LIBYA'S INTER-ARAB AND REGIONAL POLITICS

by

Roberto Aliboni

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Islamic Anti-imperialism and Arab nationalism

As far as political analysis is concerned Muammar Qadhafi's [1]
Green Book is more or less irrelevant. This does not mean however that
the same applies from a practical point of view. The evolution in
Qadhafi's ideas, represented by the book, has undoubtedly exerted de-
termining influence on the Libyan political system. At the same time
it is an important expression of that part of the Third World anti-
imperialist movement whose ideology derives primarily from Islam. It is
thus possible that the book could well have a transnational influence.
What are not clear, on the other hand, are the book's implications for
Libyan foreign policy. It is this latter point which I intend to examine
in this article.

The Green Book is an elaboration on the Third Universal Theory.
The first summary formulations of this theory date back to 1972.[2] In
its present form the theory is the result of a long and complex process
of revision begun by Qadhafi as soon as he became aware of the failure
of his inter-Arab policy and of the passive attitude of the Libyan
population towards this policy. In a speech delivered at Zwara on April
5, 1973 he launched a "cultural revolution". What this meant in practice
was the organization throughout Libya of committees and congresses in
which the people could take a direct role in decision-making. At the
special session of the General People's Congress, held at Sabha, from
February 28 to March 2, 1977 the Arab Libyan Socialist Republic was
transformed into a Jamahiriya, a term which could be translated as
"regime of the masses" or "assembly-ruled democracy".[3] State institu-
tions beginning with the Revolutionary Command Council were abolished
and replaced by the assembly system which had begun to come into existence
over previous years. Shortly afterwards the General People's Assembly
elected Qadhafi as its secretary-general. On March 1, 1979 however

Qadhafi, having completed his ideological mission with the publication
of the third volume of the Green Book, retired from all his institu-
tional functions. Since then he has ruled Libya on a purely carismatic
basis in his capacity as "Leader of the Revolution".

In general terms the Third Universal Theory broadly coincides
with Islam, which is seen as an ideology revolutionizing human, class
and international relations and thus as a third road between capitalism
and communism. Given that the aim of Islamic expansion is to fight
and defeat the materialist, political predominance of these other two
universal theories this is clearly an anti-imperialist process. Islamic
anti-imperialism is very different from Marxist-Leninist anti-imperialism.
In the language of the Green Book one might say that just as the citizens
of a country may struggle to free themselves from the power of the
"instruments of governing" (that is to say democratic parliamentary
institutions) and return to genuine democracy so nations fight for libera-
tion from their instruments of governing, the imperialist powers. The
setting up of an Arab nation, the natural bearer of the Islamic message,
is the first step in this direction. In other words the aim of Arab
unity is not a return to a happy political and cultural past; Arab
unity is not an end worth pursuing in its own right, it rather should
serve to create the necessary preconditions for Islamic anti-imperialism[4].

Anti-imperialism and Arab unification are by no means new goals
for the Libyan leaders. It thus seems lecit to ask what is the relevance
of the Third Universal Theory to a foreign policy which has pursued these
objectives ever since September 1, 1969. Given that this theory has
given a clearer definition of the logical relationship between anti-
imperialist and pan-Arab objectives - the latter being seen as a specific
aspect of the former - and given that it emphasizes the essential importance
of Arab emancipation if the anti-imperialist struggle is to succeed one
might argue equally coherently:-

a) that the Jamahiriya is likely, while maintaining the importance of
Arab nationalism, to give greater importance to its anti-imperialist
mission and thus to its international role; or
b) that while continuing its contribution to the anti-imperialist
struggle the Jamahiriya will concentrate more intensively on realizing
its Pan-Arab goals as a precondition for success against imperialism.
In order to clarify the orientation of Libyan policy it is useful to
examine the "omni-directional" nature of this policy, a permanent
feature of Libyan attitudes in international affairs. In the past
however this omnidirectional approach has never seemed to be completely
genuine; even long-range intervention always referred to the ultimate
goal of Arab unity and to those factors - primarily Zionism -
which were hindering achievement of this aim. More recently the inter-
vention in central Africa has represented an accentuation of the omni-
directional approach. Does this mean that it has changed in nature?

Libya in inter-Arab relations

Whatever one's evaluation of Libya's omni-directional approach to
foreign policy there can be no doubt that within this foreign policy a
central role is reserved for inter-Arab relations. It is these relations
which are supposed to lead to Arab national unity. The conflict with
Israel is a corollary of this policy. Qadhafi sees Israel as the last
and most formidable barricade put up by imperialism to prevent the re-
birth and integration of the Arab world. The existence, at the very heart
of the Arab world, of an extraeneous national entity tied to capitalism
and imperialism is a source of disputes and rivalries among the Arab
countries. The elimination of Israel is thus a crucial aspect of the
battle for Arab national unity.

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There have been two distinct phases in Qadhafi's inter-Arab policy. During a first phase the aim was to build a genuine unitary entity. This was the period of the formation of the Federation of Arab Republics (FAR), the attempted union with Egypt, and the later attempt at unification with Tunisia. The second phase, on the other hand was marked essentially by a negative policy aimed at fighting Arab coalitions which were seeking to settle the conflict with Israel and to establish a tighter alliance with the United States. The states which led these coalitions - Egypt, Saudi Arabia and most recently Saddam Hussein's Iraq- met with particularly violent opposition. It is thus worthwhile giving a brief account of these developments.

The revolutionary military government began to concern itself with Arab unity only a few days after having taken power. At the beginning of September 1969 Jallud visited Khartoum to visit the leaders of the Nasserian revolution of the previous May. On his return he stopped off in Cairo to inform Nasir of Libya and Sudan's desire for unification with Egypt.[5] On December 27, 1969 this aspiration was translated into the Charter of Tripoli. The Charter, signed by Nasir, Qadhafi and Nimeyri, laid the foundations for an institutionally integrated system, open to other Arab countries. Following Nasir's death Sadat continued the project. On April 17, 1971 an agreement was signed in Bengasi for the setting up of the FAR. In September the member countries approved this agreement with referenda. In the meantime in April 1971 the Sudan had to abandon the project following serious domestic problems, caused to a large extent by the opposition of certain political parties to the FAR. At the end of November 1970 on the other hand President Asad, who had just taken power in Damascus had brought Syria into the project. The FAR thus came to consist of Egypt, Syria and Libya.

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The FAR showed signs both of strength and of weakness. Its
strength was shown by the rapid intervention of Libyan and Egyptian
forces to repress the coup d'état which a heterogeneous coalition of
forces, led by the Sudanese communist party, had organized against
Nimeyri in July 1971. [6] Its weakness on the other hand was demon-
strated by Egyptian, Sudanese and finally Syrian reservations con-
cerning the real significance and depth of the integration process.
Egypt in particular tended to adopt an opportunist attitude. As early
as the Cairo meeting of November 4-8 1970 when Qadhafi and Nimeyri
first discussed the project with Sadat, a deep contrast emerged between
the Libyans' goal of genuine integration and the coordination being sought
by the Egyptians and Sudanese. The compromise solution reached on that
occasion - the setting up of a unified tripartite command - reflected
the vagueness of the Egyptians and Sudanese and their desire to main-
tain their national sovereignty. [7] Egyptian opportunism was shown
by the way in which Sadat used the FAR and the anti-communism of the
young Libyan officers to eliminate the faction headed by Ali Sabri. Even
clearer was the opportunism inherent in the idea of giving priority to
joint defense forces rather than to the fundamental institutional ques-
tions raised by the Libyans, a position which emerged at the January 1971
meeting when Sadat was highly concerned about prospects when the ceasefire
with Israel ended on February 5. [8]

Half way through 1972 the FAR began to dissolve. The form it
had taken and the way it had performed were already however a source of
deep dissatisfaction for Qadhafi. This was the reason which in February
1972 led the Libyan leader to propose a complete merger with Egypt.
The plan was announced on August 2 and it was expected that the merger
would take place, not later than September 1, 1973.

In view of the fact that by May of that year nothing had been decided, in June Qadhafi visited Cairo where Sadat proposed a vague project for gradual unification. Qadhafi replied with a People's March on Egypt which was easily turned back. The Libyan leader returned to Cairo at the end of August at a time when Sadat was visiting Saudi Arabia and Syria to prepare the attack on Israel. Qadhafi was not informed. The Cairo meeting ended with the signature of a project entirely based on Egyptian conceptions.

One month later, on October 6, Syria and Egypt began the 4th Arab-Israeli war. It was presumably at this moment that Qadhafi realized that his policy for Arab unification had failed. [9]

This failure was not due just to the Libyan leader's over-enthusiasm or to the cynicism and opportunism of his colleagues. The real, while not particularly complex, causes were objective.

It is extremely doubtful whether in these years the other Arab countries ever really accepted Qadhafi's conception of Arab unity and whether as a consequence they ever saw inter-Arab relations as the natural framework within which to build this unity. Up until 1967 there had undoubtedly existed a genuine aspiration for Arab unity, led by Nasir's Egypt. Defeat however, along with the emergence of the Palestinians as an independent, subversive force, radically changed the basic assumptions underlying Arab politics. First the Arabs replaced the goal of eliminating Israel with that of recovering the occupied territories. Secondly there was a change in the policy of confrontation with the United States. (The new goal was to become a close American ally in East-West relations and thus to influence the US alliance with Israel). Finally Saudi Arabia joined Egypt and Syria to become the third key element in the inter-Arab balance. These changes came about gradually in the period between the two wars of 1967 and 1973. As has been emphasized by Kazziha [10] "The war further introduced into the Arab world a new sense of pan-Arabism. This is based on the idea of economic,

political and military coordination and cooperation between different kinds of Arab governments instead of the old concept of Arab unity based on the social and political integration of the Arab peoples. This new sense of pan-Arabism may have little popular support but the idea certainly appeals to most Arab regimes which are interested in maintaining the political status quo".

Given these crucial changes the taking of power in 1969 by two strongly pro-Nasserian regimes in Libya and Sudan was ironical. While in later years Sudan accepted the change and took her place within the new Arab world, Qadhafi suffered the humiliation of the events leading up to 1973 but failed to learn his lesson. When he visited Cairo, half-way through 1973, to ask for unification, history, without him realizing this, was moving rapidly in another direction. He was a pityful figure. Referring to the failure of the unification one commentator summed up the situation in an epigram: "Le président Kadhafi croit au nassérisme, l'Egypte n'en veut plus".[11] If we want a broader evaluation it seems legitimate to ask whether Qadhafi behaved the way he did because he was incapable of analysis or rather because he believed he could model reality along the lines suggested by his own rationality. Certainly if he had been a European he could never have been a Monnet functionist and would have severely criticized Fouchet's confederal plans. Rather he would have been an orthodox federalist, totally unwilling to come to terms with reality and expecting rather that reality would eventually give way to the superior rationality of Federation. It thus seems legi-timate to consider that Qadhafi was aware of what he was doing. His actions in other words were not due to any simple defect in analysis. Consequently, his reaction to the crisis was to reinforce his ideological schema with the development of the Third Universal Theory. Certainly he did not try to change it.

Nonetheless, at least to some extent even Qadhafi had to adapt to the new situation which emerged from the 1973 war. Since then he has never again fought directly for Arab unity. He has not in other words proposed any new Federal true projects. Rather he has struggled for this goal using indirect means, opposing the attempt to settle the conflict with Israel through a rapprochement with the United States. This in fact is what characterizes the second phase in Qadhafi's inter-Arab policy.

At this point we cannot avoid giving a brief account of inter-Arab politics in the period following the 4th inter-Arab war, even if this means risking a degree of simplification. This account will enable us to comment on the role played by Libya.

The 1973 war created a new pole of influence in Arab political life. As I have already stated briefly, whereas in the period up to 1967 inter-Arab politics were dominated by Egypt and Syria, the rise of Saudi Arabia and her subsequent role in the 1973 war led to the emergence of a triangle involving Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. This triangle took its place at the very heart of the Arab political world. The stabilization it created was threatened however by Syrian fears of a seperate peace between Egypt and Israel. This fear derived primarily from considerations concerning Syrian security vis à vis Israel. Secondly it involved Syria's non-aligned position with respect to the great powers. If a seperate agreement extended Israel's special relation- ship with the United States just to Egypt Syria would be forced into closer ties with the Soviet Union. Finally any seperate peace risked compromising Syria's relations with the Palestinians, Jordan, any new state which might emerge on the West Bank and the Lebanon - that is to say an area she considers as essential to her security and to her prestige as an Arab power.

During the preparations for the 1973 war and the war itself
the Syrians trusted in the Egyptians' desire to conduct a common policy
and the triangle worked. In the period between 1974 and 1976 however
its effectiveness was seriously weakened by the unilateral agreements
reached between Egypt and Israel (the 1973 ceasefire and the 1975 interim
agreement), through exclusively American mediation . Nonetheless the
period saw no break between Syria and Egypt. Between October 1976 and
the summer of 1977 the agreement reached at the Riyadh summit on the
Syrian presence in Lebanon made it possible to bring the triangle back
into operation. With Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, the Camp David Agree-
ments and peace with Israel however Syrian fears materialized drammatically
and Syria along with the whole of the rest of the Arab world broke with
Egypt.

During this sequence of events Libya's aim was to split Syria
off from Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This policy was based on the conviction
that Syria had fundamentally no part to play in the grand strategy of
stabilizing the Arab world, settling with Israel and achieving a more
balanced position between the two super-powers. Libya thus maintained
continual pressure on her to join the Rejection Front. This pressure
lasted until she joined the "Steadfastness Front" and signed the unifica-
tion agreement with Libya. In practice however Syria's aims have never
differed fundamentally from those of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. What is
more there seems to have been no change in this position even today. The
break came when Syria began to perceive the Egyptian way of putting these
goals into practice as a more or less imminent threat to her own interests
and security. The present divisions within the Arab world - including
those involving Syria -   are not due to serious differences over the
need to find a way of living with Israel but rather to important conflicts
concerning both the inter-Arab balance and Arab relations with the super-
powers, both of which are threatened by the Egyptian initiatives. If

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this is so, Syrian membership of the the "Steadfastness Front" is largely based on opportunist considerations. The same applies to the unification agreement signed with Libya in September 1980.

In order to clarify this point it is useful to look at the detailed circumstances in which Syria joined first the Front and then the unification agreement. Membership of the Steadfastness and Resistance Front was agreed in Tripoli in December 1977 at a time when Syria had been shaken to the foundations by Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and had every reason to feel herself isolated and exposed to the Israeli threat. It should be emphasized however that the decision to accept Qadhafi's invitation to Tripoli came only at the last moment, following a failed attempt to convince the Saudis to constitute a Front aimed specifically against Sadat and after a further failure in an attempt to persuade Baghdad to put aside old disputes in the common Arab interest.(12) What is most important however is that once, a year later, Iraq took the initiative of a rapprochement with Syria, offering her the security she needed, Damascus, without leaving the Steadfastness Front, took an active role in the Centrist majority which emerged from the two Baghdad summits. Iraq's aim in this period was to fill the gap taken by Egypt; the result was a return to the old stabilizing triangle. Given her fundamental policy options Syria did not fail to accept this. The fragility of the relationship with the Steadfastness Front and with Libya became only too apparent.

The subsequent rupture between Iraq and Syria and the long war with Iran, where Saddam Hussein has buried the hopes of leadership he had so brilliantly grasped in the preceding years, have left Syria isolated with a number of security problems, not least with Iraq. This explains why Syria has not left the Steadfastness Front, her support for Iran, her

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pact with Libya (which has come to nothing, presently resembling the
agreement proposed by Sadat to Qadhafi before the 1973 war rather than
those Qadhafi has inspired himself) and most recently her Treaty of
Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union. Nonetheless there
has been no change in the basic frame of reference of Syrian policy.
Syria has no real intention of relying on the Soviet Union and Libya
to threaten the existence of Israel and to open the road to the unifica-
tion of the Arab countries. Rather she counts on them to convince
Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United States that a global settlement of
the conflict is only possible if Syrian interests and aspirations are
satisfied.

Whereas the Soviets are aware of this Libya seems not to be,
just as she did not understand the realities of inter-Arab politics
at the time of the FAR and unification with Egypt. Syria has met Libyan
aspirations by breaking with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and even Iraq. Her
motives however are different from Qadhafi's. Her membership of the
Steadfastness Front, her acceptance of the plan for unification and
other alliances with Libya do not have the significance which the Libyans
seem to think. During the recent Lebanese crisis there were signs of an
improvement in Syrian relations with the other Arab countries. If
American policy were longer-sighted this rapprochement could rapidly
take more solid form and just as in 1973 Qadhafi would be forced into
realizing the weakness of his policy. This does not mean however that
he would come to see it as any the less correct or worthy of being
pursued. Qadhafi is not a politician but a prophet. What is really
important, as has been emphasized by Alexander [13] is that the perpetually
anachronistic stability of his political conceptions and objectives has
led to an ever less effectual and inconclusive inter-Arab policy.

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African Policy

Qadhafi's African policy is important in that it is here that
we can best see whether there has been any change in the relation-
ship between the long and medium term goals of Libyan foreign policy.
From Qadhafi's theoretical standpoint his different anti-imperialist
policies are all of equivalent value as means towards his final Pan-
Islamic goal. In practice however the Libyan leader has always seen
Arab unity and the struggle against Zionism as of greater priority than
the other anti-imperialist policies he has pursued such as the alliance
with Malta, support for the IRA and diplomatic backing for Liberation
movements in Southern Africa. Qadhafi's frequent interventions in
Africa represent no exception to this rule: on all occasions the aim
has been to strengthen Libyan Pan-Arab policies. Thus the complex
relationship between Libya and Sudan may be seen as a simple corollary
of Libyan Pan-Arab policy and more specifically of her relations
with Egypt. In the same way Libyan backing for the Eritrean nationalist
movement and for a number of African countries such as Uganda and the
Central African Empire may be considered as being just one more aspect
of the struggle against Israel. More recent policies on the other hand
such as those towards Ethiopia and the West Sahel seem to represent
a break with this political rule. Undoubtedly they are connected with
Libyan Pan-Arab policy, or as in the case of Chad and Niger Libyan
local interests. Nonetheless the way they have developed appears to
imply that in the future non-Pan-Arab policies will be assigned a role
in the anti-imperialist struggle at least as important as that tradi-
tionally given to Pan-Arab policies. In order to show the way this
trend is developing I will consider three Libyan policies in Africa:
that towards Sudan, that towards Ethiopia and that towards the Western
Sahel.

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Sudanese foreign policy is determined by the fact that Sudan is both an Arab and an African country. The cultural, ethnic and economic split between the North and the South of the country does not only create a problem of national integration; at the same time it leads to problems with neighbouring countries. Given that ethnic, cultural and religious ties overlap national frontiers, poor national integration within Sudan has tended to lead to tensions with her neighbours and tensions in these countries have been easily transmitted to Sudan. It should also be borne in mind that national and regional integration are closely linked. Thus strong Pan-Arab regional integration tends to imply poor national integration and increased tension with a number of neighbouring countries. When the country is dominated by Islamic factions (the Moslem Brotherhood and the sects such as the Ansars and the Khatmiyah)[14] or by Pan-Arab groups the result is a domestic policy aimed at subordinating the Southern provinces combined with aggression and subversion against (and from) Ethiopia, Uganda and other countries on Sudan's borders. This was the situation in Sudan up until the failed coup-d'état of July 1971, following which Nimeyri ended the civil war in the South signing the Addis Abeba agreements (February 1972). The signature of these agreements marked the transition from a Pan-Arab to an Arab-African position. In line with the pattern we have just noted the predominance of Islamism and Pan Arabism had brought with it a long civil war. This war set in motion a number of border conflicts. In 1965 and 1966 the emperor of Ethiopia exploited the war, using his support for the Anya nya as a basis to negotiate (in 1966) the cessation of Sudanese backing for the first Eritrean uprising. At a later stage the Israelis, Hailé Selassie's allies, backed the Anya nya themselves until finally in 1971 the Ethiopians committed themselves to preventing this in return for the withdrawal of Sudanese support for the second Eritrean rising.

When the Communists and the social-nationalists dominate Sudan
the picture changes. Although these two parties have differing
international alliances and different plans for social reform both
want a secular independent state and both favor a policy of friendship
towards Arabs and Africans alike. During these periods national inte-
gration is strong and the country is less vulnerable to instability
in neighbouring countries and to threats from across her borders.
At the same time however she is exposed to Pan-Arab pressure and
subversion. This subversion has powerful allies in the Islamic
brotherhoods. In the period between the two attempted coups in 1971
and July 1976 Sudan, governed by the social-nationalists, integrated
the South of the country, created a Federal structure and established
good relations with neighbouring African countries. Within the Arab
world she moved closer to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, two countries which
allowed her to adopt a non-militant yet pro-Arab stance. For economic
and above all regional and international security reasons the rapproche-
ment with Egypt became particularly important after 1974. Even as
early as 1972 however Sudan and Egypt had taken a common line on the
improvement in relations with the United States and the other western
powers. Qadhafi, with his Pan-Arab policies, could not be indifferent
to this development. Previously Libya had been one of the main forces
behind Sudanese pan-Arab policies. Now she acted as host for many
opponents of Nimeyri's. In July 1976 Libya was heavily implicated
in the attempted coup d'état by the National Front, the grouping of
conservative islamic parties led by Sadiq el Mahdi. Qadhafi had two
aims in encouraging this subversion: on the one hand to engineer a
return by Sudan to a Pan-Arab policy and a break with her Arab-African
line, on the other to break her alliance with Egypt and make a thrust
at this country's security.

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Nimeyri saw the attempted coup d'état as a sign of his own weakness. As a result he began a policy of reconciliation with the National Front. This policy has become a means for Qadhafi to closely influence Sudanese foreign policy. If Sudan's foreign policy is not satisfactory to Mahdi, he slows the pace of reconciliation. In order to go ahead, Nimeyri must comply with the foreign policy required by Mahdi and Qadhafi.

As a result Nimeyri was asked to break with Egypt and move closer to Ethiopia. This policy, which caused grave concern in the South of the country, he never really accepted. When Sadat visited Jerusalem and later signed the Camp David agreements Nimeyri remained an ally. Later he was forced to withdraw this explicit support. Nonetheless he assumed a low profile and there was never a real break in relations. This was the situation prior to the Libyan intervention in Chad which led once again to strong tension between Sudan and Libya. Sudan feeling herself threatened by Libyan expansionism and by perceived Soviet support for this policy, fully reactivated her alliance with Egypt.

Libyan policy towards Sudan is fully in line with her inter-Arab policy. Like other policies adopted by Libya in Africa this policy is subordinate to the more general aims of Libya's inter-Arab policy which I discussed earlier. In the specific case we are talking about the aim is to destabilize Sudan and thus Egypt, undermining the latter's security. Sudan, with Egyptian support but above all thanks to Nimeyri's great political skill and the loyalty of the majority of the Southern ruling class has maintained the domestic system and the international posture which she opted for in 1971-2. Nonetheless the contradiction between this general strategy and the policy of national reconciliation with Islamic and pan-Arab groups appears to be ever harder

indeed impossible to manage. It thus seems as though events in Sudan
could take a dramatic turn. Libyan destabilization in Sudan has taken
many years to work. In the long term however it has proved to be
effective. Its consequence in the Nile Valley could well be explosive. Even
here however the same applies as to the rest of Libya's inter-Arab
policies. The backwardness of these with respect to the policies being
pursued by the other main actors in the area is such that although they
could be damaging they are unable to exert significant influence on
the present and future course of inter-Arab politics.

As opposed to Libyan policy towards Sudan the second of Qadhafi's
policies I intend to examine - his alliance with Ethiopia - does contain
a few innovative features. Undoubtedly this alliance originally
emerged as an inter-Arab policy and still has some relevance as such.
Nonetheless if we consider it in the light of Libya's relationship with
the Soviet Union and with other pro-Soviet countries in the region it
seems to assume a special significance of its own.

In line with her Pan-Arab policy revolutionary Libya backed the
Eritrean nationalist movement right from the very beginning. Nonetheless,
although Qadhafi has never completely broken relations, in 1976 this
support was for all practical purposes withdrawn. Diplomatic relations
with the PMAC (Provisional Military Administrative Council) were established
as early as 1974. From that time on the ties between Libya and Ethiopia
became ever closer. In 1976 Ethiopia was implicated in the attempted
coup d'état against Nimeyri. Although the latter had done everything
in his power to resist Pan-Arab pressures to give strong support to the
Eritreans against the Ethiopians, it became known that for five years
the Ansar had been training in an Ethiopian camp before subsequently

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moving to Libyan camps. In the following years, Libyan-Ethiopian relations continued to improve. One sign of this tendency was the call by the Mahdi for a rapprochement between Sudan and Ethiopia as part of the program for national reconciliation.

Ethiopia and Libya always seem to belong to the same alignment. Ethiopia maintains excellent relations with the countries belonging to the steadfastness front. On August 19, 1981 she signed a treaty with Libya and South Yemen, the aim of which was to emphasize these countries' opposition to US aspirations for a military presence in the area. As far as Ethiopia is concerned this attitude is determined not only by her alignment with the Soviet Union but also by the continuing conflict with Somalia, an Egyptian and US ally. From a Libyan standpoint the alliance with Ethiopia appears once again as nothing more than one feature of her inter-Arab policy aimed at destabilizing Egypt. There can be no doubt that this is true. Nonetheless Libya's alignment with pro-Soviet countries in the region is more than just an aspect of her Pan-Arab policy.

Regardless of what American sources claim [15] Qadhafi does not depend on the Russians. His arsenal, recently valued at 12 billion dollars, has been fully paid for and includes equipment of non-Soviet origin. His Soviet, East German and Cuban instructors are consultants who could be sacked even more easily than in Sudan, Egypt and Somalia. What is more there are almost certainly much fewer of them than suggested by international press reports. Finally while the Soviet Union's treaties of friendship and cooperation with other Arab countries have not proved of any particular value with Libya such a treaty does not even exist. The relationship between Libya and the USSR depends on the opportunism of both sides and has nothing to do with the subtler

problems raised by Soviet relations with socialist-orientated countries such as Ethiopia and Mozambique. In terms of the Third Universal Theory the Libyan attitude towards the Soviet Union should be one of open hostility. According to this theory the USSR is just as much an imperialist power as the USA.

Nonetheless, however opportunist it may be, the conviction that the USSR can be used to resolve the conflict with Israel brings Libya into line with a conception which is making progress in a number of non-aligned countries and many liberation movements, namely that from an objective point of view the USSR is anti-imperialist. In this way Libya's opportunism leads her right up to the brink of a political alliance. At the same time it is important to note how this opportunist relationship has led Libya to align herself with the Arab and African countries closest to the Soviet Union, such as Ethiopia and South Yemen. At present this represents no threat to Libya's independence; potentially however the threat exists. We have to ask - as Hottinger has done [16] - what will be Libya's reaction if she begins to feel ever more desperate in an international and inter-Arab environment ever more hostile to her activities and aspirations. Hottinger's reply, with which one cannot not agree, is that she could take one last gamble with her independence, throwing herself into the arms of the USSR.

These considerations lead us to the third of Qadhafi's policies which we intended to examine, namely his policy towards the Western Sahara.

International public opinion first began to appreciate the emergence of an all-round Libyan policy towards the Western Sahel following the military intervention of the Islamic Legion in Chad in December 1980. In July 1980 Senghor had already denounced Qadhafi's expansionist aims for the whole region:- Chad, Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Senegal. [17]

At the same time he claimed that Libya had created a 5000 strong force,
recruited within the region itself with the aim of destabilizing
governments in power and setting up an Islamic regional government.
The Islamic Legion had gone on parade for the first time in Tripoli
in 1979 on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Libyan
Republic.

In reality relations between Libya and Chad had for a long time
been dominated by Libyan aspirations to annex the Aouzou strip. The
Libyan claim was based on a 1935 agreement between Laval and Mussolini
which was never ratified by the parties concerned. The policy of
infiltration and division pursued by Frolinat continually aimed to
involve Libya in Chad politics and thus to influence the N'djamena
government over the question of the Aouzou strip. This objective
was unequivocably achieved with the mutual defense agreement signed in
Tripoli on June 15, 1980 between Qadhafi and Goukouny Weddey, who
forecast that it would be possible for the two signatories to begin
"a legal process ... to end the Chad war, to achieve a return to peace
and to rebuild the country". [18] The following October a speech by
Qadhafi at Aouzou was couched in terms which made it obvious that the
territory had been annexed to Libya. When in November however Libya
intervened militarily in Chad on the basis of the Tripoli agreement
and when in December the Islamic Legion took N'djamena, it was clear
that Chad-Libyan relations were no longer centred on the annexation of
Aouzou and that much broader issues were at stake. The terms of
subsequent agreement between the two countries, signed on January 6
1981 and establishing the basis for their eventual unification made it
evident that Libyan aspirations do not just concern Chad.

The factor which appears to be responsible for this broadening
of Libyan horizons in the western Sahel is the growth in importance
of the Polisario Front. Qadhafi has supported the Front ever since
1975. Often he has linked this support to his adversion for the King
of Morocco, viewed in the same way as Sadat as any enemy of Arab unity.
Nonetheless, in line with his Federalist conceptions Qadhafi has never
recognized the Arab Sahrawi Democratic Republic, founded in 1976. Given
that Libya is opposed to the creation of a new Nation-state, recognition
has been confined to the Polisario Front. At the same time there have
been repeated proposals for a North African Federation within which to
define the Western Sahara as a territorial entity.[19]

The Sahrawi Republic appears to Qadhafi as a traditional issue,
of very little interest. The Polisario, on the other hand, has developed
in a transnational direction which interests Qadhafi exceedingly. The
Polisario Front, which emerged from a population of approximately 30.000
was initially based on a force of around 6000 men. Despite heavy losses,
in the space of a few years this figure has now reached 20.000. This
growth is the result of transnational recruitment. According to the
figures supplied by Balta [20] West Saharan forces are presently made up
of 10-20% Sahrawi's, 50% Mauritanians and 50-40% Tuareg, and mauri from
Niger and Mali. This struggle for a common cause, ideologically
identified with the objective of Islamic revolution has created great
solidarity within the Polisario. This force, thanks to its composition,
feels that its role extends beyond the question of the independence of
the Sahrawi Republic. The Islamic Legion, which Qadhafi has based on
the Polisario model, thus creates understandable concern within the region,
particularly in view of the fact that Libya makes no secret of the ties
she sees between the Legion and the West Saharan force. With the inter-
vention in Chad these ties are now beginning to take concrete form.

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Qadhafi's aims are not going to be easy to achieve. They give rise to mistrust and hostility not only in the countries most directly concerned but also in Algiers and in Lagos. The recent rapprochement between Libya and Morocco, which prepared the way for the Libyan proposal to the OAU summit meeting in Nairobi in July 1981, has been manoevred by Algeria as part of a diplomatic strategy aimed at containing Libyan activism, avoiding involvement in Libyan plans and preparing, in the long term, an acceptable solution to the West Saharan question. Libyan acceptance of these initiatives in the Maghreb is purely tactical.[21] One may thus conclude that the results of this "Sahelian" turn to Libyan foreign policy are anything but easily predictable.

What I am really interested in pointing out here is that in this latest development of Libyan foreign policy the objective of Islamic revolution is no longer absorbed by Pan-Arab objectives. This is the first time this has occurred. Qadhafi's plans for the Sahel are no longer centred on the Arabs, Arab territories and Arab aspirations. Qadhafi's essentially internationalist conceptions seem to have been translated onto a broader plane. This is in line with the development of the Third Universal Theory and with the increased emphasis which this theory gives to Islamic revolutionary objectives. If then I wanted to reply to the questions I raised at the beginning I would say that the African developments in Qadhafi's foreign policy are a sign of a change in that policy and that they seem to be transforming it into a genuinely omnidirectional policy which no longer emphasizes just the Arab but also the Islamic revolution. It is difficult to say whether this means that Qadhafi is going to adopt a more effective and less anachronistic policy than his past inter-Arab strategy. It seems reasonable to expect that in the future as in the past Qadhafi is not going to be easily convinced by realities. His idealist opportunism

is likely to prevent him from paying due attention to the means and allies at his disposal when he is engaged in the pursuit of his ends. This in its turn could lead him to take an unrealistic view of his fellow travellers. Just as in the case of Malta he will ask too much of them without recognizing their legitimate interests and the constraints which these interests impose on their alliances; he will break these alliances. With the passage of time Qadhafi's biggest enemy is becoming frustration. To beat this frustration he could be led into alliances, with the USSR for example, in which he could lose his independence. This is a risk not just for Libya but for the West. What is needed - however difficult this might be - is a policy of integration with and increased understanding for Qadhafi, combined with greater care in making him aware of the limitations he must accept on his foreign policy initiatives.

(1) The Green Book is composed of three volumes: The Solution of the Problem of Democracy: The Authority of the People, 1976; The Solution of Economic Problems: Socialism, 1978; The Social Basis of the Third Universal Theory, 1979, all three of which are published in London.

(2) Libyan Arab Republic, Ministry of Information and Culture, The Fundamentals of the Third International Theory, Tripoli, 1974. This is in the form of a pamphlet.

(3) "Jamahir" is the plural of "Jamhur", and means "the masses". It could be translated as "mob". Libya's internal political organization has not been studied in this paper. See Gideon Gera, Libya, in Colin Legum (ed.), Middle East Contemporary Survey (MECS), Vol. II, 1977-78, Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc., New York and London, 1979, page 629. Another very interesting analysis is that of Sauri G. Hajjar, "The Jamahiriya Experiment in Libya: Qadhafi and Rousseau", Journal of Modern African Studies, 18, 2, June 1968, pp. 181-200.

(4) The ideological aspects of Libya have been given rather scarse attention. For further information see: R. Chambour, Power and Concept of the Libyan Revolution, Lausanne, 1977; A.A.V.V. La Libya nouvelle: rupture et continuité, CRESM, Aix en Provence, CNRS, 1975; H. Habib, Politics and Government of Revolutionary Libya, Montreal 1975.

(5) "De la révolution libyenne à l'U.R.A.", Maghreb, 49, 1972, p. 39, which gets its information from Al Ahram, 7 May 1971.

(6) The relations between Sudan's internal politics and the FAR are examined by Peter K Bechtold in "New Attempts at Arab Cooperation: The Federation of Arab Republics, 1971-2", The Middle East Journal, 27, 2, Spring 1973, pp. 152-172.

(7)   "De la révolution libyenne...", op. cit., p. 40.

(8)   As stated in the chronologies presented by Bechtold, op. cit., p. 157

(9)   Jean Colas, "Le mariage manqué égypto-libyen", Maghreb-Machrek,
      61, 1974, pp. 9-12; H. Mammeri, "Où en est la fusion entre l'Egypte
      et la Libye?", Maghreb-Machrek, 59, 1973, pp. 16-18.

(10) Walid W. Kazziha, Palestine in the Arab Dilemma, Croom Helm, London
      1979, p. 34.

(11) Colas, op. cit., p. 12

(12) See Daniel Dishon and Varde Ben-Zvi; Inter-Arab Relations, in MECS
      op. cit., p. 217

(13) Nathan Alexander, "The Foreign Policy of Libya: Inflexibility Amid
      Change", Orbis, 24, 4, Winter 1981, pp. 819-846.

(14) Sudan's interal political structure and its relationship with her
      foreign policy are discussed by Dunster M Wai; Domestic Politics
      and Foreign Relations under Nimeyri, "African Affairs", vol. 72, 312,
      1979, pp. 297-317.

(15) For example, see John K Cooley, Evidence of Soviet Build up in Libya
      Points to Grave Military Threat to West, "International Herald
      Tribune, March 13, 1981.

(16) Arnold Hottinger, L'expansionisme libyen: Machrek, Maghreb et
      Afrique Noire, "Politique Etrangère", 46, 1, 1981, pp. 137-150.

(17) "Le Monde", 16 July 1980

(18) "Marchés Tropicaux et Méditeranéens", No. 1813, 8 August 1980,
      p 1952

(19) See G. Gera, Libya, in MECS Vol I, pp. 539-40; Vol II, p. 639

(20) See the articles by P Balto in "Le Monde" 7-10 April 1981.

(21) El Obeidi, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Libya, declared to the
      Moroccan press that Libya is not hostile to a "unionist" solution
      whereby the Sahrawi would have a "wilaya" under Moroccan sovereignty
      This confirms Qadhafi's aversion towards the Sahrawi Republic but
      does not in any way affect his support of the Polisario. On the
      other hand Qadhafi needs to reconcile   with Morocco and soften
      his position with regards to Chad in order to prepare for his year
      of presidency over the OAU.