

Chair of History of Italian Foreign Policy

How Italy Shaped the Mediterranean: Exploring its Role and Influence in Libya

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*Nessuno è chiamato a scegliere tra l'essere in Europa e nel Mediterraneo, poiché l'Europa
intera è nel Mediterraneo.*

Aldo Moro, 1975

A chi attraversa il Mediterraneo
trovando la morte nella nostra indifferenza.
A chi arriva dall'altra parte, libero.

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Introduction: Methodology and Literature Review

When people discuss Libya, Italy is almost always mentioned as well. It is the country whose history has been intertwined with ours since time immemorial; it is a very important location, whether viewed as a territory to be colonized or as an opportunity for homegrown businesses; it is the territory that, prior to the Italian colonization, connected sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean, and then Europe. Before the First World War, in 1911, there was an attempt at colonization that was interrupted by the war's outbreak. The initiative reached its zenith with the advent of fascism and the exodus of a substantial Italian community to Libya, where it remained for thirty years. On October 7, 1970, Colonel Gaddafi expelled our large and prosperous community, bringing an end to the long-lasting Italian presence. However, this decision did not result in the severing of ties between the two nations because Italy's economic interest in Libya was too great. Alongside the giant ENI, smaller and medium-sized corporations returned to Libyan territory as early as the 1980s.

In 2011, however, the wave of the Arab Spring began, which did not spare Libya and ultimately determined Gaddafi's defeat and death. Unfortunately, this does not result in greater stability for the country, which is instead governed by armed militias in each of their respective local regions. Local and tribal interests prevail in the absence of a central government. Before the arrival of General Haftar and his endeavor to seize control of the nation. Alongside the two factions formed by Haftar and Al-Serraj, international actors will inevitably be involved. Italy does not speak with a resounding voice and cautiously backs the latter, thus playing a secondary role in relation to its history with Libya. Without the pretension nor the space to fully retrace the long and at times tumultuous relationship between Italy and Libya, we will analyze the relationship between the two countries today and from what perspectives it continues to represent a fundamental relationship for our nation.

Given the importance of Tripoli for Rome, one almost has to wonder whether this relationship is one-sided or not. That is, whether, given recent historical events, Italy is a factor of influence or not for Mediterranean countries and, in particular, for Libya. The purpose of my research will be not only to enumerate the last 70 years of history between the two countries, but to try to investigate a possible revival of Italy's role in Libya in the footsteps of illustrious Italian politicians such as Aldo Moro, Giulio Andreotti, Amintore Fanfani and Enrico Mattei.

The sources used in the writing of this paper range between different authors and different themes, yet transversal to the object of investigation. In particular, I would like to mention the following authors and books: Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia: un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*. The book provides a historical overview of the wars and revolutions that affected Libya during the last century. The work provides an overview of the political and economic dynamics that influenced the country and its relations with Italy;

Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*. The book analyses relations between Italy and Libya during the period of the “First Republic”, with a particular focus on the role played by Andreotti and Gaddafi. The work provides a historical perspective on the political and economic dynamics that influenced relations between the two countries; Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006*. This volume collects a series of letters and documents exchanged between Andreotti and Gaddafi in the period from 1983 to 2006. The work provides an insight into the personal relationship between the two leaders and the diplomacy that characterized bilateral relations; Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*. The book offers a historical reconstruction of Libya from the Ottoman period to the fall of the Gaddafi regime. The work analyses the political, economic and social dynamics that characterized the country during the 20th century; Del Boca, A. (1986). *Gli Italiani in Libia*. The book analyses the Italian presence in Libya from 1911 to 1943. The work provides a historical overview of Italian colonization in Libya, the economic and social dynamics, and relations with the Libyan population; Varvelli, A., & Pelosi, G. (2012). *Dopo Gheddafi: democrazia e petrolio nella nuova Libia*. The authors explore the internal dynamics of the political transition, the economic challenges, and the role of international actors. In particular, the book focuses on the oil issue and the implications for Libya and Italy, one of the African nation's main trading partners; e, infine, Varsori, A., & Zaccaria, B. (2018). *Italy in the International System from Detente to the End of the Cold War*. In it the authors explore in detail Italy's foreign policy, its goals and achievements, in particular its Mediterranean policy and its relationship with Libya. The book provides an overview of Italian foreign policy at the time, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities offered by the Cold War.

Considering this, the structure of this paper is as follows.

After the conclusion of World War II, the issue of Libyan independence and the establishment of the Libyan state will be addressed in the first chapter. The origins of the Libyan monarchy and the impact of its two main Western partners, the United States, and the United Kingdom, will be discussed. Specifically, from a security standpoint, it was these two nations that proved to be the monarchy's greatest assets. However, what happened to Italy in all of this? As we shall see, Italy would not officially return to Libya until 1956, following a significant redefinition of the political, economic, and strategic dynamics between Rome and Tripoli.

Following this Italian awakening in the Mediterranean, the second and third chapter will attempt to explain comprehensively the new paradigm by which the Italian Republic was able to orient its foreign policy towards the basin and its riparian states. We are discussing the so-called neo-Atlanticism exemplified during the 1960s and late 1950s by Amintore Fanfani and Giorgio la Pira, among others. In addition to this context, we will also attempt to accommodate the function of ENI and its historic president, Enrico Mattei, on the chessboard of the Mediterranean. During this time, because of the underground oil discovery in the former Italian colony, relations between Italy and Libya will endure a genuine renewal in light of the 1956 treaty.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, both Italy and Libya experienced a period of political and economic instability. As we will see in Chapter 4, the international community witnessed the fall of the Senussite monarchy in 1969 and, at least initially, was unsure of how to approach the new Libyan ruling class, comprised of young army colonels, and, most importantly, their leader, Muammar Gaddafi. In addition, the 1970s energy crisis and the expulsion of Italians following the rise to power of the Libyan colonel will loom large in the minds of the Italian establishment during these years. In fact, the entirety of chapter four is devoted to Aldo Moro's actions as foreign minister. During that challenging period, the international community designated Italy as its special observer. As we shall see, Moro's idea of Italy, the Mediterranean, the European community, and the international system saw détente as the apex of a process that would allow for the unraveling of all hostilities and disputes even in relation to the age-old problem of energy supply, thus bypassing the opposition between the two blocs and Third-Worldism logics.

The subsequent chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, will focus on the specific governing actions of two Italian politicians who left an indelible mark on bilateral relations between Rome and Tripoli from the 1980s until the fall of the “First Republic” and into the golden decade of the Second Republic. I am talking about Giulio Andreotti and Silvio Berlusconi. The difficult task of dealing with Gaddafi, which was frequently fraught, fell to both. Consider, for instance, the two Sirte crises between the Libyan regime and the United States. Andreotti, along with Berlusconi, had to negotiate with Gaddafi over the recurring issue of reparations for the harm caused by Italian colonialism in Libya. In a sense, this issue has been at the center of bilateral relations between the two countries for more than three decades, characterized by intentional or not, mutual misunderstandings, accusations, and omissions.

As we shall see, it appeared that with each agreement reached, new issues would arise immediately after ratification to open a new crisis front; this occurred with the 1991 agreement, the 1998 Dini-Mountasser Declaration, and the 2008 Benghazi Treaty. With the approach of 2011 and, consequently, the Arab springs that led to the outbreak of a revolution and the subsequent regime change in Libya, Italy reluctantly decided to side with the revolutionaries, resulting in the collapse of a pillar of its foreign policy. Italian interests toward its erstwhile fourth shore have not changed, as we will see in Chapter 7 and in the conclusion. The energy market and the management of migratory flows from sub-Saharan Africa continue to be two pillars of Italy's foreign policy toward Tripoli (or whoever stands in for Libya on the international stage), regardless of who occupies the country's representative institutions. Despite the division of the Libyan state into two entities governed by two distinct governments that continue to struggle to recognize each other's presence, Rome insists that we discuss gas, oil, and migrants. It mandates this not through the creation of new instruments, which were eliminated from the 2017 memorandum, but rather through the recovery of those historical acts that governed relations between Italy and its former colony.

Even though chaos reigns supreme on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, Libya is valiantly trying to break out of the political impasse that opened up after the 2011 revolution and led the country into the abyss

of two civil wars. The West, which very often headlines itself as the "international community," looks at Libya as something that can concretize the failure of international institutions in that transition process, a failure often dictated by internal divisions within the front itself, as in the case of Paris. As part of this coalition, we have been able to witness the infiltration of actors-state and non-state-on the Libyan scene: Ankara and Moscow, by supporting the parties in play, have carved out two spheres of influence in the region and consolidated their positions until the ceasefire was proclaimed and the political path towards the holding of national elections, scheduled for just this year, was initiated.

It is precisely these elections that are of vital importance for our country as they will determine not only who will exert, through the winning coalition, its influence over the fragile Libyan state, but also the strategic and political balance of the entire broader Mediterranean region, and Italy, unlike in recent years, will have to avoid being cut off from it.

Chapter 1: An independent Libya. What prospect for the Italian Republic?

1.1 Libya in the Cold War, between the USA and the USSR. Which Italian legacy?

At the end of the Second World War, the international framework in which the territories that would later form Libya existed was distinguished by a series of processes that must be mentioned in order to completely comprehend the tense environment in which the construction of the Libyan state took place.

The first process to be addressed was the collapse of the Italian colonial empire in conjunction with the gradual expansion of American influence in the Middle East. In 1948, with the development of the Cold War coinciding with the commencement of the first Arab-Israeli conflict, it did not take long for the United States' new position to become apparent in Libya. American interest in the Gulf of Sirte and its hinterland grew during the British military administration in 1943, when two airbases were established in the territory of the former Italian colony, El Adem, in Cyrenaica, and Wheelus Field, east of Tripoli, capable of ensuring British and American air control over the central and eastern Mediterranean. We can therefore conclude that the United States played a significant part in creating the structure of government that was to govern Libya, first within the Four Power Commission of Inquiry for the Former Italian Colonies and subsequently within the United Nations Advisory Council for Libya. Nonetheless, the Four-Power Commission finished its work by finding against independence due to the total and absolute absence of the minimum prerequisites for self-governance. In connection with this verdict, however, Italian hopes of obtaining a mandate over Tripolitania were reignited, as were the French notion of annexing Libyan Fezzan to French Equatorial Africa and the British proposal to establish an independent emirate in Cyrenaica under the Senussi dynasty, which would be defended militarily by the United Kingdom. What has been described thus far was finalized in the compromise signed by the British foreign minister, Ernest Bevin, and his Italian counterpart, Carlo Sforza, on May 6, 1949, and presented to the United Nations General Assembly the same day.¹

The reported agreement was constructed according to the old European colonial logic and overlooked an essential part of the new order in the region, namely the United States' involvement. The latter could not accept a potential exclusion from the administration of Libyan land, even in relation to the Wheelus Field airbase in Tripolitania. The United States emphasized that the current situation in Libya must be managed differently, wanting that British and American interests in the former Italian colony would never be divided. Simultaneously, the United States urged France to forsake its colonial logic and adhere to the new international

¹ News of the possibility of an agreement on the return of any form of Italian administration to Libya so shook local political groups in Cyrenaica that they pushed Emir Idris to take an irrevocable step with the unilateral declaration of independence of Cyrenaica, which was proclaimed on June 1, 1949. Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 141-145. Roma. Carocci.

framework, thereby excluding Italy's return to the Libyan stage². The Americans were fully aware of how the verdict of the quadripartite commission placed Libya in an awkward position: open to new colonial-style influences, which could have exacerbated nascent Arab nationalism with unforeseeable repercussions for the control of territory in a strategically significant region from the American perspective.

To the decisive and frequently difficult entry of the United States into the Mediterranean, we must now add the gradual retreat of another historical participant from the basin: Great Britain. In truth, Great Britain was beset by a severe financial crisis by the end of 1940. These economic difficulties put Britain in a position to significantly reduce its engagement on the world stage, necessitating a reform of British foreign policy. In this context, London began to consider initiating the process of handing India full independence, withdrawing military aid from Greece and Turkey, and abandoning its mandate over Palestine. This arrangement, characterized by Britain's steady withdrawal from what would become one of the most significant Cold War battlegrounds, produced a series of power vacuums. In relation to this second process, it is important to mention the third: in international relations, a Hoover is created when an actor leaves a territory, which can be a colony or protectorate, or trivially renounces or is forced to renounce, for reasons of force majeure, its ability to exert influence and authority in a particular context. But these vacancies must be filled before anyone else may. In the framework of the Cold War, which was characterized by a gradual escalation of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, the regions from which Britain decided to withdraw paved the way for an expansion of Moscow's influence in the Mediterranean basin.

It is now evident that the establishment of the Libyan state as we knew it prior to 2011, complete with its borders, occurred in an environment characterized by a strategic battle between two superpowers for control of the Mediterranean. This Mediterranean would become the boundary between the Western and Soviet spheres of influence, with Italy serving as the hinge between the two. The United States and the Soviet Union would attempt multiple times, with varying degrees of success, to transfer their notion of modernity to the newly independent riparian nations. Faced with the dilemma of British abandonment, the United States emphasized the significance of forming an equal partnership with the United Kingdom in order to advance shared Western objectives, which tended to prevent the growth of Soviet influence in the region³.

The constitution of the Libyan state occurred within the UN framework, most notably through the appointment of the UN Advisory Council for Libya, chaired by Adrian Pelt and composed of 10 members representing Egypt, France, Great Britain, Italy, Pakistan, the United States, the three provinces and the ethnic minorities

² Ibidem.

³ Varsori, A., & Zaccaria, B. (2018). *Italy in the International System from Detente to the End of the Cold War*, pp. 95-127. Londra. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Brogi, A. (2004). *Orizzonti della politica estera italiana: Stati Uniti, Europa e Mediterraneo (1945-1960)*. In *Passato e Presente*, 62, pp. 1-12. <https://francoangeli.it/riviste/SchedaRivista.aspx?IDArticolo=21956&Tipo=Articolo%20PDF&idRivista=98>. Last consultation on 12 May 2023.

of Libya, with the mandate to assist the Libyan people in drafting a constitution and establishing an independent government. All members of the council agreed to install Muhammad Idris al-Senussi, Emir of Cyrenaica, as the new ruler of Libya. The delegates found it more difficult to precisely define the form of the state. Open a spirited debate between the proponents of a unitary state, such as Egypt and Pakistan, and the proponents of a federal state, the western nations' representatives. The former believed that a federal structure would subject the future nation to the influence of foreign powers. The latter, on the other hand, believed that the federal structure was conducive to safeguarding the political and cultural identities of Libya's three provinces: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan.⁴ Although though the United States supported the formation of a federal state, they took into account Arab resistance, primarily from Egypt, and urged France and the United Kingdom to be wary of the minority Libyan nationalists in the territory. Notwithstanding Egyptian objections, the panel resumed its work under the watchful eyes of the two nations that had contributed the most to the Italian defeat in Africa: Great Britain and the United States. From the early 1950s, these two parties have pursued two primary goals: securing the ongoing use of military sites and providing the essential assistance to the Libyan people in accordance with UN Resolution 289/1949. So, even before independence, a strong western influence was forming, particularly due to the converging interests of the London administration and King Idris.

Regarding the constitution of the state of Libya, we will not linger for long. It is sufficient to note that Libya was a hereditary monarchy with a bicameral system of representative government and that Islam is the state religion according to the constitution. On 24 December 1951, when King Idris I proclaimed the independence of the new state, it lacked both the financial means to fulfil its budgetary obligations and skilled indigenous staff for important positions in the public administration. In the early 1950s, Libya was one of the poorest countries in the Mediterranean, with a population of approximately one million that was largely illiterate, and an economy based primarily on agriculture. Only 21% of the residents dwelt in urban areas, and 42% were nomads, indicating a relatively underdeveloped system. Due to the arid climate, just 18% of Libya's area was arable, and half of the fertile hectares are owned by the approximately 47,000 Italians still residing in the country, primarily in Tripolitania.⁵ Due to the paucity of its resources, evidently prior to the discovery of oil, the Libyan government was able to request economic and financial assistance from the West from the very beginning, specifically from the United Kingdom and the United States, which it received in exchange for maintaining the aforementioned airbases. Obviously, the most significant western strategic outpost was the

⁴ The political system created since the constitution saw the royal palace at the center, with the king at the head of the two main offices: the former handled the personal affairs of the ruler and the royal family, while the latter, intervened in matters of government. The federal organs consisted of the cabinet, the bicameral parliament, and the federal supreme court, composed of judges with life tenure. The House of Representatives was elected according to a proportional method, so that representatives from Tripolitania predominated within it, while the senate represented the three provinces equally, and its members were partly royal appointees. Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 144-147. Roma. Carocci.

⁵ Ibidem.

American base at Wheelus Field, which was to become the largest air installation in the eastern central Mediterranean. If the United States was concerned with the military and strategic aspects of the country, Great Britain exerted significant influence in the field of public administration, primarily through its high-ranking officials who had served since the British military government. London and Washington pressed for the new government to recognize their prerogatives, despite already wielding enormous influence in the country. A military alliance pact between Libya and Britain was signed in Benghazi on July 29, 1953, by Prime Minister al-Muntasir and British Ambassador Kirkbride. This enhanced British dominance. Once adopted by parliament and ratified by the sovereign, the military alliance pact became the cornerstone of Libyan foreign policy, strengthening the already substantial British influence. Due to a series of arguments over the subject of economic help that the Libyans requested in exchange for concessions for the Wheelus Field facility, the Americans were needed to wait until 1954 to get a treaty of a similar sort to that gained by the British.⁶

In Libya, the adoption of the military alliance pact with the United States was a highly contentious matter. Not only did it encounter significant internal opposition, within the Parliament itself, where the President of the Senate, Umar Mansur al-Kikhiya, declared himself against any form of negotiation with the United States, convincing the parliamentary commission in charge of examining the ratification bill to reject it, leading to the direct intervention of the king, who removed him from office, but it also encountered significant international opposition, particularly from Arab nations. In reality, neighboring governments accused Libyan Prime Minister Ben Halim of collaborating with Western powers. The chief proponent of these claims was Gamal Abdel Nasser, the head of the Arab nationalism movement. By bringing up the question of economic development aid, the Libyan prime minister wanted to persuade the other Islamic nations and, most importantly, Egypt of the need for Libya to enter into an arrangement with the United States. The primary topic of discussion with Nasser was the dire economic condition in Libya⁷. Ben Halim highlighted his views on foreign aid, claiming that despite his government's formal support for a program of cooperation with the West, he believed that relying on other countries to fund the deficit was a short-sighted approach that would lead to complete subjection to these countries. Thus, the prime minister indicated a desire to develop Libyan resources through foreign economic investment in order to liberate himself entirely from western influence, so allowing the country to soon stand on its own two feet. Nasser applauded the initiative of the Libyan prime minister and urged him to maintain cautious relations with Washington. For Nasser, the United States remained a friendly nation, eager to provide aid without imposing a neocolonial strategy. Despite the acceptance of the most influential nation in terms of Arab nationalism, Libya's foreign policy appeared somewhat paradoxical

⁶ Brogi, A. (2004). *Orizzonti della politica estera italiana: Stati Uniti, Europa e Mediterraneo (1945-1960)*. In *Passato e Presente*, 62, pp. 1-12. <https://francoangeli.it/riviste/SchedaRivista.aspx?IDArticolo=21956&Tipo=Articolo%20PDF&idRivista=98>. Last consultation on 22 April 2023.

⁷ Ibidem.

and troubled due to the necessity to maintain a balance between Western powers and the Arab world, of which Egypt was the most authoritative representation.

The Soviet Union's involvement in Tripoli's foreign policy worsened Libya's standing on the world stage. In 1955, the Libyan government made the decision to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow. This decision was always made by Ben Halim with the dual purpose of securing Soviet support for Libya's admission to the United Nations and demonstrating to the Arab League and, in particular, Egypt, that the Libyan government was capable of conducting an independent foreign policy towards the Soviet bloc. Tripoli's contacts with Moscow deeply alarmed the Western countries, most notably the United States, which feared that Libya may have played a significant role in the expansion of communist hegemony in North Africa. So, Libya was at a crossroads between the Arab sunset and the West on the one hand, and the Anglo-Americans and the Russians on the other. In this instance, the prime minister chose to carry Libya's opportunistic policy to its logical conclusion, seeking maximum benefit for his country each time. Ben Halim repeatedly assured the American and British ambassadors that diplomatic ties with Moscow did not imply an openness to the idea of modernity that the Soviet Union intended to export to the Mediterranean countries. However, this reassurance was not enough to calm Washington and London, which reacted with outrage to Tripoli's initiative. In response to the protests of the West, Ben Halim stated that having diplomatic relations with any state, even the Soviet Union, was a question of sovereignty and, as a result, the Western countries had no say in the matter. Even more alarmed by Tripoli's arrogance, Britain and the United States supported the notion that an understanding was growing between Libya and the Soviet Union. These suspicions were fueled by a drive organized by Ben Halim himself to obtain additional aid from the United States and the United Kingdom, which raised the spectre of a possible turn towards communism. Following a series of informal discussions with the Soviet ambassador, the Libyan prime minister expressed an openness to the Soviet Union's participation in Libya's growth.

Ben Halim soon realized that the United States was serious about not leaving Libya in the hands of the Soviet Union and expanded its offer of aid accordingly. Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., the US ambassador to the United Nations, was dispatched as a special appointee. During discussions with the king and the prime minister, he quickly broached the topic of the threats communist infiltration posed for Libya. The Libyan counterpart responded that if Tripoli needed Soviet assistance, it was because American aid was insufficient to meet the country's demands. At this time, the Americans were prepared to respond to additional pleas for assistance from Libya, but this time they required assurances that the country would not collaborate with the Soviet Union to the harm of Western countries. In addition to an increase in development aid of \$12 million in grants for 1956-57, weaponry and equipment for the Libyan army, and 25,000 tonnes of grain, the US offer also

carried stringent requirements.⁸ The one on which Ben Halim had the strongest opinion was the refusal to accept any other sort of development assistance from non-Western bloc nations. This prohibition applied not only to the Soviet Union but also to Arab League member states. The objection of the Libyan prime minister to this clause reflected Libya's indifference in engaging with the Soviet Union, but it also indicated Libya's unwillingness to sever its ties with the Arab world.

1.2 A new paradigm for the Mediterranean: the rebranding of the early 1950s

Beginning in the earliest years of the 1950s, the Italian Republic underwent a significant course correction. The policy of this period was dictated by a series of contradictions between the new American order, to which Italy was anchored, and Rome's aspirations in the Mediterranean. These two elements, which were more or less binding depending on the period and the issues dealt with, meant that Italian foreign policy was played with great balance between the Western/European world and the Mediterranean world.

Important in this respect are the words of the Italian ambassador to Paris, Pietro Quaroni, in 1952.

*«Noi siamo partiti da una constatazione di fatto: che il non essere più uno stato coloniale, almeno nel settore arabo, faceva cadere certi handicap di cui avevamo sofferto nel passato. Di qui ne abbiamo che, appoggiandoci politicamente su questo mondo, noi potevamo aumentare il peso di influenza politica dell'Italia. Questa nostra politica araba, od orientale, avrebbe dovuto essere quella di metterci, dove e come possiamo, ad appoggiare la tesi del nazionalismo mediorientale ad aiutarlo con tutti i mezzi a nostra disposizione».*⁹

And yet, it was Quaroni himself who stated that this possibility was not immediately available to Italy, for a whole series of reasons. Firstly, because of Italy's inclusion in the Atlantic Pact and, secondly, because of Italy's participation in the European integration project. These two factors would have led on the one hand to a clash with the Americans, and on the other to a whole series of frictions with the European partners with whom they were trying to bring about EU integration¹⁰.

The Paris ambassador's position was certainly logical but not shared by the diplomatic leadership, which, faithful to a moderate and cautious approach, aimed on the contrary at positively enhancing Italian participation in the Atlantic pact. In the respectful vision of the bond created by the latter, it was precisely the western grid that allowed an active Middle East policy, finally resolving the drama of a foreign strategy divided between Europeanism and pro-Arabism. Thanks to the new position acquired with the loss of the colonies,

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ ASMAE Roma, AP, 1950-56, Medio Oriente, b. 1036, f.2°, lettera riservata n°1224, da Quaroni a Zoppi, del 29.12.1952, pp. 1-2. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 158-159. Roma. Carocci.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

Rome could present itself to the allies as the safest vehicle for reaching and then bringing the Arab world under control, thus managing to justify and give a sense of collective utility to its Mediterranean aspirations.

Quaroni's position, expressed in this way to Vittorio Zoppi, then secretary of Palazzo Chigi, showed how the combination of Europeanism or, in general, Atlanticism and Mediterraneanism, a pair of non-homogeneous terms in which the former refers to political doctrine, the latter to identity issues, is an indication of how difficult it is to connect two orientations considered neutral in Italy's international relations on the level of principles. It is necessary to note that it is indispensable to understand the alleged irreconcilability between European policy and Mediterranean policy. Europeanism, elaborated in the resistance, in Catholicism, in socialist internationalism, in anti-fascism, was an important ingredient of the so-called altruistic interpretation of the causes of integration. In Italy, where nationalism had been discredited by fascism, the federalist objective gathered wider and more widespread support than in any other European country, and the federalist movement exerted a dominant influence on the ideology of European integration. Conversely, Mediterranean policy was the most typical manifestation of the nationalist policy of liberal fascist Italy and in the 1950s it retained the political, economic, and cultural matrices that had fuelled it from unity onwards. Even when Mediterranean policy lost some of its traditional connotations in the 1960s and 1970s, it acquired other equally remote European ones. Europeanism and Mediterranean politics belonged to two opposite ideal universes.¹¹

Italy should have acted, according to Palazzo Chigi, with the means at its disposal, but following a light line based on cultural and economic relations and played on the role of mediator in disputes between states, which is dear to the country's tradition. This vision avoided a conflict with the allies while seeking to exploit with caution the new spaces of penetration created by the weakening of the Middle East hegemony of France and Great Britain. It is interesting that a message from the Directorate General for Political Affairs was written the day following Paolo Emilio Taviani's address at the September trade exhibition in Bari in 1951. Following a discussion of Italy's role as a mediator between East and West, the document offered several efforts to coordinate Italy's activities in the Middle East, concluding that:

«Non v'ha dubbio che l'Italia è l'unico dei grandi paesi occidentali che ha saputo in questo dopoguerra guadagnarsi le simpatie del mondo arabo e musulmano in genere. L'essere rimasta in disparte dalla decisione dell'ONU e dagli accordi tripartiti del 1950, e più recentemente ancora, dal progetto quadripartito di difesa del M.O. nonché da altre pressioni e passi diplomatici, l'Italia è fuori dal cerchio di odi che si stringe oggi contro tutte le altre potenze. Evidentemente si tratta di simpatie teoriche, e cioè di uno stato d'animo, più che di una concreta politica. Nonostante ciò, da una situazione di questo genere, che sta a noi consolidare e

¹¹ Calandri, E. (2003). *Europa e Mediterraneo: tra giustapposizione e integrazione*. In *Il Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana* (pp. 47-60). Bologna. Il Mulino; Brogi, A. (2004). *Orizzonti della politica estera italiana: Stati Uniti, Europa e Mediterraneo (1945-1960)*. In *Passato e Presente*, 62, pp. 1-12. Available at: <https://francoangeli.it/riviste/SchedaRivista.aspx?IDArticolo=21956&Tipo=Articolo%20PDF&idRivista=98>. Last consultation on 12 April 2023.

*accentuare, possiamo trarre dei vantaggi economici, che la nostra penetrazione è vista con favore nei paesi orientali, anzi spesso incoraggiata e, domani, delle possibilità politiche, perché nessuna accusa di imperialismo, di colonialismo, di velleità di influenza mossa contro di noi. L'Italia potrà quindi presentarsi ai popoli di civiltà islamica con il prestigio intatto ad essere eventualmente uno dei tramiti meglio accetti tra il mondo occidentale e quello orientale».*¹²

Some members of the diplomatic corps, such as Pietro Quaroni and the undersecretary for foreign affairs Paolo Emilio Taviani, argued that Italy's Middle East strategy should have spent more time and money to conquer this vast market through economic and financial initiatives capable of establishing a serious network of relations. Also, it would have been crucial to pursue the anti-colonialist and Third Worldist position to its logical conclusion by actively supporting the cause of the peoples still under colonial authority. Nevertheless, as Quaroni pointed out, this was impossible since it would have caused Rome to betray the confidence of the allies who remained committed to attempting to restore their empire. Only after the Suez crisis would a more rapid pace of decolonization have permitted Palazzo Chigi to adopt a role desired, albeit contradictorily, by a portion of the political class.¹³ So, in the beginning of the 1950s, Italy's status as an Atlantic power, as a result of its NATO membership, provided the country's foreign policy a broader range of action, albeit in a restrictive manner. On a theoretical level, membership in the Atlantic Alliance allowed, through the role of bridge between East and West that Rome proposed to play, the solution to the traditional dilemma that saw Italy divided between Europeanist commitment and Mediterranean ambitions, but on a more concrete level, Palazzo Chigi found itself in the embarrassment of managing its action within limits strictly marked by the regard that as a weak ally Italy owed France and the United Kingdom.

Some events, such as the Anglo-Egyptian conflict that erupted in October 1951, illustrate the inclination of the new Italian Middle East strategy to allow its deeper and more idealistic spirit to supplant the more controlled and deferential spirit of Atlantic connections. About this, a note stated:

*«L'Italia ha avuto più volte occasione di far presente in sede internazionale l'opportunità di non sottovalutare questi fermenti nazionali che agitano i giovani popoli dell'oriente e la convenienza di invitarli partecipare su di un piano di parità e di fiduciosa collaborazione, alla difesa del comune patrimonio civile. Quelle forze vive che scuotono il Medio Oriente possono e devono essere associate nella lotta che il mondo democratico intende organizzare per la sua stessa esistenza».*¹⁴

¹² ASMAE, Roma, AP, 1950-56, Medio Oriente, b. 846, f. 8, appunto, del 29.10.1951, pp. 4-5, in Calandri, E. (2003). *Europa e Mediterraneo: tra giustapposizione e integrazione*. In *Il Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana* (pp. 54-56). Bologna. Il Mulino.

¹³ Tremolada, I. (2015). *Nel mare che ci unisce: il petrolio nelle relazioni tra Italia e Libia*, pp. 78-82. Milano. Mimesis.

¹⁴ ASMAE, Roma, AP, 1950-56, Medio Oriente, b. 841, appunto dal titolo: *L'Italia e il Medio Oriente*, del 17.10.1951. Cit. in Tremolada, I. (2015). *Nel mare che ci unisce: il petrolio nelle relazioni tra Italia e Libia*, pp.79. Milano. Mimesis.

The disparity between the ministerial corridor concepts and those based on incisive action by the ambassadors in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia was a clear reflection of the difficulty of establishing a policy that had to take into account numerous limits in advance. The diplomats on mission in the most important capitals of the Middle East agreed, albeit in different words and arguments, that Italy could not remain passive in deference to the historical positions of the allies, but must, while respecting the rules dictated by Palazzo Chigi, act to avoid a passive abstentionism that would be, in the words of the Italian ambassador to Ankara, Renato Prunas, "*neither meat nor fish*."¹⁵ The existence of a rift within Italian diplomacy, although mitigated by decisions in line with international commitments, nevertheless shone through externally, worrying the Western allies to the point where the secretary general of Palazzo Chigi characterized the Western allies' fear that Rome could insinuate itself into the Middle East through Anglo-French difficulties as shortsighted jealousy. Zoppi believed that a rapprochement between Italy and the Arab states would assist the European allies in resolving the challenges brought by the war and the resulting loss of prestige. Due to the loss of the colonies, the secretary noted in December's instructions for the ambassador in Cairo, Renato Prunas, Italy held a unique situation that would earn it special respect among all Arab nations. Zoppi believed that Italy might play a helpful role in foreign policy, but he remained hesitant on the question of tangible action in the Middle East. The text outlined the objectives and restrictions of Italy's Middle East policy, stating what Palazzo Chigi expected of its ambassadors.

The text we are referring to is a paper taken from the Historical Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which Zoppi outlined the establishment of a strong and active relationship with the Arab world as the ultimate objective of Italy's new foreign policy direction. Mostly economic methods would be utilized to develop this amicable connection. Zoppi spoke to the need to increase trade between Italy and the riparian nations in order to link them to our nation. Zoppi pointed out that, with the exception of Egypt, which was complementary in nature, there were considerable obstacles in terms of trade technology and the subsequent commencement of significant trade flows with other Arab nations. Simultaneously, Zoppi spoke to the cultural component, presenting it as replete with goals to be attained. The cultural aspect would subsequently be utilized as a tool to strengthen commercial ties between Italy and Arab nations. Lastly, from a political standpoint, a collaboration with the Arab world that gradually, if feasible, takes on a character of continuity and convergence toward objectives of common interest could only be beneficial to Italian foreign policy¹⁶. Therefore, Zoppi outlined Italy's Middle East policy, its guiding principles, and the goals to be achieved. He also emphasized that the fundamental significance of Italy's presence in the Middle East lay in the fact that Rome had abandoned old colonialist ideas to become the proponent of an extremely modern strategy based on

¹⁵ ASMAE, Roma, AP, 1950-56, Medio Oriente, b. 1092, telespresso n° 1277/626, da Ambasciata di Ankara a ministero Affari Esteri, del 11.7.1950, p. 1. Cit. in Calandri, E. (2003). *Europa e Mediterraneo: tra giustapposizione e integrazione*. In *Il Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana* (pp. 65-66). Bologna. Il Mulino.

¹⁶ Ivi, p. 2.

respect for peoples, economic-cultural collaboration, and political protection achieved through mediation of disputes between states.

In 1950, the process of reconstructing Middle East policy was more rigorous than in the months immediately following the UN vote on the colonies. The entire diplomatic corps was involved, and the scope of the issues ranged from the Italian presence in the region to the complexities of the power balance. Rome, which, as stated, had high hopes for the image of a non-colonialist nation it had constructed following the loss of its colonies, led a reflection on the causes of instability in the Middle East region, allocating the lion's share of blame to old-fashioned colonialism. In 1951, the onset of the Iranian crisis and the Egyptian government's repudiation of the 1936 pact signed with Britain for the defense of the Suez Canal bolstered the belief that Anglo-French policy would never again be adequate. The acceleration of the decolonization process brought about by these two events strengthened Palazzo Chigi's faith in the anti-colonialist concept upon which it wanted to base its Middle East policy. Motivated by this conviction and the difficulties that weakened the British position, Italy strove to construct, beginning with the Iranian crisis and capitalizing on the Egyptian one, an aggressive strategy of friendship with the Arab world.

First and foremost, Palazzo Chigi was of the opinion that the international policies adopted by the French and British governments were now obsolete. Together, they were the carriers of a short-sighted and outmoded strategy that fought against slowly but inevitably emerging phenomena such as Arab nationalism, unable to recognize the end of the old imperialism. Italy's commitment to the Middle East, on the other hand, aimed for an influence based on respect for the natural dynamics of growth and development of the Arab populations, which would remove the threat of falling into the Soviet orbit. The diminished British power was visible to all international observers, but its still massive presence prevented the United States from making a policy without London, as Rome desired. With a theory based on coordination with the United States as the dominant power of a hypothetical anti-colonialist axis, Italy proposed an intervention aimed at enhancing economic collaboration to the detriment of political and military control systems, thereby exposing itself, hobbling, and weakening the anti-colonialist coalition.¹⁷ However, at the beginning of the 1950s, the United States had not yet realized that the center of international relations tended to shift towards colonial and Mediterranean issues, and this prevented them from enhancing Italy's regional role, leaving Italy to cherish the dream of a primary and regional relationship alone.

Only the enhanced commitment of the Eisenhower administration and the developments caused by the Suez crisis would alter this situation. Theoretically, Italy had therefore selected the key components of a Mediterranean and Middle Eastern strategy that it awaited to implement and that would consume a great deal of energy between the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the next decade. Early in the 1950s, a network of

¹⁷ Di Nolfo, E. (1990). *Italia e Stati Uniti: un'alleanza diseguale*. In *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 1, pp.53-57. Bari. Laterza.

institutes was established with the intention of strengthening ties between Italy and the countries of the Middle East and Mediterranean region. The contribution of energies from various spheres of culture and society, along with the consistent but not always official support of Palazzo Chigi, transformed this coordination network into a forum where the vitality of Middle Eastern politics could express itself without fear of clashing with the dominant Westernist and Europeanist chambers. Unaf, the National Union of African Action and Italian-Islamic and Mediterranean Cooperation, was established in 1950 on the idea of Enrico Insabato.¹⁸ Insabato, who was already president of the Italo-Arab centre and editor of the Arabic-language weekly 'L'Avvenire arabo,' was also one of the most influential monthly editors of 'Civitas,' the magazine edited by the undersecretary for foreign affairs Paolo Emilio Taviani, who was also a firm believer in the necessity of fostering friendships with Arab nations. Promoted by the Accademia del Mediterraneo and inspired by its president, Giancarlo Alliaia di Montereale, the first international conference on Mediterranean studies took place in Palermo in 1951. The center for Italo-Arab cultural ties was established in April 1952 at the Institute for the East, which has been functioning in Rome since 1921. The center for Italo-Arab relations was established under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in response to the need, felt by Palazzo Chigi, to create an agile body capable of swiftly carrying out initiatives and activities that it would have deemed useful but would have preferred not to engage in directly.

The Directorate General for Economic Affairs at Palazzo Chigi believed that trade with Middle Eastern nations was destined to be the natural outlet for our exports, particularly with regard to mechanical, chemical, and electronic industry products, products that could not hope to compete with foreign competition in dollar areas or in Western Europe, and products that in Eastern Europe faced difficulties related to the Cold War.¹⁹

Italy was therefore recovering from its loss at the United Nations General Assembly in May 1949 by articulating a geopolitical strategy that appeared, at least to a broad analysis, to be congruent and coherent, despite the fact that it was the consequence of obvious strategic opportunism. In fact, it was precisely the most bitter judgments about the future of Tripolitania, i.e., those that had weighed the heaviest in the conception of the new course, that produced a highly conflicting attitude.²⁰ In the internal diplomatic debate, but especially in the meeting with Libyan and Eritrean delegates returning from Lake Success on 31 May 1949, the independence of the former Italian colonies, but more generally of all countries still subject to this political constraint, was declared an inalienable goal of national foreign policy. Palazzo Chigi, on the other hand, did

¹⁸ ASMAE, Roma, AP, 1950-56, Italia, b. 697, f. 59, appunto n°11/04232/C, da Direzione Generale Affari Politici, a Direzione Generale Affari Economici, senza data. Cit. in Di Nolfo, E. (1990). *Italia e Stati Uniti: un'alleanza diseguale*. In *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 1, p. 62. Bari. Laterza.

¹⁹ ASMAE, Roma, AP, 1950-56, Medio Oriente, b. 1092, appunto della Direzione Generale Affari economici per il Segretario Generale, senza data, p. 1. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 165-167. Roma. Carocci.

²⁰ Del Boca, A. (1986). *Gli italiani in Libia*, pp. 178-184. Milano. Oscar Mondadori; Brogi, A. (2004). *Orizzonti della politica estera italiana: Stati Uniti, Europa e Mediterraneo (1945-1960)*. In *Passato e Presente*, 62, pp. 1-12. Available at: <https://francoangeli.it/riviste/SchedaRivista.aspx?IDArticolo=21956&Tipo=Articolo%20PDF&idRivista=98>. Last consultation 23 April 2023.

not adopt a retaliatory stance; rather, it prepared a counteroffensive that was inconsistent with the values of self-determination that it had adopted as its banner not long before.

1.3 The Italian-Libyan treaty of 1956

We discussed how Libya was established after the end of World War II and how it fit into an international context characterized by a dual confrontation: the confrontation of the West with the Moscow-led communist bloc, and the increasingly tense rift between the Western bloc and the non-aligned countries, particularly those burgeoning in the Middle East. What about Italy? After the failure of the Bevin-Sforza agreement, our nation was completely expelled from the Libyan scenario, unable to play an effective role in the dynamics of an independent Libya, if not, and in any case, in a very limited capacity within the Western bloc, whose principal representatives were the United States and the United Kingdom. From Rome's perspective, the building of friendly relations with King Idris's Libya was of utmost importance, as a sizable Italian community remained in the old Italian colony, as noted above.

Rome deemed it imperative, for political and economic reasons, to achieve an agreement with the Libyan leadership. It would also enhance the country's broader Mediterranean and Middle Eastern strategy; it was argued at Palazzo Chigi. The Palestinian problem has dominated international balances for several years, allowing Arab nations to propose to the Soviet Union an alliance against Western supporters of the Jewish state. A deal with Libya that had paved the way for new types of friendly collaboration would have had the greatest positive impact on the other Arab nations.²¹ A failure to reach an agreement, on the other hand, would have led to Arab reluctance towards the West, preventing Rome from intervening in the interest of Italy and the West as a whole with the authority and influence conferred by our geographical position and our traditional friendship with the Arab world, and instead allowing Soviet penetration.

After the proclamation of independence in 1951, Italy and the new Kingdom of Libya engaged in lengthy and complex negotiations that culminated in the signing of the Italo-Libyan treaty on 2 October 1956, pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution No. 388 of 15 December, which provided for an economic cooperation agreement between the two states and definitively regulated all issues between Rome and Tripoli arising from UN General Assembly Resolution No. 289 of 21 November.²² In accordance with the aforementioned treaty, our nation also agreed to contribute \$5 million to the "economic rehabilitation of Libya." The same pact ignored the permanence of the Italian population resident in an Arab country and allowed Italians unfettered property ownership. Specifically, Art. 9 of the treaty established as follows:

²¹ ASMAE, Roma, AP, Libia, b. 1087, f. T.a/1, Appunto segreto senza data, pp. 2-3. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 149-152. Roma. Carocci.

²² Tremolada, I. (2015). *Nel mare che ci unisce: il petrolio nelle relazioni tra Italia e Libia*, pp. 87-89. Milano. Mimesis.

«Il Governo libico dichiara [...] in merito al rispetto dei diritti ed interessi dei cittadini italiani in Libia, che nessuna contestazione, anche da parte di singoli, potrà essere avanzata nei confronti delle proprietà di cittadini italiani in Libia, per fatti del Governo e della cessata Amministrazione italiana della Libia, intervenuti anteriormente alla costituzione dello Stato libico. Il Governo libico garantisce pertanto ai cittadini italiani proprietari di beni in Libia, nel rispetto della legge libica, il libero e diretto esercizio dei loro diritti.»²³

Art. 7 also substantially favored Italy, since it acknowledged our country's right to keep possession of various public facilities required for the exercise of consular diplomatic activities and the operation of Italian educational institutions in Libya.

«[...] lo Stato Italiano trattiene, come necessari al funzionamento dei propri Servizi diplomatici e consolari e per le proprie istituzioni scolastiche in Libia [...]»²⁴

However, even if Art. 18 of the agreement confirmed in a certain sense that it had settled all the questions concerning the transfer of sovereignty and, therefore, formally exonerated Italy for all the damage done to the former colony, preserving the heritage of the resident Italian community, in reality, the Libyan governments of the 1950s and 1960s would show a persistent mistrust and resentment towards the former colonizers, passing, as we shall see, laws to reduce the influence of the Italian community.

«I due Governi, nel dichiarare di loro piena soddisfazione le intese raggiunte col presente Accordo, confermano di aver definito tutte le questioni dipendenti dalla Risoluzione o con questa connesse o dipendenti dal passaggio di sovranità.»²⁵

As we will see in the coming chapters, however, the Italian community's fortunes took a turn for the worst after the regime change in 1969, when the monarchy fell, and Gaddafi came to power.

1.4 Conclusion

In this first chapter, we have analyzed in depth the international process that led to the proclamation of Libya's independence in 1951, taking into account the competing interests at stake and the failure of the Bevin-Sforza Accord of 1949. Italy, officially excluded from the fate of its former fourth shore, had the foresight to develop a foreign policy that - apart from the classic and unfailing opportunisms - made the decolonization process and the fight against inequalities the guiding light for the delineation of future relations with Arab and Mediterranean countries. Having lost its colonial empire, the Italian Republic could now position itself as a

²³Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana. (1957). LEGGE 17 agosto 1957, n. 843. www.gazzettaufficiale.it. Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1957/09/24/057U0843/sg>. Last consultation on 13 May 2023.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ibidem.

genuine and alternative partner for all nations interested in liberating themselves from the exploitative logic of the West, be it political or, more simply, economic.

Insinuating itself into the fissures of the French and British colonial empire, Rome was able to carve out actionable zones that, despite the limitations imposed by its geographical location and alliance structure, permitted it a considerable degree of freedom of action. As we have seen, this approach required our nation to maintain a perpetual balancing act between East and West, between Europeanism and pro-Arabism, with the constant risk of straining relations with France and the United Kingdom. Signs of this exercise became apparent in the form of a growing dispute between the Italian diplomatic corps and its political class, as seen by the different reports used in the drafting of this first chapter.

Chapter 2: *A new Italian dynamism in the Mediterranean in the light of neo-Atlantism*

As indicated previously, during the beginning of the 1950s, several members of the Italian government and its diplomatic corps initiated a new foreign policy orientation for the republic. In the aftermath of the end of the Second World War, our nation's reputation was at an all-time low. Under specific British orders, the provisions of the 1947 peace treaty attempted to transform our country into a Mediterranean-facing commonwealth. The primary objective of the ruling class of the "First Republic" was, therefore, to recover - in addition to a certain level of economic prosperity - an international credibility such that actors in the global system would recognize Italy as a medium power with certain responsibility and influence spheres: Europe and the Mediterranean.

2.1 The Italian vision of the Mediterranean as a space for détente

Rome's efforts in the early decades of the second half of the twentieth century to position itself as a valid interlocutor with newly independent countries, not just in the Mediterranean basin but also in other former colonial contexts, were emblematic of its foreign policy. In contrast to France and the United Kingdom, Italy had the 'advantage' of having watched her colonial empire dissolve following World War II. For the former colonies of these two European nations, the United States was a crucial economic and, in some instances, political partner. During the first half of the 1950s until the beginning of the 1960s, the presence of frequently competing interests between our nation and its two European allies was defining.

Parallel to the actions of the Foreign Ministry, there is the emergence of another key participant in this newly discovered Italian dynamism in the Mediterranean basin. We are discussing ENI. Through his oil initiatives in the Middle East and Africa, Enrico Mattei, president of the state body, offered real execution to the new foreign policy guidelines aimed at regaining Italy's worldwide prestige after the tragic adventure of Fascism and the war.²⁶ If La Pira was the theoretical interpreter of this new direction, the strategist of the opening to the Arab states, then Mattei was without a doubt the supreme interpreter, the operative arm, the man of action who gave substance to these ideas, directing them toward a goal that laid the foundations for national economic development: access to energy sources. La Pira was an out-of-the-ordinary Christian Democrat: a man of faith who envisioned a mission for Italy to attract the nations of the Mediterranean and Europe and who saw in the founder of ENI the executor of the project for the emancipation of the Arab peoples from the western powers, the one who would put solidarity towards the economically weaker countries into practice. The agreements struck by ENI with Nasser's Egypt, Mohammed V's Morocco, and Bourguiba's Tunisia in the 1950s were the

²⁶ Lastly, relations between Italy and the United States were particularly strong during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, as Washington viewed Italy as a reliable ally at a time when other influential Western European nations, such as de Gaulle's France, were harshly critical of American policy. Varsori, A., & Zaccaria, B. (2018). *Italy in the International System from Detente to the End of the Cold War*, p. 100. Londra. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

product of Mattei's political-entrepreneurial foresight and his efforts to reposition our country on the world chessboard.

Bruna Bagnato characterized Italy's accession into NATO as becoming a connection for the West in the Mediterranean; an alternative or rival axis to the Franco-British axis. I find these statements to be quite interesting. The opportunity that Washington afforded us to distinguish our Mediterranean policy from the anachronistic French policy did not, however, exempt us from the need to guarantee support, if only formal support, to France, sensitive and vulnerable on the colonial issue, the key Atlantic ally and, for Italy, an indispensable European partner. This double register placed the Italian Republic on the precipice between the western choice, which required it to be pro-French, and the Arab option, which pushed it in the opposite way, drawing the ire of Paris, which feared for its position as a force in North Africa.²⁷ The Suez crisis was the turning point that broke the compatibility between Atlantic strategy and Mediterranean options. France, Great Britain, and Israel controlled the Suez Canal and bombarded Egyptian airports in the autumn of 1956, as an uprising erupted in Budapest that would eventually lead to the Red Army's invasion of Hungary. While the Soviet Union threatened to intervene in Egypt's defense and the United States exerted pressure on Britain to end hostilities, Fanfani and La Pira expressed their closeness to Nasser by sending Mattei to Cairo to assure him of all the assistance he required to implement an adequate energy policy. Even on this occasion, Italy's friendship permitted Mattei to negotiate his first joint venture with an Arab nation on February 9, 1956.²⁸ After Suez, Italy was able to offer itself as the most dependable translator of the demands of the Atlantic community on the Mediterranean chessboard due to a reaffirmed and now explicit convergence. In contrast to France and the United Kingdom, which were viewed as disruptive components of Western policy in the Mediterranean, our nation became the dynamic actor that, in conjunction with the United States, could articulate the genuine strategy of the Euro-American community in the region. On the other hand, the Soviet Union would have been able to expand its influence in the Middle East if it had intervened in favor of Nasser. Yet, they would have been ecstatic if the Anglo-French plan had been abandoned, as it actually was. The Americans feared that the British could regain a monopoly on military power. Thanks to the deal with France, the control of oil resources would certainly be added. This is why the United States wished for Italy's development.

In terms of the internal political structure of the Italian Republic, however, Neo-Atlanticism also featured a number of subtleties. To counterbalance this newly discovered Italian dynamism in the Mediterranean basin, it was necessary to stabilize the political system of the Republic, which was characterized by weak

²⁷ Bagnato, B. (2004). *Petrolio e politica: Mattei in Marocco*. In *Petrolio e politica*, pp.87-88. Firenze. Polistampa.

²⁸ Oddo, G., & Antoniani, R. (2022). *L'Italia nel petrolio. Mattei, Cefis, Pasolini e il sogno infranto dell'indipendenza energetica*, pp. 61-63. Milano. Feltrinelli; Brogi, A. (2004). *Orizzonti della politica estera italiana: Stati Uniti, Europa e Mediterraneo (1945-1960)*. In *Passato e Presente*, 62, pp. 1-12. Available at: <https://francoangeli.it/riviste/SchedaRivista.aspx?IDArticolo=21956&Tipo=Articolo%20PDF&idRivista=98>. Last consultation on 11 April 2023.

governments unable to meet the transformation and modernization requirements that the Italian socioeconomic system demanded of its political class.²⁹ Behind this affirmation of faith in Italy's Atlantic Pact - which was clearly tinged with opportunist positions, given Italy's interests towards riparian countries - there was an attempt to legitimize a political opening to the left on the part of the Christian Democrats, which would lead to the inclusion of the socialists in the government majority, thereby removing them from the influence of the Italian Communist Party. It should also be remembered that at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, the American attitude towards our country ceased to be based on modernization: Italy once again became, contrary to what our political class believed, the frontier between the western world and the communist world in which the Cold War was fought. This is why the opening to the left will result in a conflict with Washington that is marked by mutual mistrust and confusion. For both doctrinal and political considerations, the socialist party opted to adopt more moderate policies in order to earn the favor of the American administration. As stated previously, the political class of Christian Democracy, which identified with more center-left instances, believed that the détente process that began with the death of Stalin in 1953, and the subsequent denunciations made by his successor, Nikita Khrushchev, of the horrors and crimes of Stalinism, could find a solid application not only in relations between the two great powers, but also in Italy and, therefore, the Mediterranean.³⁰

In terms of political implications, what characterized Italian politics throughout those years and, in a sense, continues to define it today is the remarkable connection between international and local political events. In the following paragraphs, we will focus on the figure of Amintore Fanfani, who served as prime minister or foreign minister multiple times. An occurrence that occurred in 1959, the year in which the second Fanfani cabinet resigned, illustrates the strong relationship between the foreign and domestic political spheres.³¹ Fanfani travelled to Egypt in that year to sign a slew of economic deals and to meet with Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of the Arab Republic of Egypt. He was convinced that a détente with implications in the Mediterranean was in the works. In addition to this fact, which sparked a national and worldwide scandal, he was also eager to work with the communist party.³² It was precisely this combination of events that led to Fanfani's resignation as prime minister and as secretary of the Christian Democratic Party, due to stark disparities with the so-called Dorotei movement in his own party. Fanfani's political demise revealed that the Italian political elite's conception of extension had no place in an international system still characterized by a bipolar clash between Eisenhower's United States and Khrushchev's Soviet Union. It would be essential to wait for Kennedy's election in Washington for a real détente that would put Fanfani back into government in

²⁹ Varsori, A., & Zaccaria, B. (2018). *Italy in the International System from Detente to the End of the Cold War*, pp. 101-103. Londra. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

³⁰ Martelli, E. (2008). *L'altro atlantismo: Fanfani e la politica estera italiana, 1958-1963*, pp.123-125 (Vol. 21). Milano. Guerini e associati.

³¹ Giovagnoli, A., & Tosi, L. (2010). *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, pp 53-65. Milano. Marsilio Editore.

³² Riccardi, L. (2022). *Storiografia e diplomazia. Storia delle relazioni internazionali e politica estera italiana*, pp 54-58. Roma. Dante Alighieri.

1960, allowing him to implement his vision of the Mediterranean thanks to his tight relationship with the President of the Republic, Giovanni Gronchi.³³

2.2 *Enrico Mattei and the ENI: an instrument for Italian diplomacy*

ENI was founded in 1953, in part because to the efforts of Enrico Mattei, who served as its first chairman from that year until 1962. In the same year, ENI took an interest in the Mediterranean. In February 1955, he purchased around 20% of Ioc's share capital in Egypt, which was the first country in which he wanted to act. The internationalization of ENI, and in particular the acquisition of research permits in producer countries in the Middle East and North Africa, was at the core of Mattei's strategy, the ultimate objective of which was to make Italy energy self-sufficient, which could not be achieved with the limited resources available in the national territory.

According to Mattei, the economic growth of a country in full development at the time, such as the Italian peninsula after World War II, was hampered by dependence on a global oil market completely conditioned by the large Anglo-American corporations, which held oil concessions and determined production flows and sales prices. According to the head of ENI, these were kept artificially high, particularly for Middle Eastern hydrocarbons, in order to support exploration and extraction in the vast American territories. Until this state of affairs had changed, i.e., until the consumer and producer countries had succeeded in coordinating a freely negotiated and jointly administered multilateral plan with the oil companies that would harmonize the positions of the various parties with regard to production, prices, and benefit-sharing and reconcile the established situations with those that would emerge over time, all countries would be permitted to pursue their own interests freely.³⁴

Mattei, therefore, presented himself to the producer states of the Middle East and Africa as the representative of a country that was on the same path of emancipation from the power exercised by Anglo-American corporations. He believed that the union of these reciprocal needs could result in genuine change. After securing significant concessions in Egypt and Iran, ENI's dramatic journey to internationalization proceeded by expanding geographically while continuing to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the political instability of Middle Eastern nations. In Iraq, this was the situation. ENI, which had already arrived in Iraq a few days after the coup d'état, recognized the situation instantly. Attracted by the anti-Western nature of a revolution that appeared, in fact, to provide easy conquests, the Italian corporation arrived in Baghdad with the tenacity of people who desire to get results, although it was immediately apparent that results would not be achieved soon. This perception did not prevent Mattei's admission, sent a few days after the outbreak of the

³³ Varsori, A., & Zaccaria, B. (2018). *Italy in the International System from Detente to the End of the Cold War*, pp. 99-100. Londra. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

³⁴ Tonini, A. (2003). *Il sogno proibito: Mattei, il petrolio arabo e le sette sorelle*, pp. 54-57. (Vol. 7). Firenze. Polistampa.

revolution, to offer Iraq Italian assistance in constructing an independent energy industry; however, the timing of such an action was deemed inappropriate by local authorities, and ENI did not obtain a consulting contract until 1962. A few days after the coup d'état in Iraq, however, on 26 July 1958, a deal for oil exploration was signed in Rabat. Ties between the Italian organization and the North African state dated back to the previous year and formed part of a larger framework of ties between Italy and Morocco. After achieving independence, Rabat, in pursuit of fresh political and economic ties, sought Italy's friendship and collaboration, establishing a network of ties that began with the Schiff-Giorgini mission in the spring of 1956 and continued with Mohammed V's visit to Italy in January 1957. The tour, which was a success, paved the way for an intense discourse between Italy and Morocco that continued for several months with a constant exchange of visits. In July 1958, the officials of the two countries signed an agreement for oil exploration in the Moroccan capital as a result of the preparatory work.

Mattei's policy was distinguished by his firm belief in the contractual equality offered by ENI, but it would be naive to assume that he decided to convey this belief without taking into account the fact that he was aware of how much the Arab countries liked it and, therefore, how successful he would have been if he had proposed it. This latter implication, however, was not grasped by his interlocutors or observers due to his propaganda skills, charisma, and the passion that drove him. As a result, he became the champion of anti-colonialism, equality, and independence thanks to the re-proposal of the Iranian formula (the famous 75/25), which was renamed the Mattei formula shortly thereafter.³⁵ In spite of the fact that this was true in general, Saudi Arabia rejected the desired scheme.³⁶ The strategy devised by ENI between the second half of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s was unsuccessful. Mattei had attempted, because he would have benefited from it, to turn himself from an entrepreneur prepared to share the Arab countries' initiatives into a change agent by contributing the experience of his specialists and Italy's willingness to invest overseas. However, the unsuccessful conclusion of certain negotiations revealed the limitations of his action and character. He did not appear to have been able to fully embody the myth of the lone knight capable of altering history, but rather, it must be said, had to continue to play the role of the willing partner compelled to act within the constraints imposed by local governments.

As we have seen, a foreign policy focused at changing the narrative in order to forge new relationships with newly independent nations in the Mediterranean was coupled with an industrial policy pushed by ENI that ensured equitable treatment and access to the fortunes represented by energy resources. This complementarity between the actions of the government and those of the state-owned corporation can be traced not only to a shared viewpoint between Mattei and the Christian Democrats we've mentioned so far, but also to the complex

³⁵ Ivi, pp. 65-68.

³⁶ AsEni, Pomezia, ENI, DE, b.67, f.2B, lettera da Salem a Paolucci, del 4.2.1959, in *Archivio Storico ENI*, available at: <https://archivistorico.eni.com/aseni/it/>. Last consultation 15 May 2023.

network of relations - in some cases opaque - that the director of ENI maintained with the Christian Democrats and the other political forces present in Parliament.³⁷ Supporting Mattei was one of the methods identified by the Christian Democrat leader to advance his foreign policy, it was believed in the days following the formation of the second Fanfani ministry, even by the United States State Department, which was alarmed by the new government's international programs and immediately committed to comprehending every aspect of them.³⁸ The statement made by a diplomat who had just returned from a trip to Italy, where he had the opportunity to converse with Fanfani's entourage, the so-called "Mau-Mau," stated:

1. *«Fanfani represents a new era in Italian politics. He is an intense nationalist and, as such, does not share the highly vocal enthusiasm for the United States which have marked the average Italian political leader of the postwar period. To be sure, Fanfani speaks in de Gasparean terms of war friendship with the United States, but this can be explained more as a tactical move rather than a matter of convention.*
2. *The profession of friendship are in large measure a tactical device to offset the small majority in the parliamentary vote of confidence. To Fanfani, Italian interests come first. If close association with the United States serve this interest, then Fanfani seek close cooperation. If in his judgement Italian would be adversary effected, as for example in the Middle East, then he would follow a nationalist and independent policy.*
3. *In addition to a passionate orientation, Fanfani motivation in his interpretation of his own personal destiny. He is a man with a very precise mission - to rebuilt Italian national power, to relive Italian poverty, and to make the Italian voice heard again in world affairs. If he does not succeed this time he will return as a Prime Minister at a later time because he has an intensely loyal organization behind him.*
4. *To achieve these objectives, Fanfani will employ both a long-range strategic plan and immediate tactics designed to surmount current political problems. It is necessary to separate his strategy and his tactics if we are to deal with him. The basic elements of his broad objectives may in time become distasteful to the US the basic elements are:*
 - a. *The increase in Italian effort for economic expansion and subsequent growth of influence in the Mediterranean and Middle East areas. He will support Mattei, for example, in all of his operations in the oil field of this area. He will put forth many ideas for cooperative economic activity in the Middle East economic rehabilitation.*

³⁷ Oddo, G., & Antoniani, R. (2022). *L'Italia nel petrolio. Mattei, Cefis, Pasolini e il sogno infranto dell'indipendenza energetica*, pp. 64-65. Milano. Feltrinelli.

³⁸ Giovagnoli, A., & Tosi, L. (2010). *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, pp 66-68. Milano. Marsilio Editore; Brogi, A. (2004). *Orizzonti della politica estera italiana: Stati Uniti, Europa e Mediterraneo (1945-1960)*. In *Passato e Presente*, 62, pp. 1-12. <https://francoangeli.it/riviste/SchedaRivista.aspx?IDArticolo=21956&Tipo=Articolo%20PDF&idRivista=98>. Last consultation on 13 May 2023.

- b. *Fanfani will seek to recognize the economic and social structure of Italy in order that might deal quickly and effectively with economic situation. He will advocate statism and the growth of state enterprises in the economics sphere. In this sense he represents the same outlook as Mattei».*³⁹

In the following section, I will describe how the discovery of oil in Libya significantly altered relations between the two countries. Yet, we can add that ENI interpreted the road of change that Arab nations were pursuing by making it the key to its success in the MENA area. The Italian energy corporation was viewed as a reliable ally as a result of the sensitivity and, in some instances, opportunism that guided President Mattei's decisions. This resulted in an even stronger resolve to offer collaboration and a growing interest among the numerous producing nations in these regions. Libya was the first to approach the Italian company with a partnering request. As previously indicated, the signature of the economic cooperation agreement between Italy and Libya was symbolically akin to the completion of a chapter: that of colonialism, at least materially, and this was the belief of the protagonists. By the end of 1956, it had not been stated that any big deposits had been discovered, but the probability of finding large quantities of oil in the subsurface of Libya was continuously increasing in proportion to the area drilled. When Palazzo Chigi urged ENI to investigate the significant chances in the energy sector of the former colony, the Italian corporation saw the investment potential and accepted. ENI's newfound interest in the former Italian colony was also supported by the actions of the Libyan Prime Minister, Mustafa ben Halim, who, between 1954 and 1957, as part of the negotiations for the Italian-Libyan collaboration agreement, requested that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs urge Agip Mineraria to begin investing in Libya.⁴⁰

2.3 The discovery of oil and the Italian-Libyan trade relations at the end of the 1960s.

While Italy's new approach to the Mediterranean began in the late 1950s with a revived interest in Libya, the history of oil concessions in Libya dates back far further. In 1943, the year the British forces occupied Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the occupation began. In this setting, several British oil corporations were interested in researching the subsurface of Libya. However, the fledgling Libyan state lacked an oil exploration law, thus the al-Muntasir government granted the firms permission to begin oil explorations before to the passage of a real oil law.

The law was known as the "mining law" and it went into effect in 1953. The decree provided that firms who requested one might acquire a special license allowing them to conduct surface investigations and aerial

³⁹ NARA, Washington DC, RG 59, LF 67D330, box 5, office memorandum confidential, del 25.7.1958, pp. 1-2. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 169-177. Roma. Carocci.

⁴⁰ Ben-Halim, M. A. (1998). *Libya: The years of hope*, pp. 102-105. Berkeley. AAS Media Publishers.

surveys inside the licensed region, but not a concession license, regardless of the exploration's outcome. Only after the passage of a special oil law, on which the government was collaborating with international, primarily British, specialists, could concessions be requested. The substantial British influence on the formulation of the bill was reflected in a provision that gave British corporations preference in gaining concessions. Assuring such a right, however, would have eliminated competition among businesses by granting Britain a monopoly. The new Prime Minister Ben Halim, who took office in April 1954, realized that excessively favoring British companies would have been detrimental to Libyan interests, so he relieved the British advisors of their duties and put Libyan advisors in their place, including Finance Minister al-Unayzi, with the specific task of drafting a draft oil law that would better protect the country's interests and contain no clauses that would favor British companies.⁴¹

Priority number one for the Libyan government was achieving economic independence; exploitation of the country's oil wealth was essential for an economic growth strategy. At this time, it was necessary to ascertain the actual presence of oil in the subsurface of Libya in sufficient quantities to justify its extraction, and this could only be accomplished through contracts with foreign companies: a clear and specific law was required. The first issue to be resolved was the competition between the Libyan provinces, as the constitution provided provincial organizations the authority to execute any law pertaining to oil extraction. The authorities feared that international corporations would take advantage of the competition amongst local potentates. Hence, it was agreed to give a federal agency the authority to enforce the new law and deal with international corporations. The second, much more important problem was the precedence that two British corporations, British Petroleum (BP) and Shell, claimed to have in Libya due to their involvement there since 1943. At the time, the Prime Minister feared the formation of a British oil monopoly in Libya. Ben Halim summoned the representatives of the British companies in June 1954 and informed them that, despite the existence of the principle of precedence in the preparatory work of the oil law, the Libyan government had made the irrevocable decision not to give priority to the two aforementioned companies.

The primary objective of the new oil law, which was enacted on 19 June 1953, was to provide maximum incentives to corporations that had made every effort to accelerate oil discovery and, ultimately, extraction activities. According to Article 13, the entire land of Libya was divided into four zones: the first and second, the most important, were the north of the country and the coastal strip, while the third and fourth were the desert zone in the south. To obtain a concession, the company was required to pay a fee of approximately 500 Libyan pounds, followed by a variable amount based on the zones: «Zones I and II: 10 Libyan pounds for each of the first eight years; 20 pounds for each of the next seven years and 2,500 pounds for each additional year;

⁴¹ Ibidem.

Zones III and IV: 5 Libyan pounds for each of the first eight years; 10 pounds for each of the next seven years and 2,500 pounds for each additional year». ⁴²

Thus, the new law was conceived on the basis of two fundamental principles: the first was that each concession agreement was to be treated as totally independent of all others, thereby avoiding monopoly positions and the problem of subcontracting; the second was that oil companies would be required to cede a portion of the concession at set intervals, such that after 10 years from the date of concession, the company would be left with no more than one-third or one-fourth of the original area. Hence, the government kept great control over its territory and was able to allocate the areas returned to its jurisdiction to firms it judged acceptable. We will discover, however, that in most situations this was not the case, since the United States and the United Kingdom attempted to conceal the actual wealth of the country from the Libyan government until the very end.

On 20 May 1959, ESSO Standard Libya informed the United States State Department of the discovery of a very rich oil field at Bi'r Ziltan, in oil concession No. 6 in Cyrenaica, using the now-famous phrase, «Libya has hit the jackpot». ⁴³ Output was estimated at 17,500 barrels per day, and the extracted oil was of exceptional grade. The discovery placed Libya among the world's top 30 crude oil producers, creating significant opportunities for its economic growth. The US administration, however, exhibited both excitement and trepidation, sure that the finding of oil in commercial quantities would have far-reaching consequences for the nation's future. In the United States, there was considerable controversy over whether or not the Libyan oil industry should be developed. According to others, it should have waited, as the quick expansion of Libya's oil riches would have led to internal strife. If 1959 is remembered as the year of the discovery of oil, then 1960 was no less significant for the growth of the oil sector. The foundation of OPEC, an organization of oil-exporting nations, in March 1960 encouraged the Western powers, and the United States in particular, to strive to encourage the development of alternate energy resources to those of the conventional oil-producing nations. Under this situation, Libya was an attractive option due to its strategic location west of the Suez Canal. The first strategy of caution, which was motivated only by strategic reasons, gave way to a program of huge oil exploitation, which prioritized the economic aspect. In essence, it was a matter of reinterpreting the significance of the Libyan chessboard in light of the changed conditions in the Middle East of the Mediterranean basin: by the beginning of the 1960s, the Western bloc had long since lost control of the Suez Canal, through which ships carrying Middle Eastern oil destined for European ports passed, and which could be subject to threats and retaliation by a country, Nasser's Egypt, deemed unreliable; to this, one must add the

⁴² Legge petrolifera libica 1959, Art. 13. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 163-165. Roma. Carocci.

⁴³ TNA, FO 371/138785, Tel. No. 1239 from H. Caccia (BrEm. Washington) to FO, Washington DC, 21/05/1959. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 167-172. Roma. Carocci.

fact that In this perspective, Libya assumed great significance, since it permitted both the geographical and economic obstacles to be bypassed. As a result, Libya became the primary direct source of supply for NATO members.

At this juncture, it would be intriguing to study the political and economic implications of the oil discovery for Libya. From the late 1950s to the end of the 1990s, Libya's oil industry emerged and grew, although output did not reach a significant level until the late 1960s. During this period, Libya's economic need on foreign aid had decreased significantly due to its oil resources. According to a document in the British archives, however, there remained a margin of risk due on the one hand to the Libyans' propensity to squander their new resources on unproductive ventures and on the other hand to the Tripoli government's inability to plan Libya's economic development, despite the law at the time mandating that 70 per cent of government revenues from the oil industry be spent on the implementation of a modernization plan drawn up by an international committee. At this time, the country's primary challenge was to successfully establish a capitalist economic system linked to the West. This appeared especially complicated in a politically stagnant nation where political parties were obsolete by tradition and the parliament was virtually always deprived of its duties due to personal intrigues, tribal allegiance, and provincial rivalry. This situation had to wait until the nomination of Muhi al-Din al-Fakini as prime minister and the enactment of the law changing Libya from a federal to a unitary state through a series of modifications to the constitution of 1951. The abolition of provincial governments would have achieved a rationalization of the government apparatus and savings in its running costs, but above all, a unified apparatus would in time have helped to assert the unity of the country against regionalist tendencies. In reality, two main interest groups argued for the abolition of the federal system on the basis of concrete economic and political advantages: on the one hand we find the oil companies, who wanted to simplify procedures and deal with a single interlocutor without the intermediation of the federal governments; on the other hand, the group most intimately linked to the monarch and the management of power, in particular the clan led by the Shalhi brothers, who would take advantage of the new unitary system to concentrate the levers of command in their hands. Regardless of the constitutional reform, the new prime minister sought to change his attitude especially in foreign policy: Strengthened by the self-confidence justified by the recent oil riches and the new national sentiment generated by the constitutional reform, al-Fakini declared himself against excessive interference by Western powers in Libyan affairs as early as his inaugural speech, in which he beings that his government would not be «influenced by external interference of any kind, to express its opinions without being conditioned by the ideologies of the political and doctrinal blocs fighting for control of the contemporary world».⁴⁴ The reference to the Western powers in the part of the speech concerning external interference was clear. Britain and the United States were faced with a sudden change in Libya's foreign policy, which was trying to build an autonomous image for itself in the international arena.

⁴⁴ Prime Minister Statement in Parliament – March 31, 1963, in “Tarabulus al-Gharb”, 1° aprile 1963. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, p. 175. Roma. Carocci.

Having pointed out this change in Libya's international posture, it would be interesting, at this point, to investigate the changed relations between the Italian Republic and the Kingdom of Libya in the aftermath of the discovery of oil, particularly in the late 1960s.

In the preceding paragraph, we mentioned that prior to 1956, no oil was discovered in Libya. Yet, Italian enthusiasm for the hydrocarbon rush in King Idris's land was building steadily. Engineer Carlo Sarti, a technical expert in drilling and bringing fields into production, represented ENI in Libya. Mattei appointed him to supervise the negotiations in Tripoli, which did not reach an advanced stage until May 1957, after a month of intense discussion, so that the management of the national hydrocarbons firm could make a solid offer. Mattei attempted once more to implement the 75/25 quotas that had made ENI famous during the internationalization process. A few days later, ben Halim's consent arrived from Tripoli. The Libyan prime minister praised the Italian initiative but requested a larger share of the eventual joint venture's shares be reserved for his country. After that, the process of ENI's incorporation onto Libyan soil moved slowly. Motives for what many viewed as a real obstacle placed against the Italian state-owned company included bureaucratic factors, such as the nature of the company headed by Mattei, and competition with other companies specializing in the extraction and processing of hydrocarbons, particularly those of British and American origin. But, the antipathy towards ENI has to be viewed in a broader context. In fact, foreign oil corporations had been watching the Italian company for months, as had the chancelleries of London and Washington, which were attempting to determine what contribution Mattei's unclear behavior was making to Italian foreign policy.⁴⁵ Neo-Atlanticism, of which Mattei became the bearer, with its consequences for the development of the dynamics of Italian foreign policy, was the political reason for the failure of the 1957 agreement with the Libyan Petroleum Commission, which resulted in the assignment of the wells identified by ENI to the American company Texaco Overseas.

Notwithstanding this first setback, the national hydrocarbon company's Middle East ventures proceeded with vigor throughout the Fanfani era. In fact, it was during the second government led by the Christian Democrat leader that Mattei sought again to send ENI to Libya, having learned from the 1957 failure. This time, Libyan Finance Minister Otman assisted Enrico Mattei in comprehending the personalistic mechanism that governed politics in Tripoli, which had earlier led to the rejection of the Italian firm. Due to the mediation of this figure, ENI was able to gain a concession that proved to be significant, not only for its economic but also for its political worth. In truth, the relationship between Italy and Libya conquered a territory that did not exist during the colonial period and, as a result, was destined to become the ideal ground on which to develop a new alliance. From that point forward, Libya, which was then primarily an oil-producing nation, would view Italy as a technically prepared and technologically proficient nation, practically an ideal partner due to its proximity

⁴⁵ Tonini, A. (2003). *Il sogno proibito: Mattei, il petrolio arabo e le sette sorelle*, pp. 123-125. (Vol. 7). Firenze. Polistampa.

and lack of raw resources. In other words, the Italian peninsula would have been a big market for oil product sales as well as a credible political alternative to Great Britain and the United States. The pro-Italian stance became evident immediately with the awarding of concession number 82, which was contested by Edison and another Italian enterprise. In fact, the British, who were usually keenly aware of political shifts in nations where they had significant economic interests, reported observing «*an extraordinarily high proportion of Italophiles*»⁴⁶ in Libya.

The 1960s were a pivotal decade for Libya. The reasons, which were numerous, were mostly determined by a single geopolitical factor: oil. The local and international press, as well as the political and economic world at large, keenly monitored the development of the energy business in the former Italian territory. To this must be added the procedure that led to the formation of Opec. The oil industry's history had reached a turning point due to the process of self-awareness that the producing nations had through since the end of World War II. The need to achieve independence in the management and opposite of political structures, economic structures, subsoil resources, and natural heritage, transformed into a moral obligation by the pervasiveness of ideas of independence in a world still under colonial control, remained a fundamental accomplishment. In 1962, the year that national oil began to circulate on the market, Libya joined Opec. As previously said, the discovery of crude oil and Libya's natural geographic location made the former Italian colonies - particularly for European countries - a vital supply of energy, since it was not constrained by the Suez Canal, and this gave it a new strategic weight. For this reason, the old continent began to view it as a crucial geopolitical pillar that needed to be safeguarded against the potential of nationalist and pan-Arab contagion, as well as the communist threat.⁴⁷ Threats of this size, it was felt in London and Washington, were made more probable by Tripoli's impending economic and subsequently political independence due to oil income, and this prompted the two Western countries to tighten their ties with the local government.⁴⁸

As we have seen, crude oil altered the structure of Libya's diplomatic connections in the years leading up to independence, but it also served as a glue for new relationships, such as with Italy. Rome and Tripoli had not had intense exchanges since the signing of the bilateral agreement in 1956, but ENI, which had obtained a concession in 1959, increased and intensified its presence in the country in the years that followed, forging a bond that would soon become fundamental to Italian foreign policy. As with the former Italian colony, the 1960s were a time of great significance for the national hydrocarbons firm. The assassination of Enrico Mattei

⁴⁶ TNA, Londra, FO 371/138787, f. JT 1532/64, confidential letter n. (JT 1531/64), da Ambasciata di Bengasi a African Department, Foreign Office, del 25.11.1959. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 188. Roma. Carocci.

⁴⁷ Riccardi, L. (2013). *L'internazionalismo difficile. La "diplomazia" del PCI e il Medio Oriente dalla crisi petrolifera alla caduta del muro di Berlino (1973-1989)*, pp. 68-74. Roma. Rubbettino.

⁴⁸ TNA, Londra, FO 371/138785, lettera dal titolo: Libya: Implications of the Discovery of Oil, da Riches a Lloyd, del 3.6.1959. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 189-191. Roma. Carocci.

on October 27, 1962 was undoubtedly the incident that influenced, for better or worse, the subsequent growth of this company. The new administration of ENI, led by Marcello Boldrini and Eugenio Cefis, was intended to, on the one hand, fill the hole left by the death of the previous director of the state-owned firm, and, on the other hand, prevent a political takeover of ENI.⁴⁹ The new management immediately adopted a less combative posture towards the major Anglo-American oil companies than Mattei had. The same approach towards the countries of the South was the subject of a revision project that fully overturned Mattei's grand idea, which was soon to be abandoned permanently in favor of peace with the major oil firms abroad.⁵⁰ The projects and mineral exploration in the North African country proceeded, utilizing both old and new routes, and with more or less transparent negotiations, in order to get oil concessions in the Libyan territories, despite the new leadership's change in direction. The situation deteriorated after 1964, when, under the influence of Egyptian President Nasser, Libya was swept by a wave of Arab nationalism that indirectly led to the reorganization of the energy sector and the subsequent blocking of the distribution of concessions, as a result of protests over the poor quality of life.

Egyptian influence in Libyan politics was characterized by popular calls for a review of the military accords reached with the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1950s. Regarding Italy, ENI once again served as a diplomatic route to develop a fresh bond of trust, laying the groundwork for the rebirth of relations between Libya and Italy. Rome and Tripoli discovered the right venues to reformulate the terms of a union that could not recall the past but first and foremost had to be prepared to interpret the future within this alliance. Hydrocarbons essentially made this idea possible. The Mediterranean inexorably drew its countries together, and by the mid-1960s, oil, which Libya had to sell and Italy had to consume, became the impetus for a restart of bilateral relations.

In reality, it was no coincidence that the first happy formal meeting between Libya and Italy occurred immediately after ENI's energy interests obtained fresh concessions.⁵¹ With the signing of the agreement in 1956, bilateral relations were largely stuck in silence until 1967, when Libyan Foreign Minister Ahmed el-Bishti paid an official visit. In Rome in May of 1967, he visited with Foreign Minister Amintore Fanfani, but on the same day he also met with Prime Minister Aldo Moro and subsequently President Giuseppe Saragat. As soon as the ritual formalities were out of the way, the two foreign policy decision-makers established a reborn Italian-Libyan brotherhood: a brotherhood able to develop with exceptionally balanced exchanges due to the hydrocarbon finds. The opening remarks were then followed by a wide-ranging discussion on the topic of the Mediterranean balance, which, according to Bishti, was also positively maintained thanks to the constructive work carried out by Italy, whose understanding, friendship, and boldness towards Arab countries was especially appreciated in Tripoli. Fanfani illustrated Italian relations with the major countries in the

⁴⁹ D. Pozzi, *Dai gatti selvaggi al cane a sei zampe*, pp. 459-460. Milano. Marsilio.

⁵⁰ Tonini, A. (2003). *Il sogno proibito: Mattei, il petrolio arabo e le sette sorelle*, pp. 165-169. (Vol. 7). Firenze. Polistampa.

⁵¹ Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Roma, Archivio Aldo Moro, b. 67, f. 8, *Programma della visita ufficiale del Ministro degli Affari Esteri del Regno di Libia S.E. Ahmed El Bishti*, maggio 1967, *Primo colloquio italo-libico*, 3.5.1967, p. 1. Cit. in Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana e i popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp.320-321. Bari. Besa

Middle East and Mediterranean region, beginning by stating that Italian policy is based on the conviction that the Arabs have a significant position on the international chessboard due to their geographical location, historical events, and shared interests.⁵² Despite the formality of the occasion, Fanfani's remarks contained actual and concrete components of a foreign policy that has always been dominated by a core interest in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.⁵³

The improvement in Libya's economic situation and the exploitation of oil resources also gave impetus to Italy's trade relations with Libya, which received a considerable boost from 1967 onwards. According to the French ambassador in Rome, Armand Bérard, the Libyan minister's arrival in Italy solemnly confirmed the abandonment of the grudges of the colonial past and the cordiality of the relations that had been established in the second half of the 1960s between Rome and Tripoli. Here is the telegram from the French ambassador dated April 1967:

*«L'Italia si sta impegnando a perseguire una politica dinamica di assistenza e di investimenti in particolare nel settore petrolifero. Nel 1966 essa ha realizzato nel Regno di Libia dei lavori per 72,675 milioni di dollari di cui 40 milioni per lo sviluppo della rete stradale. Gli scambi commerciali [inoltre], che rappresentavano l'1,05 per cento del totale degli scambi italiani, sono passati nel 1966 all'1,38 per cento».*⁵⁴

During their conversations, Fanfani and his Libyan counterpart discussed a variety of topics, including Italian foreign policy in the Mediterranean and the Arab-Israeli question, but they focused primarily on bilateral relations, highlighting technical and cultural cooperation between the two countries. In particular, al-Bishti acknowledged the contribution of Italian specialists to the Libyan economy, as well as the relevance of the Italian population, primarily located in Tripolitania, to the economy of Libya.⁵⁵ In French Ambassador Bérard's description of the visit of the Libyan politician to Italy, the following can also be found:

«L'esame delle relazioni economiche e commerciali [...] a posto in rilievo lo sviluppo progressivo degli scambi, [dovuto principalmente] all'accrescimento delle esportazioni dei prodotti petroliferi libici (la SNAM si è impegnata nel 1966 ad acquisire in vent'anni tre miliardi di lire all'anno di gas libico). [...] Il ministro libico si è inoltre compiaciuto per l'importanza recente dei lavori realizzati dalle imprese italiane: nel 1964

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Giovagnoli, A., & Tosi, L. (2010). *Amintore Fanfani e la politica estera italiana*, pp 78-82. Mialno. Marsilio Editore.

⁵⁴ AMAE, Série Europe – Généralités – Sous série Italie (1961-70), vol. 378, Télégramme n. 816-817 de A. Bérard au MAE, Roma, 15704/1967. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 191-192. Roma. Carocci.

⁵⁵ Ivi, Télégramme n. 994-1000 de A. Bérard au MAE, Roma, 09/05/1967. Cit. in Oddo, G., & Riccardo Antoniani. (2022). *L'Italia nel petrolio. Mattei, Cefis, Pasolini e il sogno infranto dell'indipendenza energetica*, pp. 86-88. Milano. Feltrinelli.

*9,5 milioni di dollari di commesse; nel 1966, quasi 73 milioni di cui 40 milioni per le strade e 13,8 milioni per la costruzione di un aeroporto».*⁵⁶

The late 1960s thus witnessed an increase in Italy's economic trade relations with Libya, which, as will be seen later, would intensify considerably after the Gaddafi regime came to power.

2.4 Conclusion

The 1960s was an era of transition between change and continuity in Italian foreign policy. Internally, the transformation had been signified by the formation of the first organic center-left administration, led by Aldo Moro, in 1963. Initially, the political upheaval had at least partially encompassed the country's foreign policy, which was afterwards able to convey a thought that was somewhere between continuity and discontinuity. Consistent with the past was the centrality of the Euro-Atlantic axis, which was reconfirmed as a pillar of international action despite an increasingly bipolar dimension resulting from the détente process and despite the difficulties both NATO and the European community encountered around the middle of the decade. On the other hand, the lines of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern policy, which in that decade were dominated by the figures of Amintore Fanfani and Aldo Moro, were both linked to tradition and rupture elements. In this sphere, the past could be found in the capacity that the Mediterranean strategy still had to provoke, as it had done almost continuously, between political positions and a heated conflict, which, along with the usual accusation that this was the sphere in which Italy exercised the most duplicity and velleitarism, tightrope walking, and contradictions, typified the Italian attitude towards this region of the globe.

Enrico Mattei and ENI played a crucial role in the articulation of Italian foreign policy at the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s, as evidenced by the network of ties they were able to develop between the two sides of the Mediterranean. Mattei's passing in 1962, which for many marked the shattering of the ideal of energy independence, resulted in the loss of the ideologue behind ENI, as identified by many. In actuality, the Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi, while keeping a key role in Italy's energy and foreign policy, lost the theoretical contribution it had previously contributed to the Mediterranean balances of the Italian Republic.

⁵⁶ Ibidem.

Chapter 3: The collapse of the monarchy and the Free Officers movement

In the preceding chapter, we saw how the finding of oil was the impetus for the resumption of relations between Italy and its former colony. In addition, the expansion of the hydrocarbon sector made Libya a strategic country in the eyes of the Anglo-Americans and their European allies, particularly in the energy supply sector, due to its advantageous geographical location. If oil, on the one hand, altered the country's international standing, the social and economic conditions of its citizens, characterized by poverty and suffering, remained virtually constant.

There were several main potential destabilization factors for the nation. The most significant is the failure to improve the living conditions and quality of life of the residents of the Kingdom of Libya after the discovery of oil. American and British desire in maintaining Libya within the western orbit, thereby becoming the country's leading partner, is also worthy of mention.⁵⁷ Obviously in contrast to this is the overall attitude of the Arab world in the 1960s towards the West and the United States in particular. In truth, the Arab League at the time represented a bloc of non-aligned nations that were, in a way, susceptible to Soviet influence, given the close connections between Egypt - which at the time was considered the Arab world's vanguard - and the Moscow leadership. Libya, which was also a member of the Arab League and had more western positions, found itself isolated and vulnerable to the Arab nationalist propaganda of Nasser. This confluence of variables created an especially volatile situation within Libya.

3.1 The path to the monarchy's demise

In 1964, following a series of student demonstrations critical of the government and the conduct of its foreign policy, as well as of the monarchy and the scant investments made to improve the quality of life for Libyans, the government of al-Muntasir set itself in opposition to what it had signed with the United States and the United Kingdom in the two years immediately following Libyan independence: Tripoli, on 23 February 1964, declared its commissioners to be independent from the central government. Al-Muntasir's reaction was

⁵⁷ Varvelli, A. (2009). *L'Italia e l'ascesa di Gheddafi: la cacciata degli italiani, le armi e il petrolio, 1969-1974*, p. 65. (Vol. 383). Milano. Dalai Editore.

deemed excessively moderate by both public opinion and Egyptian President Nasser, who, using his influence over certain figures in the Libyan government, such as Foreign Minister Maziq, led to the formalization by the Kingdom of Libya of the liquidation of the Anglo-American airbases.

This tension, along with the possibility of Egyptian aggression, prompted the British and Americans to design a defense strategy codenamed Operation Enigmatic: Plan for British military support to Libya within the framework of joint Anglo-American studies on Libya.

*«Disordini interni. La situazione interna della Libia è tale da poter precipitare in ogni momento, con lo scoppio di disordini rivolte. La RAU (Egitto) potrebbe approfittare di ogni violenta manifestazione pubblica per tentare un colpo di Stato Mirante a insediare in Libia un governo più orientato verso il pan-arabismo [...]. Gli egiziani, potrebbero servirsi di "volontari" e sabotatori nei loro sforzi per fomentare disordini all'interno della Libia [...]».*⁵⁸

The events of 1964 confirmed Western concerns regarding the influence of Nasser's regime on the Libyan regime but made the hypothesis of a direct attack by the RAU less credible, at least in the short term: it became evident that the Egyptian president's primary weapon was Arab nationalist propaganda.⁵⁹

Only the involvement of King Idris I, who threatened to abdicate, generated such a wave of popular support for the monarchy that it softened Libya's negotiating posture. Notwithstanding the gravity of the events, the crisis of 1964 was resolved in favor of Western powers, which retained a strong presence in the country. In any case, even if the protests of 1964 had not marked the definitive withdrawal of Western powers from Libyan territory, the agreements signed by Tripoli with London and Washington in April 1964 set a significant precedent for the Western powers: never before had the United States formally requested that Britain

⁵⁸ TNA, FO 371/178868, I. T. M. Lucas (BrEm., Tripoli) to P. H. Laurence (FO), Tripoli, 13/02/1964, cfr. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 192-193. Roma. Carocci.

⁵⁹ TNA, FO 371/184228, Letter from H. Caccia to M. Trend: "Anglo Treaty Review", London, 13/01/1965, sr. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 193-194. Roma. Carocci.

dismantle its installations and withdraw its troops.⁶⁰ The problem, however, had just been postponed, as the Libyan populace grew increasingly impatient with the Western military presence. The Arab-Israeli war, which began on 5 June 1957 and ended five days later, prompted a new manifestation of Libyan hostility towards the United States. In fact, the propaganda campaign launched by Nasser against Israel and its main supporters in the Western bloc found fertile ground in Libya, particularly among the students.

With the commencement of the Six-Day War, major Libyan cities witnessed anti-Western and anti-Israeli rioting. The problem was additionally exacerbated by the behavior of the Maziq government, which remained essentially inactive throughout the struggle for fear of compromising itself with the Egyptians vis-à-vis the West and with the United States and Britain vis-à-vis Nasser's government. In the days that followed, as the crisis expanded throughout the Arab world, Maziq's complete incapacity to handle the situation pushed key politicians in Tripoli to form a special commission to fill the institutional void that had been created in the country.⁶¹ A group of young nationalists, whose ideology was founded on a new idea of Libyan national identity rather than mere adherence to Nasserite-style Arab nationalism, joined this council of notables within a few days. These young intellectuals exerted pressure on the feeble Libyan government to renew the United States and United Kingdom's demand for the evacuation of the bases.

The Libyan prime minister called the British and American ambassadors on 15 June 1967 to demand the total removal of the soldiers and the final destruction of the bases. Without even giving the foreigners time to evaluate the Libyan demands, King Idris annulled Maziq's authority, resulting in a change of administration. The pick of the king was al-Qadir Badri, who, within a few days, had the leaders of the rebellion arrested, restored some order, and rescinded his predecessor's proposal for the evacuation of bases, reinforcing the necessity of the Anglo-American military presence to Libya.⁶² Hence, it was the king's involvement once more that saved the Western military sites. This event, however, demonstrated that the attitude

⁶⁰ Varvelli, A. (2009). *L'Italia e l'ascesa di Gheddafi: la cacciata degli italiani, le armi e il petrolio, 1969-1974*, pp. 67-71. (Vol. 383). Milano. Dalai Editore.

⁶¹ Ivi, p. 73.

⁶² TNA, FCO 39/344, *Libya: Annual Review for 1967*, Tripoli, 05/01/1968, cf. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 195-196. Roma. Carocci.

of the Libyan people had changed, particularly that of the young people, who had developed a form of independent nationalism that viewed the presence of foreign troops as a legacy of colonialism in stark contrast to the aspirations of a resource-rich state such as Libya.

The first to understand the ideological change taking place in Libyan nationalism were the British, and in particular the ambassador in Tripoli, Sarrel, who had realised that the nationalists of the new generation could no longer be an enemy to be fought, but even new interlocutors, compared to the old political class. To win the sympathy of the new generation, however, it was necessary to change the direction of policy towards Libya, as was indicated in a report by the Tripoli embassy to the Foreign Office in July 1967:

*«Le nuove generazioni, caratterizzate da una maggiore cultura in campo politico ed economico, sostituiranno presto nei ruoli chiave gli esponenti della vecchia generazione, più conservatori [...]. Le nuove generazioni, invece, meno legate alla monarchia e più nazionaliste, sono in generale ben disposte verso la Gran Bretagna; [...] Quello che chiedono, tuttavia, è la trasformazione del ruolo britannico nelle relazioni con la Libia da quello attuale di paese “protettore” a un ruolo di [...] partner commerciale».*⁶³

The events of 1967, according to the British diplomat, expedited the transition between the old and younger generation of Libyan politics. However, there were three main obstacles to a revision of the great powers' policy in the Libyan chessboard: the king's obstinate desire to maintain British troops as a prop for the monarchy against a possible Egyptian expansionism; the American intention to maintain at all costs the Wheelus Field air base, considered a bulwark of western strategic positions in the Mediterranean; and the importance placed by the British General Staff on the availability of oblique air support. So, the concept of continuing British influence in Libya, even from a purely economic standpoint, could not be proposed without the support of British troops who had to remain to manage the succession situation involving King Idris. Whether the monarchical administration continued under the leadership of Crown

⁶³ TNA, FCO 39/118, *BrEm. In Libya to R.H. George Brown (MP), “Report on the future of British Forces in Libya”*, Tripoli, 08/07/1967, sr. Cit. in Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia. Un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, pp. 113-116. Bologna. Il Mulino.

Prince al-Hasan al-Rida or a new nationalist republican regime developed, Washington and Britain wanted to ensure that Libya would not become a satellite of Egypt.⁶⁴

In the months leading up to the Anglo-Libyan-American negotiations in August 1967, both the United Kingdom and the United States chose to follow the route of compromises. Despite the fears, the negotiations resulted in the maintenance of the status quo, and ties between Libya and Western powers significantly improved. The installation of the new government in October 1967, when the king yielded to popular pressure and appointed the young nationalist leader al-Bakkush as prime minister, who immediately understood the importance of maintaining good relations with the Western allies in order to preserve the country's independence and avoid the risk of becoming an Egyptians satellite, was also a turning point in this regard.⁶⁵

Al-Bakkush had an ambitious plan to make Libya stand out on the international and Mediterranean chessboards, given that it was the sixth largest oil producer and fourth largest crude exporter in the world in 1968.⁶⁶ This, however, required the assistance of the Anglo-Americans and other Western nations, like Germany and Italy, with whom Libya had significant trading relations. During his tenure, the Libyan prime minister made a number of journeys to the capitals of the major European nations in order to promote the image of a revitalized and ambitious Libya that was capable of playing a leading role in the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the first step required a reconciliation with his long-standing friends, the United States and Great Britain.

Therefore, it appeared that all the conditions were in place for the new government, which had the support of the people, the backing of the crown, and the sympathies of the western powers, especially the United States, which, for the first time in Libyan history, saw a government at the helm of the country that possessed all the defining characteristics of a 'democratic' government. According to American assessments, al-Bakkush had been the only Prime Minister capable of providing effective political direction to the Libyan government,

⁶⁴ Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, p.197. Carocci.

⁶⁵ TNA, DEFE 24/313, *BrEm. in Tripoli to FO – Telegram n° 782*, Tripoli 12/08/1967. Cit. in Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia. Un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, p. 117. Bologna. Il Mulino.

⁶⁶ Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, p. 200. Roma. Carocci.

assuming office with a precise and carefully crafted program with three main goals: to modernize Libya through the participation of members of the younger generation, equipped with a more rational and technologically advanced approach to reality; to rethink famine relief efforts; and to rethink famine relief efforts.⁶⁷

The Americans perceived the new government's attempts to initiate a process of political growth by taking measures toward the establishment of contemporary political institutions as a desire to westernize Libya while honoring the traditions of the Arab world. The sudden departure of al-government Bakkush's on January 4 caught the United States and Britain off guard, as they believed they had finally found a dependable mediator. According to a British document, the resignation was likely the result of the king's refusal to accept the prime minister's proposed modifications to the government's structure. Yet, it had been apparent for several weeks that King Idris did not approve of al-methods Bakkush's of governing, which were based on dynamism and a desire for reform, since he had not hesitated to criticize them openly.⁶⁸

Wanis Gaddafi, Bakkush's successor, did not jeopardize relations with the two Western allies, but the Anglo-Americans knew from the outset that the new prime minister would be a political lightweight. Lacking authority and popular support, the new prime minister would have to articulate a policy that strikes a balance between maintaining a cordial relationship with the allies - as directed by King Idris - and responding to the population's growing desire to break away from the Anglo-American game. Simultaneously, however, Western fears grew over the succession to the throne of Idris by his heir al-Hasan al-Rida, who was deemed unfit for the job of monarch due to his general disinterest in the political dynamics of his country. Indeed, this view was shared not only by the Brits, as expressed by British ambassador to Libya Sarrel, but also by the king.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ NARA, RG 59, SNF 1967-69, POL15 LIBYA, *Airgram: "The Bakkush Government: 25 October 1967-4 September 1968: Permanent Imprint or Passing Phenomenon"*, Tripoli, 29/11/1968, sr. Cit. in Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia. Un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, p.119. bologna. Il Mulino.

⁶⁸ "Anglo-Libyan Relations", Tripoli, 17/09/1968. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, p. 201. Roma. Carocci.

⁶⁹ TNA, FCO 39/452, *Letter from R. Sarrel to D. J. Spears: "The Crown Prince"*, Tripoli, 28/01/1969. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, p. 202. Roma. Carocci.

During one of their conversations, King Idris showed his admiration for the powerful al-Shalhi family, whose members were properly positioned in the army and court. At this juncture, the British anticipated two possible outcomes: the survival of the Senussi dynasty with a weak but pro-Western monarch, or an alternative scenario with a republic or military administration in the hands of the al-Shalhi family. We cannot determine which of the two conditions was more acceptable to London, but it may be assumed that the situation would remain under control, albeit with a degree of uncertainty owing to external influences on King Idris' successors. It is possible that, at some point, the British did not rule out the possibility that a regime change might be desirable, provided that the al-Shalhi were responsible for it. This is suggested by the so-called 'October Memorandum' (1968), in which the British government pledged to provide aid to the Libyan army for the purchase of new armaments and emphasized that this agreement had been reached directly with the army's top leadership. Yet, there have been instances of opposition to the colonel's growing authority, particularly among young officers, causing unrest within the army that threatened the country's internal and external security.⁷⁰

London, expecting a split in the army between more conservative elements and younger commanders more susceptible to Nasser's propaganda, agreed to bolster the Cyrenaica Defence Corps for this reason. This latter organization was a provincial military police force that had always been loyal to King Idris and traditional institutions. It was armed with powerful weapons capable of withstanding a mutiny inside the army or opposing any Egyptian involvement in the country, maybe at the request of the rebel officers.⁷¹

Essentially, shortly before what will be remembered as the revolution of 1st September, the coup d'état of the free officers, the situation in Libya was extremely uncertain: the king had left for Turkey, from where he and the queen would travel to Greece in June 1969 for a long spa stay, leaving the crown prince in charge of the country. Likewise in June 1960, British and American Ambassadors Roderick Sarell and David Newsom were recalled by their respective governments to assume their respective posts, the former as Ambassador to Turkey and the latter as *Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs*. The two ambassadors were friends

⁷⁰ TNA, FCO 39/442, *Military Mission for the quarter ending 30 June 1969*, Benghazi, 30/07/1969. Cit. in Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia. Un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, p. 121. Bologna. Il Mulino.

⁷¹ Cricco, M. (2002). *Il petrolio dei Senussi: Stati Uniti e Gran Bretagna in Libia dall'indipendenza a Gheddafi: 1949-1973. Il petrolio dei Senussi*, pp. 159-161. Firenze. Polistampa.

with one another and had a good relationship with the Libyan leader, who was furious at the prospect of the two officials leaving him alone in an atmosphere of intrigue and conspiracy.⁷²

Nevertheless, British documents provide a completely different account of the events than that of a terrified and insecure monarch compelled to flee a dangerous situation. In fact, according to a report prepared for the Foreign Office by diplomat Peter Wakefield, King Idris of Turkey received a series of visits from the Presidents of the Senate and the House, the Rector of the Islamic University of Tripoli, and the Grand Mufti to receive confidential updates on the internal situation. However, the meeting between the sovereign and the notables on foreign soil sparked rumors about the king's possible decision to «*deprive the crown prince of his succession rights in order to install one of the al-Shalhi in his place*».⁷³ Nonetheless, the king had not yet completely renounced his authority.

As neither the crown prince nor the government of Wanis Gaddafi appeared capable of managing the state's destiny following the ultimate abdication or disappearance of the king, a likely turning point for Libya's future was predicted to come from the military. In accordance with the king, the British government had dispatched a few military instructors, ostensibly to train Libyan forces in the use of the new armament, but in secret to monitor developments within the army. General Derek Warren, commander of the British military mission in Libya, reported on 6 August 1969 that Colonel al-Shalhi initially agreed to an agreement to employ several British officers in the Libyan army as trainers. However, during a formal meeting with the Libyan prime minister, Colonel al-Shalhi was critical of the project, according to Warren, in order to demonstrate his loyalty to the national cause and to regain consensus within the army, where he was losing support.⁷⁴ Never before did the Libyan army appear to be divided between the older officers, who were members of the country's most prominent families and were pro-Western, and the young officers, the majority of whom belonged to the underground Free Officers organization. In the eyes of the latter, Nasser represented the triumph of Arab

⁷² Intervista a Sir Roderick Sarell (ex ambasciatore britannico in Libia, 1963-69), da parte di Massimiliano Cricco, 3 novembre 2000, Newbury, Gran Bretagna. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, p. 205. Roma. Carocci.

⁷³ TNA, FCO 39/382, *Report from P. Wakefield to D. J. Speares: "Rumors of Constitutional Changes"*, Tripoli, 13/08/1969. Cit. in Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia. Un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, p. 125. Bologna. Il Mulino.

⁷⁴ TNA, WO 32/19316, *Report by Head of Mission on Discussion in Tripoli*, Benghazi, 02/08/1969. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, p. 208. Roma. Carocci.

nationalist ideals over Western imperialist objectives. Abd al-Aziz al-Shalhi was aware of these revolutionary ferments within the army, but he was unable to repress them out of fear of a public uprising, as most Libyans shared the young officers' nationalist beliefs. The colonel had only one option to combat the mounting resistance in the army and country currently: a coup d'état to prevent a potential revolution.

3.2 The Arab Republic of Libya and the expulsion of Italians

Abd al-Aziz al-Shalhi now appeared to be the strong man in the Libyan political scene following the departure of the king: a secret report by the British military mission in Libya revealed that the colonel had been planning a coup d'état for some time and that the plan had been drawn up in detail during a secret meeting held between senior army officers on 26 August with the interior minister's complicity.

*«La data più frequentemente menzionata per il via al colpo di Stato era il 5 settembre il perché di tale giorno rimane aperto alle ipotesi più disparate [...] ma si era d'accordo sul fatto che l'intero stato maggiore dell'esercito e tutti gli ufficiali favorevoli a Shalhi avrebbero dovuto concentrarsi a Tripoli già dal 31 agosto».*⁷⁵

The information of the scheme reached the free officers in time for them to organize and prepare a coup d'état in advance of the senior officers' preparations. The coup by the free officers was executed with astonishing efficiency. In the early hours of 1 September 1969, the young officers' movement seized control of the major cities of Libya. The coup was not so much based on timing as it was on precise operational phases: in the first phase, the objective was to arrest the senior officers of the public security forces and the army, along with all those capable of organizing resistance; in the second phase, the fifth infantry regiment was to seize mobile attack vehicles located near al-headquarters Shalhi's to prevent a revolt; and in the third phase, communications, including air traffic control, were taken over. Colonel al-Shalhi and his key allies were so caught off guard by the coup that they were unable to escape and were

⁷⁵ TNA, FCO 39/442, *British military Mission in Libya: "Report for quarter ending 30th September 1969"*, Tripoli, 23/10/1969. Cit. in Varvelli, A. (2009). *L'Italia e l'ascesa di Gheddafi: la cacciata degli italiani, le armi e il petrolio, 1969-1974*, pp. 81-83. (Vol. 383). Milano. Dalai Editore.

detained. Crown Prince al-Hasan al-Rida had a similar fate; he was seized in his palace and compelled to abandon his crown claims. From Greece, King Idris pleaded with the British administration to restore order and return the dynasty to the throne, but to no avail.⁷⁶

Regarding international recognition of the new state, the Soviet Union was the first power to overcome the impasse on September 4, 1969, when it recognized the Libyan Arab Republic. For the Americans, Soviet recognition was a clear indication that Moscow hoped the regime change would increase the USSR's influence, and according to Washington, one of the primary objectives of Soviet strategy in the Mediterranean was to deprive the United States of the crucial Wheelus Field airbase in Libya.⁷⁷ On September 6, the U.S. government, in collaboration with the United Kingdom and Italy, formally recognized the new authority.⁷⁸

Shortly after the coup, the United States, Great Britain, Italy, and France were satisfied that the new Libyan government would continue trade links. Muammar Gaddafi's meeting with the British and American ambassadors in October-November 1969 demonstrated the new regime's willingness to maintain good relations with the governments of London and Washington, but only on the condition that the Anglo-American alliance respect Libya's territorial integrity.⁷⁹

Gaddafi picked the public square to announce the Libyan government's decision to call for the closure of the bases, employing an attitude that would become characteristic of his character and a speech with increasingly determined and aggressive undertones. In light of the negotiations for an early end to the treaties with the United Kingdom and the United States, the intelligence services of the United States Department of State drafted a memorandum on the nature and medium-term prospects of the Libyan military government in order to anticipate its possible future actions.⁸⁰ The paper reveals that there were two parties within the

⁷⁶ Del Boca, A. (1986). *Gli italiani in Libia*, p. 225. Bari. Laterza.

⁷⁷ It is worth pointing out how, American experts on the ground supported the policy of recognition of the new regime—due in part to Britain's insistence—and to the continuation of diplomatic relations. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1979-1976*, Volume E-5, Part 2, Documents on North Africa, 1969-1972, eds. Belmonte Monica, L. & Keefer Edward, C. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2007), Document 38. Available at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve05p2/d38>. Last consultation on 19 May 2023.

⁷⁸ Varvelli, A. (2009). *L'Italia e l'ascesa di Gheddafi: la cacciata degli italiani, le armi e il petrolio, 1969-1974*, pp. 89-92. (Vol. 383). Milano. Dalai Editore.

⁷⁹ TNA, FCA 39/389, *Report on Anglo/Libya Relations by D. J. Spears (FCO-NAD)*, London, October 23, 1969, sr. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, p. 209. Roma. Carocci.

⁸⁰ In the aftermath of the coup carried out by Qaddafi and his men, American concerns focused exclusively on maintaining the Wheelus Field area base. This factor would form the basis of future confrontation with the new Libyan regime. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1979-1976*, Volume E-5, Part 2, Documents on North Africa, 1969-1972, eds. Belmonte Monica, L. & Keefer Edward, C. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2007), Document 37. Available at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve05p2/d37>. Last consultation on 19 May 2023.

revolutionary council: the first, commanded by Colonel Gaddafi and composed of Captains Jalud, al-Kharrubi, al-Huni, and the younger and more intransigent officers, was anti-imperialist and pro-Arab unity-oriented. The second, minority group was led by Lieutenant Colonel Adam al-Hawaz, who played such a vital part in the coup's organization that Gaddafi named him as Minister of Defense on the spot. His side, which could be defined as "Libyan nationalist," consisted of more experienced officers who appeared more ready to continue military collaboration with the United States and the United Kingdom.⁸¹

The State Department's analysis was so accurate that ten days later, on 9 December, radio announced that "reactionary forces and opportunists, advocates of imperialism," had hatched a plot against the new Libyan government. It was an opportunity for Gaddafi to eliminate his deadly opponents and solidify his position, in addition to fostering a strategy of close collaboration with Egyptian President Nasser, Gaddafi's primary inspiration since his youth. In the interim, in December 1969, the constitution of 1951 was superseded by a new constitutional proclamation, the preamble of which said, among other things, that the Libyan people were part of the Arab nation and would struggle to eliminate any obstacles to Arab unity. The proclamation also asserted that the sovereignty belonged to the people. Although Islam was the national religion, the government maintained religious freedom. The purpose of the state was to realize socialism through social justice, the abolition of all exploitation, the elimination of class disparities, and the attainment of prosperity. Abd al-Salam Jallud, Gaddafi's right-hand man during the coup, led the negotiations with the United Kingdom and the United States. The promotion of the young revolutionary council member known for his intransigence and devotion to the goals of the revolution signified, on the one hand, a shift in the RCC's balance in favor of the more politically determined faction in the Arab nationalist sense, and, on the other hand, Gaddafi's refusal to make concessions to Western powers. In this environment, Libya and the Anglo-Americans initiated negotiations.

The new government's decision to vacate the British-American bases and its attitude of substantial indifference towards Italy appeared to reassure the government in Rome regarding

⁸¹ NARA, RG 59, SNF 1967-69, POL 15 LIBYA, *DoS Research Memory*.: "LIBYA, Short-term Prospect for the Qadhafi Regime", Washington, 01/12/1969, sr; ivi, *Tel. from AEm. To SecSt.*: "Identification of military Coup leaders", Benghazi, 10/09/1969. Cit. in Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia. Un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, p. 132. Bologna. Il Mulino.

Gaddafi's intentions towards the former colonial power and the approximately 13,000 Italians in Tripoli. According to Foreign Minister Aldo Moro, Libya had a great interest in preserving good relations with Italy due to the importance of Italian technology and skilled labor in bilateral relations and the fact that Italy relied substantially on Libya for significant oil and natural gas supplies.⁸² As the two countries signed a treaty in 1956 transferring sovereignty to an independent state, the Italian political class believed that the events of the colonial period no longer had any bearing on their relations with Libya. The first indications of intolerance of the new administration for Italians in Tripoli appeared following Gaddafi's speech in Misurata on the 50th anniversary of the Italian takeover of the Libyan city. On this occasion, the colonel characterized the presence of Italians in Libya as abnormal and remarked that:

*«il governo della Repubblica araba libica avrebbe studiato le ragioni per cui vari settori della [originaria] comunità italiana erano rimaste in Libia, aggiungendo che molti erano arrivati al servizio dell'imperialismo e del fascismo [...] In Italia non vi erano moschee, negozi arabi e scuole arabe; non [si] vedeva dunque perché vi dovessero essere, invece, chiese, scuole e interessi commerciali [italiani in Libia]».*⁸³

Misurata's statement was the impetus for an initiative that, notwithstanding the warnings issued to the Italian community, the embassy, and the government in Rome on that day, was long overdue: Gaddafi's abrupt declaration in July 1970 of the expulsion of Italians living in Libya and the confiscation of their property and assets, which according to an initial assessment by the commercial counsellor of the Italian embassy in Tripoli, Luigi Morrone, amounted to more than \$100 million.⁸⁴ In Italy, the news of the deportation of Italians from Libya and the global expropriation of their properties was met with more surprise than fury. Many Italians were unaware that such a sizable Italian population with considerable business interests existed in Libya. Yet only the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) undertakes a violent campaign with patriotic and nostalgic undertones against Tripoli and spurs fascist groups to attempt to storm

⁸² Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 210-215. Bari. Besa.

⁸³ NARA, RG 59, SNF 1970-73, POL 17 IT, *Tel. from AEm. Tripoli to SecSt. Washington: "Qadhafi criticizes Italian community in Libya"*, Tripoli, 10/07/1970. Cit. in Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia. Un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, pp. 134-136. Bologna. Il Mulino.

⁸⁴ Del Boca, A. (1986). *Gli italiani in Libia*, pp. 227-229. Bari. Laterza.

the Libyan embassy in Rome, despite the government's cautious and balanced stance. In addition to condemning the actions of the neo-fascist hooligans, it must also voice a loud protest against the measures implemented by Tripoli.

However, the delay in formulating a response to Tripoli's attitude - due to the government crisis of July-August 1970 -, combined with the lack of condemnation - repeatedly criticized by the PCI - of Italy's colonial past in Libya, led to the unilateral revocation of the 1956 Italian-Libyan treaty and the adoption of severely discriminatory measures against the Italian community in Libya.⁸⁵ Ambassador Ludovico Borromeo's protest was vehement, but Italy's response was a letter from President Giuseppe Saragat to Colonel Gaddafi expressing a personal appeal to stop the acts of violence against the embassy and Italian people living in Libya. Gaddafi's reaction was that the expropriation of property from the Italian population was the lawful exercise of the new regime's prerogative to end the country's colonial history.⁸⁶

After the final expulsion of the Italian community, which Gaddafi had accused of retaining an imperialistic mentality, the Libyan government's attitude towards Italy changed dramatically, in line with what Foreign Minister Buwaysir had said at a press conference following the expulsion order: «*Noi vediamo in questa minoranza di italiani rimasti nel nostro paese la vecchia Italia coloniale. La nostra azione non è rivolta contro l'Italia di oggi, ma contro questa minoranza di italiani rimasti in Libia le vecchie idee*».⁸⁷

Along with the confiscation of property and the expulsion of Italians, the property of Israelites, regardless of their nationality, who had been subject to rigorous detention restrictions since 1961, was also expropriated.

3.3 Conclusions

The departure of Italians is accomplished in less than three months as a result of the policy of Libya, which in this instance demonstrates exceptional effectiveness. On October 18, 1970,

⁸⁵ «Rinascita», 31 luglio 1970: *Il Governo italiano di fronte alla Libia*, in Del Boca, A. (1986). *Gli italiani in Libia*, p. 231. Bari. Laterza.

⁸⁶ NARA, RG 59, SNF 1970-73, POL 17 IT, *Telegram from AEm. Tripoli to SecSt. Washington, "Confiscation of Italian property in Libya"*, Tripoli, 23/07/1970. Cfr. "Relazioni Internazionali", 31, 1° agosto 1970, pp. 765-766. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 210-212. Roma. Carocci.

⁸⁷ Del Boca, A. (1986). *Gli italiani in Libia*, p. 236. Bari. Laterza.

Gaddafi was able to proclaim that the final group of unwelcome Italians had left the nation. «*In Libia - reports Mino Vignolo - rimangono 500 italiani residenti, riconosciuti come "buoni" dal CCR, e 1800 pendolari fra lavoratori tecnici e dirigenti di imprese di lavori pubblici e petrolifere. Sono il nucleo attorno al quale i dirigenti di Tripoli intendono ricostruire la trama dei rapporti tra Libia e Italia*». ⁸⁸ After expelling the Italians, the Libyan government wishes to eradicate all traces of their previous presence. Therefore, their press organ, "*Il Giornale di Tripoli*", has been closed. To assist the displaced, the Italian government provides very modest subsidies and grants to returnees and, over time, begins to pay partial compensation to those who are eligible. Yet, it does not go beyond these measures, despite calls from some sectors to embrace a gunboat strategy. One desires to preserve at all costs the excellent trade links with Libya and the excellent relations with the Arab world. «*Pur esprimendo la sua comprensione per il dramma dei profughi, - Vignolo recalls - Moro compie una scelta realistica e obbligata. Alla camera dichiara che la rivoluzione libica deve essere compresa nel contesto della realtà dell'era post-coloniale e che l'azione di Tripoli è un episodio isolato che non deve guastare la politica di collaborazione con i paesi arabi*». ⁸⁹ Although Moro's statement lacks a repudiation of colonialism, his position, like the government's, appears to be well-balanced and far-sighted. Yet exactly because it is moderate, the Libyan migrants who declare they do not wish to be resettled cannot comprehend it.

The new Libya presented itself to the world with two acts, expected, that created a stir in the international system. Firstly, the closure of the Anglo-American bases created a strategic vacuum in the Mediterranean that rekindled a close competition between Washington and Moscow; secondly, the expulsion of the Italians and the confiscation of their property created a wound in the political life of the Italian Republic that never fully healed. In both cases, the Western powers and Italy were thus exposed to the attitudes - often judged incomprehensible - of Gaddafi who, even if in the medium to long term he turned into a disturbing factor for the West, for Rome he remained a valid and, above all, necessary interlocutor given Italy's dependence on hydrocarbons.

⁸⁸ Vignolo, M. (1982). *Gheddafi. Islam, petrolio e utopia*, pp. 129-132. Milano. Rizzoli Editore.

⁸⁹ Ivi, p. 133.

Chapter 4: Aldo Moro, the Arab cause, and oil

After the collapse of the monarchy and the commencement of Gaddafi's military rule, the previous chapter detailed the tragic demise of the Italians of Libya. They arrived in Italy after being forced to flee their homes and businesses without receiving enough compensation for their losses. Yet, the vicissitudes of these 13,000 Italians and the unfriendly and highly discriminatory policies adopted by the Libyan government towards them had little effect on relations between Tripoli and Rome, particularly in the commercial and energy sectors. In fact, various voices from the former Italian colony advocated for a resumption of relations between the two countries after putting an end - in an entirely acceptable manner, according to the Libyan counterpart - to the relics of Italian colonialism in North Africa. On the Italian side, however, as we have seen, it was not so many voices that gave substance to the need to maintain relations with Tripoli - and the only ones that arose came from the communist and neo-fascist opposition to openly criticize the Colombo government's attitude towards the new Libyan regime - as it was a pragmatic attitude comprised of unspoken words and accommodating behavior. Not only is this proven by the modest response of the Italian government to the expulsion of Italians from Libya, but also by the manner in which the question of compensation for the property lost by Italians in the former Italian colony was handled.

Yet, informing the foreign policy of the Italian Republic, in what will go down in history as the turbulent 1970s, was Aldo Moro. Moving with a certain familiarity in the international chessboard marked by the renewed tensions between the USA and the USSR and by the continuous escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Moro's positions will always be based on a growing pro-Arabism. The sensitivity of the Christian Democrat exponent would reap the fruits of Fanfani's Neo-Atlanticism, making Italy a valid interlocutor in the eyes of the entire Mediterranean world during his tenure at the Farnesina.

4.1 Aldo Moro: foreign policy cornerstones

Aldo Moro's foreign policy, particularly his Mediterranean policy, was part of a larger, post-World War II direction in which the new Italian ruling class placed a premium on multilateral diplomacy. In the new international system, Italy supported primarily the actions of international organizations that sought to ensure the preservation of peace. Attention and international cooperation did not, however, preclude the use of more conventional instruments to advance national interests.^{90 91} In the Mediterranean region, for instance, the Italian Republic's diplomacy established relations with newly independent African and Mediterranean nations primarily through the stipulation of trade agreements and economic, technical, and cultural cooperation

⁹⁰ Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 69-70. Bari. Besa.

⁹¹ Aldo Moro's foreign policy, comma in particular the Mediterranean policy, is part of a more general direction outlined in the immediate post World War II period, in which comma following a profound ideal renewal and a realistic analysis of the evolution of relations between states and of the country's international standing, the new Italian ruling class paid particular attention to multilateral diplomacy.

accords, in order to protect Italian interests linked to the supply of raw materials and energy resources. Additionally, Moro's foreign policy was characterized by multiple levels that allow us to explain his mode of action and the goals pursued.^{92 93}

The first level represents the ethical ideal. For Moro, Italy's international action should have pursued three objectives through the international cooperation promoted by the United Nations and regional organizations: détente, the preservation of peace, disarmament, respect for human rights, and cooperation for development. By supporting UN initiatives, he supported the action of multilateral diplomacy for the resolution of the Middle East conflict in the Moro Mediterranean. Moreover, he advocated for a greater role for the European Community through the adoption of a European Mediterranean policy and the initiation of a dialogue between producer and Arab countries, and he attempted to promote an expansion of détente along the North-South axis by proposing a conference for security and cooperation in the Mediterranean.⁹⁴ The ethical-ideal assumptions also determine bilateral relations with Mediterranean countries, which are founded on the rejection of all forms of colonialism and neocolonialism and are characterized by development cooperation and technical assistance.

However, Moro's emphasis on dialogue and cooperation in the human dimension of international relations was always cognizant of the international system's reality. The second level consisted of a concrete and pragmatic realpolitik, fully cognizant of the global context of international relations during those years, which were characterized by the Cold War and Italy's membership in the western alliance. Moro's policy in the Mediterranean, which was marked by the Arab-Israeli conflict, aimed to strengthen the position of the Atlantic alliance and prevent Soviet penetration. In addition to support for United Nations initiatives, there was also support for the peace plans drafted by American secretary William Rogers and for the mediation work conducted by Washington following the Yom Kippur War. Moro, like his predecessors, was attentive to the defense of purely national interests, through the stipulation of economic and technical agreements with the Mediterranean countries, to guarantee Italy constant supplies of energy resources at advantageous prices and to permit a reduction in trade deficits, in exchange for the provision of technological and scientific know-how for the development of these countries.

The different levels on which Moro's Mediterranean policy was based, the ethical-ideal one and the pragmatic-realist one, were closely interconnected: the wish to transform the region, thanks to multilateral diplomacy,

⁹² Schilirò, D. (2003). *Il Mediterraneo nella politica italiana del secondo dopoguerra. Analisi e commento*. Cit. in Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana e i popoli del Mediterraneo*, p. 71. Bari. Besa.

⁹³ Moro's vision of Italy's role in the international scenario is all built within the system of alliances defined in the aftermath of the Second World War and never questioned. Of it, however, Moro showed that he had a so to speak dynamic vision whereby the stable attachment of our country to the more general destiny of a western Europe capable of dialogue both with the Soviet Union and the countries of the East and with the peoples of the Middle East favors the evolution of the alliance framework towards the prospect of a transition towards a possible more democratic multilateral government of the world.

⁹⁴ L. Tosi, *L'Italia e la cooperazione internazionale nel Mediterraneo: aspirazioni nazionali e realtà internazionale*, in De Leonardis (a cura di), *Il Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana*, cit., in particolare pp. 184-188. Bologna. Il Mulino.

into «un'era di pace e di collaborazione»⁹⁵ implied the acceptance of Cold War dynamics for the solution of the Middle East question, a solution that was considered the necessary prerequisite for the progress of the Mediterranean peoples for the development of European relations broad, with Arab countries, so as to also guarantee the interests of the country.⁹⁶

Finally, Moro's Mediterranean policy was always very attentive to the positions of public opinion and to the dynamics of domestic politics, also because in the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, part of the Christian democracy, the socialist party and the secular parties were pro-Israeli suppositions, and the other part of the DC, including Moro himself, pro-Arab suppositions, similarly to the communist left, whose Christian Democrat leader aimed at gaining consensus with respect to his international action. Moreover, the Mediterranean policy was supposed to show the Communist party that a democratic and progressive policy could be implemented without leaving the Atlantic camp. This internal opposition regarding foreign policy positions to the Christian Democracy itself and, more generally, to Italian politics, to quote Elena Calandri, would represent the field on which the internal confrontation for what would later go down in history as the historic compromise would take place.⁹⁷

4.2 Moro's Italy and Gaddafi's Libya

Aldo Moro's Mediterranean policy was similarly based on the same tenets as relations with Gaddafi's Libya. In August 1969, when the Christian Democrat representative assumed control of the Farnesina, Italian-Libyan relations were progressing along the path established after World War II. Due to the 1967 Six-Day War, the same links were additionally strengthened by the closing of the Suez Canal until 1975. Since oil tankers from the Persian Gulf had to circumnavigate Africa, resulting in a significant increase in supply costs, Libya has become Italy's most important gas and oil trading partner.⁹⁸

The September 1969 coup d'état that brought a group of young army officers led by Colonel Gaddafi to power could have ended this period of cordial relations. Aldo Moro, who had only been at the helm of Italian diplomacy for a month, recognized the dangers of the situation and initiated a policy of vigilance and

⁹⁵ *Documentazione. Moro alla Commissione Esteri del Senato. Fare del Mediterraneo un'area di pace e collaborazione*, cit., pp. 869-870. This speech was pronounced on 24 September 1969. Cit. in Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, p. 74. Bari. Besa.

⁹⁶ When we refer to Aldo Moro's foreign policy, we very often hear talk of a 'third phase'. This term refers to an international system no longer characterized by the opposing logics underpinning the power policies of the United States and the Soviet Union. In other words, Aldo Moro's third phase comma does not only appear to be the product of an assessment of the national vicissitude and the contradictions connected to the particular way in which the effects of the choices of a democratic system and those derived from dual loyalties to opposing international, political and ideological contexts interrelated. It appears as the accomplished manifestation of the awareness of the impossibility of separating domestic and international policy choices in the history of nation-states in the 20th century.

⁹⁷ Calandri, E. (2003). *Europa e Mediterraneo: tra giustapposizione e integrazione*. In *Il Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana* (pp. 102-103). Bologna. Il Mulino.

⁹⁸ Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 217-220. Roma. Carocci.

caution toward Libya that would define the subsequent years, but which had to contend with the unpredictability of its leaders' decisions. Italy recognized the RCC government on September 6, 1969, along with the United Kingdom and the United States, who also recognized it due to the anti-communist stance of the new leaders, who claimed to be inspired by the Quran. Moro's objectives coincided with those of the allies: to maintain the good political and economic relations established with the regime of King Idris and to prevent Libya from abandoning the western camp by moving too close to Nasser's Egypt and slipping for opportunistic reasons into the Soviet camp.⁹⁹ He attempted to propose a guiding role for Italy in the western world in relation to the new reality of Libya. This objective was part of a larger policy of friendship with the countries of the Mediterranean, as part of a liaison between the Arab world and the West, which the United States also valued.

However, Moro was also concerned with protecting national interests, ensuring that ENI could exploit its promising concessions. As a result of the contribution of specialized Italian labor to the Libyan economy and the thriving performance of trade, there was optimism regarding the continuation of a productive dialogue between the two nations. In a speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 21 October 1969, Moro expressed his desire to reaffirm relations of friendship and cooperation with Libya.¹⁰⁰ The Libyan authorities did not accept the request for talks until the beginning of July. However, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, in July 1970 Gaddafi delivered a speech in Misurata in which he harshly criticized the Italian community. Faced with the threats posed by the Libyan regime against its own compatriots, a situation that caught Moro and the Farnesina itself by surprise, and which highlighted how Italian diplomats on Libyan territory had misinterpreted the situation, Moro's decisions were governed by the presumptions of the objectives defining his action on the international stage.¹⁰¹ The response was moderate and pragmatic, recognizing the irreversibility of decisions and avoiding initiatives that could exacerbate the crisis. Moro did his utmost to ensure the safety and dignity of his compatriots, to facilitate their repatriation, and to assist them once they returned home by providing initial compensation, job placement, and housing. The ethically idealistic beliefs that guided his international conduct also explain his decision to reject a force-based retribution alternative. In fact, *realpolitik* was also a factor in the decision-making process. A policy of harsh confrontation was deemed harmful due to the potential for negative repercussions on relations with the entire Arab world, as well as the risk of Russian expansion in the Mediterranean to the detriment of Western allies. The option of withdrawing the ambassador or expelling the Libyans currently residing in Italy was deemed equally irrelevant and even counterproductive for the

⁹⁹ Tremolada, I. (2015). *Nel mare che ci unisce: il petrolio nelle relazioni tra Italia e Libia*, pp. 128-133. Milano. Mimesis; Labbate, S. (2010). *Il governo dell'energia: l'Italia dal petrolio al nucleare (1945-1975)*, pp. 87-93. Firenze. Le Monnier.

¹⁰⁰ *Documentazione. Moro alla Commissione Esteri del Senato. Fare del Mediterraneo un'area di pace e collaborazione*, cit., p. 870. In order to achieve the desired cooperation, the Farnesina sought direct contact with the new Libyan leadership, which, however, continually postponed it because it was focused on reforming the state organisation and reshaping relations with the Western powers on an equal footing. Cit. in Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana e i popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 75-79. Bari. Besa.

¹⁰¹ Cricco, M. (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia e la Libia di Gheddafi, 1970-1976*, p. 87. Roma. Rubbettino Editore.

remaining Italians in Libya. By reducing Libya's oil exports, economic sanctions were neither utilized to the benefit of other oil-producing nations, particularly those in the Persian Gulf.¹⁰²

While much of the short-term response to the expulsion of the Italians was marked by actions of dubious utility, their primary purpose was to inform the Mediterranean allied countries of Italy's motivations and Tripoli's violations of international law so that they could advise the new Libyan government to enter negotiations with the Italian government. Specifically, the Egyptian mediation card was utilized once more. For Moro, relations with Libya were part of a larger context of contacts he intended to maintain with Arab nations. In actuality, the desire not to close the channels of communication with Tripoli was tied to the intention not to weaken the policy of friendship towards Arab countries and of attention to the cause of the Palestinians, which was supported by most Italian political parties, most notably the Communist party.¹⁰³ As stated previously, the Western allies appreciated this approach because it wanted to continue a positive conversation with the Mediterranean countries.¹⁰⁴

4.3 *The redefinition of a relationship between Rome and Tripoli*

Due to the interest of the Turkish government, a meeting between Moro and his Libyan counterpart Buwaysir took place on 1 August 1970 in Beirut, because of Moro's pleas to the regional nations to intercede with Tripoli. The meeting was instrumental in establishing new relations between the two countries and establishing Moro as a politician. Moro acknowledged that Italy had a colonial past but observed that the repressive measures adopted in Libya by the fascist dictatorial regime had also been applied against the regime's opponents. He reiterated what he had publicly stated, namely that the Italian Republic, born out of the resistance, and the mentality of the Italian people were far from any form of colonialism.¹⁰⁵ Moro recalled how numerous times a meeting had been requested in vain to find a consensual solution to the question posed by the Libyan government regarding the Italian community measure adopted by Tripoli was judged to be unilateral and had generated strong resentment among the political forces and Italian public opinion, despite the government's efforts to maintain balanced and constructive positions.¹⁰⁶ With extreme realism, Moro did not demand the

¹⁰² ACS, FAM, b. 139, f. 2 *Libia*, sf. 2.1 *Archivio On. Ministro. Problemi Libia 1971*, appunto del Vicedirettore Generale Affari Politici, il Ministro Plenipotenziario di 1° classe Carlo Perrone Capano, Roma, 22 luglio 1970. Cit. in Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 81-83. Bari. Besa.

¹⁰³ The sensitivity shown by Moro with respect to the political solution of the Palestinian question comma which even went so far as to hypothesize the birth of an Arab state in that region comma and the recognition of the United Nations as the only legitimate agent of pacification of the area indicated that Italy was, among the countries belonging to the Western alliance, one of those most advanced in a pro-Arab direction. This is not to diminish, however, the great attention that the Italian ruling class and public opinion also paid to the question of the survival of the State of Israel

¹⁰⁴ ACS, FAM, b. 139, f. *Libia*, sf. 2.1 *Archivio On. Ministro. Problemi Libia 1971*, appunto del Mae, Roma, 27 luglio 1970, con annotazione a mano: "Consegnato al Ministro degli Esteri [turco] Caglayangil, in occasione del suo passaggio per Roma". Cit. in Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 100-103. Bari. Besa.

¹⁰⁵ Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, p. 102. Bari. Besa.

¹⁰⁶In the debate held at the end of July in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lower House, the communist Umberto Carducci called for recognition of the revolutionary and anti-imperialist character of the new Libyan regime and its right to consider itself

withdrawal of the measure, but he did demand the facilitation of the Italians' repatriation, which was impeded by the bureaucratic formalities imposed by the Libyans, and he deemed the situation intolerable. Following the definition of the respective positions, Minister Buwaysir made reassuring remarks in which he stated that Italian companies and technicians were welcome on Libyan soil and that Libya would prefer to purchase goods from Italy rather than other nations. In addition, the foreign minister addressed ENI's position in Libya. Tripoli, however, demanded a form of disavowal of the 1956 agreement, arguing that the demand for compensation for the expropriations to the Italians' detriment would always be matched in the future by a demand from the Libyan side for compensation for the damages of colonial occupation. Now Moro, however, was certain that the expulsion of the Italian community would not prevent the retention in Libya of a significant number of Italian workers, so as to favor national enterprises, hinder the penetration of other countries and allow indirect compensation for the damage suffered.¹⁰⁷

Libya's interest in maintaining, if not strengthening, relations with Italy was confirmed by the letter sent to Moro on 22 September 1970 but by the new Libyan Foreign Minister Mohammad Najm. The letter reiterated how the measures taken against the Italian community were aimed at eliminating the remnants of the colonial period. But, at the same time, it stressed the intention to start a new phase of relations to develop productive cooperation that could be achieved through trade, cooperation agreements and the work of Italian companies and technicians. Finally, Moro was invited to Libya to discuss cooperation between the two countries. In his reply, the Italian Foreign Minister expressed his satisfaction at the official Libyan openness to start negotiations that he considered important, not only to establish lasting cooperation between the two countries, but to consolidate relations between the Western and Arab worlds. Negotiations to concretely establish cooperation between the two countries began with a visit to Tripoli by the Director General for Economic Affairs, Giovanni Vincenzo Soro, at the end of October. During the visit, Soro met Gaddafi himself, who confirmed to him the Libyan desire to «establish a trusting and constructive relationship with Italy today»¹⁰⁸. This willingness was also Moro's and the opportunity to confirm it presented itself to him in March 1971 when the Italian government foiled the so-called 'Hilton Plan', the attempted coup d'état organized by Libyan exiles who had taken refuge in Italy, thanks to the Trieste hijacking of a boat that was supposed to bring arms and mercenaries to Libya.¹⁰⁹

non-committed by agreements signed with the previous regime; *Documentazione. Le misure Della Libia. La reazione dell'Italia illustrata dal ministro Moro*, "Relazioni internazionali", XXXIV, 1970, 32-33, p. 791. Cit. in Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 341-345. Bari. Besa.

¹⁰⁷ Oddo, G., & Antoniani, R. (2022). *L'Italia nel petrolio. Mettei, Cefis, Pasolini e il sogno infranto dell'indipendenza energetica*, pp. 123-127. Milano. Feltrinelli; Labbate, S. (2010). *Il governo dell'energia: l'Italia dal petrolio al nucleare (1945-1975)*, pp. 102-105. Firenze. Le Monnier. An initial assessment of the losses suffered by Italian citizens, calculated on the basis of confiscated real estate, interrupted economic activities and other lost assets, rights and interests, amounted to approximately 200 billion lira. To this figure had to be added 78 billion in lost compensation to Italian companies for work carried out in Libya under contracts signed with the previous regime.

¹⁰⁸ ACS, FAM, b. 139, f. 2 *Libia*, sf. 2.1 *Archivio On. Ministro. Problemi Libia 1971*, teleg. 500segreto, *Colloquio Ambasciatore Soro con Gheddafi*, il primo Consigliere d'Ambasciata a Tripoli, Umberto Toffano, al Mae, Tripoli, 26 ottobre, 1970. Cit. in Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 307-311. Bari. Besa.

¹⁰⁹ Gaddafi had closed British and American bases in Libya and expelled the Italian community-these were good reasons to think about possible aid. Indeed, the plan could hardly have gone unnoticed by Western intelligence services. Those in Italy had begun

The emphasis on international cooperation and politics in the Third World, which reflected Moro's personal beliefs and those of a significant portion of the Italian leadership, was in no way compatible with support for a counterrevolution. In addition, there was a substantial amount of realism. As an alternative to improbable compensation for expropriations, Moro's diplomacy toward Libya envisioned the establishment of privileged economic relations to guarantee energy supplies and the recovery of lost positions. The meeting between Gaddafi and Moro took place on 5 May: On this occasion, Aldo Moro, making ample use of the credit acquired by foiling the Hilton plan, directed-as a point of reference for building new relations with Tripoli-the development of new forms of cooperation and legal relations that could contribute to the resolution that the expulsion of the Italians had generated. Considering the weight that Moro's visit would have on the bilateral relations between Rome and Tripoli, Gaddafi advanced - again as a key to strengthening Italian-Libyan relations - the purchase and sale of Italian arms, which, despite initial Italian indecision, began in 1972.¹¹⁰

The conversation made it clear that the remembrance of past events and the mutual demand for reparations would not affect the willingness of both governments to engage in a series of negotiations to advance economic cooperation. Certainly, Moro's constant attention to the Arab world, manifested in a series of declarations, was instrumental in fostering the continued rapprochement with Libya in the months that followed. On 28 September, before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, he reaffirmed his belief that the solution to the Middle East conflict lay in the full implementation of the 1967 Security Council resolution 242, and on 6 October 1971, while urging the full implementation of the resolution, he mentioned the Italian government's desire to open a new chapter in its relations with Libya.¹¹¹ The diplomatic political openings had significant effects on the economic and commercial levels. In August 1971, the Libyan government and ENI commenced joint venture formation negotiations. The negotiations made clear the favorable treatment reserved for the Italian company by the Tripoli government, which intended to implement the nationalization of other foreign oil companies, initiated in December 1971 with a British Petroleum subsidiary.¹¹² In fact, the Libyan government, as well as the governments of the other Arab countries, praised ENI's policy, which differed from that of other oil companies by promoting direct links between producer and consumer nations through the formula of equal participation.

precisely on Moro's orders to keep an eye on Libyan exiles in Rome and on communications between Italy and Libya. This attention to the Libyan exiles and collaboration with other intelligence services made it possible to become aware with some ease of the preparations being made, to follow their developments, and finally to screw things up. Varvelli, A. (2009). *L'Italia e l'ascesa di Gheddafi: la cacciata degli italiani, le armi e il petrolio, 1969-1974*, pp.74-77. (Vol. 383). Milano. Dalai Editore.

¹¹⁰ According to disarmament archive research, the amount of Libyan buying and selling of Italian arms in the period between 1976 and 1985 is estimated to be about 2 trillion liras. Major contracts concluded include the supply of 40 Aeritalia G222 aircraft (rememorized Rolls Royce to circumvent the U.S. embargo) and the construction--by many Italian firms--of military infrastructure in which, starting in 1982, some 300 Italian trainers will be housed. For more information: Bertozzi, L. (1986). *Armi Italiane alle Libia* (Archivio Disarmo. Centro di documentazione sulla pace e sul disarmo, Ed.; pp. 1-4). Available at: https://www.archiviodisarmo.it/view/nLIWcMUT2ebj1Y4a4Ezzw8gw_KuSy6A1M_iqmuNCHgs/bertozzi-armi-italiane-libia-mag-1986-.pdf. Last consultation: 20 May 2023.

¹¹¹ *Moro al Senato. Giusti rapporti tra Stati*, "Relazioni Internazionali", XXXV, 1971, 41, p. 1007. Cit. in Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 313-316. Bari. Besa.

¹¹² Oddo, G., & Antoniani, R. (2022). *L'Italia nel petrolio. Mettei, Cefis, Pasolini e il sogno infranto dell'indipendenza energetica*, pp. 132-134 Feltrinelli; Labbate, S. (2010). *Il governo dell'energia: l'Italia dal petrolio al nucleare (1945-1975)*, pp. 115-124. Firenze. Le Monnier.

In the interim, arms sales negotiations had also become a priority. In September 1971, Italy reaffirmed its willingness to meet Libyan demands for the delivery of defense-related armaments, which would not have violated the rule that the Italian government had set forbidding the export of war materials to countries directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition to benefiting the military industry, the sale of arms would have facilitated ENI's negotiations for the formation of the joint venture. Italy demanded a written guarantee from the Libyan government prohibiting the transfer of arms to other nations. Moro was succeeded at the Farnesina in June 1972 by Giuseppe Medici, who led Italy's foreign policy until July 1973 and continued along the path laid out by Moro.¹¹³ The handover took place in August 1972. The agreement between the Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) and ENI was signed on September 30, after negotiations had begun in 1971. As an exception to what would have been done by the Libyans with the other foreign oil companies, which were asked for a majority shareholding of 51% in the summer of 1973, leading to the complete nationalization of the major companies in early 1974, the agreement provided for the creation of a joint venture on an equal footing.

In addition to guaranteeing Italy an ample supply of oil, the agreement authorized the resumption of concrete collaboration between the two nations. The agreement between ENI and the NOC was, however, only the first step. Despite the growing radicalism of the Libyan regime and the financial support given to international terrorism, particularly Palestinian terrorism but also the Northern Irish IRA, Moro, once back at the helm of the Farnesina, sought to conclude a broader treaty of political, technical, and cultural cooperation.¹¹⁴

4.4 Italy and Europe facing the Mediterranean

The goal of a cooperation agreement with Libya was to strengthen Europe's position in the conflict between the blocs and to increase Italy's negotiating power with the countries of the region. The escalating difficulties of the United States, which had terminated the Bretton Woods system and was still engaged in the Vietnam War, increased the possibility of a reduction in American military presence in Europe and the Mediterranean.¹¹⁵ Therefore, it appeared necessary for European nations to begin playing a more decisive role in the Middle East conflict and to become a credible partner in the Arab world, seizing the opportunity to present themselves as a leading economic player after the realization of the common market. Already in 1971,

¹¹³ Caviglia, D., & Cricco, M. (2006). *La diplomazia italiana e gli equilibri mediterranei: la politica mediorientale dell'Italia dalla guerra dei Sei Giorni al conflitto dello Yom Kippur (1967-1973)*, pp. 110-112. Roma. Rubbettino Editore; Riccardi, L. (2013). *L'internazionalismo difficile. La "diplomazia" del PCI e il Medio Oriente dalla crisi petrolifera alla caduta del muro di Berlino (1973-1989)*, pp. 97-101. Roma. Rubbettino.

¹¹⁴ Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 235-237. Roma. Carocci.

¹¹⁵ Varsori, A., & Zaccaria, B. (2018). *Italy in the International System from Detente to the End of the Cold War*, pp. 184-188. Londra. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Riccardi, L. (2013). *L'internazionalismo difficile. La "diplomazia" del PCI e il Medio Oriente dalla crisi petrolifera alla caduta del muro di Berlino (1973-1989)*, pp. 111-114. Roma. Rubbettino.

Italy proposed the establishment of a free trade zone between the European Economic Community (EEC) and Mediterranean-bordering nations. The Italian theses received an initial response at the European summit in Paris in October III, with the approval of the Global Mediterranean Approach, which was defined in June '73 and aimed at creating a free trade area for industrial products and tariff facilities for agricultural products between the Mediterranean countries and the EEC in order to contribute to the economic development of the former, including through technical cooperation initiatives.

The collaboration between Italy and Libya was also a component of the Italian government's plan to expand the Mediterranean détente process. As part of the negotiations for the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the proposal for a conference for security and cooperation in the Mediterranean was formally presented at the Atlantic Council in Bonn in May 1972. For Moro, it was impossible to separate security in Europe from security in the Mediterranean, while a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which could be achieved only through the fulfillment of the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the definition of a truly stable and secure peace act in the Mediterranean, a region that is also crucial for wider balances. As is common knowledge, this initiative also failed because it was subordinate to the conflict in the Middle East, which began in October 1973 with the Yom Kippur War. Specifically, the Yom Kippur War contributed to the continuation of a crisis situation in the Middle East, which gave the superpowers the opportunity to assert their dominance over the Mediterranean by limiting Arab and European national autonomy. Italian pro-Arab and pro-Palestinian sentiments intensified as a result of the subsequent oil crisis.¹¹⁶ Moro's call for a common European initiative in October 1973 was followed by the Copenhagen Declaration of the nine EEC governments on the Middle East the following month, which made reference for the first time to the full implementation of Resolution 242 and the legitimate interests of the Palestinians. Moro reiterated the declaration's contents in his report to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on January 23, 1974.¹¹⁷

The convergence of European and Italian stances on the Arab and Palestinian cause did not, however, indicate the success of the Euro-Arab dialogue that began in late 1973 or early 1974. This project, which was also initiated by Italy, was an additional attempt to break the duopoly of the superpowers in the Middle East conflict resolution. It envisioned the European offer of economic, scientific, and technological cooperation in exchange for the shipment of adequate crude oil at reasonable prices.¹¹⁸ The Euro-Arab dialogue, which was supposed to have political significance for Italy, failed to materialize because the producing countries chose to concentrate on bilateral agreements and political objectives, such as the recognition of the Palestine

¹¹⁶ Caviglia, D., & Cricco, M. (2006). *La diplomazia italiana e gli equilibri mediterranei: la politica mediorientale dell'Italia dalla guerra dei Sei Giorni al conflitto dello Yom Kippur (1967-1973)*, pp. 116-118. Roma. Rubbettino Editore.

¹¹⁷The issue of the recognition of Palestine, or rather the rights of the Palestinian people has been a significant ground for cooperation in the dialogue between the Christian Democrats and the Communists. It is worth mentioning, therefore, how the field of foreign policy - especially that relating to cooperation and development programs - represented a precedent of the so-called "historic compromise" mediated by Moro and Berlinguer. Riccardi, L. (2013). *L'internazionalismo difficile. La "diplomazia" del PCI e il Medio Oriente dalla crisi petrolifera alla caduta del muro di Berlino (1973-1989)*, pp. 124-129. Roma. Rubbettino.

¹¹⁸ Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana e i popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 318-320. Bari. Besa.

Liberation Organization (PLO), while the European countries moved independently to secure energy supplies. In response, the United States urged the western oil-importing nations to form a united front against the producing nations. However, in Moro's view, the 1974 Washington conference's establishment of an Atlantic group for a common oil policy was not intended to intervene in the dialogue between Europe and the producer countries. In light of the difficulties encountered by multilateral initiatives, particularly those of the European Community, however, Moro had no choice but to pursue other avenues; moreover, the Italian government's desire to involve Libya in the beginning of a dialogue and collaboration between the West and Arab and Mediterranean countries did not materialize, also due to Tripoli's lack of interest.¹¹⁹

The alternative viable objective, made possible by Moro's increasingly pro-Arab stances, was the signing of bilateral cooperation agreements, which were also typical of Italy's Mediterranean policy. In addition to satisfying the nation's interests, these agreements reflected the foreign policy ideals of the Italian statesman. The emphasis on cooperation aimed at the economic and social development of newly independent countries stemmed from the belief that peace could only be achieved by redressing all global imbalances. With the promulgation of Law No. 1222 on Technical Cooperation with Developing Countries in 1971, this belief was given a concrete expression.¹²⁰ Prime Minister Mariano Rumor and Libyan Prime Minister Abd al-Salam Jallud signed a framework agreement for economic, technical, and scientific cooperation on February 25, 1974, in Rome. In exchange for Italian assistance in the construction of refineries, iron and steel plants, fertilizer factories, and land reclamation projects, Libya agreed to supply 30 million tons of Alitalia crude oil, 7 million tons more than the supply at the time, which was equivalent to one-third of its oil requirements. The agreement ensured Italy's oil supply continuity, which was crucial during those years of energy crisis, while permitting Libya to diversify its economy, as more than 60% of Libya's gross domestic product was derived from oil exports. The agreement, which was applauded by the Italian Communist Party, also had political significance in that it aimed to foster coordinated action by the two countries on major international issues and broader forms of cooperation between the Arab world and Europe.¹²¹ In fact, for Libya, it represented an opportunity for an alternative to the decision made by the new Egyptian leader Anwar al-Sadat and the moderate Arab regimes to collaborate with the United States, while for the Italian government, it resumed on a bilateral level the proposal of Euro-Arab dialogue and reaffirmed the desire to oppose the US policy of confrontation with the oil-producing countries. The signing of a second agreement between AGIP and the Libyan government reaffirmed this decision.

Both agreements also sanctioned from a formal point of view the gradual return of Italy to Libya, whose workers actually remained in the North African country even after the expulsion of the Italian community in

¹¹⁹ Varsori, A., & Zaccaria, B. (2018). *Italy in the International System from Detente to the End of the Cold War*, pp.189-190. Londra. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹²⁰ Gnisci, L. (2022). *La diplomazia dell'equilibrio: Aldo Moro e la dimensione euromediterranea della politica estera italiana. La diplomazia dell'equilibrio*, pp. 117-122. Savona. PM Edizioni.

¹²¹ Cricco, M. (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia e la Libia di Gheddafi, 1970-1976. Aldo Moro, l'Italia e la Libia di Gheddafi, 1970-1976*, 713-732. Roma. Rubbettino Editore.

1974 numbered more than 5,000, while the value of Italian exports had increased in 1974 has about \$600 million. The crisis that had begun with the expulsion of the Italians was definitely behind us and, according to Moro's intentions, relations between the two countries were being stabilized.

4.5 Conclusion

Despite what has been stated thus far, Moro's international action as a whole, and particularly his policy toward Gaddafi's Libya, have been the subject of criticism for a long time. The most serious charge against Moro is his failure to condemn Italian colonialism. Angelo Del Boca makes this accusation, despite the fact that he believes the expulsion of the Italian community from Libya to be inevitable and therefore unrelated to what transpired in the former Italian colony. However, opposition to colonialism is precisely one of the guiding principles on which Moro's foreign policy, as well as that of his predecessors, was based. This lack of stance is explicable, in my opinion, by the republican Italy's openness toward the Third World, as a democratic nation that cannot be blamed for the colonial policies of previous decades.

According to others, Moro's condescending attitude toward the Gaddafi regime in the face of the injustices suffered by our compatriots in Libya not only represents one of the most tormented and least dignified chapters of Italian diplomacy, but also symbolizes Moro's inability to avoid blackmail by the Libyan regime on the oil front. However, Moro realized that the conditioning was reciprocal. Libya needed Italy because Italy was the distributor and refiner of Libyan oil products in Europe and because Italy possessed the technical know-how required to modernize the country.¹²²

Regardless of opinion, Moro's policy towards Libya was conducted by a statesman and a fine diplomat who was extremely shrewd and intelligent, aware of the context in which he was operating and thus the limitations present. This policy was part of a larger, more ambitious plan to involve Tripoli in the beginning of a dialogue and collaboration between Europe and Arab nations. The failure of the European Community to implement a Mediterranean policy and the impossibility of transferring the détente process to the Mediterranean prevented Moro from fostering not only security, but also economic and cultural cooperation. This was due to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the hostility with which the United States and the Soviet Union viewed cooperation between European countries and Arab countries. In the area of bilateral Italian-Libyan relations, Moro's perseverance and foresight proved fruitful.¹²³

After the anti-Italian measures of 1970, Moro was able to regain control of the situation within a few days thanks to the meeting in Beirut, which paved the way for fruitful negotiations that resulted in the 1974 agreement. In less than four years, the Italian government reopened the doors of Libya to Italian companies

¹²² Garzia, I., Monzali, L., & Imperato, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Aldo Moro, l'Italia repubblicana ei popoli del Mediterraneo*, pp. 325-328. Bari. Besa.

¹²³ Varsori, A., & Zaccaria, B. (2018). *Italy in the International System from Detente to the End of the Cold War*, pp. 194-200. Londra. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

and workers and initiated a new phase of bilateral relations by utilizing the instruments of confrontation and cooperation and exploiting the economic interdependence between the two countries to Italy's advantage.

This success turned out to be partial over time, so much so that, as we shall see, relations with Libya experienced some difficult moments in the decades that followed. The causes, however, are attributable more to the political and authoritarian characteristics of the Gaddafi regime than to Italian positions, which have always been characterized by dialogue and cooperation, following the path outlined by Moro himself.

Chapter 5: The 1980s and 1990s between crises and reconciliations

Aldo Moro's Libyan policy was an admirable instrument for articulating Italian interests not only in Libya, but in the Mediterranean basin as a whole, as we saw in the previous chapter. With the passing of the Christian Democrat statesman, Giulio Andreotti, a fellow party member, assumed responsibility for the Libyan issue. Andreotti had followed developments in Gaddafi's new Libya since the beginning of the Free Officers' Revolution and, like all his predecessors, had long advocated - particularly after the expulsion of the Italians - the need to re-establish and strengthen relations with Tripoli.

Prime Minister in 1972-73, Minister of Defence in 1974, and Prime Minister again in 1976-79, during the saddest period for the Italian Republic - marked by the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro - the Roman statesman returned to lead a ministry in 1983 as Foreign Minister of a Pentapartite government led by the socialist Bettino Craxi. He held this position until 1989, when, backed by the same parliamentary formula, he resumed the position of prime minister, flanked by Gianni De Michelis as foreign minister, until his resignation in 1992.

Andreotti encountered obstacles that were not novel, but rather recurrent and rooted in the past. The pursuit of economic and strategic interests, particularly in the energy sector, as represented by ENI; the protection and preservation of Italian workers in Libya; and, finally, the persistent and pressing management of the colonial past, exemplified by Gheddafi's explicit and repeated request not only for a formal condemnation of Italian colonialism but also compensation for the damage suffered by the Libyan populations.

However, the difficulties of Italy's Libyan policy are also attributable to a second set of factors associated with the international behavior of the Tripoli regime. We speak, for instance, of Gaddafi's not-exactly-informal support for international terrorism, especially that of Arab-Palestinian origin; or of Libya's progressive diplomatic isolation, supported primarily by the United States, which is committed to carrying out real forms of retaliation against the Gaddafi regime. The two Sirte crises, which occurred in 1981 and 1989, were precipitated by precisely this situation of constant friction. The Italian position was therefore undermined not only by the need to counterbalance assistance to the American ally - the principal victim of Gaddafi-sponsored terrorism - but also by the imperative to preserve stability in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions.

As we will see in this chapter, however, Italian policy was forced to make a long-avoided decision regarding its indifference toward Tripoli. The result was not a rupture in relations, as might be expected, but a significant cooling down that did not prevent the recomposition of relations after 1983. In this phase, we can appreciate Andreotti's work the most: the statesman's patience and tenacity led to a 1991 agreement that paved the way

for all future initiatives by Rome towards Tripoli in the economic, political, cultural, and technical-scientific sectors.¹²⁴

As we shall see, Italian foreign policy towards Libya in this decade was marked by a progressive and commendable balancing act, which saw our country anchored to the Atlantic bloc but still able to exercise, with a certain degree of freedom, a level of prominence in the Mediterranean acknowledged as such by Washington. A completely different scenario from the preceding decade, in which Italy was viewed negatively due to its lack of credibility and its foreign policy stances, particularly on the energy dossier, due to domestic social, political, and economic unrest.

5.1 The tension in the Italian-Libyan relations: the issue of compensation

The removal of Italian mines played a significant role in the delicate issue of compensation for military occupation. According to the documents consulted, mine clearance had been on the agenda of the new regime since 1971, when it made an explicit request to the government in Rome for the necessary equipment and personnel to remove mines. In accordance with this request, Italy had undertaken, between the end of 1971 and that point, to provide Tripoli with extensive documentation regarding what our military authorities knew about the locations of camps on land and barrage lines in Libyan waters. The subject resurfaced during the 1974 negotiations, and in November 1975, it was proposed to send two senior officers of the Engineer Corps, experts in land reclamation techniques, to the site, but the Libyan side did not respond. In contrast, an unanticipated initiative had arrived at the United Nations. On 7 October, the Libyan representative submitted a draft resolution addressed to the nations whose troops had fought on Libyan soil during the Second World War, namely Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, in order to provide all pertinent information and to compensate Libya or other nations that had endured a similar military strategy. On the 24th of the following month, the resolution was approved, and Italy abstained with the justification of avoiding an exclusively negative stance that would have ended up presenting the flank to possible polemics, thereby rendering at least partially ineffective the constructive work that our diplomacy was undertaking.¹²⁵

As can be seen, the issue was not only complex, but also difficult to address from a technical standpoint. Moreover, the bilateral relations between Rome and Tripoli were typically characterized by two opposing tendencies. The Libyan one was always aimed at raising the bar of demands, under the banner of a logic of reparations that, although material, had to be moral; the other, on the Italian side, was aimed at reducing their

¹²⁴ Andreotti and Qaddafi were two statesmen at the antipodes in terms of culture, political training, and government experience. Yet the two men managed to find a common feeling that guided their political actions and attracted them to each other. For before talking about interests, which also, of course, substantiate the relationship between men in government, it is necessary to juxtapose the broader visions the two had of existence and politics. Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006*. *Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp- 15-21. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹²⁵ Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, pp. 20-25. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

scope and rejecting a priori any accusation meant to put our country in the dock. Regarding the sending of Italian technicians, for instance, there were differing opinions, as the Libyans demanded that they stay for at least a couple of months and be provided with adequate equipment so that they could carry out a portion of the operation themselves. In contrast, the Italian intention, which was quite different, was to limit the stay of our officers to a few days, as they were not to do anything other than provide all the case information; Libyan personnel could be housed in Italy for training purposes. As a result, a sort of dialogue between deaf-mutes was taking place, that is, between positions such as the Libyan one, which accused the Italians of dithering simply to shelve the problem in time, and the Italian one, which was resolutely determined to avoid engagement, a portent of future demands and consequently new problems.

In other words, it was essential to avoid any actions that might have suggested guilt on the part of Italy and its troops. The issue persisted over time, as evidenced by the fact that Andreotti was asked about it again in 1976 and 1984. To be fair, it must be recalled that the partial but still concrete final proposal for cooperation made by the Italian authorities in 1981 was never formally accepted by Libya. This attitude should not come as a surprise, as Gaddafi's conduct over the decades has been anything but linear and consistent, as was often the case with his diplomacy and, to a lesser extent, his entire policy. Apart from the more or less legitimate recriminations of the former colony, such arguments were typically unearthed at certain moments for their own potential instrumental utility. Evidently, Gaddafi's entourage in the early 1980s chose to broaden the scope of demands. Consequently, the entire Italian military occupation was destined to become a source of periodic friction, a point on which the arduous negotiations to reach the Italo-Libyan agreement of 1900 had repeatedly stalled. As an example, the then-Foreign Minister, Andreotti, received a note from the Farnesina's Secretary General that reiterated the importance of the issue to the Libyans. Close to a trip to Tripoli on official business, the official made the following remarks:

«È anche alla luce delle considerazioni sopra delineate che deve essere valutata la richiesta libica di indennizzi per i danni provocati dall'occupazione italiana dal 1911 ad oggi.

*Le indicazioni raccolte sin qui inducono a ritenere, infatti, che l'iniziativa Di Gheddafi rientri nell'azione propagandistica intrapresa per galvanizzare le masse con la continua identificazione dei nemici da battere e di obiettivi da perseguire. Alcune personalità vicine a Gheddafi hanno confidenzialmente fatto notare che certe sue prese di posizione tendono a soddisfare esigenze interne, e che egli fa del problema soprattutto una questione di principio».*¹²⁶

¹²⁶ *Il segretario generale del MAE per Andreotti*, appunto dell'11 novembre 1983, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. The issue of reparations for damages caused by military occupation was destined to remain a thorn in the side of Italian-Libyan relations, regardless of how acceptable our diplomat's interpretation appears to be, and also in light of numerous other incidents that had occurred in previous years. Until nearly the end of the Gaddafi regime, or at least until the 2008 agreement with Silvio Berlusconi. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, pp. 30-35. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

The issue of reparations for damages caused by military occupation was destined to remain a thorn in the side of Italian-Libyan relations, regardless of how acceptable our diplomat's interpretation appears to be, and also in light of numerous other incidents that had occurred in previous years. Until nearly the end of the Gaddafi regime, or at least until the 2008 agreement with Silvio Berlusconi. In other words, with regard to the colonial past and its darkest pages, which inevitably led to the issue of possible reparations, the republican ruling class wrote a decidedly unhappy chapter in its persistent attempt to downplay the obvious roles our Armed Forces played in the military operations of conquest and repression.¹²⁷ And this state of affairs was likely influenced in part by the absence of a serious debate on Italian colonialism, which led to a lack of collective awareness. The loss of all overseas possessions between 1941 and 1943 also indirectly contributed to this development. In fact, Italy did not experience the same emotional turmoil as other former colonial powers, particularly France, in the decades that followed the process of small-scale decolonization. Therefore, the nearly universal silence proved to be the best cultural stew for the humdrum of the 'good Italian'.¹²⁸ Returning to the document reserved for Andreotti, the Farnesina official cautioned him against taking Gheddafi's personality for granted under any circumstances.

«È comunque difficile considerare Gheddafi come un partner completamente affidabile, per le prove di duplicità e di machiavellismo offerte in molte occasioni. [...] Il negoziato sull'argomento non sarebbe comunque facile, anche se la posizione italiana sarebbe fondata su argomentazioni molto valide, di natura giuridica e morale.

Quali che siano gli sviluppi di questo contenzioso - che non dovrebbe essere drammatizzato essendosi libici limitati in passato a chiedere un gesto simbolico - due constatazioni obiettive e confermano, peraltro, la necessità di mantenere aperto il dialogo tra i due paesi. [...]

*L'importanza delle relazioni economico-commerciali. [...] La presenza di un'importante collettività di circa 14.000 persone».*¹²⁹

¹²⁷ A. Del Boca (1992), *L'Africa nella coscienza degli Italiani. Miti, morie, errori, sconfitte*, pp. 11-127 Roma-Bari. Laterza; N. Labanca (2002), *Oltremare. Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana*, pp. 78-82, Bologna. Il Mulino.

¹²⁸ D. Bidussa (1994), *Il mito del bravo italiano*, pp. 84-86, Il Saggiatore, Milano; A. Del Boca (2005), *Italiani brava gente. Un mito duro a morire*, pp. 76-79. Milano, Neri Pozza.

¹²⁹ Il segretario generale del MAE per Andreotti, appunto dell'11 novembre 1983, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. These were valid points of view. The first, the significant volume of import-export business with Libya, had been the primary reason cited by our authorities when deciding, immediately after the confiscation of assets and the expulsion of the Italians in the summer of 1970, whether to interrupt relations with Tripoli, even temporarily, could proceed and open a new chapter. The second, closely related to the first because it involved the personnel of the numerous Italian companies operating in Libya, on the shore that second Italian community that, beginning in the 1960s, first flanked and then completely replaced the historical one, formed as a result of colonization. We are therefore referring to those Italians who, in the eyes of the Gaddafi regime, could in no way be associated with colonialism and fascism, confirming that the refugees of 1970 were identified as the archetypal scapegoat and the easiest target to hit. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006. Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 22-23. Roma.Edizioni Studium Srl.

In any case, the Libyans' reasoning appeared to follow a path that was not devoid of its own logic; beginning with the limited issue of the mines, they progressed to the damage caused by the war before expanding the discussion to include the damage caused by the Italian occupation. Not that there was a dearth of well-grounded reasons to support such theses, but Gaddafi's unscrupulous policy ultimately weakened certain arguments by pursuing an entirely instrumental purpose. In other words, with one eye on the past and the other on the present, where the Libyan dictator insisted on playing at multiple tables simultaneously.

*«Della sua rivendicazione nei nostri confronti e di un eventuale riconoscimento di responsabilità al riguardo egli vorrebbe infatti farsi forte per stabilire una nuova regola del diritto internazionale che riconosca ai paesi ex colonizzati un diritto al risarcimento per i danni in vite umane ed economici subiti. Voler essere un paese di punta nelle rivendicazioni a nome del terzo mondo e una delle costanti ispirazioni di Gheddafi, convinto di essere stato un esempio per altri nel modo in cui, dopo la rivoluzione, ha risolto il problema dell'evacuazione delle basi straniere, dei rapporti con le società petrolifere [...]».*¹³⁰

In addition, in the early 1980s, in an effort to gain a larger audience, Libya began to raise the issue in international forums such as the United Nations and the Islamic Conference; initiatives that prompted our foreign minister to take appropriate countermeasures.¹³¹ Nevertheless, even taking into account all the mitigating circumstances of the case due to the overbearing personality of a dictator who, as in every dictatorship, periodically sought out new enemies to use as a means of attracting the attention of his own people, public opinion, and the mass media on a national and international level, the problem existed and could not be avoided. In fact, a series of investigations conducted by international bodies in the early 1980s into the price Libya paid for our colonization bolstered Libyan claims. The claims were diverse, ranging from direct or indirect war damage to individuals and the economy to infrastructure damage. Not to mention how Libyan demands eventually encompassed the fate of several thousand compatriots deported to Italy and incarcerated in various penal institutions since the start of military operations in 1911. Gaddafi's compensation model was identical to the one that led Israel to demand \$1.5 billion in reparations from the Federal Republic of Germany for Nazi persecution. However, the fundamental stance of our diplomatic corps remained one of adhering at

¹³⁰ *L'ambasciatore a Tripoli alla DGAP*, appunto del 19 dicembre 1983, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. For all the other claims of the developing countries, Gaddafi would like to be the forerunner in achieving the set of claims that are often referred to as the 'new international economic order'. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006*. *Andreotti e Gheddafi*, p. 25. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹³¹ These include the following: «Si prega pertanto: [...] il Servizio del Contenzioso Diplomatico di voler cortesemente predisporre un'analisi volta a configurare alla luce del diritto internazionale le tematiche dei danni di guerra [...], e dei cosiddetti danni coloniali. Tornerebbe anzi utile disporre in argomento di un'apposita memoria giuridica cui fare eventualmente ricorso sia nei contatti con il governo libico che nelle opportune sedi multilaterali; il Servizio Storico e Documentazione, di voler cortesemente svolgere una ricerca per l'individuazione, qualora non esista uno studio organico, di documenti validi a quantificare lo sforzo economico e finanziario affrontato dal nostro paese per lo sviluppo della Libia durante il periodo coloniale». *Appunto a uso interno della Segreteria Generale degli Affari politici del 12 gennaio 1984*, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006*. *Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 26-27. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

most to a generic form of cooperation obligation on the part of the former motherland, and nothing more. In any case, what must be revealed is how the Italian political-diplomatic authorities of the time took Libyan requests seriously, alarmed in part by a series of more or less spontaneous demonstrations held by Libyans in front of our representative offices in Tripoli. One of the Italian countermoves must be understood in this context; it must be recalled that the Farnesina commissioned Guido Napoletano, a professor at the Sapienza University's Faculty of Political Science, to study the case and then express an opinion that could help our leaders get a handle on the situation.¹³²

As further evidence of the importance of the issue, it suffices to consider the amount of time devoted to it during the 4 February 1984 conversation between Andreotti and Gaddafi in Tripoli. At that point, the colonel reiterated that, if Italy failed to pay compensation for the damages caused by the colonial occupation, Libyans who considered themselves to be injured parties could sue in Libyan courts; the next step, which the Libyan government hoped would not be necessary, would be to seize Italian ships and planes. Andreotti attempted to entice the colonel with concrete proposals, such as an official declaration of condemnation of colonialism by Parliament, the construction of a hospital facility in the area where the Italian occupation was the harshest, and a series of scholarships that would allow the descendants of those families who had endured the most severe suffering to remain in our country.¹³³ In Gaddafi's view, none of this was sufficient, but he was especially eager to remind himself that the Italian people were historically responsible, without distinction, for the beginning of the conquest in 1911, which united the liberal ruling class with the fascist ruling class. However, the issue was so sensitive that it was destined to remain the source of tension in bilateral relations unless significant progress was made. The stalemate was also confirmed by the July 31 discussions between the two politicians in Tripoli. The Gaddafi's ambiguous response to Andreotti's direct question as to whether the Libyan authorities could consider the colonial dispute resolved permanently following the construction of a cardiology hospital was that he could not comment. To highlight the disparity between the respective positions, the Libyan leader resurrected the issue of mine clearance, on which he also expected a concrete gesture from the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany and made a further request regarding the return to Libya of the Italian-removed archaeological artifacts.

Certain Libyan demands were objectively irrefutable, beyond the often bombastic and provocative tones. If anything, we repeat, doubts could be reserved as to the sincerity of Gaddafi's words, given the rather instrumental nature of the whole affair, due to his usual tendency to want to play up several games at once.¹³⁴ In addition to the unreliability of the Libyan dictator's personality, such a reading of the facts received

¹³² *Relazione del professor Guido Napoletano del 21 gennaio 1984*, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, pp. 39-41. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹³³ *Appunto sul colloquio tra Andreotti e Gheddafi*, Bab Azizya, 4 Febbraio 1984, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, p. 42. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹³⁴ That Gaddafi brought up the issue of reparations according to his own convenience is confirmed, among other things, by a simple reading of the papers. These show that on a previous official visit by Andreotti to Tripoli, on 15 November 8 as Prime Minister, the issue was not mentioned at all. Not to mention the fact that this pending issue in no way hindered the continuation of the still profitable economic relations, which included military supplies on the Italian side.

diplomatic confirmation. Firstly, by a hypothesis launched by the governments of Algiers and Jeddah, approached, along with others considered friends, by our own diplomacy in an attempt to find a plausible explanation for the hardening of tones on the part of Tripoli. According to these governments, Gaddafi's sudden hardening could have stemmed from an intention to exert pressure to obtain a change in our deployment in Lebanon.¹³⁵

Despite some apparent calm, the contentious issue of reparations demanded of Italy remained a harbinger of a latent state of tension between Rome and Tripoli, which we can conclude in this first section. But as is well-known, the issue of reparations also preoccupied the Italian state on the domestic front, as this time it was the turn of the Libyan refugees, repatriated in droves between the summer and fall of 1970, to attempt the arduous path of claiming reparations. Nonetheless, this unfortunate community was saddled with a hefty bill for responsibilities that were actually attributable to the Italian state, as specified by the confiscation decree issued by the Libyan authorities, which stated that this act was to be interpreted as partial compensation for the damage Italy caused to Libya. It was not even so much a discussion of the so-called *raison d'état*, in whose name - as Varvelli effectively emphasized - it was decided to sacrifice the lives of those 20,000 for the good of the entire nation.¹³⁶

Thus, the appeals of Italian refugees unable to see their lost property redeemed were of no use. Not only that, in those same years there were numerous voices describing - in an attempt to counterbalance the darkest pages of Italian colonization in Libya - the colonists as agents of modernization of the country during past eras.¹³⁷ Such a narrative, therefore, only cast further doubts and insecurities on the real intentions of both sides regarding the issue of compensation. To this, one must add not only the bureaucratic delays the Italian refugees - united under the common *Associazione Italiani Rimpatriati dalla Libia* (Airl) had to go through in order to try to see, at least in part, guaranteed assistance from the Italian state, but also the future limitations

¹³⁵ Confirmation that such a hypothesis was not far from the truth can be found in the dialogue between Ambassador and Alessandro Quaroni and Libyan Foreign Minister Obeidi in January 1984. Thus we read in a confidential document: «Circa nostra presenza in forza multinazionale pur apprezzando differenze in atteggiamento e compiti nostro contingente, da parte libica si ritiene che esso rappresenti tuttavia un supporto per la permanenza delle forze americane in Libano cui ruolo è senz'altro negativo è foriero di inevitabili, tragiche conseguenze. Ritiro nostro contingente, che pure ha svolto ruolo che si riconosce positivo metterebbe Stati Uniti di fronte a una presenza più solitaria e rafforzerebbe posizioni di quelle correnti americane che chiedono il ritiro dal Libano», *Quaroni ad Andreotti*, tel. «riservato» del 31 gennaio 1984, in ASILS, AGA, Seria Libia, b. 1302. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, pp. 43-44. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹³⁶ There is no shortage of data in this regard. Among the many we report those contained in this memo drafted by the MFA for an upcoming visit by Andreotti as Prime Minister to Tripoli in 1978: «L'Italia (Eni, Montedison, Sir e qualche altro privato) acquista annualmente circa 16 milioni di tonnellate di greggio libico per un valore totale di circa 1300 miliardi; leni con 12,5 milioni di tonnellate è il principale acquirente, seguito dalla Montedison. Alle importazioni di greggio fare riscontro un notevole sviluppo delle nostre esportazioni assicurando così un elevato tasso di copertura. Da tempo, per altro, Gheddafi persegue un accordo intergovernativo che assicura la Libia maggiore i nostri acquisti proliferi e dall'Italia un posto ancor più brillante nello sviluppo industriale & libico con consistenti contropartite». Cfr. *Rapporto del ministero degli affari esteri del 10 novembre 1978*, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, p. 46. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl; Varvelli, A. (2009). *L'Italia e l'ascesa di Gheddafi: la cacciata degli italiani, le armi e il petrolio, 1969-1974*, pp. 98-103. (Vol. 383). Milano. Dalai Editore.

¹³⁷ L. Goglia, *Gli italiani in Libia*, in «Italiani d'Africa», XII, 1990, n. 10, p. 39. Savona. PM Edizioni.

that, starting in 1992 - with the Maastricht Treaty - would see a strong restriction of the Italian Republic's spending capacity and, therefore, of its ability to meet the refugees' compensation needs.¹³⁸

5.2 Reagan and Gaddafi: from the first Sirte crisis to Operation El Dorado Canyon

Along with Andreotti and Gaddafi, another figure had a significant impact during the two decades that will be examined in this chapter. We are discussing Ronald Reagan, who assumed the presidency on January 20, 1981. His presidency aimed to reestablish the prestige of American influence in the world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. His primary concern was the Soviet threat and, in particular, the possibility that radical states backed by the USSR government could instigate regional conflicts to further Soviet objectives. Reagan persuaded himself that Gaddafi was an unpredictable actor, a threat to American interests in the Middle East and North Africa, and therefore had to be contained at all costs, as evidenced by a National Security Council (NSC) document dated 15 May 1981, in which the following can be found: «We are systematically increasing all forms of diplomatic, military, and economic pressure on Libya».

*«Libya has become a strategic threat to American interests in both the Middle East and Africa. It is necessary to initiate a policy that can redirect [...] those Libyan actions that are dangerous to our interests. Our initial arrangements [...] are determined to make Colonel Qaddafi aware that the US government is intent on adopting a new and more energetic approach in its relations with Tripoli».*¹³⁹

The first sign of the new American policy towards Libya was the expulsion of the entire Libyan diplomatic corps from the United States. This measure was approved by President Reagan on 5 May and was notified by Secretary of State Alexander Haig to Chargé d'Affaires Ahmad al-Hudayri the following day, with the order for Libyan diplomats to leave American soil within five days. The purpose of this decision was to indicate 'to governments, business companies and private citizens with economic and commercial interests in Libya that the United States refused to maintain regular relations with Qaddafi'. A new meeting of the NSC, held on 4 June 1981, approved a series of measures designed to reinforce the initiatives already taken by Reagan against Libya:

- A media campaign to focus attention on Libyan misdeeds.

¹³⁸ Testo del discorso pronunciato da Andreotti il 21 giugno 1992, in AISLS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1311. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006. Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 37-39. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹³⁹ DDRS, *Background information in preparation for the NSC Meeting on US policy toward Libya and the Caribbean Basin proposal*, Washington, 15/05/1981, sr. Within this framework, Reagan became convinced that Gaddafi was an unpredictable actor, dangerous to American interests. Therefore, it was necessary to contain him at all costs, systematically increasing all forms of diplomatic, military and economic pressure on Tripoli. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, p. 50. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

- An approach with the governments of Europe and the region to inform them of the policy towards Libya and obtain maximum cooperation.
- An approach with countries that have sold military equipment to Libya in order to reduce this activity.
- Naval operations by the Sixth Fleet in August in international waters illegally claimed by Libya.¹⁴⁰

This final action was a priority and an excellent opportunity to launch a challenge to Libyan claims over control of the entire Gulf of Sirte, which Gaddafi illegally wanted to include in his country's territorial waters, and to reassert American influence in the Mediterranean. According to a cost-benefit analysis conducted by the CIA, the Libyan government was likely to view the exercises as a conspiracy against it, and a hostile tactical response leading to a confrontation was a distinct possibility. The Libyan government could have viewed the incursion of foreign armed forces into its claimed airspace waters as an incident. Tripoli's non-military response options included an oil embargo, the nationalization of crude oil facilities, and the persecution of American citizens domiciled in Libya. Concerning potential Soviet responses, the same document argued that Moscow could move to exploit the situation and fan the flames of Arab resentment in general and Libyan resentment towards the United States in particular by attempting to strengthen its solidarity with the Arab countries and concretely attempting to expand the presence of Soviet military advisers in Libya. In the end, it was suggested to the Reagan administration that the August naval maneuvers be carried out in order to both challenge Gaddafi and gauge the scope of Soviet reactions in the Mediterranean.

During the exercises on August 19, 1981, the first Sirte crisis occurred when two F-14 Tomcats took off from the flagship of the Sixth Fleet, the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz, to intercept two Libyan fighter-bombers that had fired missiles without hitting either the USS Nimitz or the nearby aircraft carrier USS Forrestal. Due to the lack of an imminent military response from Libya, the United States was able to conclude its naval exercises on 20 August as scheduled. Washington expected Gaddafi's response to be an aggressive speech against the United States. In addition, the circumspect response of the Soviet Union, which condemned the downing of Libyan aircraft without endorsing the Arab state's territorial claims, persuaded Washington to maintain its policy of pressure against the Tripoli regime.

While understanding the position of the United States and sharing the deep mistrust aroused by the colonel's regime in US government circles, Andreotti did not believe that Gaddafi was an enemy of the West and was convinced that it was possible to bring Libya back into the fold of international coexistence; or, at the very least, he believed that an attempt should be made to initiate a dialogue and to induce him to become an interlocutor with whom it would be possible to have normal political relations and avoid the exasperation of the revolutionary character of his regime, defusing support for terrorism and the Libyan-US escalation.

¹⁴⁰ DDRS, *Background information in preparation for the NSC Meeting on US policy toward Libya and the Caribbean Basin proposal*, Washington, 05/06/1981, sr. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, pp 51-52. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

Ghaddafi, according to Andreotti, was not animated by absolute anti-Americanism and a military reaction against him, instead of weakening him and provoking a regime change, would have only led to the accentuation of his anti-colonialist claims and anti-Western and anti-Israeli attitudes.

We must, in order to better understand the ways in which bilateral relations between Rome and Tripoli were articulated, consider the situation in which Italy and Libya developed their close collaboration: the Cold War, in which the Italian government was closely anchored to the Atlantic Alliance and careful to contain Soviet power in the Mediterranean. The Craxi government, in line with what had been done before it by the Cossiga government and the Spadolini government, reaffirmed - despite internal controversy over the method chosen - its faith in Atlanticism through the start of the installation of American missiles at the Comiso base in Sicily. This triggered the concerns of Gaddafi who feared the possibility of those missiles being used against Libya by Washington. Andreotti's talks with Jallud and Gaddafi in February 1984 and, above all, the confidential one on 31 July, focused on the issue of NATO installations at Comiso. However, at the same time, they opened the way for the Italian Foreign Minister's attempt at rapprochement, an attempt that continued until the 1991 agreement.¹⁴¹

In fact, in a letter between Ambassador Malfatti and Andreotti, Ghaddafi's arguments are listed and possible answers are suggested for the talks scheduled for the following month. In particular, Malfatti emphasizes three points dear to the Colonel:

«- l'installazione dei missili è contraria agli interessi del popolo italiano

- *ed è una realtà imposta dagli Stati Uniti;*
- *la Libia condivide gli obiettivi dei movimenti pacifisti italiani e ne appoggia l'azione;*
- *i missili non sono diretti contro una minaccia sovietica ma rappresentano*
- *in realtà una minaccia per i popoli del Nord Africa».*¹⁴²

The bilateral issues, however, quickly receded into the background as the question of Libyan support for terrorism and the Reagan administration's responses took precedence and ultimately harmed them. In a private meeting on July 31, Ghaddafi outlined his policies, which could be summed up as follows: he was not pro-terrorist, but he supported national liberation movements, and he was not pro-Soviet, but he could not play the role of an American subordinate. However, the Libyan leader demonstrated an openness to dialogue with the West. Then, Andreotti assumed the responsibility of assisting the two parties, Ghaddafi and the Reagan

¹⁴¹ Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, pp. 60-62. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹⁴² *Malfatti and Andreotti* appunto del 12 gennaio 1984 in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. Between the end of 1983 and the first half of 1984, the installation of US intermediate-range Cruise missiles was completed at the Comiso military base in Sicily, as part of the NATO response to the deployment of the new SS-20 theatre missiles initiated by the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1970s in Eastern Europe. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, pp. 66-68. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

administration, to clarify their positions and initiate a dialogue in order to halt the inevitable progression towards a military confrontation.

It was precisely the US administration that pointed to William Wilson, who has been the Reagan administration's representative since 1981, as a suitable person for the purpose. A personal friend of the president of the United States, a fervent Catholic, and an entrepreneur with many interests in the oil industry, Wilson was negotiating the resumption of diplomatic relations between Washington and the Holy See, which was achieved precisely in 1984 with the appointment of Wilson himself as ambassador to the Vatican.¹⁴³ The secret channel between the White House and Tripoli appeared to be collapsing swiftly, as evidenced by the Italian documents, although they only record the Libyans' complaints about the Americans' complete lack of comprehension as a result of these first fleeting contacts. The Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs was careful not to endorse Ghaddafi's declarations of clarifying and distancing intent, limiting himself to being the "postal messenger" of the Libyan leader's position, as he explained to his interlocutors on the occasion of Reagan's visit to Los Angeles on August 13. Faced with Colonel Ghaddafi's unpredictability, Andreotti was hesitant to adopt a course of action that could have made the Italian position appear ambiguous and unbalanced in favor of the Libyan side, endorsing and to some extent guaranteeing the latter's theses; at the same time, Ghaddafi's openness seemed to him to be animated by a certain degree of sincerity, and he did not want to leave un He believed the United States should be receptive to dialogue and disapproved of the Libyan government's direct involvement in terrorist acts. Above all, he was not persuaded that it was impossible to dissuade the leader from supporting terrorist organizations, which is why he attempted to promote dialogue but did not serve as a mediator.

Reagan seemed at the time also interested in a direct dialogue with Tripoli, however, the secret channel through Wilson did not take off. A diversity of opinions within the American administration on how to approach the Libyan question immediately appeared. Initially, both Reagan and his National Security Advisor McFarlane seem to be open to dialogue, but the latter makes it known at the end of August that it is better to postpone for the moment and wait at least for the conclusion of the presidential elections in November 1984. Direct dialogue was not initiated by Ghaddafi, who twice, in January and February 1985, urged through the Italians an interlocution with Ambassador Wilson.¹⁴⁴ What rekindled international tension were the attacks on

¹⁴³ *Quaroni a Bottai* lettera segreta del 20 giugno 1984 in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. In this letter, Ambassador Quaroni pointed out to his colleague that the Libyan foreign minister, Ali Abdussalam Triki at the time, was already aware of Wilson's readiness given his contacts with him in New York. Mention was made, however, of the Libyan minister's own incredulity about the possibility of positive political developments in the short term due to the absolute lack of American understanding of Libyan foreign policy attitudes and motives. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, pp. 70-72. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹⁴⁴ *Quaroni ad Andreotti*, Telegramma n. 8645/90 del 26 gennaio 1985, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1302. In this telegram, Quaroni expresses an at best positive assessment of Gaddafi's attitude towards his American counterpart. In the last point of the telegram, Quaroni, in fact, emphasises a curious interest on the part of the Libyan leader in the possibility of establishing, more or less formally, a form of direct channel between Tripoli and Washington through Wilson; and *Quaroni ad Andreotti*, Appunto per l'On. Ministro del 23 febbraio 1985, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1314. In the memories, particularly in the first point, it is emphasised that - during a conversation with Quaroni - Qaddafi wished for a possible private visit of Wilson to Tripoli as a possible point of restarting relations between Libyans and Americans. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2018). *Andreotti, Gheddafi e le relazioni italo-libiche*, pp. 75-77. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

the airports of Vienna and Rome on 27 December 1985, which reopened the crisis between Washington and Tripoli that led to Operation El Dorado Canyon, the bombing of Libya on the following 15 April.

How did the enterprises in El Dorado Canyon originate? After the first Sirte crisis in 1981, the United States not only focused on the political isolation of Libya, but also provided for the country's progressive economic isolation by instituting a true oil embargo in 1982. The export embargo was imposed at a time when there was little crude oil on the market and prices were low; consequently, Tripoli's government was disproportionately affected by this measure, and Libya's isolation attained its zenith. As a result of this pressure situation and American reluctance to open a dialogue channel, the previously mentioned assaults were carried out. They constituted the most recent provocation in the deteriorating relations between Tripoli and Washington. The United States then began to concentrate the Sixth Fleet in the Sirte Gulf.

Again, the objective was to exert pressure on Gaddafi to abandon the 'death line' for good. Reagan would have had the opportunity to attack Libyan infrastructure in the event that Tripoli responded to the provocation. On March 24, 1986, two American fighter jets took off for a reconnaissance mission over the coastal cities, prompting Libya to fire two missiles at the American aircraft. The United States responded harshly by attacking military infrastructure. Bettino Craxi, the prime minister of Italy, expressed concern over the events, stating that he did not want a crisis on his doorstep. It was now evident that Reagan was prepared to use force. On April 5, 1986, there was another attack, this time on a discothèque in Berlin, which, according to the Americans, was ordered by the regime in Tripoli. The American attack was therefore scheduled for April 9, 1986, with the intention of causing maximum damage to Gaddafi and his regime. In the NSC meeting, it was unclear whether the operation planned for 15 April would be the decisive blow to the Libyan regime or the first in a series of attacks calibrated according to Gaddafi's reactions and aimed at striking political, economic, and military targets.

At least three were the warnings that the colonel received about the American attack: the first was from Prime Minister Bettino Craxi, who asked his advisor - Antonio Baldini - to warn the Libyan ambassador in Italy that «on 14 or 15 April there would be an American raid against Libya».¹⁴⁵ Craxi informed the Libyans two days before the attack and added that «Italy would not allow the Americans to use the sea and sky' to carry out the attack»¹⁴⁶. This was reported by Senator Giulio Andreotti, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, who declared that «the American attack was an improper initiative [...] and I do believe that a warning for Libya came from Italy».¹⁴⁷ The second warning was that, according to Stasi (the GDR's secret service) documents, Soviet Air

¹⁴⁵ V. Nigro, *Andreotti e il ministro libico confermano: "Craxi avvertì Gheddafi del bombardamento usa"*, pp. 1-2, in "la Repubblica", 30 ottobre 2008.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴⁷ S. Romano, *Quando Bettino Craxi salvò la vita di Gheddafi*, pp. 1-2, in "Corriere della Sera", 9 Marzo 2011.

Marshal Alexander Koldunov had informed Libya.¹⁴⁸ The third warning was received by Gaddafi shortly before the bombing began: the then Maltese Prime Minister Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici.¹⁴⁹ He telephoned the Libyan leader informing him that unauthorized aircraft were flying over Maltese airspace, heading south towards Tripoli.

Despite the warnings received, the American air attack was disastrous, especially for the Libyan air force, which was taken by surprise and showed a disappointing capacity to react. Gaddafi's own response to the bombing was subdued compared to his usual response. Standing in front of the ruins of the military barracks in Tripoli, he expressed his despondency before disappearing from the limelight for a few days.

5.3 From the Second Sirte Crisis to the 1991 Agreement

In the aftermath of the US raid, the primary casualty of the confrontation between Washington and Tripoli is the freezing of bilateral relations between Libya and Italy following Gaddafi's act of self-defense in launching missiles against the island of Lampedusa. The conflict between the United States and Libya compelled the Italian government, which had attempted in vain to avert the armed conflict through patient and difficult mediation efforts, to choose a side, professing solidarity with its American ally and halting relations with Tripoli.

Particularly damaging to economic relations was the May 1986 decision by the Craxi government not to renew ENI's contracts for the purchase of Libyan crude oil and to limit imports to the quantities stipulated in the agreement on the restitution of Italian companies' debts to the Libyan government.¹⁵⁰ The anticipated Libyan response took the form of a suspension of oil supplies to resolve claims, with the resumption of those supplies contingent on the renewal of the contract with ENI. Franco Reviglio, the chairman of ENI, was the one who emphasized to Andreotti the critical nature of this conflict between Rome and Tripoli, urging him to

¹⁴⁸ BStU, ZA, AGM 533, *Information from Air Force Marshal Koldunov on issue related to "US aggression against Libya"*, April 1986. PHP, www.isn.ethz.ch/php, by permission of the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich and the NSA at the George Washington University on behalf of the PHP network. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006. Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 43-45. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹⁴⁹ Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp.235-236. Roma. Carocci.

¹⁵⁰ *Badini a Ruggero*, Lettera riservata del 21 maggio 1986 in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1318. In this letter, Ambassador Badini informs his colleague Ruggero of how, at the G7 meeting conducted in Tokyo from 4 to 6 May 1986, the economic repercussions that the Libyan crisis of 1986 had on Italy were discussed. There, Andreotti and Craxi had the opportunity to confer with President Reagan and Secretary Shultz. Badini made it clear to his namesake that the non-renewal of the existing contracts between ENI and Libya was directly related to the international isolation of the Tripoli regime by the United States. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006. Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 52-56. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

avert possible retaliation that, among other things, could have led to the nationalization of Agip, and therefore suggested reactivating the compromise line.^{151 152}

However, despite the flexibility and willingness to compromise once again displayed by the Italian leaders, the Libyan authorities again halted the crude oil supply in the middle of 1988, a few months after the compensation mechanism was effectively restarted and trade resumed. On the Libyan side, it is understood that the normalization of economic relations is contingent upon the normalization of political relations, which has been demanded on multiple occasions since the summer of 1986, when Ghaddafi and his men regained full control of the country after the American attack.¹⁵³

The foreign policy of the United States towards Libya continues to impede the resumption of financial and political relations between the two countries. The Reagan administration and its successor, the Bush administration, continued to view Tripoli as a threat to American national security and regional interests. Even after the 1986 operation, the United States remained convinced that Libya continued to finance international terrorism. In addition, the United States disclosed the construction of industrial complexes capable of manufacturing chemical weapons. Weapons that, according to the United States, are capable of striking targets thousands of kilometers distant. They urged their European allies, Italy, not to give Gaddafi the impression that they had relaxed their vigilance and to continue applying sanctions to isolate Tripoli and contain Gaddafi. Andreotti's attempts to re-establish communication between the parties were largely ineffective. The head of the Farnesina was motivated by the same factors that prompted him to act in 1983 and 1986: to preserve the stability of the Mediterranean region, to eliminate any threat to the Italian coasts, to protect the enormous economic interests in Libya, and to protect the community of Libyan workers. To these reasons must be added the opinion of the *Servizio per l'Informazione e la Sicurezza Militare* (Sismi), according to which the American

¹⁵¹ *Reviglio ad Andreotti*, Lettera 179/P del 28 ottobre 1986 in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1318. The letter follows the 13-15 October 1986 meeting between ENI and NOC (Abdalla Salem El-Badri) in Milan. In his letter to Andreotti, Reviglio emphasizes how, contrary to what the Italian diplomatic authorities had anticipated - he refers to the above-mentioned letter between Badini and Ruggero - Libya pursued a different course. According to Reviglio, Tripoli froze the offsetting of Italian counter-contractors' claims upon the renewal of petroleum purchase contracts with Libya. In light of Italy's substantial interests in Libya, the chairman of ENI suggested that the government should adopt a more conciliatory stance. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006. Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 57-58. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹⁵² *Attolico ad Andreotti*, appunto n° 079/21384 in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1318. In this letter between Ambassador Attolico and Andreotti, the elements for evaluating Reviglio's position, mentioned in the previous letter, and the possible positions of the Italian government in this regard are mentioned. Attolico shows himself to be aware of eni's considerable business interests in Libya but denies, in a certain sense, his fears regarding the nationalisation of Agip. In taking this position, he considers the fact that Italy, despite the cooling of relations, is still Tripoli's leading trading partner. Moreover, Attolico mentions the possibility of a further interruption in the recovery of outstanding debts, mentioning how the continuous state of negotiation, advocated by Reviglio, could not be reconciled with national interests that would require a government decision in this case. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006. Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 59-61. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹⁵³ *Martini ad Andreotti*, Rapporto segreto prot. N. 776/313. L./01 SISMI-01/154/86 in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1318. In this report, delivered to Andreotti by Ambassador Ruggero, Admiral Martini meets his namesake, Ibrahim El Bisher - head of the Libyan intelligence service. During this meeting, a number of issues are discussed, in particular mentioning the Libyan side's desire to restore relations with the Italian Republic through an informal and confidential meeting. Furthermore, El-Bisher informs Admiral Martini how the internal situation in Libya has come back under control following the protests triggered by the US operation. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006. Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 62-64. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

indiscretions regarding Libya's capacity to produce chemical weapons and the availability of the technologies required for the use of missiles are not conclusive. Also, according to Sismi, which extended its analysis to the development of the nuclear sector in Libya, the Tripoli regime is a long way from being able to begin producing nuclear weapons, particularly in the quantities and timeframes presented in the American report.¹⁵⁴

In a conversation with Jallud when he visited Rome at the end of November 1988, Andreotti expressed Libya's willingness to allow foreign observers to visit the facilities indicted by the American administration and to participate in the Conference on Chemical Weapons, which was held in Paris from January 7 to 12, 1989. The head of the Farnesina promptly informed George Shultz, the US Secretary of State, about Jallud's openness. The American closure, however, remained unchanged. Washington demanded that Tripoli submit to a comprehensive investigation into its chemical and weapons of mass destruction arsenal. In fact, according to the American perspective, Tripoli's participation in the Paris Conference is merely a further complication, as it would enable Gaddafi to delay by involving other international bodies, while production would continue at full capacity.¹⁵⁵

The primary solution for Shultz and the US administration will continue to be the destruction of the plant. This definitive conclusion will be accompanied by the resurgence of tensions between Washington and Tripoli, which will become manifest on 4 January 1989 with the Second Sirte Crisis, which will go down in history. It will entail the shooting down of two Libyan MiG 23s in international waters off the coast of Libya by American F14 fighters launching from the aircraft carrier USS Kennedy. Tripoli, Rome, and the rest of the international community all feared that the United States would launch a new military operation against Libya, similar to what had occurred in 1986.¹⁵⁶ Reemergence of international terrorism with the shooting down of the Boeing 747-121 of the American airline Pan Am over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, which claimed 270 lives, further darkened the situation. In 1991, just three years later, two Libyan secret service agents were indicted.

¹⁵⁴ *Appunto del SISMI*, Riservato del 19 dicembre 1988, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1317. This memo was sent to Ambassador Cavalchini by Admiral Martini - a SISMI executive at the time - with the aim of informing the Italian leadership of the developments in the industrial complexes under investigation by the Americans regarding the issue of the development of chemical and mass destruction weapons. According to the memo, the production capacity of the plant indicated by the Americans, amounting to some 20-40 tones of updated material, seems decidedly exorbitant. As proof of this, he cites the Samarra complex in Iraq, which can produce a maximum of 9 tones of aggressive chemicals per day. Martini also points out how no evidence has been provided about the Libyan side's willingness to install these aggressors on SCUD missiles. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006*. *Andreotti e Gheddafi*, p. 70. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹⁵⁵ From 24 November to 1 December 1988, Jallud was on a visit to Rome, where he had meetings with Ciriaco De Mita, Andreotti, Renato Ruggiero, minister of foreign trade comma and the president of the republic, Cossiga. In addition to the international policy issues discussed in Andreotti's letter to Schultz on 26 November 1988 - concerning the 6th Fleet exercises in waters claimed by Libya and Jallud's willingness to dialogue with Washington -, the talks touched on all subjects of Italian-Libyan interest: the question of Libyan deportees during the conflict for the conquest of Libya, the Libyan request for compensation for colonization, economic and political cooperation between the two countries, as well as the Italian commitment to receive a Libyan delegation to discuss at a technical level ways of collaboration for mine clearance.

¹⁵⁶ *Rapporto del SISMI*, Riservato /13101/335/06.73 (12/43) del 29 dicembre 1988, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia b. 1307. Following a statement by President Reagan on 21 December 1988, the Libyan Air Defence Force and Air Force were placed on high alert, while army and navy units would be on high alert. The attack on the PAN AM flight, according to the SISMI report, further increases the possibility of American intervention. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006*. *Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 71-73. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

In this climate of tension between the American ally and Libya, it becomes especially difficult for the Italian government to continue along the path of normalizing political relations, as desired by the regime in Tripoli, which since July 1988 has been insistently requesting a date be set for the resumption of dialogue through the Italian-Libyan Commission, within which the outstanding issues for the relaunch of the partnership between the two countries can be discussed. The reluctance of the Italian government to accept the Libyan request causes the officials of the regime in Tripoli to fear that Rome is losing interest in improving relations with Libya as a whole, addressing only the most pressing issues, such as the problem of outstanding payments to Italian companies. The reaction of the Libyan government, as expressed in 1989 by Gaddafi publicly and by Jallud to representatives of the Italian government, consisted of a restatement of demands for reparations for the harm the Libyan people sustained during the colonial period. The total condemnation of both the Italian presence in Libya during the liberal and fascist periods and the neo-colonial policy of the republican governments during the reign of Idris is accompanied, however, by the recognition of the importance of the economic ties between the two countries and of the friendly role played by Italy during the military operations conducted by the United States against Libya, with the clear intention of demonstrating the underlying ties between the two countries.¹⁵⁷

The agreement was reached a year and a half later, in June 1991, after a series of events in Europe and the Middle East during those 18 months had profoundly altered international reality: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the communist regimes in Eastern Europe effectively ended the Cold War and the bipolar system, and the Gulf War, waged by a United Nations coalition led by the United States against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime for the liberation of Kuwait altered the balance of power in the Middle East. The disappearance of the Soviet coastline increases the pressure on the Libyan government to reach an agreement with Italy, which is also requested to serve as a mediator with the other members of the European community. Gaddafi's condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait legitimized Italy's move toward normalizing political relations and international rehabilitation of the Tripoli regime.^{158 159} The June 1991 agreement would not immediately bear the hoped-

¹⁵⁷ *Bottai ad Andreotti*, Appunto per l'On. Ministro del 17 aprile 1989 in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1309. This document actually refers to telegram No 291 of 14 April 1989 on economic relations between Italy and Libya signed by Ambassador Reitano. In this document, in addition to reporting the protests of the Libyan authorities concerning the meeting in Rome (29-31 March), Reitano noted that, in his opinion, these were generated by the fear that the Italian side was no longer interested in improving relations with Libya. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006. Andreotti e Gheddafi*, p. 75. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹⁵⁸ *Verbale dell'incontro tra De Michelis e Ferjani (Direttore Generale per l'Europa occidentale del Ministero degli Esteri libico) del 10 febbraio 1990*, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1309. The achievement of an agreement between Italy and Libya, despite setbacks and uncertainties due to the changed international climate, has come to be structured on solid foundations of cooperation in the economic, cultural and even political sectors. Italy, in fact, despite the moments of crisis, has remained Tripoli's first official partner with an interchange of around 50 billion dollars in the last 10 years prior to the 1991 agreement. In addition to more purely economic issues, considerations of a more political nature were also raised during the meeting. We are talking about relations between the EEC and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). In particular, De Michelis was asked to push for normalization between the EEC and Libya. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006. Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp. 76-77. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹⁵⁹ *Testori ad Andreotti*, Appunto per l'On. Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri del 9 Ottobre 1990, in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1309. This note written by Ambassador Testori in Tripoli mentions Libyan interest in structuring a new agreement to regulate relations between Italy and Libya. In particular, attached to the document is a list of sectors in which collaboration would be easier and more promising. Specifically, the transfer of technology in a multi-sectoral perspective, the development of educational and healthcare programs, as well as social assistance and cooperation in the construction sector are mentioned. In these areas, according

for fruit due to the international isolation to which Libya was condemned by the United Nations for Tripoli's involvement not only in the attack on the Pan Am flight in 1988, but also in the attack on the French airliner UTA 772, which exploded while crossing Niger airspace on September 19, 1989, killing 170 passengers. Investigations conducted by US authorities between September and November 1991 led to the indictment of several Libyan intelligence agents whose extradition was requested. As a result of Libya's lack of cooperation in determining who was responsible for the terrorist attack, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution No. 748 on March 31, which prohibited all member states from departing, landing, and overflying Libyan territory, as well as supplying spare parts and technical assistance for Libyan aircraft. This was accompanied by an embargo on the sale of arms, ammunition, and military vehicles, as well as a request to reduce the number of diplomatic personnel. Midway through 1992, the European Community - and, by extension, Italy - enacted the resolution, halting the provision of certain goods and services to Libya, resulting in severe damage to economic trade relations and a consequent chilling of political ones.¹⁶⁰

However, once the crisis had been resolved and bilateral dialogue relaunched, the text signed in 1991 would be the starting point for subsequent important steps on the road to full reconciliation between Rome and Tripoli: as we shall see, the joint communiqué signed by the foreign ministers, Lamberto Dini and Omar Muntasser, in 1998 is the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation, signed in 2008 by Gaddafi and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, with which, in addition to providing a comprehensive and comprehensive settlement to various problems in the bilateral relationship, political and economic relations between Italy and Gaddafi's Libya were definitively consolidated.

5.4 Conclusion

With the end of the 1980s and the start of the 1990s, Italian foreign policy was no longer able to disentangle itself from the game of balancing acts that, until the fall of the Berlin Wall, had allowed Italy to exploit its position on the international chessboard by using its membership in the Atlantic Alliance to advance its interests in a region - the Mediterranean - that had historically been at the center of Italian attention. In fact, the end of the Cold War and the new international situation - characterized by American unipolarity - caught the Italian Republic unprepared, unsure of its role and prerogatives, intent on maintaining its positions but

to Testori, clear and concrete action by the Italian government was needed. In addition, there is mention of the drafting of a multi-year agreement in the oil and petrochemical sector and in the electricity sector, where, again according to Testori, collaboration with ENI could be used. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006*. *Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp. 78-80. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

¹⁶⁰ *Gheddafi ad Andreotti*, Lettera personale di aprile 1992 in ASILS, AGA, Serie Libia, b. 1304. In this personal letter, Gaddafi, addressing Andreotti directly, emphasized the need for our country to be the bearer of Libyan interests and to defend the efforts made by Tripoli regarding the investigation into the attacks on the two aircraft involved against the statements made by the foreign ministers of European countries. It also mentions how the Libyan position was supported by the Organization for African Unity and the Arab League. Cit. in Bucarelli, M., & Micheletta, L. (2019). *Andreotti e Gheddafi: lettere e documenti 1983-2006*. *Andreotti e Gheddafi*, pp 81-83. Roma. Edizioni Studium Srl.

unable to comprehend that the strategic income, guaranteed by its geographical position during the period of bipolarity, had officially ended.

This disappointment was exacerbated by the economic turmoil that made our nation an EMU project compliance observer. Domestic and international investors were alarmed by the lira's weakness, the steadily increasing state deficit, and the Andreotti administration's inability to control the situation. With the introduction of the five parameters, the negotiations for the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 dashed the hopes of Christian Democrat leaders like Andreotti and Cossiga regarding our country's negotiating skills in the European sphere. Also on a social level, our nation was undergoing significant change. In fact, many grew weary of the old moderate parties, such as the Christian Democrats and the Socialists. There was a desire for new leaders capable of interpreting the post-Cold War demands of Italian society and able to denounce the pervasive and now blatant corruption that *Tangentopoli* had exposed.¹⁶¹

The economic, institutional, and political crises of the 1990s weakened Italy's international influence and compelled a new political class to undergo an agonizing reevaluation of the country's foreign policy objectives. The European Union became the only significant foreign policy arena in which Italy could play a role, but as a result, foreign policy and domestic issues became inextricably intertwined, resulting in additional challenges and contradictions. Italy's foreign policy was about to enter a new era, which was likely to be significantly less ambitious than the past.

¹⁶¹ Varsori, A., & Zaccaria, B. (2018). *Italy in the International System from Detente to the End of the Cold War*, pp. 118-124. Londra. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chapter 6: The end of the “First Republic” and the Berlusconi-Gaddafi relationship

The decisions made in the late 1940s and early 1950s regarding the European integration process and tying the country to the Atlantic Alliance were the pillars of the first Italian Republic's foreign policy. It was believed that the periods following these two decisions would be devoted to turning these new orientations into a concrete foreign policy program. The principal challenge that the new ruling class faced at the time was the redefinition of the country's general orientations in the international arena: in particular, the objective was to adapt to the evolutions of the international system using Washington and Brussels as two fixed points of reference. We can say that this assumption remained true even after the Berlin Wall fell.¹⁶²

In fact, the early 1990s marked the beginning of a new era in Italy. Changes in the global scenario had a devastating effect on our country, which, as predicted in the conclusion of the previous chapter, ceased to be the pivot between the western and eastern worlds. The fall of the Berlin Wall, economic globalization, and the formation of the European Union are unanimously cited as the three causes of the disorientation - if we can call it that - that characterized Italian foreign policy during this transitional decade. Noting that Italian foreign policy is inextricably linked to the internal developments that define Rome's domestic policy, we must also consider the internal upheavals that characterized Italy in the final decade of the twentieth century.¹⁶³ I would like to emphasize, in particular, how the inability of the political elite to provide leadership in resolving this identity crisis, combined with the scandal of *Tangentopoli* and the 1993 referendum on the electoral law, led to a significant shift in Italian society and politics.

This crisis was both political and institutional. The old political system, paralyzed by corruption scandals and global changes, saw its strongholds fall one by one. The Communist Party was the first party of the “First Republic” to exit the political scene, followed by the Socialist Party and the Christian Democracy.¹⁶⁴ In what was a genuine political crisis of the “First Republic” - which led to the second and was viewed by many as unresolved - the institutions stepped up to guide the country in the absence of a strong party system. It was the first time that institutions such as the Presidency of the Republic and the Bank of Italy were able to impose legally binding decisions on the Italian people.

The situation was exacerbated by a financial crisis that caused the lira to depreciate further and further, similar to what occurred during the conjecture against our country in the 1970s. Italy was ill-equipped to face the new wave of globalization and the process of European integration as a result of excessive state

¹⁶² It is worth quoting here a speech by Ambassador Pietro Quaroni who, responding in an ironic tone to who, in his opinion, was responsible for Italian foreign policy, said no one. Not only that, but he also stated how, in fact, a real Italian foreign policy did not exist. For more information: Vigezzi, B. (1991). *Politica estera e opinione pubblica in Italia dall'unità ai giorni nostri*, p. 131. Milano. Editoriale Jaca Book.

¹⁶³ Diodato, E., & Niglia, F. (2018). *Berlusconi 'The diplomat': Populism and foreign policy in Italy*, pp 23-48. Berlino. Springer.

¹⁶⁴ It should be mentioned here how, alongside the collapse of the old political class, there was also the emergence of new forces. We are referring to the Northern League, which was born in the wake of the scandals that swept through the old political system.

involvement in our country's industrial development plans and excessive labor costs, which, in a highly globalized world, drove many companies to relocate their production sites.

Adding to the gravity of the situation were the new security concerns emanating not only from nearby conflict zones, such as Yugoslavia, but also from distant ones, such as Iraq.¹⁶⁵

Adaptation to the new international and European system posed the greatest challenge for the fledgling Second Republic. Regarding this issue, researchers should evaluate the successes and failures of political leaders, including Berlusconi. On the one hand, domestic events captured the interest of the Italian people in the early 1990s, culminating in the political forces' disregard for international and continental events. On the other hand, Italy's desire for change was crystal obvious. In a referendum held in 1993, 82.7% of Italians voted in favor of abolishing the proportional system for the election of the Senate, providing the most compelling evidence of this. This referendum did not pave the way for a majority system, but it did pave the way for a more competitive democracy. Despite the dissolution of the old organizations, it took time for a new political system to emerge. In truth, it was not until 1993, following an announcement by Indro Montanelli in *Il Giornale*, that Silvio Berlusconi became the new face of Italian politics in the Second Republic.

As we shall see, Berlusconi profoundly altered the direction of Italian foreign policy on a number of issues, most notably the relationship between Italy and Arab nations, nearly bringing an end to the traditional Rome. At the same time, however, Berlusconi attempted to adapt the Farnesina's network of embassies to the entrepreneurial requirements of promoting Made in Italy, which he deemed essential to our country's recovery.¹⁶⁶ Many of his opponents, including the Left as represented by Massimo D'Alema, criticized Berlusconi's foreign policy, characterizing it as a collection of initiatives devoid of a true overarching vision.¹⁶⁷

This chapter examines Berlusconi's foreign policy toward Gaddafi's Libya. Specifically, we will begin with the 1998 Dini-Mountasser agreement and end with the 2008 treaty. Therefore, our window of analysis will encompass Berlusconi's first two administrations. The primary objective of this analysis will be to demonstrate that, despite the change between the first and second republics, the underlying connection between domestic and foreign policy remained strong and influenced the actions of various administrations, regardless of political hue.

6.1 *The 1998 Dini-Mountasser statement*

¹⁶⁵ During the same days, Italy also experienced an unprecedented migratory flow from Albania to the Apulian coast. On 27 March 1991, 27,000 Albanians arrived in Italy. Even at this juncture, the political reaction of the Italian government was weak. In any case, the migration problem became the subject of political debate mainly for public opinion, not so much for the political forces, which were focused on the conflict in Yugoslavia.

¹⁶⁶ Silvio Berlusconi's long tenure at the Farnesina made it possible for the Prime Minister to change his internal organization and the structure of the embassy network to make the figure of the ambassador and consul the structure on which the promotion of the Italian system rested.

¹⁶⁷ Diodato, E., & Niglia, F. (2018). *Berlusconi 'The diplomat': Populism and foreign policy in Italy*, pp. 169-189. Berlino. Springer.

The 1990s were the most challenging decade for Libya since its declaration of independence. Gaddafi's old rhetoric, which was based on a reinterpretation of Nasser's theory of three circles,¹⁶⁸ no longer appealed to many Libyans, who saw what had been the ideals of the 1969 revolution distorted by their leader either through support for terrorist groups that increasingly diverged from the ideals of the old Arab nationalism either through a 'heretical' reading of Islam, which contrasted with the doctrine of the 'ulama;¹⁶⁹ or, finally along with the international outrage at the behavior of the Libyan regime, which after the alleged involvement of secret services in the Lockerbie and Niger bombings continued to sponsor terrorist groups, Gaddafi began to see the first tangible signs of a discontent within Libya that posed a threat to his own leadership.

The colonel launched a long and complex program of reforms, which was linked to a process that had already begun with Infitah, the massive program of economic liberalization launched in 1987, in response to growing difficulties and a decline in consensus caused primarily by the economic crisis resulting from first Libya's international isolation and then the harsh embargo imposed on the country as a result of UN Resolution No. 748/1992. However, the reforms of the late 1980s did not produce the intended results, in part because, beginning in 1992, international sanctions began to erode the country's economic and social fabric, leading to a rapid decline in living standards.

Gaddafi's reaction to the sanctions was twofold: on the one hand, he flaunted an attitude of absolute calm and normality, declaring, so as not to give satisfaction to the Western powers, that the economic resources were such that the UN measures would not have affected the country's standard of living in the slightest; on the other hand, he promoted a series of political reforms, slowly deconstructing the Libyan institutional apparatus, realizing the inefficiency of the system of revolutionary commissions and their growing unpopularity due to the arbitrariness with which they exercised power. The years of sanctions saw the intensification in Libya of a phenomenon that had already begun in the 1980s: the progressive return to the tribal system, characteristic of Libyan society, which Gaddafi had sought to reduce.

In the period between 1992 and 1998, economic exchanges between our country and Libya continued to be increasingly tense - despite the 1991 agreement - both inside and outside Libya. Following a rapid deterioration of the internal political and economic situation - specifically due to the fall in the price of crude oil - repressive policies could no longer be sufficient to maintain a regime that was increasingly unpopular with its citizens, especially the younger generation. By virtue of this, between 1997 and 1998, a group of

¹⁶⁸Nasser's theory of the 'Three Circles' aimed to explain what the mission of the Egyptian state should have been, to constitute a synthesis of 'Arabism', 'Africanism' and 'Islamism' without the prevalence of any of the three ideologies.

¹⁶⁹ Gaddafi presented himself as the sole interpreter of the Koran to use Islam to establish a new form of democracy, which he called 'Koranic socialism'. It was precisely in one of the many situations of conflict with the 'ulama that Gaddafi imposed the seizure of their property and the forfeiture of their titles, definitively breaking the relationship between them and the regime. Moreover, increasing the contrast with Libyan society - still strongly tied to the institutions of tribalism, especially in the more remote areas of the country - will be, above all, the laws that improved the condition of women through the institution of maternity leave and the amendments to the law on divorce and repudiation. For more information: Gigliotti, G. (2006). *Esperienza Internazionale. Libia*, pp. 23-27. Banca Documentale del Lavoro.

Gaddafi's close associates, including Abdallah al-Ubaydi (former prime minister, foreign minister and ambassador to Italy and Tunisia), Abd -al-Rahman Shalqam (former ambassador to Italy, foreign minister and Libya's representative at the UN), Musa Kusa (former head of the leader's security and foreign minister), Shukri Muhammad Ghanim (former oil minister and prime minister) and Muhammad Abu'l-Qasim al Zuway (former secretary of the People's Congress), convinced the colonel that it was necessary to resume relations with international society.¹⁷⁰

It was not until the second Clinton administration, however, that a timid dialogue between Washington and Tripoli resumed in 1998, thanks to the invitation to Libya of the renowned American journalist Milton Viorst - a contributor to the magazine *Foreign Affairs* - by Abdallah al-Ubaydi, who put him in contact with Gaddafi. During discussions with the Libyan leader and key government officials in Tripoli, Viorst learned that Libya was tired of its isolation, would like this series of events to end, would like to close the book on the Lockerbie incident, and would do everything possible to reconcile with the United States.¹⁷¹ A journalist from the United States subsequently published an article that reignited the debate within the Clinton administration regarding the need to resume talks with Gaddafi. The pivotal moment occurred when British Prime Minister and White House tenant Tony Blair proposed holding the Lockerbie bombing trial in The Hague, convening an international court of judges presided over by a Scottish high magistrate appointed by Britain. In March 1999, the government of Tripoli accepted the proposal and demanded that UN sanctions be suspended promptly in exchange. The recognition of the responsibility of Libyan agents in the Lockerbie bombings in the Ténéré desert and Gaddafi's handing over of the two alleged bombers to the Dutch authorities on 5 April 1999 resulted in the immediate suspension of sanctions and the Clinton administration embarked on a policy of cautious rapprochement, which was corroborated by a further gesture of goodwill by the colonel, who at the end of 1999 expelled Abu Nidal's organization from Libya.

This reconciliation includes a resumption of friendly relations between Tripoli and Rome. The last formal agreement between the two parties' traces back to 1991, when, despite tensions with Washington, Rome chose to negotiate to protect ENI's vast economic interests in Libya and avoid retaliation from the Gaddafi regime. Yet, as we all know, the implementation of this agreement was not simple due to the severe sanctions regime imposed on Tripoli after the international community proved Libyan responsibility for the attacks on the two American and French aircraft. During this thawing and rapprochement with the West - a rapprochement paid for by the severing of ties with the Arab League and the consequent abandonment of efforts targeted at the unification of the Arab peoples - lies the joint Dini-Mountasser communiqué of 4 July 1998. Once more,

¹⁷⁰Abd -al-Rahman Shalqam joined the ranks of the rebels in 2011; Musa Kusa took refuge in Great Britain after the fall of Gaddafi; finally, Muhammad Abu'l-Qasim al Zuway sided with the National Transitional Council NTC in 2011. For more information: Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp189-197. Roma. Carocci.

¹⁷¹Viorst in his article presents a Libya tired of its isolation, a country that would have liked to see that series of events (the economic sanctions) come to an end and turn the page on the Libyan financing of international terrorism. For more information: Viorst, M. (1999). *The colonel in his labyrinth*. *Foreign Affairs*, pp. 60-75.

however, Gaddafi took advantage of resentment towards Italian colonialism to pressure Rome into signing an agreement that was never sent to the United States Congress for ratification. The memorandum, which began with an acknowledgment of the enormous volume of communication between Rome and Tripoli, proposed the development of good neighborly relations between the two parties, which precluded the use of hostile actions in articulating their relationships. Italy, expressing its deep regret for the damage caused to the Libyan people because of colonization, was committed to the removal of the damage caused by the Italian presence on Libyan soil through minefield reclamation works, the search for people - or their families - forcibly removed from Libya during the colonial period, and in some cases, the provision of appropriate compensation. On the other hand, Libya is reportedly committed to allowing 20,000 Italians to return to Libya for labor, family, or political reasons.¹⁷²

The Dini-Mountasser communiqué was part of a larger effort by Italy to persuade the United Nations and, most importantly, its American ally to lift the economic sanctions imposed in 1992 and strengthened by the D'Amato Law - issued by the Clinton Administration in 1996 - against companies with trade ties to Libya and Iran. On the Italian side, it was reaffirmed in 1998 that Rome's foreign policy considers the Mediterranean to be its immediate political and economic border. Even during the Second Republic, at the height of the first Prodi administration, the policy towards the Mediterranean and towards Libya, aims to recover multilateral cooperation with the riparian countries in order to guarantee a space of freedom and security in order to achieve the alignment of Italian interests in the region.

As we shall see, however, the agreement between the then Foreign Minister, Lamberto Dini, and his Libyan counterpart was not to be the last act in the relations between the Italian government and the Gaddafi regime. In fact, it was not long before the two parties realized that it was by no means sufficient to settle the ongoing disputes. To avoid unpleasant incidents such as kidnappings, threats and kidnappings against Italian citizens in Libya, a symbolic gesture - later renamed the '*Grande Gesto*' - was needed to appease Libyan claims. To see it, however, we will have to wait until 2003, although its concrete effects will only be visible from 2008 with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation in Benghazi.¹⁷³

6.2 The “*Grande Gesto*” and Libya-Italy Friendship Day.

¹⁷² In order to achieve these goals, the joint communiqué envisaged the creation of an Italo-Libyan company in which public and private Italian companies would participate, and the president of which would be designated by the Libyan side. The purpose would have been to contribute to the support of the Libyan economy through the execution of basic infrastructure projects of development projects in general. According to the communiqué, this company was to set up a special fund for the following purposes: the clearing and urbanization of areas littered with mines during the Second World War; the training of specialists in the field of mine clearance; the search for Libyan citizens forcibly removed from their country and possibly their descendants; and lastly, other initiatives to alleviate the negative outcomes caused by the colonial past. Full text of the joint Dini-Mountasser communiqué in: Associazione Italiani Rimpatriati dalla Libia. (2014). *Comunicato congiunto (Roma, 4 luglio 1998)*. AIRL. <https://www.airl.it>.

¹⁷³ Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 262-268. Roma. Carocci.

It opened a new season of dialogue with the international community and facilitated the introduction of new economic initiatives by the Tripoli government in Europe and Africa, three of which were designed to end Libya's isolation and reestablish diplomatic and commercial ties with numerous states. Libyan businessmen seized the opportunity for new investments, particularly in agriculture - which had been bolstered by the large artificial river project to increase water resources -, tourism, and international trade, and strengthened the foundations of the Libyan economy thanks to the new influx of petrodollars. The lifting of UN sanctions coincided with a sharp increase in crude prices. In a little more than a year, crude oil prices on the international market skyrocketed, allowing revenues from the export of oil and natural gas to increase, and contributing to a 50% increase in GDP and a 97% increase in exports.¹⁷⁴

However, the turning point in the revival of the Libyan economy did not occur until November 2000, when an international conference on development and investment was convened. During this conference, the government in Tripoli presented a development plan to liberalize the economy, which had remained under state control according to Gaddafi's socialist model.¹⁷⁵ Tripoli's declaration of its willingness to compensate the families of the victims of the Lockerbie bombing - by allocating a special fund of 3 billion dollars - and to formally renounce the production of weapons of mass destruction also contributed to the easing of economic sanctions.

In its relations with the West, the Tripoli government naturally favors the United States over traditionally close EU nations, such as France, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Regarding Libya's rapprochement with the EU, it was cemented by Gaddafi's April 2004 visit to Brussels at the invitation of former European Commission President Romano Prodi. At that time, Europe's greatest concern, particularly in the Mediterranean, regarding Libya was that it was one of the primary transit routes for an increasing number of African refugees to reach Europe. The EU needed Libyan cooperation to reduce the influx of illegal immigrants, and Gaddafi, beginning in 2004, had promised cooperation in this area only if the EU provided Libya with radar patrol boats to patrol its coasts: this implied the lifting of the total arms embargo that had been in place since 1980, which was lifted by Coreper on 22 September 2004.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ The evolution of prices in the oil market during the time under review went from around \$17 per barrel, to \$37 and even close to \$40 per barrel in some cases. Price trends available at: GO-TECH. (2000). GO-TECH: NM Pricesheet. Octane.nmt.edu. Available at: <http://octane.nmt.edu/gotech/Marketplace/Prices.aspx>. Last consultation on 22 May 2023.

¹⁷⁵ An important example of this new period of reforms and openings inaugurated by Colonel Gaddafi was the construction of the so-called 'Great Artificial River'. It consisted of an artificial canal of considerable size, the purpose of which was to bring water from the underground basins of the Sahara to the coastal towns and agricultural production. Libyan Prime Minister Ghanim's statement on the need to diversify the country's economy through the definition of an investment portfolio to be implemented through the Tripoli Stock Exchange (recently created) also deserves an important mention. Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp.262-268. Roma. Carocci.

¹⁷⁶ For more information about the lifting of the sanctions regime applied to Libya: Barisoni, S. (2004). *UE-Libia. Revoca totale delle sanzioni*. Il Sole 24 Ore. Available at: <https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2012-06-11/muammar-gheddafi-203156.shtml?uuid=AbJKdtqF>. Last consultation 22 May 2023; e Sarcina, G. (2004). *L'Europa: revoca totale dell'embargo alla Libia*. Il Corriere Della Sera. Available at: https://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Esteri/2004/09_Settembre/22/libia.shtml. Last consultation on 22 May 2023.

The initiative, launched by Italian diplomats in Brussels, aimed to unblock a predefined list of sighting instruments against clandestine landings in exchange for an unconditional green light for military supplies. However, Italy and other union members were free to supply Libya with any type of weapon, including tanks and fighter-bombers. Various European leaders attempted to capitalize on the end of the embargo, most notably French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who invited Gaddafi to Paris from 10 to 15 December 2007 to sign, among other documents, a memorandum of cooperation under which Libya committed to exclusive negotiations with France for the purchase of military equipment.¹⁷⁷

Despite the 1998 joint communiqué, it was difficult to entirely resume relations with Italy. This is why the notion gradually gained traction that the Italian side needed to make a symbolic gesture. Initially, this was accomplished by constructing a cancer facility under the supervision of eminent Italian specialists. The initiative could necessitate a nonrepayable 60million € investment from the Italian government. On 28 October 2003, the concept for the hospital was finalized during a meeting between the Italian prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, and Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. However, the hospital was not enough for the Libyan leader, who demanded a more costly project: a highway along the Libyan coast from the Tunisian border to the Egyptian border, estimated to cost between one and 6 billion Euros.¹⁷⁸ Later, this request was debated with some seriousness, until a technical meeting in December 2004 concluded fruitlessly because the Italian side was unable to secure a political commitment to finance the entire motorway. Gaddafi, during a 2004 visit by Berlusconi to Libya, stated that the 7th of October would no longer be celebrated as "Vengeance Day" in Libya, but rather as "Friendship Day" between the two countries. However, this pleasant relationship did not last long: in 2005, Gaddafi again declared 'Revenge Day' against the Italian occupation, citing Italy's broken pledges as the reason.

As if that weren't enough, the controversy surrounding the then-minister Roberto Calderoli on 15 February 2006, when he wore a T-shirt depicting a caricature of the prophet Muhammad during a television interview, further aggravated the situation surrounding the so-called "*Grande Gesto*". On February 17, a violent demonstration occurred in front of the Italian consulate in Benghazi, which was occupied, set on fire, and rendered untenable. According to subsequent statements by Gaddafi himself, the Benghazi uprising was not caused by the cartoons, but rather by a historical dispute between Italy and Libya regarding compensation for colonial damages. The affair came to an end on February 18, 2006, when Calderoli resigned at the explicit request of the entire government and opposition, as well as President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. This incident not

¹⁷⁷ Quirico, D. (2007). *Incontro Gheddafi-Sarkozy, polemiche e contratti miliardari*. La Stampa. Available at: <https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/2007/12/11/news/incontro-gheddafi-sarkozy-1.37114099/>. Last consultation on 22 May 2023.

¹⁷⁸ The agreement between Dini and Mountasser was strongly unbalanced in favor of Libya; in fact, while on the one hand Italy expressed its regret for the suffering caused to the Libyan people and provided it with special support in the cultural and economic fields, on the other hand Libya, despite having recognized the right of the Italians expelled in 1970 to return to its territory, was not shocked by harsh clauses against it. It should be noted that no reference was ever made in the Dini-Mountasser Joint Communiqué to the value of the property confiscated from the Italians. Wanderwalle, D. (2007). *Storia della Libia Contemporanea*, p. 201. Roma Salerno Editrice.

only partially rekindled tensions between Rome and Tripoli, but it also allowed Gaddafi to use the colonial issue to bolster his negotiating position with Rome.¹⁷⁹

Yet it must be mentioned how, during the Second Republic, the focus on Libya was not exclusive to the center-right led by Berlusconi. Even the second Prodi government gave a lot of space to Tripoli in its foreign policy, regardless of the duration of the executive. It is worth mentioning the 26 October 2007 conference on Libyan deportees. The date chosen was symbolic since Libya celebrated the beginning of deportations in 1911 and was a day of national mourning. On the other hand, about the issue of the “*Grande Gesto*” and the construction of the motorway mentioned above, the Prodi government's attitude was to achieve some objective results in an attempt to please Gaddafi by proposing a visit to Italy. The atmosphere, however, was not yet ripe for such an event.

6.3. *The Benghazi Treaty, state visits and the migration issue*

The 2008 agreement should be viewed as the culmination of a long process of normalization of bilateral relations between Rome and Tripoli; it began with the 1956 treaty, resumed after the expulsion of Italians in 1970, and continued more or less intermittently until 30 August 2008, when Gaddafi and Berlusconi signed the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation in Benghazi.¹⁸⁰ The treaty was ratified by Italy on February 6, 2009, and by Libya on March 2, 2009, during Berlusconi's visit to Tripoli. Within the 23 articles of the treaty, issues pertaining to the colonial past and their ultimate resolution play a significant role.¹⁸¹ The first articles define the general principles of the new relationship between the two countries, such as sovereignty equality, non-interference in internal affairs, rejection of the use of force, and recourse to peaceful dispute resolution.¹⁸² He then addressed the issue of colonialism, stating that it was a chapter in history that needed to be closed. In order for this to occur, the Italian government consented to pay a non-symbolic price of USD 5 billion for infrastructure development. Most of this total (approximately \$3.5 billion) was designated

¹⁷⁹ In addition to the warning, the Colonel gave non-reassuring details about what else might have happened in Benghazi on 17 February, the day on which his police rescued the Italian representation and killed at least 11 protesters, later described as 'martyrs'. The protesters were determined to kill the consul and his family when they attacked the Italian consulate. Ferrera, M. (2006). *Gheddafi: non escludo altri attacchi a Italia*. Il Corriere Della Sera. Available at: https://archivio.corriere.it/Archivio/interface/slider_pagine.html#!/03-03-2006/03-03-2006/NobwRAdghgtgpmAXGAJALIMAAaMAzAJwHsYkwAGAZgHorqAmc8gNhZHSLLrsZbAF9s4aPDIBrOAE8A7kQIo26OAA90ZAQF0gA. Last consultation on 22 May 2023.

¹⁸⁰ The following agreements between Tripoli and Rome should also be mentioned for information purposes: 1998 the Agreement on Tourism and the Consular Convention, in 2000 the Agreement on the Promotion and Protection of Investments, in 2003 the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation.

¹⁸¹ IAI - Istituto Affari internazionali, & Ronzitti, N. (2009). *Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between the Italian Republic and the People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya*. Available at: <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai0909.pdf>. Last consultation on 22 May 2023

¹⁸² Rif. *Atto Parlamentare, Disegno di legge n° 2041* presented by Foreign Minister Frattini with the various ministers on 23 December 2008, p. 2. Cit. in Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 262-268. Roma. Carocci.

for the construction of a motorway from the Tunisian border to the Egyptian border, along a route parallel to the coast and spanning approximately 1,800 kilometers.

In addition, the treaty stipulated that all of the work would be delegated to Italian companies, which would oversee the intended financing. Alongside the motorway, other interventions in civil construction were planned: medical assistance for victims of wartime mines, study grants for Libyan students in Italy, and the return of works of archaeological and documentary value that had been transported to Italy during the colonial period. In the following articles, the Tripoli government committed to granting entry visas to Italians born in Libya, who were prohibited by Tripoli's laws from returning to the Libyan state, and to paying off debts contracted with Italian corporations dating back to the 1970s.

The final section of the text discussed the sectors in which cooperation between the two countries should develop in order to give bilateral relations a new impetus: the scientific and university sector, the cultural sector, the archaeological sector, the economic, industrial, and agricultural sector, and the energy sector. Cooperation in the fight against terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, and, most importantly, irregular immigration, was emphasized heavily. Your final articles called for close cooperation between Libya and Italy in the war industry¹⁸³, where the Tripoli regime was the ninth largest customer in the world.

Before and after ratification, the treaty aroused much controversy, especially with regard to the contradiction between the reference to and general desire for disarmament and the weapons, even sophisticated ones, that Italy proposed to supply to the Libyan government. Another critical point concerned the hypocrisy of the references to the recognition of human rights enunciated in the treaty, when the reality of what was required of Libya (preventing migrants' access to Italian shores) clashed with the right to asylum that could be granted to many of them. Beyond the controversial mutual interests of cooperation between Libya and the individual states of the European Union, however, there remained dark sides to the Libyan regime, especially with regard to the aspects of the country's lack of democratization, the authoritarian system in the management of power and the failure to observe human rights both domestically and internationally, which were also the subject of debate within the Gaddafi regime itself, when thoughts began to be raised about finding a possible successor within the leader's family.

In spite of the controversy surrounding the human rights situation in Libya, relations between Tripoli and Rome continued to strengthen.¹⁸⁴ Before the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation, it was inconceivable that the colonel would ever visit Italy. However, on 10 June 2009, Gaddafi arrived in Italy for

¹⁸³ Rif. *Atto Parlamentare, Disegno di legge n° 2041* of the Chamber of Deputies, presented on 23 December 2008, p. 5. Cit in. Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 262-268. Roma. Carocci.

¹⁸⁴ The 2008 Benghazi Treaty is the final act of a long and difficult journey, used as a 'springboard for Libya-West international relations' that became, given its importance, the treaty between two continents, Africa and Europe, and not simply an Italo-Libyan treaty.

a three-day state visit. The event provoked controversy and protest without fail. The Libyan leader was greeted at the Campidoglio, La Sapienza University, and the Confindustria headquarters, and he met with high-ranking Italian officials.¹⁸⁵ The Italian Radicals organize a protest demonstration outside the Senate chamber in opposition to the reception arranged for the Libyan leader by Berlusconi's government. Gaddafi's speech on 11 June 2009, in which he compares the United States to Bin Laden in regard to the 1986 El Dorado Canyon Operation, has generated the most controversy.¹⁸⁶

Gaddafi will return to Italy, Rome, on 16 November 2009 to participate in an FAO meeting and on 29 August 2010 to commemorate the second anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Friendship between Italy and Libya. On both occasions, the Libyan leader will organize a number of debates on Islam and the Koran, which will be attended by approximately 500 young women. Again, the presence of the Libyan leader in Italy generates considerable controversy. Particularly contested are the Berlusconi administration's foreign policy towards the Libyan regime, the grave and repetitive violations of human rights in Libyan prisons, and the absence of democratization that characterizes Tripoli's domestic politics. It will once again be Italian Radicals and Democratic Party members who will lead protests against Gaddafi's presence in Italy.¹⁸⁷

In defiance of the hostility of some Italian political forces towards the colonel, the treaty's provisions are beginning to take effect. Those pertaining to the struggle against illegal immigration are of most immediate interest. Recent polemics claiming that Libya has not halted emigrant traffic to Italy are well-known; these polemics aim, in part, to expedite the ratification of the treaty, which has already been completed on the Libyan side. In reality, the surges of migrants from Libya are enormous. Obviously, these are not Libyan nationals, but rather individuals from countries south of Libya's land borders in the possession of traffickers, who then embark them on Sirte's coasts. Article 19 of the treaty provides, on the one hand, for the implementation of the 2000 agreement and, in particular, the two 2007 protocols and mixed-crew patrols with Italy-provided patrol vessels. On the other hand, Italian corporations will be entrusted with a system of remote control at the land borders of Libya. A relatively costly system that does not involve the deployment of Italian police forces. The financing will be provided in equal parts by Italy and the European Union in accordance with agreements already reached. In this instance as well, the financial protection was provided by the IRES surcharge.¹⁸⁸

Italy and Libya are signatories to the UN protocol (2000) against organized crime to counteract the land, sea, and air trafficking of migrants. Libya, on the other hand, is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention

¹⁸⁵ Tran, M. (2009). *Gaddafi makes historic visit to Italy*. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/10/gaddafi-visit-italy-protests-libya>. Last consultation on 13 May 2023.

¹⁸⁶ Nigro, V. (2009). *Gheddafi: "USA come Bin Laden. Partitismo aborto della democrazia*. La Repubblica. Available at: <https://www.repubblica.it/2009/06/sezioni/esteri/gheddafi-italia/gheddafi-senato/gheddafi-senato.html?ref=search>. Last consultation on 13 May 2023.

¹⁸⁷ Partito Democratico. (2011, July 16). *Gheddafi a Roma, tra le polemiche* / PD. Web.archive.org. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20110716220615/http://www.partitodemocratico.it/dettaglio/81290/gheddafi_a_roma_tra_le_polemiche. Last consultation on 11 May 2023.

¹⁸⁸ The surveillance and patrol system was financed partly by Italy and partly by the European Union, as written in the treaty and following the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Tripoli and Brussels in July 2007.

relating to the Status of Refugees.¹⁸⁹ The convention does not grant a subjective right to asylum, but it does provide several guarantees, such as the non-refoulement of refugees to the borders of a state where their life or freedom would be in peril. The fact that Libya is not a signatory to the Refugee Status Convention has raised concerns regarding the fate of migrants crossing Libya's land borders. Apparently, the non-ratification is the result of an ideological belief that the concept of a refugee is foreign to Arab culture, where solidarity and brotherhood among Arab nations require states to welcome their Arab siblings and sisters. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, cited in Article 6 of the Treaty, states that everyone has the right to seek asylum in other countries if they are persecuted there. The third paragraph of Article 19, which obligates the parties to cooperate through bilateral and regional initiatives to prevent illicit immigration in the countries of origin of migratory flows, should also be mentioned.

On the economic aspects, the treaty foreshadows the prospect of not only consolidating the partnership between individual national companies, with the transfer of technology and development in partnership between Italian and Libyan companies, but also of consolidating Italy's position as an economic partner for the Gaddafi regime. Italian companies are to be facilitated with the exemption of customs and import taxes, as well as taxes on the consumption of electricity, gas, water and telephone lines. In order to guarantee the necessary financial coverage of these concessions, an additional IRES tax will be levied on companies active in the hydrocarbon sector, which have more than 20 billion capitalization and are listed on the stock exchange. The reference is, in fact, to the ENI group.

In 2009, following a generalized trend of slowing world trade, the figures for economic relations between Italy and Libya fell slightly, influenced directly by the price of crude oil. Libya remains, however, Italy's fifth largest supplier in the world, accounting for 4.6% of our total imports, while our country ranks first among exporters to the African country. Italy is also the third largest investor among European countries, if oil investments are excluded, and the fifth largest in the world. Testifying to the importance of these relations are the more than 100 Italian companies that maintain a stable presence in Libya and that operate mainly in the oil infrastructure sector, as well as in the mechanical engineering and construction technology sectors.¹⁹⁰

The energy sector remains fundamental in the relations between the two countries, with the ENI group operating in Libya since 1959 and which has always been guaranteed a privileged relationship, which has

¹⁸⁹ The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, approved by the UN at the Geneva conference, defined who could be considered a refugee and what forms of assistance, protection and rights they should receive from the state party to the convention. The refugee's obligations to the receiving state were also defined. This convention was created primarily to protect European refugees caused by the Second World War, but with the 1967 Protocol, the scope was extended globally.

¹⁹⁰ Between 2008 and 2010, Libya and Italy exchanged around 40 billion Euros, of which 2.5 billion by the Libyan central bank in the Italian banking group UniCredit, around 7% by Lafico in the share capital of Juventus, 1% by ENI, while Italy acquired 10% in Taral Ben Ammar's company, Quinta Communications. These are just some of the many examples of investments between the two states, examples to understand how strongly our country is linked to Libya, not only from a historical and cultural point of view, but also from an economic and energy point of view. Cit in. Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 262-268. Roma. Carocci.

allowed the company to continue operating without being subjected to the nationalization process of the oil industry imposed by Gaddafi and to periodically secure the renewal of the Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) contracts with the National Oil Corporation (NOC), Libya's national oil company. With the latest signing in June 2008, the relationship was extended until 2042 for oil production and until 2047 for gas production.¹⁹¹ This agreement also provides for the increase, from the current 8 billion cubic meters per year to 11 billion, of the transport capacity of the Greenstream submarine gas pipeline linking Libya to Sicily.¹⁹² ENI also signed an agreement with the Gaddafi Development Foundation and the NOC for investments of around \$150 million in social projects, ranging from training for Libyan engineers to the construction of specialist clinics, restoration of archaeological sites and environmental projects.

Relations between Rome and Tripoli were disrupted by a series of tensions that, unlike in the past, had nothing to do with Italian conduct or Gaddafi's caprice. We are referring to the diplomatic tensions that arose between Switzerland and Libya beginning on February 14, 2010, when the government in Bern decided to suspend the issuance of tourist visas to all citizens of Schengen countries, including those already issued.

Tensions between the two nations began in July 2008 with the detention by Swiss authorities of Hannibal Gaddafi, the colonel's son, and his wife, following a complaint of mistreatment by two servants. Shortly thereafter in Libya, two Swiss businessmen were arrested on charges of violating Libyan immigration laws and conducting business without authorization. Switzerland published a blacklist of 188 Libyan dignitaries who were denied entry into the country, escalating the crisis. The cessation of visas posed a threat to the economic ties between Italy and Libya, which had intensified since the ratification of the friendship treaty. According to ICE, approximately a hundred Italian companies are present in Libya, and according to the Italian consulate, there are approximately 1,500 Italians residing in Libya: 850 residents plus a variable proportion of citizens registered with AIRE and people with work visas.¹⁹³ Foreign Minister Frattini announced on 15 March, while waiting for a solution to the Libyan-Libyan crisis, that if the situation was not resolved by 5 April, Italy would propose to the Schengen countries that they issue limited-territory visas to Libya (i.e. visas valid only for the state issuing the visa), as the new rules of the Schengen agreement that would take effect on 5 April would permit. Several European nations, including Spain, Portugal, Malta, Slovenia, and Cyprus, supported the Italian initiative.

The crisis did not end until 29 March of the same year when Switzerland withdrew the blacklist and Libya banned visas for Schengen citizens. Italy contributed decisively to the solution of the crisis. As reported

¹⁹¹ The agreement concluded in 2008 came after a series of diplomatic dialogues between Italy and Libya; the public apology for war crimes committed during the colonial period and numerous trips to Libyan territory by Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi served as a stabilization of relations between the two parties, which concluded with the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation ratified on 3 February 2009.

¹⁹² The Greenstream is the 520 km long submarine gas pipeline connecting Italy and Libya. Work began in August 2003 and was completed in February 2004. The project was realized by Saipem, an ENI company. Cit in. Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 262-268. Roma. Carocci.

¹⁹³ The amount of trade between Italy and Libya and the amount of trade by products can be found at: ITA - Italian Trade Agency. (n.d.). Agenzia ICE-Statistiche. Available at: https://www.ice.it/it/statistiche/Short_stat.aspx. Last consultation on 22 May 2023.

by Foreign Minister Frattini in a hearing before the parliamentary monitoring committee on the implementation of the Schengen agreement on 24 February, Italy first of all carried out two actions a bilateral step on Libya to ask for the suspension of the retaliatory blockade against all Schengen countries, is a meeting by Minister Frattini himself in Rome with the Libyan foreign minister accompanied by the foreign minister of Malta, a country on which the visa blockade has had serious economic repercussions Following this meeting, talks took place between the Libyan minister, the Spanish minister Moratinos (at the time Spain held the presidency of the union in the first half of 2010) and the Swiss foreign minister, Micheline Calmy-Rey.¹⁹⁴

In the same hearing, Frattini also added:

*«Italy has taken personal and individual steps at bilateral level. In particular, I am referring to a nightly step by President Berlusconi on leader Gaddafi to avoid actions that could have created a serious escalation (as you know, Libyan police were surrounding the Swiss embassy in Tripoli during the night) [...] President Berlusconi called Gaddafi, who promised him that he would not provoke any kind of escalation. On the following day, 22 February, during the Council of Foreign Ministers of the European Union, an agreement was reached for the immediate release of one of the two Swiss nationals, the one acquitted, who had already left Libyan territory for the same of the Council of Ministers. As for the other Swiss citizen, sentenced to four months, Libya undertakes to accommodate him in a guest house, pending the trial of the pardon procedure».*¹⁹⁵

The treatment of Italy during the period of the crisis was rather favorable: according to ANSA on 24 February, only 46 Italians had been repatriated out of a total of 246 arrivals in Libya, while the proportion of repatriations was much higher for other European countries. Further confirmation of the fruitfulness of relations between Italy and Libya is given by the signing on 15 April 2010 of an agreement on visa exemption for diplomatic passports and the signing of an agreement on visa exemption for diplomatic passports by Foreign Minister Frattini and his Libyan counterpart Moussa Koussa. In this crisis, the mediation role played by Italy and Malta in resolving the tensions and their fundamental role in the dialogue with Libya was also recognized by the European Union: the EU commissioner for home affairs at the time, Cecilia Malmstrom, who described Libya as an essential partner, said that the help of Italy and Malta was indispensable to establish cooperation to counter the phenomenon of illegal immigration from Libya to all the countries of the Union.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Iacovino, G., & Centro Studi Internazionali (CeSI). (2010). *I rapporti bilaterali tra Italia e Libia alla luce del trattato di amicizia. In Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale*. Note (pp. 1–4). Camera dei deputati Servizio Studi Dipartimento Affari Esteri. Available at: <https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/repository/affariinternazionali/osservatorio/note/Nota8CeSIRapporti%20Italia%20Libia.pdf>. Last consultation on 14 May 2023.

¹⁹⁵ *Ivi*, p. 1. The decision taken by the Libyan government on entry visas for Schengen citizens, taken in retaliation to the drawing up of a blacklist on which the political and institutional leadership of Tripoli was included, risked damaging the image of the African country and, above all, the credibility of the new diplomatic approach undertaken by Colonel Gaddafi in recent years. An approach that has seen the abandonment of rearmament programs in the field of weapons of mass destruction, the conversion of nuclear research from military to civil, and the beginning of the process of revising the traditional policy of support for terrorism. The 'Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation' between Italy and Libya is one of the fruits of this new attitude, along with a general rapprochement of the African country towards the West.

¹⁹⁶ *Ivi*, p. 3.

6.4 Conclusion

As we have seen, the Italy of the Second Republic was characterized by a radical change in the political landscape, with a consequent and necessary change in the ruling class, and a deep-seated yearning for social change. The desire for change did not, however, affect relations with Libya or the former colony's prominent position in the formulation of Italian foreign policy in the Mediterranean. Rome was one of the first European and Western nations to resume political and economic exchanges between the two sides of the Mediterranean after the sanctions were withdrawn. Regardless of its governing majority, Italy was able to present Libya as a country with which dialogue was imperative in the eyes of its European partners. Urgent dialogue on several dossiers, beginning with the migration dossier and progressing through the security dossier and the energy dossier. The significance of Italy in the détente of relations between the EU and Libya could also be mentioned in the Tripoli-Bern crisis. The latter was pressured by Rome to remove the list of undesirables from Swiss soil.

Nevertheless, despite the apparent détente, critical issues remained in the climate of partnership that the 2008 Treaty had promised to foster. The internal situation within the Libyan regime, marked by poor democratization and human rights violations, was frequently addressed by the leaders of the center-left opposition during the governments of Silvio Berlusconi and during the Colonel's two visits to Italy.

The onset of the economic crisis, coupled with Italy's interest in maintaining stability in the Mediterranean region - an unwavering component of Rome's foreign policy and essential to the continuation of economic and political relations between the two countries - and the obsession with controlling migratory flows, prevented the Italian government from recognizing the changes that were occurring in the region beneath the surface and in an obvious manner. The so-called "Jasmine Revolution" in Tunisia in 2010 and the ouster of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali on 14 January 2011 were the catalyst that ignited the revolt throughout the Arab world, including in Libya.

In the following chapter, we will analyze the end of the Gaddafi regime, focusing on the international alignments at play and, above all, on how Italy, caught in a moment of maximum international weakness, reacted, attempting, but obviously failing, to mitigate the damage that the revolution and NATO intervention wrought on the former colony and Italian foreign policy.

Chapter 7: From the outbreak of the uprising to the collapse of the Qaddafi regime

The history of the Qaddafi regime's downfall, NATO's intervention, and criticisms of the nation's post-2011 revolution reconstruction process will all be covered in this last chapter. Even today, Libya is divided into two entities, Tripolitans and Cyrenaica, which, despite both international and local efforts, are still far from achieving true national reconciliation. Libya is a highly centralized country, not only in terms of the control exercised by Qaddafi's family, lacking any real local administrative structures, and having Tripoli as its only political arena. As we shall see, this process has been slowed down not just by the obvious political impediments in Libya but also by Western dithering and ineptitude. They have in fact failed to reestablish accountability in the freed country of Libya, which has resulted in a proliferation of actors, each with their own ideology, international affiliation, and armed force.

7.1 The insurgency and the establishment of the NTC

The outbreak of the uprising against the Qaddafi regime in Libya in 2011 relates to the general picture of revolutionary street motifs in North Africa and the Middle East, known as the "Arab Spring".¹⁹⁷

As it turned out, Qaddafi's authoritarian policies in Libya clashed with opposition and dissent movements in exile abroad because no form of dissent was permitted inside the nation. These movements criticized the colonel for stealing and spending the state's enormous oil profits with his clan.

Nothing, however, had been predicted in Western analyses of the impending popular uprising against the regime in Tripoli in February 2011 when the protests in Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia, which then swiftly spread to the entire country, and Tahrir Square in Cairo had long since flared up. The regime's survival was linked to significant European interests, from securing oil supplies to reducing the flow of migration from black Africa to the violent repression of the much-feared Islamic movement.¹⁹⁸ Europeans and Americans were given a distorted picture of a Libyan regime that, despite Gaddafi's excesses and verbal outbursts, had widespread support, as evidenced by Tripoli's propaganda, which featured pharaonic development projects like the massive man-made river aqueduct that brought fossil water from the desert to the major coastal cities or the opulent hotels that welcomed the few wealthy Western tourists following Libya's international isolation.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ The protests were framed as moral, ethical. They were an absolute and unabashed rejection of the authoritarianism, corruption and nepotism underlying the power of the state leaders ousted by the Arab Springs. For more information: Emiliani, M. (2020). *Purgatorio arabo: il tradimento delle rivoluzioni in Medio Oriente*. Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa; Campanini, M. (2013). *Le rivolte arabe e l'Islam: la transizione incompiuta*, pp. 102-134. Bologna. Il Mulino.

¹⁹⁸ In the West there was a general aversion to Islamist-driven movements, even the more moderate ones. Yet, as we know, many of these became interpreters of the protest movements in the countries affected by the protests by leading, as in the Egyptian and Tunisian cases, the transition. For more information: Dalacoura, K. (2012). *The 2011 uprisings in the Arab Middle East: political change and geopolitical implications*. *International Affairs*, 88(1), 63–79. JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41428541>. Last consultation on 21 May 2023.

¹⁹⁹ For years, Libya had exploited the narrative of pan-Arabism and its oil wealth to bind the Arab Maghreb countries to itself. However, the lack of support that this very world denied him following the Lockerbie affair and the subsequent fall of the Soviet Union prompted Gaddafi to rediscover relations with the rest of the African continent, not only through the financing of certain "warlords," but also through the creation of economic projects with the Sahara-Sahel countries. As evidence of this interest, we

After all, stopping at statistical data, it could be seen that some six million Libyans had a per capita income enormously higher than citizens of other African states, owned a home, as stipulated by the Green Book doctrine, and were, on average, much more schooled than the inhabitants of the rest of the continent.²⁰⁰

The numerous negative aspects of the Tripoli government were what most people did not know or did not care to know because having an autocrat like Gaddafi as Libya's interlocutor served the interests of the arms industry and oil companies extremely well. First, Human Rights Watch has noted the massive human rights violations that continue to occur. During my three trips to Libya between 2005 and 2008, I discovered that the majority of Libyans were routinely subjected to restrictions by the regime in all spheres of civilian life: freedom of the press was essentially nonexistent because the nation's four major newspapers, which were considered to be the regime's organs, only published laudatory articles on Di Qaddafi's policies, and all news from abroad was routed through the official government news agency Jana; all public demonstrations that were not organized.²⁰¹

Sayf al-Islam, the regime's more appealing face at the time, spearheaded efforts to change this situation by encouraging the wider use of modern media, including the Internet and satellite television, beginning in 2008. Sayf's plan included unblocking the signals that allowed Arabic-language television stations like Al Jazeera to be viewed, once more via satellite, as well as the opening of al-Libbiyya, a private satellite television channel, as well as two private radio stations, Iman and al-Libbiyya, and two newspapers, Qurina and Oea. However, Gaddafi was not pleased with the experiment and less than a year later, in June 2009, he announced the nationalization of radio and television stations as well as the shutdown of independent newspapers. However, the decision to open up the media had already been made, and efforts to control the Internet only succeeded in blocking the websites of international opposition movements. The foundation for an insurgent movement had been built by 2009, when more than 260,000 Libyans, largely young people, had access to the Internet and created protest blogs.²⁰²

The arrest of Fathi Turbil, a young attorney and advocate for the relatives of the Abu Salim prison massacre victims, on February 15, 2011, was the catalyst for the Libyan protest. Several protests were held in Benghazi, al-Bayda', and other cities in Cyrenaica on February 17, which was dubbed "Thursday of Rage" by opposition movements to the regime in exile that had been able to communicate with the protest day's organizers via the Internet, in support of Turbil and other human rights activists detained by Libyan intelligence services. At least 15 people were killed, and hundreds injured in the violent clash between

mention the creation of the Sahelo-Saharan Investment and Trade Bank. For more information: Iacovino, G. (2010). *La Libia e le relazioni con i Paesi africani*. In Centro Studi Internazionali (Ce.S.I.) (Ed.), Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale. Note (pp. 1–3). Camera dei deputati Servizio studi Dipartimento Affari Esteri. https://www.parlamento.it/documenti/repository/affariinternazionali/osservatorio/note/Nota_21_CESI_LibiaAfrica.pdf. Last consultation on 21 May 2023.

²⁰⁰ Kawczynski, D. (2011) *Seeking Gaddafi: Libya, the West and the Arab Spring*, pp. 206-7. Hull. Biteback Publishing; Campanini, M. (2013). *Le rivolte arabe e l'Islam: la transizione incompiuta*, pp. 102-134. Bologna. Il Mulino.

²⁰¹ For more information on practices inside Libyan prisons: Human Rights Watch. (2006, September 12). *Stemming the Flow: Abuses Against Migrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2006/09/12/stemming-flow/abuses-against-migrants-asylum-seekers-and-refugees>. Last consultation on 24 April 2023.

²⁰² Kawczynski, D. (2011) *Seeking Gaddafi: Libya, the West and the Arab Spring*, pp. 214-7. Hull. Biteback Publishing.

protesters and Qaddafi's police, the first casualties in what will turn into a full-fledged civil war between regime supporters and rebels. The rebels will organize as an insurgent movement by forming a National Transitional Council (NTC), based in Benghazi, led by former Libyan justice minister Mustafa 'Abd al-Jalil, who was the first to defect from the regime.²⁰³

At this point, the uprising's stages are condensing: while Sayf al-Islam defends his father's regime in a speech on state television on February 20, 2011, protests also reach the capital, and Benghazi receives the first reports of massacres committed by loyalist forces against rebels in Cyrenaica. The following day, two Libyan pilots ask the Malta government for political asylum in order to defy orders to bomb the Benghazi protesters. This is the first indication of the fierce repression Qaddafi was planning against the rebel forces, who had in the meantime managed to arm themselves. He organised an attack on the Katiba barracks' arsenal, which was reportedly overrun by a car bomb, led by a suicide Islamist named Mahdi Ziyu.²⁰⁴

On Feb. 24, Misrata is the first city in Tripolitania to fall into the hands of the rebels, who begin their march toward Tripoli. From this point on, the fighting takes on the contours of a full-fledged war of military conquest of cities and territories, with a focus on control of oil wells, ports and pipelines. The military operations are accompanied by a strong political action aimed at creating an institutional body of the rebel forces, which will later be the NTC, chaired by 'Abd al-Jalil and initially composed of 31 members representing civilian and military representatives of the liberated municipalities, as well as prominent figures of the new Libyan political landscape, encapsulating the different souls of the protest against the Qaddafi regime. These include, in addition to President 'Abd al-Jalil, Mahmud Jibril, head of the interim government until the colonel's death and former chairman of Libya's National Council for Economic Development, who switched to the rebels from the beginning; 'Abd al-Hafiz Ghuqa, NTC vice-chairman, liberal leftist, renowned Benghazi bar lawyer with expertise in human rights protection; 'Ali Tarhuni, NTC finance chief, economist in exile in the United States since 1981, convicted in absentia by the Qaddafi regime;²⁰⁵ Sulayman Mahmud, army commander of the rebel forces after the killing of General al-Ubaydi in late July, one of the first other officers to leave the regime, under whom he was in charge of the Tubruq garrison. 'Abd al-Hakim Bilhaj, Finally, who officially became in charge of the rebel forces in Tripoli and formerly known as Abu 'Abdallah al-Sadiq, IS the most disturbing figure in the NTC. Bilhaj, in fact, served in radical Afghan Islamic groups during the time of Taliban rule and is nicknamed the Afghan for this reason. He was also a member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, affiliated with the Al Qaeda network.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Micheletta, L. (Ed.). (2017). *Riflessioni sulla crisi libica del 2011: Guerra, economia e migrazioni*, pp. 15-19. (Vol. 20). Roma. Sapienza Università Editrice.

²⁰⁴ For more information on Mahdi Ziyu's case: McGreal, C. (2011). *Dispatch from Libya: the courage of ordinary people standing up to Gaddafi*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/23/libya-benghazi-gaddafi-revolution>. Last consultation on 24 April 2023.

²⁰⁵ Cresti, F., & Cricco, M. (2012). *Storia della Libia contemporanea: dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, pp. 273-281. Roma. Carocci.

²⁰⁶ Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia: un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, pp. 291-333. Bologna. Società editrice il Mulino, Spa.

These figures were joined on November 24, 2011, by members of the new interim government who were sworn in in Tripoli, with one hand placed on the Quran, before NTC Chairman Mustafa 'Abd al-Jalil. Among them are to be mentioned the new chief executive 'Abd al-Rahim al-Kib, Hailing from one of the most influential families in Sabrata, Tripolitania, who is an electrical engineer who fled in 1976 from Libya to the United States, where he devoted himself to an academic career, becoming a professor at the University of Alabama; 'Abd al-Rahman Ben Yizza, the NTC's New Minister of Petroleum, who was for years the operational chairman of the management committee of ENI's Libyan office; Usama al-Juwayli, Minister of Defense, former head of the military council in Zintan, who was responsible for the capture of Sayf al-Islam and for this I have promoted on the ground to head of one of the most sensitive departments in the new Libyan government.

7.2 *The international appeal and Western intervention*

The international community started to respond as tensions in the nation increased. French President Nicolas Sarkozy was the first to advocate for a military intervention against the Qaddafi government. There is still much discussion over his motivations. The aim to quiet Qaddafi in order to hide the illegal funding of Sarkozy's election campaign, which came from the Libyan state itself, is the most frequently mentioned.²⁰⁷ In 2013 and 2019 French journalistic investigations brought to light testimony of the minds confirming the existence of such funding.²⁰⁸ It is still unclear how Sarkozy could have thought a Gaddafi fighting for his life wouldn't leak the precise information the French president was trying to maintain a secret. The French activism was motivated by deeper political factors in addition to potential personal ones. These included the desire to forge consensus in an all-domestic game before the 2012 presidential elections, which, as we know, were not enough to prevent Francois Hollande's victory, and the desire to regain France's position as a major player in a chessboard where Sarkozy made a serious error by siding with Ben Ali shortly before the latter was removed from the Tunisian presidency.²⁰⁹ These reasons of the president were compounded by the anxieties of many French politicians, intellectuals, and commentators about the violence perpetrated by Qaddafi against his own people.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ The internet, as always, went wild on this front with a series of viral videos about the real reasons for the war, for example, Nova Lectio. (2020). *Com'è scoppiata la guerra in Libia? (vera spiegazione)* [MP4]. In YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-yTupRY_ak. Last consultation on 23 April 2023; Capire il Mondo. (2021). *LIBIA 2011: Inchiesta su una guerra civile (Parte 1)* [MP4]. In YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaCncxf9cl0>. Last consultation on 24 April 2023.

²⁰⁸ Graciet, C. (2013). *Sarkozy-Kadhafi. Histoire secrète d'une trahison: Histoire secrète d'une trahison*, pp. 76-82. Parigi. Seuil; Arfi, F., Collombat, B., Despratx, M., Gueguen, E., & Le Guilcher, G. (2019). *Sarkozy-Kadhafi. Des billets et des bombes*, pp. 86-92. Parigi. Delcourt.

²⁰⁹ Northern, A. R., & Pack, J. (2013). *The role of outside actors. The 2011 Libyan uprisings and the struggle for the post-Qadhafi future*, pp. 113-149. Berlino. Springer; Palma, L. (2020). *Il nostro miglior nemico. Gheddafi, l'Italia e il Mediterraneo dalla Guerra Fredda alle Rivolte Arabe*, p. 78. In *Tripoli, Italia. La politica di potenza nel Mediterraneo e la crisi dell'ordine internazionale*. Roma. Castelvecchi Editore.

²¹⁰ Weighill, R., & Gaub, F. (2018). *The Cauldron: NATO's campaign in Libya*, pp. 115-123. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

However, France couldn't have started a military involvement in Libya by herself. Sarkozy was followed by British Prime Minister David Cameron nearly immediately. Several members of his government, including Foreign Secretary William Hague, harshly criticized his choice because Britain had significant interests in Libya that were all at risk in the case of a regime change.²¹¹ British diplomacy had suspected that Cameron was competing with Sarkozy for leadership of European foreign policy, although the pressure exerted by the large expatriate Libyan community in the UK should not be forgotten.²¹² In any case, the rift within the British government produced some paralysis for a few days.

Hillary Clinton, the secretary of state, and Samantha Power, the president's foreign policy advisor, were in favor of intervention in Libya, while Defence Secretary Robert Gates was adamantly opposed and provided a memo outlining at least six reasons why it was unwise: Lack of a clear political goal; ignorance of the rebel movement's true nature; worry that another Muslim nation would be invaded, following Afghanistan and Iraq; potential instability caused by an intervention in Libya's neighbors; need to avoid diverting resources away from Afghanistan; and worry that the intervention would turn into a protracted war.²¹³ Hillary Clinton's emails leaked by Wikileaks reveal that aides to the secretary of state measure her on the risk of creating a power vacuum in Libya.²¹⁴

Even on the non-Western front, with regard to Moscow's position-characterized by a newfound assertiveness in foreign policy-President Dimitri Medvedev remained possibilistic with respect to international intervention, while Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was opposed to it.²¹⁵ In Germany, a similar rift pitted Angela Merkel's chancellery, determined to join the international community so as not to isolate Germany, against her foreign minister Guido Westerwelle.²¹⁶ Italy, finally navigated by sight, with president of the republic Giorgio Napolitano and foreign minister Franco Frattini more inclined to accept intervention, while prime minister Berlusconi and defense minister Ignazio La Russa were more cautious.²¹⁷

In short, as was probably inevitable, a crisis such as the Libyan one determines a more or less sharp rift in all Western governments and beyond. What then determined the broad front that then moved against Colonel Qaddafi?

²¹¹ Northern, A. R., & Pack, J. (2013). *The role of outside actors*, p. 120. Berlino. Springer.

²¹² Libyan state assets have been estimated at around \$130billion according to estimates by the Central Bank and the Libyan Sovereign Wealth Fund (based in London). In addition to Bp and Shell in Cyrenaica-where French, American, German and Chinese consortiums also operate-the British have the petrodollar financial asset to defend. For more information: Negri, A., & Parsi, V. E. (2016). *La grande spartizione della Libia: un bottino da almeno 130 miliardi*. Il Sole 24 Ore. https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/mondo/2016-03-06/la-grande-spartizione-114530.shtml?uuid=ACe75oiC&refresh_ce=1. Last consultation on 12 April 2023.

²¹³ Chivvis, C. S. (2013). *Toppling Qaddafi: Libya and the limits of liberal intervention*, pp. 47-52. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

²¹⁴ Wikileaks, Email C05780053, Sullivan a Clinton, Feb. 27, 2011, available at <http://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/emailid/6604>. Last consultation on 23 April 2023.

²¹⁵ Weighill, R., & Gaub, F. (2018). *The Cauldron: NATO's campaign in Libya*, p. 157. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

²¹⁶ Ivi, pp. 48-49, 67; Keukeleire, S., & Delreux, T. (2014). *The foreign policy of the European Union*, p.167. Londra. Bloomsbury Publishing.

²¹⁷ Biagini, A. F. (2020). *Tripoli, Italia. La politica di potenza nel Mediterraneo e la crisi dell'ordine internazionale*, pp. 87-94. Roma. Castelvechi Editore

There were primarily two components. First, Gaddafi's own obstinacy in disregarding international pleas. On February 26, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1970, which emphasized the Libyan government's duty to protect its citizens, enacted an arms embargo on Libya, and demanded that the regime be subject to international sanctions for its repressive response to protests on the streets.²¹⁸ Qaddafi remained impassive and in those very days launched his counterattack.

The Arab world provided the second push for intervention, which was possibly the most important one. Human rights abuses in Libya were denounced by the Arab League, the African Union, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, which led to the gradual removal of diplomatic delegations from Libya from half of the Arab world.²¹⁹ Qatar, in fact, would be the first Arab country to recognize the NTC on March 28.²²⁰ Saudi imams launched calls and prayers for Qaddafi's downfall, describing him as a bloodthirsty dictator is an enemy of Islam.²²¹

In response to near-unanimous appeals from governments, media, and activist organizations in the Middle East, and inspired by the Responsibility to Protect doctrine adopted by the United Nations in 2005, the United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 1973 on March 18. Russia and China, as well as Germany (then a rotating Security Council member), abstained, permitting the resolution to pass.²²² The evening before the UN vote, a sort of impromptu council of war took place in the foyer of the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, where Napolitano Berlusconi and La Russa (along with advisers Gianni Letta and Bruno Archi) were attending the 150th anniversary of Italian unification celebrations. Frattini joined the group via phone from New York, and within a few fraught minutes, a decision was made regarding whether or not to support military intervention in Libya. Everyone was aware that Italy had much to lose from a regime destabilization, but the Atlanticist position of not opposing a UN decision almost single-handedly prevailed. The authorization for the use of Italian bases for air operations and then Italy's actual participation in the conflict occurred during one of the Berlusconi government's moments of maximum weakness, as previously reported.²²³

The international community's decision to intervene in Libya has frequently been attributed to either altruism or unscrupulous, neo-imperialist machinations. either black or white. Perhaps it is less reassuring for proponents of both positions to acknowledge that legitimate humanitarian concerns coexisted with opportunistic calculations and substantive geopolitical assessments, and that Arab countries were among the

²¹⁸ UN Security Council, Resolution 1970, Feb. 26, 2011, available at <http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/s/res/1970-%282011%29>. Last consultation on 2 May 2023.

²¹⁹ Nesi, G. (2011). *Recognition of The Libyan National Transitional Council: When, How and Why*, pp. 45-59. The Italian Yearbook of International Law Online, 21(1). Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274358429_RECOGNITION_OF_THE_LIBYAN_NATIONAL_TRANSITIONAL_COUNCIL_WHEN_HOW_AND_WHY. Last consultation on 22 May 2023.

²²⁰ Northern, A. R., & Pack, J. (2013). *The role of outside actors*, p. 123. Berlino. Springer.

²²¹ Weighill, R., & Gaub, F. (2018). *The Cauldron: NATO's campaign in Libya*, pp.45-47. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

²²² UN Security Council, Resolution 1973, Mar. 18, 2011, available at <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/s/res/1973-%282011%29>. Last consultation on 22 April 2023; Fabbrini, S. (2014). *The European Union and the Libyan crisis*, pp. 177-195. International politics, 51(2).

²²³ Diodato, E., & Niglia, F. (2018). *Berlusconi 'The diplomat': Populism and foreign policy in Italy*, pp. 169-190. Berlino. Springer.

intervention's most vocal supporters. Importantly, the UN mandate for international intervention did not call for the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime, only an end to attacks against civilians.²²⁴

At 5:45 p.m. on March 19, French Rafale aircraft conducted their first attack on Qaddafi's troops on the fringes of Benghazi. It marked the start of Operation "Harmattan." Soon after, Britain launched Operation "Ellamy," Canada launched Operation "Mobile", and America launched Operation "Odyssey Dawn." Obama had finally determined that the United States could not yield to the appeals of so many Muslim nations, but he remained convinced that Washington should remain in the background: this was a European-led international coalition in which the United States would play a supporting role.²²⁵ Qaddafi's advance on Benghazi was halted by the initial airstrikes, which were followed by a barrage of missiles fired from ships and submarines off the Libyan coast. At this juncture, the coalition proceeded to establish a no-fly zone, achieving air superiority by neutralizing the Libyan air force. On March 23, the objective was declared accomplished.²²⁶ But within days, the coalition encountered logistical and command and control issues, requiring it to operate with four discrete chains of command.²²⁷ Then there was another problem, as revealed by General Vincenzo Camporini:

*«L'operazione libica fu un'ottima occasione per apprezzare le deficienze militari europee gli europei non avevano abbastanza aerei per il rifornimento in volo, né da combattimento, e mancavano anche piloti, munizionamento e intelligence satellitare».*²²⁸

Thus, the Libyan government was able to repel insurgent counterattacks and regain previously lost ground. At this juncture, it was necessary for the United States to assume a greater role within the coalition, guaranteeing up to 80 percent of air-to-air refueling missions and supplying the allies with the majority of targets via their advanced satellite systems.²²⁹ At this point the NATO operation began to take hold. But it was by no means an easy option.

Within the Atlantic Council, the Brussels-based NATO decision-making assembly, only Britain and Italy were in favor of placing the Atlantic Alliance hat over European operations.²³⁰ As for the military organs,

²²⁴ Micheletta, L. (Ed.). (2017). *Riflessioni sulla crisi libica del 2011: Guerra, economia e migrazioni*, pp. 37-42. (Vol. 20). Roma. Sapienza Università Editrice.

²²⁵ Wehrey F. (2018). *The burning shores: inside the battle for the new Libya*, p. 43. New York. Farrar Straus & Giroux; Weighill, R., & Gaub, F. (2018). *The Cauldron: NATO's campaign in Libya*, p. 71. Oxford. Oxford University Press; Sanger, D. E. (2012). *Confront and conceal: Obama's secret wars and surprising use of American power*, p. 345. New York. Crown.

²²⁶ BBC News. (2011). *Libya: Air force "no longer exists as a fighting force"* [MP4]. In BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-12840437>. Last consultation on 23 May 2023.

²²⁷ Michaels, J. H. (2013). *Able but not willing: A critical assessment of NATO's Libya intervention*. In *The NATO Intervention in Libya*, pp. 17-40. Londra. Routledge.

²²⁸ Interview with Gen. Vincenzo Camporini, Dec. 19, 2019. Cit. in Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia: un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, pp. 291-333. Bologna. Società editrice il Mulino, Spa.

²²⁹ Fabbrini, S. (2014). *The European Union and the Libyan crisis*, pp. 177-195. International politics, 51(2).

²³⁰ Eastern European member states believed that the alliance's task remained primarily to contain Russian threats, highlighted by the recent cyberattacks suffered by Estonia in 2006 and Moscow's war against Georgia in 2008. Turkey was opposed to intervention against a Muslim country. France was uncomfortable both politically and from a technical standpoint, having rejoined NATO's integrated command in 2009 after leaving in the 1960s; it was therefore less familiar with allied military procedures. Finally, the

the Supreme Command was entirely preoccupied with the war in Afghanistan, and Joint Force Command Naples (JFC), the naval command tasked with managing the Mediterranean crisis, had an embarrassing lack of information on Libya, making military planning risky. The geopolitical myth that NATO intended to overthrow the Tripoli regime and had been preparing for military action for years is untrue²³¹: the Alliance was so unprepared for the war in Libya that, when it became involved, the JFC's operational headquarters had to be physically constructed.²³² Therefore, NATO's involvement was dictated solely by military considerations; attempts were made to introduce the Alliance solely from the perspective of the administration of ongoing operations, with no political connection to what was occurring on Libyan soil.

This mechanism would have both positive and negative effects. It allowed for a remarkable speed of action: by March 31, 2011, NATO had undertaken command of all operations and merged them under the name "Unified Protector" (OUP).²³³ However, this mechanism enabled the majority of allies to distance themselves from the Libyan issue. As a consequence, there was a dearth of aircraft. Therefore, NATO's Arab allies, particularly the UAE and Qatar, who were granted entire autonomy, were given a larger role. It was a decision fraught with grave repercussions.²³⁴

Maintaining political consensus within such a diverse group implied, therefore, two things: first, the operation lacked a clearly defined end state (strategic purpose). In three weeks, as many as four operational plans for OUP were developed, but it wasn't until April 14 that a set of cease-fire clauses were formulated: an end to all threats to civilians, the withdrawal of Qaddafi's forces, and free access for the Libyan people to humanitarian assistance. As we can see, NATO has always attempted to maintain a degree of neutrality, as the stipulated clauses included the eventual possibility of striking the insurgents if they failed to comply with the cease-fire. Furthermore, humanitarian logic led to a stricter interpretation of UN Resolution 1973 in the passage where it explicitly forbade occupying forces. In theory, this passage left open the possibility of deploying troops to Libya to maintain the cease-fire, but NATO was given directives such as "no boots on the ground".²³⁵ Given the need to avoid allegations of neocolonialism, this made OUP especially sensitive.

bloc of countries traditionally hostile to military ventures, such as the Baltic states, Germany and Spain agreed with France that the alliance did not enjoy a favorable reputation in the Arab world. For more information: Laity, M. (2014). *NATO and Libya: The Dawn of European Security Management, a Warning, or Business as Usual? Strategy in NATO: Preparing for an Imperfect World*, pp. 91-107. Londra. Algarve MacMillan.

²³¹ M.D. Nazemroaya (2012), *La Globalizzazione della NATO. Guerre imperialiste e globalizzazioni armate*, p. 226. Bologna. Arianna Editrice.

²³² Wehrey, F. (2018). *The burning shores: inside the battle for the new Libya*, p. 47. New York. Farrar Straus & Giroux; Weighill, R., & Gaub, F. (2018). *The Cauldron: NATO's campaign in Libya*, pp. 33-36. Oxford. Oxford University Press; Laity, M. (2014). *NATO and Libya: The Dawn of European Security Management, a Warning, or Business as Usual? Strategy in NATO: Preparing for an Imperfect World*, p.100. Londra. Algarve MacMillan.

²³³ Schinella, A. M. (2019). *Bombs without Boots: The Limits of Airpower*, p. 253. Washington. Brookings Institution Press.

²³⁴ Libya has been turned into a territory of confrontation between two opposing visions of Islam. The Qatari version, close to the circles of political Islam has repeatedly subsidized-without making a secret of it-militias of the Salafist stamp. In contrast to Doha, the Emiratis, behind what would later be Cyrenaica's strongman - Field Marshal Haftar - along with Egypt, would finance anti-Islamist paramilitary groups. For more information: Savina, M. (2020). *Gli EAU in Libia: interessi e progetti di espansione*. In OSMED - Osservatorio sul Mediterraneo. <https://www.osmed.it/2020/06/17/gli-eau-in-libia-interessi-e-progetti-di-espansione/>. Last reference April 24, 2023.

²³⁵ Schinella, A. M. (2019). *Bombs without Boots: The Limits of Airpower*, pp. 261-266. Washington. Brookings Institution Press.

However, no one addressed the most difficult aspect of the ongoing conflict: the possibility that Qaddafi would not accept the proposed terms. In other words, the longer the conflict persisted, the greater the threat posed by OUP's limitations and contradictions to the operation.

The initial operations were designed to repel Qaddafi's attacks on the cities of Misrata and Agedabia in order to guarantee the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians and the destruction of the regime's military infrastructure. After that, between April and June 2011, there was an impasse that many described as strategic, during which both old and new disagreements reemerged.²³⁶ The humanitarian emergency in the cities locked in the regime's vise had ended and, as we learn from Hilary Clinton's Wikileaks-revealed emails, this factor now offered little foothold for the continuation of hostilities.²³⁷ The Italians pointed this out, citing, among other reasons, the need not to completely alienate relations with Moscow. Only the British and French were, more than ever, determined to carry out the operation by keeping up the pressure on the regime's troops.²³⁸

The objective was also carried out through unilateral actions - in which Rome also participated - such as infiltrating raiders in order to locate target infrastructure on behalf of the Alliance and training rebel troops.²³⁹ In this the Allies were also aided by their Arab partners, foremost among them Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, who also supplied tens of thousands of tons of armaments.

However, and this is where the gravity of the lack of a plan and actual coordination of the operation becomes apparent, this aid was not delivered to the NTC, but rather to rebel units ideologically aligned with Doha or Abu Dhabi. The former primarily equipped Islamist militias close to jihadist circles, while the latter armed competing factions ideologically opposed to political Islam.²⁴⁰ Sudan in the south and Egypt in Cyrenaica carried out comparable actions. The result of structuring these relationships was detrimental over the medium term: latent but robust patronage networks were constructed that strengthened peripheral political circles at the expense of unifying ones, thereby tying particular Libyan militias to the interests of foreign actors. This permitted NATO to withdraw from the post-liberation crisis that gripped the country.

As soon as Tripoli became the target of the revolution, the fragmentation of the chain of command was manifest. Here, both the National Transitional Council and the Qatari and Emirati officers accompanying the militias lost operational control.

²³⁶ Ivi, p. 259; Weighill, R., & Gaub, F. (2018). *The Cauldron: NATO's campaign in Libya*, pp. 112, 127, 161. Oxford. Oxford University Press; Chivvis, C. S. (2013). *Toppling Qaddafi: Libya and the limits of liberal intervention*, p. 117. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

²³⁷ Wikileaks, Email C05782459, Sullivan a Clinton, Mar. 29, 2011, available on <https://www.wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/?q=libya>

²³⁸ Agence France Presse. (2011). *Libye: division des Alliés de l'Otan sur la poursuite des frappes*. L'express. Available at: https://www.lexpress.fr/monde/libye-division-des-allies-de-l-otan-sur-la-poursuite-des-frappes_1005034.html. Last consultation on 25 April 2023.

²³⁹ Gaiani, G. (2011). *Tra le forze speciali in Libia 40 uomini del Col Moschin*. Il Sole 24 Ore. Available at: https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2011-10-15/forze-speciali-libia-uomini-081302_PRN.shtml. Last consultation 2 May 2023

²⁴⁰ Northern, A. R., & Pack, J. (2013). *The role of outside actors*, cit., p. 123, 137. Berlino. Springer; Lacher, W. (2020). *Libya's fragmentation: Structure and process in violent conflict*, pp- 122-125. Londra. Bloomsbury Publishing.

The impending collapse of the regime finally prompted the allies to consider the future of Libya after the fall of Qaddafi. The objective was to prevent armed militias from escalating the situation. NATO and even the EU drew up plans for Libyan security reform and the demobilization of militias, but the NTC's insistence on the non-necessity of an international body to manage the demobilization, coupled with the United States' reluctance to launch a new peacekeeping mission, caused the Europeans to withdraw from the arduous task. Thus, the 16 September 2009 UN resolution maintained the no-fly zone and arms embargo and established UNSMIL, a mission dedicated to the reconstruction of Libya, but made no mention of a stabilization force.²⁴¹

Muhammar Gaddafi was captured and murdered in cold blood in Sirte on 20 October 2011, where he had sought refuge with a group of loyalists, including his son Mu'tasim, after the fall of Tripoli on August 22 and Banu Walid on October 17. No one will be able to judge Muhammar Gaddafi.

According to the most credible reconstructions, the column of vehicles escorting Qaddafi and his son was intercepted by French NATO jets and a U.S. drone, which purportedly struck the vehicles at the front of the convoy, preventing the others from continuing. Qaddafi, wounded in the legs, was rumored to have sought refuge in a tunnel for irrigating fields in order to evade the rebels pursuing his Jeep, which had turned back towards Sirte after the bombardment. The rebel militias then surrounded Qaddafi, extracted him alive from the tunnel, and executed him.²⁴²

The remainder is well-known and will remain in the historical memory of Libya and the entire world: the video of the execution, filmed from one or more cell phones, is circulated by international media, and, a few hours later, his son's bearded and beaten body is also shown. The body of Gaddafi, which was brutally trampled by the hysterical crowd, will be reassembled in an ambulance and transported to the mortuary at Misrata hospital. After the autopsy, he will be buried at a secluded location in the desert according to traditional Islamic rites.

7.3 A challenging transition

The Libya that arose the day following its liberation was a divided nation. In terms of damage to infrastructure and natural resources, it was in a stronger position than other countries just emerging from conflict: there had been no oil well fires, water pipes had suffered only superficial damage, and mass displacement had been avoided in the majority of cities. In addition, Libya had an interim government that was drafting an interim constitution in preparation for free elections.

²⁴¹ For more information: UNSMIL - United Nation Support Mission in Libya. (2011). UNSMIL. Available at: <https://unsmil.unmissions.org>. Last consultation on 3 May 2023.

²⁴² Emiliani, M. (2020). *Purgatorio arabo: il tradimento delle rivoluzioni in Medio Oriente*, pp.138-145. Bari. Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa.

At the same time, however, the security sector had collapsed; Libyans, including those who had won the conflict, were experiencing a mixture of elation and fear.²⁴³ Politically, the end of the conflict resulted in a radicalization of centrifugal and localist tendencies, reflecting not only the traditional ethnic and tribal visions of Libya, but also the limited scope of the various insurgencies that had been the true backbone of the so-called revolution. In each of these locales, one or more militias were in danger of acquiring a monopoly of force, and in Tripoli, the institutions themselves, despite the NTC's ostensible function as a superordinate body.²⁴⁴

In this context, international support was essential to prevent division and fragility from prevailing over collective optimism and solidarity. Here, a problem that persists to this day arose: who was responsible for what? Officially, the operation in Libya had been handed over to the United Nations, and the UN would continue to be tasked with managing the reconstruction.²⁴⁵ However, the unwillingness of the Libyans to tolerate international interference in the new phase of state-building, coupled with the fact that the UN mission lacked military personnel and had enormous budget issues, prevented UNSMIL from operating effectively. We will never know whether the presence of an international force would have compelled the militias to disarm or at least acted as a deterrent to their desire for power, as claimed by the majority of protagonists and observers of this affair; or whether, on the contrary, such a foreign military presence would have encouraged a violent acceleration even faster than what actually transpired, as speculated by the leader of the Libyan National Front, Mohammed Ali Abdallah, and some Western analysts.²⁴⁶ What we do know is that, without a professional military force behind it, the Libyan interim government had to entrust the task of maintaining order and security to the same militias that were theoretically supposed to be demobilized.

As elections approached, extremist groups acted with increasing freedom, and anarchy was exacerbated by the increasing politicization of militias. In the West, the 7 July 2012 elections came as an unexpected surprise. In a country where political participation had been nonexistent for nearly half a century, nearly three million people, a large proportion of whom were women, cast ballots, granting moderate parties approximately fifty percent of the vote. Their primary adversaries were the Associated Parties, the Muslim Brotherhood, and various minor parties. Following what appeared to be a triumph for liberal, secular, and moderate forces, there was a chorus of congratulations from the United States and the European Union, as well as enthusiasm from

²⁴³ Among the causes of this bewilderment Libyans pointed to the lack of police; the presence of militias and armed groups without discipline; common criminals armed to the teeth; and Islamic extremists. For more information: Abou-Khalil, N., & Hargreaves, L. (2015). *Perceptions of Security in Libya*, p. 14. Washington. United States Institute of Peace.

²⁴⁴ Cole, P., & McQuinn, B. (Eds.). (2015). *The Libyan revolution and its aftermath*, pp. 124-133. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

²⁴⁵ A NATO mission sent at the end of the summer to ascertain the post-conflict situation in Libya concluded that the country needed immediate and decisive security measures, without which the entire reconstruction process was in grave danger: the possibility of Libya relapsing into internecine warfare was estimated at 44%. For more information: Choria, E. (2013). *NATO's Libya Intervention and the Continued Case for a Responsibility to Rebuild*, pp.120-134. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

²⁴⁶ Becker, J., & Shane, S. (2016). *In Their Own Words: The Libya Tragedy Part 1 - Part2*. The New York Times, The Libya Gamble. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/02/28/us/politics/libya-quotes.html>. Last consultation on 16 April 2023.

international analysts. According to many, Libya was even ahead of Tunisia in the democratization process, where lessons had favored Islamists.²⁴⁷

However, the impunity with which armed groups had interfered with the democratic process, with neither the NTC nor the EU monitoring the regularity of the proceedings having the audacity to intervene, had by then triggered a perverse mechanism of delegitimization of all other forms of force. Thus began the trend of terrorist attacks against political opponents, journalists, and diplomatic missions abroad in Libya. U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens was slain in one of these, which occurred on September 11, 2012.²⁴⁸

The General National Congress (GNC), the body delegated by the National Transitional Council (NTC) to write a new constitution and appoint an interim government, nominated Ali Zeidan (Nov. 14, 2012), a human rights activist with progressive and liberal ideas who was highly regarded by the United States, as prime minister. However, the militias and the irreparable fragmentation of the Libyan security apparatus led to Zeidan's ouster on March 11, 2014.

Out of the chaos that ruled the country emerged a figure with ties to the former regime: former Qaddafi commander Khalifa Haftar. He became famous following the launch of a military operation - which he called Operation "Dignity"²⁴⁹ - conducted in Benghazi against the Islamist group Ansar al-Sharia, Haftar increased his credibility with the ideological and material support of General Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi, who a few months earlier had led a military coup in Egypt violently ousting the Muslim Brotherhood-led government. Additionally, Emiratis supported Haftar's enterprise. These elements shared a nearly existential antipathy towards political Islam. By including every Islamist force among his enemies, Haftar united them, but he also succeeded in channeling to himself anti-Islamist militias outside Cyrenaica, particularly those linked to Tripolitan circles, thanks in part to an increasing number of politicians, including former prime minister Zeidan, who are more or less explicitly supportive of the new leader. Similarly, the coalition of Islamist forces started receiving funds and munitions from foreign powers, particularly Qatar, which had supported Islamist militias in 2011 along with Sudan and Turkey. In Libya loomed the most significant proxy conflict in the Middle East in recent years.²⁵⁰

In this climate of tensions and clashes, the 2014 elections were a flop: with a turnout of 18%, they were immediately declared illegitimate by Islamist forces, which had suffered a new defeat. Without waiting for

²⁴⁷There were numerous voices in Europe, from both moderate and near far-right circles, about the unreliability of the Muslim Brotherhood about the pursuit of democratic freedoms. The victory of the moderate Islamist party Ennahda in Tunisia raised several concerns, for example. The victory of secular parties in Libya seems to banish the specter of political Islam. For more information: Lambsdorff, A. G. (2012). *European Union Election Assessment Team to Libya General National Congress Election 2012 Mandate of the EU Election Assessment Team*. Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/eueom/missions/2012/libya/pdf/eueat-fact-sheet-21062012_en.pdf. Last consultation on 26 April 2023.

²⁴⁸Stevens, J. C. (2012). *Murder in Benghazi*. The New York Times, Opinion. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/opinion/murder-in-benghazi.html>. Last consultation on 24 April 2023.

²⁴⁹ Mezzofiore, G. (2014). *Libya Military Coup Fears: General Khalifa Haftar Calls for Suspension of Parliament*. International Business Times, Politics. Available at: <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/libya-military-coup-fears-general-khalifa-haftar-calls-suspension-parliament-1436410>. Last consultation on 12 May 2023.

²⁵⁰ Lacher, W. (2020). *Libya's fragmentation: Structure and process in violent conflict*, p. 140. Londra. Bloomsbury Publishing.

the formation of an executive hostile to them, Islamist groups launched Operation "Libyan Dawn"²⁵¹ June 13, 2014: attacked militias close to General Haftar that controlled Tripoli airport, officially ushering in Libya's second civil war. As the level of violence escalated with the invasion of government quarters, the elected parliament (the House of Representatives) fled the capital for Tobruk. From there, a new government led by Abdullah Al-Thani was appointed. On August 23, "Libyan Dawn" forces were successful in expelling Haftar's militias from the capital. Two days later, they declared the restoration, in Tripoli, of the previous parliament, the General National Congress, which promoted its own government, which was subsequently entrusted to Khalifa Ghwell. Now, Libya had two parliaments and two governments, each supported by a distinct coalition of militias, and each accused the other of attempting to defund the 2011 revolution.

7.4 Conclusions

This chapter concludes with a concise discussion of the international community's response to the 2014 summer escalation. Despite the withdrawal of various diplomatic personnel and staff from European and United Nations issues, the European Commission produced a document emphasizing the urgency of assisting the United Nations in its mediation efforts to produce a government of national unity and an end to hostilities. Thus, the paper reaffirmed the UN's leadership role in managing the crisis but urged the EU to adopt a mechanism for monitoring the eventual armistice in Libya, which is a clear plan for implementing the UN's eventual agreement. The document proposed dispatching a multinational force to monitor strategic assets and infrastructure, as well as implementing a sanctions regime for any agreement violators. However, these were sensible proposals that the United Nations did not wish to adopt for fear of stifling negotiations.

The Libyan crisis was therefore debated in diplomatic groups comprised of the permanent members of the Security Council, Italy, Germany, Spain, the EU, and UNSMIL, to which Russia and China were later added. In 2015, international actors were consistent in denying legitimacy to any parallel economic institution created in Cyrenaica to make that region economically autonomous; and they did the same with respect to the reinstalled General National Congress, declaring that the legitimate parliament was the assembly that emerged from the most recent elections (the House of Representatives). This convinced both coalitions that they could not be truly independent and could not receive international recognition unless they formed a coalition government.²⁵²

²⁵¹ The Islamist groups against which Haftar launched Operation Dignity were organized within a counter-operation named "Libyan Dawn." This coalition of militias supported the government in Tripoli, represented by the New General National Congress. For more information: Internazionale. (2015). *I gruppi armati che controllano la Libia*. Internazionale, 2. Available at: <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/2015/02/20/i-gruppi-armati-che-controllano-la-libia>. Last consultation on 13 May 2023.

²⁵² Implementing Decision of 28.11.2016 on the Annual Action Programme 2016 Part 2 in favour of Libya to be financed from the General Budget of the EU, (2016). Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2017-04/c_2016_7802_libya_aap_2016_part_2_commission_implementing_decision_en.pdf. Last consultation on 28 April 2023.

It was under these circumstances that it became possible to sign an agreement, that of Skhirat, Morocco, on December 16, 2014. The UN favored as its new prime minister a semi-unknown and by many accounts politically weak man, Fayez al-Serraj.²⁵³ In an effort to expedite the process, the new U.N. appointee, Martin Kobler, and he decided not to seek the approval of the existing Libyan institutions, but rather to have approximately 20 Libyan politicians sign the agreement individually, with the expectation that this would lead to institutional ratification. The entire accord was a diplomatic gamble in this regard.

Under the provisions of the agreement, the rival governments of Ghwell and Al-Thani would be replaced by a new government of national accord led by Serraj. The old General National Congress was deemed to have expired, and the House of Representatives was supposed to ratify the agreement, but the lack of an international mechanism for monitoring the ceasefire, and especially a mechanism for implementing the agreement, with UN-approved punitive measures against those who undermined the peace, proved to be the greatest flaw of the diplomatic initiative in Skhirat.²⁵⁴

Although Haftar himself approved the agreement, it was never ratified by the House of Representatives. The text of the agreement attributed the appointment of the commander of the Libyan armed forces to the Serraj-led presidential council, whereas Haftar had himself been appointed Field Marshal and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces by the House of Representatives. Haftar had no intention of submitting to a civilian authority in Tripoli that had the power to remove him from office immediately. I therefore use the House to deny the Government of National Accord the legitimacy it required to expand its influence throughout the nation.

In the next chapter - the paper's conclusion - we will continue to analyze the Italian positions after the Libyan crisis in light of what, to this day, remain for Rome to be the most important lines of information in its foreign policy towards its former colony: the energy market and the management of migratory flows. The dissolution of the "coalition of the willing" that toppled Qaddafi in 2011 without a plan for the country's future, combined with the increased interference of external actors - such as Russia and Turkey - contributed to the progressive sense of Italian disorientation on the management of the Libyan crisis, resulting in our marginalization in the Libyan scenario.

²⁵³ Lacher, W. (2018). *Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Libya Case Study*, p. 14. Londra. UKAID Stabilization Unit, February.

²⁵⁴ Sizer, L. (2014). *Rewriting Libya's post-revolution narrative*, pp. 27-38. Bruxelles. Atlantic Council, 16.

Conclusion. Tripoli, bel suol d'amore!

In the previous chapter, we left behind a Libya that was on the verge of dissolution with two parliaments, two governments and several militias on the ground. The situation - long curbed by state institutions, both under the monarchical period and under the Gaddafi dictatorship - that saw the re-emergence of a whole series of political, social and cultural divisions between the country's different provinces, reappeared.

Yet, in this situation of fragmentation of the state, two entities began to consolidate: the national unity government of al-Serraj, based in Tripoli, and the Libyan National Army, based in Benghazi - recaptured by Haftar with Operation 'Dignity' against the Islamists - as of 2017.

Haftar, despite his growing strength in Cyrenaica, could not have aspired to rule the entire country without the support of potent international allies; this was his major advantage over those who had attempted to rule Cyrenaica prior to him. Egypt and the Emirates continued to provide him with munitions in flagrant violation of the UN embargo; the Emirates even constructed a military airport in Cyrenaica to provide Haftar's army with air support. Saudi Arabia and Russia also increased their material diplomatic support for the field marshal: in 2016, Russia printed billions of Libyan dinars for his benefit and orchestrated a sophisticated online propaganda campaign using well-honed techniques for manipulating public opinion via virtual platforms.²⁵⁵ In early 2019, the first Russian mercenaries were identified following Haftar's armed forces and rumors began to circulate that the general was negotiating the cession of a naval base in Cyrenaica to Russia, replicating the agreement between the Kremlin and Syrian dictator Bashar al Assad (who had granted Russia air and naval bases in Syria).²⁵⁶

But it was France that gave Haftar the most international legitimacy. Although it had been supporting the field marshal since 2015 with military advisers and supplies in order to fight the terrorists in Benghazi - and here we must remember how France has been to the European country most affected by jihadist attacks since 2015²⁵⁷ -, it was Emmanuel Macron's rise to power in May 2017 that brought about a turning point in French policy in Libya. The newly elected president invited Haftar and Serraj to Paris on July 25 to broker an agreement between the two major power poles in Libya. The initiative surprised a portion of French diplomacy. Less than a month later, Macron convened a second summit in Paris, from which Haftar emerged even stronger, to the point of rejecting a U.S. proposal that called for the surrender of his armed forces to the government of national accord in exchange for his demotion to second-in-command of the Libyan armed

²⁵⁵ UN Security Council. (2017). Final report of the Panel of Experts in Accordance with Paragraph 13 of Resolution 2278 (2016), S/2017/466 (pp. 1–5). For more information: Wehrey, F., & Feltman, J. (2019). Libya Is Entering Another Civil War. America Can Stop It. The New York Times, 1–3. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/05/opinion/libya-civil-war.html>. Last consultation on 23 April 2023.

²⁵⁶ M. Cousins, *Question over Russian, US role in Libya resurface*, in «The Arab Weekly», 17th March 2019. Available at: <https://theArabweekly.com/question-over-russian-us-role-libya-resurface>. Last consultation on 22 April 2023; N. Mikhelidze, *Italy Sidelined as Russia Consolidates Position in Libya*, IAI, 25th June 2019. Available at: <https://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/italy-sidelined-russia-consolidates-position-libya>. Last consultation on 20 April 2023.

²⁵⁷Wehrey, F. (2018). *The Burning Shores: Inside the Battle for the New Libya*, pp. 57-65. New York. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

forces.²⁵⁸ With French support, Haftar could now aspire to become the sole ruler of Libya, while the country appeared increasingly trapped between the spectre of chaos and that of a new dictatorship.²⁵⁹

In addition to a purported ideological affinity, the alliance between France and Haftar reflected the clear strategic interests of Paris, which required stricter control along the border between Fezzan and the Sahel in order to limit as much as possible the infiltration of jihadists from Libya into Mali and Niger, where France was conducting difficult counterterrorism operations. Obviously, placing one's Cyrenaic ally in command of the entirety of Libya would have made France the most powerful European nation in the country, so French activism clashed with Italy's interests almost immediately.²⁶⁰ Rome had much to fear from a regime change in Tripoli due to its extensive collaborations with the government of national accord on multiple fronts (including immigration, infrastructure, and the purchase and sale of petrol and oil) and therefore rushed to organize a summit in Palermo in November 2018. At the level of content and solutions for Libya, however, Palermo was a disappointment: it certainly had the merit of setting a Libyan national conference for December (later postponed to April 2019), from which a unified national agenda towards new elections was to emerge, so that the Italian initiative seemed to harness Haftar by elevating his action within a clear political track; however, in the absence of an international monitoring mechanism for such initiatives, their success would be dependent on chance alone. From this perspective, Palermo widened the gap between the contenders: Haftar skipped the main meeting, only showing up for a photo op with Prime Minister Conte and Serraj, and continued to insist to Western media that Libya was not ready for democracy and that the circumstances were not conducive to political solutions.²⁶¹ After Palermo he held a series of rallies in Cyrenaica in which he openly promised the capture of Tripoli: just two months later he would prove that he was serious.

The offensive on Tripoli had once again exposed the international community's inability to compel Libyan actors to keep their word: the operation had been launched against the agreements made in Paris, Palermo, and previously at a conference in Abu Dhabi promoted by Egypt, yet there was no reaction to Haftar's attack on the Libyan capital. In recent years, the paradox was that the United Nations remained formally at the helm of efforts to find a political solution to the Libyan crisis but had been gradually drained of any real power to influence it by the initiatives of member states pursuing their own and competing geopolitical designs. The

²⁵⁸Fouquet, H. (2018). *Libya Conference in Paris Will Try Again to Solve 7-Year Crisis*. Bloomberg. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-27/libya-conference-in-paris-will-try-again-to-solve-7-year-crisis#xj4y7vzkg>. Last consultation on 22 April 2023.

²⁵⁹ Gillon, J. (2020), *France-Libya: marshal Haftar, the Controversial Friend of the Elysée*, in «The Africa report». Available at: <https://www.theafricareport.com/24823/france-libya-marshal-haftar-the-controversial-friend-of-the-elysee/>. Last consultation on 21 April 2023; Galtier, E. M. (2020), *Libya trapped between a Strategy of Chaos and the Spectre of a New Dictatorship*, in «The African Report». Available at: <https://www.theafricareport.com/22540/libya-trapped-between-a-strategy-of-chaos-and-the-spectre-of-a-new-dictatorship/>. Last consultation on 19 April 2023

²⁶⁰ Mercuri, M. (2020). *Incognita Libia: Cronache di un paese sospeso*, p. 98. Milano. FrancoAngeli.

²⁶¹ Reuters Staff. (2016). *Libya's Haftar says won't work with unity government until militias disbanded*. Reuters. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-libya-security-haftar-idUKKCN0YB2FL>. Last consultation on 12 April 2023; Wintour, P. (2018). *Libya may not be ready for democracy, says military strongman*. The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/10/libya-may-not-be-ready-for-democracy-says-military-strongman>. Last consultation on 22 April 2023; Cremonesi, L. (2017). *Il generale Haftar: "L'Italia in Libia si è schierata dalla parte sbagliata"*. Il Corriere Della Sera. Available at: https://www.corriere.it/esteri/17_gennaio_02/generale-haftar-l-italia-libia-si-schierata-parte-sbagliata-dcdd026c-d122-11e6-bd06-82890b12aab1.shtml. Last consultation on 24 April 2023.

same was true of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, where some member states had sided with various Libyan factions. During the Trump administration, America's adversaries, such as Russia, benefited from the administration's growing lack of interest in matters unrelated to immediate and vital American interests, which exacerbated the problem of international governance.²⁶² At the same time, European countries also found it difficult to raise the diplomatic level of confrontation with the countries involved in the Libyan proxy war, for fear of jeopardizing economic and energy interests.²⁶³

The relative coherence of intentions between major powers that had allowed the Skhirat agreement to take place was thus crumbling: on paper, international organizations continued to call for Libyan unity, the disarmament of militias and a peaceful solution, but these were empty words.²⁶⁴ It is an international mission of blue helmets with a strong enough mandate to ensure an acceptable level of security in the country. Libya, in summary, highlighted the crisis of trade diplomacy and soft power that underpins so much of European foreign policy. Many Western nations, including Italy, realized too late the implications of this geopolitical laissez-faire.

An emblematic example of this bewildering situation experienced by the West and, in particular, Italy, occurred on 27 November 2019 - 8 months after the beginning of the siege of Tripoli, which saw for the first time and in a completely blatant manner, the involvement of Wagner group militiamen, - was the conclusion of two agreements with Turkey, its main international sponsor.²⁶⁵ The first agreement redefined the exclusive economic zones of Libya and Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean and north of Cyrenaica, allowing Ankara to advance exploration and drilling rights in Greek-claimed waters east of Crete. This also placed Turkey in a position to oppose the construction of a gas pipeline proposed by Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, and Italy that would connect these countries across the Mediterranean, effectively isolating Turkey. With the second pact, Turkey offered the government of national accord military aid, subject to approval by the Turkish parliament.²⁶⁶

²⁶² A. Colombo, *Trump's America and the rest*, in A. Colombo e P. Magri (a cura di), *Big Powers are back. What about Europe?* Milano, LedPublishing, 2018, p. 36; Ferrari, A. (2018). *Russian Foreign Policy between Westphalia and Greater Eurasia*. In *Big Powers Are Back. What about Europe? Global Scenarios and Italy*. Annual Report (pp. 1–6). Available at: <https://iris.unive.it/handle/10278/3706523>. Last consultation on 22 April 2023.

²⁶³ Recall that in 2018 some 40% of Europe's gas came from Russia; Turkey, which itself continued to violate the UN embargo in favor of the Government of National Accord, was a major trading partner of Germany and Italy; Egypt was considered vital by many European countries both in terms of regional stabilization and because of the discovery of new oil fields off its coast; finally, many European states did not want to give up their existing arms and oil contracts with their partners in the Persian Gulf.

²⁶⁴ Council conclusions on Libya - Council conclusions (6 February 2017), 5321/17 (2017). Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5321-2017-INIT/en/pdf>. Last consultation 22 April 2023.

²⁶⁵ Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) denounced the presence of around 800 Russian mercenaries from the Wagner Group on the frontline. Moscow has repeatedly denied any direct involvement in the conflict. For more information on Wagner's involvement in the Libyan conflict. For more information: Montalto Monella, L. (2019). *Chi sono i mercenari russi del Wagner Group che combattono in Libia con Haftar*. Euronews. Available at: <https://it.euronews.com/2019/12/18/chi-sono-i-mercenari-russi-del-wagner-group-che-combattono-in-libia-con-haftar>. Last consultation on 26 April 2023.

²⁶⁶ The maritime zone of the eastern Mediterranean became a major energy focus area when the Leviathan gas field was discovered in 2009. These fields offer various economic and political opportunities for regional development and cooperation between countries. For more information. For more information: Colombo, M. (2020). *Approfondimento: l'accordo Turchia-GNA sui confini marittimi*.

European actors participated in two rounds of conferences conducted in Berlin on 19 January 2020 and 23 June of the same year, respectively, to counterbalance the influence of Turkey and Russia on the course of the civil conflict gripping Libya. At the conferences, the main parties affected by the Libyan crisis participated. The objective was to provide international protection for the intra-Libyan dialogue on the country's future. The outlook was optimistic, particularly in European capitals that, for the first time in years, appeared to speak with one voice on the Libyan issue. The refusal of the Libyan authorities to embrace possible international intervention once again impeded the development of a path that could actually lead to national reconciliation. At this juncture, the Europeans gathered in Berlin decided to prioritize international coordination to limit and progressively eliminate the influence of external actors in Libya, specifically their ability to arm the competing Libyan factions.

EUNAVFOR MED "Irinì" was established in response to the inability to establish a mechanism for automatic sanctions against those who violate the UN arms embargo. The operation was conducted on 31 March under the command of Rear Admiral Fabio Agostini as evidence of the union's renewed resolve to intervene in the Libyan crisis. Nonetheless, the European mission was quickly met with harsh criticism: a number of analysts and commentators deemed it to be too weak and tactically unbalanced, as it lacked the means to adequately monitor and block violations of the embargo by air and particularly along land routes. Consequently, both Libyan coalitions accused the 'Irinì' mission of being partisan: the Russians claimed that by moving the area of operations along the Cyrenaica, they intended to harm Haftar; the Government of National Accord Turkey, on the other hand, claimed that a naval operation unable to stop arms shipments by land was directed against the coalition that relied on maritime supply lines, leaving Haftar free to obtain supplies from Egypt and Sudan.²⁶⁷

Thus described, it was virtually impossible for either party to overpower the other. This is how, following the failed seizure of Tripoli, a ceasefire was declared on August 21, 2020 (and subsequently formalized on October 23, 2020). Stephanie Williams, the new UN envoy, proposed and received approval for a new package of initiatives, which included the resumption of oil production, the equitable distribution of revenues among the three regions of the country, the demilitarization of the Sirte area, and the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Libya.²⁶⁸ In a climate of almost surreal uncertainty, on 19 January 2021 the Libyan political forum

In ispionline (pp. 1–8). ISPI. Available at: <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/approfondimento-laccordo-turchia-gna-sui-confini-marittimi-25158>. Last consultation on 22 April 2023.

²⁶⁷ On 31 March 2020, the European Union launched the military air-sea operation 'Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI' to ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions banning arms trafficking to and from Libya since 2011. The EU Council today extended the mandate of the European military operation in the Mediterranean - EUNAVFOR MED IRINI - until 31 March 2025. The decision was taken following the strategic review of the operation carried out by the Political and Security Committee. For more information: Redazione ANSA. (2023). *Libia: l'Ue rinnova la missione Irini*. ANSA. Available at: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/mondo/europa/2023/03/20/libia-lue-rinnova-la-missione-irini_aa2045cd-4309-4d21-92b4-ee79aa2fdde7.html. Last consultation on 24 April 2023.

²⁶⁸ Breccia, G., & Marcuzzi, S. (2021). *Le guerre di Libia: un secolo di conquiste e rivoluzioni*, pp. 278-285. Bologna. Società editrice il Mulino Spa.

approved the mechanism to elect the new government. In the absence of a broad consensus on individual candidates, lists were formed, each proposing its candidates for the presidency and premiership. The winner was the Menfi- Dbeibah list, whose government officially took office on 10 March of that year.

After years of political gridlock, how was such rapid approval possible? On the one hand, the weariness of the Libyan population, which has grown weary of the war and the economic and social crisis, certainly plays a role. However, the crucial factor in understanding the relative calm in Libya is the crisis-freezing policies implemented by Turkey and Russia, who have become the dominant sponsors of the two warring parties. Just as in Syria and Nagorno-Karabakh, the initiative of these two powers, whose relationship can be described as one of collaborative rivalry, appears to have produced stability where Western policies had failed, for two main reasons: both Russia and Turkey had a clear political objective and a clear takeover, and both had used the military instrument to continue to make policy where mere diplomatic words were ineffective. All of this with geopolitical objectives in mind. In truth, Ankara was permitted to maintain control over the port of Misurata and to negotiate with the new government of national unity to acquire military outposts on Libyan soil.²⁶⁹ In the meantime, a series of meetings were held between high-ranking Libyan and Turkish officials to discuss infrastructure agreements pertaining to the military, commerce, and energy. As for Russia, it initiated the construction of a series of military infrastructures in Cyrenaica and secured important contracts for future infrastructures in the region, as well as consolidated its influence through shrewd diplomatic initiatives such as the delivery of thousands of sputnik vaccines against covid.²⁷⁰

The question of Italy's role throughout the numerous Libyan crises has now arisen. Italy has always sought to assist international actors in their efforts to contain the Libyan crisis and find a form of mediation that could effectively resolve the conflict. Once again, the management of migratory flows and the energy market have been the axes of action around which Italian diplomacy has maneuvered to exploit its ascendancy over a now-shattered Libya.

In fact, the Memorandum between Italy and Libya extends back to February 2017. The Memorandum represents the conclusion of the negotiations minister Minniti instigated on behalf of the Italian government in January of the same year and conducted in Libya. The text begins with the general necessity to secure and strengthen development cooperation in Libya. To accomplish this goal, however, it was necessary to combat irregular immigration (Article 1 letter a) and human trafficking by enhancing border security between Libya and Italy.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Ivi, pp. 287-289.

²⁷⁰ Ivi, pp. 290-301.

²⁷¹ On 2 February 2017, the Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni and the Head of the Government of National Reconciliation of the State of Libya, recognized by the European Union and Italy, Fayez Mustapa Serraj, signed a Memorandum to deal with the emergency represented by the landings on Italian shores of citizens from Libya. On a formal level, since the Memorandum was concluded in a simplified and non-solemn form, some associations active in the field of human rights have cast doubts on its validity. As for the content, the Memorandum starts from the general need to protect and strengthen development cooperation in Libya.

Particularly relevant, moreover, is the willingness of both sides to revitalize previous agreements. We are talking about the 2008 Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation, which had a much broader scope than the present memorandum, and the 2012 Tripoli Declaration.²⁷² Nationally and internationally, the Italian government's actions in managing, or rather entrusting the management of migration flows to Libya, will be harshly criticized. In particular, the Libyan coast guard, to which Italy provides assistance through the supply of equipment, including the delivery of several patrol boats, is comprised of the personnel of various local militias, whose interests are frequently unrelated to the management of migratory flows, and which frequently collude with human traffickers.

Yet, the issue of the perpetuation of past agreements, and the 2008 Treaty in particular, is the one that most interests our nation. In 2011, during the Monti administration, then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata advocated the treaty's resumption in anticipation of a future encounter with Mamud Jibril, then-head of the NTC.²⁷³ Much more recent, however, is the attempt by Enzo Moavero Milanesi, foreign minister during the first Conte government, who went to Tripoli in July 2018 precisely in order to lay the foundations for an effective recovery of the treaty and the strategic partnership.²⁷⁴ However, the road still appears to be ascending. How so? There are three causes for this difficult recovery. The first is related to the military conflict between NATO and Libya, in which Italy reluctantly took part. In general, political treaties are terminated, while trade treaties are suspended and reinstated at the discretion of the parties (or, if a peace treaty has been signed, the victor, which is not the case here). The Benghazi Treaty contains, particularly in the first section, a number of clauses of a political nature that ought to have been extinguished automatically, while the discussion remains open (with some benevolence) on those clauses pertaining to economic cooperation and other areas. Then, a regime transition occurs. Typically, this is not a basis for terminating a treaty, but either party could invoke a fundamental change of circumstances to terminate (or at least suspend) the agreement. The ineffectiveness of the Libyan government, which, despite being endorsed by the United

²⁷² The 2017 Memorandum thus appears to be a sort of collector between the acts of Gaddafi's Libya and the authority recognized as a legitimate government by the international community. This is particularly evident in relation to Art. 19 of the 2008 Treaty. Thus, consistent with its provisions, the Parties are committed to the completion of Libya's land border control system, especially in the south of the country.

²⁷³ In the hearing of Minister Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata on 27 February 2012, the Minister himself makes no secret of the doubts nurtured by the Monti government - with particular regard to the 2008 Treaty, signed by the Berlusconi government - on respect for human rights in Libya. It is precisely the Tripoli Declaration, made in the same year, that somehow seeks to reaffirm Italy's interest in the issue of human rights in its former colony without, however, concealing strong doubts about their respect. In particular, during the Monti government, Terzi di Sant'Agata mainly dealt with the issue of fishing rights - following the seizure of a number of Italian fishing boats by the Benghazi authorities in October of the same year - and the issue of migrants' refoulement at sea. For more information: Terzi di Sant'Agata, G. (2012). *Audizione del ministro degli affari esteri Giulio Terzi di Sant'Agata sul tema Politica estera e diritti umani*. Available at: https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/interventi/2012/02/20120227_resoconto/. Last consultation on 22 April 2023; Redazione ANSA. (2012). *Pescherecci sequestrati: a Bengasi udienza per rilascio*. ANSA. <https://www.ansa.it/mare/notizie/rubriche/ambienteepesca/2012/11/14/Pescherecci-sequestrati-Bengasi-udienza-rilascio-7794897.html>. Last consultation on 23 April 2023.

²⁷⁴ In the course of the talks, the Minister had an in-depth exchange of views on all issues relating to the strategic partnership between Italy and Libya, as well as on the security framework in the country, and confirmed Italy's wide-ranging commitment to supporting the process of institutional consolidation in Libya. Italy, due to its geographic position and history, is a natural bridge between Libya and Europe, the Minister repeatedly recalled, and renewed the hope for a relaunch of the strategic partnership, leveraging the mechanisms of the 2008 Treaty of Friendship. He also confirmed Italy's readiness to deepen cooperation in the infrastructure sector, which is crucial for the revival of Libya's economic system.

Nations, is merely a trustee body, undermined by the rebel Haftar and struggling with armed militias that control extensive portions of the country's territory. The economic clauses of the Benghazi Treaty are especially burdensome for Italy, and it is debatable whether their implementation makes sense in the context of enduring hostility. There is a possibility that it will be necessary to negotiate not only with Dbeibah's administration, but also with Haftar and even with Libyan tribes and cities, as was done previously to reduce migratory flows.

What strategy should be proposed? The Benghazi Treaty cannot be a crucial factor in stabilizing Libya on its own. It is therefore preferable to leave the Treaty in ambiguity, delaying its reactivation until the situation in Libya has stabilized. Reactivation could also be an occasion to revise certain clauses of the instrument, a revision that requires the consent of all parties and is contingent on the existence of an effective Libyan government. For the time being, one could continue as has been done thus far: select the clauses of the Treaty that lend themselves to elaboration and specification at the present time, perhaps with the inclusion of Protocols or Memoranda.

The presence of ENI on Libyan soil is the other important issue in the relationship between Rome and Tripoli. In fact, crude oil production in the country ceased in 2011 after the conclusion of the civil war: between 2012 and 2013, crude oil production in Libya decreased by 64% compared to the previous year. Since 2020, the NOC has been able to guarantee a fair distribution of crude oil sales revenues among the country's three regions. Previously, the production and sale of hydrocarbons had been the subject of lengthy disputes between the various authorities that managed the extraction with the aid of militias, including ISIS. ENI is no exception to the use of these practices; the company's presence in the country for more than fifty years has enabled it to exploit informal networks of contacts in order to reaffirm its position as a distinct economic actor. Today, ENI administers approximately one-third of Libya's oil and gas production, compared to just over one-fifth during the Gaddafi regime. A crucial aspect of this advantage is that the majority of the company's operations are conducted overseas. Along these lines is the approximately \$8 billion investment that the company finalized with the NOC in January 2023 for the development of the 'A&E Facilities', the largest industry investment in the nation since the 2000s. ENI's agency is perceived not only in Libya, but throughout the entire region; in 2016, ENI's current CEO Claudio Descalzi was invited to Egypt to discuss the future of Libya.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ To date, ENI remains the last major international energy company on Libyan soil. Despite the tense situation in the country during the civil war, ENI's infrastructure has remained somewhat excluded from the fighting between the armed forces linked to the two governments thanks to local security arrangements. Writing about this is the Wall Street Journal, which mentions how Eni, by getting in touch with local militias - often with conflicting political allegiances - managed to protect its mining activities on Libyan territory. In the midst of the civil conflict, at the very beginning of 2015, ENI's production - despite the general depression of extractive activities - jumped from 240 to 300,000 barrels of oil per day. Today, ENI handles about 1/3 of all oil and gas production in Libya when, during the Gaddafi era, it was less than 1/5 of total production. The main factor behind this relative stability lies in the presence of the state-owned entity in Libya since 1959: this permanence has allowed the company to develop the network of contacts and resources that enable it to coexist with Libyan militias on the ground. Underlining the importance of these informal networks was Eni's CEO, Claudio Descalzi, who, during a conference in Egypt, affirmed the central role his company intends to play in the country's future reconstruction process. For more information: Redazione Il Post. (2015). *L'ENI, l'unica grande società rimasta in Libia*. Il Post. Available at: <https://www.ilpost.it/2015/04/08/eni-libia/>. Last consultation on 23 April 2023; ENI S.P.A.

Italy finds itself in a peculiar position with respect to its former colony, or at least what remains of it, in light of what has been said thus far and elaborated upon in the preceding chapters. Overshadowed by emerging powers, particularly Turkey - the first partner in political and military terms of the Government of National Accord -, Rome adheres to secondary positions, limiting its presence to cooperation in the management of migratory flows and the continuation of existing agreements in the field of gas and oil extraction. Nevertheless, something is afoot beneath the surface. Despite its dormancy, our nation's Mediterranean leanings are not indelible, and despite its progressive marginalization, Rome continues to make its voice heard or, at the very least, its concerns about the situation on the southern Mediterranean Sea coast. Nonetheless, these concerns lack concrete actions. In fact, along with Libya, Tunisia is also a source of concern for Rome, as it has suffered for years from an economic crisis that has driven unemployment - particularly youth unemployment - to record levels. After the election of Kais Saied to the presidency of the Republic, who, during the Covid 19 pandemic, dissolved Parliament and was granted full constitutional powers, there has been a progressive erosion of democracy. The Italian and European silence regarding the management of the Tunisian crisis is indicative of their incapacity to take concrete action in a much larger crisis, the Libyan one.

A new focus on Libya was further confirmed by the Draghi government. On 6 April 2021, Mario Draghi paid his first state visit to Tripoli. The former prime minister wanted to point out how the situation of general agreement between government and parliament allows Libya to move forward on the path of stabilization by opening the door once again to cooperation with Rome in the energy, infrastructure, economic, health and cultural fields.²⁷⁶ However, as we have previously indicated, Mario Draghi also wished to emphasize the significance of the migration issue and Libya's porous southern border when discussing the axes of Italy's foreign policy towards Libya. Moreover, beyond the mere Libyan issue, during the Draghi administration we have witnessed a realignment of our country's petrol consumption towards the Mediterranean and Algeria in particular, following the outbreak of war in Ukraine and the resulting energy crisis. Also in this case, Italy has been able to utilize an agency that dates back to the late 1950s, when Enrico Mattei was in charge of ENI. With the installation of the Meloni government in September 2023, the Libyan issue received renewed attention. Giorgia Meloni, accompanied by Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani and Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi, travelled to Tripoli on 28 January 2023 to sign not only the

(2023). *Il Presidente dell'Egitto Abdel Fattah el-Sisi incontra l'Amministratore Delegato di Eni Claudio Descalzi*. Available at: <https://www.eni.com/it-IT/media/comunicati-stampa/2023/01/presidente-egitto-abdel-fattah-el-sisi-incontra-amministratore-delegato-eni-claudio-descalzi.html>. Last consultation 22 April 2023

²⁷⁶ On the occasion of his visit to the Libyan capital, Draghi wished to emphasize how this moment of relative peace linked to the extension of the ceasefire would allow the historical friendship between Italy and Libya to be rebuilt. According to the former prime minister's statements, the main objective would be to restore economic and cultural exchange to the levels that existed before the outbreak of the revolution and the two ensuing civil conflicts. The Libyan counterpart has expressed interest in the reactivation of the comma agreements, in particular the one of 2008, which should involve the construction of the coastal highway. In the energy field, too, the Tripoli's authorities envisage increased cooperation in the field of electricity and gas and crude oil supplies. For more information: Redazione ANSA. (2021). *Draghi in Libia: "Momento unico per ricostruire l'amicizia tra i due Paesi."* ANSA. Available at: https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2021/04/05/draghi-in-libia-obiettivo-ritorno-leadership-italia_Oebaae00-06fa-4761-bc52-46e7ae2527c8.html. Last consultation on 22 April 2023.

aforementioned agreement signed by ENI, but also to rekindle relations between Rome and Tripoli in light of the upcoming elections in Libya, which were suspended in December 2021.²⁷⁷ In addition to this visit, on 11 April 2023, Prime Minister Meloni issued a message on the occasion of the National Day of the Sea that can be taken as a real declaration of intent on how Italy should imagine itself (whether it succeeds in doing so remains to be seen) in the Mediterranean: Meloni traces the fact that for years Italy has imagined itself as a 'Homeland without sea' unaware of the geostrategic, environmental, cultural and economic dimension that this asset entails.²⁷⁸

Regardless of declarations and objectives, in my opinion, Italy will have to concentrate above all on one thing in Libya's future: its reconstruction. Investing in the reconstruction of the infrastructure - whether military or civil - would entail a real revival of Italy's role in its former colony, combining economic supremacy with one of an exclusively political nature capable of distancing actors such as Turkey from our foreign neighbor, reducing the destabilization that the southern coast of the Mediterranean has suffered over the last decade.

Despite this relative stability, the government of Dbeibah confronts enormous challenges. Politically, his inauguration was accompanied by allegations of vote-buying, and many have faulted the prime minister for his turbulent past, which was marked by a series of criminal proceedings under the Gaddafi regime. Without an electoral procedure, the government of national unity, which is still composed of a small number of delegates, risks losing legitimacy rapidly. According to the Geneva agreement, all foreign forces were required to depart Libya by January 31, 2021; however, to date, not a single asset or mercenary has withdrawn. The presence of these forces continues to discourage the demobilization of Libyan militias and casts doubt on the likelihood of new elections. As observed in 2014, the risk of incidents in the months preceding the election could result in a low level of influence, which would be promptly exploited by the defeated to invoke the illegitimacy of the legislature elected by an absolute minority of eligible voters. In addition, those who command foreign troops in Libya could use them to influence the outcome of the referendum. All of this made the international community's role in securing a freer and more democratic future for Libya crucial once more.

²⁷⁷ The agreement discussed on the occasion of President Meloni's visit is worth around 8 billion dollars and aims to increase gas production for the Libyan domestic market and guarantee its export to Europe. Not only that, but the energy issue also mirrors that of irregular immigration. At this juncture, the government pledged to provide Libya with five boats equipped in the field of search and rescue at sea. During the press conference with the Tripoline authorities, Meloni described Italy as willing to help the country on its path of both economic and democratic growth in view of the political path towards elections. However, she warned that the issue of stabilizing the country - which is still divided into two governments - risks posing a real obstacle to resolving the critical issues afflicting Libya. During the press conference, the so-called 'Mattei Plan' was also relaunched, with which Italy aims to become a reference gas hub not only for the European market but also for producer countries, helping them along the path of economic development. For more information: Cappelleri, P. (2023). *Meloni a Tripoli, patto sul gas e trattativa sui migranti*. ANSA. Available at: <https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/politica/2023/01/28/meloni-intesa-italia-libia-per-potenziare-guardia-costiera-fc86d2f8-f92e-4c5e-b14d-d132752b17af.html>. Last consultation on 21 April 2023.

²⁷⁸ On the occasion of President Meloni's statement, there was a reminder that the geographical maritime factor that, to a large extent, characterizes our country is not only limited to a purely seaside dimension, but must also be combined - and here Italy will have to rediscover this nature of its own - in the economic, political and strategic spheres. Italy as a homeland without a sea is therefore a harmful narrative for the very interests that our country nurtures towards the Mediterranean basin, i.e. what, broadly speaking, should be 'our backyard'.

The European Union offered its satellite-based air assets to a mission commanded by the United Nations to monitor the withdrawal of foreign mercenaries. However, the Libyan government refused once more, as they continue to deny an international intervention force. Thus, Libya continues to contend between the risks of unmistakable fragmentation, looming authoritarianism, and foreign dominance. These three factors have relentlessly plagued the history and difficult process of national and state-building of the Libyan people over the past century. In a nation where everything changes but nothing moves, they will continue to hover for a very long time.

Diplomacy has proven ineffectual of producing results throughout the country's two wire conflicts without the ability to project military force and the relative ability to use it. In contrast to the West, actors from outside Libya, such as Turkey and Russia, have demonstrated the capacity to project and a relative willingness to use it on Libyan soil. Therefore, it will not be simple for the West to regain prestige and credibility after 2011, not even in light of US President Joe Biden's renewed interest. Italy has been asked to play a crucial role in this delicate phase, but the weight of the geopolitical actors that have intervened in Libya in recent years is such that only a more decisive commitment by the European Union as a whole could counterbalance their interference.²⁷⁹ Such an involvement aimed at truly ensuring the stability of the country - that is, opposing by all means anyone who attempts to start a new war - would finally represent a concrete step in defense of the Libyan people, whom the West helped free from Gaddafi's dictatorship. The alternative is stark and daunting: losing the opportunity to exert a positive influence on what is no longer the 'fourth shore' of Italy, but on all of Europe.

²⁷⁹ On 4 May 2023, a meeting took place in Rome between President Meloni and Libyan General Haftar. During the approximately two-hour meeting, it was decided to address not only the dramatic unfolding of the conflict in Sudan, but also the phenomenon of migration to our country. The meeting was requested because, on 28 January, Meloni had not been able to reach Benghazi following her visit to the Tripoline authorities. The meeting with the Cyrenaica strongman took place after Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani's appeal to Egyptian President al-Sisi to try to exert influence on Haftar in order to stop migratory flows from Cyrenaica to Italian shores. The need to also meet with the Cyrenaic authorities is dictated not only by the difficult - as well as unsuccessful - management of the migratory flows, but also by the recent attacks by the French executive on the Italian government. Having always been Haftar's main sponsor, Paris would now seem to be trying to insinuate itself into the situation of relative peace guaranteed by the ceasefire by pursuing its own interests, related to the fight against political Islam, marginalizing the Italian role in the eyes of the Libyan general. For more information: Redazione Il Sole 24 Ore. (2023). *Meloni vede Haftar, focus sui flussi migratori verso l'Italia*. Il Sole 24 Ore. Available at: <https://www.ilssole24ore.com/art/il-generale-haftar-roma-oggi-l-incontro-meloni-AEC33UPD>. Last consultation on 6 May 2023

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Summary

Italian-Libyan relations have experienced a complex and dynamic history since the 1950s. From the early years characterized by Italian colonial rule and subsequent independence struggles to the tumultuous relationship during Muammar Gaddafi's regime, and the post-Gaddafi era marked by political changes and regional developments, this synthesis explores the evolving nature of Italian-Libyan relations up until 2023.

In 1951, Libya gained independence from colonial rule, and Italy was among the first countries to recognize the newly formed state. This act of recognition demonstrated a willingness on the part of Italy to acknowledge Libya's sovereignty and forge a new chapter in their relationship.

With the establishment of diplomatic relations, Italy and Libya embarked on a path of cooperation and engagement. Economic agreements were signed, with a particular emphasis on the oil sector. Libya possessed vast oil reserves, and Italy recognized the strategic importance of securing access to this valuable resource. Italian companies began investing heavily in the Libyan oil industry, contributing to the development of the sector and establishing a foundation for economic cooperation.

One significant milestone in the post-colonial era was the signing of the Treaty of Friendship between Italy and Libya in 1956. The treaty aimed to solidify bilateral ties and foster mutual cooperation. It covered various areas, including trade, cultural exchanges, and technical collaboration. The treaty helped pave the way for increased Italian investments and trade with Libya, further strengthening the economic relationship between the two countries.

However, it is important to note that the path to a fully normalized relationship would experience further complexities and challenges in the subsequent decades, particularly during the rule of Muammar Gaddafi and the turbulent post-Gaddafi era.

The relationship between Italy and Libya underwent significant transformations during the rule of Muammar Gaddafi. After seizing power in 1969, Gaddafi pursued a policy of Arab nationalism and socialism, which strained ties with Western powers, including Italy. In 1970, Gaddafi expelled Italian residents and confiscated Italian assets, leading to a freeze in relations. However, in the late 1970s, Italy adopted a pragmatic approach, seeking to mend ties due to shared economic interests.

The 1980s saw a series of crises, including the downing of a civilian plane over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in 1984 and the development of infrastructure for the creation of chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction. During the 1980s, weighing on relations between Tripoli and Rome was the Reagan administration's attitude toward the Qaddafi regime. Relations between the two countries entered a heated situation after a series of terrorist attacks that culminated in the American decision to intervene in Libya with Operation El Dorado Canyon in April 1986. The enmity between Washington and Tripoli made Italian

positions unworkable before the United States. However, a policy of rapprochement emerged in the 1990s. Italy sought to exploit Libya's potential as an energy partner and invested heavily in the country, particularly in the oil and gas sectors.

The 2000s marked a significant turning point in relations as Gaddafi's regime underwent a process of international rehabilitation. In 2002, Gaddafi announced his decision to abandon Libya's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and pledged to cooperate with the international community. This move led to the gradual normalization of Libya's relations with Western countries, including Italy.

One significant event in Italian-Libyan relations during this period was the signing of the Libya-Italy Friendship Treaty in 2008. The treaty aimed to establish a framework for cooperation in various fields, including energy, infrastructure, trade, and culture. It also included provisions for compensation to be paid by Italy to Libya for colonial-era damages. The treaty paved the way for increased economic cooperation between the two countries. Italian companies, especially in the energy sector, began investing in Libya, while Italy became one of Libya's major trading partners. Libyan oil and gas exports to Italy also increased significantly.

In 2009, the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi visited Libya and signed various agreements, including a deal worth billions of dollars for Italy to build a coastal highway in Libya. This visit further strengthened the bilateral ties between the two countries. Italy and Libya collaborated on border control measures and joint patrols to address this issue, which remained a contentious topic.

However, it's important to note that Italian-Libyan relations during the 2000s were not without challenges. The issue of illegal migration from Libya to Italy became a significant concern, as thousands of migrants attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea.

The 2011 Arab Spring uprisings and NATO's military intervention in Libya brought about the downfall of Gaddafi's regime. Italy played a prominent role in the intervention, leading to mixed sentiments within Libya. Following Gaddafi's death, Italy supported Libya's transition to democracy and participated in the international effort to stabilize the country. However, the aftermath of the intervention saw Libya descending into chaos, marked by rival factions, armed groups, and a power vacuum.

Italy faced numerous challenges in the post-Gaddafi era, including managing irregular migration flows from Libya, securing its energy interests, and countering the threat of terrorism emanating from the region. Italy maintained diplomatic engagement with Libya's different factions and supported the UN-led political process. In recent years, Italy has sought to balance its relationships with various actors in Libya, including the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Libyan National Army (LNA), led by General Khalifa Haftar.

Looking ahead, Italian-Libyan relations will continue to navigate regional complexities and address ongoing challenges. Italy's priorities include supporting Libya's political stability, promoting economic cooperation,

and addressing migration issues in a humane and sustainable manner. Italy's historical ties, geographical proximity, and shared economic interests' position are key factors in the region, influencing and being influenced by developments in Libya.

In conclusion, the history of Italian-Libyan relations from the 1950s to 2023 has been characterized by a mix of cooperation, strained ties, and periods of reconciliation. Political dynamics, economic interests, and regional developments have shaped the trajectory of this relationship. Despite challenges and fluctuations, Italy has maintained its engagement with Libya, striving for stability, economic cooperation, and addressing common concerns. The future will require continued adaptation and cooperation as both countries navigate the complex regional dynamics of the Mediterranean and North Africa.

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