



Situation Report

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Libya: A Critical Review of Tripoli's Sub-Saharan African Policies

Introduction

Libya, or the Great Socialist people's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, is a country with a unique governmental structure that, although functioning under the same leadership for almost four decades now, seems to have made drastic changes in its foreign policies and external relations. From an isolated country considered, not long ago, by many Western countries as a state sponsoring terrorism, it has once again become a country with which it is good to do business. This is the result of two factors. One is Tripoli handing over two of its nationals in 1999 for trial. The two were suspected of involvement in the crash of an American plane over the Scottish city of Lockerbie in 1989.² The other factor is Libya's renunciation to all its nuclear programmes in 2003. From a history of widespread suspicion and accusations of involvement in destabilising many African countries, Libya is now more and more playing a prominent role in Africa. This role is seen by some as constructive, while others still remain sceptical. A case in point here is the divergence of views in relation to Muammar Qaddafi's appointment, in February 2009, as the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) for the year 2009.

It is with this double incarnation of Libyan foreign policy that this paper deals, addressing specifically the country's role in African security issues and taking into account the geo-political factors that inform Libya's foreign/security policy. Thus, the paper is divided into four sections. The first section looks at the internal structures of the Jamahiriya and addresses the internal dynamics within the revolutionary committees in the country. The second section deals with the main geopolitical factors that can be said to inform Libya's foreign policy, particularly since the coming to power of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi in 1969. The analysis of these factors departs from a closer look at the country's geographic position – at the border between the so called 'Arab' and 'Black' or 'Sub-Saharan' Africa – and how this affects its foreign policy.

The third section looks at Libya's presumed role in the political (de)-stabilisation of some African countries, particularly in Central and West Africa. This will be followed, in the fourth section, by a closer look at Libya's apparent new role as a peace broker and development partner in Africa. Emphasis will be put here on the ascending importance of the regional role played by Libya, whether through regional organisations such as the AU and the Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CEN-SAD) or through individual and bilateral initiatives, in the African continent in general and in its neighbouring countries in particular. In so doing, special reference will be made to Chad, Sudan, Liberia and Sierra

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Leone. The concluding section will take stock of the general perceptions of Libya's role on the continent and will try to establish what direction the country's foreign policy is likely to take in the near future.

Libya formally achieved its independence in 1951. Almost two decades later, the 'revolution' of 1st September 1969 resulted in the ascension to power of Col. Muammar Qaddafi as the de facto head of state. Soon after coming to power Qaddafi started to apply his revolutionary ideas and vision of governance. In 1976, for example, he proposed a new theory called the *Third Universal Theory*, which was introduced in the *Green Book*. This theory rejects both communist and capitalist models of government, while advocating Arab nationalism, Islamic reformism and utopian socialism.

The Green Book begins with the premise that all contemporary political systems are merely the result of the struggle for power between instruments of governing. Those instruments of governing (parliaments, electoral systems, referenda, political parties, etc.) are all undemocratic, divisive, and that the real democracy can only be achieved through the direct involvement of the people. Thus, in March 1977, the Libyan system of government underwent some radical and dramatic changes. For example, all government institutions, traditional legal and bureaucratic systems were replaced by a completely different structure under the name of 'peoples' power'.³

This system is called 'Jamahiriya,' which can literally be translated as 'the state of the masses' or a state that is governed by the people. In this system, the country is supposedly run by various people's committees. The latter get their guidance from the General People's Congress (GPC, or *Mutamar as-sha'ab ala'am* in transliteration). The executive branch is led by the Leader of the Revolution, Brother Leader Col. Muammar al Qaddafi, who holds no official title, but is the de facto Head of State. He is assisted in his duties by the Secretary of the General People's Committee, which is the equivalent of Prime Minister. The Cabinet or the General People's Committee is appointed by the General People's Congress.

The Supreme Council for Judicial Authority is the administrative authority of the judiciary. The Supreme Court of Libya, established in 1953, is the highest court in the land. The Court is presided over by a president elected by the General People's Congress. Cases appealed from the lower courts and involving Sharia'a are heard by a separate body called the Sharia'a Court of Appeals.⁴

'Direct democracy' is the basis of the political system in the Jamahiriya. The idea behind it is that 'people' exercise their authority in the decision-making process through revolutionary committees. The structure of the 'authority of the people's system' or 'direct democracy', according to the ideology of the Green Book, is comprised of four main decision-making structures. The first is the Basic Popular Congresses (BPCs), where people are allocated on the basis of their place of residence. The second structure is the People's Committees (PC), which are chosen by the masses of the BPCs and are responsible to the latter. The third and fourth structures are the Unions and Professional Associations, to which all citizens who are members of the Popular Congresses belong, professionally and functionally. On this basis, citizens may organise themselves in Unions, and the General People's congress.⁵

In 1987, Libya had a complex bureaucratic structure because the new organisations created by Qaddafi had been superimposed upon existing institutions. At the time, the primary formal instrument of government was the GPC, which was both an executive and legislative body, convening three times per year. The GPC was headed by a small General Secretariat composed primarily of members of the former Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), which was abolished in 1977. A General People's Committee performed the function of a cabinet, replacing the old Council of Ministers. Sub-national representation and participation was accomplished through four bodies. These were People's committees that were organised at the basic (urban ward or rural village) and municipal levels; the Arab

Socialist Union (ASU), the only authorised political mass organisation; the BPC; and the revolutionary committees, organised both geographically and functionally⁶.

Early in 2009, Qaddafi announced on the official Libyan television his intention to dismantle the formal bureaucratic structures of government, including ministries, and to distribute state revenues directly to the people. The people would then be free to spend the funds as they wish.⁷ It is not clear how this will work in practical terms, but the fact of the matter is that it was not the first time that Qaddafi had made such a declaration.

As noted above, Libya's foreign policy has had two main avatars since Qaddafi came to power in 1969. In the first two decades from 1970 to the mid-1990s, Qaddafi's foreign policy was oriented towards the Arab world with the ambition of achieving Arab unity. These years were also marked by many political adventures that earned Qaddafi the reputation of a destabiliser in many African countries. But Tripoli's foreign policy since the late 1990s has seen a shift from this revolutionary orientation towards a more constructive engagement in Africa and championing of African unity. Both orientations are analysed in some detail below.

The dream for Arab unity

Libya's geographic location between Arab and Sub-Saharan Africa and the desire to belong to both, shapes its foreign policy to a great extent, particularly since Muammar Qaddafi came to power in 1969. Neighbouring Egypt had an impact on Qaddafi, as he was inspired by Gamal Abdel Nasser, whom many regard as a leader of contemporary Arab nationalism. This is probably what informed the post-1969 coup slogan purporting it to be a Libyan, an Arab and an Islamic revolution.

Gamal Abdel Nasser was one of the most influential and powerful leaders of contemporary Egypt and the Arab world. His life was a continuous struggle for freedom⁸. In retrospect, it would seem that he was the real architect of the 23 July 1952 coup or revolution that overthrew the veneer monarchy in Egypt and ended the de facto British protectorate over the country.⁹ Abdel Nasser made enormous contributions to liberation movements all over the Arab world and in many parts of Africa. This is partly due to the fact that he was against European domination of Africa and was considered as the leader of the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s¹⁰. He was also a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), created at the peak of the Cold War between East and West.¹¹ Under him, Egypt's foreign policy was based on what he called the trilogy of Arabism, Islam and Africanity¹².

Inspired by this, Qaddafi's initial strategy consisted in seconding the Egyptian leader in his attempts to achieve Arab unity. Like other young Arab nationalists who had followed the ideological debates and struggles in the Arab world, Qaddafi viewed Abdel Nasser as a revolutionary model to be followed¹³.

Thus, the death of Abdel Nasser in September 1970 was a blow to Qaddafi, but one, which gave him the opportunity to position himself as the leader of Arab nationalism. Qaddafi soon became the self-appointed guardian of Nasser's legacy, nurturing the notion of Arab nationalism and unity as an objective of the Libyan revolution. Qaddafi was willing to commit his country's resources to the pursuit of unity with other Arab countries.¹⁴ The confrontation with the West and Libya's repeated efforts at creating alliances with other Arab countries must be understood not only as a means of creating support in Libya but also as fulfilment of the deep conviction that Qaddafi could indeed be the heir to Abdel Nasser within the region.¹⁵

Qaddafi made many attempts and took a number of initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s to reach this goal. Like his hero before him, he proposed many initiatives to unite with Arab states like Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and many others, but all failed to achieve his dream. Nasser managed to form a confederation between Egypt and Syria that became the short-lived United Arab Republic (1958–1961[1971]).¹⁶ It is not clear what form of unity Qaddafi was pursuing, but he failed to match Nasser's achievement, as his ideas never took off.

One explanation for the failure of Qaddafi's dream of Arab unity is indeed in Nasser's. As it is normal with humans, people tend to avoid engaging in enterprises that had failed in recent times. Added to this is the conservatism of most of the countries Qaddafi was trying to persuade into his dream Arab federation. In the *Machreq* (Middle East), countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were (and are still) led by leaders that not only were close to the West, but also did not want to put their trust in the dream design of some young and 'naïve' leaders calling for Arab unity. The closeness of these regimes to the West is important here, given that the West, particularly the US, was not in favour of the pan-Arab ideas of Nasser, let alone Qaddafi.

In the *Maghreb* (North Africa), not only had the successor of Nasser in Egypt abandoned his ideas and allied Cairo to the West, Qaddafi's other immediate neighbour, Tunisia, had a conservative leader in the person of Habib Bourguiba. The latter did not buy his eastern neighbour's idea for Arab unity. Qaddafi's own erratic personality and governance style also contributed to discouraging these other leaders from joining a federation that would either be led by Qaddafi or at least get its impetus from him.¹⁷

And when Western countries imposed sanctions against Libya over Lockerbie and accused his regime of terrorism in the 1980s, Qaddafi was greatly disappointed by the Arab response. This led him to direct his foreign policy goals towards Africa – the second option of Libya's geopolitics – that had shown more solidarity with it than the former. We shall return later to this new policy.

Qaddafi's 'revolutionary' wars in Africa

This section discusses the alleged involvement of Tripoli in destabilising some African countries.

Libya had a foreign policy characterised by active involvement in supporting armed opposition movements that came under various appellations, ranging from revolutionary forces to liberation movements. Qaddafi's support for these movements went beyond Africa, as seen in his support to armed groups in the Middle East (i.e. Palestine), separatist movements in the Philippines, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, and other armed movements in Colombia in Latin America.¹⁸ However, the section is particularly focused on his presumed role in supporting armed groups against their governments in Chad and Sudan in Central Africa, and Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa.

Libya's initial involvement in Africa was directed towards curtailing African support for Israel, which was in line with his ideal of Arab nationalism, given that such support was susceptible to undermine efforts at achieving Palestinian emancipation. In 1973, for example, Qaddafi played a considerable role in the break in relations between Chad, Congo, Niger, and Mali and the Israeli state. But as time passed, Qaddafi sought to spread his brand of revolution to other African states, perhaps as a way of extending his own influence across the continent. Thus, he began supporting dissident groups – armed or unarmed, directly or indirectly – against incumbent governments in many countries, including Chad, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In September 1972, during Idi Amin's first confrontation with Tanzania, Libya intervened with equipment to airlift Ugandan troops, justifying this actions as a support for the Ugandan struggle against colonialism and Zionism. Tripoli fought Chad over the strip of Aouzou from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. Again, in the early 1990s, Libya was accused of supporting Charles Taylor's and Foday Sankoh's rebel movements that destabilised Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The Chadian operation resulted in Qaddafi's defeat. But Libyan involvement in Chad dates back to the years before Qaddafi came to power. In 1965, a group of Chadian dissidents, calling themselves the National Liberation Front of Chad (FROLINA), declared an open revolt against the regime of President François Tombalbaye. At that time there was interaction between the two states through

migration of nomadic tribes, and Libya had irredentist claims to the northernmost portion of Chad dating back to the Italian occupation. Consequently, King Idris of Libya felt almost compelled to support the Frolina against Tombalbaye. However, the king had no particular desire for a confrontation with the French backed regime of N'djamena, and his support for the dissidents was limited.

This changed after the 1969 revolution and Qaddafi's rise to power. He had more ambitious designs on Chad. In particular, he claimed the Aouzou Strip, in the North of Chad, constituting about 1/6th of Chad, based on a non-ratified treaty with the Italian colonial administration. Qaddafi supplied the Frolinat with weapons and funding. The Chadian leader eventually sought French support, which President Charles de Gaulle and his successors provided¹⁹. But the conflict saw four separate Libyan interventions in four phases in Chad, taking place in 1978, 1979, 1980–1981 and 1983–1987. Between 1973 and 1987, during the crossing of the Aouzou strip and back to Libya, about 3,600 Libyan troops were killed²⁰. Its intervention in Chad alarmed the West, particularly France, as they thought that Qaddafi's success in Chad would encourage him to consider interventions elsewhere. The Chadian adventure, however, ended in military defeat.

In Sudan, Qaddafi was more forthcoming to help Jaafar Numayri's regime (1971–1989) combat its opponents labelled as 'communists' in the Sudan, but withdrew his solidarity with him when he signed the Addis Ababa agreement in 1972 with Southern Sudanese rebels. It would seem that the difficulty for Qaddafi was not so much the peace agreement but the terms, which accepted an autonomous, regional self-government for the Southern Sudan.²¹ Thus, Qaddafi established a base at Jabal Uwaynat and Ma'tan as-Sarra in the Sara Triangle from which to launch a force to overthrow Jaafar Numayri in Khartoum. Numayri was now confronted by a more implacable enemy than the 'communists' were in 1972, and after three days of bloody fighting, he was rescued by a tank battalion that drove into Khartoum to restore order. After the fierce combat in which some 3,000 Sudanese were killed, a deep resentment spread throughout the Sudan against Qaddafi's violent intervention. This effectively ended any accommodation between Libya and Sudan.

Numayri never again trusted Qaddafi. When the forces of Sadiq al-Mahdi, supported and financed by Qaddafi, had failed to overthrow Numayri's government in Khartoum in 1976, the Libyan premier, Abd al-Salam Jalloud, denied that the rebels had been trained in Libya or that Kufra and Ma'atan as-Sarra had been used to strike into the Sudan. Qaddafi denied but could not disguise his support for Sadiq al-Mahdi's attempt to overthrow Numayri, which galvanized the Sudan, Egypt, Chad and Niger into a loose entente against Libya's role.²²

In West Africa, particularly Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Liberian conflict was so destabilising to the region that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), spearheaded by Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea formed a West African peacekeeping force (ECOMOG) and intervened in Liberia to put an end to the conflict. Libya helped Charles Taylor's rebellion in Liberia with weapons and it also trained them in guerrilla warfare.²³ Qaddafi's interest in assisting Taylor can be understood from a personal as well as an ideological perspective. Ideologically, as soon as he took power in 1969, he made it clear to the world that 'he was unambiguously a man of thawrah (revolution)'²⁴. He established a revolutionary institute under the Libyan Intelligence Services, to train volunteers from all over the world in revolutionary and guerrilla warfare. Qaddafi lent support to Taylor on the basis of this ideology and given that Taylor presented his rebellion in revolutionary terms, even though there was nothing revolutionary that could be found in his rebellion.

As for the personal aspect of Qaddafi's support for Taylor, this was derived from personal and diplomatic quarrels between the Libyan leader and Liberian President Samuel Doe (1980–1990). Initially rejected by many states of the region due to the brutal killing of his predecessor, Doe was welcomed by Libya and the Soviet Union. But he was forced by pressure from the Reagan administration to build

relations with the US and Israel and to sever ties with the Soviet Union, Libya and all Communist regimes. And Doe did exactly this, by closing the diplomatic missions of both Libya and the Soviet Union in the early 1980s and by establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel. He even followed this, in September 1983, by a state visit to Tel Aviv during which he lamented at Qaddafi. This was partly why Qaddafi viewed Doe's regime as a satellite of imperialism and therefore supported Charles Taylor's rebellion.²⁵

The civil war in Sierra Leone saw the rebel group called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) taking up arms against the regime of Joseph Momoh of the All People's Congress (APC) party. Libya's support for the RUF was an extension of its support to Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), as Sankoh was a protégé of Taylor. According to the final report of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, the Libyan authorities trained RUF fighters between 1987 and 1989 with the aim of overthrowing the APC regime, which the RUF indirectly succeeded in doing in 1992 when a military junta overthrew the Momoh regime in Freetown.²⁶

After the upheavals of the first three decades of his rule, Qaddafi began, in the late 1990s, to gradually shift his policy towards neighbouring countries and the rest of Africa. As mentioned earlier, Qaddafi gave up his dream for Arab nationalism due to his disappointment with the Arab response to his call for unity. The shift can also be explained by the support he got from Africa in his years of isolation when Libya was under Western sanctions. Qaddafi's attempts to get these sanctions lifted, which were based on his alleged support for terrorism, also meant that he had to stop his support for armed movements on the continent. Thus, after decades of destabilising Africa, he shifted from pan-Arabism to pan-Africanism, and from 'arsonist' to 'peace broker' and 'development partner' in Africa, even in some of the countries that he had been accused of destabilising. Another factor for this change might lie in the calculation that Sub-Saharan Africa would be a more receptive ground for his policy of the chequebook, which had its limits in the Arab world.

The year 1998 became a turning point in this policy change when he abolished the Ministry of Arab Affairs and replaced it with one on African Affairs. Qaddafi also started to have closer and, one could argue, more 'constructive' relations with African states and to provide them with financial assistance. Libya returned to Chad for investment purposes and with financial assistance for infrastructure development. He did likewise in Burkina Faso, Mali, Uganda, Sierra Leone and several other African countries.²⁷ In April 1999, Qaddafi brokered a peace accord between Uganda and Congo²⁸, sending Libyan troops to Uganda to help implement it.

Likewise, in May 2001, Libya provided support to the government of President Ange-Félix Patassé in the Central African Republic through the deployment of Libyan military forces after a failed coup attempt against him. In February 2002, CEN-SAD forces, composed of Libyan, Sudanese and Djiboutian troops, arrived in Bangui to secure the capital and prevent rebels from ousting Patassé from power. Libya declared that this mission was strictly in line with the objectives of the African Union.²⁹

In sum, Libya has attempted to move from a country accused of destabilising many African countries to a pacemaker, development partner and champion of African unity. These three dimensions of the new Libyan foreign policy are analysed below in more detail.

Qaddafi, the champion of African unity?

Qaddafi was one of the main drivers behind the establishment of the AU, which he first initiated during the thirty-fifth summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) held in Algiers in July 1999. On 9th September 1999, Qaddafi hosted an Extraordinary Summit of the OAU in Sirte, Libya. His objective in hosting

this meeting was to find ways in which to achieve greater economic, political, social and military cooperation between the African countries, leading to the establishment of one government for the whole continent in a 'United States of Africa'.³⁰ But most of the African leaders argued that while they appreciate these objectives, attending them should be a gradual process that should start with economic cooperation which will then lead to integration in other fields or through the 'cross pillar effect', following the example of the European Union (EU).³¹

In order not to offend Qaddafi and recognising the soundness of the principle of African unity, the gathering African leaders accepted the idea in the Declaration of Sirte but fell short of establishing the USA proposed by Qaddafi. Instead, they decided to transform the OAU into the AU with greater powers and enlarged structures. Thus, the draft Constitutive Act of the AU was later adopted at the 36th summit of the OAU held in Lomé, Togo, in July 2000. The AU was formally launched in Durban, South Africa, on 9 July 2002, as the new body to meet the collective aspirations of the African peoples. Libya provided more than one million dollars to facilitate the transition from OAU to AU³². Together with Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, Libya is one of the five biggest financial contributors to the AU budget, equally contributing a total of 75 per cent of the AU budget. They are generally referred to as the Big Five.

Given this prominent role played by Qaddafi in the establishment of the AU, some initially perceived the new body as a reflection of his presumed personal ambition to rule and dominate the continent.³³ Thus, the Constitutive Act of the African Union, like the OAU charter, is a compromise document between those led by Libya that advocated for immediate and total unification of Africa, and those that favour a gradual approach to this type of integration. The Act sought to accommodate these two competing visions of African unity because while others did not agree with the hasty approach advocated by Qaddafi, they also clearly recognised that 'he who pays the piper dictates the tune'. For one of the major constraints that faced the OAU and is still being faced by the AU has been the lack of adequate financial resources to execute its programmes due to irregular payment of annual subscriptions by member-states, and Qaddafi generously attempts to fill this void.³⁴

But it would seem that Qaddafi was not satisfied with this compromise, for he has persisted in his call for a Union Government in Africa. For example, during the 4th Ordinary Session of the African Union, held in Abuja, Nigeria in 2005, he came up with the idea to have an AU minister of defence, foreign affairs, transport and communication and foreign trade. Disappointed with regard to these initiatives, he persisted and managed to have the proposal of a Union Government as the main theme of the July 2007 summit of the AU, held in the Ghanaian capital, Accra. The 8th Ordinary Session of the AU held in January 2008 in Addis Ababa was another opportunity for Qaddafi to press for his proposal but 'the only decision in this regard was to set up a committee to establish a roadmap and a time frame for a union government'.³⁵

Qaddafi still did not give up and he multiplied threatening statements with regard to the continued membership of his country in the AU if his peers did not make a concrete commitment to the creation of the Union Government at the 14th ordinary Summit of the AU Heads of State and Government that was scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa in early February 2009³⁶. Again, African leaders politely rejected Qaddafi's idea but tried to accommodate him. In other words, they took note of his campaign but did not endorse it. Instead, the Assembly decided to transform the existing African Union *Commission* into the African Union *Authority* with the idea of giving more powers to the latter than the Commission currently has. But these new powers and mandates were not spelt out, which means that the Commission remains in place until such time when the functions and size of the Authority as well as the financial implications for establishing it have been worked out and agreed³⁷. Qaddafi was also made the Chairperson of the AU's Assembly for the year 2009 as another gesture, one could argue, to accommodate him.

The Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) is another multilateral initiative of Qaddafi aimed at greater regional integration in Africa or, for some, at advancing his political and diplomatic influence on the continent. The CEN-SAD was established on 4 February 1998 in Tripoli during the Summit Meeting instigated by Brother Leader Qaddafi. His most prominent guests at this event were the Heads of State of Mali, Chad, Niger, Sudan and a representative of the President of Burkina Faso. The CEN-SAD became a Regional Economic Community (REC) in July 2000, and has its headquarters in Tripoli.

The objective of CEN-SAD is the establishment of an economic union based on the implementation of a community development plan that complements the local development plans of member States. These plans comprise the various fields of a sustained socio-economic development: agriculture, industry, energy, society, culture, health, etc. Like other RECs on the continent, the CEN-SAD also hopes to achieve such objectives as free movement of persons and goods; right of establishment, ownership and exercise of economic activity; the promotion of external trade through an investment policy in member States; the increase of means of land, air and maritime transport and communications among member States and the execution of common projects.³⁸

Libya and peacemaking on the continent

From a supporter of rebel movements on the continent, Qaddafi has come to play a leading role in peacemaking, although he does not always inspire trust in all the observers or even the protagonists. Some argued that Libya helped President Idriss Déby Itno of Chad while he was leading a rebel movement against President Hissein Habré in 1989.³⁹ But Qaddafi now plays a mediation role in view of stabilising that country, both within and in its turbulent relations with Sudan, another country which has had murky relations with Tripoli in the past.

The people of eastern Chad and western Sudan have a long history of ethnic, social, and economic ties that date back to long before the imperialist era. Colonisation, and later independence, changed the dynamics within both countries and this led to disputes between governments. The basis for the current political enmity between these two nations was set in the early 1960s, when Northern Chadians felt they were politically and economically marginalised in the country in favour of their Southern countrymen⁴⁰. As Libya did, Sudan also allowed a faction of Frolinat rebels to organise, train, and establish bases in western Sudan and to conduct raids into Chad from Sudan's Darfur province. Refugees from both countries fled across their mutual border. As violence in Chad increased between 1979 and 1982, Sudan faced its own internal rebellion, and relations deteriorated after Numayri was ousted in 1985⁴¹. In 1988, Habré assailed Sudan for allowing Libyan troops to be stationed along Chad's border and for continuing to allow assaults on Chadian territory from Sudan.

In late 1989 Hissein Habre was ousted in a coup organised by his former Chief of Staff, Idriss Deby Itno, with logistical support from Sudan, France and Libya. However, the complex dynamics of ethnicity, social exclusion, environmental stress and political violence in eastern Chad and Darfur led to the deterioration of relations between the two countries. Thus, in December 2005, Chad declared a 'state of belligerence' with Sudan⁴². Since then, the conflict between the two countries in the border region of Darfur has become increasingly grave as scores of Sudanese flee to refugee camps in Chad due to the conflict in Darfur.⁴³ Chad broke diplomatic relations with Sudan at least twice in 2006⁴⁴.

Qaddafi attempted to put an end to this conflict and managed to broker the Tripoli Agreement of 8 February 2006⁴⁵. A Ministerial Level Committee was established and chaired by Libya, made up of the Foreign Ministers of Chad, Sudan, Central African Republic (CAR), Libya, Congo Brazzaville, Burkina Faso and the Chairman of the Executive Council of CEN-SAD. Endorsed by the AU and the EU, it also called for the establishment of a joint border surveillance force consisting of Libyan, Eritrean, Chadian and Sudanese observers. Unfortunately, however, it

failed to achieve its goals. Qaddafi dispatched a delegation to the Chadian capital, N'Djamena, on 11 April 2007 to register his concerns. Presidents Deby and Omar Hassan El Bashir of Sudan then signed an agreement in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, on 3 May 2007, in which they made a commitment to work with the AU and the United Nations to put an end to the conflict in Darfur and in Eastern Chad.⁴⁶

Chad's foreign minister had assured the international community of his country's wish to normalise relations with Sudan⁴⁷. According to him, his government was prepared to implement the 13 August Agreement to strengthen the democratic process in Chad between the president's party and the opposition political parties.⁴⁸ This resulted from the negotiations that took place from 14 April to 10 August 2007, as well as the Sirte Agreement of 25 October 2007, signed by both the government of Chad and the main Chadian opposition groups.⁴⁹ President Deby expressed his gratitude to Qaddafi for making such efforts to maintain peace and security in the region.⁵⁰ His Foreign Minister, Ahmad Allam-Mi followed suit in appreciating the efforts made by Libya to restore relations between the two countries (Chad and Sudan) and to resolve the problem of Darfur.⁵¹ Despite Qaddafi's efforts, however, Sudan and Chad remain in a quasi-state of belligerence through support of rebel movements against each other's regime.

Qaddafi has been very much engaged in the conflict in Darfur since it started in early 2003.⁵² But his engagement, particularly the mediation and peacemaking side of it, is driven by his analysis of the situation. The problem of Darfur from the perspective of the Brother Leader is not, as some claim, a racial problem between blacks and whites or between Arabs and Africans. Nor is it a religious one between Muslims and non-Muslims. In an address before students at Cambridge University in 2007, he said:

I know those tribes. The main tribes are known to you. One cannot distinguish between Arabs and non-Arabs in the tribes of Masalit, Ruzeiqat, Zagawa or Fur. It is impossible to do so. They inter-marry. They are all Sunni Muslims. They all speak Arabic. The local dialect is understood by all [...] This is the truth of the situation there.⁵³

But he also thinks that the conflict is partly fuelled by a conflict between the major world powers like the US and China.

Libya's diplomatic involvement in the Darfur conflict was highlighted during its presidency of the UN Security Council in January 2008 when Libya's representative to the United Nations, Giadalla Ettalhi, stated that his country's monthly presidency of the Council would focus on Arab and African issues, particularly Darfur. The same day, when Foreign Minister Abdel-Rahman Shalgam held a meeting with the American Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, he said: 'I think we can work together for peace, including working on bringing peace to Darfur and combating terrorism'.⁵⁴

Libya as a 'donor' of development assistance in Africa

In the last 10 years, Qaddafi has taken many initiatives to improve relations with most African countries, through the provision of development assistance, or at least capital investment. This is evidenced, for example, by the active role played by Libya in trying to assist African countries to deal with the ongoing food crisis, particularly since the beginning of 2008, and the Libyan Fund for Aid and Development in Africa.⁵⁵

Since the end of the war in Sierra Leone in 2002, Libyan president Muammar Qaddafi has multiplied acts of generosity towards the people of Sierra Leone. For example, in early 2008, he granted 30 agricultural tractors to Sierra Leone in an effort to revive the farming sector in the country. The Libyan government had earlier assisted the government of Sierra Leone with twenty tractors and had pledged to send ten more⁵⁶. It is reported that Qaddafi has also donated a significant number of tractors to Tanzania and has given some assistance to women and children's institutions in the country⁵⁷. Both Zimbabwe and the Gambia are also said to have benefited from similar deals.⁵⁸

Perhaps the area in which Libyan economic involvement has been more noticeable on the continent in the last decade is capital investment. Much of this is done through the Libyan Arab African Investment Company (LAAICO) and the Libyan Arab Foreign Investment Company (LAFICO).⁵⁹ Formed in the mid-1970s, LAAICO's business activities are said to be in more than 25 African countries in varying degrees. Both companies invest mainly in hotels and real estate, agricultural development, mining and telecommunications. They do this by partnering with national governments or local parastatal companies, or by setting up independent ventures. The following table indicates some of the investment sectors and volumes of LAAICO and LAFICO in Africa.

Country	Company & year of establishment	Share	Main activities
Gambia	LAFICO-Gambia, 1999	LAAICO: 100%	Owns the Atlantic Hotel in Banjul (204 rooms) and has a 60% share in the African International Trading Company
Liberia	LAFICO-Liberia, 2002	LAAICO: 100%	Rubber factory and 86% share in the Pan-African Real Estate Corporation
Mali	LAFICO-Mali, 1998	LAAICO: 100%	Owns Hotel de l'amitié in Bamako (4*), and is shareholder in the National Tobacco Company (SONATAM), with plans to establish a fruit juice processing plant.
Ghana	Ghana Libyan Arab Holding Company (GLAHCO), 1982	LAAICO: 65.5% Ghana: 34.5%	Owns the Golden Tulip Hotel in Accra (4*), a supermarket in Accra, and an agricultural farm of 3426 Ha.
Chad	LAFICO-Tchad, 1997	LAAICO: 100%	Owns a mineral water plant; textile factory and a 5* hotel in Ndjamena, as well as an administrative, commercial and residential complex
Ethiopia	Ethio-Libyan Joint Agricultural Company (ELACO), 1981	LAAICO:49% Ethiopia: 51%	Drilling water wells and other agricultural activities; and LAAICO is shareholder in a mineral water factory

Source: LAICO, November 2009, at www.laico.com

Conclusion

The main objective of this paper was to critically look at the two incarnations of Libya's foreign policy vis-à-vis Africa since Muammar Qaddafi came to power in 1969 and the general perceptions of Libya's role on the continent. The country's foreign policy in the first two decades of Qaddafi's rule (1970–1990) was analysed. The paper then dealt with the second avatar of Libyan foreign policy, starting in the late-1990s and marked with aggressive diplomatic manoeuvres in the direction of Africa.

The first section looked at the internal governance structures of Libya and revealed the apparent rivalry between the so-called conservatives and reformers in the country. With regard to the first orientation of Libyan foreign policy, the paper showed that this was heavily influenced by ideals of pan-Arabism and Arab unity. When it looked southwards, Libyan involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa was characterised by a real or perceived support for opposition armed groups against various African regimes in the name of anti-imperialism. It also saw attempts at outright invasion and annexation of parts of neighbouring Chad when the two countries fought – with French involvement on the side of Chad – over the strip of Aouzou.

From the 1990s, however, Libyan foreign policy objectives and orientations somehow changed vis-à-vis Sub-Saharan Africa. From destabiliser and supporter of rebel movements, Qaddafi's Libya has come to play a leading role in promoting initiatives of African unity and integration. The pivotal diplomatic and financial role the country played in the transformation of the OAU to the AU as well as the establishment of CEN-SAD is tangible evidence thereof. Qaddafi has also become a peace broker, particularly in Central Africa, between Chad and Sudan, and in

West Africa, in Mali and Niger. He has also been providing financial assistance to many African countries, including some that he had been accused of destabilising in the past, such as Sierra Leone and Chad.

Libya's relations with the Western world seem also to have changed after its landmark decision taken in 2003 to renounce terrorism and to abandon its weapons of mass destruction programmes. This led to the US rescinding Libya's designation as a state sponsoring terrorism in June 2006 and then in late 2007, Libya was elected by the General Assembly for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the 2008–09 term. Other Western countries, particularly Italy, the United Kingdom and France have revised their policies vis-à-vis the oil-rich country and have been competing for lucrative investment contracts.

These changes notwithstanding, the legacy of the revolutionary period of the 1970s and 1980s still haunt the country and this is clearly reflected in the perceptions that many observers have of these actions. Some are inclined to give Qaddafi the benefit of the doubt or even believe that he has indeed changed and that he is genuine in his declarations and actions for African unity. Others, however, remain sceptical and cynical. For some of the latter, Qaddafi is engaged in 'cheque book diplomacy' in Africa with a view to increasing his influence and quenching his thirst for leadership or for other insidious purposes. Qaddafi's excesses and low respect for democratic rules at a time when the AU is struggling to infuse universal norms of governance add to these perceptions.

What we are likely to see in the near future is a continuation of this line of Libyan engagement in Africa, but one that becomes more and more realistic with regard to the drastic changes Qaddafi is proposing. Despite the uncertainties linked to the unresolved question of his succession, this does not exclude occasional threatening statements to pull out of the AU should his ideas not be endorsed by others. This argument is based on at least three facts. The first is that while other African leaders are aware of Libya's financial clout, they have become accustomed to his style and thus savvy about how to handle him diplomatically. The second fact is that Qaddafi feels somehow indebted to Africa, not least because of Africa's stance and solidarity with him when his country was under Western sanctions. He probably also thinks that unlike the Arab world, he can still influence events in Africa, at least in some countries, and have a voice at the continental level. The recent past indicates that the Libyan leader has indeed had a greater influence over African politics than he could have had over Arab politics. In the Arab world, Libyan diplomacy cannot match that of Egypt, nor can its oil money rival that of wealthy Gulf States in the Arab League, and thus in the Middle East.

But the country faces some challenges internally, not least the apparent rivalry between the so-called conservatives and reformers in the revolutionary structures governing the country. The urgent need for political and economic reform is another daunting challenge. The reported rivalry between conservatives and reformers hovers around political reform. The latter, reportedly led or inspired by Saif el-Islam Qaddafi, a son of the Brother Leader, calls for more modernisation and consideration for human rights and democratic principles. The economic reform, particularly in the oil production, is to be centred on issues of better management and equal distribution of its proceeds amongst the various segments of society. This is very important given that oil is the main sector of the economy and the main source of the country's export revenues.

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- 1 Amira Ibrahim is a PhD candidate in Foreign and Security Policy and holds an MA in Euro-Mediterranean studies from Cairo University, Egypt.
 - 2 It has to be noted that following their trial in 2001, one of the two was acquitted. But the one that was sentenced to life imprisonment, Abdelbaset Ali al-Megrahi, was released in August 2009 on compassionate grounds, based on his critical medical condition. He was in Libya, and terminally ill at the time this paper was completed.
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