intended to support Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan, the 'Northern Tier' countries against a Soviet attack.⁶⁸ The Baghdad Pact was an apparent reinforcement of the Northern Tier tactic; still, the British positioning in Libya was too far away from any potential front line in case of an attack coming from East. In fact, London mainly planned to maintain pressure on Cairo following the 1954 agreement and to stress the fact of Libya being a pro-Western bulwark.

2.2. The Suez Crisis.

On 26 July 1956, the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser decision to nationalize the Suez Canal, priorly owned largely by Paris and London, prompted the belligerent reaction of Israel, Great Britain and France; on the

⁶⁷ R. J. Worrall, *The strategic limitations of a Middle East client state by the mid-1950s: Britain, Libya and the Suez Crisis*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30:2, 309-347, 2007, p. 318.

⁶⁸ S. Blackwell, *Saving the King: Anglo-American Strategy and British Counter-Subversion Operations in Libya, 1953-59*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jan. 2003, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 1-18, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., p.3.

other hand, Ben-Halim, the Libyan Prime Minister even congratulated the Egyptian President. The Libyan endorsement to Cairo's audacious move pointed to the difficulties that London would have had in trying to use those bases as a departure point to invade Egypt. Therefore, these complications revealed how the Libyan military sites "*were not like a rotating gun turret that could be turned in any direction to face a threat because the moment these facilities came to be fixed against an Arab target, the bases became hostage to local political opposition*".⁶⁹ Hence, the Libyan popular and political opposition to foreign troops in their territory reached the apex during the Suez crisis; labelled as the ultimate conclusion of 'base politics' in Libya.

All the negotiations between the two counterparts about the hostility to British garrisons settled in Libyan main cities, such as Tripoli and Benghazi, the twin capitals, had now deteriorated into a universal refusal to allow the usage of these bases for military operations, especially if against an Arab state. As for the British response to the destabilization threat of the most important site in the whole region, the Chiefs' 'Outline Plan' urged for provocative maneuvers so as to create a second front in a fight against Egypt, a 'ring of forces' ready to strike after an ultimatum had been issued.

On 3 August Walter Graham, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Libya, worried about the possible military use of the Libyan base, sent a telegram stating that: "*... Libyans are not (repeat not) going to acquiesce in the use of Libyan bases and facilities against the Egyptians. Arab blood is thicker than foreign subsidies... Long term results of forcing them to cooperate i.e. by restoration of military administration, hardly bears contemplation... We shall have a major security operation on our hands at least in Tripolitania... Reconsideration of plan is therefore urgent if we are not to have the worst of both worlds*".⁷⁰ Still, the idea of a wartime move of the 10th Armoured Division persisted.

Harold Macmillan, Foreign Secretary from April 1955 to December 1955, promoted a single maneuver to overthrow the Egyptian regime through a combined attack both on Alexandria by the 10th Armoured Division and by an amphibious force which would seize the harbor. That's because London was in the same situation of the 1951–54 emergency, meaning that "*our reason for evacuating the Canal Zone was because we could not enforce our will [on Egypt] merely by sitting on the Canal*".⁷¹ Against Macmillan suggestions, Graham pursued his own view relating it with the Anglo-Libyan treaty and the subsequent issue of legality about the use of the bases which would signify a strong violation of both the spirit and letter: "*It would be unfortunate if, while imposing our position in the canal we wrecked our present very good position here, which, though by comparison secondary, is also very important both for itself and for its effect on the rest of the Arab world*".⁷²

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 326.

⁷⁰ PREM 11/1148, Tripoli to FO, 3 Aug. 1956.

⁷¹ 7CAB 134/1217, EC (56) 8, Action against Egypt, Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 7 Aug. 1956.

⁷² PREM 11/1148, Tripoli to FO, 8 Aug. 1956.

In fact, Ali Sahili, the acting head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that under Article 1 and Article 4 of the treaty, there were no clauses authorizing an attack on any Arab state to be launched from the Libyan bases without permission of the Libyan parliament; this approval was impossible to get. Basically, it would deteriorate Anglo-Libyan relations for an indefinite period; that's why Graham was striving to aid the Libyans avoid the claim "*of giving assistance to the Imperialists in a war against Arab brothers*". Therefore, the British Ambassador desired a complete ban on Libya being used for any military purposes; this desire did not meet the approval of Air Commodore David Lee, secretary of the COS Committee. He informed the Foreign Office that the Chiefs disagreed on the fact that absolutely no use could be made of Libya military facilities. On the contrary, the military needed Libya as a supportive function, mainly to reduce the Cyprus airfield overcrowding. The Foreign Office perceived these views as examples of the military failing to properly see the wider picture.

On 29 October, Israeli forces invaded the Sinai peninsula; then, Britain and France released a joint ultimatum to cease fire, which was ignored. Thus, one week later, the two Western powers landed paratroopers along the Suez Canal. In this context, the British troubles in Libya reached the peak. Ben-Halim had been properly informed of a rise in the British Air Force movements at *El Adem*, the Israeli attack and the Anglo-French ultimatum. Thus, the Libyan Cabinet discussed the possibility of Libyan bases being used in operations against and decided to authorize the deployment of Libyan militaries to stop British forces; moreover, a popular resistance against the British was discussed. Therefore, the Anglo-French Commander-in-Chief, General Sir C. Keightley, removed the 'Libyan' division from the order of battle.

The Suez crisis came at a defining moment for both Libya and the British position in Egypt: King Idris country was in an awkward position in comparison to other Arab states. Libya's empathy for the Egyptian cause was offset by British subsidies that helped their military presence within a bordering country. The key question in London was whether King Idris was still worth saving in the aftermath of Suez. Implicit in Eden's thoughts on Suez was not only the political damage caused but also the realities of the economic constraints on Britain's military posture in the Middle East.

In the aftermath of Suez, Ben-Halim, in his 'speech from the throne' made on 26 November requested several assurances from the British side such as inserting a clause into the treaty that prevented Britain from using the Libyan bases against another Arab country; a resolution of the British troops in Libyan cities' issue and even a pledge to secure London's agreement to the growth of the Libyan Army. The Foreign Office was irritated at Ben-Halim's proposals, thinking that Her Majesty's Government's good faith was being questioned, since they thought that the existing provisions were already protecting the Libyans from their fears. Rather than submit to this, it was deemed necessary to reassess the necessity of military requirements in Libya; hence the topic of a total retreat from the North African state started to appear in the public discourse. However, Ambassador Graham did not agree on this risky solution; the policy of complete abandonment would have meant to leave Libya to the

influence of the Soviets and of radical nationalism, fueled by Cairo. As a consequence, he championed the cause of treaty revision because even the preservation of *“an emasculated Treaty might still serve the negative purpose of avoiding a dangerous vacuum”*.⁷³ But overall these views came at the wrong time. Suez had demonstrated that Whitehall could not use the Libyan bases against an Arab state and it had therefore become of questionable value in the broader strategy of strengthening London’s commitments in the Arabic peninsula. Philip Darby identifies this case as a great evidence of the inherent unreliability of the Middle East air route to the Persian Gulf and beyond. Consequently, British policy towards Libya in the aftermath of Suez was dominated by two distinct but interlinked topics: the essential reduction in the financial commitment to the North African government and the will to guarantee Libya as a state allied to the Western block. These topics have been exemplified by Anthony Nutting, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, who promoted to *“only retain those military facilities which are indispensable to the achievement of our essential aims, namely the support of the Bagdad [sic] Pact, the protection of the oil bearing areas of Iraq and Iran against subversion and the defence of the oil of the Persian Gulf... We must concentrate on the[se] essential aims and abandon any facilities which make only a marginal contribution to the achievement of these aims (e.g. in Jordan) or which cannot in fact be used as we would like (e.g. Libya) because of adverse political factors”*.⁷⁴

The Libyan appeals to British military disengagement, possibly leaving one small garrison to protect King Idris could match with Macmillan government purpose of decreasing external defense spending to repair Britain’s economy after happenings in 1956. London’s retreat should have been counterbalanced by a more assertive American presence, which were to be convinced *‘to carry out as much of the load there as possible’*. Indeed, the financial commitment topic was the theme of a British and American officials’ meeting in January 1957. The financial subsidy argument progressively became *“a pawn in a Libyan game of playing one side off another in order to secure further aid. What this meant is that even before the Suez crisis, the AngloLibyan treaty was already in difficulty and subject to internal and external pressures which, in the case of the latter, was the threat of accepting Egyptian (and Russian) aid to break Libya’s dependence on British subsidies and thereby allow the Libyan government to request removal of all foreign troops”*.⁷⁵ Libya was for sure a country affected by the Egyptians propaganda, that during 1955 had directed itself at other British client administrations like the Hashemites Kingdoms in Iraq and Jordan; this exposure was exemplified by its Prime Minister, Ben-Halim, who aimed *“to reduce the ‘stigma’ of Libya’s treaty relations with Britain through counter-moves in the pan-Arab arena that included sympathy for Nasser and the rebels in Algeria”*.⁷⁶

⁷³ FO 371/119729, Graham to Lloyd, 27 Nov. 1956.

⁷⁴ R. J. Worrall, *The strategic limitations of a Middle East client state by the mid-1950s: Britain, Libya and the Suez Crisis*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30:2, 309-347, 2007, p. 341.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 344.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

So, it can be stated that Libya had shifted into a less reliable client state before the start of the Suez crisis; however, London was still the major Libya's bankroller.

This double-track between sympathy for Nasser and the realities of the British alliance showed its intrinsic problems revealing the illusion about the remaining areas of British influence in the Middle East. Hence, the Anglo-Libyan treaty was a flawed document since the most significant motivation for the British troops being positioned in Libya was for an involvement in Egypt, heavily restrained by the Libyan government attitude and the local population stances. As a result, the outcome of the Suez crisis in relation to the British foreign policy in Middle East and North Africa determined a transfer of the Libyan (and Jordanian) commitments to Washington, backed by the Eisenhower Doctrine approach.

This change happened throughout all 1957, when several talks between Washington and London took place; the change of the British initial thought of leaving Libya, due to the Ministry of Defence pressures on the Foreign Office about the need of the military over-flying rights being essential for British interests in the region, has been indispensable. (*FO 371/126043, JT1071/33G, Lloyd to Sandys, 17 April 1957 and Sandys to Lloyd, 6 May 1957.*) Robert Murphy, a State Department's official, argued at a National Security Council meeting in April that Soviet influence would “*open the gateway to all of North Africa and the NATO flank*”. President Eisenhower agreed, thus under his doctrine he extended U.S. aid to Libya, although it was stressed that the British should still play an important role. It is important to note that the British recommitment to Libya, by late 1957, arose not only from restored Anglo-American co-operation but also from continued fears of destabilization. The counter-revolutionary plan masked the absence of a long-term political solution for the country and the obstacles of reconciling a conservative, authoritarian monarchy with an increasingly radicalized population. The factors that led to the counter-insurgency operations in the country during 1956 and 1958 revealed that the importance of Libya rested on extremely precarious foundations: the Iraqi coup displayed that the systems of treaty rights and strategic preferences built up between the Western powers and conservative Arab monarchs could be demolished within hours by a successful nationalist coup. Even if the British countermove to save the King in 1956 managed to please the U.S. administration in relation to the change of heart over the abandonment of their commitments in the short-term, it also ensured the monarchy further detachment from the political currents that would eventually guide Libya's future. Hence, “*the British policy towards the Anglo-American discussions not only illustrated British weakness within the 'special relationship' but also the extent to which Libya's value in Nasser's containment had been weakened by the Suez catastrophe*”.⁷⁷

So, the British retrenchment happened without leaving a dangerous vacuum, feared by Ambassador Graham, that might have been filled by other political forces.

⁷⁷ S. Blackwell, *Saving the King: Anglo-American Strategy and British Counter-Subversion Operations in Libya, 1953-59*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Jan. 2003, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 1-18, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., p. 8.

The quick withdrawal of military forces immediately came back to the fore: on July 1958, the Iraqi revolution saw British officials fear that Libya could find an analogous destiny. That is why in September 1958 London decided to keep units in Libya after their original withdrawal date of March 1959. Eventually, Blackwell denotes that the conflict in Libya revealed the Anglo-American reliance on conservative rulers more and more overwhelmed by popular radical nationalism. Libya was deemed to be a vital link in the Western strategies to protect the Middle East. This implied the British need in keeping King Idris in power; this is why in July 1958 London intervened militarily.

To conclude, *“Libya between 1953 and 1959 provides an interesting case study of a regional 'turf war' involving Nasserist subversion, fears of Soviet manipulation and Anglo-American attempts to support a regime of increasingly questionable legitimacy in the eyes of its population”*.⁷⁸

2.3. Gaddafi's rule and the consequent poor relations.

During the '60's Libya oil production had grown; since 1961, the American Standard Oil Company began exporting it and by 1970 Libya had become the fourth major oil producing state. The signs of poor stability were already present, like the crisis of 1958. In fact the 1969 coup which overthrew King Idris was accepted with muted resignation by the British Labour government, presided by Harold Wilson.

Gaddafi's Free Officers had their chance when the King took a trip abroad, hence starting on 1 September *"Operation Jerusalem"*, pursued with the occupation of airports, radio stations and government offices in both the twin capitals.

The Kingdom of Libya's armed forces were trained by the British army; Ghaddafi's very negative opinion of the British led to his refuse to learn English and when sent to England, he was rude to the British officers, who reported the Libyan soldier for insubordination and abusive behavior. Thus, Ghaddafi's antipathy towards the United Kingdom arose from personal experiences: the future Libyan leader was precisely sent in U.K. in April 1966 for four months so as to complete his military training, where, according to Moussa Koussa, he was supposedly insulted and oppressed by British Army officers. So, this individual involvement merged with his ambition of becoming the advocate of the third world instances against the imperialists and colonialists Western countries, crafting the Third International Theory that merged principles of direct democracy with Islamic socialism and Arab and African nationalism.

Thus, the new generation of Libyan rulers, under the name of the “Free officials”, perceived the presence of British and American military bases as an intolerable concession made by a crooked King: *“How can a soldier remain passive and salute a king who has filled the country with foreign forces? How can you accept being*

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

*stopped on the street by an American? that happened to me personally. When I wanted to enter Wheelus base, I was turned away”.*⁷⁹ This remark by Gadhafi represented the disappointment of many of the Revolutionary Command Council members, the body that ruled the Libyan Arab Republic.

Actually, the removal of foreign bases had already been discussed when the monarch was still ruling the country; still, Gadhafi used this image as the clear proof of the old Regime’s complicity with the imperialist interests. After Operation Jerusalem took place, France, U.K., U.S. and Soviets representatives were called to meet RCC members. London and Washington answered rapidly, swiftly extending diplomatic recognition, so as to try to secure the military bases position. These friendly efforts to establish a relationship with the new Libyan government failed; mainly because Gadhafi’s strategic design saw the gaining of national sovereignty against the imperialist influences as the main objective of his political action. In fact, he declared that the new revolutionary Libya would never tolerate the American imperialism on Libyan land. The British left Libya definitely in March 1970.

In the meanwhile, the regime extended its influence over its oil industry, by far the most important commerce in the country. In the first two years of the new regime, the Revolutionary Command Council augmented royalties and taxes derived from crude oil extraction. Moreover, the Free Officials starting with the expropriation of British Petroleum’s share, commencing their policies of nationalization. In September 1973, it was announced that all foreign oil producers active in Libya were to see 51% of their operation nationalized. These actions produced great economic success: Libyan gross domestic product rose from \$3.8 billion in 1969 to \$13.7 billion after 5 years; then, to \$24.5 billion after 10 years, thus marking a great boost in Libyan economic development, linking it to the reappropriation of the soil resources that belong to the Libyan people.

So, from this point, relations between Libya and the United Kingdom have been very troubled for approximately more than 20 years. Among other things, the *Jamahiriya* sponsored energetically the Irish Republican Army (IRA), supplying money, weaponries and ammunitions to support their struggle against the British ‘imperialists’. One of the most difficult tasks that Thatcher governments had to solve was exactly the Irish problem; the proofs of Libya supporting the IRA further pushed London behavior for harsher measures against Gadhafi’s country. “*It is also beyond doubt that Libya provides the Provisional IRA with money and weapons. The major find of arms in Sligo and Roscommon in the Irish Republic on 26 January, the largest ever on the island, included rifles and ammunition from Libya*”.⁸⁰

On 17 April 1984, the United Kingdom broke off relations with Libya, after the killing of a police member staff, Yvonne Fletcher, outside the Libyan Embassy in London in St. James Square, while on duty during an anti-Gadhafi rally. Answering to Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton), she replied that “*We shall not forget the*

⁷⁹ D. Vandewalle, *A history of modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 79.

⁸⁰ *US bombing of Libya, Public Statement - House of Commons Speech, April 16, 1986.*

tragic murder of WPC Fletcher by shots fired from the Libyan people's bureau in London just two years ago tomorrow".⁸¹ This dramatic episode also played a role in the British support of the Reagan administration bombing of the twin capitals, done as retaliation for the attack at *La Belle* discothèque in Berlin, as stated by Margaret Thatcher when she addressed the House of Commons about that.

By 1986, the country's period of revolutionary upheaval came to a physiologic end; the quarrels with the Western countries, mainly with Britain, Italy, France and the United States have always been hints that Libya was directed towards a complete confrontation with the West. The rupture of diplomatic relations with Washington and London was the temporary culmination of an escalation started in 1969 that left the country diplomatically and economically isolated until the last years of the '80's.

The Conservative British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, in a speech made in the House of Commons in 1986, stated that government's decision to support the self-defense action of the United States, resulted in the bombings against "*five specific targets directly connected with terrorism*" in Libya. She framed the response as a bigger action against terrorism, since it "*attacks free societies and plays on those fears. If those tactics succeed, terrorism saps the will of free peoples to resist*".⁸² About the same topic, she replied to Mr. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) that terrorism was not a problem only for the United States but that the United Kingdom was also in the front line against the spreading of radicalism; thus, to overcome the threat of terrorism thriving on appeasement, in this case it was compulsory to take a strong action.

To Mr. Robert N. Wareing, (Liverpool, West Derby) the Prime Minister explained the ratio of the strong measures taken against Libya, since Whitehall believed "*together with our European partners, that economic sanctions work only if every country applies them. Alas, that was not going to happen with Libya. In April 1984 we took our own measures. We closed the Libyan people's bureau in London and broke diplomatic relations with Libya. We imposed a strict visa regime on Libyans coming to this country and we banned new contracts for the supply of defence equipment and we severely limited Export Credits Guarantee Department credit for other trade.... We also considered the wider implications, including our relations with other countries, and we had to weigh the importance for this country's security of our Alliance with the United States and the American role in the defence of Europe*".⁸³

⁸¹ *Ibidem.*

⁸² *Ibidem.*

⁸³ *Ibidem.*



The Lockerbie bombing in December 1988.

Source: *D. Vandewalle, A history of modern Libya, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 168.*

In 1989, the already recalled explosion of the Pan Am Flight 103 crash in Lockerbie, which massacred 270 people, symbolized an all-time low in the Anglo-Libyan relationship.

2.4. 1990's rehab.

In the 1990s, after the all-time low peak in the relations between the two countries, Ghaddafi started to dissociate Libya from the image of a state supporting international terrorism. This move has been substantiated by key intelligence that satisfied the British government in relation to Libya's relations with the Irish Republican Army. Furthermore, in 1999, ten years after the tragic accident happened in the Scottish skies, the African country handed the accused of the Lockerbie blasting to Scottish authorities; this move marked a strong step in the way to the complete restoration of full diplomatic relations with London.

Thus, Libya started its path to international rehabilitation, corroborated by other pragmatic actions by Muammar Ghaddafi, such as giving its non-conventional weapons program (WMD) in December 2003. This action has been made so as to exploit the international environment imposed by the war on terrorism declared by the United States after 9/11 disaster, in order to reestablish constructive relationships with many Western nations. The need to restore decent diplomatic exchanges with these countries was due also to the need of foreign investment, required to provide for the ill Libya oil industry. This need has been described by D. Vandewalle,

who stated that “... *Although the Libyan National Oil Company (LNOC) had established itself as a capable manager of the country’s oil fields, its officials were the first to admit that the country required international technology and know-how that would enable it to expand production, in part by drilling for oil beyond the Sirt Basin, including offshore*”.⁸⁴

However, the architect of the Libyan *Jamahiriya* had clearly left deep-rooted patterns on the country’s social, economic and political structures.

Gaddafi’s son, Saif al-Islam, clearly perceived that “*many of those structures now needed to change if the country were to fully benefit from the opportunities its reintegration into the international economy and community afforded*”.⁸⁵ Moreover, he claimed that to meet the challenges of Libya’s rise from both political and economic segregation, a huge set of reforms would be strongly considered necessary. Even if some technocrats and intellectuals were gradually finding their place within a system that had traditionally offered no occasions for anyone but those inflexibly devoted to the Great Arab Republic revolutionary axioms, “*the lack of institutionalization within the country’s political system still left much of that process subject to the vicissitudes of Qadhafi’s own decisions. By the end of the decade, most of Saif al-Islam’s attempts at reform had been hemmed in substantially by opponents within the regime – a force even someone as privileged as Saif al-Islam had been unable to neutralize*”.⁸⁶

After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union due to unsustainability within the satellite republics, the post-cold war international scenario observed a greater freedom of action enjoyed by the United Kingdom. Under these changed circumstances, London managed to separate, to some extent, its policies from Washington, although the focal point of the special relations persisted and often their interests converged.

When the New Labour came to power in U.K., it started more and more to perceive itself as a ‘force for good’ in the world; therefore, London foreign policy values and interests had to merge, leading to a wider portrayal of principles, standards and normative actions.⁸⁷ However, as many authors such as Hollis pointed out, this normative commitment has been pursued selectively, depending on the particular country: for instance, the relations between London and Tehran, Riyadh and Tripoli have been conducted with a different rate of focus on normative standards for greater democratization.

⁸⁴ D. Vandewalle, *A history of modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 174.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 174.

⁸⁷ R. Hollis, *Britain and the Middle East in the 9/11 Era*, London, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

From the British side, Tony Blair, Labour Prime Minister from 1997 to 2007, visited Libya two times, in 2004 and 2007. Blair had developed a friendly relationship with Colonel Gaddafi when economic sanctions executed on the North African country were lifted by both the United States and the United Kingdom.⁸⁸

During his premiership, the military Secret service, MI6, in 2004 handed over Abdelhakim Belhadj, the future *al-Watan* Islamist religious party leader, after 2011 war to the Gaddafi regime, though Blair later claimed he had "no recollection" of the happening.⁸⁹

Connected to the political reconciliation, 36 year later the nationalization of its Libyan assets by the Revolutionary Command Council, the British Petroleum signed a 900 million dollars deal about exploration and production rights on Libyan soil. This commercial deal was also related to the freeing of Abdel Baset al-Megrahi occurred in 2009; he was the head of the security for Libyan Arab Airlines and has been found guilty by Scottish judges of the Lockerby bombing.⁹⁰

However, with the eruption of the Arab Spring, this rapprochement with Ghaddafi ended, and the United Kingdom, through David Cameron Conservative government, was the hardest state alongside Sarkozy's France, against the counter revolutionary action the Tripoli Rule put in place against the remonstrations in February 2011, especially in Cyrenaica.

3. FRANCO-LIBYAN RELATIONS: NEVERENDING TENSIONS.

3.1. Frictions in the Libyan southern border.

Historically, the relations between Tripoli and Paris have not been so positive. The Italian colonial adventure in Libya, Ottoman province, started in 1911 under the government of Giovanni Giolitti. This led also to the invasion of Fazzan, sitting at a regional crossroads, linking southern Libya to the Sahel, a very significant spot nowadays for the sub-Saharan migrant routes to northern Libya and then onto Europe via the Italian peninsula. Here the subsequent departure of the Ottoman troops had left a power vacuum that France readily sought to fill, therefore clashing with the similar ambitions that the Italian Kingdom had in

⁸⁸ "Blair hails new Libyan relations", *BBC News*. 25 March 2004.

⁸⁹ R. Norton-Taylor, 11 April 2012. "Blair cannot recall' MI6 rendition for rebel Libyan to Gaddafi. *The Guardian*. London, UK. 1 December 2017.

⁹⁰ D. McElroy - C. Irvine, *Libya' granted oil concessions to BP on understanding Lockerbie bomber Megrahi would return home'*, "The Telegraph", September 7, 2011.

these territories. This was due to the fact that the Italian presence in this region had always been precarious, at least until the rise of fascism when more efforts were taken so as to consolidate the colonial dominions.

Twenty years later, in the midst of World War II, the forces of the French government in exile, *les Forces françaises libres*, led by General Charles De Gaulle, gained control of Murzuk, the main city of the southwestern Libyan region. Thus the French administration of Fazzan started, ending in 1951 when the whole region became part of the newly established Kingdom of Libya. France initially would not back the efforts for a united Libya under the United Nations framework since it was anxious to hold on to Fazzan and its resources, alongside with its strategic importance for the *Françafrique*, the French *pré carré*-backyard.

As seen in Chapter 1, the attempt to avoid the establishment of a unified Libya was implemented with the Bevin-Sforza plan, published on 10 May 1949, proposing ten-year trusteeships for France in Fazzan, for Italy in Tripolitania for Great Britain in Cyrenaica. On September 1949, at the U.N. General Assembly session, London had already individually opted to grant Cyrenaica self-government under the guidance of Sayyid Idris, the Sanusi leader. As Vandewalle notes, this effectively meant that if independence were to be granted to the provinces, it would necessarily drive Sayyid Idris into a privileged position, therefore safeguarding British interests. Thus, on February 1950, France agreed to set up a transitional government in Fazzan and creating a Representative Assembly for the province. “*In the case of France, there was a mixture of strategic and economic concerns: Fazzan was an important staging area for French Equatorial Africa, and French engineers had started to prospect for oil across the Libyan–Algerian border*”.⁹¹ In addition, “*Several National Congress members considered the federal formula an undisguised attempt by Britain and France to maintain their influence in the kingdom*”.⁹²

One of the most important source of clashes between the two countries, Libya and France, had traditionally been the dispute between some territories among the Libyan southern border and the Northern territories of Chad. The latter was a component of the French Colonial Empire (*Empire colonial français*) from 1900 when the Military Territory of Chad was created, to 1960. The complete occupation of Chadian territory came about in 1914; in the meanwhile France began negotiating treaties so as to establish the borders of the new African colony. On March 21 1899 the Supplementary Declaration to the Convention of 1898 managed to delimit the Chadian northern border, which comprised the so-called Aouzou Strip. The Declaration of 1899, concerning Chad's northern border, was reaffirmed by Great Britain and France in 1919. When the Great War came to an end in 1918, France honored its previous treaty obligations with the Kingdom of Italy by extending the western border of Libya, and granting other territories to Italy in 1919. This meant that Italy had the right to exercise its control

⁹¹ D. Vandewalle, *A history of modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 40.

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 47.

on the territories previously belonged to the Ottoman Empire, including all the territory in Chad that had been under Turkish control prior to the war in 1911 as part of the province of Libya.

On 7 January 1935, the French Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Laval and Benito Mussolini met in Rome. In accordance with the Treaty of London, Laval and Mussolini signed the Treaty of Rome which revised the Accord of 1919 and specifically ceded to Italy the area now called the Aouzou Strip. However, the instruments of ratification were never exchanged between Italy and France, meaning that this part of frontier zone was to never come under Italian control.

After the catastrophe of the Second global Conflict and the Italian collapse, the intricate topic of the Libyan borders had been entrusted to the United Nations; therefore the U.N. passed a resolution recommending that the delimitation of the borders between Chad and Libya would have to be negotiated between France and the new Libyan entity directly. Thus, the two sides in 1955 agreed to honor all the prior agreements: the Convention of 1898, the Declaration of 1899, the Accord of 1902, the Accord of 1919, and the Boundary Convention of 1919 between France and Great Britain. The fact that undeniably no mention was made to the Treaty of Rome of 1935, lacking the exchange of ratifications, which ceded to Italy the Aouzou Strip, by this means implicitly admitted that the Strip belonged to Chad. Both France and Libya ratified the treaty and the instruments of ratification were exchanged in February 1957.

In the summer of 1960 Chad became independent, declaring the inviolability and integrity of the territory in compliance with the international law principle of *uti possidetis*.

It can be argued that the Libyan engagement in Chadian affairs has started in 1968, in the midst of the Chadian civil war, when the rebel Muslim National Liberation Front of Chad- *Front de libération nationale du Tchad* (FROLINAT) started attacking against Chadian Christian President François Tombalbaye troops. In 1969, Tombalbaye demanded Paris for civil and military help. Therefore, a French mission was settled aiming at reforming the Chadian army and the civil service reform. The French moves had a positive outcome; the rebels were confined in the Tibesti mountains, between Chad and Libya, so Paris started retiring its military. Certain to have defeated the FROLINAT, President Tombalbaye, more confident about its position of force with respect to the rebels, halted the path of reforms in 1971 and accused some of the recently freed FROLINAT political prisoners of an attempted coup with Libyan backing; as a consequence Tripoli recognized officially Abba Siddick's FROLINAT, giving financial and logistic funding, then occupying the Aouzou Strip.

However, three years after the Libyan Young Officials had overthrown King Idris' monarchy, a secret agreement had been signed whereby Chad ceded the Aouzou Strip to Tripoli in exchange for a sum of money, twenty-eight million francs, and the guarantee that Libya would halt its subsidy to the FROLINAT. Colonel Ghaddafi's interest

in these territories “*was fuelled by a desire to achieve strategic importance and resources for his regime*”.⁹³ Negotiations between Ghaddafi and the Chadian government had taken place, where the head of the *Jamahiriyah* did agree to withdraw support from the Islamic organization and provide Chad with financial assistance if Chad would cut relationships with Israel, which happened in November 1972, when the African state broke relations with the Middle Eastern country. By aiding rebel groups, Ghaddafi planned to abolish colonial boundaries which obstructed the objectives of one of the Colonel’s ideas, Pan-Arabism, ideally leading to the merging of an Arab and African state.

Libyan occupation of the Aouzou Strip did not become public until May 1975 when the French *Le Figaro* reported that Libyan troops had seized control of the northern border of Chad, completely annexed in September, pursuant to the secret agreement between the two African countries Presidents. The Chadian authorities in 1977 publicly complained of the Libyan presence, stating that “*Aouzou is an integral part of Chad. We will never accept Libyan occupation in this area*”.⁹⁴

In 1980 Ghaddafi declared: “*Aouzou is a Libyan oasis and its inhabitants would not understand if someone were to tell them that they are Chadian and not Libyan*.”⁹⁵ In 1981, in addition to the fight for competing territorial claims, Tripoli’s bid to destabilize Tunisia led to a more open confrontation with France and the United States. For this reason, on January 1981, the French government rejected to execute a contract that had been signed between the oil company Elf Aquitaine and the Libyan Petroleum Company (LIPETCO), the Libyan investment company, and became more openly aligned against Libya following the latter’s renewed incursions in Chad.

The conflict between Libya and Chad reached worldwide attention on December 1980, when Libyan and rebel troops captured the capital N’Djamena. Nevertheless, the role of Paris in the struggle between the two African states has proven of the utmost importance. French aid to Chad, comprised of weapons and troops, helped Chad repel the Libyan advances.⁹⁶ By 1987, Chad “*had regained all of its territory as far north as the Aouzou Strip, but not including the Aouzou Strip*”.⁹⁷

In the last months of 1987, around 1,300 French militaries were stationed in Chad, mostly positioned as defense in the Chadian capital N’Djamena. France also sent economic aid to Chad; it gave \$90 million in 1987. However, French policy did not authorize its forces to cross the sixteenth parallel, the red line of the conflict from 1984, consequently a direct confrontation between French and Libyan combatants appeared as extremely unlikely. This conflict lasted until that year, with the final clashes in the so-called Toyota war; Hisssein Habré

⁹³ S. Simon, *The Great Toyota War, history of yesterday*, 21 July 2020.

⁹⁴ C. Alibert, *L'affaire du Tchad 1980-1985*, *Revue Generale De Droit International Public*, 1986, p. 366.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.365.

⁹⁶ M. Kelley, *A State in disarray: conditions of Chad’s survival*, 1986.

⁹⁷ P. Lewis, *France Refuses to Back Chad Offensive*, *N.Y. Times*, Aug. 11, 1987.

led Chad to victory and the ceasefire led the conflict to an end.⁹⁸ The ceasefire left open the issue of the disputed bordering piece of land; finally, the International Court of Justice allocated it to Chad in 1994.⁹⁹ After heavy losses, Libya restored diplomatic ties with Chad on October 1988, and agreed to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the dispute over the Aouzou Strip.¹⁰⁰

While involved in the quarrels with 'Ndjamena, by the second half of the '80's decade, the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya changed its name into Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya; this detail did not change that the country's long decade of revolutionary upheaval had run its course. The already analyzed disagreements with the United States in the Gulf of Sirte, with Britain in Egypt, and with France in Chad were initial signals that the Jamahiriya was advancing into a total conflict with the Western colonial powers.

3.2. Diplomatic incidents and political antipathy.

In particular, the tensions with France reached a peak on 19 September 1989 when the French UTA 772, a Mc Connell Douglas DC-10, airliner exploded over Niger. The airplane was destroyed by a bomb in the cargo hold, killing all 170 people among which there were 54 French. France accused Libya, in particular it accused four Libyan intelligence officials, demanding Tripoli the surrender of the indicted. The *Cour d'assise* found six Libyans guilty of the attack and awarded the relatives of the victims sums ranging from €3 000 to €30 000 depending on their relationship to the deceased. On 9 January 2004, the French relatives' group "*Les Familles du DC10 d'UTA*" signed an agreement with the Gaddafi International Foundation for Charity Associations accepting a payment of \$170 million for the victims as compensation.

Another area in which Libya and France developed close relation is that of the arm trade. After the Six Days War, the third Arab–Israeli War, fought on June 1967 between Israel and Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq and the minor involvement of Lebanon, Paris eased its arms embargo on nonfront-line Middle East combatants and permitted to sell weapons to Tripoli. In 1974 France and Libya finalized an agreement whereby Libya traded its oil supplies for technical assistance and financial cooperation; this was signed by the Libyan Premier Jalloud and the French Prime Minister Pierre Messmer.¹⁰¹ However, only two years after the signing of the trade deal, Muammar Ghaddafi condemned Paris' policies as the one an "*arms merchant*", since it was selling weapons to both the Israelis and the Arab opponents; for instance, the French government was also selling Israel the same

⁹⁸ <https://historyofyesterday.com/the-great-toyota-war-52a22751b2c1>.

⁹⁹ G. Naldi, *The Aouzou Strip Dispute-A Legal Analysis*. *Journal of African Law*, 1989, 33(1), 72-77.

¹⁰⁰ R. W. McKoeon, *The Aouzou Strip: Adjudication of Competing Territorial Claims in Africa by the International Court of Justice*, *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* Volume 23 Issue 1 Article 6 1991.

¹⁰¹ F. Lewis, *France Agrees to Give Libya Long-Term Aid in Return for Oil*, *The New York Times*, Feb. 20, 1974.

Mirage 5 fighters, a supersonic attack aircraft, as it sold Libya.

Libya's dissatisfaction with Paris also concerned the latter's military interventionism in African countries such as Chad, the Western Sahara and Zaire-Democratic Republic of Congo, thus accusing the Vth French Republic of having started all over again a colonialist policy, in line with Colonel Ghaddafi anti-colonialist and anti-western propaganda, depicting himself as the champion of the pan Arabist cause.

Another peculiar relation between Ghaddafi and Paris has as main character Nicolas Sarkozy, former *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* head and *Les Républicains* founder, Président de la République from 2007 to 2012. *“As president, Sarkozy rolled out the red carpet for Gaddafi early, famously allowing the eccentric autocrat to pitch his Bedouin tent on the grounds of the Hotel de Marigny, a state-owned mansion adjacent to the Élysée Palace, during a controversial five-day official visit to Paris in December 2007”*.¹⁰²

Then, this turbulent relationship rose to prominence during the turbulent days of 2011, before the NATO intervention Unified Protector that led Paris, first foreign country to do it, to legitimate the rebels gathered in Benghazi; all this led to the death of Ghaddafi. The Libyan's leader son, Saif al-Islam, in an interview with Euronews attacked Nicolas Sarkozy, allegedly having taken Libyan funds for his 2007 Presidential campaign that eventually led him to the Elysée.¹⁰³



Source: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/>, April 8, 2021.

¹⁰² France24.com Gaddafi relations haunt Sarkozy in 2007 campaign financing case, 20/03/2018).

¹⁰³ <https://www.france24.com/en/20180320-france-libya-sarkozy-gaddafi-relations-haunt-2007-campaign-financing-case-custody>.

Here is an excerpt from the interview:

Riad Muassas: “*What is your position on France and President Sarkozy? France was the first country to recognize the Provisional Council*”.¹⁰⁴

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi: “*Firstly Sarkozy must repay Libya the money he took for his election campaign. We financed his election campaign and we have all the details and we are ready to publish them. The first thing we ask of this clown Sarkozy is that he repay this money to the Libyan people. We helped him become president so that he would help the Libyan people but he has disappointed us. And very soon we will publish all the details and the documents and banking pay slips*”.¹⁰⁵

To conclude, decades of political skirmishes and diplomatic incidents did not allow Tripoli and Paris to have stable and unambiguous relationships. The contradictions between the commercial agreements in lots of fields and the strong hostilities at a political level have not allowed these two countries a qualitative leap in bilateral relations over the past century. The case of Sarkozy’s ambiguity sums up well the rate of diffidence among Paris and the *Jamahiriya*; this precisely led to France being the strongest proponent for the overthrow of Colonel Ghaddafi and the subsequent devastation of the Libyan unified state. The concept of one Libya, however, from an historical point of view has pretty much always been an artificial construction. As Vandewalle noted, the establishment of the Kingdom of Libya has been made to reassure the western powers about the possible Soviet offensives which would have led to a difficult situation in the southern flank of the Atlantic alliance.

Even in the last years of the ‘70’s, the leader of the Libyan Arab Republic remarked that although economic relations between the two states were good, political relations were not. (*Libya: France, Library of Congress Country Studies, 1987*)

However, the role of France, in “*the enigmatic oil state*”,¹⁰⁶ even if less prominent than the one of Rome and London historically has proved to be of the utmost importance in the decade, as it will be shown in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.euronews.com/2011/03/16/exclusive-saif-al-gaddafi-wants-money-back-from-sarkozy>.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁶ D. Vandewalle, *A history of modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

4. MADNESS AND AFTERWARDS

4.1. The end of the Jamahiriya: Operation Unified Protector.

Jason W Davidson have examined the events of 2011 in Libya, showing how only a model that integrates aspects from different theoretical approaches could offer a comprehensive description of the western powers' military intervention against the Arab Jamahiriya. Thus, the author merged the constructivist focus on the normative power of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) standards and the perceived threats for a country's interests, cherished by the realists stances alongside the leitmotif of the prestige of a state. The latter is defined by Robert Gilpin as the social recognition of a state's power, valued both by constructivists and realists approaches. This study has been put in place because each of the theories explored offer a critical factor of the story which the other concepts ignore. Therefore, this enlarged theoretical perspective could offer a better understanding of the initial factors leading to an armed intervention.

Paris actions towards Ghaddafi regime changed radically in one month. When the violence and brutalities started in the Libyan streets in February 2011, the country's rhetoric was steering towards more conciliatory tones. European Affairs Minister Laurent Wauquiez said humanitarian aid should have been the priority in Libya rather than military action to overthrow the head of the Free Officials, a day after Washington declared it was moving its military forces closer to Libya. Moreover, he said that preventing Ghaddafi to pay mercenaries should also have been a priority. To this end, he proposed to impede the Libyan authorities selling shares in European countries, rather than trying to set up a no-fly zone on Libya, as it in fact happened. He was also skeptic about this prospect, "*Libya is twice the size of France. So is it even possible to set up a no-fly zone quickly, and would it be effective?*".¹⁰⁷ Thus, the Republican Minister was pushing for economic sanctions: "*Paris is in favour of the European Union going a step further on that point. The Libyan state owns stakes in European companies. The aim would be to ensure that it can not sell its stakes*".¹⁰⁸

Sarkozy, on the other hand, was concerned about stressing the humanitarian motivation and the supposedly shared democratic values with the rebels gathered in Benghazi; more importantly, he was hoping to "*draw a veil over earlier disarray in his government's response to the Arab spring*".¹⁰⁹

However, on 19 March 2011 the Sarkozy government had totally changed its policy preferences: Paris has been the first country to intervene with military means against Ghaddafi; as the French Defence Ministry 2011 data

¹⁰⁷ Reuters, *UPDATE 1-France urges aid, not military action for Libya, 1 March, 2011.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹⁰⁹ A. Goldhammer, *De Gaulle, he ain't, Foreign Policy, 22 March 2011.*

show, France deployed around 60 aircraft and was involved in about 5600 incursions. Paris, alongside with London, was answering to the prospect of large-scale civilian losses rather than the reality of it; in fact, Reports from the UN's High Commissioner for and the Special Advisers to the Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide and R2P thought the Ghaddafi regime's actions 'might' and 'could' amount to crimes against humanity.¹¹⁰ However, when the Libyan loyalist forces bombed the outskirts of the rebel stronghold Benghazi, the Colonel was warning the insurgents '*we are coming tonight ... there won't be any mercy*'.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the head of the regime warned: "*officers have been deployed in all tribes and regions so that they can purify all decisions from these cockroaches*"¹¹² and "*any Libyan who takes arms against Libya will be executed*".¹¹³ Nevertheless, as far as it concerns the United Kingdom and France, the threat of no mercy for the rebels actions cannot fully explain the Franco-British decision to intervene "*as both countries were the leading advocates for a no-fly zone well in advance of the siege*".¹¹⁴

Davidson continues in his analysis of the intervention cutting off the humanitarian reason of the European involvement since UN documented substantial civilian deaths from North Atlantic Treaty Organization bombings. Following this reasoning if France and Britain had been chiefly driven by humanitarian concerns it would have expected them rationally to have pushed NATO to inspect these hard-hitting accusations meticulously, to admit the supposed misconducts and making clear how they would deal with this problematic in the future interventions. The refusal to investigate the legitimate United Nations' claims brings down the pure humanitarian logic of the shared intervention against Ghaddafi regime. Therefore, the logic underneath the intervention should be found in the pursuit of the strategic interests of the two governments: Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron administrations. From Paris side, "*the Sarkozy government perceived international and regional support as critical prerequisites to intervention*".¹¹⁵ Actually, the facts contradict the obligatory nature of the international and regional backing of the operations; however, it was an important facet for the decision-making of the French government. In fact, Ambassador Gérard Araud, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations from 2009 to 2014, during the debate in the Security Council of the U.N. stressed the fact that the Arab and the African countries had pushed for the intervention of the Security Council. Equally, the new appointed French Foreign minister, Alain Juppé, who replaced the former head of *Quai d'Orsay* Michèl Alliot-Marie, stated that a military intervention against Ghaddafi's regime would be possible only with the input of the Arab League

¹¹⁰ A. J. Bellamy, P. D. Williams, *The new politics of protection? Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and the responsibility to protect*, *The Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 825-850, 2011, p. 839.

¹¹¹ H. Morris, P. Hollinger and J. Blitz, 2011, 'US joins push for UN action in Libya', *Financial Times*, 18 March 2011.

¹¹² ABC (Australia), *Defiant Gaddafi issues chilling call*, 23 Feb. 2011.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁴ J. W Davidson, *France, Britain and the intervention in Libya*, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26:2, 310-329, 2013, p.315.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 318.

and the African Union. This call from the Arab league arrived on 12 March 2011, when the Council of the League of Arab States asked for a no-fly zone on Libyan military aviation and for further moves to protect the Libyan civilians against the regime's repression and brutality. On 17 March, the UNSC Resolution 1973 passed with 10 votes in favor and 5 abstentions. As it was stated, "*while it is hard to say that the French embrace of a no-fly zone was driven by regional and international support, as the former preceded the latter, it seems plausible that a degree of support was a critical prerequisite*".¹¹⁶

Preserving access to Libyan oil and lessening the terrorist threat stemming from the Libyan territories were for sure significant contributing factors in Paris' decision. These two matters are relevant "*only given that the Sarkozy government made the initial decision for a no-fly zone*".¹¹⁷ This is true because Sarkozy could have made a deal with the regime if France's principal drives were the terroristic menaces and the energetic supplies. Since Paris made clear that it was arming the rebels, the move was in contradiction with the arms embargo mandated by UNSCR 1970 and 1973.¹¹⁸ The best means to preserve French main interests, namely access to oil and minimizing the prospect of forthcoming threats from the North African country was to secure the triumph of the Transitional National Council established in Benghazi. Moreover, Paris exposed itself in many ways, pushing for the Colonel's dethronement, for instance by the words of Juppé: "*He [Gaddafi] must leave. I remind you that France was one of the first powers to say it with so much clarity*".¹¹⁹

Then, taking a strong stand in an international crisis when the United States, under Obama administration, was very cautious in exposing itself, was thought as a great way to boost Paris international prestige, nurturing the concept of *Grandeur*, pillar of the Fifth French Republic since its inception through General de Gaulle's actions.

Moreover, due to public and opposition support Sarkozy knew that intervention was unlikely to generate significant electoral costs. The Sarkozy government's Libyan policy was popular with the French public: while on 4 March 2011, a poll found that 66 per cent of the civil society opposed an intervention; then, an IFOP (*L'Institut Français d'Opinion Publique*) poll published on 19 days later displayed that 66 per cent of respondents were in favor of the military intervention.¹²⁰ Not only the civil society, but even the opposition parties, like the *Parti Socialiste*- the Socialist Party, were in favor of a strong answer. Thus, surely both the "*support from the French public and the opposition reduced the political risk to Sarkozy in using force but it would have been foolish for him to think he could make significant political gains through the air war*".¹²¹

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 319.

¹¹⁸ J. Blitz, P. Hollinger, 'France reveals arms drop for Libya rebels', *Financial Times*, 30 June 2011.

¹¹⁹ A. Juppé, 'LIBYE RÉPONSE DU MINISTRE D'ÉTAT', 8 March, <http://basedoc.diplomatie.gouv.fr/exl-php/cadcgp.php>.

¹²⁰ *Le Monde*, 'Près de 66% des Français approuvent l'intervention', 24 March 2011.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 320.

On the other hand, across the Channel, one of London's main worries was the gross human rights violations. As Davidson states, on 25 February the UK's representative to the UN Human Rights Council declared that "*the use of military force against civilians and the attacks on funeral processions have caused deep anger throughout the country and across the world. We are also deeply disturbed by reports of Libyan planes being ordered to bomb their own people and by Qaddafi's public threats of violence in order to hold on to power*".¹²²

Moreover, in his speech at the House of Commons on 21 March 2011, David Cameron stated: "*This action was necessary because, with others, we should be trying to prevent this dictator from using military violence against his own people*".¹²³

Obviously, the human rights concerns and the subsequent responsibility to protect logic were not the only push factor that led to the government decision for an armed intervention. This is especially true because "*it later emerged that Britain had sold £21.7 million in defence equipment to the Gaddafi regime in 2009, including 'chemical, biological weapons, teargas, or radioactive materials' and military aircraft supplies*",¹²⁴ having as main objective the promotion of its national defense industry. However, as a *Times*' report showed, since the Libyan leader would not face a substantial task, London was at first cautious about exposing itself in Libyan domestic concerns. But, when "*in the last week of February, British Special Forces entered Libya and began assessing the vulnerability of the regime to air strikes*",¹²⁵ London's view changed radically.

On 28 February, the British conservative Prime Minister announced his endorsement and the subsequent preparation for a no-fly zone. Moreover, he declared the freezing of the Sirte's Colonel economic assets, saying "*my message to Colonel Gaddhaffi is simple: go now*".¹²⁶

In his 18 March speech in the House of Commons, David Cameron highlighted three critical conditions in the debate about intervention in Libya: one of them was the regional support, namely the one of the Arab countries.¹²⁷

As it concerns the international support, the British Foreign Office Minister stated that "*a no-fly zone could be implemented without UNSC authorization, noting that 'it depends on the situation on the ground'*".¹²⁸ In general, it can be stated that the most important reasons that pushed London to intervene were a combination of the economic interests, migration and terrorism logics. About the migration threat, on 4 March 2011, a press

¹²² FCO, 'UK at the UN Human Rights Council on Libya', 25 February, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/advanced-search..>, 2011.

¹²³ House of Commons Debates (HC Deb) 21 March 2011 vol 525 c704.

¹²⁴ M. Savage, 'Britain shipped weapons worth...', *The Times*, 3 March 2011.

¹²⁵ J. W. Davidson, *France, Britain and the intervention in Libya*, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26:2, 310-329, 2013, p.321.

¹²⁶ HC Deb 2 March 2011 vol 524 c291.

¹²⁷ HC Deb 21 March 2014.

¹²⁸ J. W. Davidson, *France, Britain and the intervention in Libya*, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26:2, 310-329, 2013, p.322.

release from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office projected that roughly 200,000 migrants had fled Libya in the last month. Moreover, it was argued that from London's perspective, all economics, energy safety and immigration issues were pointing in the same direction.¹²⁹

Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the time, on 2 March declared: *"If people in the UK ask why, I would point at the efforts in recent weeks to rescue British nationals caught up in the turbulent events, at the level of human migration from North Africa to Europe, at the level of trade and investment between Europe and North Africa, and its importance to us in terms of energy, the environment and counter-terrorism"*.¹³⁰ Therefore, the threat of Libya becoming a rogue state would have put the United Kingdom in a position where all these three aforementioned menaces would have become real threats, because *"that would be a danger to the national interest of this country"* as declared by William Hague, British Foreign Secretary. Moreover, this time from Cameron's words: *"... Let us be clear where our interests lie. In this country we know what Colonel Gaddafi is capable of. We should not forget his support for the biggest terrorist atrocity on British soil... This would potentially threaten our security, push people across the Mediterranean and create a more dangerous and uncertain world for Britain and for all our allies as well as for the people of Libya"*.¹³¹ Then, the Conservative Prime Minister continued stressing the fact that when the moral motif and the national interest stances were blended together, London intervention would have been far more likely: *"just because we cannot do the right thing everywhere does not mean we should not do it when we have clear permission for and a national interest in doing so"*.¹³² Following these reasonings and having decided for an armed intervention, starting on 19 March 2011, the United Kingdom alongside with France, started its airstrikes against the Libyan *Jamahiriya* deploying 37 aircraft which engaged in more than 3000 sorties.¹³³

The rapprochement of France and Britain witnessed the British Prime Minister David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy agreeing about the policies to follow, despite a temporary disagreement about the role of NATO in the operation. The understanding came about also because after the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 passed on 17 March 2011, both Paris and London were too involved in the Libyan Arab *Jamahiriya* situation, thus putting their prestige on the line.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ P. Stephens, *Arab revolutions teach lesson in realpolitik*, *The Financial Times*, 2011.

¹³⁰ <https://shandklibdems.org.uk/en/article/2011/0459022/nick-clegg-transforming-europe-s-partnership-with-north-africa>.

¹³¹ HC Deb 21 March 2011 vol 525 c708 and c711.

¹³² HC Deb 21 March 2011 vol 525 c708.

¹³³ Ministry of Defence, *'The UK's contribution to freeing Libya'*, <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/MilitaryOperations/>, 5 January 2012.

¹³⁴ J. Blitz, A. Barker, D. Dombey, *'Cameron seeks "leadership" on Libya'*, *Financial Times*, 17 March 2011.

The U.N. resolution 1970¹³⁵ failed to make Ghaddafi comply with the human rights standards; this is due to the Colonel's rejection of the anxieties exposed in the first Security Council Resolution and to his refuse to permit humanitarian aid caravans into some of the cities surrounded by the Libyan army.¹³⁶ However, the UN Resolution 1973 imposing a no-fly zone on Libya after the failure of the Libyan authorities to comply with Resolution 1970, recalled paragraph 26 of Resolution 1970 in which the Council expressed its readiness to consider taking additional appropriate measures, as necessary, to facilitate and support the return of humanitarian agencies and make available humanitarian and related assistance within the Libyan boundaries. Therefore, acting under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, the Security Council demanded a ceasefire, the protection of civilians, the establishment of a No-fly zone, which is *"a ban on all flights in the airspace of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in order to help protect civilians" except flights whose sole purpose is humanitarian, such as delivering or facilitating the delivery of assistance, including medical supplies, food, humanitarian workers and related assistance, or evacuating foreign nationals from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya... nor other flights which are deemed necessary by States acting under the authorization conferred in paragraph 8 to be for the benefit of the Libyan people, and that these flights shall be coordinated with any mechanism established under paragraph 8...*".¹³⁷

Moreover, in Paragraph 13 the U.N.S.C. requires *"in order to ensure strict implementation of the arms embargo established by paragraphs 9 and 10 of resolution 1970 (2011), to inspect in their territory, including seaports and airports, and on the high seas, vessels and aircraft bound to or from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, if the State concerned has information that provides reasonable grounds to believe that the cargo contains items the supply, sale, transfer or export of which is prohibited by par 9 or 10 of res 1970 (2011) as modified by this resolution, including the provision of armed mercenary personnel, calls upon all flag States of such vessels and aircraft to cooperate with such inspections and authorises MS to use all measures commensurate to the specific circumstances to carry out such inspections"*.¹³⁸ Then, a *"ban on flights to any aircraft registered in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya or owned or operated by Libyan nationals or companies"*¹³⁹ as written in paragraph 17; an asset freeze and the establishment of a group of up to eight experts (*Panel of Experts*), to make recommendations on actions, provide to the Council an interim report and to *"gather, examine and analyse information from States,*

¹³⁵ <https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1970%20, 2011>.

¹³⁶ A. J. Bellamy, P. D. Williams, *The new politics of protection? Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and the responsibility to protect*, *International Affairs* 87:4 825–850, 2011.

¹³⁷ United Nations S/RES/1973 (2011) Security Council Distr. Resolution 1973 Adopted by the Security Council at its 6498th meeting, on 17 March 2011.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, p.4.

¹³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

*relevant UN bodies, regional organisations and other interested parties regarding the implementation of the measures decided in resolution 1970 (2011) and this resolution, in particular incidents of non-compliance”.*¹⁴⁰

One difference between the two countries’ approaches may be seen in the procedures that led to the decision of bombing Libyan soil: Cameron sought a vote of confidence from the House of Commons before starting the military operations even if in the United Kingdom Parliament's authorization to deploy troops is not required; while the French President did not pass through the *Assemblée Nationale*’s voting.

In the House of Commons, after a six-hours hard discussion and after Labor MP Dennis Skinner questions followed by Cameron’s reassurances about Libya not becoming like Iraq: “*This is not going into a country, knocking over its government and then owning and being responsible for everything that happens subsequently. This is about protecting people and giving the Libyan people a chance to shape their own destiny*”. The government motion, supported as well by Labour party minority, was backed by 557 MPs and opposed by 13.¹⁴¹

On the other hand, Sarkozy simply acted *de son bon plaisir* — at his own pleasure, since used his prerogatives of sovereignty, which can be declined as the power to declare an emergency, in this case an humanitarian one, so it follows that Paris has the responsibility to protect Libyan citizens. “*If so, then the Libyan intervention has been a striking demonstration of Sarkozy’s sovereignty over la Grande Nation. He has stuck his neck out quite far in pushing for Western intervention in Libya*”;¹⁴² still, it has shown the world again that France will always do what is in its power to follow the needs dictated by the pursuit of its national interest.

In closing, both London and Paris’ early political moves presented the issue of international and regional support, summarized mainly by the consent of the Council of Security of the U.N. and by the Arab League, which they required as a preliminary requirement to use military tools against Libya. Having engaged in initial actions, the two governments connected their future moves with both countries’ prestige, since they cut all the relationships with Tripoli, consequently making the latter more likely to work under track to plan terrorist incidents.

Finally, the Sarkozy government benefited from the support of the French public opinion and opposition, like the Socialist Party. Likewise, the Conservative and Unionist Party government was also secured from eventual future electoral losses because of the Labour Party’s support for the use of force, headed by Ed Miliband.

It has to be remembered that the two European countries’ maneuvers were finalized to depose Ghaddafi, therefore it is explained the backing of the rebels, gathered in the National Transitional Council; the two powers were not focused on Libya’s situation after the defeat of the 40 years ruling of the revolutionaries Free Officials,

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴¹ *BBC, MPs back United Nations action against Col Gaddafi, 22 March 2011.*

¹⁴² *A. Goldhammer, De Gaulle, he ain’t, Foreign Policy, 22 March 2011.*

thus they “*could not guarantee an improved human rights situation or reduced migratory pressures, lower terror threat or access to oil*”.¹⁴³

4.2. The Italian twist.

Apart from France and the United Kingdom, eager to get rid of Ghaddafi, Italy has been the most conflict-ridden of all the EU and NATO members. This becomes quite clear when someone sees the degree of economic and strategic relations between Rome and Tripoli through the last century, as shown in the first chapter. Then, the Italian interests in Libya were endangered by the rebellions and the subsequent bilateral strong actions initiated by Paris and London. The initial efforts made by Berlusconi government were made null and void by the approval of UN Security Council Resolution 1973. So, by this time Silvio Berlusconi, Franco Frattini, the Foreign Affairs Minister- *Ministro degli Affari Esteri*, and other top politicians were then obliged to choose sides, precisely what they were trying to avoid. Therefore, in April they endorsed the attempts by both the EU and the NATO-led force to obtain the Colonel’s fall and even legitimized the insurgents, the T.N.C. grouping. “*Rome agreed to contribute forces to help enforce the arms embargo and allowed NATO to use seven air bases. Although Italian forces were initially not permitted to engage in combat, by late April even that caveat had been withdrawn*”.¹⁴⁴

Given that Great Britain and France led the charge in dealing with the crisis meant that, from the outset, the international response was a European concern. Moreover, the United States, the historical Italian ally, usually even closer than with the European neighbors, got out of the Libyan issue since it was not Barack Obama’s priority. Thus, Washington was not eager to take the lead of the NATO-led intervention, producing an extremely ambiguous situation for Rome.

Apart from Washington choices and the world-wide condemnation of the Libyan Arab *Jamahiriya* from the international community because of the employment of excessive actions against the protesters from Cyrenaica, Berlusconi government was still willing to shield as much as possible the bilateral relationship with Tripoli from the turbulence and conflict.

Another strong example about the Italian different will compared with the European allies has been Silvio Berlusconi’s denial to use his personal connection to the Libyan President to insist on the termination of bloodsheds, declaring that the Colonel was “*too busy*” at the moment.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ J. W. Davidson, *France, Britain and the intervention in Libya*, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26:2, 310-329, 2013, p.325.

¹⁴⁴ B. Lombardi, *The Berlusconi Government and Intervention in Libya*, *The International Spectator*, 46:4, 31-44, 2011, p. 31.

¹⁴⁵ Associated Press, “*Berlusconi Speaks to Ghadafi by Phone*”, 22 February 2011.

Differently from the situation in the U.K. and in France, the Italian opposition parties were against the government initial actions: for instance, one of the opposition front-runners, former *Partito Democratico* member Francesco Rutelli, disapproved the government's silence about Ghaddafi's crimes, arguing that "*Italy has been behaving with extraordinary lightness in the face of a dictator*".¹⁴⁶

Even the Italian Defense Minister, Ignazio La Russa, while discussing with the journalists at the Chamber of Deputies at the end of February, denied the military option suggestion: "*For humanitarian military action I imagine they mean peacekeeping actions such as those in which we are engaged in different parts of the world... There has been no talk of it, it does not seem to me that there are the conditions at this time*".¹⁴⁷

Nevertheless, by the last weeks of March, Rome's policy changed drastically: Lombardi points to the reassessment of the beast means to pursue its objectives, which remained unchanged. Surely the U.S. endorsement for the Anglo-French resolution at the UN Security Council won't have left much choice; probably pressures for military assistance to demonstrate NATO's credibility and resolve were made, appealing to the government's traditional focus on the US relationship, especially in Berlusconi's political view.

Moreover, according to Angelo Panebianco's third scenario for post 2011 Libya, the one in which Ghaddafi regains Libya, should be seen as a terrible perspective: "*it will be painful for Italy, we will pay a very high economic cost. Not to mention the difficulty of re-establishing cooperative relations on such sensitive issues as the control of emigration from Africa*".¹⁴⁸ This perceptions has been apparent when the 29 March Franco Frattini met with the rebel Transitional National Committee representatives at the London Conference; there, he noted the T.N.C. willingness to honor the agreements at the international level, comprising the arrangements with ENI, crucial for Italy, and to ensure continuity in economic action.¹⁴⁹

This development with the former rebels, now legitimized, matches with Panebianco's Libyan first scenario, the best one for both Italians and Libyans. This is true because "*however elusive, vague and reluctant to be imprisoned in precise definitions, the idea of 'national interest' cannot be ignored*".¹⁵⁰ These commitments made the foreign policy shift more acceptable. Six days later, the Head of the *Farnesina* backed officially the Libyan regime change announcing that Italy, after Paris and Doha would become the third state to recognize the rebels as the legitimate voice of the Libyan people. "*Any solution for the future of Libya has a precondition: that Qadhafi's regime leaves... that Qadhafi himself and his family leave the country*".¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ C. Barry, "Italy's Close Ties with Libya Run Deep", *HuffPost Business*, 22 February 2011.

¹⁴⁷ *Corriere Della Sera*, *Ue-Usa: Subito assistenza umanitaria; La città di Zawia sotto le bombe*", 24 February 2011.

¹⁴⁸ A. Panebianco, "Tre Scenari Per Una Crisi", *Corriere Della Sera*, 7 March 2011.

¹⁴⁹ A. La Mattina, "Frattini a microfoni spenti 'È stato un fallimento'", *La Stampa*, 30 March 2011.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵¹ https://www.esteri.it/mae/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/20110314_libia_frattini_g8.html.

Then, Rome agreed in the same days, on 1 April 2011, to the creation of EUFOR Libya, a European Union military operation in support of humanitarian assistance operations in response to the crisis situation in Libya¹⁵² under the command of an Italian military. By the end of the month the Italian authorities even announced through the Defense Minister, the dispatch of military advisors to assist the rebels.¹⁵³

Finally, to complete the complete overturning of positions and statements in less than two months, on 25 April the Italian Prime Minister informed President Obama that the even the reticence on Italy's military contribution to the NATO-led operation were being removed.¹⁵⁴

As Bellamy and Williams show, the possibility for the establishment of a no-fly zone in Libya has been possible through the regional organizations pressures; *“the political game-changer came with the third key factor—the positions taken by relevant regional organizations. Once again regional organizations served as ‘gatekeepers’ by framing the issues and defining the range of feasible international action”*.¹⁵⁵ This is true because Washington was unquestionably uninterested in the topic and the UN Security Council authorization was deemed unlikely since three non-permanent members (India, Brazil, and Germany) and two permanent members, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China (following its five principles of foreign policy, including the non-interference and the non-use of force) opposition was strong at first glance. In the end, these five countries abstained in the vote, because of their conviction of the impossibility to legitimize inaction with respect to the supposed gross violation of human rights. The Gulf Cooperation Council, on 7 March 2011, called on the UN Security Council to *‘take all necessary measures to protect civilians, including enforcing a no-fly zone over Libya’*.

In this first subchapter, all the three countries activities and concerns in the Libyan game have congealed and converged. NATO Operation Unified Protector lasted 222 days from 23 March to 31 October 2011, enforcing UN Security Council 1970 and 1973.

The initial coalition comprised of 10 countries: apart from the above-mentioned France, United Kingdom, Italy and the United States, even Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Qatar and Spain were involved in the maneuver. The official names for the single countries contributions were *Opération Harmattan* for the French intervention; *Operation Ellamy* for the participation by the United Kingdom and *Operation Odyssey Dawn* for the United States. As said, all these single operations were then handed over to NATO led *Operation Unified Protector*. After months of fighting, having retreated to Sirte, one of his last strongholds and his birthplace, after

¹⁵² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011D0210&from=EN>.

¹⁵³ A. Cowell, and R. Samaiya, *“France and Italy will also send Advisors to Libya Rebels”*, *The New York Times*, 20 April 2011.

¹⁵⁴ White House Office of the Press Secretary, *“Readout of the President's Call”*, 25 April 2011.

¹⁵⁵ A. J. Bellamy, P. D. Williams, *The new politics of protection? Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and the responsibility to protect*, *International Affairs* 87:4 825–850, 2011, p.841.

Tripoli's capitulation, Muhammad Ghaddafi tried to reach the desert to continue its resistance. NATO bombers attacked its convoy; then, taken by the T.N.C. rebels, heavily injured, he died before reaching the city of Misrata.

4.3. Tripolitania vs Cyrenaica: new powers are emerging.

The news of Ghaddafi's death gave hope for a pacification within the country, but this prediction was not realized. In fact, the consequent power vacuum, together with the lack of harmonization between the many factions present on the territory, did not allow the normalization of the country. After the two Security Council Resolutions n. 1970 and n. 1973 of March 2011 in which on the one hand the first resolution offered the establishment of an embargo on military equipment so as to stop the violence, possessing a sanctioning nature; on the other hand resolution 1973 admitted the use of force by a coalition of NATO member states in order to safeguard the population.

The overthrow of the government did not entail the termination of the commitments undertaken by the previous regime; hence, Libya after NATO intervention should continue to comply with the past international agreements.

However, the Libyan situation was peculiar, since had to deal with a substantial governmental void because of the struggle for power among several factions, turning into a state 'in the process of failure'. Italy, the country that enjoyed the strongest relations with the former regime, continued to express its will to have robust relations with the former colony. However, from a legal perspective, since the scenario of the Libyan civil war is different from the moment when the Benghazi Treaty during Berlusconi government was concluded, it would be possible to terminate the 2008 Treaty on the basis of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties of 1969, since a fundamental change of circumstances and supervening impossibility had happened, according to Artt. 61 and 62.

Nevertheless, the Vienna Convention itself, in Art. 73, states that "*the provisions of the present Convention shall not prejudice any question that may arise in regard to a treaty from a succession of States or from the international responsibility of a State or from the outbreak of hostilities between States*".¹⁵⁶ Consequently, the validity and application of the Treaty of Benghazi after the civil war, concluded with a Draft of Articles written by the Commission of International Law about the effects of armed conflicts on treaties approved in 2011. According to this proposal, armed conflicts do not constitute *ipso facto* the cause of suspension or extinction of pre-war treaties.

Moreover, neither Rome nor Tripoli have ever affirmed the will to suspend or extinguish the agreement. In February 2017, through the *Memorandum of Understanding* on immigration they even confirmed their will to comply with agreement, as stated in the preamble.

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.jus.uio.no/lm/un.law.of.treaties.convention.1969/portrait.pdf>.

On 21 January 2012, the Tripoli Declaration was signed, a '*pact of friendship*' that reflects a framework of relations between the two countries, under El Keib *ad interim* Presidency. However, the impact of the Arab uprisings in 2011 commenced in Libya on 17 February 2011 has led to radical political changes; therefore, it was decided to postpone the question of stipulation of more significant deals. Later, in April 2012, the dialogues between the then two Minister of the Interior Annamaria Cancellieri and Fawzi Al-Taher Abdulal aimed to reestablish the control system for migratory flows and to increase maritime patrols.

The transitional period, has been led by the National Transitional Council. On 7 July 2012, the first elections after Ghaddafi's overthrow, sanctioned the General National Congress' triumph.

Three years after the civil war that toppled Ghaddafi, after other legislative elections held in 2014, the Second Civil was prompted.

Libya is still contended by different factions, as always: the Government of National Accord (G.N.A.) based in Tripolitania, then the House of Representatives in Eastern Libya, new major force as chosen in the elections, and finally other Islamist factions including I.S.I.S. and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, (A.Q.I.M).

The House of Representatives established its parliament in Tobruk, while the Government of National Accord is in Tripoli.

The continuing fights have been stopped when a 2015 United Nations-mediated deal produced the unity government; the talks, held in *Skhirat*, Morocco, in December led to an agreement where the different sides decided to unite in the Government of National Accord.

This Libyan political agreement,¹⁵⁷ approved by 90 members of the House of Representatives of Tobruk and 69 deputies of the National Congress, established a Presidency Council located in Tripoli that took office in March 2016,, and self-proclaimed legitimate; Fayez Mustafa Al-Sarraj has been appointed as Prime Minister. Khalifa Ghwell, Prime Minister of the Tripoli government, representative of the General National Congress (GNC), threatened to arrest Al-Sarraj, the only one recognized by the international community, who was part of the government of national unity.

Ghwell did not legitimize Sarraj because he did not have the support of the Tripoli's parliament, the so-called General National Congress, born from the 2012 free elections in Libya, but overpowered at international level.

However, on 31 March 2016, the Chairman of the Presidential Council, backed by the international community through the U.N. Security Council Resolution No. 2278, placed the oil trade and non-embargoed arms under the government of national unity's control. Finally, in April, al-Sarraj's rivals, embodied by Ghwell, left the Libyan capital.

Within this complicated scheme, a motion voted almost unanimously by the Tobruk House of Representatives blocked the political settlement because of their total refusal of Article 8, which states: "*All powers of the senior*

¹⁵⁷ https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/LY_151207_PoliticalAgreement.pdf.

military, civil and security posts stipulated in the Libyan legislations and laws in force shall be transferred to the Presidency Council of the Council of Ministers immediately upon signing this Agreement".¹⁵⁸ The legitimacy of all the military actions in the hands of the Presidency Council would have been impossible to accept for General Haftar, since this would have clearly caused him to lose his greatest leverage, the military tool.

On 13 April 2016, General Serra, Italian senior advisor to U.N. Special Representative Martin Kobler on security issues related to the dialogue in Libya, in an hearing before the Italian joint defense committees of the House and Senate, depicted the situation as "*calm, unstable and tense*".¹⁵⁹

The continuation of events led to yet another test of strength in an unstable and changing framework, where offensives and opposing counterattacks have followed each other for years. In April 2019, Haftar, announced his plan to get Tripoli, ruled by Al Sarraj G.N.A., and several allied brigades, "*notoriously unreliable politically and militarily and often independently funded*".¹⁶⁰ His attempt failed. On the other side, al-Sarraj G.N.A. launched an unsuccessful counteroffensive to seize Sirte.

On 19 January 2020, the first Berlin Conference on Libya, invoked by Angel Merkel, strived to establish some common ground basis for a ceasefire; the lack of dialogue between the two Libyan counterparts achieves little practical validity.

Hence, the skirmishes continued: on 27 April 2020, General Haftar said he had "*a popular mandate*"¹⁶¹ to govern the country, declaring void the Skhirat Agreement. In a speech on Libya al-Hadath TV channel, he said the LNA was "*proud to be mandated with the historic task*" of leading Libya.

In this complex picture, the countries historically involved in the Libyan affairs, such as Italy, the United Kingdom and France, are not the main actors anymore. Various countries have entered the Libyan game, such as Arab United Emirates, Egypt, Russia and Turkey, eager to gain influence within the north African state.

A.U.E. and Egypt are giving strong logistic and military support to the Cyrenaican military leader, in addition to a strong intelligence support from Paris, always present in this scenario. Even the Russian federation is indirectly supporting the Eastern part of Libya, especially using the contractors, composed of thousands of soldiers; "*now about 2400, Wagner is a company controlled by Evgeny Prigozhin, a businessman with close ties to Vladimir Putin*".¹⁶² This soldiers control the Al-Jufra base and the L.N.A. brigade 106, one of the most skilled elements supporting Haftar. The great game that Moscow is playing envisages the strategic objective of

¹⁵⁸ *Libyan Political Agreement, art. 8, p. 20, 17 December 2015.*

¹⁵⁹ *Camera dei Deputati, Servizio Studi, XVII Legislatura, L'evoluzione della crisi libica dopo l'accordo di Skhirat: cronologia degli avvenimenti, Nota n° 84 - 3 August 2016.*

¹⁶⁰ *G. E. Valori, Interessi strategici e guerra per procura. La Libia dietro al tentato golpe di Haftar, Formiche.net, 4 April 2020.*

¹⁶¹ <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/north-africa/2020/04/28/Libyan-National-Army-s-Haftar-claims-mandate-from-the-people->.

¹⁶² *G. E. Valori, Interessi strategici e guerra per procura. La Libia dietro al tentato golpe di Haftar, Formiche.net, 4 April 2020.*

establishing a military base in Cyrenaica, a possible game changer between NATO and Russian relations.¹⁶³ This future threat of a Russian base on the Atlantic alliance Southern flank was precisely what prompted the unification of Libya under the Senussi monarchy, in order to protect the British and Western interests against the Soviet desires of expansion.

On the other side, Fayed al-Sarraj, the Libyan Prime Minister from April 2016 to March 2021, and the forces controlled by Tripoli have been firmly supported by Recep Tayyip Erdogan government, new great regional authority, eager to give military support, mainly in exchange for the exploitation of mineral resources. Moreover, Ankara wanted to play a role in protecting and expanding the Muslim Brotherhood networks.

This move needs to be framed within Ankara strategic design, *Mavi Vatan*-blue homeland, explained by the Turkish Admiral Cem Gürdeniz, interviewed by Marco Ansaldo.¹⁶⁴ This new strategy had in part replaced the 'strategic depth' concept, conceived by Ahmet Davutoglu, former Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister, the first multidimensional step to reach the Neo-Ottoman dream. Thus, *Mavi Vatan* added to the former strategic framework, complementing this vision with another element: "*control the sea to control energy resources and impose their influence*".¹⁶⁵

Finally, on 23 October 2020, the 5+5 Joint Libyan Military Commission representing the Western Libyan L.N.A. and the Eastern Islamist G.N.A. reached a permanent ceasefire, thus agreeing to stop the conflict.¹⁶⁶

During the Second Berlin Conference,¹⁶⁷ held in June 2021, the situation appeared much better than it was during January 2020. The summit, which followed the First Berlin Conference format, included the main powers with specific interests in the country, including Italy, Turkey, the U.S., Russia, France, the Arab Emirates and Egypt. Moscow and Ankara, supporting the two different factions during the second civil conflict, finally agreed to a first step so as to trigger a de-escalation through the withdrawal of 300 Syrian mercenaries each. The involvement in the Berlin conference on Libya of the new U.S. Secretary of State under Joe Biden administration, Anthony Blinken, could boost the conciliation activity by mediating between Ankara and the other states backing the cluster of forces stationing in Cyrenaica.

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁴ *Limes*, *Rivista Italiana di geopolitica*, *Il turco alla porta*, 7/2020, pp. 67-77.

¹⁶⁵ <https://it.insideover.com/politica/mavi-vatan-turchia-erdogan.html>.

¹⁶⁶ https://sicurezzainternazionale.luiss.it/2021/06/23/libia-al-via-la-conferenza-berlino-2/?doing_wp_cron=1631011495.2433540821075439453125.

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/berlin-2-conclusions/2467750>.

Libya

20,000

The estimated number of mercenaries and/or foreign forces in Libya (12/2020)

10

The military bases fully or partially occupied by foreign forces in Libya

1.3 mn

Libyan citizens in need of humanitarian assistance

90%

The percentage of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe departing from Libya

21

The countries and international institutions who took part in the Berlin II Conference

1.5 mn bpd

The oil production Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) plans to reach by the end of 2021



SOURCES: UN; UNHCR; LH

MED This Week

Source: After Berlin II: What's next for the future of Libya? 30 June 2021, ISPI MED.

Arturo Varvelli, commenting upon the Libyan future after the Second Berlin Conference, perceives the attempt of stabilization as an essential step towards real European synchronization on the Libyan dossier; this is true because the author perceives the will of several actors to meet the crucial demands of another party. He makes an example of Italy's and France's new attitude under the Berlin framework: *"Italy has demonstrated to be ready to make concessions and support French security vision for the Sahel region – an approach well exemplified by Rome's participation in the TAKUBA task force under French command. On the other hand, France should be ready to abandon its unilateral approach – on the Libyan dossier as elsewhere – and to really distance itself from Haftar. Certainly, a common European position is not sufficient to solve the Libyan crisis, but it is certainly a prerequisite"*.¹⁶⁸

The main developments envisaged by the Conference consist in the security aspect, the economic and financial reforms and the respect for international human rights.

The path to stabilization then should have finally been agreed upon between the major factions through an inclusive, Libyan-led and Libyan-owned Political dialogue resumed among all Libyan political parties and actors, under the United Nations sponsorship. For the first time, also representatives of the Libyan government of

¹⁶⁸ ISPI MED, *After Berlin II: What's next for the future of Libya?* 30 June 2021.

National Unity took part to the process, what did not happen during the First Berlin Conference. An interim executive authority was established, and the interim Government of National Unity (G.N.U.) approved by the House of Representatives. During the second meeting, the *interim* Prime Minister Dabaiba has reaffirmed its commitment to held unified election on 24 December 2021.

In the meanwhile, the struggle for the national interest is still in progress; according to G. E. Valori: “*Eni is the primary object of desire, of course, and the closure of the Maghreb to the presence of a non-homogeneous partner, like Italy, to the oil interests of London and Paris does the rest. In 2011, at the moment of Rome’s great financial spread, the British punished the Colonel who, under direct selection of our services, carried out the coup against King Idriss, a man of the British as much as ever*”.¹⁶⁹

From the French side, “*Paris, in any case, still wants Eni or in any case a hegemonic Libyan space for its oil company of reference, Total. Since the beginning of this year, moreover, Haftar controls almost all the oil wells, such as Sarara, Al Fil, the whole area of Sirte, as well as all the terminals on the coast to transport those oils*”.¹⁷⁰

France supports of Haftar originates from the perception that the Libyan General is the only credible person to guarantee controls on the movements of arms and persons in the Sahel area, crucial for Paris’ interests; indeed, since 2014 it is sustaining its Operation *Barkhane*, an anti-terrorism operation with the help of five Sahel states: Chad, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso.

Of course, the fact that a man with ties to France holds most of the Libyan oil fields allows Paris to let *Total* take the lion’s share of the blame, especially against Eni interests. Since, in 2016, the UN Security Council extended a motion granting to Tripoli’s executive alone the right to sell the oil abroad through the National Oil Corporation (N.O.C.), Libya’s state oil company.¹⁷¹ But, since L.N.A. forces were holding most of the Libyan oil fields, Paris was still indirectly pursuing its interests through Total with the Haftar’s backing, especially against the competitor company, Eni.¹⁷²

4.4. Future perspectives and the national interests implications.

The French President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, in office since May 2017, during an official visit in Tunisia disapproved the NATO intervention in Libya, supported by his predecessor Sarkozy, which left the country target of instability and extremist factions.¹⁷³ Moreover, the French embassy in Tripoli reopened after 7

¹⁶⁹ G. E. Valori, *Interessi strategici e guerra per procura. La Libia dietro al tentato golpe di Haftar*, *Formiche.net*, 4 April 2020.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷¹ U.N. Security Council *Renews Measures against Illicit Oil Exports from Libya, Grants Mandate Extension for Expert Panel Assisting Sanctions Committee*, 31 March 2016.

¹⁷² <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/france-must-recognize-its-role-in-libyas- plight/>.

¹⁷³ *France 24, Macron hails Tunisia's 'democratic revolution' on state visit*, 1 February 2018.

years of closing.¹⁷⁴ Rome already returned its embassy to Tripoli in 2017. Instead, the British Embassy has ended its work on 4 August 2014.

To grasp the Italian future needs in the Libyan arena, it is worth to quote Giampiero Massolo's thoughts: "*Yet, we cannot avoid a realistic foreign policy line in defense of national interests. Italy's commitment is there: circumstances require us to finalize it more, to better define and defend our priorities, not to pretend to always please everyone, to be attentive to the concrete returns of our initiatives, to be ready when necessary to assume individual responsibility. This is what our European partners do*".¹⁷⁵

As always, Rome is striving to avoid fragmentations of power, logically heading to instability. Again, the geographical proximity condemns the Italian action to deal with its near abroad, since voids of power near its boundaries prompt possible Jihadist infiltrations, migratory crisis and instability for the energetic supplies, Enrico Mattei's action focus. The Italian national interest thus emerges clearly.

In conclusion, the best way to deal with the North African situation, after the NATO intervention, that aside having stopped civilian killings and bloodshed during the first Libyan civil war, on the other hand it never had a clear plan to build a new state with working institutions, as stated by David Cameron in the House of Commons. By 2016, the House of Commons foreign affairs select committee Chairman, the Conservative Crispin Blunt, criticized 2011 intervention stating that while the U.K. policy should have protected harmed civilians, "*we do not accept that it understood the implications of this, which included collapse of the state, failure of stabilisation and the facilitation of Islamist extremism in Libya*".¹⁷⁶

This lack of a future planning therefore led to a Second Civil war, the deterioration of Libya from the economic aspect to the human rights concerns, exactly what prompted the intervention in the first place, at least legally.

Besides, Alan Kuperman summarized the Libyan case as a model of failure, since "*it increased the duration of Libya's civil war by about six times and its death toll by at least seven times, while also exacerbating human rights abuses, humanitarian suffering, Islamic radicalism, and weapons proliferation in Libya and its neighbors*".¹⁷⁷

In addition, stabilizing Libya would entail thwarting the new competitors from outside the European area, to allow an agreement between the main factions, especially the militias on the ground, to close definitively the war chapter in Libya. The anarchy of the last years has prompted a flourishing black market, from human trafficking through the migrant routes, the central Mediterranean path headed to Italy, to energetic and arm deals. The local forces' role has been and still is crucial; militias playing a vital role in the current organization of trafficking leads

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/29/france-reopens-libya-embassy-after-7-year-closure>

¹⁷⁵ G. Massolo, *Così l'Italia torni a contare nel mediterraneo*, ISPI, 31 December 2020.

¹⁷⁶ P. Beaumont, 'War weary' Libya reflects 10 years on from Gaddafi and Arab spring, *The Guardian*, 26 April 2021.

¹⁷⁷ A. J. Kuperman, "Lessons from Libya: How Not to Intervene." Policy Brief, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, September 2013, p.1.

to an additional statement: “*if one wants to fight trafficking, militias must be provided with alternative sources of financing*”.¹⁷⁸ Since Libya is a rentier state, it obtains most of its income from the sale of oil and gas. The role of the various militias, linked to a certain area, tribe or warlord has to be rethought in order to redistribute the main Libyan richness in a more equal way, so that the conflicting parts will have incentives to make peace and to change the source of their revenue; from profits from war to profits from the reconstruction of the state and its companies. Mustafa Sanalla, N.O.C. Chairman always stresses this issue to be one of the most important causes of Libyan instability: “*We need a real national debate on the distribution of oil revenues. It is at the root of the recent crisis*”.¹⁷⁹

The debate shall entail the representation of every aspect of the Libyan society, otherwise, like in the Skhirat agreement, it would dissolve into nothing, because of the lack of any chance of effective application on the ground.

So, the future to build shall comprise a project which is federal but within a national Libyan background. In this way the traditional identity of the Libyan people will be legitimate and will allow the transition from a war economy to the great reconstruction easier.

5. THE EU EXTERNAL ACTION’S BEHAVIOUR IN THE MENA REGION: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE.

The European Union’s behavior in the awakening of the protests that provoked huge variations in the Mediterranean area as a whole has been questioned in several occasions. The EU’s narrative shifted from an aim of developing the democratization process in the areas touched by the rebellions against old and corrupted authoritarian regimes to a more balanced approach when the turmoil started to affect the internal situations of those countries, thus threatening to spread the instability to the southern border of the EU, eventually leading to destabilization with regards to the security aspect for the member states. This debate could be framed in terms of the everlasting dispute about the democratization-stabilization dilemma.

Numerous theoretical approaches tried to frame the conduct of the international actors involved in the Arab springs in order to understand the underlying logics of their behavior. In particular, this chapter will deal with the

¹⁷⁸ A. Varvelli, M. Villa, *La Libia tra conflitto e migranti: ripensare il ruolo delle milizie*, Policy Brief n. 321, ISPI, 2018, p. 6.

¹⁷⁹ https://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/it/notizie/rubriche/politica/2018/07/11/libia-haftar-rida-terminali-petrolio-riprende-export_c4e44019-2fa1-4633-8e56-c18d3714233d.html.

different assumptions between the ‘Normative Power’ approach, the realist constructivism thought and the liberal explanation.

This chapter will deal with the main theoretical approaches and the subsequent hypotheses developed by some authors. The aim of this section is to see whether the EU and its member states changed their strategic behavior when the violent happenings heavily modified the landscape of the Arab world between the end of 2010 and 2011.

In particular, Ian Manners’ thinking and its normative power theory will be questioned. This constructivist perspective, shared also by academics such as R. G. Whitman and Thomas Diez, will be doubted by the stances stemming from the realist approach. The latter queries the democratization concerns of the European Union and asserts that the EU and its member states actually prioritize the security concerns rather than the self-declared universalistic principles of the EU. Then, another criticism of the NPE assumptions will be employed: a theory coming from the liberal assessment, mainly by W. Wagner, bringing in the theme of ‘Liberal Power Europe’. The liberal hypothesis that will be developed is capable of explaining several aspects about the struggles of the EU between security and democratization issues, bringing on the discourse of politics and the constraints that the various European actors face while developing their external action, especially in the field of foreign and security policy.

Having a look at the Middle East and North African region in 2021, about ten years after Mohamed Bouazizi’s death for self-immolation on 17 December 2010, it can be stated that the current situation is not matching with what the normative power perspective would have envisaged. Consequently, the realist critique is helpful to comprehend the importance of the economic and security interests rather than the predominance of the democratization, as predicted by Manners. In addition, through the help of the Liberal Power Europe perspective, the issue of members states’ interests and the constraints imposed by the EU institutional structure joins the discussion between democratization and stabilization, bringing in the critical topic of politics within the EU.

The aim of this thesis is to grasp why the European Union struggles so much in pursuing a clear foreign policy in the MENA area; the question that will be answered is how has the EU Mediterranean security dimension changed due to the 2011 Arab upheavals. In order to solve the matter, this theoretical chapter will deal with some of the main international relations theories about the EU external behavior; the main authors defending the three different theories are Ian Manners, Adrien Hyde-Price and Wolfgang Wagner.

5.1. The social constructivist interpretation: collective identities and the moral dilemma.

The theme of the European Union’s positioning in the international system has been analyzed by several school of thoughts; among the most successful theorizations, the Normative Power Europe concept has left its mark.

This notion envisions the EU as a promoter of norms which displace the state as the center of concern. The importance of this notion can be seen by looking at the differences between Europe as a Normative power and the other paramount theories about the European international role: the civilian power argument laid down by François Duchêne and Europe as a military power portrayed by Hedley Bull. The civilian power notion can be reassumed by saying it is characterized by three essential dimensions: multilateralism, meant as ‘diplomatic cooperation to solve international problems; the nonmilitary tool, given the economic power supremacy; and finally the importance of international law, understood as *‘legally-binding supranational institutions’*. According to Manners in ‘Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?’, these two concepts share various resemblances since both of them fit in the framework of the “frozen nature of international relations during the cold war period and included assumptions about the fixed nature of the nation-state, the importance of direct physical power, and the notion of national interest”.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, their attention was paid to “*the strengthening of the international society not civil society*”, meaning that the French and the English scholars shared the interest in the maintenance of the centrality of the Westphalian nation-state conception in the international relations. Likewise, both Duchêne and Bull welcomed the leverages of power along the lines of actual empirical capabilities whether “*long on economic power*”¹⁸¹ or a “*need for military power*”¹⁸². In addition, they also agreed with the opinion of understanding the European interests as dominant. However, all the similarities shared by these theoretical concepts turned out to be useless in understanding the international relations when the cold war ended through the disintegration of the USSR between the late 80s and the end of 1991. The internal collapse of regimes throughout eastern Europe, whose ideology was recognized as unsustainable, might be framed as the crisis of norms rather than the collapse of the power of force. Consequently, the achievement of a clearer comprehension about EU's position in world politics may be reached by reflecting on what those revolts teach us in relation to the power of ideas and that of force. It is exactly the attention paid on the power of ideas and norms that can be summarized as the role of normative power in the international relations. The main studies about the Normative Power Europe will be the ones of authors such as Ian Manners and R. G. Whitman.

The normative power theorization could be recognized as an effort to redeploy the focus of the analysis away from the prominence of the EU's institutions or policies, and towards including cognitive processes, with substantive and symbolic elements.¹⁸³ Thus, the concept of the Normative Power Europe is placed within the

¹⁸⁰ I. Manners, *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction In Terms?* JCMS Volume 40, Number 2, pp. 235-58, p. 238, 2002.

¹⁸¹ F. Duchêne, ‘The European Community and the uncertainties of interdependence’, in M. Kohnstamm and W. Hager (eds), *A Nation Writ Large? ForeignPolicy Problems Before the Community*, London: Macmillan, pp. 1–21, p. 19, 1973.

¹⁸² H. Bull, ‘Civilian Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 149–64, p. 151, 1982.

¹⁸³ I. Manners, *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?* Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, 2000.

debate of the 'power over opinion', or 'idée force' as suggested by Duchêne, and the aspiration to move beyond the dispute over state-like features through an understanding of the EU's international identity.¹⁸⁴ The European Union identity has been frequently debated, leading to a possible definition of being a *sui generis* actor. The reasons of this peculiarity, the EU's "*normative difference*", emerge from its historical context, hybrid polity and political-legal constitution. The EU was conceived by the six founding countries rising again from the ashes of the Second World War, thus despising the exasperated nationalisms that had led to that tremendous ending. Because of this context, the creation of Community institutions and policies took place in a situation where the Europeans were committed to "*pooling their resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty, and calling upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts*".¹⁸⁵ The EU has then evolved into a hybrid of supranational and international forms of governance which transcends the classical Westphalian standards in which the previous theorization of Europe were stuck. As it concerns its establishment as a political entity, the constitution has happened mainly through an elite-driven process having the founding treaties as the polity. This is why the EU norms symbolize crucial constitutive factors which define its international personality. So, according to this strand of literature, the EU has gone further towards making its external relations informed by, and conditional on a list of norms. The importance of those norms on which the EU is established and on which it sets its foreign and development policy purposes is remarked in the treaties: "*The Union recognises the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 7 December 2000, as adapted at Strasbourg, on 12 December 2007, which shall have the same legal value as the Treaties...*".¹⁸⁶ (Treaty on the European Union, Art. 6) The pivotal element of the Normative Power Europe concept is therefore the fact that it exists as being different to pre-existing political forms, and that this particular difference pre-disposes it to act in a normative way (Manners, 2002). Thus, Ian Manners investigates the EU's normative basis, in order to assess the validity of its assertion. He identifies five core norms: the centrality of peace, the idea of liberty, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The peace theme is shown in the famous Declaration of 9th of May 1950 delivered by the French Foreign Affairs Minister, Robert Schuman and in Art. 3.1 TEU. The other four core norms are set in the Preamble of the TEU '*Confirming their attachment to the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law...*'. The last three core norms are also set in the membership criteria for the future accession of the Central and Eastern Europe countries, adopted at the Copenhagen European

¹⁸⁴ I. Manners, R. G. Whitman, *Towards identifying the international identity of the European union: A framework for analysis of the Eu's network of relationships*, *Journal of European Integration*, 21:3, 1998.

¹⁸⁵ CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TREATY ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, *Official Journal of the European Union*, p. 3, 2012.

¹⁸⁶ CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TREATY ON THE EUROPEAN UNION, *Official Journal of the European Union*, p. 7, 2012.

Council in 1993. That is because these standards had to differentiate the Western European countries from the former Soviet ruled Eastern Europe. These criteria then became defining features of transition from communist rule in the immediate post-cold war period as the Copenhagen criteria prove. In addition, in December 2000 this aspiration for greater legitimacy through the essential norms that the EU symbolizes has found a further expression in Nice, where the European Council adopted the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union.

All these examples assessed the normative basis on which the EU has been built. Still, this acknowledgement doesn't make it a normative power *per se*, as an additional step is that of spreading the norms embedded in the European structure. Manners suggests that there are six features producing EU's normative power: contagion, informational diffusion, procedural diffusion, transference diffusion, overt diffusion and the cultural filter. Contagion means that the unintentional diffusion of ideas eventually lead to the spreading of norms to other political actors. The informational diffusion creates EU policies and communications, while the procedural one requires the institutionalization of a relationship ranging from an inter-regional co-operation agreement to the actual enlargement negotiations to EU. The informational, along with the transference diffusion are assisted by the mandatory conditionality clause in all the agreements with third states. Differently, the transference diffusion happens with EU aid or trade through financial or substantive means. Overt diffusion happens with the EU physical presence in third states or international organizations. Lastly, the cultural filter is founded on the interplay among the construction of knowledge and the formation of social and political identity by the subjects of norms' spreading.¹⁸⁷

Overall, Manners' work about the normative power notion proposes that since the EU's construction has been erected on a normative basis, this source drives it to behave in a normative way in world politics. "It is built on the crucial, and usually overlooked observation that the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says, but what it is".¹⁸⁸ Thus, the EU can be conceptualized as a norms' modifier in the international system, and it should act to expand its norms into the international system. Hence, Manners' effort states that framing the European Union as a normative power is not at all a nonsense but that the EU should be defined as such, in addition to the earlier theorizations of the EU as a civilian or military power. In fact, "*rather than being a contradiction in terms, the ability to define what passes for 'normal' in world politics is, ultimately, the greatest power of all*".¹⁸⁹ The observation about what the EU is instead of what it does or says being the peculiar strength of the EU in shaping its international role is related to the norm's diffusion through

¹⁸⁷ I. Manners, *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction In Terms?* JCMS Volume 40, Number 2, pp. 235-58, 2002.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 252.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 253.

the relative lack of physical force in the imposition of that rules.¹⁹⁰ But how to relate this political *ethos* enlightening the EU external action with the issue of conflict prevention in a normative way, as the events developed in the '90's in Yugoslavia and Rwanda have shown? The mantra for the first years was that of a 'sustainable peace', but the brutalities and the genocide committed in that wars have made necessary for the EU the prioritization of preventing violent conflicts, despite the 1993 Petersberg tasks delineated three purposes for which military units could be deployed: humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and the tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking. The critical reinterpretation during the 1990s to bring in the concept of a sustainable peace policy has become an important characteristic of the Normative Power Europe. This is shown by the pioneering document on '*Preventative Diplomacy, Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa*' agreed at the General Affairs Council in December 1995. It matched with the agreement on the use of 'conditionality clauses' stating that NPE core norms such as the rule of law, human rights and the democratic principles were indispensable components of EU aid and political agreements with third states.¹⁹¹ Examining the normative power idea in the Mediterranean region, authors such as F. Bicchì frame the European Foreign policy as advised by the suggestion that '*our size fits all*'. The EU aims at promoting regionalism as the 'normal way' for neighboring countries to tackle shared concerns' issues. Arab regimes have consolidated national sovereignty at the expense of regional co-operation. Paradoxically, the MENA region, an area defined as stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in Morocco to Iran, is unified by its constantly conflictual character. As a consequence, there has never been a request to the EU on the part of Mediterranean non-members to participate in a regional environment. On the contrary, Mediterranean countries have tried to play against their neighbors in order to develop tighter relations with the EU. According to Manners, the standards endorsed by the EU are valuable because of their universality, that's why the European normative power is influential. In particular, the EU acts in a normative way when it supports standards that empower actors influenced by European foreign strategy. Normative power is relational as any form of power; thus in order to be normatively justifiable, it's required to let the people outside of the EU borders express themselves. The constructivist approach on EU External Action's behavior in the Mena region is inclusive, it "*sits on the fence separating reflexive and unreflexive behaviour, as one of its main tenets is that the border between reflexivity and unreflexivity is subordinate to time. What starts off as intentional behaviour tends to be routinized over time, as the early rationale for action is subsumed by the repetitive pattern of routine-based behaviour*".¹⁹² This perspective puts the emphasis on the universal character of the norms promoted by the EU. The above-mentioned core norms

¹⁹⁰ I. Manners, *Normative power Europe reconsidered: beyond the crossroads*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2, 182-199, 2006.

¹⁹¹ European Parliament DG for External policies Policy department, p. 8, 2014.

¹⁹² F. Bicchì, '*Our size fits all*': normative power Europe and the Mediterranean. *Journal of European Public Policy* 13(2): 286-303, p. 291, 2006.

described by Manners are deemed as specific because they originate from the special historical context of Western Europe after World War II, but they are universal too as “*the EU, in its external action, refer[s] to reasons that can be expected to gain approval in a free and open debate in which all those affected are heard*”.¹⁹³ Hence, NPE highlights the cosmopolitan nature of the EU’s core norms, particularly by “*a commitment to placing universal norms and principles at the centre of its relations with its member states and the world*”.¹⁹⁴ So, it could be stated that, generally, Europe as a normative power stresses its overall structural power instead of underlining simply the economic or legal leverages of power, exactly because of its relative ambiguity. Now that we stated the main normative power assumptions about the EU’s external behavior, it is appropriate to develop some hypothesis about the behavior of the European institutions in the Southern neighborhood. The European Southern Neighborhood comprehends ten countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. All the Arab countries, namely each of the Southern neighborhood countries except from Israel, suffered from the uprisings which began with Mohamed Bouazizi self-immolation in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia. The protests spread through all the region, achieving regime changes in Tunisia itself with Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s deposition, the end of Hosni Mubarak ruling in Egypt and the death of the Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in Libya. In Syria there is still an ongoing civil war which led to the devastation of the country. In Morocco, Algeria, Palestine and Jordan sustained street protests occurred. In Lebanon, the protests prompted governmental change. Hence, after the several collapses of the old regimes, the NPE conceptualization should have envisaged the EU as the harbinger of the democratic promotion, the respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the establishment of rule of law, as it did after the collapse of the Soviet Union spreading its fundamental norms in the Eastern European countries, fulfilling its mission of the normative projection in the world. However, if on the one hand in the post-Soviet area the EU’s efforts pressing for liberal democracy standards have been deemed as accomplishments, on the other hand more than a few academics have questioned the efficacy of EU’s democracy promotion towards the Mediterranean region since its institutionalization through the Barcelona Process in 1995. In fact, the supposed declarations of the pursuit of democratization in the Middle East and North Africa aren’t substantiated by a clear policy driven by the 27 member states’ unified consensus. The European Union program for the MENA region is considered as defective on two main points: its ultimate objective not being clearly and explicitly democracy in itself (that is, rather than having political transformation in the MENA as the core objective of EU policy, there is more concern with stability and security goals); then, the timing of the democratization efforts. “*If the situation in Mediterranean societies is not acceptable to the EU and if it thereby seeks to order, modify, improve, and rearrange the current state of affairs in the region, then it should seriously*

¹⁹³ H. Sjursen, *The EU as a 'normative power: how can this be?* *Journal of European Public Policy* 13(2): 235-251, p. 243, 2006.

¹⁹⁴ I. Manners, *Normative power Europe reconsidered: beyond the crossroads*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2, 182-199, p. 176, 2006.

reflect upon what it has been doing all along".¹⁹⁵ These doubts related to the EU's approach in the Mediterranean area weren't wiped out at all by the changes that could have been prompted by the last decade turmoil. As a matter of fact, EU policy tools put in place after 2011, such as the revision of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2015, didn't lead to a change of the strategy apparently designed for 'democracy promotion in the MENA', thus continuing in the groove established before the 2011 upheavals, such as the 1995 EMP with its association agreements, the 2003 strategy paper on the Arab world, the ENP with its 'action plans' and the 2005 European Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights and the Union for the Mediterranean in 2008. In fact, the ultimate objective of these initiatives is securing the EU's own concerns about (in)migration, security, and stability rather than 'transformation' in the MENA.¹⁹⁶ Having a look at the region in 2021, the EU institutional actors' behavior is not compelling with what the normative Power perspective would have envisaged.

5.2. The realist thinking: the geostrategic interests and the consequent prioritization of security and stability.

Hence, predictably the normative power thinking has attracted much criticism specifically from structural-realist/rationalist scholars. The realist perspective rejects the statement perceiving the European Union as an actor with a distinct will, different from that of its member states. "*The EU was used by its most influential member states as an instrument for collectively exercising hegemonic power, shaping its "near abroad" in ways amenable to the long-term strategic and economic interests of its member states*".¹⁹⁷ The profound changes occurred in the Arab world a decade ago and the consequent European reactions could be better outlined by the realist approach, which seems to be better suited than the normative power framing of the problem. Realism and its accent on geostrategic interests may possibly explain why the EU external action converged on security and stability over democracy and the usual normative concerns. This debate suits to the everlasting dilemma about the democratization-security prioritization.

By helping MENA countries in safeguarding stability and addressing economic needs, the EU would be maintaining its security in addition to protection of its interests and its borders. The changes prompted by the rebellions, after the first moments of focus on the democratic political transitions, have continued to show that the main interest for the EU is the stabilization of the neighboring areas. Therefore, the EU policies' approach didn't have a variation in relation to its strategical priorities after the changes happened after the 2011 uproars in

¹⁹⁵ M. Pace, *Paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion in the Mediterranean: the limits of EU normative power, Democratization*, 16:1, 39-58, p. 45, 2009.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁷ A. Hyde-Price, 'Normative' power Europe: a realist critique, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2, 217-234, pp. 226-227, 2006.

several Arab countries. This impression is shared by Julien Barnes-Dacey, the director of the MENA program at the European Council on Foreign Relations, stating that “*The European focus increasingly narrowed in on the security and migration challenges with decreasing self-belief in any ability to push the region’s political order in a more positive direction*”; then, “*Ten years on from the uprisings some Europeans are now re-embracing the notion of authoritarian stability, as symbolized by the increasing embrace of Sisi in Egypt*”.¹⁹⁸

The lack of substantive policy change in the EU’s approach to MENA region is on the one hand largely explained by member states’ differences over how to deal with non-democratic regimes, how to manage illegal migration to the EU and which conflicts in the region should the EU prioritize; on the other hand, it’s clarified by the limited freedom EU institutions have to act on behalf of the member states. Furthermore, the absence of internal stability and security rigorously limited the EU’s assistance for economic improvement and democratic reforms.

The main author who developed a realist based critique to EU as an ethical power is Adrian Hyde-Price. He sees two main threats as risks entailed in the pursuit of a foreign policy modeled by ethical principles: the ineffectiveness of the EU actions entailing the non-prosecution of the member states’ shared interests and the danger of getting stuck in unfeasible “*moral crusades with the attendant risk of hubris leading to nemesis*”.¹⁹⁹ That’s because different states have different and usually conflicting conceptions of what is deemed to be good. Thus, the realist approach to the EU actions is seen as fulfilling these instrumental objectives: pursuing the member states’ collective economic interests, mainly the agricultural and trade protections, within the global economy framework; then, the EU as a tool to influence the regional milieu, that can be seen exactly in the European Neighborhood policy, the institutionalization of the Barcelona process and also in the failed engagement in the Western Balkans. Here stands one of the realists’ critique of Ian Manners’ conception, because through the milieu-shaping of its neighborhood, the key EU device is not Europe itself, its structure “*what it is*” but on the contrary, the leverages of future memberships and the third countries’ expectations of joining the European Common market are its strongest means, being concrete sources of hard power. Finally, the EU has come to provide to its member states’ the institutional source of the second order normative concerns. In this sense EU can be understood theoretically as an ‘*ethical power*’. Hence, how could any actor effectively follow its own interests in an international system where there are competing visions of the *summum bonum* and simultaneously stating that the norms it’s spreading are considered universally acceptable by others, “*unless one uncritically accepts liberal-idealist claims that there are cosmopolitan or universal values and interests that*

¹⁹⁸ A. Vohra, *The Arab Spring Changed Everything—in Europe*, Foreign Policy, December 2020.

¹⁹⁹ A. Hyde-Price, ‘*Tragic Actor?*’ A Realist Perspective on ‘*Ethical Power Europe*’, *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), Jan., Vol. 84, No. 1, *Ethical Power Europe?*, pp. 29-44, p. 30, 2008.

transcend those of individual political communities”²⁰⁰ According to the realists critic, the doctrine of the harmony of interests set forth by the cosmopolitan view, is built by determined privileged groups with the aim of maintaining their dominant position, to coerce their view of life on the community, consequently supporting them as a moral expedient. Hence, the political realism theory doesn't recognize a certain actor's ethical goals matching the moral principles that regulate the world.

A realist approach to EU foreign policy would expect the fading of its normative rhetoric, then it would suggest accepting the ethical dilemmas of international politics, and stop assuming that what is right for Europe is good for all humankind. This theoretical approach admits as logical events the rival interests' clashes and the struggle for security among the great powers in a self-help international system. Hence, realists deal with the states' disputes through “*reciprocity and prudence, rather than through moral crusades designed to reshape the world in a liberal, European image*”.²⁰¹ Thus, instead of struggling for normative principles, the realists encourage EU policy-makers to be calculators. The design should bear in mind that the states' national interest perceive the security issue as a priority, while understands the spread of democracy principles as a second order matter. For instance, the concerns for human rights could actually shape the EU foreign policy, but not when these collide with vital common interests of the EU's member states, especially the great powers' ones.

Another important feature of this theoretical perspective is that the realist international theory highlights the relation between the state's behavior and the limitations imposed by the structures in which they move.

In order to better understand the realist claims about the states' behavior in the international politics, it is worth to have a look at the realist ethics. Realists follow Michael Oakeshott, as cited by Hyde Price in *A 'Tragic Actor'? A Realist Perspective on 'Ethical Power Europe'*, in dismissing “*the illusion that in politics there is anywhere a safe harbour, a destination to be reached or even a detectable strand of progress*”.²⁰² The English scholar claims that there are three 'idioms of moral conduct': the one of communal ties, the one about the common good and the idiom concerning the individuality. The morality of communal ties signifies the appropriate participation in a community's events. This type of morality is deemed as unsuitable to the international politics environment, as the latter is made by sovereign communities who often have a distinct insight of how the good life should be like. The second idiom of moral conduct is the morality of the common good, which sees a socially constituted 'common good', as there is a society of independent actors that are actually all involved in a common enterprise and consequently share a common understanding of 'social good'. This second form of moral behavior can turn to crusades, thus it doesn't fit with the perspective we are analyzing right now. Then, there is the morality of

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p.33

²⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

²⁰² A. Hyde-Price, *'Tragic Actor'? A Realist Perspective on 'Ethical Power Europe'*, *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Jan., Vol. 84, No. 1, *Ethical Power Europe?*, pp. 29-44, p. 41, 2008.

individuality, the most suitable for a realist ethics, which is described as “*a balance of accommodation between the demands of desiring selves each recognized by the others to be an end and not a mere slave of somebody else's desires*”.²⁰³ This instance matches with an 'ethic of responsibility', which specifies that one should consider the consequences of one's actions for others and behave accordingly. Therefore, this conceptualization of morality applied to the area of international politics develops a non-teleological ethics illustrated by three principles: prudence, skepticism and reciprocity. The prudence of the realist ethics demands circumspection and modesty, as Oakeshott states, cited again by Hyde-Price; “*Is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss*”.²⁰⁴ Hence, for the realist perception, the greatest virtue in politics is prudence, meant as the ponderation of the possible outcomes of determined actions. Skepticism deals with the capability of the political action of accomplishing the ‘good life’. Lastly, the third principle of the realist non-teleological ethic is built on reciprocity because of the differences in the ‘good life’ that occur between different communities. Accordingly, the realist vision push for compromise, restraint and mutual accommodation.

In line with this statecraft based on realist ethics, the EU foreign and security policy should be grounded on a resolute strategy of the common 'European' interests evaluated in relation to the contrasting visions of the way of life pursued by the different political communities. Hence, the moral conduct corresponding to a realist perspective is the 'morality of individuality', not a morality of communal ties or of the common good. This arises from the acknowledgement that is given to the international society diversity and pluralism. As R. Niebuhr states: “*Politics will, to the end of history, be an area where conscience and power meet, where the ethical and coercive factors of human life will interpenetrate and work out their tentative and uneasy compromises*”.²⁰⁵ Thus, as already asserted, this theoretical foundation considers extremely challenging the framing of the EU foreign and security policy as the harbinger of universal norms willing to transform the world in Europe's image. The denial of the universality of European models lays on the clash between the presumption of seriousness in the official declarations and the actual policies deployed as soon as these statements collide with the European economic, strategic or political interests. In addition, the foreign and security policy characterization in terms of second-order normative concerns will tend to diminish its effectiveness as the international system's self-help logic caused by the international anarchy will lead to the competition between the powers for security; finally, the predisposition of the European external action for the typical crusading moralism will lead to the crash between the ethical intents and the actual results.

²⁰³ M. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, p. 502, 1962.

²⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 408.

²⁰⁵ R. Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, p.4, 1932.

The neorealist beliefs about the EU external action fits rigorously in describing the different reactions to the uprisings started with the Jasmin revolution in Tunisia at the end of 2010. In fact it can be stated that EU main concerns and consequently the priorities has been those of securitization and stabilization of the area, instead of pressing for the classical normative concerns.²⁰⁶

As Hyde-Price notes, the realist school of the international relations didn't deliver a comprehensive research in this section. The main reason why the neorealist approach didn't get along with the studies about the European Union foreign, security and defense policy is because of this philosophy's assumptions about the international relations: the multilateral co-operation doesn't fit well under the postulation of an anarchic 'not hierarchical' system; moreover, the state-centric supposition focuses on hard power matters and the 'high politics' of international security. So, despite the impossibility of a comprehensive perspective on EUFSP, by looking at Kenneth Waltz's thought, the theme of the systemic influences could be dealt by the realist approach. There are four pillars in the realist theory: international systems are anarchic; states are the primary international actors; states are functionally similar; and states are rational and unitary actors. The anarchy of the system entails that the conflicts' roots lie in the structure and dynamics of the international system, not in what Waltz calls the first and the second images, that is the human nature and the domestic makeup of states.

In addition, states are the primary international actors, hence the EU is not a sovereign actor in its own right, but acts as a vehicle for the collective interests of its member states. The third tenet, entailing the functional similarity of the states because of the anarchic nature of the international system, differs from the functional differentiation of states happening in the hierarchical systems. One result of the assumption on the functional similarity of states is that all great powers have some offensive military capacity, "*which gives them the wherewithal to hurt and possibly destroy each other*".²⁰⁷ The last essential element is the rationality of states, the critical connection between system structure and actor behaviour, "*which enables the theorist to predict that leaders will respond to the incentives and constraints imposed by their environment*".²⁰⁸ Based on these notions, realists presume that anarchy in the international system produce security competition, thus "*the EU should be seen as an intervening variable which matters only at the margins of European security*".²⁰⁹ Then, realists deduce that there will be security competition through power maximization and that the various states focus on relative gains. Another realist belief relates to the desire of states to model their milieu, as they are concerned in the governance of their neighboring areas, through which they could guarantee their external environment's solidity;

²⁰⁶ T. A. Börzel, T. Risse, A. Dandashly, *The EU, External Actors, and the Arabellions: Much Ado About (Almost) Nothing*, *Journal of European Integration*, 37:1, 135-153, 2015.

²⁰⁷ J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p.30, 2001.

²⁰⁸ R. O. Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 167, ed. 1986.

²⁰⁹ A. Hyde-Price, 'Normative' power Europe: a realist critique, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2, 217-234, p. 221, 2006.

generally, this task is handled by the most influential countries. Hence, EU external policy co-operation constitutes a collective attempt at milieu shaping, driven primarily by the Union's main states, as they have a greater stake in the stability of the area, and because they have the capabilities to take on special responsibilities. Since the shaping of the European 'near abroad' is pursued in ways amenable to the long-term strategic and economic interests of its member states, the realist hypothesis about EU strategy in the MENA region after the 2011 upheavals perceives the securitization pressures as being way more important than the normative claims about democratization, the core of Normative Power Europe's proposal.

Historically, the realist thought doesn't recognize the former European communities and later the European Union as a primary actor in the international arena since the states are. Thus, the European Economic Community created by the Treaty of Rome was not deemed as a new actor employing its civilian power, but rather as a "*vehicle for co-operation on a limited range of second-order issues driven by its largest powers, a development facilitated by the bipolar structure of power*".²¹⁰ However, the realist justification of the success of this construction between the six initial Western European founding members lays in the international structure of power. The global system order originated from the ashes of the second global conflict was a bipolar one where the USA and its western allies opposed to the USSR and the Warsaw pact. Consequently, Europe's major powers became security consumers. In this framework, the European states' usual apprehensions about security competition and relative gains diminished. Therefore, a way to co-operate to engage in shared 'milieu goals' was consequently easier to accomplish. The framing of the international system didn't make the old conflicts of interest between West European states vanish; nevertheless, these disagreements could have been settled peacefully; for instance, during the Declaration of the French foreign minister Robert Schuman made on the 9th of May 1950, the proposal of a European Coal and Steel Community had to be built upon the awareness of making "*war not merely unthinkable but materially impossible*".²¹¹

Thus, "*conflicts of interest remain, but not the expectation that someone will use force to resolve them*".²¹² After the realization of sectorial economic cooperation through the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC), another important progress was the first limited form of foreign policy co-ordination: the European Political Co-operation. It emerged as a response to the perceived need for common approaches to milieu shaping, and provided a forum for limited policy co-ordination.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 and the consequent downfall of the Soviet Union and

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 225.

²¹¹ *The Schuman Declaration*, 9 May 1950; https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration_en.

²¹² K. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, p.71, 1979.

the whole Eastern bloc, the bipolar structure of power set during the Cold war period collapsed. Consequently, new systemic pressures on state behaviour began to assert themselves. These circumstances had as a direct consequence that a united Germany should be embedded in an 'ever closer union' in order to address concerns of its neighbors and allies arising from the shift in relative power capabilities. The issue of the German reunification has been summed by the famous sentence declared by Italian politician Giulio Andreotti: "*I love Germany so much that I preferred two of them*". The German reunification has been a great urge behind the building of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. In addition, the member states were threatened by the likelihood of political instability and economic crisis in the former Soviet countries which now all sought to 'return to Europe'. In order to address these fears, the EU should act as a collective vehicle for 'milieu shaping' into Central and Eastern Europe.

Hence, the rise of the European Security and Defense Policy require that the international system is settled in a way that allows EU countries to be able to shape certain areas. In fact, the unipolar system in a global scale and the concept of balanced multipolarity in the European continent were crucial in determining the foundation of the ESDP. The Soviets' dissolution means that the US are now the only country with a global power projection capability. Still, the place where the US stands in the global arena doesn't mean that they can be considered as a global hegemon: "*it exercises hegemonic power in the Western hemisphere, but it does not dominate all regions of the world*".²¹³ This always originates from the first realist's pillar stating that the international system is anarchic, not hierarchic. The US purpose is "*to prevent great powers in other regions from duplicating their feat*".²¹⁴ That's why on the one hand they would accept a more efficient ally with which to 'burden-share', but on the other hand a more integrated Europe would be less eager to comply with Washington's instructions. Hence, the unipolar international system that followed the end of the Cold war meant for the European major powers that the US foreign policy became more self-referential, especially as it regards the threats that EU countries perceived as huge dangers. For instance, the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation produced apprehensions from the EU side, but from Washington those issues weren't perceived as high concerns: James Baker, Secretary of State during George H. W. Bush administration, stated that "*We don't have a dog in that fight*".²¹⁵ Because of that, during the '90's, Washington's assessment about its international posture made possible the development of mutual feelings among the European allies about the need of "*addressing regional crises in their 'backyard' on their own terms and with their own resources*".²¹⁶ Then, apart from the global framework which sees the US as

²¹³ A. Hyde-Price, 'Normative' power Europe: a realist critique, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2, 217-234, p. 228, 2006.

²¹⁴ J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p. 41, 2001.

²¹⁵ W. Bert, *The Reluctant Superpower*, Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 189-190, p. 189, 1997.

²¹⁶ A. Hyde-Price, 'Normative' power Europe: a realist critique, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13:2, 217-234, p. 229, 2006.

the only superpower, the situation within Europe has been depicted by John Mearsheimer as one of balanced multipolarity. Specifically the multipolar European system entails five poles: three Europeans (Germany, economic superpower but bearing unifications' costs and the lack of nuclear weapons, France and Great Britain); and still the USA and the Russian Federation. In short, Europe's former great powers have begun to relearn their old roles, framing it in a way that resembles the nineteenth century Concert of Europe, the European balance of power system that emerged from the Congress of Vienna, chaired by the Austrian Empire's Foreign minister, Klemens von Metternich, after Napoléon Bonaparte's concluding defeat. The realist international relations theory states that within a balanced multipolarity system the security competition remains under control, as neither Germany nor France or Britain could make a credible bid to get a hegemonic status. Thus, states' strategic behavior is characterized more by security maximization, rather than power maximization; moreover, concerns over relative gains are also less pronounced, so as to enhance co-operation chances.

In summary, the end of the bipolar system led to the emergence of the US as the only global superpower, whilst the European region didn't have a nation clearly prevailing economically and militarily on the others. This international system's arrangement ushered the space for the creation of a European approach for Security and Defense issues. This construction is not intended as a prelude for a European armed force designed for collective territorial defense, but according to the realist thinking, it stems as a tool to influence the regional external milieu, as the US policies in the context of global unipolarity didn't give the EU countries enough assurances of stability. As realism would predict, the process has been driven by the major powers, and rests on intergovernmental decision-making, as states are the primary actors in the international system. Nor the European Rapid Reaction Corps, deployable for crisis management, neither the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) established by the Council in December 2017 could be considered as a 'European army'. This is it even if it is true that PESCO has boosted cooperation on defense among the capable and willing member states, because of the legally binding nature of the commitments undertaken by the 25 EU countries. Nevertheless, the ESDP is a collective mechanism for coalitional coercive diplomacy and military crisis management by EU member states. It establishes a framework for limited security co-operation in order to collectively shape the Union's external milieu. The ESDP thus represents the first EU's response to the failures of the 'civilian power' Europe's posture in the Balkans.

The anarchic shape of the international system means that the EUFSP shall consider the chase for an 'ethical' agenda as obviously constrained by the structures that 'shape and shove' the actors' behavior, being the structural dynamics of a competitive, self-help system. As we have seen in this subchapter, A. Hyde-Price has questioned the normative foundations of the European Union as framed by Ian Manners. Structural realism aims to spot the 'parameters of the possible', that is the extent to which structural factors either facilitate or limit political choices in international politics. Thus, the actions of the international actors should operate in accordance to a non-teleological ethics. The approach that EU member states had during the 2011 Arab upheavals has been criticized

by Joost Hiltermann, director of the International Crisis Group's program for the Middle East. He believes that Europe misinterpreted the nature of the Arab 'Spring' from the beginning. The requests rising from the people were instantly framed by the Europeans as movements about democracy, as cited by A. Vohra "... *The protesters wanted dramatically better governance and, failing that, the overthrow of unresponsive and corrupt regimes. When the protests resulted in violent and chaotic outcomes, the Europeans became more cautious, blaming Islam for the absence of democratic progress, and tightening border controls against refugees and migrants, among whom they suspected were jihadists trying to get to Europe*".²¹⁷

However, through the support of the method resulting from the realist constructivism, mostly by the works of authors such as Hyde-Price, the EU response to the turmoil's in the MENA region sees the normative attitude as less important than other strategic concerns, for instance the migration and the subsequent transnational terroristic threats. This prioritization of security concerns rather than the normative ones is agreed even by authors don't belonging to the realist school of international relations. They agree on the fact that, the explanations about the Europeans' external action based on realist thinking grasp well the ratio of the various external responses to the violent protests which started the upheavals with the Tunisian Jasmin revolution. So, instability in the Arab World affects the security concerns of the EU with respect to migration and transnational terrorism.²¹⁸ Hence, the ranking of security and stability over any other foreign policy goals should be in line with the realist reasoning; there is a substantial agreement about the attitude within the EU over prioritizing security and stability over democratization. In fact, the member states of the European Union undoubtedly have geostrategic concerns in the MENA region as a whole. From this perspective, realism can indeed justify why stability concerns have been highlighted over human rights and democratization in general.

Nevertheless, other authors have shown that even if the realist analysis might clarify the goal orientations, it doesn't grasp the specific policy choices, that are too vague to be explained by a realist stance.

5.3. The liberal explanations: bringing politics back in.

Apart from this agreement about the useful contribution given by the constructivist realism theory about the real aims of the EU institutions and member states, on the one hand the liberal approach adds other important aspects to the criticisms of the Normative Power theory, while on the other hand it admits other assumptions.

²¹⁷ A. Vohra, *The Arab Spring Changed Everything—in Europe*, *Foreign Policy*, December 2020.

²¹⁸ T. A. Börzel, T. Risse, A. Dandashly, *The EU, External Actors, and the Arabellions: Much Ado About (Almost) Nothing*, *Journal of European Integration*, 37:1, 135-153, 2015.

Wolfgang Wagner builds his theory of 'Liberal Power Europe' from Ian Manners' intuition and the subsequent observations by the realist side, adding three criticism to the above-mentioned NPE: the uniqueness of the European Union structure, the overstatement on the normative approach and the lack of 'politics' in the EU framework.

The first comment confronts the exceptionality of the EU construction, being an “*hybrid of supranational and international forms of governance*”.²¹⁹ Thus, since the EU has a unique institutional composition, there is no point in engaging in a comparative evaluation of its foreign policy and those of the other states. The second criticism to Manners' thought focus on the overemphasis about the proportion of the norms' impact pursued by the EU, according to which human rights' endorsement and democracy policies are established. Finally, the third criticism developed by Wagner shows that the framing of the EU as a normative power lacks the aspect of politics in the external actions' framework. The self-defined essential norms which should shape and guide the European activities abroad are not easily synchronized between each other; indeed, core principles as the pursuit of democratization in MENA region and the need of peace and stability- democratization-stabilization dilemma- usually entail a conflict with each other. “*Since conflicts between equally valued norms are inevitable, prioritizing some over others is a highly political process*”.²²⁰

Thus, in order to surmount these critiques of the Normative Power theory, Wagner proposes the concept of 'Liberal Power Europe', showing some similarities but also several differences. The notion of liberal power highlights that not only ideas (norms and values) have an impact on EU external policies, as the NPE spotlights, but also the material interests of the actors involved; furthermore, their influence cannot be determined *ex ante*, as it remains an empirical question. Hence, this theoretical conceptualization generates a raise in the awareness about topics such as “*lobbying by interest groups or responsiveness to public opinion*”.²²¹ The question of whether of the two pressures on governments will lead cannot be answered *a priori*; this is because a third key liberal variable should be also taken in account– ‘the institutions that serve as transmission belts’ and that make administrations more or less open to be influenced by lobbying and held responsible by their voters. The notion of institutions as transmission belts assists two functions: offering a model of how foreign policy results from a set of variables and causal mechanisms, and offering an operational hypothesis about how the EU acts through those variables and causal tools; this construction should drive to a ‘liberal’ policy result meaning that it symbolizes liberalism's fundamental political principles. This expectation is supported by the core documents establishing the European security and external action's goals, as stated in the Treaty on the European Union and

²¹⁹ I. Manners, *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction In Terms?* JCMS Volume 40, Number 2, pp. 235-58, p. 240, 2002.

²²⁰ W. Wagner, *Liberal Power Europe*, JCMS 2017 Volume 55. Number 6. pp. 1398 –1414, p. 1401, 2017.

²²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 1402.

in the European Security Strategy, which highlight liberal standards, (democracy, human rights, international cooperation and international law). In fact, in the TEU, within Title V containing ‘*general provisions on the union's external action and specific provisions on the common foreign and security policy*’ in the first chapter, art. 21 is stated that: ‘*The Union’s action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the UN Charter and international law*’.²²² Thus, the foreign and security ambitions are linked to the EU identity. Since the concern placed on the individual is very precious, as a result it could lead to a moral duty to save strangers somewhere else, if necessary with the help of military force. Moreover, this tendency of EU foreign policy creates limits on government policy; this is mainly displayed with the liberal public's expectation to the minimization of risks for their own citizens, especially for those deployed to conflict zones. Martin Shaw has created the term of ‘risk transfer wars’ to describe liberal democracies’ interventions “*because it centers on minimizing life risks to the military – and hence all-important political and electoral risks to their masters*”.²²³

In addition to the three criticism of the Normative Power Europe, there are some elements of the theory which remain intact. A lot of normative commitments don't change: that's because both conceptions support the security and the rights of human beings and uphold instruments to protect them such as the rule of law, since they are both based on the core value of individual well-being. In addition, the EU can and should be studied as a foreign policy actor in its own right as a liberal power, not only as an actor with a normative influence.

Wagner envisions the EU as a liberal power as threefold: LPE not only highlights the motivation driving EU policies but is also sensitive to the constraints imposed by interests, ideas and institutions on EU actions; the focus on the constraints EU has to face draws attention to the aspect of politics in its external action; finally, this idea enables dialogue between EU studies and the field of foreign policy analysis. Focusing on politics becomes especially useful when dealing with EU foreign, security and defense policy, as the Liberal Power Europe perceives the human rights' and rule of law's protection as an external action's core feature, as NPE. Moreover, LPE also perceives the EU as constrained in certain ways; for instance groups that will be damaged by the effect of a certain policy are supposed to operate to block or weaken the negative outcome. The result, that is whether the liberal values or specific groups' interests prevail, should also take in account the feature of the institutions and decision-making rules in a specific issue area; as it regards the sanctions, Manners' thought frame them “*as*

²²² Treaty on the European Union, p. 16, 2012.

²²³ M. Shaw, *The New Western Way of War. Risk Transfer War and its Crisis in Iraq*, Polity Press, p.1, 2005.

an instrument to diffuse EU norms”.²²⁴ However, Wagner quotes Klaus Brummer’s findings about the “*distorting impact of the Member States on the EU’s sanctions policy*”²²⁵ since, according to him, contradictions and double standards lead to the not so normative power Europe. The German political scientist insight digs on the issue of Member States’ influence on sanctions policy: this fits greatly with the LPE analysis since it agrees with NPE that sanctions are employed as leverages to reinforce demands vis-à-vis third countries to comply with EU norms, especially in the neighborhood areas. Nonetheless, the liberal perspective additionally observe the consequences of these sanctions in relation to Member States’ commercial interests and the influence of institutions on the relative weight that ideational and economic preferences have on EU decision-making. That is because of the sensitivity of the liberal perspective about the constraints imposed by interests, ideas and institutions on EU actions. The intergovernmental set-up of Common Foreign and Security Policy provides the Member States with enough room for maneuver to influence decisions on sanctions, as it is enshrined by the legal basis for the CFSP, set out in Articles 21-46, Title V of the TEU, then in Articles 205-222, Part 5, and Articles 346 and 347, Part 7, of the TFEU.

As it concerns the Common Foreign and Security Policy decision-making system and the subsequent policy choices, the liberal power-perspective recognize that it “*do not emanate directly and unambiguously from an identity as a normative power*”.²²⁶

On the contrary, this approach pushes for ‘bringing politics back in’; in fact, the various outcomes are identified as ‘highly political’ in the sense that abstract norms and values have to be balanced against possibly conflicting interests between them. This practice requires competing interests that lobby decision-makers, that’s why they are the result of political battles that set coalitions of EU countries and non-state actors against each other. Hence, precisely, Wagner perceives EU policies as not originating directly from a set of core liberal norms but as a struggle between differing interests.

As it regards the dialogue between EU studies and the field of foreign policy analysis, the historical establishment and development of a security and defense policy prompted critiques by Ian Manners in his ‘*Normative power Europe reconsidered: beyond the crossroads*’, where the institutionalization of these structures was seen as a risk to the EU’s progressive distinctiveness, since it’s assumed to militarize its normative power.

Actually, other academics greeted the establishment of military capabilities, viewed as an additional instrument to pursue normative aims; thus, CSDP as reinforcing instrument, rather than one jeopardizing the EU’s

²²⁴ I. Manners, *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction In Terms?* JCMS Volume 40, Number 2, pp. 235-58, p. 244, 2002.

²²⁵ K. Brummer, ‘Imposing Sanctions: The Not So ‘Normative Power Europe’’. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 191–207, p. 203, 2009.

²²⁶ W. Wagner, *Liberal Power Europe*, JCMS 2017 Volume 55. Number 6. pp. 1398 –1414, p. 1406, 2017.

sui generis nature. Moreover, the development of a strong civilian dimension, within the military toolkit, allowing the deployment of police, prosecutors or judges in addition to the military helped reinforcing EU activities towards external areas. Most importantly, since human security is the core of CSDP missions, the availability of military force didn't alter EU liberal inclination. However, the liberal power-perspective facilitates an understanding of the specific way in which the EU conducts its missions in practice: it emphasizes that the European and the member states' liberal identity encourages as well as constrains EU military action. For instance, the contemporary states' distaste for 'collateral damage' is now profoundly embedded in liberal societies.²²⁷ One of the main reasons could be found in the will of the governments to be reelected, while the news of casualties in the military usually have a strong negative impact on these prospects. This predisposition has therefore become a main feature in liberal democracies' use of force, including CSDP missions. The added value of referring to a theory such as the Liberal power Europe one lays in the added value that gives in overcoming a blind spot in NPE theorization. The latter would answer with ad hoc references to limited capabilities to questions such as: why the EU being a normative power, it doesn't intervene in areas characterized by huge magnitude of human rights violations? As previously mentioned, even if the LPE concept and NPE both agree on the driving forces of CSDP, the former provides "*a theory of distinctly liberal constraints, going back to the fundamental ambivalence of human security as a call to save strangers and a demand to refrain from putting one's own citizens at risk*".²²⁸ Hence, taken together, Wagner's approach presents a richer analysis of EU crisis management than NPE because the latter "*lacks an interest in interests and institutions*".²²⁹

In conclusion, W. Wagner's work offers a more comprehensive critical perspective on EU's external relations than the Normative Power discourse. This broader perspective has been built by reason of the focus on the restraints on EU activities imposed by interests, ideas and institutions, the facet of politics in its foreign policy and by framing EU actions as any other actor that is driven and constrained by liberal ideas and interests, rather than treating the EU as a *sui generis* entity with a unique policy.

For instance, in the context of military missions the emphasis on differing interests displays the ambiguity of many norms (for example, when dealing with an illiberal government that has emerged from free and fair elections); moreover, it discovers the inner conflict between different norms, as it is shown by the struggle between the pushes for democratization and conflict-avoidance and between norms and interests, namely between human rights' protection and free trade.

Furthermore, through the contamination of the studies about EU external action with foreign policy analysis, largely with the literature on democratic distinctiveness, the importance of constraints and of political contestation

²²⁷ A. Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 596–598, 2008.

²²⁸ W. Wagner, *Liberal Power Europe*, JCMS 2017 Volume 55. Number 6. pp. 1398–1414, p. 1408, 2017.

²²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 1409.

in foreign relations is widely acknowledged. Thus, the area of ESDP could have a great benefit from an interchange with foreign policy analysis; this is especially true looking at EU actions and policies pursued in the North African and Middle Eastern area, where huge security and defense issues stem, in particular since the last decade.

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