

How's international dynamics redesigned Libya's distribution of power after
2011 and what's left of Italy's role.

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Introduction:

Geography has always been a key factor in international relations. Throughout history, there have been several examples in which geographic factors have played a fundamental role in the politics of states. In fact, in some cases, geographic features mark a boundary and reduce the possibility of a large-scale war due to their strategic inconvenience (such as the Himalayan Mountain ranges in relation to the China-India border). In other cases, they represent a nation's Achilles' heel (Russia's lack of direct access to warm-water ports) but, at the same time, they can also represent the key to a country's security (like the geographic position of the United States). What is certain is that geography shapes a country's politics, and given its fundamental role, it should be one of the primary starting points for analysing a country's foreign policy. Italy does not represent an exception. The Italian peninsula overlooks the Mediterranean Sea, a geographical area that occupies 0.82% of the globe's water surface and through which approximately 20-25% of global traffic passes. So, geography has chosen for Italy one of its areas of greatest interest.

Since Italian unification in 1861, Rome (annexed only nine years later) has consistently sought to project its influence across the Mediterranean, however, it encountered considerable difficulties. Weak because it was poor and poor because it was weak, Italy had to face the increasing influence of its neighbouring European states on the Mediterranean during the beginning of the 'Scramble for Africa' in the 80' of the 19th century. In this context, on the one side, France strengthened its position in North Africa by establishing a protectorate in Tunisia, which provoked strong protests from the Italian government (at the time, approximately 10,000 Italians resided in Tunisia) and on the other side, Great Britain occupied Egypt.¹ Moreover, it should be emphasized that the French protectorate in Tunisia had British approval, since, from London's point of view, a possible French protectorate of Tunisia would have both prevented the control of the Strait of Sicily by a single power, Italy, and it could have been used as a bargaining chip to increase British influence in Egypt.² Thus, Italy began a great diplomatic effort due to receive assurances from the European powers about the possibility of establishing its influence in present-day Libya; the only Northern African territory not yet occupied by European powers. In this light Italy invaded Libya in 1911. From that moment until today several historical phases have marked the relations between Italy and Libya, and even today, the Libyan scenario represents a key pillar of the Italian foreign policy. Thus, geography still matters.

The aim of my thesis is to analyse the international dynamics that led to Gaddafi's overthrow in 2011 and what remains of Italy's role in Libya. From a methodological perspective, the work is based on a qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources. Indeed, it examines Italian historical manuals relating to the Italian colonization of Libya, official documents of the Italian government and the United Nations (in particular UNSCR No. 1970 and 1973), Italian, British, and French parliamentary records, as well as strategic papers by think-tank experts on geopolitics. The aim is to provide a clear analysis of the events and motivations from a

¹ Monzali, L., Imperato, F., Milano, R., & Spagnulo, G. (2022). *Storia delle relazioni internazionali (1492-1918): Dall'ascesa dell'Europa alla prima guerra mondiale*. Pg 361 Mondadori Università

² Ivi

domestic and international point of view that led to the fall of the Gaddafi regime, and how Italy has carried out its foreign policy from that moment on up to the present day. Indeed, Libya represents one of the most emblematic cases of state collapse and geopolitical competition in contemporary North Africa. However, in order to have a clear perception of the events that have occurred in the Libyan scenario over the last 15 years, it is important to begin with a historical analysis of the Northern African country. Therefore, thanks to a historical introduction of the various dominations that have followed one another in the Libyan territory it will be possible to highlight the different ways in which the three main regions of Libya: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan have been administered. This will be crucial to understand the origin of the various cultural differences between the three regions and how these differences shaped and influenced the creation of the Libyan state under the Idris monarchy. Subsequently, the first chapter will focus on the internal policies adopted by the Idris Monarchy in order to administer and maintain unity in such a divided state, until Gaddafi's coup which marked a breakthrough moment in Libyan history. Thus, the second part of the first chapter will analyse the 42-year regime of the dictator from both a domestic and international perspective. The dual objective is, on the one side, to understand the way in which the Libyan dictator administered the country by creating a personal structure parallel to the state (which represented one of the main obstacles of post-Gaddafi institutional transition); while, on the other side, the goal is to analyse the various phases that characterized Gaddafi's foreign policy, from Arab nationalism and support for terrorist organizations, through international isolation, to Libya's reintegration into the international arena. To conclude this part, the focus of the thesis will be on the causes and events that led to the fall of the Libyan dictator, from a domestic point of view, in order to underline once again the key role played by Libya's longest-standing institution: the tribes. In fact, through the historical analysis of the internal dynamics of the three Libyan regions, it will be clear that the Libyan tribes represent the most peculiar domestic actor who have influenced and continues to influence the history of Libyan society.

Following this domestic analysis of the Libyan scenario, it is possible to introduce the role played by the international actors in the Libyan events of 2011. Thus, the second chapter aims to analyse the positions and motivations of states that voted in favour of UNSCR 1973, which led to the fall of the dictator on one side, and the reasons behind the choice of many states to abstain on the other side. In this context, at the European level, it will be possible to outline a Great Britain and France shared position on the Libyan scenario, albeit motivated by different reasons. The former country adopted the classic foreign diversion for internal reasons, while the latter country had to compensate for the loss of influence in Africa caused by the Arab Spring of 2011. The diplomacy of these powers in the Libyan scenario succeeded in marking one of the few historical moments in which the United States followed the initiative of some European countries and not the contrary. Without Washington's support, perhaps we would be talking about a different story. However, as we will underscore, not all countries were strongly in favour of the international intervention in the Libyan scenario. For example, Germany decided to abstain from UNSCR 1973 for both internal reasons and international considerations related to the French foreign policy in Africa. At the same time, it will be possible to analyse

the peculiar position of Russia and China, which, despite not being openly in favour of international intervention in Libya, decided not to oppose Resolution 1973. So, due to their decision not to oppose UNSCR No. 1973, Libya did not represent a stage of conflict between the great powers. From this international perspective, it will be possible to analyse the new Libyan scenario without Gaddafi and how the influence of regional powers has increased significantly. In fact, in the new Libyan landscape, numerous regional powers played a leading role by supporting the various factions present. In this light, the second part of the second chapter aims to explain the foreign policy of these regional powers (Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt) and how Libya has become a territory of regional competition between the various powers. In relation to this aspect, it will be possible to mention the policies of the other powers involved in the Libyan scenario, and more specifically, the peculiar French role in Libya, which was motivated by its economic ties with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Moreover, will be possible to evaluate the role of the three superpowers, more interested in their own interests than in the pursuit of Libyan state unity. And to conclude the 'new' role played by Turkey since 2019, the year in which Ankara entered the Libyan scenario, which has modified the Libyan scenario. From this analysis, the aim is to understand the various facets of the foreign policies of the aforementioned countries in order to highlight how Libya is another arena of competition between the various powers at play, where economic interests and regional considerations are closely linked. Indeed, the following chapter analyses the Italian role in the Libyan scenario and how this has evolved since Gaddafi's period to today. Relations between Italy and Gaddafi's Libya were marked by several periods. After an initial nationalist phase that led to the expulsion of Italians from Libya, relations between the two countries improved, as evidenced by the Italian government's initiative during the US bombing of Libya in 1986. Subsequently, after the end of Libya's period of international isolation, the economic cooperation between the two countries increased significantly leading to the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership, and Cooperation which was signed between Italy and Libya in 2008. This agreement marked the Italian predominant role in Libya, three years before the fall of the Rais. From this perspective, Italian foreign policy will be assessed during the events that led to the dictator's fall, highlighting Italy's strategy aimed at protecting its primary interests in both the energy sector and security. Given this starting point, it will then be possible to evaluate the results of the Italian government's unilateral and multilateral initiatives in post-Gaddafi Libya in order to ensure the stability of a geographical area very close to Italy. In conclusion, the thesis will underscore a possible Italian regional approach to Africa with the aim of understanding whether Libya's internal problems can be addressed from a regional perspective.

The reasons that led me to choose this topic are extremely current. Today, as in the past, Libya's internal dynamics influence our country's security. We can choose not to take an interest in Libya, but the underlying forces of the North African country will impact our country. For this reason, it is important to be aware of the interests at stake in Libya. Several regional and non-regional actors pursue an active foreign policy in our neighboring North African country. Their involvement contributes to Libya's instability, which directly impacts our country. Thus, I believe it is essential to emphasize once again that Libya is crucial to our foreign

policy, especially in a context where only Italy seems to be interested in the stability of Libya. Each country pursues its own interests in the country, but the results of the instability on the North African coast are primarily reflected in Italy. For these reasons I have chosen to address this topic which today as in the past, is always crucial for our interest due to the geographical position.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Libyan issues

1.1: History and Geography as factors to understand the divisions inside the country

“Look back over the past, with its changing empires that rose and fell, and you can foresee the future, too.”³ Thus, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius in his book ‘Meditations’ affirms and underlines the role of history in understanding the situation in a country. This assumption finds a perfect application in the Libyan case.

Before Libya gained unity and independence in 1951 with the Idris Monarchy, its history was strongly related to tribes⁴, regions, cities and to the broad domination that had affected the three territorial entities of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan⁵. Geography was one of the key factors defining differences among these regions on both cultural and commercial levels. In order to understand these differences, it’s important to begin with a brief historical analysis of the matter.

First, Libya is geographically divided into three zones: the western side of the country is defined as Tripolitania, from the Greek ‘*tripolis*’, three cities. In the Eastern part of the country, there is the region of Cyrenaica, encompassing the city of Benghazi; in the South is located the region of Fezzan, a nomadic land, stretching all the way to the Chadian border and with very little in common with the two coastal regions. When we speak about the importance of geographical factors to understand history, we do not include only the main aspects like mountains and rivers, which could constitute natural geographical borders. We are referring to all those natural factors that have shaped the course of history and, in the Libyan case, one of those factors are the marine currents; these have influenced the cultural interactions of the two coastal regions in very different way. Indeed, the strong commercial relations between Cyrenaica with Egypt and all the Mashriq⁶ (oriental lands) arise from the marine currents off Benghazi’s coast, which naturally carry boats eastward. Instead, Tripolitania, due to its geographically North-West oriented position, has always had close relations with Maghrib.⁷ These social-commercial interactions, on the one side with the West and on the other with the East, have determined both the diverse tribal composition inside the coastal regions and their cultural-historical ties with the tribes of neighbouring countries.

Even today these ties are evident, indeed the most important tribes of Cyrenaica, namely Al-Abaidat, Awaqir, and Zuwaya, have strong relationship with tribes of the Western Egypt. Instead, Tripolitania principal tribes, namely Warfalla, Qhadhadfia, and Zinten have solid links with Tunisian tribes.⁹ With regard to the third region of Libya, Fezzan, it is important to underline that this region has never been strongly connected either with Maghrib nor Mashriq in his history, instead, the nomadic population of this geographical area has tied its

³ Aurelius, M. (2014). *Meditations* (M. Hammond, Trans.). Penguin Classics.

⁴ *tribe*. (2025). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/tribe>

⁵ Metz, H. C. (1989). Libya : A Country study, pg 3. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13428580>

⁶ Everett-Heath, J. (2018). The Concise Dictionary of World Place-Names. In *Oxford University Press eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780191866326.001.0001>

⁷ *Maghribi, n. & adj. meanings, etymology and more* | *Oxford English Dictionary*. (n.d.). https://www.oed.com/dictionary/maghribi_n

⁸ Marshall, T. (2016). *Prisoners of geography*, pg 70. Elliott & Thompson.

⁹ Grigoriadis TN, Kassem W. The regional origins of the Libyan conflict. *Middle East Policy*. 2021;1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12560>

relationship with the African Sub-Saharan part; therefore, from here, the connections between its tribes and Chadian tribes. At this point is fundamental to analyse how these three regions have been dominated and administrated in a such a broader way during history and how this has led to the development of eco-cultural differences among the regions. Starting from Tripolitania, the largest region, the Phoenicians established there three different colonies in the 7th century, which led to the development of three cities: Labqui (Leptis Magna where Roman Emperor Septimus Severo was born, who ruled from 193 to 211 CE), Oea (Tripoli) and Sabratha (Sabratak). In the previous centuries, first the Carthaginians, then the Numidians had conquered these cities, until the Numidian war of 46 BC when the Romans conquered and later on annexed those cities to the Empire for the next four centuries. Afterwards, there was a brief period of Vandals and then of Bizantine Greeks until 643 CE when the region was conquered by the Arabs who maintained their domination for an extended period. Finally, the Ottoman Turks gain control of the region in 1551 and ruled on it, directly or indirectly for the following 360 years.¹⁰

The second Libyans region, Cyrenaica, was dominated during the great age of Hellenic overseas colonization by the Greece in 631 BC; in that period, 4 cities were founded, including Euhesperides (currently Benghazi). In 525 BC the region was conquered by the son of Cyrus the Great, and the Persian domination ruled over it for years, until 74 BC when Cyrenaica was annexed to the Roman Empire becoming, along with Crete, a roman province for the subsequent 400 years.

Under Roman administration both regions experienced a period of prosperity, however, due to their previous domination, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica have preserved their distinct character, Punic in the first case and Greek in the second. The patterns of trade also remained different, Tripolitania was one of the main regions for olive-oil exportation, instead Cyrenaica was very significant for horses and wines exportation. The word 'Libya' was used for the first time in the 300 CE, as an administrative designation, after Emperor Diocletian's decision to reorganize the Empire. With this decision, the Roman province of Creta-Cyrenaica was divided, and the latter formed the province of Upper Libya and Lower Libya.

Moreover, with the breakthrough moment of the Roman Empire in 395 CE, Upper Libya and Lower Libya were incorporated into the Eastern Roman Empire, while Tripolitania became part of the Western Roman Empire.¹¹

The third region of Libya, Fezzan, during the Phoenician domination in Tripolitania and the Greece domination in Cyrenaica, was ruled for a long time by a very powerful tribe, the *Garamentes*, that established a Kingdom based on the control of trade routes. Afterwards the region was conquered by the Romans in 19 BC, named the regions 'Phazania, by the Arabs and finally by the Ottoman Empire in 1842.¹²

As previously mentioned, the Romans were the first power to rule over all three regions; many years later a similar situation occurred under the Ottoman Empire, which administrated the regions autonomously (as for

¹⁰ Metz, H. C. (1989). Libya : A Country study, pg 5. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13428580>

¹¹ Ibidem

¹² The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2025, October 14). Tuareg. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tuareg>

Algeria and Tunisia) and separately under the Karamanli dynasty (1711-1835), who was recognized by the Ottomans as 'hereditary pasha'. Tripolitania was the region that developed more in this period (at that time Tripoli was the most populous city of the regency) due to its geographical position, the region created an economy-based-on custom duties, imposed on ships sailing off the region's coasts.¹³

It is important to notice that the economy-based-on custom duties was very common in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia too; however, a request from the Tripolitania region for an increased tribute to the United States, and the latter's subsequent refuse, led the Karamanli's decision to declare war on the US in 1801. Due to the American's actions (a naval fleet sent off the Tripolitania's coast) the war was concluded a few years later, in 1805, with an economically favourable peace treaty for the Americans.¹⁴

Initially, the ottoman's influence on the territory was primarily based on the taxation of the local tribe's confederation; therefore, for the first period, Ottoman's control and dominance on the three provinces was only economic¹⁵. Subsequently, in order to contain the French influence expansion in Africa, the Ottoman Empire launched an extensive centralization policy, which included a military campaign to suppress tribal autonomy. For this reason the Karamanli dynasty was defeated in 1835 and the direct Ottoman rule over the three regions was established.¹⁶

Seventy-six years later there was another breakthrough moment in the history of those regions: Italy's military invasion. The casus belli that led to Italian military intervention in 1911 was Istanbul's alleged hostility towards the peaceful penetration undertaken by the Bank of Rome, which financed local companies in the main cities. Moreover, the Italian action had the French approval under the condition that Italy would not make any further colonial claims on Tunisia (which was under French control). It is the unanimous opinion of scholars, that at the time of the Italian invasion, a national spirit among the three regions aimed at contrasting the foreigner was absent; instead, the only spirit of unity present was in Cyrenaica, and it was characterized by its identity-religious aspect based on the Islamic order of Sanūsiyyah (present in Cyrenaica since the first half of 19 century it fostered a sense of unity and brotherhood through the region)¹⁷ Indeed, the most important resistance to the Italian invasion was carried out in Cyrenaica, and for this reason the Italian army only controlled the coastal part of Tripolitania for a long time.

With the start of First World War, due to the pre-eminence of the Northern front, there was a partial withdrawal of Italian troops from Libya which led to peace, through the Acroma agreement of 1917, between Italy and Sayyid Idris al-Sanussi (chief of Senussi).¹⁸ The Acroma agreement officially recognized the Senussia control over Cyrenaica and, three years later, another agreement was signed between the parts, the

¹³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2023, October 27). Tripolitania. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tripolitania>

¹⁴ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2025, August 4). First Barbary War. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/First-Barbary-War>

¹⁵ Emiliani, M. (2021) *Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*, pg 158. Roma: GLF editori Laterza.

¹⁶ Ibidem

¹⁷ Brown, L.C., Barbour, N., Buru, M.M., Fowler, G.L., Cordell, D.D. (2025, October 23). Libya. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Libya>

¹⁸ Gasbarri, C. (1973). LA POLITICA AFRICANA DELL'ITALIA NELLE CARTE DI COLOSIMO. *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi e Documentazione Dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, 28(3).

Regima Pact, which recognized Sayyid Idris al-Sanussi as King of Cyrenaica; the king would be funded by Italy, to which it was expected to guarantee, in return, the disarmament of the various militias formed by the tribal confederation¹⁹. Moreover, it is important to notice that the year before the Regima Pact, the Italian Parliament approved the Fundamental Laws of 1919; the scope of those laws was to establish a sort of liberalist approach to the colonial territories, granting important freedoms to local tribes. The reason behind this decision was economic-based because after the World War I Italy's economy was in ruins and the country could not afford to sustain a greater financial effort in the overseas territories.²⁰

In Tripolitania, after the approval of the Fundamental Laws, the situation became more complex and internal division assumed greater importance. A short-life Republic was created, but due to the contrasts between different tribes on the one side, and between the coastal part and the internal part of the region on the other, it was abolished. Moreover, in this situation also the ethnic contraposition among the Arab population and Berbes played an important role, indeed the latter decided in 1922 not to taking part into the consultation for deciding the Tripolitania government composition.²¹

The Italian foreign policy changed with the rise of fascism; the decision to withdraw the Fundamental Law and restore military operations in Libya led to the conquest of Tripolitania and Fezzan; once again, the only forms of resistance were carried out in Cyrenaica by Omar al-Mukhtar, until 1931, when the Senussi resistance was finally defeated.²²

Tripolitania was entirely conquered in 1923, Fezzan was pacified a few years later and until 1931 Cyrenaica become the most Italian relevant field of operations aimed to defeat Omar al-Mukhtar's resistance. Due to the differences in terms of numbers between Italy and Senussi and due to the knowledge of the terrain, on the one side Mukhtar adopted guerrilla tactics like ambushed troop columns, cut lines of supply and communication, on the other side, Italian forces under Graziani's command conducted a war of attrition characterized by search and destroy missions and air support against the tribal camps of the resistance.²³ Thanks to the tactics adopted by Mukhtar, Graziani was unable to fight a decisive battle against the resistance, so in 1930, the Italian General decided to order the construction of a 320 kilometres barrier from the coast south along the Egyptian frontier aimed to cut Mukhtar off from his supply sources, moreover, the area was designated as a free-fire-zone constantly patrolled by Italian aircrafts.²⁴ In 1931, in Al-Kufrah, the Sanussi resistance was finally defeated and Mukhtar was captured, the Italian conquered of Libya was completed; the day the leader of the Sanussi resistance was hanged in front of a crowd of 20000 Arabs assembled by the Italians in order to witness the event. Mukhtar becomes a symbol of resistance against the colonialism in all MENA's countries and, in 2009,

¹⁹ Emiliani, M. (2021) *Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*, pg 159. Roma: GLF editori Laterza.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Ivi, pg 160.

²² Breccia, G. (2016, October 20). CONTROGUERRIGLIA IN CIRENAICA, 1931: COME CATTURAMMO OMAR AL-MUKHTAR. *Limes*. <https://www.limesonline.com/rivista/controguerriglia-in-cirenaica-1931-come-catturammo-omar-al-mukhtar-14621282/>

²³ Metz, H. C. (1989). *Libya : A Country study*, pg 22. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13428580>

²⁴ ibidem

when Gaddafi arrived in Italy for a formal visit to the Italian Republic, he brought a Mukthar's photo in his hands.

Summarizing fascist colonial policy would take quite a long time, but it is essential to underline some relevant aspects that have influenced the future of the country. First of all, fascist colonial policy weakened all structures that could have a semblance of self-government, like tribal confederations. Furthermore, the local population was excluded from the political-administrative life of the country.²⁵

In the future independent Libya, these two factors that characterized Italian administration led to a situation in which the population was not prepared for self-government also due to the fact that there were no state structures able to carry out political activities. At the same time, the fierce fascist administration in Libya created the identification of the modern state with the fascist state in the mentality of the population, creating a strong future hostility even towards the purest form of the modern state in the Libyan people. For these reasons, during the occupation, the tribal tradition control of territory was idealised as the only pure form of administration; these two aspects: hostility towards the modern state and tribal tradition were the two key element in the Ghaddafi's future propaganda.²⁶

The way in which Italy decided to administrate the country can be seen after the pacification of the country. In 1934, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were divided into four provinces, (Fezzan remained a military territory), but they were formally called as a single unit, Libya, with clear evidence of reflection to the Roman Empire. The colony was administered by the Governor General, Italo Balbo was the first one, and all the administrative posts at all levels were held by Italians. One of the Italian goals in Libya was to solve the internal problem of overpopulation and unemployment through emigration to the colony and so on the project of demographic colonization was strongly carried forward by the Italian government. By 1940 around 110000 Italian settlers were currently living in Libya, thus representing the 12% of the total population. The aim was to arrive by the 1960's to around half a million Italian presents on the Libyan territory, but due to the Second World War it never happened. During the colonization, thanks to the capital invested, the country made impressive improvements in infrastructure; highways and railroads were constructed, ports facilities were expanded, and important project were carried out to modernize the main cities.²⁷ These infrastructures certainly benefited the local population, but the main objective of most of the projects that the Italians completed in Libya was clearly aimed at reducing the time taken to transport goods between different areas of the country and between the colony and the mother country. This strongly economic approach was typical of 20th-century European colonialism in Africa but this approach, can also be rediscovered in China's Belt and Road Initiative project on the African continent as a sort of neo-colonialism. Moreover, important investments on the sanitarian and educational field were carried out in Libya during the 1930s. For the first time, modern medical care was available in the country and a new educational system was developed aimed to create a new society of skilled

²⁵ Emiliani, M. (2021) *Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*, pg 160. Roma: GLF editori Laterza.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Metz, H. C. (1989). *Libya : A Country study*, pg 30. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13428580>

workers for the mother country.²⁸ On international level, in 1934, an agreement was signed between Italy, Great Britain and Egypt. Thus, the Anglo-Egyptian corner known as the Sarra Triangle passed under the Italian control. Moreover, in 1935 between Italy and France another agreement was signed on the region, the negotiation was based on the Libyan-Chadian border and the parties agreed to move the border 100 kilometres southward across the Aouzou Strip (a place where Gaddafi made one of his first foreign policy initiatives years later) but even if the agreement was signed between parties, the French Parliament never ratified it, and then Italy never gained that piece of land²⁹. With the outbreak of World War II and Italy's subsequent defeat in the Battle of El Alamein in Africa, Great Britain gained the military and administrative control over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica while Fezzan passed under French control and therefore the future of the country was decided by the winning powers of the Second World War.

First of all, in order to analyse the internal situation of the three regions, a representative commission of the Alliance was sent to Libya, and it's very interesting to underline the different willingness of the respective population of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan toward the future, founded by the Commission. Tripolitania was in favour of the union of the three regions, due also to the fact that at the end of World War II a lot of refugees came back from the Arab countries, where during their exile they cultivated an arab-libyc nationalism in which the union of the three regions was a key pillar. Instead of that, the situation in Cyrenaica and Fezzan was different: the population of the first aimed for an independent state of the region with a Senussi government, while half the population of the second preferred to remain under the French control³⁰. To avoid the issue from becoming entangled in the unfolding dynamics of the emerging Cold War, the Quadripartite Commission reached an agreement on the drafting of the final report, affirming the unanimous will for independence expressed by the Libyan people; after which the matter was referred to the United Nations General Assembly which approved the resolution n.382 decreed that Libya should become independent no later than 1 January 1952, and the country officially gained its independence on 24 December 1951.³¹

The administration of the newly formed state was entrusted to King Idris al-Sanussi, who, when faced with a domestic context devastated by war, internal fragmentation and lacking any modern state tradition, opted for a federal system granting considerable autonomy to the three regional entities.³²

Due to the absence of institutional structures, the King heavily relied on religious brotherhoods and tribal networks, thus favouring tribal institutions over the development of a state apparatus in line with Western state-building models. So, the federal system that began to take shape in Libya, known as the system of joint powers, was based on the principle that the provinces were responsible for implementing the laws approved by the federal government; in theory, it was a simple and effective structure, yet in practice it encountered

²⁸ *ibidem*

²⁹ Metz, H. C. (1989). *Libya : A Country study*, pg 30. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13428580>

³⁰ Emiliani, M. (2021) *Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*, pg 163. Roma: GLF editori Laterza.

³¹ *Constitutional history of Libya*. (n.d.). ConstitutionNet. <https://constitutionnet.org/country/libya>

³² MEZRAN, K., & ELJARH, M. (2014). *The Case for a New Federalism in Libya*. Atlantic Council. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03435>

several difficulties in its application³³. One of those difficulties was related to the presence of legislative and executive councils, with their prime minister, in each territory of the country, leading to an internal situation of four different governments with four different prime ministers. In a very young and fragmented nation, as Libya was at that moment, this situation created conflicts between regions and the central authority and a polarization of the political activities of the country, becoming one of the principal problems to the political and economic development of Libya itself³⁴. Due to this conflictual situation among the actors, and the oil discovery in 1960 which increased the internal tensions in the country, the federal system was abolished by the decision of the Monarchy in 1963; the petroleum was the key factor that brought Libya from a federal state to a unitary state and therefore the relations between the central authority and territorial entities changed.³⁵ Beyond transforming Libya's internal system, oil also reshaped the country's relevance on the geopolitical stage. Libyan Petroleum had two fundamental features that made it particularly attractive to foreign markets: its quality, thanks to the presence of only minimal sulphur content and its geographical position, which made connections with European ports extremely easy, providing both logistical and economic advantages.³⁶ Given its desirability, it was crucial for the young African state to maximize the international benefits of oil exploitation. For this reason, the first national oil law established a system designed to leverage competition among multinational oil companies on one side, and to secure the highest possible returns for the country on the other side. Moreover, the system took into account the lessons learned from the experiences of other Arab oil-producing nations and therefore included two key provisions: first, Libya received royalties calculated on the basis of the daily extracted number of barrels; second, oil concessions granted to major companies had to be effectively exploited rather than merely held as options and with a mandatory requirement for foreign Companies to form a joint venture with the Libyan Petroleum Company.³⁷ These clauses were of primary importance, as they ensured Libya a voice in determining production levels, a role that other Arab oil-producing countries did not yet possess.

The country's economic life experienced significant growth during these years; however, corruption simultaneously expanded exponentially at all levels of the tribal structure, transforming the relationship between the monarchy and the tribal confederations from one based on loyalty, as established by the *bay'ah* (the traditional Islamic act of allegiance and submission), into a purely patronage relationship.³⁸

Four years after the transition from a federal to a unitary state, the Six-Day War of 1967 once again altered Libya's internal situation. The King's close alignment with the West provoked widespread demonstrations in the aftermath of the war; oil workers refused to work, both in solidarity with the Arab countries engaged in the conflict and in opposition to their monarch's relationship with the West. These protests embodied not only

³³ Emiliani, M. (2021) *Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*, pg 164. Roma: GLF editori Laterza.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Ivi, pg 166. Roma: GLF editori Laterza.

³⁶ African Petroleum Producers' Organization (APPO). (2025, June 11). *Libya | APPO*. African Petroleum Producers' Organization (APPO) | APPO. <https://apposecretariat.org/membership/libya/>

³⁷ DCAF. (2021, July 13). *Law No. (25) of 1955 on the Petroleum Law - Libya - DCAF legal databases*. Libya - DCAF Legal Databases. <https://security-legislation.ly/latest-laws/law-no-25-of-1955-on-the-petroleum-law/>

³⁸ Emiliani, M. (2021) *Medio Oriente: Una storia dal 1918 al 1991*, pg 167. Roma: GLF editori Laterza.

dissatisfaction with the King's international stance but also growing resentment toward the corruption and nepotism that had produced an almost oligarchic system permeating Libya's political and social structure.³⁹ The convergence of these internal factors with the monarch's pro-Western alignment ultimately led to the coup d'état carried out by the Free Officers Movement on 1. September 1969.

1.2: Ghaddafi's Libya: domestic and foreign policy of the Colonel

Within a few days, the Free Officers Movement gained full military control of the country. The army's rapid decision to side with the coup leaders meant that resistance to the takeover was virtually non-existent; indeed, no casualties were recorded during those days. From an international perspective, the Free Officers Movement, coordinated by a directorate of twelve members known as the Revolutionary Command Council, promptly tried to reassure the major world powers of the new Libyan government's intention to recognize both the existing treaties between Libya and foreign actors, and the property rights of foreign nationals residing in the country; indeed only five days after the coup the regime was officially recognized by United States⁴⁰. On the 7 of September the new government was formed with Mahmud Sulayam al Maghrabi (a former political prisoner under King Idris's monarchy) as Prime Minister and Captain Muammar al Qadhafi, promoted to the rank of Colonel, as Commander-in-Chief of the Libyan Armed Forces. During the following years, due to accusations against several ministers of plotting a new coup, the established government was reshuffled many times, and these internal changes ultimately brought Colonel al-Qadhafi, who enjoyed strong political standing within the RCC, to assume the position of Prime Minister. The first domestic reforms adopted by the new regime aimed both to consolidate its own power and to lay the foundations for the years to come. All parliamentary institutions were immediately abolished, the long-standing ban on political parties, in place in Libya since 1952, was reaffirmed, and the country's identity as an Arab nation was once again proclaimed. On the international stage, several significant declarations were made to outline the new direction of Libya's foreign policy. During the 1970s, a period marked by the global division between the Western and Eastern blocs, the regime declared its neutrality among the great powers and firmly repudiated all forms of colonialism and imperialism. Particularly noteworthy were the statements made in support of the Palestinian cause against Israel, an issue on which King Idris's ambiguity during the Six-Day War had ultimately contributed to his fall. The early 1970s of Gaddafi's regime were marked by repression and the centralization of power. An example that can be made is the decision to conscript the press in 1972, however, much of the Colonel's attentions were directed toward Cyrenaica where the Sanussi order had developed its structure into a sort of para-state. Due to its importance, the order was outlawed, the entire tribal system came under attack, being portrayed as an obstacle to the development of Arab unity, and traditional tribal leaders were subsequently replaced by new figures loyal to the regime.

³⁹ Ibidem

⁴⁰ Metz, H. C. (1989). *Libya : A Country study*, pg 42. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13428580>

Once Gaddafi had consolidated his power, he began to shape civil society according to his own ideology through what became known as the Cultural or Popular Revolution. Its declared objective was to increase civic participation within the subnational governmental system through the establishment of people's committees across Libyan territory, which were to become responsible for local administration while eliminating all traditional forms of representation.⁴¹ The benefit the Colonel gained from people's committees was the creation of his own territorial control structures throughout Libya, which by mid-1973 numbered nearly two thousands members. Following the same principle, he also established two new political structures at the national level: the General People's Congress, which was to replace the RCC, and the General People's Committee. The former was designed as a representative body vested with exclusive legislative and executive authority, with Gaddafi himself as General Secretary. The latter replaced the Council of Ministers, changing the title of its members from ministers to secretaries, who were now directly accountable to the General Secretariat.⁴² Moreover, in order to concentrate even greater power in his own hands, the General People's Congress transferred much of its legislative and executive authority to the General Secretariat, Colonel Gaddafi himself. By the late 1970s, the new internal system established by the Dictator had become fully consolidated. The old representative bodies had been eliminated or replaced with new ones, creating a structure based on overlapping jurisdictions among different institutions, all sharing one common feature: they were presided over by Gaddafi.

On the international level, Gaddafi foreign policy was characterized by two different phases: the first, between 1970 and the end of the 90', characterized by the gradual increase of the international isolation of the country, and the second from the 2000 to the 2011 when Libya's international relations rose, especially in the Western hemisphere. During the first phase, key pillars of Gaddafi Foreign policy were strongly based on one side to the persecution of the Arab Unity and on the other side to the growth of the Libya's influence towards the African Continent. With regard to the idea of Arab Unity, his idea was to create a Union of States within a federation stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean. In an historical period where the dominant global players were, on the one hand, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and, on the other, the United States, the Libyan dictator expressed himself as follows: 'it is ironic to see that Americans and Soviets, who are not of the same origin, have come together to create united federations, while the Arabs, who are of the same race and religion, have so far failed to realize the most cherished goal of the present Arab generation.'⁴³ For these reasons, under Gaddafi's initiative, an agreement was signed with Egypt and Syria for the creation of the Federation of Arab Republics in 1971, nevertheless, disagreements among the three heads of state meant that the Federation became more of an idealistic identity than an effective political entity.⁴⁴ However, obsessed with the pursuit of Arab unity, Gaddafi pursued further initiatives in the region to achieve some concrete form

⁴¹ Ivi, pg 44

⁴² Metz, H. C. (1989). *Libya : A Country study*, pg 45. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13428580>

⁴³ Ivi, pg 218

⁴⁴ Bechtold, P. K. (1973). *New Attempts at Arab Cooperation: The Federation of Arab Republics, 1971-? Middle East Journal*, 27(2), 152–172. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4325055>

of unity among Arab countries. In 1974, a financial union was signed between Libya and Tunisia, but only two days after, the Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba repudiated it. In 1980, a new union was signed with Syria, but given the unwillingness of both sides to cede sovereignty the union was more idealistic than concrete. In 1984, Libya and Morocco signed the Oujda Treaty with the aim of significantly strengthening cooperation between the two countries, but the visit of the Israeli Prime Minister to Morocco and the consequent Libyan protests significantly damaged relations between the two countries. Every diplomatic initiative pursued by Gaddafi in pursuit of Arab Unity proved to be a failure. On the screen some results were achieved, but in reality, the Libyan dictator's Arab Unity project never took shape.

Instead, another type of expansion of Libyan influence was pursued both toward its neighbours in sub-Saharan Africa, namely Chad and Sudan, and across the rest of the African continent, particularly in countries where anti-imperialist insurgent movements were active. In Chad, the expansion of Libyan influence went hand in hand with a military operation carried out in 1973, which led to the occupation of the Aouzou Strip, a territory in northern Chad bordering the Fezzan region. The area represented one of Libya's territorial claims dating back to the end of the colonial period. In Sudan, meanwhile, Gaddafi was accused of being behind numerous coup attempts during the 1970s, and diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed in 1981, when the Sudanese government ordered the expulsion of Libyan diplomats from Khartoum.⁴⁵

During this period (1970-1980) the relations between Gaddafi and the West were relatively good, especially from a commercial point of view, for example, the Federal Republic of Germany was Libya's most important oil partner and in 1975, furthermore, relations with Italy improved thanks to an agreement signed between the two countries to compensate the Italian property lost when Italians had to flee Libya after the 1969 revolution. Moreover, the following year, an important trade agreement was signed between the two countries, through which Libya purchased 9 per cent of Fiat's shares and, as a result, two Libyan representatives sat on the board of the Italian company. There were also important economic relations with France, especially about military contracts, even though Gaddafi repeatedly accused France of being nothing more than an arms dealer due to the fact that France was carrying on military agreements with the vast majority of MENA countries, including those currently in war. Despite the various accusations made by the Libyan dictator, relations between the two countries deteriorated not for commercial reasons but rather for political ones, as in 1980 France and Libya supported two different sides in the Chadian situation. But the real reason behind the deterioration of relations between Libya and Western countries lay in Gaddafi's growing support for terrorist organisations and/or revolutionary movements which has led the African country into a state of international isolation over the years, that reached its peak in the second half of the 1980s, following the attacks at La Belle Disco in Berlin and the Lockerbie case of 1988⁴⁶⁴⁷. Sudan indeed was not the only country where Gaddafi financed terrorist and insurgent organizations; on the contrary, the list is quite long, and a few examples are worth mentioning.

⁴⁵ Metz, H. C. (1989). *Libya : A Country study*, pg 55. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13428580>

⁴⁶ Pearson, E. (2025, March 29). 1986 West Berlin discotheque bombing. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/West-Berlin-discotheque-bombing-1986>

⁴⁷ Steve Emerson, *The Lockerbie Terrorist Attack and Libya: A Retrospective Analysis*, 36 *Case W. Res. J. Int'l L.* 487 (2004) Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/jil/vol36/iss2/13>

The British Parliament has reported that between the 1970s and the 1990s, Gaddafi's regime provided military assistance, including arms shipments, to the IRA. Moreover, there is also evidence that the regime offered both financial and military support to the PLO in Palestine, the National Patriotic Front in Liberia, the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, and many other terrorist organizations active around the world during that period.⁴⁸ In the attacks at La Belle Disco in Berlin and the Lockerbie case, the regime was accused of having indirectly financed the terrorist organizations responsible for the attacks. Indeed, after the 1988 Lockerbie case, Libya was defined by the United States Institute of Peace as one of the main sponsors of international terrorism, and the United Nations imposed economic sanctions on the country.⁴⁹ Seven years before the economic sanctions, the Reagan administration ordered the closure of the Libyan embassy in Washington due to its links with terrorism and a few months later, during US naval operations in the Gulf of Sidra, two Libyan SU-22 fighter jets were shot down. The attack on the Berlin discotheque, frequented by American personnel in Germany, further heightened tensions, and in 1986 the United States bombed Tripoli and Benghazi, killing numerous civilians. The American attack, as well as being retaliation for the attack on the Berlin discotheque, was intended to incite the Libyan population to rise up against the dictator, but the killing of civilians had exactly the opposite effect and the population rallied in support of their leader.⁵⁰ From the perspective of the other major player at the time, the Soviet Union, following the expulsion of Soviet diplomats from Egypt in 1972, Libya became more important for the communist federation, and, over time, numerous trade agreements were concluded between the two countries, especially in the military field. Thus, in the 1970s, Libya found itself trading with both Cold War blocs. Despite these ties with the Soviet Union, the lack of effective support from the communist federation during the events of 1986 underscores how Moscow had no intention of raising tensions with its rival, the United States, to defend the Libyan dictator.⁵¹ The severe economic and diplomatic consequences of this Libyan isolation led the Colonel to shift his foreign policy toward a more moderate line. The end of financial support to terrorist organizations and the decision, in 1999, to hand over the two Libyan agents accused of the Lockerbie bombing in order to be judged by a Scottish court were the first moves in Gaddafi's new foreign policy and the first steps toward rapprochement between Libya and the West. Four years later, the decision to officially renounce weapons of mass destruction and to admit Libya's civil responsibility in the Lockerbie attack led to the suspension of United Nations sanctions against the country, bringing Libya out of international isolation and marking the beginning of a new phase of diplomatic and commercial relations with Western states, supranational organizations, Russia, and, of course, China.⁵²

⁴⁸ Winchester, N. (n.d.). Compensation for victims of Libyan-sponsored Ira Terrorism - House of Lords Library. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/compensation-for-victims-of-libyan-sponsored-ira-terrorism/>

⁴⁹ *Libya To Be Removed from State Sponsors of Terrorism List*. (n.d.). <https://www.aila.org/dos-libya-to-be-removed-state-sponsors-terrorism>

⁵⁰ Metz, H. C. (1989). *Libya : A Country study*, pg 229. <http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA13428580>

⁵¹ Ivi, 231

⁵² *UN arms embargo on Libya*. (2012, October 25). SIPRI. https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/libya/libya-1992

Gaddafi's new foreign policy can be defined in a certain sense as “pro-global” given the relations maintained by the Libyan dictator with all the players on the world stage. An initial initiative carried out during this period, together with South Africa and Nigeria, concerned the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU). During an initiative in the city of Sirte in 1999, the transformation was declared by Gaddafi as necessary, especially in light of the collapse of the communist camp in Africa and the rapid rise of Islamist movements; greater cooperation between countries was essential. The position of prominence assumed by the Libyan dictator in the new African Union increased his regional leadership to the point that he intervened as a mediator in various regional disputes for example between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and in internal disputes in Sierra Leone, Niger, Mali and Kenya.

In practice, the transformation of the organisation encountered numerous difficulties due to the differing views of the main leaders of the member countries on the specific role to be given to the new structure. However, beyond any discussion that may be had about the concrete nature of the organisation's transformation during that period, what cannot be denied is that the new Gaddafi's new role on the African continent led to an increase in Gaddafi's standing relations with the whole world.⁵³ In these relations, the strategy pursued by Gaddafi in the period following Libya's international isolation was characterised by great pragmatism, indeed, the country signed important economic agreements with all the major players on the world stage, thus a new player entered the history of Libya, quickly becoming the African country's most important economic partner: China. The relationships between China and Libya were established in 1978. During the Libyan international isolation, the relations between the two countries were marginal, until the end of the 90'. In this regard, it's important to underline that, between 1999 and 2003 two important events took place: a visit to Libya by a delegation of the Chinese Communist Party and the state visit of Chinese President Jian Zemin, which led to the signing of important trade agreements between the two countries a few months later. These were the first important steps for the Chinese penetration into Libya and a remarkable starting point for cooperation between the two countries at the energetic, infrastructural and communication level. In relation to the energetical sector, agreements were signed for a cooperation between the China National Petroleum Corporation and the National Oil Corporation (Libyan national oil company)⁵⁴. Moreover, in 2004 the Chinese company obtained concessions for the Ghadames and Muzuq wells, which increased its influence in the energy sector and led China to control more than 10% of Libyan oil exports⁵⁵. concerning the infrastructure sector, the agreements signed for the development and modernization of the country strongly focused on the railway nets. In fact, in 2008 the China Railway Construction Corporation signed a contract to build two of the largest rail-links in Libya, around \$2.6 billion worth. The development of these two railway connections, West-East from Khums to Sirte (352 km) and South-North West from Sebha to Misurata (800 km) had the dual function of both facilitating connections among the Libyan population, and above all reducing the time for transport and

⁵³ Varvelli, A. (2009). *Gheddafi e l'Unione Africana: legittimità internazionale, influenza regionale e sviluppo interno*. ISPI

⁵⁴ BBC. (2002, April 14). Middle East | Jiang hails friendship with Gaddafi. BBC News.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1928709.stm

⁵⁵ Nova, R. A. (2024b, May 24). Libya: Petrochina signs a long-term investment agreement with Agoco. Agenzia Nova.
<https://www.agenzianova.com/en/news/Libya-Petrochina-signs-long-term-investment-agreement-with-Agoco/>

delivery of goods.⁵⁶ Thanks to these investments China became the most important Libyan economic partner, the third African country in which China invested more money after Angola and Zambia and the third oil buyer after Italy and France.⁵⁷

As regards relations with France, in 2005 the Minister of the Interior, Sarkozy, paid an official visit to Libya with the official aim of creating a Mediterranean union. This visit marked the beginning of a new era in relations between the two countries and, according to current legal proceedings, also in relations between the Libyan President and the future President of the French Republic. Indeed, on 25 September 2025, Sarkozy was sentenced by the Paris Court to five years of reclusion for illegal financing received by the Libyan leader during the 2007 presidential campaign that led to Sarkozy's victory. Beyond the personal relationship between the two leaders, over the years, economic agreements were signed between the two countries, mainly in specific sectors such as defence, gas and oil; unlike the general political-economic agreements concluded between Italy and Libya in 2008.⁵⁸

Given its geographical proximity to Libya and its historical ties with the African country, Italy exerted considerable pressure to have UN sanctions against Gaddafi's regime lifted. In fact, a preliminary agreement had already been concluded in 1996 between ENI, the Italian oil company, and its Libyan counterpart. In the aftermath of the end of Libya's international isolation, the agreement between the two companies gained momentum and led to the inauguration of the undersea gas pipeline between Libya and Italy in 2004, and Tripoli became Italy's third largest oil importer after Russia and Algeria and thus a strategic partner for Italy.⁵⁹ Over the years, relations between the two countries strengthened, and in 2008, a Friendship Treaty was signed, leading to Gaddafi's visit to Rome 40 years after his previous visits. The Friendship Treaty emphasizing the special and privileged relationship that the two countries intend to develop: 'The Treaty is made up of three parts: general principles; closing with the past and ending the disputes; partnership. It begins with a long preamble which sets down, among other things, the will to close with the "painful 'chapter of the past' for which Italy has already expressed its regret for the suffering that Italian colonization caused the Libyan people". In short, Libya has managed to receive a "condemnation" of Italian colonialism, which is reflected in several of the Treaty's provisions. The reference to regional cooperation is also significant. This is attested to by the negotiations for a framework agreement between the European Union and Libya, which started in November 2008. Italy is committed to building basic infrastructure for a total of \$5 billion. The annual expenditure will amount to \$250 million over 20 years, to be drummed up through an increase in the Ires tax (tax on company income) of companies operating in the field of hydrocarbon research and development,

⁵⁶ Railway contractor wins \$2.6B bids in Libya. (n.d.). https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2008-02/18/content_6462209.htm

⁵⁷ Escobar, P. (2011, April 14). China's interests in Gaddafi. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2011/4/14/chinas-interests-in-gaddafi>

⁵⁸ RASMI, F. (2021). *Beyond the War: The History of French-Libyan Relations*. Atlantic Council. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep30743>

⁵⁹ C. Filippi, A. Varvelli, "Le strategie di politica energetica dell'Italia. Criticità interne e opportunità internazionali", Osservatorio Internazionale, 2010.

headquartered in Italy, and with a capitalisation of over €20 billion, basically ENI.’⁶⁰ In addition to various agreements of a strictly commercial nature, further agreements and partnerships were signed in numerous sectors, ranging from culture to science, education and the arts and the treaty came into force in 2009 during the visit of Berlusconi, then Italian Prime Minister, to Sirte, where the two leaders ratified the Friendship Treaty between Italy and Libya.

Moreover, with this agreement, ENI secured contracts until 2043 for oil and until 2047 for gas. Libya became an increasingly crucial partner for Italy, and ENI significantly strengthened its position in the African country. However, Gaddafi was not only interested in large-scale economic agreements. Indeed, in the same year that the Italian-Libyan Friendship Treaty was ratified, further meetings were held between the Libyan Minister of Economy and his President with their Italian counterparts, the aim was to establish several agreements for small and medium-sized Libyan industry. ‘This is also part of the strategy Gheddafi intends to follow to fulfil his commitment to concentrate 90 percent of Libya’s foreign investment in Italy and to give priority to Italian businesses that want to operate in Libya.’⁶¹

Following the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship and the evolution of the Italian-Libyan partnership, the American Ambassador to Rome, David Thorne, expressed his discomfort about the increasingly close relations between Rome and Tripoli.⁶² Indeed, Italy’s position during the internal Libyan events of 2011 will be initially be considerate as non-aligned to the positions of the others western countries.

1.3: The fall of Ghaddafi’s regime

The Arab Spring of 2011, which affected several MENA countries, led to a full-scale civil war in Libya and to the consequent end of the dictatorial regime, triggering a political, economic, and social process of fragmentation throughout the country. The causes that led to the fall of the regime are multiple and can be classified into two broad categories: internal and external factors. On the domestic level, the uprisings that broke out in 2011 were rooted in the outcomes of forty years of rule by the Libyan dictator, who, on one hand, had transformed Libya into a modern oil economy, and on the other hand, had caused an unequal distribution of wealth within the country. The main aspects through which the forty years of the Colonel’s dictatorship can be summarized are three: limited state subsidies, purely economic relations with the tribes, and repression against political opponents. Moreover, as seen previously, control over both the economy and politics was extremely tight, eliminating any form of political opposition within a structure largely based on nepotism, a

⁶⁰ Ronzitti, n (2009): ‘*The treaty of friendship, partnership and cooperation between Italy and Libya: new prospects for cooperation in the Mediterrean*’, IAI
<https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai0909.pdf>

⁶¹ Ronzitti, n (2009): ‘*The treaty of friendship, partnership and cooperation between Italy and Libya: new prospects for cooperation in the Mediterrean*’, IAI
<https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai0909.pdf>

⁶² Varvelli, A. (2010). Italy and Libya: Renewing a Special Relationship. *The International Spectator*, 45(3), 117–130.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2010.504627>

quasi-oligarchic system in which the figure of the dictator was overwhelmingly dominant. This sharp division between the elite and the people was further exacerbated by geographic fragmentation. For instance, during the forty years of the regime, the region of Cyrenaica was economically and politically marginalized. The goal was to weaken the Sanusi Brotherhood, which had a strong capacity for mobilization, and indeed Cyrenaica became the centre of the first events that led to the fall of the regime.⁶³

A significant analysis that effectively summarizes Libya's internal structure under the dictatorship was provided by Dirk Vandewalle, who described Libya as characterized by a "policy of statelessness, where nepotism affected all institutions and where both the central and military authorities were permeated by men with multiple allegiances: kinship, tribe, Islam, Arab nationalism, etc." When this system came under attack, it quickly disintegrated. The breakthrough event occurred on 15 February 2011, when the regime brutally repressed a protest taking place in Benghazi, the most important city of Cyrenaica. The demonstration was intended to protest the arrest of lawyer Fathi Terbil, who represented the families of the prisoners massacred in 1996 in Abu Salim prison. Riding the wave of the Arab Spring that was sweeping across the Maghreb, on 17 February, the population of Cyrenaica called for a new general demonstration, which soon received support from Tripolitania as well. By this point, the situation was already out of control.

Unlike in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, the protests in Libya were also organized by tribal entities, rather than solely by the youth movements that had been the driving force behind the 2011 uprisings in other Maghreb states.⁶⁴ The dictator, aware of the importance of the tribes in the Libyan context, addressed the nation on 21 February 2011, calling for an end to the protests and praising the role of the tribes as the cohesive element of the country. Ghaddafi knew that his power was founded precisely on the alliances established with these tribes; and while on one hand he was fully aware of which tribal organizations opposed him in Cyrenaica, on the other hand he could not have imagined what was about to happen: the defection of the Warfalla tribe, the largest in the country, extending from northern Fezzan throughout Tripolitania. From that moment onward, the regime began to lose its most important figures. In a short time, all members of the Warfalla tribe resigned from their political and military positions, a situation that clearly highlights the relevance of the multi-loyalty system previously mentioned. One of the last manoeuvres attempted by the Colonel was an interview granted to Christiane Amanpour, intended to advance his propaganda regarding the situation the country was experiencing, and to reassure Western powers of his control over the territory⁶⁵. The strategy adopted by the Colonel during the interview was to downplay the protests taking place across the country, claiming that they were being led by Islamic terrorists affiliated with al-Qaeda, an organization to which the Colonel declared himself opposed⁶⁶. However, Gaddafi's propaganda did not achieve the wished results. In Libya, it is true that Islamic terrorist organizations existed, and still exist, but this time Gaddafi used them as a pretext and justification to implement his brutal repression against the Libyan people. It was precisely this brutal and

⁶³ Vandewalle, D. (2012). *A history of modern Libya*. Cambridge University Press

⁶⁴ Emiliani, M. (2020) *Purgatorio arabo, il tradimento delle rivoluzioni in Medio Oriente*, pg 84. Roma: GLF editori Laterza.

⁶⁵ BBC News. (2011, March 1). *Excerpts: Gaddafi interview*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12604102>

⁶⁶ Emiliani, M. (2020) *Purgatorio arabo, il tradimento delle rivoluzioni in Medio Oriente*, pg 88. Roma: GLF editori Laterza.

bloody repression that transformed the internal situation from mere protests into a full-scale civil war, and elevated the issue to the international level, leading the UN Security Council to adopt two historic resolutions on the Libyan crisis. Resolution No. 1970 of 26 February 2011 imposed a no-fly zone and an arms embargo, while the subsequent Resolution No. 1973 of March 2011 authorized Western intervention under what Bellamy (2011) and Erdağ (2017) describe as “*the concept of the responsibility to protect constituted the grounds for legitimacy for the humanitarian interventions in Libya in terms of international law*” The civil war on the ground and the United Nations air bombardments ultimately led to the fall of Gaddafi’s regime on 20 October 2011, with the killing of the Libyan dictator in Sirte, the Colonel’s last stronghold.

1.3.1: The reasons behind the Libyan institutions collapse and the domestic situation post-Gaddafi

The initial creation of the National Transitional Council (NTC), composed of members representing several tribes, occurred during the civil war with the initial objective of coordinating military actions against the regime’s forces and, subsequently, of leading the country toward free elections and the drafting of a constitution. The NTC gave the impression of potential stability and future cooperation among the parties once the figure of the Colonel had disappeared, however, there was a significant issue that undermined the authority and thus the future effectiveness of the NTC: it lacked an army of its own.⁶⁷ This Council, as mentioned, was composed of representatives from different tribes, each one with distinct histories and interests, and each supported by its corresponding armed militias. Therefore, the strength and stability of the NTC stemmed from the presence of a common enemy, which united tribes, and consequently militias, that had historically been very different from one another.⁶⁸ For this reason, the fall of the regime, and thus the disappearance of the common enemy, marked the beginning of a new period in Libyan history characterized, on the one hand, by clashes among non-state actors (armed militias) representing major cities and tribes, and, on the other, by the reinforcement of the historical division between Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, which led over time to a de facto division of Libyan territory.

Fragmentation, always present in Libya’s history, became in the post-Gaddafi period the country’s most defining feature, a fragmentation rooted in the consequences of the abolition of state institutions decreed by Gaddafi once he took power. The absence of these institutions, able to guide the transition process after the fall of the regime, greatly contributed to increase divisions among the parties and led, over time, to a genuine polarization that still characterizes Libya today. To better understand the Libyan context concerning the absence of state institutions, it is useful to recall the words of the Libyan dictator himself during his interview with Christiane Amanpour, in which he stated: “We have no president who can resign, no parliament that can be dissolved, no elections that can be falsified, and no constitution that can be amended.”⁶⁹ These statements,

⁶⁷ Rizzi, F. (2013). *Dove va Il Mediterraneo?*, pg 96 edigita.

⁶⁸ Ibidem.

⁶⁹ BBC News. (2011, March 1). *Excerpts: Gaddafi interview*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12604102>

clearly made for propaganda purposes during the interview to illustrate how power supposedly belonged to the people, underscore the real condition of Libya's institutional framework.

What has remained constant throughout the country's history, however, is the central role of the tribes, which has permeated the entire history of Libya's three regions, from the age before the formation of the Libyan state to the fall of Gaddafi's regime, through the period of King Idris's monarchy, and continues to play a crucial role even today.

Chapter 2: The positions of the international actors during and after the fall of Gaddafi's regime

2.1: Resolution No. 1970 and No. 1973 of the United Nations Security Council

The atrocity measures adopted under Gaddafi's authority aimed to repress riots against his regime brought the Libyan civil war onto an international stage. This situation led the United Nations Security Council to approve the two famous resolutions concerning the Libyan issue: Resolution No. 1970 of 26 February 2011 and Resolution No. 1973 of 17 March 2011.

Resolution No. 1970 was approved by a clear majority of 15 members out of 15 of the Security Council due to condemning the use of force against civilians and referring the Libyan situation to the International Criminal Court.⁷⁰ Therefore, the Security Council in Resolution No.1970 first deplored the gross and systematic violation of human rights carried out by the highest level of the Libyan authority and subsequently took measures due to Article 41 of the Charter of the UN.⁷¹ Indeed, the most important measures taken in the first Resolution were three: the first one was the imposition of an arms embargo, the second one concerned a travel ban and the third one was economic-centred based on the freeze of all funds, financial assets and economic resources in the UN members states territory owned or controlled by a list of people clearly expressed in the Resolution itself. The arms embargo was applied in both directions; on the one hand, UN member states were obliged to suspend the supplies of either lethal and non-lethal military equipment to Gaddafi's country, and on the other hand, the Libyan military export to UN member states was suspended.⁷² Instead, in relation to the imposition of a travel ban, it was disciplined on Annex I of the Resolution, which contained 16 names of the most important figures of the Libyan government and Gaddafi's family.⁷³ Moreover, Annex I listed different situations in which the travel ban shouldn't be applied, for example, for those travels justified for humanitarian needs and religious obligation decided by the Committee or by a state decision due to the relevance of the travel to achieve stability and peace in the Country of Libya.⁷⁴ Subsequently to Annex I, Annex II of UNSCR. 1970 disciplined the freezing of assets in foreign territories for six members of Gaddafi's family; this economic narrowness would have been excluded in specific situations, such as in the case of medical treatment or for the provision of legal services.⁷⁵

Beyond the important measures taken against Gaddafi's Regime, there are two important aspects of Resolution 1970 that should be underlined. The former is related to the first page of the document where it was affirmed that: 'the widespread and systematic attacks currently taking place in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya against the civilian population may amount to crimes against humanity'. Instead, the latter underlines the breakthrough

⁷⁰ United Nations Security Council. (2011). *Resolution 1973 (2011) on Libya*. Pg 1
<https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unsc/2011/en/78129>

⁷¹ Ibidem

⁷² Ivi, Pg 3

⁷³ Ivi, Pg 4

⁷⁴ Ibidem

⁷⁵ Ivi, Pg 5

moment in the UN Security Council history as soon as it represented the first time in which a case was unanimously referred to the International Criminal Court.⁷⁶

Indeed, there was only another previous case in which a Resolution of the Security Council referred a case to the International Criminal Court, Resolution 1593 (2005) on Darfur, but it was adopted with eleven votes in favour and four abstentions respectively of Algeria, Brazil, China and the United States.⁷⁷⁷⁸ Moreover, to conclude the analysis of Resolution No 1970, in the last part of it, precisely at the 28 paragraphs, it was affirmed the decision by the Security Council to: ‘remain actively seized the matter’.⁷⁹ Indeed, this is precisely what happened less than a month later when it was voted and approved the subsequent Resolution No. 1973 of 11 March 2011 concerning the Libyan scenario.

This new Resolution, approved by the UNSC, began with the affirmation of the political failure by the Libyan authority to accomplish the measures contained in Resolution No. 1970, especially referring to the protection of the population in the lens of escalation of violence and systematic violation of human rights as arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture and summary executions. For these reasons, recalling the above-mentioned paragraph 26 of Resolution No. 1970, the Security Council approved the adoption of further measures concerning the Libyan crisis with 10 votes in favour and 5 abstentions respectively of India, Brazil, China, Germany and Russia. These further international measures have been particularly important in the evolution of the Libyan conflict and in the subsequent fall of Gaddafi’s regime. Indeed, as will be possible to underscore later, it is possible to question the possibility of Gaddafi’s fall without an international intervention. The worth of these further measures adopted in the UNSCR No. 1973 can be explained with the words contained in the Resolution itself when the Security Council authorizes UN member states to: ‘to take all necessary measures, notwithstanding paragraph 9 of resolution 1970 (2011), to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory, and requests the Member States concerned to inform the Secretary-General immediately of the measures they take pursuant to the authorization conferred by this paragraph which shall be immediately reported to the Security Council.’⁸⁰ Thus, the Security Council, for the first time in history, according to the implementation of the doctrine about the responsibility to protect, authorized member states to take all the necessary measures, except a territorial occupation, to protect the Libyan population. Thus, it was affirmed the international intervention in the Libyan conflict. Moreover, first, it was approved the institution of a no fly zone over the Libyan territory in order to protect civilians, second, the arms embargo was enforced in relation to what was contained in the Resolution 1970

⁷⁶ Milanovic, M. (2011). *Security Council Adopts Resolution 1970 (2011) with respect to Lybia*. EJIL: Talk. <https://www.ejiltalk.org/security-council-adopts-resolution-1970-2011-with-respect-to-lybia/>

⁷⁷ Milanovic, M. (2011). *Security Council Adopts Resolution 1970 (2011) with respect to Lybia*. EJIL: Talk. <https://www.ejiltalk.org/security-council-adopts-resolution-1970-2011-with-respect-to-lybia/>

⁷⁸ United Nations Security Council. (2005). *Resolution 1593 (2005) on Darfur*. <https://press.un.org/en/2005/sc8351.doc.htm>

⁷⁹ United Nations Security Council. (2011). *Resolution 1970 (2011) on Libya*. Pg 7 <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unsc/2011/en/78129>

⁸⁰ United Nations Security Council. (2011). *Resolution 1973 (2011) on Libya*. Pg 3 [https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/1973\(2011\)](https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/1973(2011))

and third, it was disciplined the freezing of assets of other personalities of the government and entities such as the Central Bank of Libya, the Libyan Foreign Bank and the Libyan National Oil Corporation.⁸¹

From a legal perspective, Resolution 1973 of the UN Security Council marked a breakthrough event in the doctrine of humanitarian intervention through military actions that can be explained through three different points. First of all, one of the important issues that should be underlined is the timing; indeed, only 32 days after the beginning of Gaddafi's government's brutal repression, the Security Council authorized the use of force to protect civilians. If we want to compare this aspect with another international example as the Bosnian War, it could be possible to notice that in the Balkan issue, the Security Council authorized the use of force against safe areas more than a year after the beginning of Serbian attacks on the population.⁸² Another example that can be provided is related to those international situations in which the Security Council has not adopted Resolutions aimed at authorizing the intervention through the use of forces while atrocities against the population were carried forward, as in Kosovo during the period 1998-1999.⁸³

Second, the inclusion of Benghazi as a protected area at a moment when the city was the centre of the command of the revolution can be interpreted as a clear message by the UN Security Council to not identify as moral equals and entitled to the same protection the parties involved in the war.⁸⁴ This is another aspect in which the UNSC marked a clear shift from the Bosnian Resolutions, where the term 'safe area' was not used for specific cities.⁸⁵

Third, from an international law point of view, the theme of domestic insurrections opens up important questions in relation to the cooperation between revolutionary movements and third states. Indeed, a simple form of cooperation between states, allows third states to deliberately provide assistance to the legitimate government in order to carry out the repression.⁸⁶ Instead, any form of cooperation between third states and revolutionary movements is forbidden as it is defined as an illegitimate interference in the domestic issues of a sovereign state.⁸⁷ But, as the Libyan cases seem to be affirmed, the cooperation between third states and revolutionary movements is not forbidden if it is authorized by the UN Security Council, the international body that acts in the name of the international community. Indeed, nowadays, in domestic insurrections, there is the tendency to recognize at an international level which of the different parties involved represent the legitimate aspirations of the people, and this is precisely the activity that the Security Council has carried out in several situations.⁸⁸

To conclude, it is important to notice that after different episodes where the Security Council failed to protect civilians when the population was targeted by military attacks, UNSCR No.1973 marked a moment in which

⁸¹ Ivi, pg 1-6

⁸² Paul R. Williams, Colleen (Betsy) P., *Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya: A Moment of Legal & Moral Clarity*, 44 Case W. Res. J. Int'l L. 225 (2011) pG, 228

⁸³ Ivi, pg 230

⁸⁴ Ivi, pg 238

⁸⁵ Ibidem

⁸⁶ Focarelli, C. (2023). *Diritto internazionale*. Milano: Kluwer. Pg 64-65

⁸⁷ Ibidem

⁸⁸ Ibidem

the international organization authorized all the necessary measures to protect the population in order to stop a massacre.

2.2: The different motivations of states behind their vote on UNSC Resolution No.1973

In order to clearly understand the different international reasons behind the positions of each state in relation to their vote on UNSC Resolution No. 1973, it is important first of all to analyse the situation on the ground during the phases that have preceded the approval of the international intervention. In the first days of March, the counteroffensive of the governmental forces gained important results, leading to the re-occupation of strategic positions. On 14th March Zaura and Ajdabiya were reconquered. Consequently, rebel forces began their retreat through Benghazi, the headquarters of the revolution. In this context, with the governmental forces advancing towards Benghazi, the possibility of an imminent fall of the city and then the complete suppression of the revolution was very high. Therefore, on the grounds, the outcomes of the conflict were strongly in favour of Gaddafi; indeed, on 16 of March, the Colonel proclaimed an ultimatum to Benghazi's population to surrender itself. However, alongside the governmental counteroffensive, the increase of international pressure of certain countries like Great Britain, France and Lebanon to the UN Security Council aimed to achieve the approval of a stronger resolution led the executive organ of the UN to adopt the Resolution No. 1973, which disciplined the international intervention in the conflict.⁸⁹ What is interesting is understanding the reasons of those countries in favour of an international intervention and on the other side the position of those countries that decided to abstain during the vote that led to approval of the Resolution No.1973. First, the state-members of the Security Council that decided to abstain during the vote of the Resolution were: India, Brazil, China, Germany, and Russia; their decision is based both on internal and external considerations. Starting from the only NATO country who not voted in favour of the Resolution, Germany, the position of the Northern European country represents one of those examples in which the decision was primarily based on internal reasons with a marginal support of external ones. In relation to domestic reasons, the German public opinion played a pivotal role in the government's decision to abstain from the Resolution No.1973 as soon as the regional elections were immediately close to the Resolution and the German public opinion was against an intervention through the use of forces. Indeed, from 2003, the Germans expressed their concerns about the military intervention in Iraq, and in 2011, they were already protesting against the German military presence in Afghanistan. In this context, Berlin's support in favour of a military intervention in the Libyan scenario could have led to a governmental party's defeat at the regional elections.⁹⁰ Instead, at the international stage, two main relevant aspects must be underlined behind Merkel's decision to abstain Germany at the UNSCR No.1973. The former is specifically related to the situation on the ground, as it was mentioned earlier, the

⁸⁹ Dipartimento Affari Esteri, Camera dei deputati - XVI Legislatura - Dossier di documentazione, *La crisi politica in Libia e negli altri paesi del Nord Africa e del Medio Oriente*, 23 marzo 2011. <https://documenti.camera.it/leg16/dossier/testi/es0709a.htm>

⁹⁰ Rousseau, R (2011), *Why Germany Abstained on UN Resolution 1973 on Libya*. Foreign policy Journal <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2011/06/22/why-germany-abstained-on-un-resolution-1973-on-libya/>

phases that have preceded the vote of the Resolution No. 1973 have recorded the important results of Gaddafi's counteroffensive, thus, on the unpredictability of the outcomes of the conflict have strengthened Berlin's decision to adopt a pragmatic approach to the conflict.⁹¹ The latter reason should be analysed in the lens of the Franco-German contraposition in the Northern African Country. The 'African' rivalry between Paris and Berlin started in 2007 when President Sarkozy presented the Union of Mediterranean partnership of littoral countries; thus, from the Paris point of view, Germany was excluded by Mediterranean dynamics. For this reason, since France was one of the most involved countries in anti-Gaddafi support, Germany had no interest in supporting the position of the country that wanted Berlin out of the Mediterranean scenario.⁹² Nevertheless, Angela Merkel's decision was strongly criticised, for example the Germany's former Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer declared that with this decision Germany lost its credibility as in the UN as well as in the Middle East.⁹³ To conclude the analysis concerning the Germans' position, it is important to mention the interview made by Limes to David Bosold, who is an Associate Fellow of the Transatlantic Program of the German Council of Foreign Relations (Dgap). Doctor Bosold affirmed that the government decision encountered the favour of the population but not the favour of the experts due to the fact that Germany has not voted as its allies. Moreover, Doctor Bosold underlined the lack of a clear political economic strategy of Berlin in the region, even if it affirmed that for sure Germany would not benefit from instability in the southern part of the Mediterranean.⁹⁴

Moving to the Chinese position, which represents one of the two great powers that has decided to abstain at the UNSCR No.1973, it is important to underline that from the Chinese economic perspective, the fall of Gaddafi's regime has represented a risk for the 75 Chinese national companies active in Libya and for their 19 billion dollar business in 2011.⁹⁵ However, China's choice not to oppose, but to abstain according to the policy of 'non- interventionism' to the UN resolution in 1973 was dictated by the need, as stated in the document of the UN Security Council of 17 March 2011, to consider the positions adopted by the Arab League and the African Union, which were more relevant with respect to Gaddafi's position. That's because the Arab League and the African Union included the main Chinese economic partners in the MENA region, and those countries were pushing for a UN intervention against the Gaddafi regime, which represented for China only the fourth largest oil supplier in the region after Angola, Sudan and Nigeria.⁹⁶ Therefore, if China represented the main economic partner for Libya, Libya did not represent the main partner for China on the African continent. From this point of view, the decision not to vote against the UN Resolution 1973, can be more easily explained: China didn't want to create a possible diplomatic rift with the countries of the Arab League and the

⁹¹ Rousseau, R (2011), *Why Germany Abstained on UN Resolution 1973 on Libya*. *Foreign policy Journal*
<https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2011/06/22/why-germany-abstained-on-un-resolution-1973-on-libya/>

⁹² Ibidem

⁹³ Politi, A (2011), *Bengasi e il mondo ad Est di Paperino, La guerra di Libia*, Limes.
<https://www.limesonline.com/rivista/bengasi-e-il-mondo-a-est-di-paperino-14621250/>

⁹⁴ Locatelli, N (2011), *La Germania sulla Libia sta con la Merkel' Intervista a David Bosold, La guerra di Libia*, Limes
<https://www.limesonline.com/limesplus/la-germania-sulla-libia-sta-con-la-merkel--intervista-a-david-bosold-14657216/>

⁹⁵ Wehrey, F., Alkoutami, S. (n.d.). *China's balancing act in Libya*. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
<https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2020/05/chinas-balancing-act-in-libya>

⁹⁶ UN Security Council, New York, 2011, *6498 meeting*

African Union, which are, in fact, the main Chinese economic partners in the regions. The choice of political non-interference remained unchanged even in the new and fragmented Libya, outlining the Chinese intention to remain neutral in the conflict and promoting its interests with all parties involved, maximizing both economic and diplomatic gains. The other great powers that decided to abstain from the UNSCR No.1973 is Russia, the most accredited theories behind its decision not to oppose to is connected to Russian foreign policy in 2011. First, before the 2011 Russian development plans in Libya included the construction of a rail line between Sirte and Benghazi valued at \$3.3 billion, oil contracts valued between \$4 and \$10 billion, and a projected \$4 billion in weapons sales.⁹⁷ Therefore, Russia had relevant economic interests in the Northern African country; however, from Moscow's perspective, Libya was not the most important African partner, and 25 years later to the Russian decision not to defend the Libyan dictator in order to avoid tensions with the United States, Moscow decided not to 'protect' Gaddafi again. There is no a clear and unique explanation concerning the Russian decision to abstain from the UNSCR 1973, but it is relevant to mention on the one side, the position of the Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, and on the other side, the position of the President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev. The former one has strongly criticized the Resolution N.1973 calling it as a 'medieval call for a crusade', instead, the latter one, who was behind the decision to not use the veto power for blocking the Resolution, has explained its position during a statement where he has affirmed that: 'Russia did not use its power of veto for the simple reason that I do not consider the resolution in question wrong. Moreover, I think that overall, this resolution reflects our understanding of events in Libya too, but not completely. This is why we decided not to use our power of veto.'⁹⁸ Many political analysts have seen this different position of Putin and Medvedev on the Libyan crisis as an internal conflict between the two 'souls' of the Russian Federation.⁹⁹ Even if further important geopolitical explanations are behind the Medvedev decision not to apply the veto on the UNSCR No.1973. For example, Obama's policy adviser and future US ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul pointed out that the Russian decision not to use the veto power was a sign of the Russian establishment's desire to move past the politics of the 2000s into a new era of cooperation with the West.¹⁰⁰ However, beyond possible political explanations, what is clear is that Moscow has decided not to oppose an international operation in a sovereign state, as for example, Russia's Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov declared in 2003 concerning the Iraqi issue. To conclude, if the Chinese decision not to oppose to UNSCR No. 1973 was primarily based on regional geopolitical considerations, the Russian decision was primarily dictated by Kremlin domestic dynamics as several analysts have pointed out. Moving to India and Brazil, the last two countries that decided to abstain from the Resolution, it is possible to notice that the reasons

⁹⁷ Libyan Express. "Russia planning to resume Gaddafi-era contracts with Libya." Libyan Express, 5 Aug 2017. Web, accessed 24 Oct 2018

⁹⁸ Medvedev, D (2011), *Statement by Dmitry Medvedev on the situation in Libya*, Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia
<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/10701>

⁹⁹ Luk'janov, F. (2011), *E la Russia resta a guardare, la guerra di Libia*, Limes
<https://www.limesonline.com/rivista/e-la-russia-resta-a-guardare-14621305/>

¹⁰⁰ Ishetiar, S. (2019), *Echoes of Abstention: Russian Policy in Libya and Implications for Regional Stability*, Princeton University
<https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/echoes-abstention-russian-policy-libya-and-implications-regional-stability>

behind their abstention can be related to the first case on an international evaluation, while, in the second case on an international law basis. Indeed, India's abstention can be explained in terms of its strategic culture, which is very risk-averse and rather prudent when it comes to the use of force. Moreover, it was India's belief that the international intervention could provoke the prolonging of the civil war, which was Delhi's worst-case perspective for Libya and it was a correct position in hindsight. Many scholars believe that Delhi was not prepared to play the part of a great power, others explained that it thought its post-colonial tradition of opposing Western intervention in the Middle East. Nevertheless, India's decision to abstain from the UNSCR No. 1973 seems to be related to a pragmatic and realistic approach to the specific matter.¹⁰¹ Instead, Brazil's decision to abstain from the UNSCR No. 1973 is primarily based on the position of the country concerning international law in relation to the UN charter. Indeed, Brasilia pointed out that the vagueness of the UN pillar about the Responsibility to Protect and consequently the ambiguity of the text which leaves a very broad discretion to states on how to act in order to stop the violence in Libya. Moreover, it questioned the effect of an external military action on the political narrative behind the Libyan uprising, assuming that it could increase current tensions on the ground and harm those it sought to protect.¹⁰² This Brazilian approach to the matter of international intervention in a sovereign country is not new. Indeed, the South American country has always preferred to avoid its engagement in multilateral international missions in which was contemplated the use of force, as it was pointed when the UNSC voted the Resolution No. 1524 after the Haitian coup.¹⁰³

Therefore, the reasons behind the decision of these countries to abstain from the UNSCR No. 1973 are different: some countries have taken more into consideration the public opinion, while others were not convinced about the international initiative. The evaluations were very different; indeed, we have noticed as international-based analyses as well as domestic ones; however, what should be underlined is that less than a month later from the previous UNSCR No. 1970 concerning the Libyan dynamics, five countries decided to abstain from the subsequent UNSC Resolution No. 1973.

Now, it is important to analyse the reasons behind the decision of those countries of the UN Security Council that have decided to vote in favour of the second Libyan Resolution, which are France, Great Britain, the United States, Lebanon, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Gabon, Nigeria, Portugal, Colombia, and South Africa. Given the different relevance of these countries in the geopolitical framework, for our research, it is significant to analyse the reasons behind the decisions of the first four countries mentioned. First of all, it is important to begin this part with the evaluation of the French and British positions as soon as these countries played a pivotal role in the approval of UNSCR No.1973. On the 15th of March, both countries increased their political

¹⁰¹ Raja Mohan, C. (2011). *India, Libya and the Principle of Non-Intervention*. *Institute of South Asia Studies*. Pg. 1-9
https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/128706/ISAS_Insights_122_-_Email_-_India,_Libya_and_the_Principle_of_Non-Intervention_19042011144243.pdf

¹⁰² Almeida, P.W. (2013) *Global Powers and Africa Programme, From Non-indifference to Responsibility while Protecting: Brazil's Diplomacy and the Search for Global Norms*, Pg 9-12

https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/165021/saia_sop_138_GPA_almeida_20130510.pdf

¹⁰³ Almeida, P.W. (2013) *Global Powers and Africa Programme, From Non-indifference to Responsibility while Protecting: Brazil's Diplomacy and the Search for Global Norms*, Pg 9-12

https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/165021/saia_sop_138_GPA_almeida_20130510.pdf

pressure on the UN Security Council in order to achieve the institution of a no-fly zone in the Libyan territory. Moreover, two days later, Paris, backed and supported by London, proposed its Libyan-strategy to the UN's most important organ to increase its position in the scenario.¹⁰⁴ It is important to understand why these countries were so interested in the Libyan dynamics. The reasons behind the French initiative must be analysed in the Arab Spring context, where the decisions taken by the French foreign policy led to a strong decrease of its influence in the MENA countries, especially in Egypt and Tunisia. Indeed, despite the alarms of human rights organizations concerning the human rights violations in Tunisia while Ben Ali was ruling the country, the Tunisian president had privileged relations with France, and the European Country has always supported Ben Ali's government, pointing out the favourable conditions of life in Tunisia. In 2010, the anti-government protests erupted in Tunisia, France decided to maintain its previous foreign policy in the country, and the French Foreign Minister Alliot-Marie proposed to provide assistance to Tunisian authorities. As we have analysed before, from an international law perspective, assisting the legitimate government of the country falls within the international-state powers, however, this proposal was strongly criticized in both France and Tunisia and led to the dismissal of the French Minister Alliot-Marie. The evolution of the Arab Spring events in Tunisia led to the victory of the Jasmine Revolution and the consequent fall of Ben Ali's dictatorship, a breakthrough moment in Tunisian history. However, due to the filo-governmental position adopted in France during the Jasmine Revolution, the end of Ben Ali's dictatorship marked a strong decrease in the historical France influence in the country.¹⁰⁵ France's foreign policy strategy in Tunisia was not an isolated case, indeed, during the Arab Spring in Egypt, Paris adopted the same pro-governmental strategy aimed to support the Egyptian dictator Mubarak, who represented another Paris's key allies in the region. In January 2011, when protests erupted in Egypt, French Prime Minister François Fillon accepted a Christmas holiday party at Mubarak's expense which compromised the French future position in the country.¹⁰⁶ Thus, due to France's foreign policy strategy during the events of the Arab Spring, Paris lost its primary position in Tunisia and Egypt which has represented a strong reduction of its influence in the MENA region. This is the first perspective from which must be seen and analyses the subsequently France's foreign policy in Libya.

Indeed, during the first moment of the Revolution in Benghazi, France seemed unwilling to take action to stop Gaddafi from repressing the riots. However, when it became clear that Paris's loss of influence in Tunisia and Egypt, the approach to the Libyan scenarios changed.¹⁰⁷ For this reason, President Sarkozy changed his strategy, pursuing the military intervention in Libya aimed at reestablishing France's influence in the Northern African Region.

¹⁰⁴ Dipartimento Affari Esteri, Camera dei deputati - XVI Legislatura - Dossier di documentazione, *La crisi politica in Libia e negli altri paesi del Nord Africa e del Medio Oriente*, 23 marzo 2011. <https://documenti.camera.it/leg16/dossier/testi/es0709a.htm>

¹⁰⁵ Liszczyk, D. (2011). *France and Political Crisis in Tunisia*. *Bulletin PISM*. https://www.academia.edu/4972827/France_and_Political_Crisis_in_Tunisia

¹⁰⁶ Chivvis, C.S. (2014), *Toppling Qaddafi LIBYA AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL INTERVENTION*, Cambridge University Press, pg 36

<https://www.cambridge.org/it/universitypress/subjects/law/un-and-international-organisations/toppling-qaddafi-libya-and-limits-liberal-intervention?format=PB&isbn=9781107613867>

¹⁰⁷ *ivi*, pg 32-36

In the second week of March, President Sarkozy received the NTC representatives and he recognized them as the legitimate government of Libya. This initiative astonished both the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and former French diplomats, who denounced the foreign policy of their president as characterized by impulsive and amateur decisions.¹⁰⁸ Sarkozy, from his point of view, needed a change of course after the events in Tunisia and Egypt, so he started to pursue an aggressive foreign policy. According to scholars, these are the primary geopolitical reasons behind the President Sarkozy initiative that has led France to be involved in the fall of Gaddafi's regime. Nevertheless, it is important to compare it with the reasons expressed by the President himself in his book: 'La France pour la vie'. President Sarkozy pointed out that he carried out the intervention for humanitarian purposes. He explained how his decision was dictated by the necessity of protecting the population of Benghazi from brutal repression promised by Gaddafi.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, according to President Sarkozy, he does not regret Paris's role in the fall of Gaddafi's regime, even if it is worth mentioning that according to the former President's perspective, it was a strategic mistake to abandon Libya after 2012.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, in international relations history is quite uncommon to find cases where a sovereign country has taken a military initiative, motivated only by humanitarian purposes, in the domestic field of another sovereign state. Thus, affirming that France's initiative was motivated by humanitarian purposes seems to be quite unrealistic in the light of a geopolitical framework in which France, like other Western countries, had not problems in supporting bloody dictatorships for its own interests. Instead, it seems to be more realistic that Sarkozy's decision was motivated by geopolitical considerations, as restoring France's influence on the Northern African coast, especially in a historical period in which Paris lost its influence both in Tunisia and Egypt.

France's initiative in Libya was strongly supported by the British Prime Minister David Cameron; the reasons for this Franco-British alignment can be reconducted on Cameron's evaluation of the Libyan scenario as an opportunity to increase its domestic position with a forceful action in Libya.¹¹¹ Indeed, at that time, the British domestic debate was centred on the Strategic Defence Review. Therefore, from a political perspective, a tough position on the Libyan issues could burnish his credentials on defence.¹¹² After the approval of the UNSCR No.1970, Prime Minister Cameron declared that his country was ready to be militarily prepared for the institution of a no-fly zone and from this moment, Great Britain and France started working together to draft a new Resolution aiming to pursue the institution of it.¹¹³ The strategy adopted by Great Britain in Libya has

¹⁰⁸ Chivvis, C.S. (2014), *Toppling Qaddafi LIBYA AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL INTERVENTION*, Cambridge University Press, pg 34-36
<https://www.cambridge.org/it/universitypress/subjects/law/un-and-international-organisations/toppling-qaddafi-libya-and-limits-liberal-intervention?format=PB&isbn=9781107613867>

¹⁰⁹ Sarkozy, N. (2016), *La France pour la vie*, pg 93-95

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*

¹¹¹ Chivvis, C.S. (2014), *Toppling Qaddafi LIBYA AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL INTERVENTION*, Cambridge University Press, pg 75
<https://www.cambridge.org/it/universitypress/subjects/law/un-and-international-organisations/toppling-qaddafi-libya-and-limits-liberal-intervention?format=PB&isbn=9781107613867>

¹¹² *Ibidem*

¹¹³ Chivvis, C.S. (2014), *Toppling Qaddafi LIBYA AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL INTERVENTION*, Cambridge University Press, pg 75

been questioned by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons, and in its report, the Committee has underlined first, how the government followed decisions taken in France, and second, that the establishment headed by David Cameron did not explore any alternatives aimed to protect civilians, instead it focused exclusively on military intervention. Nevertheless, the Government has responded to this interpretation, affirming that: ‘The Government does not agree that the decision to take military action was influenced by the political situation in France or that UK decision-making followed French leadership. The Government’s actions were based on British intelligence, assessment and policy judgements; decisions were guided by the UK’s national interest and role as a responsible member of the United Nations Security Council’ and, ‘It is not accurate to suggest that the UK Government focused exclusively on military intervention. The UK used a variety of diplomatic and political tools in its efforts to protect civilians in Libya.’¹¹⁴

Moreover, it could be noticed how the UK Government has motivated its military intervention due to humanitarian purposes as soon as: ‘Qadhafi and his regime were not willing to engage constructively in negotiations or to cease their violent suppression of political opposition.’¹¹⁵ Both countries that were strongly pushing for a military intervention in the Libyan scenario have adopted the same justifying strategy, according to humanitarian purposes. Also, both countries have recognized the marginal role that they carried out in the post-Gaddafi Libya and the lessons learned from it, as the UK government pointed out: ‘In light of the experience in Libya and elsewhere, the UK Government commissioned a lesson-learning exercise in this area. In 2013, the Stabilisation Unit published advice on ‘Security Sector Stabilisation’ (SSS): the UK’s recommended approach, informed by lessons learnt in Libya, seeks to “enable essential and minimum security and justice and in doing so protect and promote a legitimate political authority and prepare the foundations for transition to longer-term security sector reform. We will continue to offer support to the GNA in accordance with this approach.”¹¹⁶ To conclude, it is possible to affirm that this strategic mistake has significantly contributed to increasing the instability in post-Gaddafi Libya since 2011.

The primary role of Great Britain and France is clear, now it is important to introduce the role of the policeman of the world in Libyan scenario. Already in 1956, France and Great Britain shared a common foreign policy in Egypt, but due to the United States’ decision, they had to take a step backwards. More than 50 years after this episode, the United States’ policy in the Libyan scenarios became another time the needle of the scale. Indeed, the United States’ position is very interesting to be analysed because many experts have pointed out that it marked the begin of a post-American era in the Mediterranean because it was the first time that the United States President (Obama) followed the initiatives of a European President (Sarkozy).¹¹⁷ However, it is important to take a step backward The United States’ position has been strongly influenced by the

<https://www.cambridge.org/it/universitypress/subjects/law/un-and-international-organisations/toppling-qaddafi-libya-and-limits-liberal-intervention?format=PB&isbn=9781107613867>

¹¹⁴ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, (2016). *Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK’s future policy options: Government Response to the Committee’s Third Report of Session 2016–17*, pg 3-6

¹¹⁵ Ibidem

¹¹⁶ Ivi, pg 6

¹¹⁷ Varvelli, A. (2011). *La crisi libica: guerra umanitaria o guerra di Sarkò?*, ISPI <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/la-crisi-libica-guerra-umanitaria-o-guerra-di-sarko-245>

administrative debate over whether or not to intervene that has characterized the decision process in the Libyan crisis. According to a senior administrative official, the White House began ‘an incredibly intensive series of discussions in the Oval Office and the Situation Room’ on how to handle the Libyan crisis.¹¹⁸ Moreover, it is relevant to mention that, during those meetings, the National Security Advisor Tom Donilon set up a task force with the scope to evaluate all the possibilities of post-conflict scenarios, thus also a Libya without Gaddafi.¹¹⁹ It seems that the ‘policeman’ of the world was the only one who was thinking to a post-conflict scenario, while at the same time, Great Britain and France were only interested in contributing to the fall of Gaddafi’s regime. The Libyan crisis, like other important crises in the world, led to the division of the United States administration in relation to the key question of whether or not to intervene. Clinton administration veterans were advocating for the intervention, most of them, as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, were conditioned by their failure to stop the Rwanda genocide in 1994, thus they were pushing for a policy of intervention.¹²⁰ Indeed, the Ambassador herself was one of the proponents of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, according to which the UN was justified in intervening in the internal affairs of a state when the national government failed in its fundamental responsibility to protect its citizens. Moreover, beyond the humanitarian reasons, for the administrative part that was supporting the interventions, there were also strategic considerations at its base. The Libyan crisis must be analysed in the Arab spring context, a United States support for the revolution would demonstrate Washington’s support of the uprising across the region and then it could indirectly deter other regional leaders from brutally repressing civilian protests.¹²¹ Intervening in the Libyan scenario would send an implicit message to the Arab leaders, leading the United States to the right side of history in the MENA countries, especially after the events of the Iraqi intervention 8 years before. Nevertheless, there was also an administrative part, strongly represented by Secretary Gates, that was against the intervention in Libya, as it was in Iraq and in Afghanistan previously. Their motivation to not be directly involved in the Libyan scenario was based on the evaluation of the U.S. reputation and how another attack on a Muslim country could affect it on the international stage.¹²² But from the moment it was clear that most of the Arab states were in favour of taking out Gaddafi, the United States would come out of the action with an improved reputation in the region rather than a damaged one. So, the opposition to the intervention was overtaken.

In this geopolitical framework, in a historical moment in which many countries were calling for action, President Obama argued: ‘We can’t play the role of Russia and China’, so, first, he questioned the real impact of the early Franco-British resolution to Gaddafi’s threat to civilians. Second, President Obama tasked

¹¹⁸ Chivvis, C.S. (2014), *Toppling Qaddafi LIBYA AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL INTERVENTION*, Cambridge University Press, pg 49
<https://www.cambridge.org/it/universitypress/subjects/law/un-and-international-organisations/toppling-qaddafi-libya-and-limits-liberal-intervention?format=PB&isbn=9781107613867>

¹¹⁹ Ibidem

¹²⁰ Ivi, pg 52

¹²¹ Ibidem

¹²² Ivi, pg 55

Ambassador Rice to draw a Resolution aimed to protect civilians which became the Resolution No.1973 voted and approved at the UNSC.¹²³

On March 19 of 2011, two days after the UNSCR 1973 was approved, the operation ‘Odyssey Dawn’ led to the Western intervention in the Libyan scenario. France led the first airstrike over Gaddafi’s army close to Benghazi, and the United States and Great Britain launched more than 100 cruise missiles over the territory.¹²⁴

Since the 20th of March, Italy also participated in the military initiatives in the Libyan territory thanks to the deployment of four Tornado fighter jets, four F-16 fighter jet, and several battleships as ‘Garibaldi’ and ‘Andrea Doria’.¹²⁵ Within six months, NATO forces conducted 24,346 sorties and 9,082 strike sorties.¹²⁶

During the western intervention, Gaddafi was rarely in command of the military operations; he was affected by the syndrome that affected other previous dictators, such as Josif Stalin during the first week of Operation Barbarossa. He was refuging in Sirte, his last stronghold, and on the 20th of October 2011, while he was escaping from the city, the Colonel was targeted and hit by an American drone and two French jets. The Western attack injured but did not kill the Libyan Dictator; however, he was captured by the crowd while he was trying to escape, and he was executed by a minor rebel.¹²⁷

After 42 years Gaddafi’s dictatorship was over.

2.3: The new distribution of power in Libya after 2011

After the fall of Gaddafi’s regime, due to both substantial absence of state institutions and a lack of a Western plan for post-Gaddafi Libya, the post-transition period was characterized by a deeply fragmented political scenario. Thus, Libyan domestic issue was marked by violent struggle that led to the increased of non-state actors claiming for legitimacy and establishing their own local military control over parts of the territory. One of the main obstacles to the post-Gaddafi period was the national reconciliation process for the creation of new institutions; for this reason, the National Transition Council (NTC) adopted an Interim Constitutional Declaration, in which it affirmed its willingness to organize general elections of the Libyan Parliament.¹²⁸

Despite the problems related to the legitimacy and control of the territory, Libya held its first free elections in history in 2012, with more than 130 political parties participated. The Justice and Constitutional Party (political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood) gained only 17 seats out of 80, a clear example of how the Muslim Brotherhood had a different popularity in Libya than in other key countries of the Arab Spring, where they reported incredible results at the elections of 2011.¹²⁹ Another interesting result about the Libyan elections of

¹²³ Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA’S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 95

¹²⁴ Williams, P. (2011) *Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya: A Moment of Legal & Moral Clarity*, pg 228

¹²⁵ Parlamento Italiano, (2011), *Cronologia dell'impegno italiano nella crisi libica* (21 febbraio - 21 ottobre 2011) <https://leg16.camera.it/561?appro=857>

¹²⁶ Williams, P. (2011) *Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya: A Moment of Legal & Moral Clarity*, pg 234

¹²⁷ Palma, L. (2021) *La caduta di Gheddafi e la frantumazione della Libia*, ISPI

<https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/la-caduta-di-gheddafi-e-la-frantumazione-della-libia-30903>

¹²⁸ Corrao, F.M.; Redaelli, R. (2020) *States, Actors and Geopolitical Drivers in the Mediterranean*, Palgrave macmillan, pg 257

¹²⁹ Pelosi, G; Varvelli, A. (2021), *Dopo Gheddafi: Democrazia e petrolio nella nuova Libia*, Fazi Editore pg 22

2012 is related to the votes expressed for the National Gathering for Freedom Justice and Development of Ali Sallabi, one of the most popular religious actors in Libya. Ali Sallabi had both important international relationships with Qatar and with the Abdel Hakim Belhaj armed militias in Tripolitania, nevertheless his party gained only 2 seats out of 80 at the Parliamentary election.¹³⁰ The National Gathering for Freedom Justice and Development and the Muslim Brotherhood were the two principal parties of the religious front, which gained in total only 17 seats out of 80, the remaining seats were gained by the parties of the Libyan laicism front which have formed the National Forces Alliance composed by more than 55 different political parties.¹³¹ The success of the National Forces Alliance led by the figure of Mahmud Jibril can be explained through the historical 'Libyan rules'. Mahmud Jibril was part of the most populous Libyan Tribe (the same one of Gaddafi) that could count on more than one million of people. He was the chief of the Economic Development Board during the last part of the regime and tried to reform the Libyan economy verso a liberal form; he also developed a constitutional law with the son of Gaddafi, Saif al Islam, but it never came in forces. Mahmud Jibril was a reformist in a dictatorial regime. Thanks to these characteristics and his popularity he was appointed before as Prime Minister of the NTC and then he won the Libyan Parliamentary elections, even if it is interesting to mention that according to the Libyan electoral law, former members of the NTC could not take part in the election of 2012.¹³² Libya had a free and elected Parliament, an incredible result for a country that spent most of its history ruled by a Monarchy and later by a Dictatorship. The victory of the National Forces Alliance, close to the Western instances, marked an important moment of Libyan history for his democratic transition process. Nevertheless, after the elections, Libya faced relevant domestic problems that led to the failure of the democracy.¹³³

As it was mentioned earlier, the fall of Gaddafi's regime led to the fragmentation of the country under the control of several different armed militias, which in many cases were related to local tribes. As it was analysed in Chapter One, Libyan tribes have always influenced the course of Libyan events. After the fall of Gaddafi the situation did not change. Indeed, another important result of the Libyan Parliamentary elections of 2012 that clearly highlights the worth of Libyan tribes in the domestic scenario, is related to the city of Misurata, one of the biggest cities where the National Forces Alliance were defeated. Ambdurrahman Sewehli was the most voted candidate of the election, who presented a list called: Union for the Country. Mr. Sewehli is part of an important Libyan tribe of Misrata and before the Second World War, his family played a key role in the anti-colonialism war. However, due to domestic Libyan dynamics, one of his members was killed by a member of the most populous tribe of Libya, which was represented by Mahmud Jibril, the winning candidate at the election of 2011. For these family-historical reasons, the National Forces Alliance, represented by Mr Jibril, did not take the lead in in the Misrata constituency.¹³⁴ This aspect is very important to underline how tribes and family played a fundamental role in Libyan issues, which, still in 2012, became the origins of the obstacle

¹³⁰ Ibidem

¹³¹ Ivi, pg 23

¹³² Pelosi, G; Varvelli, A. (2021), *Dopo Gheddafi: Democrazia e petrolio nella nuova Libia*, Fazi Editore pg 22

¹³³ Ivi, pg 5

¹³⁴ Ivi, pg 46

to Libyan unity. Moreover, it is important to mention another aspect that emerged after the fall of the dictatorship: the spread of radical Islamism.

During the 42 years of the regime, the state repression of radical Islamists was ferocious, but when Gaddafi fell, all the prisons were opened, and the result was that many radical Islamists were liberated in a moment in which there was no state control of the territory: a perfect condition for the spread of radical Islamists. Several international theories aimed to explain the nexus between the increased of terrorism organization in relations to the decrease of state-control, the theory expressed by Robert, L.Rotberg in ‘The New Nature of Nation-State Failure’ is one of those and it affirms that: ‘Only a handful of the world’s 191 nation-states can now be categorized as failed, or collapsed, which is the end stage of failure. Several dozen more, however, are weak and serious candidates for failure. Because failed states are hospitable to and harbor nonstate actors—warlords and terrorists—understanding the dynamics of nation-state failure is central to the war against terrorism.’¹³⁵ In this scenario, on 11 September 2012, the most important radical Islamic movement of Libya, Ansar al-Shari’s, attacked the U.S. Embassy of Benghazi and 4 American citizens, including the U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens, were killed by the terrorist attack. The country was extremely fragmented, and the Libyan Parliament, instead of pursuing a reconciliation among the parties, it decided to enact the Political Isolation Law to exclude all the people who had a role in Gaddafi’s regime to all political and economic activities. In the Libyan framework, where neither the National Parliament was acting as a reconciliation organ, the domestic situation remained extremely fragile. On this basis, less than 2 years from the fall of the Colonel’s regime, the second Libyan civil war began.¹³⁶

In order to analyze the second Libyan civil war, it is important to introduce the figure of General Haftar as a key element in the Libyan past and present history; indeed, he was one of the Colonel who was side by side with Gaddafi during the coup d’etat that led to the end of the Libyan Monarchy. After the coup d’etat, General Haftar was appointed by Gaddafi to the command of the Libyan armed forces, and for this reason, he was the commander-in-chief of the military operation in Chad in 1987. When he was captured by the Chadian, Gaddafi did not recognize the presence of Libyan military personnel in Chad, thus one of the closest figures of the dictator was abandoned by the dictator himself to his destiny. The reasons behind Gaddafi’s decision to deny the presence of Libyan troops in Chad are unknown, but they seem to be related to an agreement made in 1984 between Gaddafi and Mitterrand, the French President at that time. The terms of this agreement were clear: on the one side, the Libyan dictator should evacuate his army from the Chadian border, and on the other side, France would withdraw its presence in the region.¹³⁷ However, Gaddafi did not comply with the agreement, and three years later, when his General was captured, the Dictator denied his existence.

Therefore, General Haftar, before passing a period in jail and then in exile in the United States, returned to his country after the end of Gaddafi’s regime, becoming one of the most important actors on the Libyan scene.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Rotberg, Robert. “*The New Nature of Nation-State Failure.*” *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2002

<https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/new-nature-nation-state-failure>

¹³⁶ Corrao, F.M.; Redaelli, R. (2020) *States, Actors and Geopolitical Drivers in the Mediterranean*, Palgrave macmillan, pg 258

¹³⁷ Oakes, J. (2021), *War Lord, Khalifa Haftar and the future of Libya*, Amberley, Pg 70

¹³⁸ Maarad, B. (2019), *Chi è Khalifa Haftar, il maresciallo che vuole farsi rais*, AGI

In 2014, exploiting tensions between liberals and Islamists, General Haftar launched the ‘Operation Dignity’ against both the Islamic extremists and political Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood. The Haftar military action increased the polarization in the country, leading to a situation on the ground clearly explained by Emadeddin Badi, a conflict analyst and policy professional with over a decade of experience working across North Africa and the Sahel: ‘For instance, the Tripoli-based government viewed Haftar’s military campaign in Benghazi as a coup attempt to disrupt Libya’s democratic transition. Nationalists in the East defended the General for ridding Benghazi of extremist groups that terrorized citizens and were involved in the killing of US Ambassador Christopher Stevens in 2012.’¹³⁹ In this civil war context, the second Libyan elections of 2014 were only 18% of Libyan citizens vote, a clear message of the population’s perception of the legitimacy and worth of the organ in the domestic dynamics. Nevertheless, the election marked the defeat of the Islamic bloc. However, their refusal to recognize the results led to the creation of two different national governments, one on the western side of the country and the other on the eastern side.

The geographical contraposition between Tripolitania and Cyrenaica has always characterized Libyan history and even after the democratic elections, it remains a key element in the domestic issues of the country, indeed, the eastern side was controlled by General Haftar, and the western side was controlled by the resurrected authority of the GNC of Tripoli. The Libyan civil war led to the creation in the same country of two different parliamentary authorities, two different governments, and two main different militias. Three years after the fall of Gaddafi’s regime, the unity of a country strongly marked by its ethnic-geographical differences was compromised due to the absence of a central authority that before was impersonalized by King Idris and later by Gaddafi.

From this moment to nowadays, several national and international initiatives have been taken in order to solve the polarization of the Libyan domestic situation. One of these was taken by the UN at the end of 2014, when it was decided to institute a support mission in Libya (UNSMIL), still active today to: “Looking forward to a future for Libya based on national reconciliation, justice, respect for human rights and the rule of law”¹⁴⁰ Thanks to this international initiative the Libyan rival parties signed the Libyan Political Agreement of 2015 in Skhirat to create a Presidency Council for establishing a Libyan unitarian government. Nevertheless, the ‘Skhirat agreement’ was not fully ratified by the House of Representatives Parliament (Haftar one) because Article 8 of it disciplined the transferring of a part of Haftar’s army to the Presidency council, where was appointed the Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord Fayez al-Sarraj.¹⁴¹ Therefore, the Skhirat agreement concluded under the UN initiatives did not produce the result of solving the Libyan domestic polarization. Moreover, in the period between 2014 and 2016, the Libyan scenario saw an increase in the presence of the Jihadist movement known as Islamic State, which arrived to gain control of 200 kilometres of

https://www.agi.it/estero/news/2019-04-06/khalifa_haftar-5280094/

¹³⁹ Badi, E. (2021, May 24). *To advance its own interests, Turkey should help stabilize Libya*. War on the Rocks.pg 27

¹⁴⁰ United Nations, (2014), *UNSCR. No. 2144*

<https://press.un.org/en/2014/sc11315.doc.htm>

¹⁴¹ Mezran, K. (2017), *Is Libya’s “Skhirat” Agreement Really Dead?*, Atlantic Council

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/is-libya-s-skhirat-agreement-really-dead/>

Libyan coast from Benghazi to Sirte, threatening the Libyan ‘oil crescent.’¹⁴² In 2017, the United States’ decision to intervene against the Islamic State strongly reduced its control of the territory and, thanks to the GNA’s military counteroffensive in the western part of Libya on one side and the LNA counteroffensive in the Eastern part of the territory on the other side, the Islamic State was defeated. However, thanks to Haftar’s military victories in Eastern Libya against the Islamic State he gained control of much of the Gulf of Sirte’s ‘oil crescent’, increasing his internal and international role in Libyan dynamics.¹⁴³ From this moment, General Haftar has tried to achieve control of the whole Libyan territory. Indeed, in 2019, his militias reached the Southern part of the country, conquering the region of Fezzan; thus, from General Haftar’s perspective, it was the breakthrough moment for attacking Tripoli. However, his advance towards the Capital was stopped by the GNA armed forces supported by specific international actors, as we will analyze in the next part.¹⁴⁴ The following year, after the failure of another international initiative to achieve a ceasefire, the GNA armed forces carried on the ‘Peace Storm’ operation, which led the Haftar army to retreat from the offensive position.¹⁴⁵ From this moment, in a country strongly divided and fragmentated, regional and non-regional powers entered into the dynamics of the Libyan conflicts; today, due to the polarization of the conflict and due to the foreign presence, the political unity of Libya seems so far from being reached. Moreover, beyond the foreign involvement in the Eastern-Western Libyan conflict, it is worth mentioning that the domestic situation is characterized by low-scale conflict due to the presence of thousands of armed militias, indeed, there are several episodes of internal conflict within the same part. For example, in 2025 General Abdel-Ghani al-Kikli, commander of the Stabilization Support Authority, (SSA), was killed in Tripoli by an ‘allied’ militia. This situation led to several clashes between different armed parties in the western part of the country, especially between Hamza’s militia and the SSA.¹⁴⁶

This example clearly explains how the Libyan situation is extremely fragile, every moment could be the breakthrough event for either the restart of the civil war or the rise of internal conflicts on the same side of the civil war. Today, the Libyan domestic conflict seems so far from being solved.

2.4: The strategies of international actors in the new Libyan scenario

My previous analysis concerning the evolution of the post-Gaddafi Libya has been focused only on the Libyan scenario from a domestic perspective; nevertheless, it is fundamental to analyze the positions and the strategies of international actors toward the new Libyan scenario.

¹⁴² Corrao, F.M.; Redaelli, R. (2020) *States, Actors and Geopolitical Drivers in the Mediterranean*, Palgrave macmillan, pg 261

¹⁴³ Ibidem

¹⁴⁴ Ibidem

¹⁴⁵ Ivi, 265

¹⁴⁶ Magdy, S. (2025) *A warlord and 6 other people killed as militia infighting rocks Libya’s capital*, officials say <https://apnews.com/article/libya-clashes-militias-tripoli-9ffda29d0071470df0b406e16f9cc8eb>

Several international state actors are involved in the Libyan issues; some of them have their military presence over the territory while others are financing specific local parties for their own interests. Moreover, some states adopted a very pragmatic approach to the issues, pursuing economic relations with all the local parties involved in the domestic conflict. Despite the different international states' approaches to the Libyan issue, what is evident is that Libyan dynamics cannot be evaluated and understood without taking into consideration the international interests in the country and the way in which these are pursued. For this reason, it is important to underline a few key pillars that will characterize my analysis of the international actors' strategies in the new Libyan scenario. First of all, as will be seen, there is no clear and solid contraposition between the main global powers, China, the United States and Russia, in the Libyan domestic issues. Despite the majority of international scenarios where the positions of these three global powers are in a clear contraposition, Libya seems to avoid this 'normal rule'. Second, through the international relations stage, Western countries usually share the same positions; instead, the Libyan case will show how specific Western states have their own unilateralist approaches to the Northern African country's domestic issues, thus representing an obstacle to the multilateral approach adopted by other Western countries and international organs in order to achieve the stability of the country. Third, the role of regional powers involved in the conflict is primary, for these countries, Libya represents the stage of the international confrontation between two different interpretations of religion. Indeed, in MENA countries, the religious aspect is fundamental as it is well explained by the actuality of historical rivalry between Sunnis and Shiites.

Usually, the analysis of international actors' strategies in Libya follows the same pattern: the contraposition between those countries that support the official government recognized by the UN, such as the European states, Turkey, Qatar and the United States and those countries that support General Haftar's part as Russia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. However, in my opinion, if this approach could be used for the analysis of the regional powers' strategies, it cannot be used for the same analysis concerning the global powers due to the lack of a clear contraposition among them in the Libyan scenario. For these reasons, I will adopt a different approach in order to underline the peculiar aspects of each state-strategy and the reasons behind it. Indeed, the way I will conduct my analysis of the international states' strategies in the Libyan scenario will be structured into three different parts. The first part would be related to the analysis of the positions of the three global powers involved in the Libyan domestic issue: China, the United States and Russia. This first part will aim to underline, on the one hand, the Chinese peculiar strategy based on the economic aspect, which led the Dragon to become the most important economic actor in the Libyan scenario. On the other hand, I will underscore a possible evolution of the Russian and American strategies towards the Chinese approach. Moving to the second part, it would be primarily based on the analysis of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates strategies in the new Libyan scenario. The objective is to underline the reasons behind their strong interest in Libyan dynamics and the way in which their role is fundamental in the fragmentation of the North African country's domestic situation. Subsequently, I will highlight the double face France strategy that has led Paris to support, on the one side, the public one, the Libyan actor recognized

by the international community, and on the other side, the private one, General Haftar. The aim is to underline the motivations behind this double-faced approach in the light of France's important economic relations with Gulf Monarchies. From this perspective, I will conclude the second part of my analysis with the reasons behind France's protests about the agreement signed between the GNA and Turkey, which has marked Ankara's primary role toward the Libyan scenario. Therefore, my third part will concern an analysis of the considerations behind the Turkish decision to intervene in the Libyan scenario and the role that Ankara is playing on the ground nowadays. Subsequently, through the introduction of the regional cooperation between Turkey and Qatar, I will explain the role that Qatar played in Libya since the fall of Gaddafi's regime and the reasons behind Doha's decision to renounce its active role in the Libyan scenario. To conclude this introduction, I would like to underline that this part aims to provide a clear analysis of the strategies and the role that each international actor has in Libya to understand in the following chapter what's left of Italy's role in the Northern African country.

2.4.1: China, Russia and the United States

China has become the most important Libyan economic partner. After the fall of Gaddafi, the Dragon immediately recognized the authority of the NTC and subsequently of the GNA in 2015, with which it signed the agreement for Libya's membership to the Belt and Road Initiative in July 2018. Despite that, since 2014, after the attack launched by Haftar in Eastern Libya and the subsequent polarization and fragmentation of the country, the Dragon has also opened economic channels with the Libyan General by financing development projects. Indeed, it should be underlined that Chinese commitment in the country is purely linked to commercial projects. This commitment to "no-interference" was also reconfirmed by China's foreign minister in July 2017 on the sidelines of a conference with his Tunisian counterpart.¹⁴⁷ From a commercial point of view, as mentioned, in July 2018, the Foreign Minister of the GNA signed the memorandum of understanding on joining the Belt and Road Initiatives and, a few months later, the Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi declared his desire to participate in the reconstruction of the country, underlining an increasingly strong economic cooperation between the two states. In fact, in the year following the signing of the memorandum, trade agreements between the two countries recorded an increase of 160.1% compared to the previous year, and in 2024 they reached a total of 4.75 billion dollars.¹⁴⁸ The choice of political non-interference remained unchanged even in the new and fragmented Libya, outlining the Chinese intention to remain neutral in the conflict and promoting its interests with all parties involved. The aim of this strategy is to maximizing both economic and diplomatic gains, indeed, on the one hand, the signing of the BRI Accession Agreement by the

¹⁴⁷ Wang Yi: *China sticks to four-point principles on Libyan issue*. 中华人民共和国外交部. (n.d.).

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/gjhdq_665435/2913_665441/2893_663786/2895_663790/202406/t20240611_11418537.html

¹⁴⁸ Frederic Wehrey and Sandy Alkoutami (n.d.). *China's balancing act in Libya*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2020/05/chinas-balancing-act-in-libya>

GNA marks a clear increase of the Chinese presence and influence in Tripolitania; on the other hand, the oil agreements closed by the CNPC in the East of Libya also marks a growing link with the region of Cyrenaica under Haftar's control.¹⁴⁹ In a future in which a truly united Libya appears increasingly complex, China, thanks to its economic agreements with all the domestic parties involved, has guaranteed its presence in Libya regardless of any escalation that could change the polarization between the various sides. To confirm this China's long-term approach in the new and fragmented Libyan scenarios it is important to mention the declaration made by XI Jinping during the Summit of China-Africa Cooperation in September 2024: 'China has a traditional friendship with Libya, and China's stance of supporting Libya's stable development and boosting friendly bilateral cooperation will not change no matter how the situation evolves.'¹⁵⁰ Therefore, in all future forecasts related to the evolution of the Libyan domestic issues, China is an actor that must be taken into account.

Russia is another global power that plays a key role in the Libyan dynamics. To understand its position and its strategy in the Libyan domestic issues is important to underline two important pillars of Russian foreign policy in MENA countries: access to warm sea and counterterrorism. In relation to the former aspect, Russia in its history has always tried to reach warm seaports in order to spread its influence all around the world. Indeed, due to the Russian geographical situation, the absence of warm seaports has always represented Russia's Achilles' heel. Sevastopol is the only Russian true warm water port, even if access out of the Black Sea into the Mediterranean is restricted by the Montreux Convention of 1936, which gives Turkey the power to close the Dardanelles and Bosphorus Straits to all warships in times of war; therefore, its value is undermined.¹⁵¹ Looking at the other Russian ports in the Arctic and in the Pacific, the situation is far more complex due to geographical issues. For example, in the Arctic, the port of Murmansk freezes several months per year, and the same situation occurs at the Port of Vladivostok on the Pacific Ocean which is ice-locked for four months per year. Reaching the access to warm water ports has always characterized Russian foreign policy; several examples can be provided in order to explain to what extent Russia pursues this strategic goal. One of these examples is related to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 which, as was declared by the ultra-nationalistic Russian politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy: 'the invasion gave hope to the Russian dream to wash their boots in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean'.¹⁵² Today, the situation regarding the Russian access to warm water ports has not changed much, indeed, in relation to the Russian foreign policy towards MENA countries, it is worth mentioning the relations between Russia and Syria before the fall of Bashar Al-Assad. Beyond all the economic agreements made between Putin and the Syrian former dictator, Bashar Al-Assad gave the Kremlin the possibility to maintain a small naval presence in Tartus, on the Mediterranean. However, the fall of Assad's regime has led to a new rapprochement of Damascus-Washington relations and Syria's new

¹⁴⁹ Escobar, P. (2011, April 14). *China's interests in Gaddafi*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2011/4/14/chinas-interests-in-gaddafi>

¹⁵⁰ Xi Jinping Meets with Chairman of the Libyan Presidential Council Mohammad Al-Manfi. (n.d.). http://in.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/202409/t20240906_11486315.htm

¹⁵¹ Marshall, T. (2016). *Prisoners of geography*, pg 16-17. Elliott & Thompson

¹⁵² Ivi, pg 14

government has withdrawn from the previous agreement with Moscow. In this perspective, at the beginning of 2025, the last Russian battleship left the Tartus port.¹⁵³ As result of the Syrian events, the Russian interest in Libya has strongly increased in order to secure its backdoor in the Mediterranean Sea. Indeed, Russian military presence in the eastern part of Libya has grown after the fall of Assad's regime, therefore will be interesting in future analysis if Haftar will do similar port concessions to Moscow as Assad did while he was ruling Syria. To conclude this first part, it is possible to underline that the reasons behind Russian involvement in Libya must be seen primarily through the perspective of the Russian strategic goal to gain access to warm water ports.¹⁵⁴ Moving to the counterterrorism reason of the Russian foreign policy in MENA countries, according to Irina Zvylyagelskaya, Chief research fellow at the Russian Academy of Science's Institute of Oriental Studies, the Kremlin's interest in the MENA region is based on the 'prevention of any destabilization that is capable of approaching Russian frontiers'.¹⁵⁵ The Russian perspective on the terrorism threat is primarily related to the Islamist terrorism in the Caucasus region; thus, the risk of a spread of Islamist terrorism in the MENA region, as it happened in Libya after the fall of Gaddafi's regime, which could affect and increase the Islamist terrorism in the Caucasus region, is a risk that Russia wants to prevent. These are two of the most important reasons behind the Russian involvement in the Libyan scenario, what is worth to be analysed is the Russian strategy to pursue its objectives in the Northern African Country. Russia has always had a historical military tie with Libya, indeed, during the Cold War, most of the senior Libyan commanders were trained in the Soviet Union. From this perspective, the heir of the Soviet Union is the natural military interlocuter of the Libyan officials; indeed, today, many scholars argue that Russia is strongly supporting Haftar in the conflict against the GNA. This is partially true as soon as is undeniable the presence of para-military companies as the Wagner group, created by Prigozhin and now under state control, in the Libyan territory alongside Haftar since 2017. In this context, it is important to mention that after Prigozhin's death, the Wagner group passed under the control of the GRU, the Russian military intelligence, which has carried out a rebranding operation of the para-military company which nowadays is called 'Africa Corps' or 'Expeditionary Corps'.¹⁵⁶ However, its involvement in African issues has not changed.

From this perspective, the Kremlin is using one of its military instruments in Libya through an approach that is considered a 'low-cost, high-interests' involvement due to the fact that most of these costs, such as the salaries of Russia's Wagner mercenaries, are paid by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, the Russian unofficial presence in the Libyan territory alongside Haftar is paid by other actors, and it does not imply the Russian regular army. However, despite the Russian ties with General Haftar, there is some evidence that highlights the fact that the Kremlin seems to approach the Libyan scenario in a very pragmatic way:

¹⁵³ Caruso, I. (2025) *La Russia dice addio al porto di Tartus ma rilancia in Libia con l'Africa Corps*, Formiche <https://formiche.net/2025/05/la-russia-dice-addio-al-porto-di-tartus-ma-rilancia-in-libia-con-lafrica-corps/#content>

¹⁵⁴ Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA'S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 75

¹⁵⁵ Ivi, pg 74

¹⁵⁶ Pitziani, E. (2024), *Ve lo ricordate il gruppo Wagner? Il Post* <https://www.ilpost.it/2024/06/17/gruppo-wagner-africa-corps/>

¹⁵⁷ Bakir, A. (2020), *The UAE's Disruptive Policy in Libya*, pg 169, SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26981722>

Moscow treats and speaks with all the actors involved in the Libyan civil war, keeping a foot in all camps. Therefore, on the one side, Moscow supports Haftar's side using its unofficial army; on the other side, it concludes relevant economic agreements with the GNA.¹⁵⁸ It seems that Russia is almost pursuing the same Chinese strategy; it is more interested in achieving its goal through its relations with all the parties involved in the conflict rather than pursuing a political unification of the country. However, from the Russian perspective, Haftar has a crucial role in contrasting the spread of Islamic terrorism as it was indirectly affirmed in 2015 by Vladimir Churkin, the Chief of the Russian mission to the UN, when he argued that: 'Russia was ready to backing Haftar with weapons and if necessary to impose a naval blockade on Libya to prevent the delivery of weapons to jihadists by sea.'¹⁵⁹ Therefore, despite the political and economic agreements between Russia and the GNA, as the deal signed between Russia's Rosneft and Libya's National Oil Corporation established a joint working committee to explore cooperation in various oil fields, it is undoubtedly the primary role that Haftar has from the Russian perspective.¹⁶⁰ However, thanks to the GNA-Moscow economic rapprochement, it seems that Russia is cultivating its relations with all the parties involved in the Libyan scenario with the aim of avoiding the possibility of being cut off by possible future development of the Libyan domestic situation. Especially after the fall of Assad's regime in Syria, which has reduced the Russian influence in the region and then has indirectly increased the value of Libya from the Russian perspective. To conclude, it appears that Russia has strengthened its position in Libya with all the actors involved, thus, regardless of the future evolution of the situation on the ground, Moscow it's prepared to maintain its influence in the territory.

Moving to the third global power, the United States, its involvement in the Libyan scenario is very peculiar. As I have analysed before, Libya has never been a United States top priority, as confirmed by the role that Washington played during the revolutionary events. Other state-actors, like France and Great Britain, have taken the lead in this scenario; indeed, it is possible to affirm that it was one of those few occasions where the United States has followed a European initiative. This soft approach can be explained through Obama's foreign policy. The President of the United States was less inclined to adopt a primary role in another MENA country during a period in which Obama was trying to reduce the United States' presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁶¹ For this reason, the American approach was to support and increase the role of its European partners in a region where European countries have more direct interests than Washington. Moreover, when the Ambassador Adams and three other Americans were killed in Benghazi, there was the possibility of a United States military involvement in the country; nevertheless, the decision to avoid other American casualties over the Libyan territory prevailed, and the United States personnel presence in Libya was transferred to Tunisia.¹⁶² Indeed, with the spread of Islamic terrorism in Libya, Washington decided to adopt only anti-Islamic terrorism actions, such as the six-month bombing campaign against ISIS in Sirte, carried out at the request of

¹⁵⁸ Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA'S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 82

¹⁵⁹ Ivi, pg 80

¹⁶⁰ Ivi, pg 83

¹⁶¹ Ivi, pg 93

¹⁶² Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA'S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 93

the GNA. Beyond anti-terrorism airstrikes, United States foreign policy in post-Gaddafi's Libya has never been very active, indeed, as declared by Obama himself, Libya was his one major foreign policy regret.¹⁶³ It is possible to say that Libya was treated as a European issue, but the European states failed to exercise their influence in the Libyan post-Gaddafi situation. With the first President Trump election, Washington's low engagement policy toward the Northern African Country was confirmed by the President himself when he declared to the Italian Prime Minister that, from his perspective, the United States will not have a role in Libya beyond counter-terrorism initiatives.¹⁶⁴ However, even if the Libyan scenario was not at the top of the US priority list under Obama's presidency, a sort of US effort was made to support European and UN initiatives concerning the Libyan scenario. Instead, under Trump's presidency, there is the perception of the absence of this willingness.¹⁶⁵ In general, it seems that the United States does not want to play the role of policeman of the world anymore, even if it has never played this role in post-Gaddafi Libya. Therefore, Donald Trump's approach to the Libyan issue does not differ too much from Barack Obama's. Moreover, in 2019, Trump had a phone call with General Haftar in which the United States President expressed his support for Haftar's drive to take Tripoli; in this light, what is important to question is the possibility of a clear shift in Washington's foreign policy in relation to the Libyan domestic issue.¹⁶⁶ Does the United States support General Haftar rather than the internationally recognized Libyan actor? Under Donald Trump's administration, due to the lack of willingness to be involved in the Libyan scenario, the Northern African Country seems to be treated as a chess piece for Washington's foreign economic and diplomatic relations with the Arab World. Thus, President Trump seems to prefer an 'Arab solutions for Arab problems', empowering Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates for its own economic interest; indeed, this introduces the primary role of the Gulf Monarchies in the Libyan scenario that will be analysed in the next part.¹⁶⁷ To conclude, Washington seems to have adopted a different approach to the Libyan scenario in comparison to Moscow and Beijing's approach. Nowadays, the absence of its role has been filled by other global and regional powers, therefore, it seems that the U.S. has decided not to guarantee itself a primary role in Libya's future. However, if on one hand it is possible to predict a future shift in Washington's foreign policy after the end of the Trump presidential term, on the other, it is necessary to remind that post-Gaddafi's Libya has never been on the U.S. top priority list, despite who was the President. But, due to the unpredictability of today's international relations, it is not possible to exclude a future in which the U.S. will be interested in the Libyan fate, but it must be underlined that Washington would reconstruct its role in a very complex and polarized scenario. Even if, due to the U.S. global worth, it is not a mission impossible.

¹⁶³ Ivi, pg 97

¹⁶⁴ Mastrolilli, P. (2017), *Trump a Gentiloni: "Non vedo un ruolo degli Usa in Libia"*, La Stampa

¹⁶⁵ Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA'S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 93

¹⁶⁶ Oakes, J. (2021), *War Lord, Khalifa Haftar and the future of Libya*, Amberley, pg 152

¹⁶⁷ Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA'S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 56

2.4.2: Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, how France's involvement in Libya is affected by these relationships?

Moving to the second part of the analysis of the international actors involved in the Libyan scenarios, it is important to mention the reasons behind the decision of some regional powers to support General Haftar. Thus, first of all, it is necessary to underline to what extent their foreign policy affects the Libyan scenario and second, how economic relationships influence Paris' decision to adopt a double face approach towards the Northern African country's issues. Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are the MENA countries that are supporting General Haftar; the reason is based on regional geopolitical considerations linked to religious perspectives. Indeed, Egypt and the two Gulf Monarchies share the willingness to counter the spread of the Muslim Brotherhood, the political movement that increased its popularity during the Arab Spring of 2011. In order to understand the extent to which this political Islamist movement gained the support of part the MENA countries' population after the Arab Spring events, it is important to mention, for example, the Egyptian case-study, due to the fact that at the end of Mubarak's dictatorship, the population elected President Morsi, an expression of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the Al-Sisi military coup d'état (supported by the UAE and Saudi Arabia) led to a brutal repression of the Muslim Brotherhood and thousands of them were imprisoned or sentenced to the death penalty. Therefore, President Al-Sisi has many to support anti-Muslim Brotherhood factions in the MENA regions, such as General Haftar in Libya, who is conducting a civil war against the Libyan expression of the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, from Al-Sisi's perspective, the possibility of a Muslim Brotherhood government in his neighbouring country will represent the worst-case scenario, especially in light of geographical considerations: the two countries share a 700-mile-long desert border. Moreover, due to Haftar's anti-Islamic terrorism positions, from Cairo's point of view, the General is a guarantee to prevent terrorism from spreading from Libya to Egypt and destabilize Al-Sisi's dictatorship.¹⁶⁸ Thus, for Al-Sisi, Haftar represents the Libyan internal actor that could avoid the regional spillover of Islamic extremism. However, despite the clear Egyptian interests in Libyan dynamics, Al-Sisi has never commanded the deployment of its troops on the ground in support to General Haftar; indeed, rather than an official military support, Egypt carries on diplomatic support as the declaration of the Sirte-Jufra red line in 2020.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, an Egyptian military intervention in the country could modify the polarization of the conflict, indeed, the two most important Egyptian allies in the region, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, have always exercised political and diplomatic pressure on Cairo for its military intervention in the conflict.¹⁷⁰ However, the Egyptian dictator has never ceded to these pressures because, according to several scholars, Egypt is not ready from a military point of view for taking the lead in the Libyan conflict.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA'S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 25-25

¹⁶⁹ Duran, B. (2020), *Cairo's threats and the Sirte-Jufra deadlock*, Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research <https://www.setav.org/en/cairos-threats-and-the-sirte-jufra-deadlock>

¹⁷⁰ Santoro, D. (2020), *Se al-Sisi entra in Libia, rischia di perdere l'Egitto*, Limes

¹⁷¹ Bakir, A. (2020), *The UAE's Disruptive Policy in Libya*, pg 165, SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26981722>

These political pressure exercises by the UAE and Saudi Arabia introduce their involvement in the Libyan scenario. First of all, as it was mentioned before, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia were the countries that backed the Al-Sisi coup d'état in Egypt in 2013. The reasons behind this decision are related to their foreign policy agenda based on the strategy to prevent and counter the spread of political Islamist parties in the MENA region governments. Egypt was not an isolated case where the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia pursued their strategy to counter political Islamist parties; indeed, Egypt was part of their complex strategy in the MENA region, as it could be noticed by the analysis of their foreign policy agenda in post-Gaddafi Libya. The United Arab Emirates' support to Haftar started immediately after the General returned to Libya and Abu Dhabi, thanks to its funding, became one of Haftar's most important financial allies. However, during the first period of the Libyan 'reconstruction' the country was seen critically due to its potentially destabilizing impact on Egypt, which was at the top of the priority list for the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.¹⁷² Indeed, from the two Gulf Monarchies' perspective, the Libyan events after the fall of Gaddafi were overshadowed by the events in Egypt. This is the reason behind the lack of the UAE and Saudi Arabia involvement in the Libyan scenario before the Al-Sisi coup d'état in Egypt, but in the moment in which, from their perspective, Cairo was secured, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi concentrated their efforts in Libya, finding in Haftar their interlocutor.¹⁷³ In the next part, we will see how the third Gulf Monarchy, Qatar, followed the reverse pattern. Therefore, with the Al-Sisi coup d'état and the arrival of Haftar in Libya, the situation changed. The way in which Abu Dhabi is supporting Haftar is very interesting and underlines the primary role of the UAE in the Libyan scenario. Indeed, it has been shown by the UK security intelligence analysis, since 2016, the United Arab Emirates has sent in the Libyan territory its own military troops in the al-Khadim airport base, 70 km south of the Haftar command control bases.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, in 2018, Abu Dhabi decided to send its own China-made offensive Wing Loong II drones to Libya, and for this reason, in 2019, the United Arab Emirates was found responsible for massacres and mass crimes among civilians. Nevertheless, the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council have turned a blind eye to Abu Dhabi's involvement in the Libyan issues.¹⁷⁵ The reasons behind the Abu Dhabi involvement in the Libyan dynamics are several, the primary has it has been explained before, which is related to the opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood and to political Islam. However, economic considerations play an important role in the UAE's support to Haftar, indeed, the Libyan Eastern part under Haftar's control is an oil-rich part with a key geographical position. Thus, from the United Arab Emirates' perspective, having political and economic ties with the man who controls the eastern coastal part of the country where most of the oil is concentrated is a very important key card for the Gulf Monarchy's foreign policy. A key card that increases the UAE's role in MENA region dynamics in comparison to its regional rivals, as for example Qatar.¹⁷⁶ Thus, from an economic point of view, the hypothesis of a whole

¹⁷² Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA'S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 51

¹⁷³ Ivi

¹⁷⁴ Bakir, A. (2020), *The UAE's Disruptive Policy in Libya*, pg 161, SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26981722>

¹⁷⁵ Bakir, A. (2020), *The UAE's Disruptive Policy in Libya*, pg 162, SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26981722>

¹⁷⁶ Ivi, pg 163

Libya under Haftar's control would greatly expand the political and economic worth of Abu Dhabi both on the regional and international level. To conclude, it is important to underline the reasons behind the international acceptance of the United Arab Emirates' roles and actions in the Libyan scenario. First, its financial power is used by Abu Dhabi as a way to spread its influence all around the world. Second, the UAE is a top global importer of weapons; therefore, its relations with the most powerful arms industries around the world secure its geopolitical role in the region. Third, Abu Dhabi works with everyone, from the Russians to the Americans, so in this framework it is very difficult that the United Arab Emirates would ever be questioned for its proactive role in the Libyan scenario.¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately, this is the reality.

The second Gulf Monarchy involved in the Libyan scenario is Saudi Arabia. In the following events of the Arab Spring, Riyadh shared the same foreign policy approach to MENA countries as Abu Dhabi's for the same political reasons. Moreover, from Riyadh's point of view, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egyptian theatre represented a risk to the US-Egypt-Saudi security triangle, which has the role of being a counterweight to Iran's ambition.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, as mentioned before, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were key state actors that backed Al-Sisi's coup d'état in Egypt. In the Libyan scenarios, Riyadh's strategy is mainly related to diplomatic and financial support of General Haftar, thus its position differs from Abu Dhabi's for a less active role in the Northern African country's dynamics. The reason for a less active role in Libyan dynamics seems to be related to different considerations; the most valid one is linked to Riyadh's military campaign in Yemen, which began in 2015, and it is still ongoing. Therefore, Saudi Arabia's involvement, as a key actor, in another regional scenario has strongly reduced Riyadh's foreign policy actions in other MENA issues, such as the Libyan one. Saudi King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud seems to be more focused on pursuing the anti-Iran agenda rather than the anti-Muslim Brotherhood one.¹⁷⁹ However, Saudi Arabia's relationships with both General Haftar and the members of the regional 'coalition' who support its policy were confirmed by the event of the inauguration of an Egyptian large military base in the Western desert, 60 kilometres west of Alexandria in 2017. At these events participated General Haftar, Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Emir of Mecca Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, and Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti Minister of Defence. Therefore, this inauguration can be seen as a meeting of Haftar's regional allies; indeed, the Qatar Gulf of Monarchy was not invited.¹⁸⁰ To conclude, it is important to underline that some scholars argue that another reason behind Riyadh's less active role in the Libyan scenario is related to their oil-based economy in a historical period in which the oil price is not increasing.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, this theory seems not to be supported by evidence related to Saudi Arabia's financial support to General Haftar, due to Saudi Arabia's provisions of tens of millions of dollars to assist the LNA offensive against Tripoli.

¹⁷⁷ Ivi, pg 164

¹⁷⁸ Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA'S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 51

¹⁷⁹ Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA'S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 52

¹⁸⁰ Oakes, J. (2021), *War Lord, Khalifa Haftar and the future of Libya*, Amberley, pg 150

¹⁸¹ Bakir, A. (2020), *The UAE's Disruptive Policy in Libya*, pg 164, SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26981722>

From the perspective of the Gulf Monarchies' foreign policy through the Libyan scenario, it is worth mentioning their relationships with France, the European country that has the most questioned position in the Libyan dynamics. Indeed, on one side, Paris has publicly supported the Western legitimate interlocutor; on the other side, Paris has diplomatically and militarily supported Haftar. Many scholars argue that France's support for Haftar is based on counter terrorism considerations due to France's involvement in Sahel countries: Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso.¹⁸² According to this opinion, from the French point of view, backing Haftar would be reducing the spread of Islamic terrorism among the MENA regions and thus among its state allies. From this point of view, it seems to appear that France's double-faced approach to the Libyan scenario is primarily motivated by security considerations. However, in 2017, Libyan Islamic extremists were finally defeated and consequently, any further reasons behind France's peculiar position in the Libyan scenarios based on security considerations have ceased to exist. Even if it is possible to notice that after the defeat of Libyan Islamist extremism, France's support for General Haftar has not changed, as it can be explained by the official video of General Haftar in which he expressed his ultimate gratitude for France's assistance in terms of intelligence and special forces in 2019.¹⁸³ Moreover, 'the seizure of French arms in one of Haftar's bases during the same year and the arrest of 13 armed French citizens on the Tunisian borders reinforce the belief that French support for General Haftar is not in question.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, an explanation based on security justification about the Paris peculiar involvement through the Libyan scenario seems not to take in consideration several other factors, one of these is France's close relationship with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.¹⁸⁵ France shares important interests with these MENA countries, both on political and economic levels; in the first stage, Paris, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh share both an anti-Turkish and anti-political Islamist tendencies. On the second stage, the economic level, Paris is the third state for arms-exports in MENA countries, indeed, from 2020 to 2025, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt become the top clients of France's military industries.¹⁸⁶ These two elements are crucial in order to understand France's double-faced position in the Libyan scenario. The question that should be posed is related to what extent France's foreign policy decision to support General Haftar in Libya is affected by these relationships with the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. An explanation that can be provided in this field is related to two different episodes, the former: 'In April 2019, France blocked a European Union statement calling on the renegade military commander to halt his assault on the capital, prompting GNA Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj in April to accuse the Macron Administration of backing a "dictator." Macron's effort to undermine the unity of the European

¹⁸² Hofnung, T. (2019), « *En Libye comme au Mali, la France joue un double jeu* », Le Monde

¹⁸³ Bakir, A. (2020), *The UAE's Disruptive Policy in Libya*, pg 167-168, SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26981722>

¹⁸⁴ Bakir, A. (2020), *The UAE's Disruptive Policy in Libya*, pg 167-168, SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26981722>,

¹⁸⁵ Kempin, R. (2021) *France's Foreign and Security Policy under President Macron*, pg 15-18, German Institute for International and Security Affairs

¹⁸⁶ George, M.; Djokic, K.; Hussain, Z.; Pieter, D.; Wezeman, T. (2024), 'TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS' Stockholm international peace and research institute

https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/fs_2503_at_2024_0.pdf

Union (EU) and NATO served Abu Dhabi's goals in Libya very well.'¹⁸⁷ The latter: 'In 2020, France used the European naval Force Mediterranean Operation (IRINI) to enforce an arms embargo against the UN-recognized government, the GNA, while turning a blind eye on Haftar's forces, which continued to receive weapons and military equipment from the UAE via air and land. The GNA accused the mission of being "unbalanced, unfair and biased."¹⁸⁸ With these diplomatic manoeuvres, France secured the UAE and Saudi Arabia's interest in Libya. Indeed, these examples are crucial to understanding to what extent France's foreign policy in Libya is related to its economic relationship with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. Thus, France's strategy undermines both the possibility of a united European policy in the Libyan dynamics and the possibility of a united Libya under the authority of the UN-recognized internal actor.¹⁸⁹ Paris is substantially contributing to the GNA's failure.

Moreover, France has always carried out a unilateral approach in the Libyan issues, as for example the initiatives in which Paris hosted two important summits between Al-Sarraj and Haftar, where Macron played the solo-European role. This approach caused diplomatic tensions with the other European partners.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Berlin is in favour of a multilateral approach to the issue, as it was shown by its initiative in 2020, where Germany hosted the Berlin International Conference on Libya, where regional and global powers participated.¹⁹¹ Berlin's initiative marked a clear shift in German foreign policy toward Libyan issues that passed from a position of little interest to an active role in the Libyan scenario. Due to geographical considerations, Italy's position is far more complex than Germany's; for this reason, I will dedicate the entire following Chapter to Rome's strategy in Libya. However, it is important to underline that Italy is against the unilateral French initiatives in the Northern African countries. In 2019, the Libyan internal situation changed; Haftar was reaching Tripoli and an agreement signed between the GNA and Turkey led to the Turkish military intervention in the country which saved the GNA's authority from being defeated by Haftar.¹⁹² From the perspective of a possible Haftar victory on the ground, France has strongly criticized the Turkish engagement in Libya because it has reversed the patterns of the civil war. Indeed, President Macron pointed out that the Turkish strategy in Libya was a clear threat to the country and to Europe.¹⁹³

The relations between Macron and Erdogan are worse than ever; indeed, there are several scenarios in which Turkey and France have contrasting positions: in Syria, President Macron sustains Kurdish militias which are considered terrorist organizations by Ankara. In Lebanon, the two countries are carrying out contrasting initiatives in order to increase their solo role in the Lebanese scenario. In the Nagorno-Karabagh war between

¹⁸⁷ Bakir, A. (2020), *The UAE's Disruptive Policy in Libya*, pg 168, SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26981722>

¹⁸⁸ Ivi

¹⁸⁹ Kempin, R. (2021) *France's Foreign and Security Policy under President Macron*, pg 15, German Institute for International and Security Affairs

¹⁹⁰ Kempin, R. (2021) *France's Foreign and Security Policy under President Macron*, pg 16, German Institute for International and Security Affairs

¹⁹¹ Ivi, pg 15

¹⁹² Ivi, pg 18

¹⁹³ Redazione ANSA, (2020), *Macron attacca la Turchia, 'gioco pericoloso in Libia,' ANSA* https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/mondo/africa/2020/06/22/macron-attacca-la-turchia-gioco-pericoloso-in-libia_ba24b0e5-62b2-4096-9185-32c3a6a32766.html

Azerbaijan and Armenia, Ankara strongly supports the former country and Paris the latter one. Thus, Libya is only another piece in the Turkey-France competition.¹⁹⁴ To conclude the analysis of the French position, it is important to affirm that Paris's double-faced game in Libya is strongly motivated by its economic ties with the Gulf Monarchies of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In 2019, the civil war led to a possible Haftar victory of the conflict; however, the Turkish involvement has changed the cards. Libya represents another scenario of the competition between Ankara and Paris, but President Macron's solo-euro approach in Libya has led France to European isolation in the North African Country. Indeed, today, even if it seems unrealistic, European countries as Italy are far closer to Ankara's foreign policy in Libya rather than to the Paris one. This clearly explains on the one side the defeat of Macron's foreign policy in the MENA region from the perspective of European relations and on the other side, it introduces Erdoğan's winning strategy in the region that I will analyse in the following part.

2.4.3: Turkey and Qatar

In order to introduce Ankara's involvement in the Libyan scenario, it is important to affirm that, despite lacking geographical proximity to the Mediterranean Sea, since President Ozal's initiatives in the 1980s, Ankara has shifted its foreign policy with the aim of becoming the land bridge between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.¹⁹⁵ Thus, Ankara pursued a foreign policy which increased its role in all the contexts where there was the possibility and North African countries, especially Libya after the fall of Gaddafi's dictatorship, were one of those countries in which Turkey became a key player. This Turkish 'new era' has led to the signing of a Memorandum between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of the National Accord-State of Libya on maritime areas and, subsequently, a military cooperation in 2019.¹⁹⁶ This Memorandum has defined Turkey's sovereignty over the maritime area between Rhodes, Crete and Cyprus, facing relevant Greek and French protests over the matter. It is important to underline that, beyond the expansion of Turkish political influence due to this agreement, the geographical area is relevant for gas extraction in the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, in the last week of December 2019, the government of Tripoli sent to Ankara an official request for military assistance on the ground; as a result, in early January, the Turkish government deployed military equipment and troops in Libya, which saved the GNA from its capitulation. Thus, Turkey entered the Libyan scenario and immediately became a breakthrough actor, because the Turkish involvement changed the dynamics of the war in favour of the GNA. The cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of the National Accord-State of Libya has been strongly criticized by the states of the European Union. Turkey has been accused of not respecting both the

¹⁹⁴ Levallois, A. (2021), '*La Francia contro la Turchia per invertire la marea*', Limes <https://www.limesonline.com/rivista/la-francia-contro-la-turchia-per-invertire-la-marea-14637528/>

¹⁹⁵ Marshall, T. (2016). *Prisoners of geography*, pg 184. Elliott & Thompson

¹⁹⁶ Santoro, D. (2020). *L'accordo marittimo tra Turchia e Libia*. Limes <https://www.limesonline.com/carte/l-accordo-marittimo-tra-turchia-e-libia-14707738/>

¹⁹⁷ ivi

sovereignty rights of third countries and the law of the sea; nevertheless, Turkey's foreign policy and military presence in the region have not been affected by those claims.¹⁹⁸ Today, Turkey maintains crucial military bases in the western part of the country (Tripolitania), as can be observed below from the map provided by Limes in 2023 (The current positions of the bases have remained unchanged).



(Canali, 2023)

The most important bases are two: the Al-Watiya air base and the naval base of Misrata, the first one is only twenty-seven kilometres from the Tunisian border and it is crucial for the Turkish control of the Libyan Tunisian border. The second one is strategically due to the geographical position. Indeed, thanks to the control of these bases, Turkey could exercise potential control of the Mediterranean Sea. However, official numbers related to the Turkish military deployment are not being published. From this perspective, due to its boots on the ground, Turkey is one of the international key actors in Libya. Many scholars have analysed the evolution of Turkish foreign policy, which has led to a military intervention on the ground; the conclusion that they reached underlines that it was a clear response to the Libyan crisis rather than the product of Ankara's long-term planned strategy.¹⁹⁹ To confirm the evaluation, it is important to underline that Turkey decided to intervene in the Libyan conflict when the LNA forces, primarily backed by the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, were closer to conquering Tripoli. However, despite that, Ankara's engagement has marked a clear shift in its foreign policy, which passed through a no-interference approach in Intra-Arabi conflicts to a new policy based on taking sides in several regional conflicts;²⁰⁰ Indeed, if we analyse the Turkish foreign policy from a regional

¹⁹⁸ Colombo, M. 2020. *Approfondimento: l'accordo Turchia-GNA sui confini marittimi*. ISPI <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/approfondimento-laccordo-turchia-gna-sui-confini-marittimi-25158>

¹⁹⁹ Kardas, S. (2020), 'Turkey's Libya policy: militarization of regional policies and escalation dominance', The Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IISS), Peking University 2020

²⁰⁰ Ibidem

perspective it is possible to notice elements that underline the presence of a clear structured policy in which Libya is part of the Ankara's 20-year strategy to exercise the control of the Mediterranean as the 'Ottoman Lake'. To understand this strategy, it is important to mention that since 2004, Turkey has increased its interest in Mediterranean dynamics, as it is shown by the foreign policy agenda aimed to increase its influence in Cyprus, a key aspect for Mediterranean considerations.²⁰¹ Moreover, another important aspect that underlines the priority of the 'Mediterranean dream' is related to the domestic reforms of the Turkish Naval Nomenclatura, which marked a new era of Turkish naval power.²⁰² These two events represent a clear shift in Ankara's considerations related to the Mediterranean Sea. Indeed, if we want to compare and apply this strategy to the Libyan scenario, Turkish engagement in the country was primarily based on the deployment of military maritime assets, which, according to military experts, marked the Turkish-GNA victory thanks to Ankara's superiority in Anatolia and Northern Africa waters.²⁰³ This naval superiority resulted in the grant of land-based supplies and the air-superiority thanks to the presence of Turkish frigates all over the Tripolitania coasts. Two key elements that led to the military victory on the ground.²⁰⁴ Moreover, from a geopolitical perspective, to clearly understand the importance of the control of the Tripolitania coast, it is worth mentioning the Greek-French agreement of 2021 aimed to counter the increased of Turkish presence both in the Mediterranean and in the Aegean Sea.²⁰⁵ Beyond the economic cooperations signed between Greece and France, the agreement also disciplined the possibility of a Paris engagement in a future conflict in which Greece has been attacked by a third country, even if the state-attacker is a member of the same military alliance.²⁰⁶ Another implicit element that highlights the anti-Turkey character of the alliance.

Thus, if on one side the Cyprus events, the Naval reform and the Libyan engagement underline the Turkish foreign policy strategy to control the Mediterranean as the 'Ottoman Lake', on the other side the meaning of the Greek-French agreement clearly highlights to what extent is importance of avoiding the possibility of a Turkish water-control of the Mediterranean. These aspects are faces of the same medal that explain the Turkish strategy and the France and Greek counterstrategy to an issue that is considered very important in Athens, Paris and Ankara. Still, there is another event that is crucial to increasing our knowledge in relation to the presence of a Turkish strategy based on water-control considerations: the decision of the Turkish President to close the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits to all warships, according to the Montreux Convention, in 2021. It is possible to question why this aspect is so relevant in relation to Libya. However, from Ankara's perspective, the Russian invasion of Ukraine could lead to Moscow's control of the Northern Coast Black Sea and then

²⁰¹ Santoro, D. (2022), *'la Turchia punta a dominare il mare nostrum'*, Limes
<https://www.limesonline.com/rivista/la-turchia-punta-a-dominare-il-mare-nostrum-14640827/>

²⁰² Ivi

²⁰³ Campanile, E. (2025), *'A Historical and Geographical Parabola of Turkey's Strategic Approach to the Mediterranean, from Northern Cyprus to Libya.'* Mondo Internazionale G.E.O.
<https://mondointernazionale.org/focus-allegati/a-historical-and-contemporary-parabola-of-turkeys-strategic-approach-to-the-mediterranean-from-northern-cyprus-to-libya>

²⁰⁴ Santoro, D. (2022), *'la Turchia punta a dominare il mare nostrum'*, Limes
<https://www.limesonline.com/rivista/la-turchia-punta-a-dominare-il-mare-nostrum-14640827/>

²⁰⁵ Ibidem

²⁰⁶ De Paolo, F. (2021), *'Francia e Grecia, accordo militare in chiave energetica. E Ankara...'* Formiche

directly represent a threat to the ‘Ottoman Lake’.²⁰⁷ The Turkish decision to apply the Montreux Convention highlights to what extent Ankara is ready to pursue and protect its Mediterranean strategy, even if this means provoking the Russian bear. To summarize, since 2004, Turkish foreign policy has been marked by water-control considerations, the Cyprus issue, the naval reform, the Libyan involvement and the application of the Montreux Conventions are all clear signs of Ankara’s pre-eminence strategy based on water-control considerations, where Libya represents only a part of it. In some of the events, it seems that Turkey has only sizzled the situation in order to pursue its foreign policy and achieve its goal, but it is worth mentioning that Ankara has arrived prepared for the possibility to exploit the events in its favour, as the naval-military reform has proven. Therefore, it is possible to say that Ankara has demonstrated the ability to be domestically prepared for possible external events. Thanks to these aspects Turkish role in Libya seems to be consolidated for the future.

When we speak about Turkey, it is important to mention the role played by Qatar in the Libyan dynamics after the fall of Gaddafi’s regime. Looking to the history of this country, due to its size, its small population and its geographical position between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Qatar has always left its protection and its foreign policy to other countries. Nevertheless, from 1995, there was a change of policy and Emir Hamad Khalifa Al Thani decided to build its own foreign policy agenda and Qatar entered the geopolitical dynamics. Indeed, during the event of 2011 Arab Spring, Qatar stepped aside to the revolutionary movements.²⁰⁸ Especially in Libya, Qatar adopted a very aggressive approach in the days immediately after the beginning of the protests, firstly thanks to its media coverage of Al Jazeera, a Qatari mass media, and secondly, due to its economic financing of Islamist political parties.²⁰⁹ Indeed, Qatar was strongly financing all the Muslim Brotherhood groups in the countries in which the Arab Spring was taking place. The aim of this strategy was to build important economic ties with the future establishment of those countries and thus become the key actor in the MENA region. Libya is a key example of Qatar’s strategy; indeed, Doha was one of the first states that recognized the National Transition Council as Libya’s legitimate government, and it participated with its airpower in NATO’s military action in 2011. Moreover, immediately after the fall of Gaddafi’s regime, the country invested more than 400 million USD in Libyan infrastructures and Qatar’s largest state-owned bank bought 49% stake of the Libyan Bank of Commerce and Development to pursue its active role in the country.²¹⁰

Nevertheless, the Qatari strategy failed because of different international reasons, like the defeat of the Muslim Brotherhood or the counterbalancing action of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. As we have seen previously, their strategy aimed to counter both the political interpretation of Islam and the increase of the Qatari influence in the regional geopolitical dynamics. Indeed, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were behind the support of General Al-Sisi in Egypt, and in Tunisia, the two monarchies backed the secular movement ‘Tunisia Call’, which defeated the Islamist party of the Muslim Brotherhood. Thus, Qatar lost its

²⁰⁷ Santoro, D. (2022), ‘*la Turchia punta a dominare il mare nostrum*’, Limes
<https://www.limesonline.com/rivista/la-turchia-punta-a-dominare-il-mare-nostrum-14640827/>

²⁰⁸ Corrao, F.M.; Redaelli, R. (2020) *States, Actors and Geopolitical Drivers in the Mediterranean*, Palgrave macmillan, pg 328

²⁰⁹ Ivi

²¹⁰ Varvelli, A; Mezran, K. (2017) *FOREIGN ACTORS IN LIBYA’S CRISIS*, Atlantic Council, ISPI, pg 50

influence in Egypt and Tunisia. For these reasons, in the days after the Egyptian and Tunisian events, Al Thani decided to increase its role in Libyan dynamics in order to protect what remains of its political influence in the region. The number of weapons and financing for its Libyan ally's growth, and a few times later, the Libyan civil war began.²¹¹ Due to its involvement, Qatar has been strongly criticized all over the world; indeed, on a regional level, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain recalled their ambassador from Doha.²¹² Qatar was at the centre of a period of political isolation. Qatar's foreign policy adopted in the Arab Spring aimed to increase its political worth in the Mediterranean dynamics but failed and led Doha into the middle of a diplomatic crisis. This situation led the Al-Thani Monarchy to rethink its own foreign policy strategy. The active role was abandoned, and the leadership of its foreign policy was given to Turkey, a state that shared Doha's interest in supporting the Muslim Brotherhood in the MENA countries.²¹³ To conclude, it is worth mentioning that even nowadays, Turkey is Qatar's key ally, indeed, Ankara has its own military bases on Qatari territory, and its diplomatic worth was crucial when Doha faced another diplomatic crisis with Saudi Arabia in 2017.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Corrao, F.M.; Redaelli, R. (2020) *States, Actors and Geopolitical Drivers in the Mediterranean*, Palgrave macmillan, pg 328-330

²¹² BBC Redaction, (2014), 'Gulf ambassadors pulled from Qatar over 'interference'', BBC
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26447914>

²¹³ Corrao, F.M.; Redaelli, R. (2020) *States, Actors and Geopolitical Drivers in the Mediterranean*, Palgrave macmillan, pg 330

²¹⁴ Cafiero, G. (2020), 'Turchia e Qatar, coppia di fatto', Limes
<https://www.limesonline.com/rivista/turchia-e-qatar-coppia-di-fatto-14636204/>

Chapter 3: What's left of Italy's role?

3.1: Italy: from a leading role to a decrease of it

During the 20th century, Italian foreign policy in Libya was characterised by various phases that can be grouped into three historical moments: the colonisation of Libya at the beginning of the 20th century, the subsequent relations between Rome and the Idris monarchy, and the 42 years of Gaddafi's dictatorship. Given Libya's geographical position, the African country has always been a scenario in which Italian foreign policy has sought to exert its influence, sometimes with greater effort, other times in a marginal way. However, especially during Gaddafi's regime, the relations between the two countries have experienced alternative phases. For example, in the years after the coup d'état, the neo-dictator adopted strongly nationalist measures, such as the confiscation of Italian property and the subsequent expulsion of the Italians from the African country. In fact, in the second week of October 1970, around 20,000 Italians were forced to leave Libya²¹⁵. Then, Gaddafi's foreign policy in the 1970s and 1980s led Libya into strong international isolation; the Colonel was accused of actively financing international terrorism and of having supported terrorist attacks, such as the one in Berlin at the La Belle discotheque in 1986.²¹⁶ In this terrorist attack, two American soldiers and a Turkish civilian were killed and more than 200 people, both military and civilians, were injured. In response to this attack, US President Ronald Reagan launched the operation 'El Dorado Canyon': the purpose of the operation was the murder of the Libyan dictator by bombing the African country. In fact, on April 15, 1986 (at 2 am) U.S. fighter jets bombed Libya. The attack killed approximately 20 Libyan soldiers and civilians, including one of Gaddafi's daughters, but the dictator survived. In this context, it is important to highlight Italy's role. As it was confirmed by the former head of Libyan diplomacy (during a conference organized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Abdel-Rahman Shalgam, who was at that time the Libyan ambassador in Rome, "Two days before the attack, Craxi sent a mutual friend to me to tell me to be careful because on April 14th or 15th there would be an American raid against me."²¹⁷ On that occasion, the Libyan minister added, that the United States would use the Lampedusa base, "but against the will of the Italian government, because Rome was against the use of national airspace and seas for aggression."²¹⁸ This thesis was also reiterated by the Italian side and more precisely by Margherita Boniver, Chief for Foreign Affairs of the Italian Socialist Party, who affirmed that Italy used all the means at its disposal to warn Gaddafi about the attack.²¹⁹ Moreover, it is important to notice that the Italian government did not make its airspace available for the attack, nor did France and Spain, thus, many of the American military aircrafts which departed from the Royal Air Force Base Lakenheath (GB), were forced to adopt a 3,500-mile flight path, with four in-flight refuelling. Indeed, the American aircrafts took 13 hours to arrive in Libyan airspace.²²⁰ The day after the U.S. attack, Gaddafi

²¹⁵ Redazione AISE (2025), 'Ghibli: il 55esimo anniversario dell'esodo degli italiani della Libia nella newsletter dell'AIRL' AISE

²¹⁶ Pearson, E. (2025), '1986 West Berlin discotheque bombing'. Encyclopedia Britannica

²¹⁷ Redazione La Stampa, (2008), 'Così Bettino salvò Gheddafi', La Stampa

²¹⁸ Ibidem

²¹⁹ Ibidem

²²⁰ Capt Ball, G. USAFR, (1999), '1986 - Operation El Dorado Canyon', Air Force Historical Support Division

ordered the launch of two Scud missiles toward the American base in Lampedusa (the missiles fell two kilometers away from the island) and twenty-four hours later, the Libyan ambassador to Rome officially declared that the missiles had been launched from Libya, not toward Italy, but toward an American base.²²¹ The aim of the attack was clear; for Gaddafi, it was important to respond to the American attack in order to strengthen his national popularity. Nevertheless, the lack of military assets capable of directly striking the United States led to the decision to launch the missiles towards the nearest American base, Lampedusa. In this context, it is important to mention Andreotti's statement, the former Italian Foreign Minister in that period, regarding the Libyan attack on the Italian territory: 'my sensation is that the missiles were launched deliberately off target: there was no intention to cause us any damage.'²²² However, there are some doubts about the credibility of the event. For example, the Italian Air Force Chief of Staff, General Cottone, claimed that the attack was a complete setup by Western intelligence services aiming at sending a clear message to Rome against its government's pro-Arab policies.²²³ Moreover, it should also be noted that the remains of these two 11-meter-long Scud missiles, which fell 2 kilometers off the coast of Lampedusa, were never found. Despite further theories concerning the event, it is important to question if the Libyan attack to Lampedusa has affected the relations between Rome and Tripoli. If we take into consideration the economic trades between the two countries in 1986, both before and after the Lampedusa event, we could notice a marginal decline in these. But, as confirmed by the analysis of the "Bank of Italy Bulletin" regarding foreign trade in 1986 and 1987 the decline was primarily related to the collapse in oil prices,²²⁴ Therefore, although the Lampedusa event might have led to a possible deterioration in relations between the Italian government and Gaddafi, there was no breakdown in relations between the two countries.

Moving forward into the 90', the economic sanctions approved by the UN in 1992 against the Gaddafi regime have isolated the African country and they have affected the Italian-Libyan cooperation. However, ENI maintained its economic relations with the Libyan government and its energy company, the National Oil Corporation (NOC), aiming at constructing a sub-sea pipeline (the 'Green Stream') from Libya to Sicily, in Southern Italy.²²⁵ A preliminary agreement between ENI and the NOC was reached in 1996, even without violations of the international sanctions on Libya, the practical implementation of the project was very complicated before the end of the UN sanctions. Indeed, a few years later, when Libya was readmitted to the international stage, the entire infrastructure became operational, representing the 5th most important infrastructure of the Italian import-network.²²⁶ Thus, once again, Italy was beginning to increase its leading position in the Libyan scenario. In 2008, 4 years after the inauguration of the Italian Libyan pipeline, Rome and Tripoli signed the: '*Memorandum of friendship, partnership and cooperation*' in Benghazi, which marked

²²¹ Di Feo, G. (2008), '*Gheddafi e i missili fantasma*', Espresso

²²² Ibidem

²²³ Ibidem

²²⁴ Research Department of Banca d'Italia, (1987) 'Economic Bulletin', Banca d'Italia

²²⁵ Marchionna, G, G. (2020), '*Italy-Libya Energy Cooperation: many efforts to face multidimensional vulnerabilities*' pg 4, ResearchGate

²²⁶ Ibidem

one of those moments when Italian foreign policy assumed a predominant role in Libya; three years before the fall of Gaddafi's regime.

3.1.2: 2011 as a turning point for Italian influence in Libya

The 2008 "Italian Libyan Friendship Treaty" marked Italy's predominant role in the Libyan economy. Beyond the economic agreements reached between the two parties, which have been analysed in Chapter 1, what is important to underline in this section is related to Article No.3 of the Treaty. In this part, the agreement provides: "the commitment to non-interference in internal affairs and, in compliance with the principles of international law, not to use or grant the use of its territories in any hostile act against the other party."²²⁷ Three years before the events of the Arab Spring and the subsequent intervention of the Western powers in Libya, Italy was legally bound to non-intervention in Libyan affairs.

From the Italian point of view, this was the situation on the eve of the 2011 events.

Another problem was represented by the Franco-British pressure to approve the two UN resolutions regarding Libya. In this light, due to its diplomatic weight, Rome aimed not be left out of the Libyan crisis's evolution. As a consequence, the Italian foreign policy during the first weeks of the uprising in Libya was characterised by hesitancy and hedging.²²⁸ In February, the Italian policy toward the Libyan scenario changed, former Prime Minister Berlusconi declared in his statement: "I have fresh news from a few minutes ago and it appears that, effectively, Gaddafi no longer controls the situation in Libya."²²⁹ Moreover, he underlined that the revolts: "could bring democracy and freedom, but all this could also trigger the emergence of centres of Islamic fundamentalism a few kilometres away from our shores and a wave of refugees."²³⁰ From the Italian perspective, the worst-case scenario of the Libyan crisis was clearly expressed. Finally, PM Berlusconi added: "for these reasons Europe and the West cannot remain spectators of this process and above all we [Italy] cannot do that, the events of the past few weeks affect our trade relations, our energy supplies and our own security."²³¹ Thus, in light of the internal Libyan situation and the position of Western actors over the matter, Italy had quickly dumped its most important African allies in terms of economic relations and geographical position. The reasons behind this decision are clear: Italy could no longer support the Libyan dictator and in this perspective, it was both necessary to protect economic relations and prevent a possible wave of migration from the Libyan coast to the Italian one. Italy had to prepare herself to a Libya without Gaddafi and avoid the scenario of being cut off from the course of events, for this reason Rome began to establish relations with the Libyan revolutionaries. Indeed, when their will to maintain unchanged the economic relations with the

²²⁷ Disegno di legge, N. 2014 (2008), *'Ratifica ed esecuzione del Trattato di amicizia, partenariato e cooperazione tra la Repubblica italiana e la Grande Giamahiria araba libica popolare socialista, fatto a Bengasi il 30 agosto 2008'*, Art 3, Camera dei Deputati

²²⁸ Lombardi, B. (2012) *'The Berlusconi Government and Intervention in Libya'*, pg 35, Italian Journal of International Affairs

²²⁹ Reuters, (2011), *'Libya's Gaddafi no longer in control-Berlusconi'*, Reuters

²³⁰ Ibidem

²³¹ Lombardi, B. (2012) *'The Berlusconi Government and Intervention in Libya'*, pg 35, Italian Journal of International Affairs

European neighbour was confirmed, former Italian Foreign Minister Frattini supported the regime change, affirming that Italy would recognize the authority of the insurgents as the legitimate authority of the Libyan people.²³² At that point, from Rome's perspective, Gaddafi's regime had to fall. In the case that the Libyan dictator had succeeded in regaining control of the country, it would have been clear that Italy would pay a high price for its support of the Libyan revolutionaries. At the same time, Italy had to play a leading role in subsequent events with the aim of establishing its influence on the National Transitional Authority, in order to prevent a future Libya under French and English influence. However, in this context, there are two fundamental aspects that needed to be clarified: the above-mentioned Article No.3 of the Treaty of Friendship Partnership and Cooperation between Rome and Tripoli and the Franco-British role. In relation to the former aspect, Article No. 3 regulated Italy's non-interference in Libyan affairs and prohibited hostile actions in Libyan territory. Therefore, if Italy had participated in a forceful action in Libyan territory, that would have been in clear violation of Article No.3 of the Treaty of Friendship, in force between Italy and Libya. But, if intervention in Libyan affairs had been disciplined by a UN resolution, which means under international law, this resolution would have prevailed over any bilateral agreement previously concluded between the parties. Therefore, from a purely legal perspective, in order not to violate the provisions of the 2008 Benghazi Treaty, a UN resolution regulating the intervention was essential for Italy's position. Moreover, an UN resolution would have led to the formation of a multilateral coalition and would have prevented countries like France and Great Britain from assuming a preponderant role in subsequent events. This position was clearly expressed by Foreign Minister Frattini in Parliament, who stated that: "We cannot accept a unilateral military action, measures implying the use of force shall be authorized by a Security Council Resolution and be taken within a multilateral, regional framework, to avoid rifts between Europe and NATO and to prevent the hostility of the Arab countries. Our work shall be aimed at promoting agreement in order to put an end to violence and to facilitate the dialogue between different factions – as you know, tribes are the most important territorial communities in Libya – in order to safeguard the territorial integrity of Libya."²³³ For this reason, when UNSC Resolution No. 1973 was approved, the Italian Government expressed its willingness to participate in the NATO operation in Libya.²³⁴

Now, from the description of Italian foreign policy during the phases that led to the fall of Gaddafi, it is important to underscore Rome's unclear strategy over the matter that has demonstrated a certain lack of proactivity in Italian approach to the Libyan crisis. Indeed, as analysed in the previous chapter, the foreign policies of France and Great Britain in Libya were motivated by regional or domestic considerations; both countries have exploited the events of the Libyan crisis since its beginning for their own interests. Instead of that, it seems that Rome has done little to protect its leading position in Libya, allowing other powers to influence events in their favour. Obviously, it must be said that the Italian diplomatic weight cannot be compared to either the French or the British one, especially if both nations, heirs of empires, pursue the same

²³² Lombardi, B. (2012) *'The Berlusconi Government and Intervention in Libya'*, pg 36, Italian Journal of International Affairs

²³³ Seduta Parlamentare n.450 (2011), Camera dei Deputati

²³⁴ Lombardi, B. (2012) *'The Berlusconi Government and Intervention in Libya'*, pg 37, Italian Journal of International Affairs

foreign policy agenda. It would be unrealistic to think that the Italian government could have carried out a solitary diplomatic action aimed at protecting Gaddafi's regime, when two of its European partners did not share Rome's position. However, what is questionable is the Italian lack of initiative in the scenarios such as the absence of willingness to transform a unilateral position to a multilateral one, for example, trying to gain the support of the other crucial European partner in the international scenario, Germany. As discussed in the previous chapter, Germany chose to abstain from UN Resolution 1973 due to domestic considerations linked to international dynamics. At the same time, most of the German people were against the use of force in Libya and Merkel's government disagreed with the French Mediterranean foreign policy. In the context of a German non-aligned position with France and Great Britain, it is also important to add another factor at the international level: the lack of a preponderant role of global powers in the Libyan crisis. Indeed, on the one side, the United States were initially not particularly involved in the Libyan events; the American establishment was divided between those who favoured intervention and those who were reticent. On the other side, Russia and China were not pursuing a strategy aiming at overthrowing Gaddafi's regime. Only Great Britain and France were trying to modify the Libyan scenario. So, maybe an alignment of the Italian policy with the German one would have counterbalanced the influence of Paris and London on Washington and on the approval of the UNSCR No.1973. Clearly, the meaning of this example is not to provide the answer to how the Libyan crisis should have been managed from the Italian perspective. Instead, the aim of it is to first underline the lack of a defined international scenario regarding Gaddafi's fall and then the possibility for Italy to play a more active role in the scenario. However, since Italy did not even try to find an agreement with Germany and did not even try to adopt further decisions in order to change the events in its favour, the result was that Rome had to subordinate its position to the strategy of the powers involved in the scenario in order to avoid the risk of being completely excluded from the events.

3.2: 2011 - 2014: Italian foreign policy in the new fragmented Libya

After the fall of Gaddafi's regime, the northern African country has represented one of the priorities of Rome's foreign policy; however, in the period 2011-2014, the Italian approach does not significantly differ from the one adopted during the 2011 events. Indeed, even after the fall of the Rais, the Italian policy in the Libyan scenario was characterised on the one side by few unilateral initiatives, and on the other side by participate to few, and in some cases inconclusive, multilateral initiatives. However, the objectives of the Italian foreign policy in Libya were clear: protect economic interests in the territory and to counter migratory flows from Libya to Italy. In order to pursue these goals, Rome has decided to support the GNA, the Libyan authority recognized at international level, because for the Italian perspective: 'West Libya's political and military fragmentation means that most Libyan migration routes start there, therefore dealing with the GNA is essential to control these flows; ENI's most important assets are also based in Western Libya, and, finally, according to

the UN and international law, the GNA is still the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people.²³⁵ In relation to the energy sector, during the Gaddafi regime, it accounted for 95% of Libya's revenues, due to the African country's rich underground resources. Given its oil-based economy, Libya's new internal actors did not oppose the return of international oil companies, as declared by Libyan Prime Minister Jibril when he pointed out that politics would not interfere with energy contracts.²³⁶ ENI was one of the companies which restarted production most quickly and according to the Italian company, by the end of 2011, its power plants had returned to 70% of their pre-revolution output.²³⁷ This is a very important factor that underlines the Italian energy company's continued presence in Libya before and after the revolution. In this regards, not all oil companies decided to restart energy production on Libyan soil in 2011, for example, the Norwegian company Statoil preferred to postpone the return of its experts to the country until it was secured.²³⁸ Regarding the second objective of Italian foreign policy in the post-Gaddafi Libya, which is related to counter irregular migration flows from Libya to Italy, an increase in the rate of irregular migrants' arrival from Libya to Italy was recorded after Gaddafi's fall. In fact, 62,692 people arrived in Italy in 2011, compared to 4,406 in 2010. So, after the fall of Gaddafi's regime, Libya became the free port where migratory flows from Eastern and Northern Africa, from sub-Saharan Africa, and from Asia ended up before following the route towards Italy.²³⁹ For this reason, in 2013, the Italian government decided to launch the military and humanitarian operation 'Mare Nostrum', aiming at contrasting human trafficking. In this operation, Italy used an amphibious ship for the command and control of operations with long-range helicopters, four Navy ships, two patrol boats, two frigates and several aircraft.²⁴⁰ According to the statement made by the Italian Government, the goal of the operation was both to save human beings and to act as a deterrent against those who were involved in human trafficking.²⁴¹ To evaluate the results of this operation it is important to notice that the year later, when the Italian government decided to shut it down due to its high costs, the rate of irregular migration towards Italy increased by 485% as it was underlined by the former Chief of Staff of the Navy Admiral De Giorgi.²⁴² Following the closure of the Italian "Mare Nostrum" operation, the European border agency, Frontex, on November 2014, instituted a multilateral mission in the Mediterranean named "Triton". Unlike the Italian mission, the EU mission was not intended to save lives, but rather to monitor Europe's borders, indeed, the multilateral European mission's operational space was pointed at 30 nautical miles from the Italian coast. This marked a clear difference with the Italian operation which patrolled the Mediterranean almost to the Libyan coast. Thus, its operational margin, as its costs and its results, was reduced. Since multilateral participation in the Triton mission was voluntary, 16 countries actively participated: Italy, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden,

²³⁵ Polat, F. (2020), *'From Energy to Migration: Surveying Italy's Position in Libya post-2011'*. Pg 4, TRT World Research Center

²³⁶ Varvelli, A. (2021), *'Il petrolio libico tra incertezze politiche e nuova concorrenza internazionale'*, pg 3, ISPI

²³⁷ Ivi, pg 3

²³⁸ Ivi, pg 4

²³⁹ Camera dei Deputati (2014,), *'Seduta Parlamentare XVII Legislatura'*, documenti camera

²⁴⁰ Gailani, G. (2013), *'Operazione Mare Nostrum'* Analisi difesa

²⁴¹ Ivi

²⁴² Pasta, S. (2014), *'Il capo di Stato Maggiore della Marina in Senato: "Mare Nostrum attirava i profughi? E' una sciocchezza'*, La Repubblica

Germany, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Switzerland, Romania, Poland, Lithuania, and Malta. The budget monthly allocated for the mission was equal to €2.9 million per month, a third of the cost of the ‘Mare Nostrum’ operation, and it included the deployment of two aircraft, one helicopter, three offshore vessels, and four patrol boats.²⁴³

So, in conclusion, the only benefit Italy gained from the end of the “Mare Nostrum” mission and the launch of the European “Triton” mission was economic. Operation “Triton” did not burden the Italian budget, but was entirely financed with European funds available to Frontex. However, beyond this purely economic advantage, Italy is obviously still legally bound to carry on unilaterally sea rescue operations due to international law. Therefore, if on the one hand Operation “Triton” did not lead to a decrease in the Mediterranean Sea deaths rate, on the other hand, it failed in its border control target, as shown by data of the period 2014 – 2016 when the highest peaks in illegal migratory flows in the Mediterranean towards Italy were recorded.²⁴⁴

Moreover, in the period between 2011 and 2014 Italy participated in the two multilateral missions established for Libya: ‘UNSMIL’, approved by the United Nations in 2011, and ‘EUBAM’, created upon decision of the EU Council in 2013. The first - The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) - works with Libyan authorities, political actors, and civil society to facilitate an inclusive political process, supports ceasefire implementation, and promotes national reconciliation whose mandate was extended until 2026.²⁴⁵ The second – ‘EUBAM’ Libya - supports the Libyan authorities in developing border management and security at the country's land, sea and air borders. As a civilian crisis management mission with a capacity-building mandate, EUBAM mission assists Libyan authorities at strategic and operational levels; its activity are carried out through advising, training and mentoring Libyan counterparts in strengthening the border services in accordance with international standards and best practices, and by supporting the Libyan authorities in the development of a national Integrated Border Management (IBM) strategy.²⁴⁶ Despite the excellent auspices under which the missions were established, both missions are characterised more by critical issues than by real strength. As for the European mission, it was created to support the Libyan state building process, however its role has been strongly reduced both by dynamics related to the different interests of Western countries in the Libyan scenario and by the internal fragmentation of the North African country. The PFCA made clear that the former EU intervention in Libya lacked context-sensitivity and assertiveness.²⁴⁷ Moreover, according to different scholars, after that the EU mission had been transferred to Tunisia in 2014, “EUBAM staff had to ‘muddle through’ an unintelligible situation with limited tools for understanding Libya’s informal and personalised forms of rule, in a conflict scenario in which coordination is made more difficult by overlapping

²⁴³ Ministero dell’Interno, (2014) *‘Si conclude ‘Mare Nostrum’, al via ‘Triton’*, Governo Italiano

²⁴⁴ Comunicato stampa 19.4.2023, *‘Sbarchi e accoglienza: 10 anni tra alti e bassi’*, Fondazione ISMU

²⁴⁵ United Nations, *‘The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)’*

²⁴⁶ European Union, *‘EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya’*

²⁴⁷ Loschi, C.; Russo, A. (2021) *‘Whose Enemy at the Gates? Border Management in the Context of EU Crisis Response in Libya and Ukraine’*, pg 1495 Geopolitics

and discontinuous chains of command across ministries, departments and sub-state levels.”²⁴⁸ Thus, the mission continued mostly as a planning mission and advisory body for Libyan authorities.

In relation to the UN Mission, UNSMIL, it was established with the aim of facilitating the Libyan political process and national reconciliation, but the fragmentation of the country and the rivalries between the various Libyan actors have extremely penalised the work of the UN.²⁴⁹ In this context, state-building in Libya has remained an elusive goal and it became even more difficult to be achieved when the Libyan civil war began in 2014 and UN staff were transferred to Tunisia. At that point, UN work in Libya was further hampered by the lack of a presence on the ground.

In conclusion, it can be stated that in the period between Gaddafi's overthrow and the outbreak of civil war, Italy pursued two main goals in its foreign policy in Libya: protecting its economic interests and countering illegal immigration. While, for the first aspect, ENI succeeded in reasserting its presence in the post-Gaddafi Libyan landscape by restarting production immediately after the dictator's fall, the same cannot be said of the Italian government's initiatives regarding illegal migration flows. Indeed, even though during the events that have preceded the overthrow of the Libyan dictator, a scenario in which the increase in migration flows from the North African country to Italy has been considered, nothing was done to prevent this scenario from becoming reality. “Mare Nostrum” was a response to the substantial increase in migration flows. On the one hand, it was effective in light of the decrease in deaths in the Mediterranean Sea, but on the other hand, the financial costs were extremely high. Therefore, Rome strongly encouraged a multilateral approach to the Libyan situation, both in terms of the migration problem and in the state-building process; however, even multilateral initiatives have produced limited results due to the limited presence on the ground and the country's internal fragmentation. Thus, in this context, in 2014, the Libyan civil war broke out and several foreign state actors increased their role in the Libyan scenario.

3.3: 2014 - today: the Italian initiatives in the Libyan scenario?

Since the beginning of the Libyan civil war in 2014 and the consequent increase in influence of external state actors in the Libyan landscape, Italy has maintained its predominantly multilateral approach to the internal dynamics of the North African country. However, in some cases, Rome has also pursued a unilateral approach with the aim of playing a key role in the multilateral arena. The focus of this part of the paper is to analyse the Italian initiatives in the Libyan scenario from 2014 up to today, in order to evaluate whether it's possible to envision a shift in Italian strategy toward its Libyan neighbour from a passive role to a more proactive approach.

²⁴⁸ Loschi, C.; Russo, A. (2021) *Whose Enemy at the Gates? Border Management in the Context of EU Crisis Response in Libya and Ukraine*, pg 1495 Geopolitics

²⁴⁹ Williams, S. (2025), *Libya since Gaddafi chaos and the search for peace*, pg 19, Oxford Academic

One of the first initiatives of the Italian government following the outbreak of the Libyan civil war in 2014 was the establishment of the operation: 'Mare Sicuro' in 2015.²⁵⁰ The aim of the operation was to guarantee presence, surveillance and maritime security, particularly in the central Mediterranean Sea and in the Strait of Sicily through the deployment of four naval military ships, helicopters and Air Force Predator unmanned aircraft for surveillance from the air.²⁵¹ It is important to underscore the fundamental task of this mission carried out by the Italian government due to its difference from the previous operations. The decision to institute operation 'Mare Sicuro' stemmed from the need to respond to the terrorist threat that had dramatically increased in Libya in 2014-2015. So, increasing surveillance of the North African coast through an already established operation would have shortened the timeframe for a potential intervention on the ground, in the event that Italian citizens or facilities critical for Italy's security (such as ENI's infrastructures) were at risk.²⁵² This was the first task. However it must be pointed out that this mission, like the previous and future ones, was characterized by search and rescue activities as required by the obligations arising from the International Law of the Sea.

Subsequently, in 2015, Italy supported the UNSMIL mission that negotiated the Skhirat Agreement between the various Libyan factions in order to achieve political unity. Unlike other players, Italy did not pursue a policy of favouritism toward one faction over another and this was considered coherent to Rome's multilateral approach aimed at establishing political stability in the country. However, the failure of these agreements and the persistence of the terrorist threat led the Italian government, in agreement with the Tripoli government, to launch operation 'Hippocrates'. This operation represented Italy's first "boots on the ground" in the Libyan arena after the start of the civil war, but it must be emphasized that the personnel deployed (fewer than 300 Italian military personnel) were intended to provide medical assistance to the Tripoli's armed forces in their fight against terrorism.²⁵³ Two years later, there is a breakthrough moment in Italian foreign policy toward Libya, which, according to many scholars, has marked Italy's attempt to adopt a more active approach to the Libyan area and its dynamics. In this framework, two key initiatives deserve to be mentioned: the decision to re-open the Italian Embassy in Tripoli and the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two countries on cooperation in fighting illegal immigration, human trafficking, smuggling, and strengthening border security. Regarding the reopening of the Italian Embassy in Tripoli, it is important to highlight that Italy was the first Western country to reopen its embassy in Libya after the outbreak of the civil war.²⁵⁴ Very important was also the decision to send Ambassador Perrone as head of the Italian mission in Libya, since he had previously conducted other missions concerning the Mediterranean area. With regards to the second initiative promoted by the Italian government, the preamble of the 2017 Memorandum mentions the goal of

²⁵⁰ Redazione La Repubblica (2015), *'Terrorismo: navi, aerei e uomini dell'operazione Mare Sicuro. Ma non sarà un blocco navale'*, La Repubblica

²⁵¹ Ravazzolo, G (2022), *'Mediterraneo Sicuro. L'operazione militare cambia nome e raggio d'azione'*, Le Formiche

²⁵² Redazione La Repubblica (2015), *'Terrorismo: navi, aerei e uomini dell'operazione Mare Sicuro. Ma non sarà un blocco navale'*, La Repubblica

²⁵³ Redazione La Repubblica, (2015), *'Libia, via all'operazione "Ippocrate". Pinotti: "Ospedale da campo e 300 uomini a Misurata"*, La Repubblica

²⁵⁴ Redazione Ansa, (2017). *'Italian embassy in Tripoli reopens'*, Ansa

implementing the agreements signed between the Parties since the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation signed in Benghazi on 30/08/2008. Indeed, in the Memorandum of 2017, was mentioned the recall of the Article 19 of Benghazi's Treaty, which regulates the cooperation of the two states in order to combat illegal immigration and its costs.²⁵⁵ Thus, it was reaffirmed that the Italian government would bear 50% of the costs of operations, while the parties would ask the European Union to bear the remaining 50%.²⁵⁶ The Memorandum signed by the parties in 2017 has led to several research analyses by scholars who have defined it as a classic case of the process of externalizing migration management through soft law.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, this agreement has raised several questions regarding its legal validity and migrants' human rights conditions in Libya, as they are not guaranteed, as shown by many international organizations and NGOs' reports. In relation to the former aspect, the 2017 agreement between the two countries was closed by the Italian government through the 'simplified form' procedure, which means that the treaty text was not approved by the Italian Parliament. It is common to conclude treaties in simplified form, it is a prerogative of the executive power; however, there are some treaties that, given their nature, must be submitted to parliamentary approval. These treaties concern specific matters set forth in Article 80 of the Italian Constitution, which states: 'The Chambers authorize by law the ratification of international treaties that are of a political nature, or provide for arbitration or judicial regulations, or entail changes to the territory or financial burdens or amendments to laws.'²⁵⁸ The Italy-Libya treaty, stipulated in simplified form, concerns matters set forth in Article 80 and therefore, as established by Article 46 of the Vienna Convention of 1969 which codifies the law of treaties, the manifest violation of a fundamental internal norm is grounds for the invalidity of the agreement.²⁵⁹ Therefore, its constitutional illegitimacy results in its international invalidity. However, at the same time, it must be said that this is not an isolated case. Throughout the history of the Italian Republic, different treaties have been concluded in simplified form concerning matters covered by Article 80 of the Constitution, like the Italian application for membership in the United Nations, which was subsequently enacted by Ordinary Law No. 848 of August 17, 1957.²⁶⁰ In legal doctrine it has been argued that an ordinary law, as the previous one, enacted ex post, can serve as parliamentary approval ex post. However, the Constitutional Court, in its Medusa Distribution ruling No. 295 of 1984, not only affirmed that an ex post law does not cure unconstitutionality but also emphasized that it produces legal effects.²⁶¹ Therefore, from a legal perspective, a distinction must be made between the international and national aspects. Article 45 of the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties allows an agreement to be considered valid, despite the violation

²⁵⁵ Governo, (2017), 'Memorandum d'intesa sulla cooperazione nel campo dello sviluppo, del contrasto all'immigrazione illegale, al traffico di esseri umani, al contrabbando e sul rafforzamento della sicurezza delle frontiere tra lo Stato della Libia e la Repubblica Italiana' pg 2

²⁵⁶ Trattato Italia-Libia 2008, 'Trattato di amicizia, partenariato e cooperazione tra la Repubblica Italiana e la Grande Gimahiria Araba Libica Popolare Socialista', pg 8

²⁵⁷ Reviglio, M. (2019), 'Externalizing Migration Management Through Soft Law: The Case of the Memorandum of Understanding Between Libya and Italy', pg 1, Global Jurist

²⁵⁸ Senato della Repubblica, (1946), 'La Costituzione Italiana art 80'

²⁵⁹ Focarelli, C. (2019), 'Diritto Internazionale', pg 162-169, Wolters Kluwer

²⁶⁰ Ibidem

²⁶¹ Ibidem

of domestic norms, by virtue of the acquiescence of the parties. While on the domestic level, in order to eliminate the unconstitutionality of the treaty and therefore a situation in which a treaty may be valid on the international level by acquiescence, but unconstitutional in the Italian legal system, it would be necessary an ex post constitutional authorization law, capable of derogating Article 80, or alternatively the demonstration of the formation of a constitutional custom having that effect.²⁶² So, the issue concerning the validity of the treaty concluded in simplified form can be overcome. Another aspect of the 2017 Italy-Libya treaty that raised some criticism, especially regarding human rights, was Italy's acceptance of the creation of temporary reception camps in Libya under the exclusive control of the Libyan Ministry of the Interior.²⁶³ Nothing has been signed regarding the respect of human rights, Italy has only accepted Libyan supervision of these camps on Libyan territory, and today the brutal living conditions that people endure inside these camps in Libya are well known, as it was stated by the report published jointly on 18 December by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “Migrants and refugees suffer unimaginable horrors during their transit through and stay in Libya. From the moment they step onto Libyan soil, they become vulnerable to unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and unlawful deprivation of liberty, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, slavery and forced labour, extortion and exploitation by both State and non-State actors.”^{264/265} Furthermore, in relation to the illegal migration phenomenon, in 2017, the former Italian Interior Minister Minniti proposed the creation of a contact group for the central Mediterranean routes to his respective counterparts in Italy, Austria, France, Germany, Tunisia, Libya, Malta, Slovenia, and Switzerland, primarily focused on tackling the smugglers' business model. Indeed, Minister Minniti stated that fighting human smugglers and pacifying Libya were two sides of the same coin.²⁶⁶ However, despite the Italian government's efforts to adopt a multilateral approach, such as the official request to Germany and France to join the FRONTEX mission, Italy found little solidarity from its European allies.²⁶⁷ Thus, beyond a triangular approach to the migration problem, Italy has simultaneously pursued a unilateral approach to the issue. From this perspective, after several discussions between Minister Minniti and his Libyan counterpart, the Tripoli government officially requested a naval-military presence on the Libyan coast with the aim of greater Italian support in fighting human smugglers. On this basis, Italy implemented the operation “Mare Sicuro” in the Mediterranean Sea, which has significantly reduced the flow of illegal migration from Libya to Italy.²⁶⁸

²⁶² Ibidem

²⁶³ Governo, (2017), ‘Memorandum d'intesa sulla cooperazione nel campo dello sviluppo, del contrasto all'immigrazione illegale, al traffico di esseri umani, al contrabbando e sul rafforzamento della sicurezza delle frontiere tra lo Stato della Libia e la Repubblica Italiana’ pg 2

²⁶⁴ UNSMIL & OHCHR, (2018), ‘*Desperate and Dangerous: Report on the human rights situation of migrants and refugees in Libya*’ pg 4

²⁶⁵ Reviglio, M. (2019), ‘*Externalizing Migration Management Through Soft Law: The Case of the Memorandum of Understanding Between Libya and Italy*’, pg 8, Global Jurist

²⁶⁶ Ivi, pg 335-336

²⁶⁷ Ivi, pg 337

²⁶⁸ Ibidem

Another aspect worth mentioning was Minniti's decision to impose a code of conduct on NGOs operating in the Mediterranean Sea in order to regulate the activities of non-governmental organizations engaged in search and rescue operations which drew considerable criticism from human rights activists. Indeed, the code of conduct imposed several engagement rules on NGOs, such as the commitment by non-governmental organizations not to enter Libyan territorial waters and a commitment not to make communications or send light signals to facilitate the departure and boarding of ships carrying migrants.²⁶⁹ On one side, the Italian government tried to reduce the flow of illegal migrants, and on the other side, the NGOs tried to save as many lives as possible from the sea and from Libyan detention camps. It seems that these two aspects are incompatible in the Mediterranean arena.

The following year, Italy decided to increase its presence in Libya to assist the Tripoli government in its state-building activities. For this reason, the 'MIASINT' mission was launched, with its headquarters in Tripoli and a detachment in Misrata. Operation 'MIASINT' marked a substantial evolution of the previous 'Hippocrates' mission in relation to the Italian presence in the North African country. It should also be emphasized that the importance of the task of the mission which stretched from providing assistance to the Libyan government in carrying out its functions to training, instruction, support, and mentoring activities for the Libyan security forces and government institutions, both in Italy and Libya, in order to increase their overall capabilities.²⁷⁰ Beyond these Italian initiatives on Libyan ground, it is also important to mention the Italian diplomatic initiative of November 2018, which led to an international conference aimed to reach the Libya's stability. This initiative must be analysed in relation to the previous unilateral French initiative that hosted a meeting between the President of the Tripoli government Al-Sarraj and General Haftar, to which Italy was not invited. Indeed, with the Palermo Conference, Rome responded to the Paris initiative by promoting a multilateral approach to the crisis. Beyond the presence of the two main Libyan stakeholders, the event was also attended by US Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs David Satterfield, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini, the European Council President Donald Tusk, the German Minister of State Niels Annen, and the French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. A total of 36 foreign delegations participated in the Palermo conference promoted by Italy for the stability of Libya.²⁷¹ The most evident result of the Italian initiative was the agreement between General Haftar and President Sarraj to convene a new conference on the issue the following year and to establish free elections in 2019. However, the real Italian diplomatic result was to bring together all the actors interested in the Libyan scenario in order to mark Italy's clear desire to participate in the stabilization process of Libya under the auspices of the UN. Several scholars have analysed the Italian initiative from different perspectives, and it has been underscored that it both aimed at reducing the inter-European conflict with France in Libya and

²⁶⁹ Ministero dell'Interno, (2017) *'Codice di Condotta per le ONG impegnate nelle operazioni di salvataggio dei migranti in mare'*, pg 1-5, Governo Italiano

²⁷⁰ Ministero della Difesa, (2018), *'Missione bilaterale di assistenza e supporto in Libia (MIASIT)'* Governo Italiano

²⁷¹ De Maio, G. (2018), *'The Palermo conference on Libya: A diplomatic test for Italy's new government'*, Brookings Institute

strengthening the Italian position with General Haftar.²⁷² Therefore, to achieve stability in Libya, it is essential to bring all parties involved to the table. From this perspective, thanks to both diplomatic initiatives and military assistance on Libyan ground promoted by Italy with greater emphasis in the two-year period 2017-2018, Rome has demonstrated a more proactive approach to the Libyan situation.

From the agreements between Italy and Libya promoted by Minister Minniti, to triangular diplomacy, to the MIASIT operation and the Palermo Conference, Libyan stability appears to have returned to being a priority for Italian diplomacy. From this starting point, it is important to analyse the events of 2019 in which Rome decided not to be involved on the ground in the Libyan domestic war. At the beginning of 2019, the Libyan civil war entered a more acute phase, an offensive by militias led by General Haftar gained important victories and the government in Tripoli was on the verge of falling. In this perspective, on May 7, 2019, Tripoli Prime Minister Al-Sarraj travelled to Rome with the aim of gaining greater support from the Italian government. According to a source close to the Presidential Council, "Sarraj is asking Italy to commit much more, and above all, more visibly, to defend the interests of the government supported by the United Nations but abandoned by the international community."²⁷³ Thus, in May 2019, Italy had the opportunity to significantly increase its influence in Libya, as confirmed by President Al-Sarraj himself in an interview with *Corriere Della Sera* in December of the same year. However, the Italian government refused a greater involvement in Libyan affairs, pursuing instead only political dialogue. Thus, the Tripoli government, surrounded by Haftar's forces and very close to its fall, asked other countries for help such as Turkey, which quickly managed to provide the military support requested by Tripoli and the counteroffensive began. Thanks to this military assistance on the ground, Ankara gained a leading role in the Libyan scenario while Rome continued to pursue its foreign policy based on the guarantee of its investments protection and illegal immigration counter. In this context, Rome on the one hand, increased its participation in multilateral diplomatic initiatives concerning the Libyan scenario and, on the other hand, it has strengthened its economic presence, especially in the energetic sector, in western Libya. Regarding multilateral initiatives, it is important to mention Italy's participation in the 'IRINI' mission established in the implementation of the outcomes of the Conference for Libya, held in Berlin in January 2020, with the aim of curbing arms trafficking to and from Libya. However, the mission has faced important limits in terms of authority. For example, the Greek frigate *Spetsai* asked to inspect a cargo but was not allowed to do so as the cargo was under the protection of the Turkish Republic. Irini's mandate does not seem completely clear what should be done in this situation and a possible clash of international rules has been raised.²⁷⁴ As for the second aspect of Italian foreign policy in Libya, unilateral economic initiatives aimed at strengthening the role of Italian companies in Libya, it is important to underline Prime Minister Draghi's visit to Libya in 2021. This was the first official visit of the former Prime Minister Draghi abroad which pointed out the importance of Libya for Italy. This visit was preceded by other bilateral meetings among political and business elites,

²⁷² Akamo, J.; Bedim. C.; Cristiani, D. (2023), *The Vicious Circle of Fragmentation: The EU and the Limits of Its Approach to Libya*, pg 17-18, Joint Research

²⁷³ Nigro, V. (2019), *Libia, missione lampo di Serraj a Roma: "L'Italia ci aiuti contro l'invasore Haftar"*, *La Repubblica*

²⁷⁴ Petrangeli, F. (2020). *Operation IRINI: Can a "No Longer Naïve" EU Tame the Libyan Conflict?* ISPI

eventually resulting in an 80-million euro deal for the reconstruction of Tripoli airport, among other agreements.²⁷⁵ Two years later, Italian economic diplomacy in the African country achieved another important result. During Prime Minister Meloni's visit to Libya, the Italian energy company ENI signed an €8 billion agreement with its Libyan counterpart, which represents the largest single investment in Libya's energy sector in more than two decades.²⁷⁶ The project between the two energy companies both aimed at increasing gas production to supply the Libyan domestic market and to ensure exports to Europe.²⁷⁷ Thanks to this agreement, ENI has once again reaffirmed its role as a world leader in gas production in Libya with a share of 80% of the national production. This represents an element of soft power that only Italy possesses in the Libyan scenario. Today, Italy's economic penetration of the North African country is continuing. On January 18, 2026, Italian Foreign Minister Tajani paid an official visit to Libya to lay the foundation stone for the "Misurata Free Zone" container terminal with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.²⁷⁸ The project agreed between the three countries, which includes investments of approximately \$3 billion over three years, aims at making the port of Misrata one of the most important hubs in North Africa. This investment will increase Libya's strategic value and it represent an important tool of the Italian economic penetration in the country.

To conclude the analysis of what remains of the Italian role in Libya in terms of the Italian foreign policy from 2011 to the present, it is important to retrace the main stages in order to have a clear analysis of Italy's relevance in the current Libyan situation. There is no doubt that Gaddafi's fall represented a breakthrough moment for Italian foreign policy in the North African country. Indeed, for Italy, having a clear interlocutor in neighbouring Libya with whom to maintain excellent economic and political relations represented a great asset for Italian Mediterranean policy. However, Italy's lack of diplomatic initiative during the events of 2011 certainly showed a lack of strategy on behalf of the government in Rome, which maintained a completely passive approach subordinated to both domestic and international developments. The same lack of Italian strategy was also evident in the post-Gaddafi Libyan situation, despite Italy's well-documented awareness, that the end of Gaddafi's dictatorship in Libya could lead to a significant increase in illegal migration flows, nothing was done to prevent the situation, and Italy once again has been chasing the events. At that point, especially regarding migration, Italy's approach was both unilateral and multilateral, seeking support from its European allies, but the absence of solidarity shown by its allies remained a significant factor that sometimes has even strained relations between European governments. Regarding the internal situation, Italy and its allies' commitment to establishing a genuine state-building process is lacking, both due to the polarization of the internal situation among the various actors and the numerous international rivalries that have arisen towards the Libyan issue. Since the begin of the civil war, many of foreign states have taken an extremely active approach (see the Arab Monarchies, France, Russia, and then Turkey), while Italy's approach has continued

²⁷⁵ Valenzano, C. G. (2021), *'Mediterranean Equilibria: Italian-Turkish Balancing and Competition over Libya'*, pg 4, IAI

²⁷⁶ Magdy, S. (2023), *'Italy, Libya sign \$8B gas deal as PM Meloni visits Tripoli'*, AP

²⁷⁷ ENI Press Releases (2023), *'Eni launches a major gas development project in Libya'* ENI

²⁷⁸ Ministero degli affari Esteri e della cooperazione internazionale, (2026), *'Tajani in Libia per l'avvio del Progetto di Sviluppo nel porto di Misurata'*, Governo Italiano

to focus primarily on economic penetration and counter to illegal migration, on one hand and on supporting multilateral activities aimed at the stability of the African country on the other hand. With the Palermo conference promoted by the Italian government, Rome once again confirmed its willingness to participate in the process of political stabilization in the North African country, however, Italy's initiative can be seen as a response to France's previous unilateral move. Italy, in a certain sense, was chasing events another time with the aim not to be left out. The escalation of the civil war in early 2019, with the risk of a collapse of Tripoli's forces, reopened the chance of the Italian intervention in support of the North African country's internationally recognized government. But the Italian government rejected this option, preferring to adopt a diplomatic and multilateral approach to the issue. Thus, Turkey intervened in Libya, opening up to considerations relating to eventual risks for Italian security linked to a possible control by a third country of the migratory phenomenon as will be seen in the next part. It is also true, that a military presence in an extremely unstable territory and the protection of its economic interests are not two sides of the same coin, at least in the Libyan context. Indeed, as stated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation: "Economic and commercial relations between Italy and Libya are growing, driven by the energy sector. In 2024, trade reached €9.5 billion (+3.7%), with Italian exports increasing by over 36%. In 2025, Italy was Libya's largest customer, with a 22.4% market share, and its third-largest supplier, with a 10.1% share. Italy exports to Libya primarily petroleum refining products, ships, and vessels, while Italian imports from Libya are concentrated in crude oil (91.6%) and natural gas (5.4%), highlighting the centrality of the energy sector in bilateral trade."²⁷⁹ Therefore, with regard to Italy's two main interests in the North African country, it can be stated as follows: numbers demonstrate that Italy has achieved significant results in relation to economic penetration and significantly less in the counter to illegal immigration flows. In this perspective, it is necessary to question whether Italy has a strategy to pursue the second objective, for this reason it is important to introduce Italy's regional approach to the African continent in light of counter immigration flows, in order to highlight its pros and cons.

3.4: A regional approach to address the Libyan issue?

First of all, before analysing the Italian regional approach to the topic of illegal migration flow with regard to the Libya-Italy migratory route, it is important to underline the extent to which this topic is important, especially in light of the Turkish presence on the Tripolitania coast. Indeed, the topic of migration flows must be analysed as a possible tool that a state could use to achieve specific results in its domestic or foreign policy. There are several examples throughout history where a state has used migration for political pressure, threat or casus belli. In 1821, Mexico controlled the region known as Texas, bordering the United States; thus, Washington has decided to encourage waves of American migrants to settle on the other side of the border. By the mid of 1830s, there were enough American settlers to force the situation and the Texan Revolution of

²⁷⁹ Ministero degli affari Esteri e della cooperazione internazionale, (2026), *Tajani in Libia per l'avvio del Progetto di Sviluppo nel porto di Misurata*, Governo Italiano

1835 drove the Mexicans out.²⁸⁰ Another example is related to China's foreign policy during the XX century, Beijing has encouraged migration in Tibet, which has brought several million Han Chinese settlers. Now the Free Tibet movement claims that Tibetans are a minority in the region.²⁸¹ China is continuing to use its migration in Africa as a tool of its foreign policy, for example in Angola, thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative, has been estimated that the presence of 150000-200000 Chinese workers military trained.²⁸² Thus, China, thanks to its migration, could have a ready-made militia in the country representing a potential threat both to the stability of the state and the region. The last example concerns Turkey, the main actor on the western Libyan ground today, which has strongly increased its negotiating power due to the presence of Syrian refugees in its territory. Nowadays, Turkey hosts more than 3 millions of Syrian refugees and President Erdogan has used this situation to threaten the European Union to open the borders in order to receive more international funding.²⁸³ Nevertheless, if the above given examples are compared to the context of illegal immigration flows between Libya and Italy, the envision of a future scenario in which this could become a *casus belli* seems unrealistic. However, at the same time, the likelihood that Turkey, given its presence on the Libyan coast, could use this 'asset' to exert political pressure on Rome does not seem entirely unrealistic, since President Erdogan's policy in relation to the Syrian refugees'. From this point of view, the importance of maintaining a good relationship with Ankara is fundamental. Italy is Turkey's most important economic partner in the Mediterranean area today, and the economic relationships between the two countries have significantly increased in the last years. It is also relevant to mention the economic ties between the two countries in the energy and defence sectors. In relation to the first one, the TANAP gas pipeline represents a fundamental element for the Italian energy supply, instead, as regards the defence sector, the agreement Leonardo-Baykar for the production of military drones underscores the solid relationships between Rome and Ankara.²⁸⁴ Thus, an important economic partnership between the two countries can certainly be an asset in avoiding the risk of a possible scenario in which Rome could be blackmailed by Ankara in relation to the issue of migratory flows. However, it is important to emphasize that Libya is the point of arrival of two out of three African migration routes. The first one is called the East African route, which originates in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan and ends in Libya. The second one originates in Central and Southern Africa and passes primarily through the Sahel countries until it reaches Libya.²⁸⁵ Subsequently within Libya there are three different migratory routes: the western one, linking the province of Ghat with those of Zwara and Aljgara; the eastern route, from Alkufra to Tobruk; and the central route, between Murzuq and Tripoli.²⁸⁶ The western and the central routes are related

²⁸⁰ Marshall, T. (2016). *'Prisoners of geography: Ten maps that tell you everything you need to know about global politics'*, pg 44, Elliott & Thompson.

²⁸¹ Ivi, pg 32

²⁸² Ivi pg 76

²⁸³ Beaumont, P.; Smith, H (2019) *'Erdogan: I'll let Syrian refugees leave Turkey for west unless safe zone set up.'* *The Guardian*.

²⁸⁴ Redazione Ares Difesa (2025), *'Leonardo e Baykar Technologies creano una joint venture per lo sviluppo di tecnologie unmanned'* ARES Difesa

²⁸⁵ Troilo, M. (2024), *'Principali flussi migratori nell'Unione Europea'*, pg 4 Ministero dell'Interno

²⁸⁶ Di Maio, M.; Sciabolazza, L.; Molini, V., (2023), *"Migration in Libya: A spatial network analysis," World Development*, Elsevier, vol. 163(C)

to the Tripolitania region whereas the eastern route affects Cyrenaica. In order to understand the importance of Libya in terms of migration flows to Italy, it is important to underline that from 2013 to 2017, more than 90% of migrants arriving in Italy departed from Libyan coasts.²⁸⁷ From the analysis of African migration routes, it is crucial to understand how fundamental it is to face this problem through a regional approach, as stated in the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. This theory identifies a regional security complex as a group of states whose primary national security concerns are so closely intertwined that they cannot be extracted or tackled independently of each other. This perfectly captures the case of the African continent, especially in relation to migration. Thus, it is important to introduce the Italian foreign policy from a regional perspective in relation to the migration issues.

Regarding of the Mattei's plan for Africa, which represents the Italian strategy aimed at increasing economic penetration in the African continent, most of the countries selected for hosting the Italian pilot projects have a low connection with the migration phenomenon (Tunisia, Egypt, and Ivory Coast).²⁸⁸ At the same time, it is noteworthy that many states of the Sahel region are not included, even if they represent key countries in relation to the migration phenomenon. However, in these area Italy exercises a peculiar influence. First of all, since 2025, following the withdrawal of French troops from the Sahel, Italy has been the only Western country to maintain an active presence in sub-Saharan Africa. Of particular note are the countries of the Alliance des États du Sahel: Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, where between 2020 and 2023, the military juntas of their respective countries staged coups and seized control of the country. These sub-Saharan African countries, beyond their natural resources, are crucial both for migration and terrorism. It is important to mention that in 2024, 1.5 millions of migrants passed from Niger to Libya.²⁸⁹ Therefore, an Italian presence in these territories, so geographically distant from Italy, aimed at strengthening state institutions, is fundamental to approach the migratory phenomenon from a regional point of view and not only from the Libyan perspective. A clear explanation of how African migration flows should be treated at the regional level and not only at the local one comes from the Italian Ministry of Defence in his declaration at the Chamber and Senate Defence Committees. Minister Crosetto pointed out the Italian willingness to increase military missions in Africa, underlining that Italian presence in Niger aims at countering migration routes toward Libya and consequently to Italy.²⁹⁰ Today, Italy is present in Niger thanks to the 'MISIN' mission, which deploys a contingent of 300 Italian soldiers in the country to train and support the Nigerien authorities. Furthermore, the MISIN mission plays a coordinating role for numerically smaller Italian forces actively present in other Sahel countries, like Burkina Faso.²⁹¹ Alongside the presence of Italian forces in sub-Saharan Africa, it's also relevant to mention

²⁸⁷Villa, M (2020). *'Migrazioni nel Mediterraneo: tutti i numeri'*, ISPI

²⁸⁸Comunità Italiana di Politica Estera, (2024), *'Il piano Mattei, rilanciare l'Africa policy dell'Italia'*, pg 12, Comunità Italiana di Politica Estera

²⁸⁹Ministero Affari Esteri e Cooperazione Internazionale, (2025), *'Missione dell'Italia in Niger contro la minaccia jihadista e il traffico di uomini'*, Governo Italiano

²⁹⁰Casale, E; Vollaro, M (2025). *'Crosetto annuncia più missioni in Africa. Quali sono quelle attuali?'* Rivista Africa

²⁹¹Ibidem

Rome's diplomatic presence in the region thanks to its embassies in Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Guinea, which ensures an Italian role in the internal dynamics of the Sahel countries.²⁹²

At this point, it is important to analyse how the Italian presence in the Sahel countries is affecting illegal migration flows towards Libya and therefore towards Italy. In 2024, the Italian Minister of Defence pointed out that the Italian presence in Niger has the function of: “creating the conditions so that 500,000 fewer people to manage arrive from that area of the Sahel”²⁹³ However, there are no precise and updated research papers that demonstrate this cause and effect relationship. Furthermore, the great political instability of these countries, combined with a lack of effective control by the government authority over part of the national territory, makes a possible Italian regional approach to the migration issue extremely fragile. Therefore, today, although the Italian presence in the Sahel countries is fundamental from a political standpoint, there are not evidences that can evaluate it in relation to counter illegal immigration flows to Italy. Thus, from this perspective, it seems that Libya has not diminished in importance.

²⁹² Redazione AISE, (2025), *Tajani e Piantedosi in Mauritania: inaugurata l'Ambasciata d'Italia a Nouakchott*, AISE

²⁹³ Casale, E; Vollaro, M (2025). *Crosetto annuncia più missioni in Africa. Quali sono quelle attuali?* Rivista Africa

Conclusion:

Libya represents one of the main cases where, after the fall of the regime, the lack of effective state institutions led to the political fragmentation of the country. However, it is important to underline the reasons behind the dictator's fall. The findings demonstrate that the end of Gaddafi's dictatorship can be evaluated from both a domestic and international perspective. In chapter one I analysed the former aspect, and it was possible to underline the crucial role played by Libyan tribes, once again they have influenced the course of Libyan history. Indeed, when the Arab Spring of 2011 erupted in Libya, the decision of the Warfalla tribe (the largest Libyan tribe) to withdraw its support for the Libyan dictator represented a breakthrough event that undermined the effectiveness of the parastate created by Gaddafi. However, as the findings of chapter 2 demonstrates, after an initial period in which the regime seemed to be about to fall, the forces loyal to the Libyan colonel regained control of a large part of the national territory and were preparing to lay siege to the revolutionary command placed in Benghazi. In this context, the international powers' decision to intervene in Libya once again changed the course of events. Indeed, due to France and Great Britain's pressure to intervene, motivated by both domestic and international considerations disguised as humanitarian concerns, the United States drafted the text that led to the UNSCR No. 1973. The international intervention in Libya was endorsed, and after 42 years of dictatorship, Gaddafi's regime fell on 20 October 2011. Given this starting point, the analysis shows the lack of an international strategy for post-Gaddafi Libya, which has contributed to the fragmentation of the country.

In the second chapter, I have analysed the reasons behind foreign state involvement in the new and fragmented Libyan scenario. Thus, it is possible to mention three main key findings: the motivation behind the regional actors' increasing influence in Libya, the reasons for France's non-aligned position, and the superpowers' peculiar approach to the issue. With regard to the first, it was possible to evaluate the primary role of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt in supporting General Haftar. Thus, the findings demonstrate that the reasons behind these countries' foreign policy are motivated by a shared aim: to hinder the growing influence of movements that promote a concept of political Islam, which are seen as potential destabilizers in the region. Moreover, it is important to add that these states' approach to the issue, as demonstrated by the role played by the two Gulf monarchies in al-Sisi's coup in Egypt against President Morsi (a representative of the Muslim Brotherhood), is not merely local but rather regional. This underlines the extent to which this aspect is considered crucial by these countries.

The second key finding is related to the motivation for France's non-aligned position. As it has been possible to analyse, Paris' peculiar position in the Libyan scenario is sometimes justified by internal security needs in relation to anti-terrorism considerations. However, the analysis shows the primary reason for France's non-aligned position lies in its strong political and economic ties with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Indeed, in relation to the political aspect, Paris, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh share both an anti-Turkish (main actor in Tripolitania) and anti-political Islamist tendencies. At the economic level, Paris is the third largest arms

exporter in MENA countries, indeed, from 2020 to 2025, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt became the top clients of France's military industries. These two elements are crucial in order to understand France's double-faced position in the Libyan scenario.

The third key finding is related to the superpower's peculiar approach to the issue which seems to be motivated more by economic considerations. In fact, this section analyses how they prioritise their own economic interests over the pursuit of Libyan unity. China has concluded economic agreements with both major factions in Libya, thus ensuring its influence regardless of developments. Russia, which has consistently supported General Haftar, has also recently concluded agreements with the Tripoli government. This can be considered an indicator of the perception of the country's internal polarization. Furthermore, from Russia's perspective, it will be interesting to analyse whether Libya will increase in strategic value in light of the diminishing Russian presence in Syria after the end of the Assad regime. As for the United States, Libya has never been a priority for Washington. As has been pointed out, Libya represented one of the rare cases in which the United States chose to follow European policy in the 2011 events. Subsequently, from Washington's perspective, the country's importance has not changed. Obama declared that the post-Gaddafi Libyan situation represents one of the regrets of his administration, while Trump declared that the Libyan situation is not on Washington's top priority list. The findings demonstrate that the American perception of its involvement in the Libyan scenario has not substantially changed.

In the last part of the second chapter, I have evaluated the reasons behind Qatar and Turkey's support of the Tripolitania government. Doha supported Islamist political parties during the events of the Arab Spring through Al Jazeera media coverage. However, Qatar's activism in Libya in opposition to the UAE and Saudi Arabia led the country to regional isolation; for this reason, the royal family decided to modify its foreign policy, subordinating its position to the Turkish one. In fact, since 2020, Ankara has occupied a primary position in supporting the government forces in Tripoli. This initiative represents a piece of Turkish new Mediterranean policy to increase its regional influence in the Mediterranean Sea, the Ottoman Lake from Ankara's perspective. Given this geopolitical framework related to the interests of international actors present in Libya, in the third chapter, it was possible to evaluate what remains of the Italian role in the North African country.

Energy represents the most important key finding, as ENI has always maintained a constant presence in Libya. Moreover, ENI's primary role was reiterated in 2023 when the Italian energy company signed an €8 billion agreement with its Libyan counterpart, which secured an 80% share of the national production. Beyond the energy sector, from the Italian perspective the stability of Libya represents a fundamental factor in relation to the phenomenon of illegal migration flows. Through the analysis of the Italian approach to this issue over the last 15 years, it has been possible to highlight a lack of strategy on the part of the Italian government in many cases. In theory, there have been numerous Italian initiatives, both from a unilateral and a multilateral point of view; however, these have always reacted to events by focusing more on the imminent conflict rather than on solving the problem. Although it must be underlined that due to the general analysis conducted on the interests

of the various states present in the Libyan scenario, Italy seems to be the only country truly interested in the stability of its neighboring country. A stability that today seems unrealistic.

Moreover, I also wanted to emphasize the risks posed by Turkey's presence in Tripolitania regarding the migration phenomenon. Considering Erdogan's policy of blackmailing the European Union over the situation of Syrian refugees in Turkey, controlling migration flows remains a strategic element of a country's foreign policy. For this reason, Turkey's presence in Tripolitania forces Italy to maintain good relations with the successor state of the Ottoman Empire. However, as analysed in chapter three, the presence of this future scenario has its origin in the choice by the Italian government in 2019 not to intervene in Libya in support of the internationally recognized government. In summary, this thesis demonstrates that the Libyan crisis cannot be comprehended or addressed through simplistic, single-cause explanations. It emerges from the interplay of internal structural elements, historical political decisions, and current geopolitical factors. Likewise, Italy's decline cannot be attributed to one event or political choice, but rather to a mix of structural limitations, strategic missteps, and changes in the global landscape.

To conclude my thesis, I evaluated Italy's potential regional approach to the migration issue in light of Rome's increased diplomatic influence in the Sahel countries. However, currently, there is no evidence to assess how Italy's presence in the Sahel influences migration to Libya.

So, while on the one side, the increased of Italian foreign policy in the Sahel countries is important from a political perspective, this cannot yet be measured against the reduction of migration flows.

In conclusion, it can be said that while a regional approach is essential, it would appear that Libya has not lost its importance for Italian security.

Geography still matters.

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