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Vienna, 12th June 2020

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Master Thesis “European solidarity across the Mediterranean? The Europeanisation of the Italian foreign policy in Libya 2011 - 2019“

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Abstract

The Arab Spring represented a game-changer in the relations of between Italy and Libya, since it catapulted the Mediterranean security threat and the migration issue to the very top of Italy's and the EU's political agendas. This renders the intersection of Italian and European interests unavoidable and this research will thus analyse the interaction of the two foreign policy levels. The concept of Europeanisation will be employed to measure the stage of integration of the national and the concurring European foreign policy in the specific domestic context of Libya; at the same time, a particular focus will be placed on the extent the Lega as a populist radical right party influenced Italian foreign policy-making. By examining the three interrelated dimensions of the conceptual framework, that is bottom-up, top-down and crossloading, it has been found that while Europeanisation did occur in the context of analysis, the observed dynamics under the Conte Government are better qualified as processes of illiberal and informal Europeanisation.

Keywords: Europeanisation; illiberal/informal Europeanisation; Italian foreign policy; European foreign policy; Libya; populist radical right parties.

Der Arabische Frühling war ein Wendepunkt in den Beziehungen zwischen Italien und Libyen, da Italien und die EU sich gezwungen sahen, Themen wie Sicherheit und Migration im Mittelmeerraum wieder höher auf die politische Agenda zu setzen. Dies macht die Überschneidung italienischer und europäischer Interessen unumgänglich, weshalb in der vorliegenden Arbeit die Interaktion der beiden außenpolitischen Ebenen analysiert wird. Mit dem Konzept der Europäisierung soll der Integrationsstand der nationalen und der konkurrierenden europäischen Außenpolitik im politischen Kontext Libyens gemessen werden; gleichzeitig wird ein besonderer Schwerpunkt darauf gelegt, inwieweit die Lega als populistische rechtsradikale Partei die italienische Außenpolitik beeinflusst hat. Die Untersuchung der drei miteinander verknüpften Dimensionen des konzeptionellen Rahmens, d.h. Bottom-up, Top-down und Crossloading, hat ergeben, dass Europäisierungsprozesse zwar im Rahmen der Analyse stattfanden, die jedoch eher als Prozesse illiberaler und informeller Europäisierung klassifiziert werden müssen.

Schlagwörter: Europäisierung; illiberale/informelle Europäisierung; italienische Außenpolitik; europäische Außenpolitik; Libyen; populistische rechtsradikale Parteien.

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List of abbreviations

AP	<i>Alternativa Popolare</i>
ASGI	<i>Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione</i>
CD	<i>Centro Democratico</i>
CEAS	<i>Common European Asylum System</i>
CFSP	<i>Common Foreign and Security Policy</i>
CI	<i>Civici e Innovatori</i>
CpE	<i>Centristi per l'Europa</i>
Demo.S	<i>Democrazia Solidale – Centro Democratico</i>
EC	<i>European Communities</i>
EEAS	<i>European External Action Service</i>
EFP	<i>European Foreign Policy</i>
ENI	<i>Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi</i>
EP	<i>European Parliament</i>
EPC	<i>European Political Coordination</i>
EU	<i>European Union</i>
EUTF	<i>European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa</i>
FRG	<i>Federal Republic of Germany</i>
GNA	<i>Government of National Accord</i>
GNC	<i>General National Congress</i>
IFA	<i>Italian Fund for Africa (Fondo Africa)</i>
IV	<i>Italia Viva</i>
LEU	<i>Liberi E Uguali</i>
LNA	<i>Libyan National Army</i>
M5S	<i>Movimento Cinque Stelle/5-Star-Movement</i>
MAIE	<i>Movimento Associativo Italiani all'Estero</i>
MoU	<i>Memorandum of Understanding</i>
MpA	<i>Movimento per le Autonomie</i>
NATO	<i>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</i>
NCD	<i>Nuovo Centrodestra</i>
NTC	<i>National Transition Council</i>
PD	<i>Partito Democratico</i>
PdL	<i>Popolo della Libertà</i>

PESCO	<i>Permanent Structured Cooperation</i>
PpI	<i>Popolari per l'Italia</i>
PRRP	<i>Populist Radical Right Party</i>
PSI	<i>Partito Socialista Italiano</i>
RI	<i>Radicali Italiani</i>
SAR	<i>Search And Rescue</i>
SC	<i>Scelta Civica</i>
UAE	<i>United Arab Emirates</i>
UdC	<i>Unione di Centro</i>
UK	<i>United Kingdom</i>
UN	<i>United Nations</i>
USA	<i>United States of America</i>

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1. Introduction

The intense history Italy and Libya share falls back on colonialism, an important factor which has characterised their future relationship. Libya went from being Italy's 'fourth shore' to becoming a viable commercial partner in North Africa, first under King Idriss and then under Gaddafi. The Arab Spring represented a game-changer in their relations, since it catapulted the Mediterranean security threat and the migration issue to the very top of Italy's and the EU's political agendas. Rome's vital interests in the Mediterranean make the management of the current conflict in Libya a number one priority for the Italian Government; additionally, the European Union's engagement in the region as a provider of humanitarian aid and bilateral assistance renders this case study as a platform for confrontation particularly interesting. Especially the issue of migration has become a common ground where Italian and European interests intersect.

This research analyses this interaction of the two foreign policy levels. I have chosen to employ the concept of Europeanisation to measure the stage of integration of the national and the concurring European foreign policy in the specific domestic context of Libya. In other words, the focus lies on explaining how the two policy levels impacted each other, using the case of the Libyan crisis. This dynamic process moves in two directions: on the one hand, we can say that, in a multilevel system, the national states tend to promote their own preferences and export them to the 'higher' decision-making level. On the other hand, it is also true that European values, principles and standards trickle down to the national level and thus impact important internal decisions and positions. First and foremost, the question arises whether and to what extent the levels influenced each other, if there is even proof for the occurrence of Europeanisation and how advanced this process is at the current stage. Secondly, the reasons and the factors causing the up- and down-loading processes will be examined in the case at hand. Thirdly, assuming that internal political dynamics did indeed have a certain impact, it will be discussed how political parties have influenced the government's activity. In particular, the influence of populist radical right parties (PRRPs) on foreign policy-making can result in a form of illiberal and informal Europeanisation or, more specifically, in a way of up-loading and cross-loading of illiberal norms and values. In this case study, I will examine how the Lega as PRRP impacted Italy's and the Union's

policy towards Libya; building on a recent study by the scholar Escartin, I will explore to what extent the Lega succeeded in promoting its illiberal political agenda.

For this purpose, I have adopted process tracing to study the Libyan conflict as an illustrative case, which confirms the conceptual framework of Europeanisation. The analysis will be restricted to the time frame 2011 – 2019; the focus will, more precisely, be placed on the interaction of the foreign policies from the outbreak of the Arab Spring in Libya and to the government crisis in the summer months of 2019 in Italy. In the following chapters, I will clarify the adopted research approach and how I proceeded in my analysis. The theoretical part will focus on the underlying concept of Europeanisation and link it to the potential influence of PRRPs in foreign policy-making. Studying its application in previous research will be valuable for the final assessment of the findings. I will then illustrate the methodology I have employed, my hypothesis and the measurements I have used to evaluate the results. The subsequent analytical part will be structured around various tipping points of the Libyan crisis, which will constitute the background to the discussion on the dynamics at the national and the European level. From the Arab uprisings, to the aftermath of the First Libyan Civil War, to the outbreak of the Second Libyan Civil War, to the continuing power struggle between al-Serraj and Haftar, I will discuss the impact of the crisis responses given at the two policy levels. Lastly, I will present my findings by dividing the time frame considered in three parts, which emphasise the varying degrees of Europeanisation I have observed.

In answering the above-mentioned research questions, I aspire to paint a clearer picture of the recent dynamics in Italian foreign policy. This research contributes to the existing academic literature insofar as it combines different aspects of previous research. Country-specific case studies on the topic are very rare despite the fact that they could offer valuable insights in terms of detail and restriction of the context of analysis. Specifically in Libya, the Europeanisation of the national foreign policy, understood as three interrelated processes, is actively promoted by the Italian Government, which recognises that the repercussions of the crisis cannot be tackled unilaterally. Besides consensus-seeking at the EU level, the executive must also win over the internal political actors which play a rather prominent role in Italian foreign policy-making (Brighi 2011).

2. Conceptual framework of Europeanisation

There is a far-reaching consensus in the academic literature that European foreign policy cannot be analysed through traditional realist and liberal intergovernmentalist approaches. EU Member States have reached a point in the integration process where the influence of the EU in the foreign policy-making process is inevitable. The Europeanisation concept is thus valuable in this regard, as it helps to examine the dynamics between the national and the EU level (Müller and Flers 2009a, 10–11). In the following paragraphs, the conceptual framework will be presented. Starting with the assumption that Europeanisation is a process of policy convergence composed of three interrelated processes, I will explain how PRRPs could potentially influence this process and why they tend to do so. The rather recent concept of informal and illiberal Europeanisation adds to this framework insofar as it suggests that PRRPs Europeanise their illiberal agendas when covering a government function.

2.1 Europeanisation

In this thesis, the conceptual framework of Europeanisation is used to explain the development of the foreign policy at hand. Europeanisation can generally be defined as *“an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making”* (Ladrech 1994, 69). According to Ladrech, this re-orientation of national policies can regard domestic politics, institutions or any other trend and transformation in the attitude of Member States. Occurring on the grounds of new environmental inputs, these changes would be caused by European integration (Ladrech 1994, 70). In his research, he measured Europeanisation by the observed changes in the organisational structure of a state. More specifically, he observed the national adaptation processes to the emerging European polity. The definition used, however, describes only the top-down dimension of the concept, which had long been the dominant and only understanding of the term Europeanisation. In fact, most older studies had exclusively examined this aspect (Wong and Hill 2011, 1). More recent studies, on the other hand, have also included two other dimensions of Europeanisation in their definitions (Economides 2005; Hill and Wong 2011; Müller 2009; Müller 2011; Tonra 2015; Tonra 2018; Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005). In line with the current

literature, the concept will be studied as a process of policy convergence, composed of three interrelated processes. The top-down dynamic describes the changes observed at the national policy or institutional level caused by the participation in EU mechanisms. The bottom-up process, on the other hand, refers to the exportation of national preferences to the European level and the promotion of national interests in European fora. This bi-directional process may result in "*a negotiated convergence in terms of policy goals, preferences and even identity between the national and the supranational levels*", which in scholarly terms is called 'crossloading' (Wong and Hill 2011, 4).

The concept of Europeanisation will then be linked to the area of foreign policy. The specific definition of European Union foreign policy (EFP) has always been a bone of contention; some authors think that, in relating to third states, Europe has not managed to develop a common foreign policy (Lister 1997). In particular at the beginnings of the European integration process, the European Communities (EC) had been struggling to find an adequate framework where a primary coordination effort could take place. In its external relations, the Community had initially focused exclusively on external trade, commercial policy, enlargement and development. The 1970 Davignon report set a major milestone by introducing regular meetings among the foreign ministers, occasional meetings between the heads of state and government, regular consultations on foreign policy priorities and regular meetings of the political directors of the six Member States. The resulting European Political Coordination (EPC) was the first institutional framework created for shaping and coordinating the EC's actions in its relations to third states. Pressure from the outside, such as the tense situation in the Middle East, the oil crises and the Vietnam War, urged the Community to engage further in international affairs. With the Single European Act, the EPC and the European Council were codified and intergovernmental cooperation in foreign policy matters was thus integrated in the European institutional architecture. When the Treaty of Maastricht was signed in 1992, the Member States recognised that the necessity to coordinate their national foreign policies in order to gain strength on the international stage. By replacing the EPC with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), foreign policy became officially one of the Union's policy areas. It remained, however, an exclusively intergovernmental process which did not substantially empower the core supranational institutions (Bindi 2012). Lisbon did indeed introduce various novelties, including conferring legal personality to the Union which facilitated the conclusion of

international agreements and the membership in international organisations; the creation of the double-hatted post of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) to coordinate the Union's missions and operations in third states; the mandatory regular consultation of the European Parliament on the principal aspects and choices of the CFSP; qualified majority voting in some cases of CFSP; the basis of a common defence policy; the possibility of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in the field of defence (Troszczynska-Van Genderen 2015). Even if these novelties strengthened the global role of the Union, the historical development and the resulting CFSP framework in place today may question the application of the Europeanisation concept to EFP. Given that the EU's competence in foreign policy is *sui generis*, the impact of European integration is less visible and the Member States are not obliged to adapt or coordinate their strategies. For this reason, previous research focused on agriculture, cohesion, policy, environment, transportation and financial services. Yet as soon as beliefs, informal norms and rules in foreign policy consolidated at the European level, the application of the Europeanisation framework became more plausible. Also, the growing importance of the bottom-up dimension, that is to say the uploading of national policy preferences through intergovernmental bargaining, contributed to this transformation (Tonra, B. 2015, 184). In contradiction with realist and intergovernmental theorists, it is here argued that a *"reciprocal relationship"* (Tonra, B. 2015, 185) between the European and the national level can be observed. The main argument for the compatibility of Europeanisation and EFP is that foreign policy decision-making, despite its intergovernmental nature, does indeed affect the formulation and/or the outcome of national policies. By becoming and then being part of the European Union, the Member States influence the European foreign policy output, but, at the same time, adapt to the institutional framework and actualise its core values (Tonra, B. 2015, 185). This intergovernmental cooperation results in *"specified norms of agreed behaviour"* which *"are not those of a hierarchical policy centre to which national foreign policies are adapting, but are the shared patrimony of Member States endeavouring to strengthen their foreign policies respectively and collectively"* (Tonra, B. 2015, 187).

Using this bi-dimensional model of Europeanisation, I will attempt to answer the above-mentioned research question, in other words if and to what extent the Italian foreign

policy has been Europeanised. For the purpose of this thesis, Wong and Hill's definition of European Foreign Policy will be the point of departure:

"'EU foreign policy' (EFP) is usually understood and analysed as the sum and interaction of the 'three strands' of Europe's 'external relations system', consisting of:

(a) the national foreign policies of the Member States;

(b) EC external trade relations and development policy;

and (c) the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU" (Wong and Hill 2011, 3).

Assuming that we understand national foreign policy as *"the actions, strategies, and decisions directed at actors outside the borders of a domestic political system (i.e., a state)"* (Kesgin 2010, 336), the proposed objective is to evaluate the impact Level a) and Level c) had on each other in the Libyan context. Using the words of the Irish scholar Tonra, Europeanisation of national foreign policies is *"a transformation in the way in which national foreign policies are constructed, in the ways in which professional roles are defined and pursued and in the consequent internalisation of norms and expectations arising from a complex system of collective European policy making"* (Tonra, B. 2000, 4–5).

2.2 The role of populist radical right parties PRRPs and the link to illiberal Europeanisation

This thesis will also address the extent to which the internal political party dimension can influence foreign policy outcomes. Literature on the impact of political parties in foreign policy-making is rather meagre; the most recent studies have evidenced the particular role played by coalition governments, compared to other types of government. The ideological dimension and the polarisation within the coalition proves to be a crucial factor (Joly and Dandoy 2018). In Italy, Brighi has observed that, after the Cold War and up until the early 2000s, the domestic political arena was decisive in Italian foreign policy-making. The alternating governing coalitions of centre-right and centre-left incised greatly in defining the country's position. She found that the degree of Europeanisation of the country's foreign policy had varied over time, by prioritising at times the downloading side, and thus adapting to the EU position, and then favouring

again the uploading side, by exporting national policy preferences to the EU level (Brighi 2011a). Building on this brief overview of the existing literature on the role of political parties in foreign policy analysis, I will specifically focus on the influence of PRRPs in shaping foreign policy.

2.2.1 The definition of PRRPs and their implications in shaping foreign policy

In his quest of defining populist radical right parties, Mudde identifies three ideological features that are common to all PRRPs. The first feature is nativism, which he defines as *"an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state"* (Mudde 2007, 19). He sees this concept as a mixture between xenophobia and nationalism¹, since the latter would suffer from concept stretching. Using 'nativism' instead would automatically exclude other liberal forms of nationalism. Second on the list is authoritarianism, which Mudde bases on a strictly ordered society where any violation is sanctioned. Populism is undoubtedly essential to the mixture, and is defined as *"an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people"* (Mudde 2004, 543). Contrary to other authors, Mudde specifies that he considers populism as being indeed an ideological feature and not a political style.

On his ladder of abstraction of nativist ideologies, Mudde depicts very well the links between the different categories. It is noteworthy that populism is not included in the ladder, considered an ideological feature and not an ideology per se. In fact, most nativist ideologies value the existence of elitism positively, which is absolutely contrary to the populist discourse. For all of the above reasons, Mudde settled for the concept of populist radical right parties to describe the phenomenon at hand. Radical because it opposes some characteristics of *liberal* democracy, such as political pluralism and

¹ Mudde defines nationalism as a *"political doctrine that strives for the congruence of the cultural and the political unit"* (Mudde 2007, 16).

constitutional protection of minorities, but does not qualify as antidemocratic; right because the perspective of a society founded on inequalities is accepted (Mudde 2007, 11–31).

Ideology	Key additional feature
Extreme right	Anti-democracy
Radical right	Authoritarianism
<i>Nativism</i>	Xenophobia
Nationalism	

Figure 1: Ladder of abstraction of nativist ideologies, by Mudde (Mudde 2007, 24).

Based on Mudde’s studies and on other researchers’ after him, the Italian Northern League is categorised a populist radical right party. It is interesting to notice that when Mudde published his work in 2007, he had classified the party as a borderline case, given that it was halfway between regionalism and nationalism on the ideological line. Yet, he still included it in the PRRPs family, for various coining characteristics in its policy positions, attitude and discourse (Mudde 2007, 56). This classification is even more accurate in today's context where the leadership of Matteo Salvini has led to completely eliminating the regionalist aspect from the party's ideology.

An important question that needs answering before linking PRRPs and foreign policy is why these parties have been so successful in recent years. On the European continent, the diffusion of anti-immigrant sentiments and the rise of PRRPs largely coincided – but can these two phenomena be causally linked? According to Mudde, PRRPs can be considered a *"catalyst"* in this turn to more rightist positions in most Western European countries, but *"a fertile breeding ground of popular resentment around immigration, crime and party politics"* was already there, which made that the populist rhetoric was better received. In other words, we can conclude that the mainstream right-wing parties contributed significantly to creating that anti-immigrant atmosphere which then provided a political platform for PRRPs. Moreover, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, defence and security policy gained in importance and called into question the mere existence of multiethnic societies. Critical voices towards the European project have become louder. Mudde and other researchers believe that the growing Euroscepticism has been particularly provoked by the transferral of more national competences to the

EU institutions after Maastricht. The idea spread that the nation state was unable to tackle the problems of the time due to this loss in powers. The internationalisation and the Europeanisation of policies have indeed rendered it more difficult to fulfil electoral promises, parties finding themselves between two chairs: they are "*responsive to their electorates*", but are at the same time "*responsible towards domestic and international stakeholders*". This weakening of conventional politics and of traditional political parties can be another factor in explaining the rise of populist parties (Balfour et al. 2016, 25–26). Mudde assumes therefore that PRRPs have a limited impact on national politics because "*much of the groundwork*" has already been laid out by mainstream parties. PRRPs merely reinforce the already existing rightist tendencies and fault lines (Mudde 2013, 11–14).

The academic literature on the impacts of political parties on foreign policy outcome is rather meagre. In particular, populist parties tend to focus on issues of inner politics and do not engage in outer affairs. This has however changed since the increase of migratory flows and the major presence of terrorism in 2015 (Balfour et al. 2016, 31). Verbeek argues that explaining the role of political parties in the definition of foreign policy has become ever more important since globalisation and Europeanisation have pushed international politics in the domestic arena and have provoked a "*domesticization of foreign policy*" (Verbeek and Zaslove 2015, 529). In his study of how the Lega Nord influenced the foreign policy of the coalition governments led by Silvio Berlusconi during the 1990s and the 2000s, Verbeek identifies 4 ways for parties to exert their influence:

1. As part of the executive, either in the case of a single-party government or a coalition;
2. As supporting faction of the government, maybe even by agreeing to a coalition agreement;
3. As an opposition party in parliament, trying to achieve their objectives by building up pressure;
4. As an extra-parliamentary party, acting from outside the institutions (Verbeek and Zaslove 2015, 529).

Verbeek and Zaslove have looked at the role of the party in question from inside the coalition as they assumed that coalition partners have the most influence on governmental policies. In this thesis, I will concentrate on the impact the Lega Nord had on the Italian foreign policy as an opposition party in Parliament.

2.2.2 Illiberal Europeanisation vs. De-Europeanisation

Based on the assumption that the influence by PRRPs exerted on the national level is rather strong, Escartin has in a recent study explored the impact of PRRPs in government on EU foreign policy in the Southern Neighbourhood. Being part of the executive, those parties can indeed directly block key decisions on EU level, be it in the European Council or in the Council of the European Union. The author takes Italy and Hungary as prime examples, where a government party's illiberal agenda is promoted at EU level and thus becomes an obstacle to an efficient decision-making process. The Lega and Fidesz are categorised as populist radical right parties that have influenced EU foreign policy-making with their Eurosceptic views. In the context of the 'refugee crisis', they have used the negative repercussions of the increasing migratory flows for their own political purposes. In his study, Escartin identifies an existing literature gap as current studies neglect the impact Eurosceptic politics may have on Europeanisation. In opposition to the concept of de-Europeanisation, he sustains that the mechanisms of Europeanisation can still be found in the two cases examined, but categorises them as mechanisms of illiberal and informal Europeanisation. Leaving the EU was not an option for the governments analysed; instead, their goal was to Europeanise their own illiberal agendas. He builds on the hypothesis that, in case of illiberal Europeanisation the *"existing inconsistencies in EU foreign policy"* are politicised, whereas the objective of De-Europeanisation is to *"remove any perceived restraints imposed by EU foreign policy"* (Rivera Escartin 2020, 2). A more detailed definition of the latter is provided by the Irish scholar Ben Tonra, who defines the concept as follows:

"(De-Europeanisation) describes a contemporary reality in which EU foreign policy-making runs against the grain of certain member state declared values/interests, where Member States are less willing to engage in collective policy making and where the results of that policy making are, on occasion, explicitly undermined by member state practice" (Tonra, B. 2018).

What could be the explanation for this non-collaborative attitude assumed by the Member state in question? Tonra points out that *"populist, nativist and/or semi-authoritarian political dynamics"* could induce a disengagement from already consolidated EU practices and mechanisms (Tonra, B. 2018). It seems therefore that both phenomena can indeed be explained by the existence of populist elements; the greatest difficulty lies in their distinction. Tonra warns about mistaking de-Europeanisation with standard political contestation, such as *"policy disagreement, reversals, weaknesses, failures, or limitations"* (Tonra, B. 2018). Both Tonra and Escartin indicate the existence of another phenomenon, which does not function as the inverse effect of Europeanisation and thus positions itself between the two opposing concepts.

Moreover, Escartin criticises the ideological usage of the Europeanisation concept, given that it has often been associated with Ian Manner's idea of 'Normative Power Europe', which has an extremely positive connotation. Generally, the vertical and formal dimensions of Europeanisation are defined as *"processes of socialization of progressive liberal norms and values among national elites and the consolidation of a European identity in foreign policy"*. Yet, the growing formation of horizontal and informal synergies between states, such as the coalitions of like-minded states, has added a third aspect - cross-loading. This process co-exists with the vertical dimensions, and emphasises that Member States, in shaping their domestic foreign policies, refer not only to EU institutions but also to other Member States via these above-mentioned *"informal cross-border contacts"*. Oftentimes, these informal interactions are used as a platform to propagate illiberal values and unite in a dissenting position towards Brussels (Rivera Escartin 2020, 3–4). The most prominent example would be the Visegrád states. Another characteristic of the Italian and Hungarian foreign policy in the Mediterranean is the frequency of unilateral and radical actions. Salvini and Orbán, taken as ultimate political leaders, attempt to legitimise those actions by using emotions abusively in their public discourse: migration policy becomes one of the main subjects, represented as a field where the European Union has failed (Rivera Escartin 2020, 5). PRRPs, by definition, rely on emotionally driven language to propagate their values, and thus appeal to anti-migration sentiments and identity politics. By distancing themselves from Brussels, EU foreign policy is openly criticised, mediatised and politicised. The goal of

restricting migratory flows becomes a way to attract voters, given that the issue engages the population as a whole.

In this thesis, the Lega will be taken as prime example of a PRRP who influenced foreign policy outcomes from outside the executive. Whereas Escartin has studied its role only from inside the executive, I will discuss the impact it had as a governing and an opposition party during the time frame of analysis and examine whether and to what extent the Italian foreign policy changed. In his study, Escartin suggests that looking at the impact of PRRPs in opposition would be a valuable contribution to the existing literature (Rivera Escartin 2020, 14). The concept of illiberal and informal Europeanisation, in particular concerning the cross-loading dimension of the party's illiberal agenda, will therefore be the point of reference. The framework used diverges thus from the *"idealised reading of EU foreign policy in the Mediterranean"* (Rivera Escartin 2020, 13). Moreover, it is assumed that the contestation and politicisation of EU foreign policy is distinct from processes of de-Europeanisation, as they do not necessarily obstacle integration and can potentially even produce a positive outcome. In the wake of the 2015 migration crisis, for instance, the EU had managed to expand its competences in the field of border control, which is traditionally subject to Member States' sovereignty, without encountering any substantial opposition (Rivera Escartin 2020, 6). In order to test that the phenomenon at hand is distinct from de-Europeanisation, it will be referred to the three criteria provided by Tonra.

- I. The gradual fragmentation of collective policy-making institutions, which indirectly lose in centrality.
- II. The introduction or strengthening of professional roles in the national sphere. This process of 'nationalisation', or even 'renationalisation', leads to a greater emphasis on the decision-making at the national level.
- III. The refusal of substantive or procedural norms, which are the core of the institutional framework. The rejection could be either explicit, by political declaration for instance, or implicit, which accounts also for omission (Tonra, B. 2018).

3. Application of the conceptual framework. Europeanisation in the academic literature

The existing case studies on the Europeanisation of national foreign policies can be classified in studies on small and large Member States, the Nordic states, neutral Member States and non-Member States (Tonra, B. 2015, 187). The following selection of case studies is considered to be valuable to the construction of the research design of this thesis and will be based on the categorisation of Member States provided by Börzel. She compared the different responses to Europeanisation given by the states and found a consistent pattern, which asserted itself in the academic literature. Member States adopt different strategies in responding to Europeanisation based on their diverging policy preferences and action capacities. She identified the following strategies:

Pace-setting, defined as *"actively pushing policies at the European level, which reflect a Member State's policy preference and minimize implementation costs"*

Foot-dragging, defined as *"blocking or delaying costly policies in order to prevent them altogether or achieve at least some compensation for implementation costs"*

Fence-sitting, defined as *"neither systematically pushing policies nor trying to block them at the European level but building tactical coalitions with both pace-setters and foot-draggers"* (Börzel 2002, 194).

According to Börzel, the decision on the strategy for pursuing Europeanisation depends largely on the state's economic development and its policy preferences (Börzel 2002). The definitions given allowed her to categorise Member States according to their characteristics. In the following paragraphs, the focus will be placed on various studies on the foreign policy of Germany, Greece and France, which respectively qualify as a 'pace-setter', a 'foot-dragger' and a 'fence-sitter'. The contributions are considered valuable insofar as they illustrate the development and the application of the Europeanisation concept, and its different interpretations. Such a close analysis will then help with the study of the Italian foreign policy and the discussion on how the country is responding to Europeanisation. Börzel hesitated in assigning Italy to one category only, torn between foot-dragging and fence-sitting. It will therefore also be

examined if this framework can even be applied to the case at hand and if a pattern can even be identified in Rome's policy towards Libya.

3.1 Germany as the 'pace-setter'

In her analysis, Daehnhardt questions the *"increasing self-confidence in (German) foreign policy"* (Daehnhardt 2011, 35) over the course of the second half of the 20th century. Initially, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) used the EC as a means to strengthen its role on the international stage and to show its discontinuity with the previous regime. The researcher identified three areas where Europeanisation occurred: firstly, in the identity dimension, where the process of European integration helped to fill the identity vacuum which had been opened with the atrocities of the Second World War. The FRG's creation of a credible *"Europeanized state identity"* (Daehnhardt 2011, 37) accelerated its re-integration in the international community significantly. Secondly, a high degree of institutional congruence between the state and the EC facilitated their interaction. National powers, which the FRG did not hold in the same way as the other Member States did, were simply transferred to a higher level. Lastly, the implementation of European policies did not cause any particular problems to the FRG as the national and European interests largely coincided. Yet, the circumstances changed with the end of the Cold War and the process of German unification; also, the acceleration of the integration process with Maastricht had transformed the existing institutional framework. How was the new state going to adapt? The political élite chose a 'two-lane policy approach' to tackle the new challenges: continuing support for multilateralist organisations such as the EU and NATO, while building on the newly-won potential of becoming one of the dominant leaders of the EFP. By pursuing this approach, recent governments have begun to show a *"less enthusiastic strain of Europeanism, more instrumental and nationally orientated, had entered the German political discourse (...) slowing down Germany's Europeanization path"* (Daehnhardt 2011, 39). Germany, however, continues to be a relatively Europeanised state given the various points of intersection between the state and the EU (Daehnhardt 2011). Concerning the German foreign policy, up-loading seems to prevail over down-loading, which makes Germany a pace-setter who actively promotes European policies.

Another contribution worth mentioning is Müller's study on the Europeanisation of the German foreign policy in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, since it is one of the

rare examples of a single case study taking into consideration a regional foreign policy. The referral to Europeanisation in the analysis of a national foreign policy towards a specific domestic context is valued a significant contribution to the field, since it considers particular issues and complexities, and thus allows for a comprehensive analysis. The restriction to a certain geographic region permits the consideration of specificities, potential difficulties or even tensions in the relations between the two poles. Moreover, it is a good example for the application of the conceptual framework to one of the six founding states and one of the largest EU countries, meaning it enjoys a considerable political weight on the European decision-making level. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was chosen as a suitable case study because, since the creation of the state of Israel, it has been a pressing issue for both Germany and the EU. Particularly Germany builds on a "*special historic relationship*" (Müller 2011, 385) in relating to Israel and is also keen on achieving a sustainable and stable solution in the Middle East. The EU shares this objective, present in the European foreign strategy since 1970, first in the framework of the EPC and then in the CFSP. Müller found that Germany has thoroughly relied on the European policy framework for the achievement of its objectives. The transformations, however, have to be viewed in the historical context of shifting international and regional equilibria. The effects of European integration have indeed been significant, but do not account for all the observed developments. His study answers another important question: why would a Member state even consider projecting its national policy preferences onto a higher level? A common EFP may offer many advantages for the Member States, who get the chance to promote their own national interests in another political forum. Smaller states can exert a greater influence and participate in joint actions. In brief, the uploading of policy preferences is useful for those Member States having certain ambitious objectives that they cannot achieve by acting unilaterally. Another motivation could be the necessity to externalise complex problems or controversial foreign policy issues to the EU level. The political costs for the national government would thus be reduced, as the European institutions are the ones executing the policy (Müller 2011, 387).

3.2 Greece as the ‘foot-dragger’

In his analysis of the Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy, Economides examines the immediate impact of EU membership on the country. He identifies three elements in

the process of Europeanisation of national foreign policies: first, the top-down approach, which consists in "*processes of adaption and socialisation*" that convey practices, values and norms to the national state. This approach concentrates on the domestic impact of European integration, or EU membership in the case at hand, which is then visible in the changing substance or style of foreign policy. Second, the author underlines that this dimension cannot simply be reduced to adaption or socialisation, but it actively contributes to the creation of a collective identity. Third, the bottom-up approach, where national interests and policy preferences are 'projected' onto the European foreign policy agenda. Member States do so when their objectives cannot be achieved with unilateral actions and they want to make use of the political weight of the Union. Economides supports the view that the Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy, besides contributing to the "*attainment of 'Europeanness'*", has deepened the ongoing process of 'Westernisation', 'modernisation' and 'normalisation'. He concludes that, in the case at hand, the bottom-up approach prevailed over the top-down dimension and the identity formation process, since Greece had successfully managed to incorporate the issues of Turkey and Cyprus in the EFP agenda (Economides 2005).

Tsardanidis and Stavridis, on the contrary, criticise the growing consensus in the existing literature of a "*successful, completed and visible Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy*" (Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005, 217). They go one step further and attempt to answer the question to what extent the Greek foreign policy has been Europeanised since the country's accession. Contrary to other authors, they argue that the Europeanisation process is not completed and that "*there is still a long way to go for Greek FP to become really Europeanised*" (Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005, 218). Based on the standard literature of the field, they consider Europeanisation to be a tri-dimensional process: top-down, bottom-up and the outcome of the first two dimensions. Economides viewed the latter more like a process of identity formation; Tsardanidis and Stavridis, on the other hand, interpret it as the result of the Europeanisation of single national foreign policies, which would be the creation of a powerful EFP allowing the EU to 'speak with one voice' on the global stage. They conclude that only the first dimension can be observed in Greece since 1996, at a moment when the EU has started to successfully influence the Greek foreign policy agenda. In fact, on some foreign policy issues, Greece had not taken a clear stance before joining the Communities and was thus obliged to adapt. The result is that, today, some issues are dealt with

exclusively through the EU framework (Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2011, 113). The process of Europeanisation has so far only meagrely resulted into the projection of national policy preferences to the EU level and is thus incomplete (Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005). A few examples can be identified where Greece has successfully uploaded national concerns to contribute to the creation of a common European position (EU accession of Cyprus, Macedonia). Yet, the researchers argue that this cannot be qualified as a 'successful' Europeanisation as it did not impact the attitudes and preferences of other Member States (Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2011, 118–19). For these reasons, they coined the term *"limited Europeanization"* (Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2011) for the Greek case. Concerning the working definition of Europeanisation used in their analysis, it would be necessary to add that Europeanisation does not only refer to the immediate impact, but also the long-term ramifications of EU membership. In other words, the concept can also be used for research involving the EU founding states who, in some policy areas, are still undergoing the process of Europeanisation.

3.3 France as the 'fence-sitter'

Next to Germany and the United Kingdom, France is considered to be one of the most influential countries in the realm of the CFSP. Issues like security and defence have always ranked high on its political agenda. Rieker identifies a *"French-dominated and militarily strong EU"* (Rieker 2006, 520) as France's ultimate goal. In this regard, Paris had hoped that the Amsterdam Treaty would be the big breakthrough, but was disappointed. The resulting expansion in civilian crisis management missions did, however, have an important impact. In fact, the author argues that the French policy has been diverted from a more military/offensive approach to a more preventive approach, embracing the principle of comprehensive security. These new trends have evolved from a learning and adaptation process, according to Rieker (Rieker 2006). The EFP, however, is still largely viewed as a tool to conduct a more efficient national foreign policy. Being a large nation, France considers itself not as dependent on the EU as other smaller Member States, and decision-makers are thus rather hesitant to engage in European foreign policy-making. At the same time, they want to avoid to be excluded from important EU deliberations and initiatives - that is one of the reasons why Sarkozy pressed for re-joining NATO, in view of playing a greater role in European security. The up-loading, on the other hand, can be seen by France proposing various missions

and operations, portraying itself as a *"consensual producer of initiatives"* (Charillon and Wong 2011, 22). Its military power, wide-spread diplomatic network and the specific and historic knowledge of certain geopolitical regions make its contributions very valuable. Charillon and Wong argue that France's foreign policy is only partially Europeanised and consider the country a *"reluctant European"* (Charillon and Wong 2011, 20). In their opinion, the country does not see the Union as a community of 27 Member States, but driven by joint Franco-German efforts. The EU should not be used as an instrument of French foreign policy, where the national ambitions prevail over the European priorities. They wish for *"a transition towards accepting EU methods and a more European approach towards French foreign policy"* (Charillon and Wong 2011, 30; (Charillon and Wong 2011).

3.4 Italy and EFP

The academic literature consensually categorises Italy as a middle power which is commonly defined as *"a state that holds a position in the international power spectrum that is in the "middle" — below that of a superpower, which wields vastly superior influence over all other states, or of a great power, but with sufficient ability to shape international events"* (Müftüler-Bac 2015). Based on this definition, the country can be described as a significant international actor, who is, however, not playing a dominant role on the world stage. For this reason, multilateral fora are frequently used to achieve certain policy goals. Especially in the second half of the 20th century, EC and NATO membership were two solid pillars of the post-war foreign policy. In this regard, Andreatta speaks of a successful foreign policy, since the country managed to tackle the key challenges arising after the end of the Second World War. Democracy had consolidated, the country had achieved a rather stable level of economic growth and continued to remain well-integrated in the international community. Other researchers consider Rome's foreign policy during the Cold War a rather contradictory policy, whereas Andreatta views it as a balancing act in the given circumstances of a bipolar system. While being an important supporter of the Western bloc and particularly the EC, the Government maintained a certain degree of openness to the Soviet bloc. In addition to low military contributions to NATO, the continuation of commercial and diplomatic relations with the communist states in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East casted some doubts on Italy's commitment and its intentions (Andreatta 2001, 45–53).

After 1989, the rapidly-changing international security situation began to threaten the country's stability. The eruption of nearby regional hostilities in Libya in the 1980s and then in Yugoslavia forced Italy to assume a more active stance. It decided to continue its activities within the "*circle of global engagement*", but revolutionise its approach within its "*circle of geographic proximity*" (Andreatta 2001, 55). Especially the unease in the Mediterranean made a policy reformulation necessary, in order to protect its own national security interests. The most important novelty was a greater disponibility in the provision of forces to military operations (Andreatta 2001, 53–57). A high degree of support for CFSP is what Italy and other Southern European states have in common. A European defence policy is seen as a positive opportunity for a stronger geopolitical role, but also as a projection platform for national policy preferences. This became very evident on the occasion of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. A "*formal communitarization*" (Dobrescu, Schumacher et al. 2017, 87) of the national positions was impossible since Spain, Portugal and Italy decided to back the UK and the USA, disregarding the opposition of France and Germany. Another field where Southern European states would often act jointly, is immigration and asylum policy. Malta, Greece, Cyprus and Italy have been very active in this policy field over the last years, for being particularly exposed to increasing migration flows in the Mediterranean. In 2008, they called for the reform of the Dublin II regulation, at a time when the burden of both migration and the financial crisis seemed unbearable. They stated that in case intra-EU reallocation in existing agreements was not fully implemented, the states would again rely on the conclusion of bilateral agreements with countries of origin and of transit. The so-called Quadro Group had thus managed to launch a serious debate on migration in the European fora. Dobrescu et al. see in this critique of Dublin II an attempt at re-nationalising migration and asylum policy, based on the consideration that the EU was not able to overcome the divisions between the Member States. The disagreements within the Union continued after the Arab Spring, when the lacking European support pushed the most vulnerable states to take unilateral measures. In their analysis of the Europeanisation of the Italian foreign policy together with the concurrent developments in Spain, Portugal, Malta, Greece and Cyprus, Dobrescu et al. found that, in this group of Southern European states, the Europeanisation process has not been excessively successful. They argue that the observed dynamics have only Europeanised the form but not the substance of the national foreign policies. The uploading of national policy preferences would not suffice for a substantial Europeanisation process

if it did not result in the definition of a common European position. Although all the Member States supported the perspective of a common European security and participated consistently in CSDP missions, they did on various occasions hamper European foreign policy decision-making (Dobrescu, Schumacher, and Stavridis 2017).

These considerations emphasise that the response to Europeanisation given by Italy has changed over time. After the Second World War, European integration was seen as a much needed means to re-integrate into the international community. The enduring bipolar system strengthened the link between Brussels and Rome even more. Yet, the end of the Cold War changed not only the international, but also the regional equilibria. Italy was forced to revise its foreign policy and pass from a more reactive to a more proactive stance. Remaining substantially a middle power, the question arises to what extent Italy has the capabilities of influencing foreign affairs, and, in our case, the EFP.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design

Analogous to previous studies, processes of European integration will be considered the independent variable impacting national policy outcomes, as the dependent variable. In the context of the European Union, the regional integration process has led to the interaction of different policy levels, and has thus indirectly generated the harmonisation of policies in various fields, such as commercial and trade policy, social policy, but also foreign policy. The concept of Europeanisation will be used to measure the stage of integration of the national and the concurring European foreign policy in a specific domestic context. The focus lies on explaining how the two policy levels impacted each other, using the case of Libya; the main research question, in other words, is how and to what extent did the European and the Italian foreign policy influence each other reciprocally. This dynamic process moves in two directions: on the one hand, we can say that, in a multilevel system, the national states tend to promote their own preferences and export them to the 'higher' decision-making level. On the other hand, it is also true that European values, principles and standards trickle down to the national level and thus impact important internal decisions and positions. First and foremost, the questions arises how these policy preferences are even projected to the EU level (bottom-up) and what influence Brussels had in determining the Italian foreign policy outcomes (top-down). To what extent did the policy levels influence each other? Is there even proof for the occurrence of Europeanisation? If yes, how advanced is the process at the current stage? Secondly, the reasons and the factors causing the up- and down-loading processes will be examined in the case at hand. Thirdly, assuming that internal political dynamics did indeed have a certain impact, it will be discussed how political parties, in particular populist radical right parties, have influenced the government's activity. I will argue that parties can both from within and outside the executive affect the decision-making process. In the case of PRRPs, this can result in a form of illiberal Europeanisation or, more specifically, in a way of cross-loading illiberal political agendas to other EU Member States. In the case at hand, the Northern League (Lega Nord) will serve as prime example of a PRRP which had a significant impact on the political life in the country, first from the inside of the executive (Government Berlusconi IV), then from the outside (Governments Monti, Letta, Renzi,

Gentiloni) and finally from the inside again (Government Conte I). The results show that the rising support to the Lega did indeed coincide with a shift to more rightist positions in Italian politics. This shift, however, was independent from the Lega being a ruling or an opposition party and was in line with the tendency observed in other European countries. I will focus therefore on the ways and means said party tried to influence the governmental positions and thus also the European decision-making process.

In this single case study, process tracing will be adopted to avoid equifinality (Müller and Flers 2009b, 7). As pointed out by various researchers, in applying the concept of Europeanisation, one of the greatest challenges is to distinguish transformative processes activated by European integration from general tendencies in the international sphere. For instance, Europeanisation should not be mistaken for mere processes of globalisation (Tonra, B. 2015, 191; Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005, 221). In conducting this kind of research, one of the hurdles to tackle is surely the challenge of disaggregation. How can one make sure that the observed process can indeed be attributed to Europeanisation, and not to globalisation? A similar problem could potentially arise with the volatility of Italian politics which could result in mistaking a sudden re-orientation of policy preferences, provoked by internal dynamics, for a shift worth analysing. The method of process tracing should therefore allow for a closer analysis where the nature of particular transformations can be identified in order to determine their relevance.

This research contributes to the existing literature insofar as it combines different aspects of previous research. Country-specific case studies on the topic are very rare despite the fact that they could offer valuable insights in terms of detail and restriction of the context of analysis. Specifically in Libya, the Europeanisation of the national foreign policy, understood as three interrelated processes, is actively promoted by the Italian Government, which recognises that the repercussions of the crisis cannot be tackled unilaterally. Besides consensus-seeking at the EU level, the executive must also win over the internal political actors which play a rather prominent role in Italian foreign policy-making (Brighi 2011a). For this reason, the analysis focuses also on the role of the Lega as PRRP in shaping the foreign policy at hand, which is a topic underexplored by the existing literature.

4.2 Case selection

The analysis will be restricted to the time frame 2011 – 2019; the focus will, in other words, be placed on the interaction of the foreign policies examined from the outbreak of the Arab Spring in Libya and end with the government crisis in the summer months of 2019 in Italy. The growing security threat at the doors of Italy and of the Union put Libya high on the political agenda of both actors. In particular, after the Treaty of Lisbon and the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU was provided with better instruments to act on a global stage. Libya became thus one of the first stages for the implementation of the newly-defined CFSP.

The Libyan case can therefore be qualified as an illustrative case which confirms the conceptual framework of Europeanisation. Besides being a political issue of the utmost topicality, why is Italy particularly fitting for the study? First, as a few researchers have shown, when studying a specific regional foreign policy, an important requirement is the existence of a *“web of political, economic, defence and cultural bonds (...) unique bilateral relationship (...) special historic relationship”* (Müller 2011, 389) between the two subjects. This is definitely applicable here where the recent history indicates that Italy has been keen on conducting friendly and fruitful relations with Libya. Wong and Hill have pointed out that the EU can also function as a platform for larger Member States, in order to re-engage with their former colonies (Wong and Hill 2011, 7). Even if Italy cannot be counted as a great colonial empire like France and Great Britain, the link remains valid. Second, security and defence is a policy field which Italy seems to be particularly committed to bring under the European umbrella. The country's defence budget accounts only for about 1% of GDP and it is therefore commonly known that *“Italy cannot simply afford to ‘go it alone’ in defence and security”* (Brighi 2011a, 65). This underlines that Italy is eager to collaborate with its European partners in CFSP matters and explains why an analysis of the interaction of the two foreign policy levels in Libya is particularly interesting. Third, previous studies have indicated that Italy's foreign policies are susceptible to the volatile political transformations in the political arena (Brighi 2011a). Brighi has detected a variance in the degree of Europeanisation of Italy's foreign policy due to party politics, or more specifically the alternations of centre-left and centre-right coalition governments since 1991. In this analysis, I will pick up exactly where Brighi left off, which is the Government Berlusconi IV. I will

focus on the foreign policy positions of the following governments and verify if Brighi's hypothesis on the varying degrees of Europeanisation holds true. As suggested by Escartin, I will also look at the impact the Lega had as an opposition party on the government's position (Rivera Escartin 2020, 14).

4.3 Measurements and hypothesis

Having explained the implications of concepts used, the question arises of how to apply them to the case at hand. Based on the academic literature, the next paragraphs will focus on the concrete means of measuring the degree of Europeanisation that has occurred. As has already been explored, Europeanisation is composed of three co-existing related processes that explain how the national and the European policy level interact and influence each other. The following illustrates the idealised dimensions which would occur in case the Europeanisation process of the policy at hand was complete.

Downloading, or the top-down dimension of Europeanisation, consists in an adaptation process to European policies and the corresponding institutional frameworks, which specifically aim to shape the form and outputs of national foreign policy positions. European goals are transposed to the national agenda where the definition of a common European position is considered a priority. The downloading dimension emphasises therefore how and to what extent European integration has affected national policies and decision-making procedures (Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005, 220). It is important to take into consideration that, in the field of CFSP, Member States retain their veto rights, meaning that adaption occurs mostly on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis.

Uploading, or the bottom-up dimension of Europeanisation, can be defined as the projection of national policy preferences. EU-level institutions and policy frameworks become the point of reference for the Member state in question, or the preferred means of conducting foreign policy. The state works on strengthening its own role and on increasing its influence over the European partners. This dimension is often used as a 'shield' for a controversial national foreign policy. Through a process of bargaining, the state aims at gathering support for its own policies, in order to build up a tool of collective leverage. The Uploading describes thus the degree to which a national foreign

policy has contributed to define a common European position (Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005, 221; Wong and Hill 2011; Tonra, B. 2015, 185–86).

The third dimension, the so-called crossloading dimension, will be adapted to the exigencies of this thesis. Supported in particular by constructivist theorists, it concretely consists in Member States sharing ideas and policy positions, and learning from each other. By determining common interests, a collective identity is defined. This dimension is thus also described as the 'socialisation' or 'learning' dimension (Tonra, B. 2015, 185–86; Wong and Hill 2011).

In this thesis, I hypothesise that a consistent degree of Europeanisation occurred, although it was not successful in formulating a common European position. Italy has been continuously trying to communitarise the Libyan issue but, after lacking support from the fellow Member States, was forced to rely on national measures to decrease the burden on the country itself. The three conventional measures of Europeanisation are summed up very well in the following framework provided by Wong and Hill, who give very concrete and specific definitions of each point. I will use this framework as a point of reference to confirm the hypothesis that Europeanisation has indeed occurred but has not been excessively successful.

Aspects of Europeanization	National foreign policy (FP) indicators
1 Adaptation and Policy Convergence – Harmonization and transformation of a Member State to the needs and requirements of EU membership ('downloading')	a) Increasing salience of European political agenda b) Adherence to common objectives c) Common policy obligations taking priority over national <i>domaines réservés</i> d) Internalization of EU membership and its integration process ('EU-ization') e) Organizational and procedural change in national bureaucracies
2 National Projection – National foreign policy of a member state affects and contributes to the development of a common European FP ('uploading')	a) State attempts to increase national influence in the world b) State attempts to influence foreign policies of other Member States c) State uses the EU as a cover/umbrella d) National FP uses the EU level as an influence multiplier
3 Identity Reconstruction – Result of above two dimensions. Harmonization process tending towards middle position; common EU interests are promoted ('crossloading')	a) Emergence of shared norms/values among policymaking elites in relation to international politics b) Shared definitions of European and national interests c) Coordination reflex and 'pendulum effect' where 'extreme' national and EU positions are reconciled over time via bilateral and EU interactions

Figure 2: The three dimensions of Europeanisation of national foreign policies, according to Wong and Hill (Wong and Hill 2011, 7).

The next question to address is if the type of Europeanisation can be qualified as liberal or illiberal/informal Europeanisation, a concept introduced by the scholar Escartin. In order to test if the Lega has succeeded in Europeanising its illiberal agenda, by pressuring the Italian Government first from the inside and then from the outside, the definitions provided by Wong and Hill need to be slightly modified. Here, the uploading and crossloading dimensions are in the foreground: the former concerns the projection of illiberal values to the EU level, whereas the latter regards the promotion of illiberal values via the formation of coalition of like-minded states, who cooperate informally for the achievement of their personal foreign policy goals. The increasing amount of "*informal border contacts*" (Rivera Escartin 2020, 3–4) indicates that Member States, in shaping their domestic foreign policy, refer no longer only to EU institutions but also to politically affiliated states (Rivera Escartin 2020). The framework provided by Wong and Hill will thus be adapted as follows:

Aspects of illiberal and informal Europeanisation	National Foreign Policy (FP) Indicators
1) Vertical projection of illiberal policy preferences ('uploading')	a) Projection of national policy preferences through the traditional European channels. b) Consensus at the EU level is sought by using a strategy based on political threats and an offensive political discourse. c) Strong political figures are employed as a means of leverage. d) Priority is the achievement of national policy goals; the development of a common European position is only a side effect.
2) Horizontal promotion of illiberal norms and values ('crossloading')	a) Promotion through the formation of informal coalitions of like-minded Member States. b) Change in the substance of policies is induced by policy learning and diffusion within the EU, independently from the formal channels. c) Use of directional and strong leadership. Radical and unilateral action with the articulation of an emotionally-laden discourse. d) Dynamic reinforces existing inconsistencies in EFP.

Figure 3: Illiberal and informal Europeanisation of national foreign policies, based on Rivera Escartin (Rivera Escartin 2020).

This framework captures how Eurosceptic politics may affect processes of Europeanisation, depriving them of their normative connotation. Its application to the case at hand will follow Italy's internal political developments, where the Lega passes from being a coalition party, to the opposition bench, to the executive again. This particular dynamic allows comparing the extent of its influence in a very elaborate manner.

Based on these considerations, in the evaluation of the findings of this research, I will follow a two-step procedure. I will first evaluate whether and to what extent Europeanisation has occurred in the case at hand. Then, I will proceed to examine if the observed dynamics fall into the category of illiberal and informal Europeanisation. This procedure can be explained by the fact that processes of illiberal Europeanisation must be preceded by 'liberal' Europeanisation in the conventional sense.

5. Analysis

The following part will focus on the development of the Libyan situation, while analysing the response given by the Italian governments and the concurrent dynamics at the European level. Introduced by a historical overview of the relations between Italy and Libya, this assessment has been structured around various turning points in the context of analysis. The Arab Spring in 2011 will serve as point of departure, followed by the aftermath of the First Libyan Civil War, the outbreak of the Second Libyan Civil War, the extensive migration management issues linked to the explosion of the domestic situation and the subsequent change in Rome's leadership in 2018, which led to the pursuit of a more fierce foreign policy. This tracing of the Europeanisation process of the Italian foreign policy will be complemented by an analysis of the internal political dynamics and, more specifically, by investigating to what extent the Lega as PRRP has influenced the making of foreign policy in the time frame considered. As the Lega is frequently considered to 'own' the issue of immigration (Geddes and Pettrachin 2020, 228), it is suggested that the party is particularly eager to promote its own policy preferences at the national and EU level.

5.1 Historical Background

The long history of relations between the two countries and Rome's vital interests in the Mediterranean have made the management of the current conflict in Libya a number one priority for the Italian Government. The European Union's engagement in the region as a provider of humanitarian aid and bilateral assistance renders this case study as a platform for confrontation particularly interesting. Moreover, Libya being a former Italian colony, the two countries share a "*special historic relationship*" (Müller 2011, 389). Between 1911 - 1947, the North African country was subject to Rome's colonial rule. Its conquest was primarily used for propaganda purposes and became therefore an important point on the political agenda of the Italian governments in the first half of the 20th century. Libya was considered Italy's 'fourth shore' and became a status symbol for the country's power and strength as a great actor. Unlike Eritrea and Somalia, it can be categorised as a more demographic colony: its fascination made it an attractive destination for many Italians seeking new opportunities. The quest for national prestige was continued under Fascist rule, when Ethiopia was added to the growing colonial

empire. The colonial rhetoric of prestige and glory was very successful in Italy, but the reality showed otherwise. The problem in Libya remained the control of the hinterland, and the fact that the Italian administration of the territory was restricted to the coast was well hidden. The concentration camps built under Mussolini failed in subjugating the population of Cyrenaica. The growing pride of a 'greater Italy' made Mussolini's defeat in El Alamein in 1942 all the more damaging for the regime and accelerated its downfall. Although the Paris Peace Treaty forced Italy to give up its possessions in Africa in 1947, a considerable amount of citizens decided to remain in Libya for work reasons, as they had been able to acquire relatively high position in the economic realm and public administration. The two countries were therefore inclined to carry on their close relations and constant dialogue. After the war, Libya had been turned into the confederate kingdom of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan and the new King Idriss did not wait long to conclude a bilateral agreement with Italy, regulating various postcolonial matters². The king did not use their common postcolonial history as leverage the way Gheddaffi did in 1969, when he came to power after the coup of the Free Officers Movement. He built his political rhetoric on criticising Western societies and their values, demanded excuses from Rome for the colonial past and then ordered the expulsion of the resident Italians and the seizure of their goods. Libya made itself unpopular also on the international stage by sponsoring various terrorist groups worldwide. The tensions took a violent turn when American and Libyan forces clashed in the Gulf of Sidra in 1986. Yet, after the fall of the Berlin wall, Gaddafi led the regime away from pan-Arabism to a more conciliatory approach towards the international community. In the eyes of Rome, Libya became again a viable partner. Between 1996 and 2008, the Italian governments worked on coming to an end with the country's colonial past and officially recognised the political responsibility over the colonial atrocities committed in Libya. The thus initiated process of reconciliation can evidently be explained by ulterior motives, such as securing energy supplies and improving migration management in the Mediterranean. The centre-right governments had in fact been pushing for the creation of combined Italian-Libyan units, monitoring the Central Mediterranean waters. Collaboration also proceeded on the institution of detainment camps on the Libyan territory. The flagship of this gradual and increasing period of collaboration was the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and

² Italo-Libyan Accord 2nd October 1956.

Cooperation, signed by Gaddafi and the then Prime Minister Berlusconi in 2008³. Italy being Libya's largest trading partner (17.5% of Libyan imports came from Italy in 2009, see Croci and Valigi 2013, 43), the treaty contains principles and guidelines for further cooperation opportunities in the field of economy and trade, but also security. It commits Italy to realise 'basic infrastructure facilities' in Libya, such as health care facilities, a highway and the provision of scholarships in Italian universities. The provisions on immigration enhanced the collaboration structures which were already in place. Critics condemn the treaty for being too vague. Bentley, for instance, considers the agreement to be an *"archetypical depiction of a benevolent colonial Italy bringing medical sanitation, modern transportation and education to its erstwhile colony"* (Bentley 2017, 146). In reality, the treaty and the official apologies did create a good foundation for the normalisation and improvement of relations between Italy and Libya. After the imposition of international sanctions in the early 1990s following various violent attacks, Italy had called for the re-integration of Libya in the international community. Rome's gesture was also a form of recognition for Gaddafi's leadership, who had used Italian colonialism as a background narrative in his political discourse extensively when building up his regime (Bentley 2017; Labanca 2010).

Although the treaty had been ratified at the beginning of 2009, it was never rightly implemented because of the outbreak of the Arab Spring and the revolution in 2011. The rapprochement between the countries did not withhold Berlusconi from joining the international coalition against the Libyan dictator.

5.2 The Arab uprisings and the international intervention in Libya

The outbreak of the Arab Spring in Libya will constitute the point of departure of this research. The protests beginning on 17th February 2011 were initially motivated with the arrest of the lawyer and human rights activist Fathi Terbil, but a profound economic and social discontent among the population came to light. While other states promptly condemned the violent response given by the Libyan dictator, the then Italian Prime minister Berlusconi failed in providing an immediate reaction. Only after a few days, he condemned the suppression of the unrests by the military regime and called for the de-

³ Law 6 February 2009, n. 7. Ratification and execution of the Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between the Italian Republic and the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, signed in Benghazi on 30 August 2008, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2009/02/18/009G0015/sg>.

escalation of the situation. On EU level, the European countries did not succeed to settle on a common position. While some Member States urged for the immediate imposition of a travel ban and an asset freeze, Italy favoured a more cautious approach and preferred to wait for more detailed information on the violent events⁴. On account of the non-aggression clause in the 2008 Treaty, the country was reluctant to oppose its former partner Gaddafi, who the official diplomatic relations were conducted with. In fact, at that point in time, the opposition groupings that had formed in Eastern Libya were still completely unknown. The presence of the Muslim Brotherhood among them was alarming enough to suggest that an Islamic regime could potentially succeed Gaddafi. Moreover, in case the situation was not properly contained, there were bound to be negative repercussions not only on the Mediterranean shores, but also on the Italian economy and energy security. For these reasons, Rome aimed to Europeanise the issue in a way that the problem was tackled collectively. By postponing the decision on EU restrictive measures, Rome's concerns on the imposition of any sanctions without the authorisation of the UN Security Council prevailed (UN Security Council Resolution 1970 followed only a few days later) (Croci and Valigi 2013, 44–46).

On 27th February 2011, the anti-regime forces formed a provisional Government in Benghazi, the National Transitional Council (NTC), which then constituted the main opposition to the central Government. The situation escalated very quickly and the Libyan Government tried to forcefully extinguish the uprisings. Major Western countries demanded the resignation of Gaddafi and decided to take immediate measures, such as cutting diplomatic relations with Tripoli. With the continuing unrests, Italy assumed a more proactive attitude. First and foremost, the 2008 Treaty was suspended on 28th February 2011, meaning the contracting parties were not bound by any non-aggression clause. Second, there was also the fear of being sidelined by France, Germany and the UK and of losing the seat at the table next to the 'Big Three'. Rome began to re-evaluate the benefits of coordinated action and was willing to contribute to any joint effort. Since the end of the Cold War, the EU had become an important pillar in collective peacekeeping and crisis management - a pillar Berlusconi certainly did not want to lose. After the initial hesitation, this shift of position illustrates Berlusconi's readiness for cooperation and coordination with the international community and especially with the EU Member States (Balossi-Restelli 2013).

⁴ 3069th meeting of the Council of the European Union (Foreign Affairs) 21.02.2011.

In March, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1973, authorising Member States to “*take all necessary measures (...) to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack*”, establishing a no-fly zone, enforcing the arms embargo, and imposing asset freezes and travel bans⁵ (United Nations Security Council 2011). For the enforcement of the no-fly zone, a coalition of willing states, including France, the UK, Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands, Spain, the USA, Qatar, UAE, Canada, Norway and Italy, launched the Operation Odyssey Dawn. Italy would have preferred the creation of a joint EU-NATO Mediterranean naval initiative, but, out of fear of marginalisation, decided to join the multinational coalition. To its satisfaction, by the end of March 2011, NATO had assumed the control of all ongoing military operations against Libya⁶. This emphasises how Italy continued to value multilateralism as a valid approach to problem solving, and considered NATO as the main organisation of European security (Crocchi and Valigi 2013). Several experts say, however, that the NATO operation failed in providing the country with a comprehensive stabilisation strategy. The intervention of various international and regional actors complicated the situation further. Given that the resolution did not foresee the deployment of foreign forces in Libya, most countries started to supply the parties with military equipment and logistical support, among them the UAE, Qatar, a few African states, France, Italy, the UK and the USA. The EU had not defined a common political position and was completely divided, since Member States seemed to pursue their own national policies. France, for instance, was the first country to unilaterally recognise the NTC as the country’s only legitimate Government. The mission, initially motivated by humanitarian reasons, had thus become a ‘regime-change operation’ (Capasso et al. 2018). Following the example set by France and other EU states, Berlusconi, supported by the parliamentary majority and opposition, decided to give in and officially recognise the NTC on 4th April 2011. Interestingly enough, the Government subsequently promoted the recognition of the NTC on an international level, in order to put additional pressure on Gaddafi and push him to resign. By September 2011, Italy had reopened its embassy

⁵ UN SC Resolution 1973 allowed also interventions in support of humanitarian assistance operations. The European Council had agreed on the EUFOR Libya military mission on 1st April 2011, in order to “*contribute to the safe movement and evacuation of displaced persons*” and to “*support, with specific capabilities, the humanitarian agencies in their activities*”. The operation, however, was never launched.

⁶ On 8th March 2011, NATO had stepped up surveillance operations in the Mediterranean, by air and then also by sea. It launched the Operation Unified Protector on 22nd March 2011, which started off as an operation to enforce the arms embargo against the country. When the international coalition started to operate under the control of NATO, the mandate of OUP was expanded and regarded also the enforcement of the no-fly zone, and air and naval strikes against any military forces attacking or threatening Libyan civilians and civilian populated areas.

in Tripoli and thus finalised the complete shift of its initial position (Crocì and Valigi 2013). The growing internal and international pressure made the fall of the regime unavoidable. As rebels captured and killed Gaddafi in October 2011, the fighting had been such that the civil war continued for the underlying reasons of dissatisfaction of the population.

5.2.1 The internal dimension

How were the Libyan uprisings and the international intervention perceived internally? The Italian Senate and the National Assembly approved two motions in favour of the military intervention on 23rd and 24th March 2011 respectively⁷. The motions presented by the majority and the opposition did not differ substantially, and both fronts requested the Government to act in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (Crocì and Valigi 2013). In the subsequent brief but intense period of foreign policy-making, Prime minister Berlusconi was able to act based on the preservation of national interests, values and principles, aware of the vast parliamentary support. Ideological preferences were here overshadowed by the exigency of protecting national interests. Crocì and Valigi suggest that policy continuity is very likely in the field of foreign policy. Once in government, political parties struggle with taking radically different foreign policy choices. Internally, they are bound by a state's financial capabilities and military spending, the domestic support and the public apparatus, which is not subject to renewal by each executive. Externally, constraining factors, such as international commitments and the European legal framework, limit states in their actions. The scholars' arguments indicate that independently of the colour of the government, the outcome would have been very similar. In other words, given the particular circumstances, the Italian engagement in the Libyan revolution was unavoidable. The internal and external constraining factors suggest that a centre-left government would have taken on the same policy choices as Berlusconi (Chelotti and Johansson-Nogues 2014; Crocì and Valigi 2013).

Inside the centre-right coalition, the influence of the Lega was noticed particularly in the field of migration policy, since Maroni had become Minister of the Interior in 2008. He embraced the party line promoting the repatriation of migrants, and favoured a

⁷ Senate of the Italian Republic, Wednesday 23 March 2011. 525th Public session, http://www.senato.it/Leg16/3818?seduta_assemblea=3968. National Assembly, Thursday 24 March 2011. 452nd Public session, <https://leg16.camera.it/410?idSeduta=0452&tipo=sommario>.

bilateral approach in migration management. With the Arab Spring, the issue became even more important. The Minister frequently spoke of *"the risk of a real humanitarian crisis, with the arrival of hundreds of people on the Italian coasts, fleeing from the Maghreb countries (...) there are criminals who have escaped from prison and people infiltrated by terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda in the Maghreb Islam (...) we are in high alert"* (La Repubblica, February 11, 2011). Irregular migration to Italy did indeed grow in 2011 in relative terms, but the numbers followed a generally increasing tendency. The referral to this emergency rhetoric served the purpose of creating an 'imagined crisis', to gather more political support and put more pressure on Brussels (Paoletti 2014). In order to reduce the incoming migration flows, Maroni decided to rely on unilateral actions, justifying them with a lack of European support. A flagship example would be the exchange of notes between Italy and Tunisia in April 2011, committing Tunis to prevent future departures and Rome to issue temporary protection permits to all Tunisian citizens who arrived in Italy in the period January - April 2011⁸. This implied that these roughly 25,000 Tunisian citizens had also right to free circulation within the Schengen area; it is needless to say that this political manoeuvre was not very much appreciated by the other EU Member States (König 2011; Paoletti 2014). At the subsequent Justice and Home Affairs Council, the Italian-Maltese proposal to extend the temporary residence permits to the rest of Europe was rejected. Maroni stated that *"Italy has been left alone (...) I wonder whether in this situation it makes sense to remain in the European Union"* (Reuters, April 11, 2011). His political rhetoric and the supposed need for unilateral actions to seek relieve for a situation which impacts Europe as a whole resembles the response his successor Salvini would give in 2018. Maroni's strong leadership and even the attempt to win over Malta for his proposal suggest a certain illiberal tendency, which cannot be ignored.

5.3 The aftermath of the First Libyan Civil War

In the aftermath of the First Libyan Civil War, the international community decided to follow a 'light-footprint strategy' by not deploying any peacekeeping forces on the ground. The post-war context was relatively calm and the new Libyan authorities were deemed capable of handling the transition. Italy was willing to resume with the implementation of the Treaty of Friendship and continued to collaborate with the post-

⁸ Senate of the Italian Republic, Thursday 7 April 2011. 536th Public session, http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/16/Resaula/0/530158/index.html?part=doc_dc-ressten_rs.

revolutionary Government led by el-Kheib (Aliboni 2016). Initially, the new Government did indeed enjoy the support of great parts of the population and could rely on a solid financial framework, by virtue of the country's vast energy resources. The democratic elections in June 2012 were supposed to produce a democratically elected and legitimate executive. The NTC handed over the power to the newly-created General National Congress (GNC), which was tasked with the formation of an executive and the drafting of a new constitution. It however did no better job than his predecessor in controlling the militias and armed groups. Subsequent changes in the Government's composition, hostilities between the conflicting political parties and their militias, the killing of Sufi brotherhood members and even a major attack on the US embassy brought anew a high degree of instability to the country. The state started lacking in sovereignty and the formation of two opposing political factions made a major polarisation of the conflict unavoidable (Chivvis et al. 2012; Capasso et al. 2018).

While the domestic tensions in Libya piled up, the Union was forced to adjust to new external challenges. The tragic events in Lampedusa in autumn 2013, with 366 casualties, marked a change in the EU's approach to sea rescue. At the ensuing European Council meeting on 24 - 25 October 2013, Member States agreed on the wording *"The European Council expresses its deep sadness at the recent and dramatic death of hundreds of people in the Mediterranean which shocked all Europeans. Based on the imperative of prevention and protection and guided by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, determined action should be taken in order to prevent the loss of lives at sea and to avoid that such human tragedies happen again."* (European Council 2013). The envisaged actions include:

- Strengthening the cooperation with countries of origin and transit, and with the relevant international organisations.
- Fighting the trafficking and smuggling of human beings.
- Strengthening of Frontex activities.
- Implementing the new European Border Surveillance System, to detect any maritime activities (European Council 2013).

The Member States thus agreed on linking the issue of sea rescue to the external border control dimension, but as no significant action followed, the then Italian Prime Minister Letta decided to launch the Operation Mare Nostrum. In fact, Cuttitta and other authors

suggest that its launch was a direct reaction to the crisis of legitimacy of the European border control regime (Cuttitta 2015; Kasperek 2015). The two official objectives of the operation were both sea rescue and the arrest of traffickers. To this end, the strait of Sicily was patrolled with air and naval assets provided by the Italian military. The real novelty was the Government's shift from a more securitarian approach, where the traffickers' criminal activity was in the foreground, to a mixed securitarian-humanitarian approach, which also took into consideration the humanitarian aspects of the crimes committed. The "*humanitarisation of the maritime border*" (Cuttitta 2015, 130) was a trait that distinguished Mare Nostrum from previous operations, which the Italian army had engaged in to patrol the maritime border. The maritime operation itself became a platform for political confrontation: since the end of 2011, the Lega and other minor right-wing parties had been confined to the opposition bench, first in a technocratic and then in a grand coalition Government. The dissent to Letta's approach of addressing the increasing number of casualties in the Mediterranean was very prominent in the parties' political discourse. The political Left, on the other hand, heavily critical of Berlusconi's migration policies, welcomed the launch for Mare Nostrum, particularly for its humanitarian dimension. The direct confrontation was carried out in the national Parliament, especially the debate held in the National Assembly in May 2014 illustrated the two fronts very well. The centre-right parties requested the immediate suspension of the Mare Nostrum, the subsequent strengthening of border controls, the conclusion of more bilateral agreements with countries of origin and transit, the revision of the Dublin convention and the implementation of a real burden sharing mechanism. This proposal was rejected by the majority, who instead approved multiple motions and a resolution calling for the transformation of Mare Nostrum into an EU-sponsored operation, more support from the EU in migration management, more cooperation between the Member States, the strengthening of Frontex and also the revision of the Dublin convention⁹. The Lega responded to this with great manifestations and other initiatives of political opposition: with slogans like "*Italians first*", "*Against racism in reverse*" and "*Stop the invasion*", the party managed to build up a very emotionally laden discourse (La Repubblica, October 18, 2014).

⁹ Motion 1-00439, presented by Giorgetti Giancarlo on Wednesday 23 April 2014, rejected in the 230th Public session of the National Assembly on Friday 16 May 2014 <https://www.camera.it/leg17/410?idSeduta=0230&tipo=stenografico#sed0230.stenografico.avv00050>. Adoption of motions 1-00455, 1-00466, 1-00467, 1-00468, 1-00469 and resolution 6-00073.

Despite the considerable number of rescues, the Italian Government announced the termination of the operation Mare Nostrum in October 2014. The reason was not the internal pressure of the centre-right and right wing, but the excessive costs and the excessive burden on the country. The EU reacted by strengthening Frontex activities and by creating the Joint Operation Triton, for the border control in Italian waters. However, it was not considered as efficient as its predecessor: for its implementation, fifteen Member States did indeed contribute with equipment and personnel, but its budget was less than a third compared to the one for Mare Nostrum; the humanitarian aspect was missing from its mandate, as no Search and Rescue Activities (SAR) activities were conducted and its main function was solely to support Italy in the patrolling of maritime borders and in information collection; also, the operation was limited to a very restricted geographical area (Cuttitta 2015, 128–40). President of the European Commission Juncker eventually recognised that the EU had given “*insufficient answers*” to the increasing migratory flows, in particular by not supporting the Italian efforts in the Mediterranean. The suspension of Mare Nostrum was a grave mistake and came at a high costs in terms of casualties; the EU would need a more comprehensive strategy to help those Member States hit the hardest. In a statement at the European Parliament, he promised to do everything in his power to introduce national quotas for the redistribution of asylum seekers (eu news, April 29, 2015), in order to decrease the burden on the Member States at the external borders. Juncker thus admitted that the lack of European support for the Italian initiative had been counterproductive for the European migration management, and acknowledged the necessity for a new comprehensive mechanism which also considered the interests of the coastal states.

5.4 The outbreak of the Second Libyan Civil War

After the GNC had refused to step down at the end of its electoral mandate, national elections in June 2014 were supposed to unblock the situation. Yet, the voting results were rejected by the Islamist Party who then forced the newly-elected House of Representatives to relocate to Tobruk, in view of an alliance with the Libyan National Army (LNA). Headed by General Haftar, the LNA had constituted itself with the purpose of gaining control of the east of the country, by launching the Operation Dignity. Consequently, Islamists and Misratan militias launched the Operation Libya

Dawn in Tripoli and thus formed a coalition supporting the GNC, which remained in place. The UN hoped to relieve the situation and mediate a solution between the two different factions by proposing the creation of an interim government, the Government of National Accord (GNA), in March 2016. Headed by Fayez al Serraj, the GNA was and still is the only Government recognised by the UN but is gradually losing support and the control over wide territories in the west of the country. It is supported by a few international actors, among them Italy, Turkey, Qatar, and others, but is continuously struggling to counter Tobruk's offensive. The LNA, on the other hand, financed by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, the Russian Federation, France and others, is achieving more and more territorial gains and thus succeeds in extending its power. In this constellation, we again see the lacking unity on the side of the European Union (Capasso et al. 2018).

These shifting dynamics in the Mediterranean went along with a more vivid engagement by the European Union. EUBAM Libya, set up in May 2013¹⁰, and EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia¹¹, created in May 2015, functioned both as a response to the rapid increase in migratory flows. The fight against smugglers and the implementation of an integrated border management are all coordinated measures aiming not only at the political stabilisation of the country, but also at securing the Union's external borders. The training and the capacity-building of the Libyan coastguard were added to the mandate of Operation Sophia only in the summer of 2016, after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Defence of the GNA. The envisaged training modules included training in the naval bases and at sea (Raineri, Loschi, and Strazzari, 6–9). In order to tackle the issue of migration in a more comprehensive manner, an Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF) was set up in November 2015 with the objective of “*stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa*” (European Commission 2015). In the North Africa window of the fund, five countries were included, namely Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya, where the latter stands out as one of the greatest beneficiaries of the financial allocations. Growing EUTF contributions over time can be

¹⁰ Council Decision 2013/233/CFSP of 22 May 2013 on the European Union Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in Libya <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02013D0233-20190101&from=EN>.

¹¹ Council Decision 2015/778/CFSP of 18 May 2015 on a European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02015D0778-20191001&from=EN>.

explained by the increase of irregular migration along the Mediterranean route, and are used, in the Libyan case, to finance programmes on humanitarian protection, institution building and stabilisation, enhancing border management capacities of the Libyan authorities and disruption of smuggling networks. The EUTF has become "*a major tool of crisis response in Libya, making other – more traditional – crisis response tools pale in comparison, in terms of resources mobilised*". According to Rainieri, Loschi and Strazzari, the main beneficiaries of EUTF-financed projects in Libya are, besides Italy, the Libyan coastguard, the maritime authorities and the border guards in the south of the country (Rainieri, Loschi, and Strazzari, 13–17).

These two elements of the EU crisis response in Libya, the training of the Libyan coastguard and the creation of the EUTF, have particularly been under attack. First, the selection process of the applicants for the training programme was not thorough enough to avoid the participation in the EU trainings of alleged criminals. Various international reports had found that numerous Libyan coastguards engaged in aggressive and abusive behaviour in relating to migrants and NGOs. Some were also supposed accomplices of smuggling and trafficking networks. These findings certainly put the programme in a bad light (Rainieri, Loschi, and Strazzari, 6–9). Second, the EUTF project design was criticised for neglecting the valuable contribution of local stakeholders and the necessity of dismantling the controversial Libyan legal framework. The frequent violations of the non-refoulement principle in Libya would make the functioning of the legal system impossible, leading to a culture of impunity where detention is the only instrument for the management of illegal migration. Various organisations have consequently refused to use EUTF funding because of their opposition to the EU's controversial migration policies in Libya: the question arose if these funds indirectly facilitated activities in breach of international and human rights obligations (Rainieri, Loschi, and Strazzari, 13–17). These points of critique of the EU crisis response in Libya damaged the reputation of the Union. It is interesting to notice, however, how they were picked up by the Italian Government at a later stage: first, with the signing of the 2017 Memorandum of Understanding between Rome and Tripoli, which envisaged a solid degree of collaboration with the Libyan coastguard; second, with the creation of the *Fondo per l'Africa*, a similar fund aiming at contrasting irregular immigration (Ministero degli Affari esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale 2017).

5.4.1 Italian foreign policy under the Renzi Government

According to the scholar Aliboni, Renzi's foreign policy opened a new phase. He was keen on shaping a new role for Italy in the Mediterranean and in the Middle East. The shifting equilibria in the region made a stronger Italian presence necessary for the protection and promotion of its economic, security and energy interests. In the fight against Daesh and the traffickers on the coast, Renzi considered the rebuilding of the Libyan institutions key to solving the crisis. Based on these considerations, he had defined four strategic guidelines:

- Full support to the UN mediation efforts that since September 2014 worked for the political stabilisation of the country.
- Provision of military forces to a future UN peace-keeping mission, if the deployment of a mission was deemed necessary.
- Promotion of a common European line on migration management to limit illegal migration in the Mediterranean.
- Securing the Libyan energy supplies and thus protecting, indirectly, the interests of ENI (Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi).

Concerning the first point, we can say that the UN mediation did produce a significant outcome but which was not successful in the long term. The December 2015 Skhirat Agreement reconfigured the internal political scene by creating a caretaker government. It did not, however, unblock the situation like the international community had hoped, since Haftar decided to reject the agreement. Other underlying reasons which account for the failure of the attempted peace process were the foreign interferences in Libyan affairs, the inconsistency in the responses given by Western countries to these interferences and the failed incorporation of moderate Islamists in the process of democratic transition. First and foremost, the dialogue launched by the UN was hampered by the interferences of various states who decided to support either one or the other opposing faction based on their national interests. Turkey and Qatar have decided to support the GNA, while the UAE and Egypt have sided with the anti-Islamic forces surrounding Haftar. Egypt, in particular, was and is still keen on keeping the Cyrenaica under control, out of fear of contamination. These interferences contribute to the worsening of the situation. Whereas other European countries like France and the UK have not been very clear about their position, Italy has continuously supported the UN-

backed Government which unites the moderate Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood (Aliboni 2016, 4–6). Contrary to France's and the US' more interventionist stance, Italy has maintained a more cautious approach. The priority was not the fight against terrorism, but the strengthening of state institutions, defending its economic interests and reducing migration in the Mediterranean (Colombo and Palm 2019, 13–14).

What alternatives remained after the misfiring of the Libyan Political Agreement? Renzi was pushing the international community, and in particular the Union, for an immediate de-escalation of the situation. Increasing migratory flows and the issue of energy security were the main reasons for this activism. First, the refugee crisis had shown that scattered national initiatives were the wrong approach for achieving any sort of long-term goal. Italy, however, would not manage to convince the other EU Member States of the necessity of revising the treaties regulating mobility and external border control. The implications of the inner dimension of the refugee crisis became evident only with the emergence of the Balkan route in spring 2015. In the European Council Emergency Summit, convened on the Italian request to discuss the dramatic situation in the Mediterranean, the leaders established four priorities: fighting traffickers, increasing presence at sea, preventing illegal migration flows, reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility. The allocated funds for the EU Operations Triton and Poseidon were tripled in order to enhance the search and rescue capacities within the mandate of Frontex¹². The European Agenda on Migration¹³, published in May 2015, envisaged a temporary distribution scheme and thus shifted the issue of migration at the centre of the debate at EU level. In addition, Rome pressed for a Council decision on the transfer of 120,000 refugees from Italy and Greece to other Member States¹⁴. The pressure exerted by the Italian Government was essential in forging these initiatives (Parsi 2016, 126). The two ongoing CSDP missions added to this comprehensive EU effort to tackle the challenges deriving from the growing migratory flows.

¹² Special meeting of the European Council, 23 April 2015 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2015/04/23/>.

¹³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A European Agenda on Migration, 13.05.2015 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf.

¹⁴ Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32015D1601>.

Besides the minor steps forward in the EU migration management, the situation in Libya had not significantly changed when Renzi handed in his resignation at the end of 2016. During this tenure, he had not managed to procure Rome a leadership role in the conflict. Parsi categorises his approach as too hesitant for changing the “*Foreign policy game*”. In his eyes “*Italy continues to play the role of a middle power, which is the maximum to which it can aspire, given its ability to contribute to the military engagements of the international community*” (Parsi 2016, 129). Since the GNA had still not managed to establish itself as the only legitimate Government, the struggle for power continued.

5.5 Migration management under the Gentiloni Government

The Gentiloni Government prioritised two aspects in its foreign policy towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East: maintaining the important commercial relationships with its historical partners, required by trade, strategic and energy security exigencies, and tackling the challenges of migration and political conflicts in a more efficient way. This more active defence policy in the Mediterranean was possible due to a partial disengagement from the campaign against Isis in Iraq and the still ongoing NATO mission in Afghanistan. The increase of forces in Niger, Tunisia and Libya was decided, with the goal of capacity building, and fighting human trafficking and illegal immigration. Also, a closer cooperation with Israel came into being as a result of the recently discovered gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean. Similarly, bilateral relations between Italy and the states party to the Gulf Cooperation Council were continued, with the perspective of benefitting from important economic opportunities (Greco 2018, 121–27).

The scholar Felsen confirms that the three foreign policy circles, which have become a consolidated concept in the academic literature on Italian external relations (Parsi 2016; Felsen 2018), hold also true for the Gentiloni Government. Since the birth of the Republic, Atlanticism, the European community and the Mediterranean have established themselves as the three pillars that largely determine the Italian foreign policy. Concerning the European dimension, the shifting dynamics on the continent in 2016 limited Italy in its action capacities. After the Brexit referendum, the country lost the UK’s support when promoting its interests with larger Member States, like France and Germany. Italy was therefore compelled to cooperate more closely with its other

European partners (Felsen 2018, 368–70). Yet, the continuing disagreements between the Member States pushed Italy to the conclusion of various important bilateral agreements. In the Mediterranean foreign policy circle, the Libyan civil war was evidently in the foreground. The international community had refrained from endorsing Italy as a major player in Libya, but despite the lack of support, Gentiloni decided to increase his diplomatic efforts. The priority was to strengthen the UN-backed Government led by al-Serraj and to strengthen his legitimacy. Foreign Minister Alfano worked on encouraging a dialogue between the opposing factions, in order to settle for an agreement on future elections. Yet, the Italian efforts were undermined by the newly elected French President Macron, when he decided to invite al-Serraj and Haftar to Paris in July 2017. This diplomatic initiative had a rather significant outcome and in some way 'changed the game', as the key role of Haftar in the resolution of the crisis was finally recognised. At the same time, Italy attempted to internationalise the Libyan civil war and reached out to the international community for more resources, given that the stall of the Libyan political crisis had further aggravated the Mediterranean migrant crisis (Felsen 2018, 370–72). The void left by the suspension of Mare Nostrum in 2014 was filled by an increasing number of non-governmental actors, who engaged in SAR activities in the Central Mediterranean. The multiplication of SAR activities, growing anti-immigrant sentiments in Italy and the lack of European support contributed to the repoliticisation of the issues of migration and border policy, by depriving them of their technocratic nature. When the public prosecutor's offices in Palermo and Trapani begun investigating against NGOs for aiding and abetting illegal immigration off the Libyan coast, exponents of the political right portrayed them as 'pull-factors' and culprits of Mediterranean migration (Il Giornale, May 18, 2017; La Repubblica, May 10, 2017). The polarising political confrontation in Italy left thus the door open for electoral exploitation (Cuttitta 2018), which the Lega benefitted from most. The rise of the Lega in these specific years however follows the general shift to more rightist positions in Western Europe (Mudde 2013, 11–14). With Wilders, Le Pen and Petry, Salvini constituted a populist front of Western European countries which united under the slogans of "*nationalism, patriotism, rejection of diversity, and phobia towards migrants and refugees*" (La Repubblica, January 21, 2017) and rejected the humanitarian dimension of the maritime missions in the Mediterranean.

5.5.1 The emerging Italian strategy for Africa

As discussed above, Gentiloni aimed at a closer cooperation with various African countries. A major military presence of the Italian army on the continent was intended to tackle the issue of migration at its root. Additionally, two other initiatives were launched which are similar in their approach to the response given by the EU and which I will discuss in the following paragraphs.

At the external level, the major engagement of Italy on the African continent urged for an expansion of the existing funds. More contributions to the EUTF and the creation of an Italian Fund for Africa (IFA) made the realisation of more projects possible. The Italian Fund was incorporated in the measures taken by Rome in the fight against illegal immigration and human trafficking. For the year 2017, € 200 million were allocated for *“extraordinary interventions aimed at re-launching the dialogue and cooperation with African countries of priority importance for migratory routes”* (Ministero degli Affari esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale 2017). Contrary to the declared objectives, the decree is criticised for risking the disrespect of constitutional and international obligations, according to which external border control must aim at safeguarding the lives of migrants and their fundamental rights. IFA allocations would be used to intercept the departure of migrants who are then brought back to the Libyan camps, under very questionable detainment conditions (La Repubblica 2017). In November 2017, the Italian NGO ASGI (Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione) had even filed a suit against the Ministry of Foreign affairs and International cooperation for misappropriation of funds, since it would have illegitimately financed the repair of four vessels of the Libyan coastguard which would not fall under the scope of development cooperation (European Council on Refugees and Exiles, November 24, 2017). The affinities between the national and the European level become evident by the criticism surrounding their lawful implementation and the fact that most of Italy's financial contributions to the EUTF originate from the IFA and that various EUTF-financed projects are conducted under the supervision of Rome (Palm 2018, 2–3).

At the internal level, Minister of the Interior Minniti made every effort to efficiently tackle the issue of migration, and decided to take some relatively harsh measures in order to decrease the burden on Italy. One pillar of the political line taken was certainly the closer cooperation with origin and transit countries, where the Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) with Libya and the Defence Cooperation Agreement with Niger stand out, while building on a greater EU engagement in the Mediterranean, via the continuation of Operation Sophia. The Minister also promoted the adoption of a rather restrictive Code of Conduct for NGOs operating rescue missions at sea¹⁵ and of a new Law on immigration¹⁶, which were strongly criticised by the political left (Palm and Barana 2019). Despite the internal political opposition, Minniti and Gentiloni achieved their objective of reducing the arrivals of migrants on Italian soil. To this end, the above-mentioned MoU of 2nd February 2017 between Italy and the GNA was probably the most effective instrument. In view of the declared priorities of “*cooperation in the development sector, to combat illegal immigration, human trafficking and contraband and on reinforcing the border security*” (Italian Republic, Government of National Accord of Libya 2017), the parties agreed to continue cooperation on matters of security and irregular migration, whereby Italy committed to providing technological and financial support to the Libyan authorities, which includes the training and capacity-building of the Libyan coastguard. The so-called ‘hosting centres’ will remain in place. Article 4 includes very vague provisions concerning the financing of the measures, and leaves it open if the allocations originate from the Italian State or the European Union. The memorandum was the result of pressures coming from Rome: the visible consequences of the EU-Turkey deal along the eastern Mediterranean route, pushed the Government to fight for a “*replication' of this approach in North Africa*” (Palm 2018, 1). Unlike the EU-Turkey agreement, however, the memorandum is missing a resettlement component. Other elements of criticism are the vague terminology, funding and the minor commitment to respecting human rights obligations (Palm 2017). The collaboration with the Libyan coastguard, also part of the mandate of Operation Sophia, was deemed necessary as it became clear that the CSDP operation could not be conducted on the Libyan state territory.

¹⁵ Code of conduct for non-governmental organisations operating rescue missions at sea, https://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/codice_condotta_ong.pdf.

¹⁶ Decree 17 February 2017, n. 13. Urgent measures to accelerate proceedings on the matter of international protection and to fight illegal immigration, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/02/17/17G00026/sg>. Converted with amendments through Law 13 April 2017, n. 46.

5.6 Conte and the revival of the Northern League

After the 2018 general elections, the new coalition Government, composed of Lega and the 5-Star-Movement, reaped the fruits of the policy designed by the previous executive. The number of migration arrivals had dropped drastically and federal secretary of the Lega and new Minister of the Interior Salvini managed to turn it into one of his victories. In his short term in office, he introduced a period of political upheaval. Unlike in the previous centre-right governments, no centrist coalition partner was there to moderate the Lega's political programme. The party benefitted from the shadowy position of the Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S) and thus managed to dominate the political scene. The *"high issue salience and effective ownership of the immigration issue by the League"* (Geddes and Pettrachin 2020, 228) was a great factor in explaining the party's electoral success in 2019. Salvini's tenure will be remembered for the adoption of the controversial Security Decrees¹⁷ on immigration and security, which had a direct impact on Italy's migration policy, its relations with Libya and the topical debate on the EU level (Bender-Säbelkamp 2019). Contrary to their declared scope, they actually increased the number of undocumented migrants on the Italian territory. The governmental decrees, subsequently converted into law by the Parliament, abolished asylum applications on grounds of humanitarian protection, amended the existing integration policies, established the withdrawal of the status of international protection for lawbreakers and restricted the sea activities of NGOs in Italian waters. Criticised by civil society, local and regional governments, and international organisations, the political debate on the legitimacy of the decrees culminated in the case of Sea-Watch 3, when the ship's captain Carola Rackete decided to neglect the Italian legislation and disembark at Lampedusa (Geddes and Pettrachin 2020). This event blended in with the Lega's smear campaign against NGOs and their rescue missions in the Mediterranean. The policy of 'closing the ports' by not authorising the disembarkation drew the attention of the whole international community, although the

¹⁷ Decree 4 ottobre 2018, n. 113. Urgent measures on the matters of International protection and immigration, public safety, as well as measures for the functioning of the Ministry of the Interior and the organisation and operation of the National Agency for the administration and the destination of assets seized and confiscated from organised crime, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2018/10/04/18G00140/sg>. Converted with amendments through Law 1 December 2018, n. 132.
Decree 14 June 2019, n. 53. Urgent measures on matters of public order and safety, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2019/06/14/19G00063/sg>. Converted with amendments through Law 8 August 2019, n. 77.

Italian ports had actually never been shut from a legal point of view. This political slogan became a symbol for the party's harsh stance on immigration (Agenzia Giornalistica Italia, May 11, 2019), which was then reflected in the official position of the executive.

During its first year in office, the UN had denounced the Government's immigration policy as a serious violation of human rights on two occasions (Affari internazionali, May 30, 2019). De facto, its political line followed already existing trends and strategic objectives, defined by the previous governments, which were then consolidated in the yellow-green coalition. In the Mediterranean, the foreign policy rested on three pillars: complicate the disembarkation of migrants in Italy; hindering non-governmental organisations from conducting SAR activities at sea; moving the "*locus of intervention*" away from the national territory, by a major engagement in the Sahel-Saharan region (Strazzari and Grandi 2019, 337). This policy of 'closing the ports' and of disengaging from SAR operations in the Mediterranean was resented by the European partners, since they were forced to accept some degree of burden sharing. (Strazzari and Grandi 2019). The discussion in the European fora on migration revolved around temporary suspensions of Schengen, seemingly endless debates on disembarkation, relocation and a reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The frequent referral to unilateral and bilateral initiatives by single Member States, which were then accompanied by EU-funded projects, led to a less effective cooperation on EU level (Palm and Barana 2019). In order to get support for its cause, the Conte Government even attempted to build a coalition of 'sovereignist' states. At the European Council Meeting in June 2018 on migration, security and defence matters¹⁸, it was indeed agreed to support the countries who had been hit the hardest by the increasing migratory flows. Yet, the Visegrád Group and Austria, the supposed allies of Rome, insisted that the relocation of migrants would happen on a voluntary basis and thus defied Italy's interests. The coalition had failed in its purpose, but the fact of reaching out to the Eurosceptical countries of Eastern Europe rather than to the Europeanist countries in the West symbolised a rather radical change in the history of Italian foreign policy (Fabbrini and Zgaga 2019).

¹⁸ European Council, 28-29 June 2018, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2018/06/28-29/>.

Another turning point was the debate on the renewal of Operation Sophia. The Italian Minister of the Interior was not particularly fond of the operation, defining it as an *“international mission that has as its only reason for living the fact that all the migrants rescued end up in Italy. A brilliant agreement signed by the Renzi Government”* (Rai News, January 23, 2019). After he had threatened to close the Italian ports to the operation if those rescued were not equally distributed across the EU, Germany decided to withdraw its vessels from Sophia. Italy’s political line would entail that the operation *“could no longer fulfil its original mandate”* (Deutsche Welle, January 23, 2019). In March 2019, the Member States finally agreed to renew EUNAVFOR MED, but restricted its activities to the only use of air assets and a closer cooperation with the Libyan authorities¹⁹. Diplomatic sources insinuated that this was the only possible outcome because of Italy’s intransigent position. Rome wanted to cease being the first-country-of-entry for the majority of migrants rescued at sea and urged the other states to receive them. Since this was not an option for France, Germany and Spain, a compromise was found which, however, deprived the mission of major capabilities (Reuters, March 26, 2019). The resulting Council decision showed, first and foremost, Italy’s commitment to promoting its interests at the EU level, and secondly, the high level of disagreement between the European states. Without a EU naval presence in the Mediterranean, any political confrontation on the distribution of migrants at the EU level was avoided (Mantini 2019). It was still a partial victory for the Italian Government: despite the lacking support for a fair distribution mechanism, Italy achieved its goal of stripping Sophia from its SAR component.

¹⁹ Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/535 of 29 March 2019 amending Decision (CFSP) 2015/778 on a European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019D0535>.

6. Discussion of findings and outlook

The very intense common history of Italy and Libya characterised their bilateral relationship. Libya went from being Italy's 'fourth shore' to becoming a viable commercial partner in North Africa, first under King Idriss and then under Gaddafi. The Arab Spring represented a game-changer in their relations, since it catapulted the Mediterranean and migration issues to the very top of Italy's and the EU's political agendas. So what conclusions can be drawn from the shifting dynamics of the following years? How and to what extent did the European and the Italian foreign policy influence each other reciprocally? How did Italy project its policy preferences to the EU level (bottom-up) and what influence did Brussels have in shaping the Italian foreign policy outcomes (top-down)? Also, what role did the Lega as a PRRP play in the context of analysis?

In the timeframe considered, I observed that the degree of Europeanisation of the Italian foreign policy has varied. No clear pattern was detected, where either the uploading or the downloading dimension prevailed. These variances can be explained with shifting power dynamics in the regional context, inside the Union but also in the internal political arena (Brighi 2011b), where the Lega stands out for its issue ownership of immigration (Geddes and Pettrachin 2020, 228), a policy area which the party effectively linked to the political crises in North Africa. Here, three time periods can be distinguished:

1) The **Berlusconi** Government was burdened with the decision on whether to join the international coalition against Gaddafi in 2011. The Union did not manage to settle on a common position regarding the military intervention, agreed however to issue a Council decision on the imposition of EU sanctions. Italy's more cautious approach prevailed and the decision on sanctions followed only after the authorisation by the UN Security Council with Resolution 1970; this is a clear example of *bottom-up Europeanisation* where Rome attempted to influence the foreign policies of other Member States and thus contributed to the definition of a common European position. Given the relatively friendly relations with Libya, Italy was reluctant to join the international military intervention. After initial hesitation, however, Berlusconi gave in and joined the military operation, out of fear of marginalisation. Pressures by the European partners, but also by the international community explain this radical shift of position, whereby

NATO was once more recognised as the main organisation of European security. Being a middle power, Italy has always been limited in its military capabilities and has thus adapted to the emerging institutional framework of European security (*top-down Europeanisation*). The NATO operation was also supported by the parliamentary majority and opposition, and the Government was in this way free to act without any constraint. Inside the coalition, the Lega was counterbalanced by its partners and was forced to moderate its demands. Minister of the Interior Maroni was therefore restricted in its actions, but still managed to shape the political discourse on migration management. Here we need to remember the conclusion of the bilateral agreement with Tunisia, the ensuing negative repercussions on all the Schengen countries and the attempt to gain Malta for the proposal of extending the temporary residence permits to the rest of Europe. The referral to unilateral actions resembles the response Salvini would give in 2018. Maroni's strong leadership and his political discourse indicate a certain illiberal tendency, which must be taken into account, but was not reflected in the Government's official positions.

2) After the fall of Gaddafi, the 'light footprint strategy' adopted by the international community left room for the interference of various foreign actors in Libya. While the domestic tensions piled up, Europe had to adjust to the increasing migration flows. The tragic events in Lampedusa in October 2013 were a wake-up call; although Italy attempted to Europeanise the issue and to promote its national policy preferences in the common institutions, no significant collective response was given by the EU. Hence **Letta** decided to act unilaterally and launch Operation Mare Nostrum, in order to address the SAR exigencies in the Mediterranean. Italian centre-right parties, and particularly the Lega, criticised the operation for its humanitarian dimension. After one year, the operation was terminated and substituted by the EU-Sponsored Joint Operation Triton, which *prima facie* appeared to be a viable successor, but was not as successful in fulfilling its purpose. When the then President of the European Commission Juncker retrospectively endorsed Italy for solely having shouldered the burden in the Mediterranean, he recognised that the lack of European support had been counterproductive for the European migration management system; this recognition of the link between European and national interests can be qualified as a *crossloading* dynamic, highlighting the existence of shared norms and values. **Renzi** built on Juncker's statement and worked on the definition of a common European strategy, by

uploading Italy's national foreign policy preferences. It was due to the pressure by the Italian Government that the European Agenda on Migration and the relocation of 120,000 refugees from Italy and Greece were decided in 2015. The operations EUBAM and EUNAVFOR MED, and the creation of the EUTF complemented this joint effort, which stood in stark contrast to the single unilateral initiatives implemented on the Libyan soil. Unlike France and the UK, Italy sided with the UN in supporting the GNA of al-Serraj and prioritised the strengthening of the state institutions, instead of the fight against Daesh. **Gentiloni** added on to his predecessor's legacy, although he seemed to take the lack of European support as a given and sponsor a more active foreign policy. Having to share the political stage in Libya with France, he increased the diplomatic efforts allowing for Italy to assume a more prominent role. The creation of the IFA and the conclusion of the controversial Memorandum of Understanding with the GNA, envisaging a closer cooperation with the Libyan coastguard, mirrored the response given by the EU with the introduction of the EUTF and the launch of Operation Sophia. This policy convergence between the national and the European level was the result of a coordination process, which reconciled both the national and the EU position and strategy (*crossloading*).

3) The **Conte** Government benefitted from the policy designed by the previous executive. Migration arrivals had significantly been reduced and Minister of the Interior Salvini rebranded it as one of his victories. He took advantage of the shadowy position of his coalition partner in order to implement a very criticised immigration policy. With the adoption of the Security Decrees, he continued the campaign against NGOs and their SAR activities in the Mediterranean. His policy of 'closing the ports' was resented by the other European states, since they were constrained to accept rescued migrants from the Mediterranean. The disagreements within the Union culminated in the debate around the renewal of Sophia, when Italy *uploaded* its national policy preferences successfully and prevailed in restricting the operation's activities to the use of air assets. It is also worth noticing that, in the European fora, the Government formed *ad hoc coalitions of like-minded Eastern European states*, instead of reaching out to the traditional partners in the West. Even when France and Germany proposed a 'new solidarity mechanism' in July 2019, Italy refused to participate and Salvini stated to be dubious about decisions "*solely taken in Paris and Berlin*" (Euractiv, July 23, 2019). Albeit the executive was led by an independent political figure, the influence of the

Lega was palpable because not counterbalanced by a politically strong coalition partner. Here, we can remember the case of the vessel Diciotti of the Italian coastguard, whom the Ministry of the Interior denied the authorisation to disembark in August 2018. The prosecutor's office of Agrigento subsequently opened an investigation against Salvini for kidnapping, illegal arrest and abuse of powers. The investigation, however, was suspended as the prosecutor did not get the official authorisation to proceed by the Italian Senate. The decisive votes were casted by the M5S whose electoral campaign had been built on values like transparency and justice (Open, March 20, 2019).

This brief review highlights the varying degree of Europeanisation of the Italian foreign policy. In 1) and 2), the observed dynamics can be categorised as processes of conventional 'liberal' Europeanisation, where Italy has continuously sought the dialogue with the European institutions in view of improved crisis management in Libya. One reason was certainly the necessity to externalise complex problems or controversial foreign policy issues, in order to reduce the political costs for the national government. It can be added Italy was not excessively successful in Europeanising its foreign policy, as it did not impact the attitudes and preferences of the other Member States (Dobrescu, Schumacher, and Stavridis 2017; Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005). Although a certain illiberal tendency was palpable under the Berlusconi Government, when the Lega covered a government function, its influence was limited and balanced by its more centrist coalition partners. The Gentiloni Government paved the way for Salvini's harsher immigration policies, but followed at the same time the general tendency to more 'rightist' positions in Western Europe (Mudde 2013, 11–14). Time period 3) represents a turning point, where the official position of the Italian Government did indeed reflect the Lega's illiberal agenda. An increasing amount of "*informal border contacts*" (Rivera Escartin 2020, 3–4), the creation of ad hoc coalitions and a prevalent emotionally-laden discourse indicate processes of illiberal and informal Europeanisation. We can therefore confirm Escartin's hypothesis, according to which, under the influence of a PRRP in government, processes of illiberal and informal Europeanisation are possible. One of the conditions is that, in case of a coalition government, the weak position of the coalition partner leaves the PRRP enough room for manoeuvre. Yet, while Escartin prioritises the crossloading dimension, I wish to stress the added relevance of the bottom-up dynamic in our context. From this analysis, it also appears evident that the influence of PRRPs in opposition is very

limited. Besides their capability of efficiently weighing in on the political debate, the foreign policy-making resulted unaffected in the context of analysis.

So how is the process in 3) different from dynamics of De-Europeanisation? Referring to the three criteria provided by Tonra, it appears evident that a permanent disengagement from European mechanism had never been an option for the Government in question. The collective policy-making institutions retained their centrality and their competences were not weakened by the introduction of any professional roles in the national sphere. Moreover, substantive and procedural EU norms continued to be respected, in spite of a certain reluctance.

The last remaining question is if this analysis has brought us closer to categorising Italy in Börzel's framework. Is it a 'pace-setter', a 'fence-sitter' or a 'foot-dragger'? Although the country did continuously push for common policies at the European level, the outcome was rather unsuccessful. The varying degrees of Europeanisation during the time frame considered make it impossible to exclude one or the other category. If we assume the role of Italy under the Conte Government as a 'foot-dragger' to be an exception to the norm, we are left with only one plausible option. Merely by considering its activism, the country cannot be qualified as a passive 'fence-sitter' – but did it actually set the pace in the Libyan crisis? It certainly tried to play a leadership role, was however often overruled not only by the international community, but also by its European partners. The priority was the protection of national interests, which simultaneously acted as a constraining factor and forced Italy to assume a more pragmatic approach in handling the Libyan issue and migration in the Mediterranean.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined the Europeanisation of the Italian foreign policy in Libya, with a particular focus on the internal political dynamics. The aim of my research was to find out how and to what extent the European and the Italian foreign policy influenced each other reciprocally, and to what extent the Lega, as PRRP, impacted the processes of foreign policy-making. To this end, I have looked into the developments of the Libyan crisis in the years 2011 – 2019, tracing the political legacy left by the Italian governments that succeeded each other.

Having verified the existence of up-, down- and crossloading processes, the research confirms the trend of varying degrees of Europeanisation in the Italian foreign policy, as had already been observed by Brighi in her study on the coalition governments of the 1990s – early 2000s. No clear pattern was detected, where either the uploading or the downloading dimension prevailed. These variances can be explained with shifting power dynamics in the regional context, inside the Union but also in the internal political arena (Brighi 2011b), where the Lega stands out for its issue ownership of immigration (Geddes and Pettrachin 2020, 228), a policy area which the party effectively linked to the political crises in North Africa. The findings indicated very clearly the existence of three different periods in the time frame considered, only one of which presented processes of illiberal and informal Europeanisation. In the first and second period, the observed dynamics can be categorised as processes of conventional ‘liberal’ Europeanisation, where Rome has continuously sought the dialogue with the European institutions in view of improved crisis management in Libya. Various flagship initiatives were launched due to the pressure by the Italian Government, which recognised that its policy goals could not be achieved unilaterally. Although a certain illiberal tendency was palpable under the Berlusconi Government, when the Lega covered a government function, its influence was limited and balanced by its more centrist coalition partners. The third time period represented a turning point, when the Lega left the opposition and succeeded in impacting the official position of the Italian Government, through its illiberal agenda. In its foreign policy, the Mediterranean migration constituted one of the main fields of intervention. The restriction of SAR activities at sea had striking effects not only on the national political sphere, but also on

the Union as a whole. Some authors even suggest that Italy's hostile attitude led to its growing isolation at the EU level (Strazzari and Grandi 2019).

This confirms the hypothesis of Escartin according to which, under the influence of a PRRP in government, processes of illiberal and informal Europeanisation are possible. One of the conditions is that, in case of a coalition government, the weak position of the coalition partner leaves the PRRP enough room for manoeuvre. This was certainly the case in the yellow-green coalition, where the voting contribution did not reflect the power distribution inside the executive. The Lega was thus very successful in influencing the agenda of the Government, relative to the Libyan crisis and migration flows in the Mediterranean. At the same time, it is safe to assume that the influence on foreign policy-making of PRRPs in opposition is very limited. Besides their capability of efficiently weighing in on the political debate, the foreign policy-making resulted unaffected in the context of analysis. After the Berlusconi Government, the Italian executives built on a constant dialogue with the European institutions, exported their national policy preferences to the EU level, adjusted to the existing or emerging institutional frameworks and powered the coordination process between the national and the EU level.

While answering some relevant questions, this research has also raised some new issues. How did other Member States perceive the Europeanisation of the Italian foreign policy? Has it incentivised them to pursue a similar approach? Also, how do governments deal with PRRPs in opposition? What is the most efficient strategy for reducing their influence on governmental policies? How do executives handle the 'populist legacy': do they eradicate it or do they deftly incorporate it in the own governmental policy? In Italy, the composition of the executive succeeding the yellow-green coalition has changed only partially. Still led by Conte as an independent figure, the right-wing component has been substituted by the social democrats, which interestingly enough did not translate in a radically different foreign policy. While the policy of 'closing the ports' has been progressively lifted, the controversial Security Decrees have remained in place. The number of arrivals, however, has been reduced to a minimum, but the rapidly evolving situation in Libya is certainly a cause for concern. The expansion of foreign interferences, the political rise of Haftar, the emergence of Turkey as a strong regional player, paired with a new European leadership that has made the strengthening of the Union's geopolitical role a priority, are certainly the

decisive factors which will shape the future status of Libya.

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Annex

Italian executives during the time frame of analysis

XVI Legislature

Government Berlusconi IV (08.05.2008 – 16.11.2011)

Coalition PdL, Lega Nord, MpA

Government Monti (16.11.2011 – 27.04.2013)

Technocratic government

XVII Legislature

Government Letta (28.04.2013 – 21.01.2014)

Coalition PD, PdL, SC, UdC, PpI, RI

Government Renzi (22.02.2014 – 12.12.2016)

Coalition PD, NCD, UdC, Demo.S, SC, PSI, CD

Government Gentiloni (12.12.2016 – 01.06.2018)

PD, AP, CpE, PSI, CI, Demo.S

XVIII Legislature

Government Conte I (01.06.2018 – 04.09.2019)

M5S, Lega, MAIE

Government Conte II (05.09.2019 – ongoing)

M5S, PD, IV, LEU, MAIE

Source: <http://www.governo.it/it/i-governi-dal-1943-ad-oggi/i-governi-nelle-legislature/192>