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THESES

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**Italian Libya-policy from 2011 to 2021 with a special focus on foreign and
security policy aspects**

Ph.D. dissertation

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Formulating the scientific problem

In our days Libya is one of the European Union's most important southern neighbours, as it plays a key role in two of the EU's most pressing problems in the Mediterranean region: curbing illegal/irregular migration and securing energy supplies. Despite this, Europeans have mostly found it difficult to coordinate their positions and policies towards Libya. Italy has traditionally had the closest relations with Libya amongst the EU Member States, but the events of the Arab Spring have shaken up this relationship.

The ongoing nature of the Libyan conflict justifies its topicality, since it is an unresolved international crisis that could escalate further on the southern border of the European Union. Hungary is indirectly involved: the government adopted the new National Security Strategy (NSS) by Resolution 1163/2020 (21.4.2020), which states that Hungary is affected by security challenges emerging from both the south and the east of Europe, and that threats and challenges not seen since the Cold War are coming from these directions. The population explosion in Africa could lead to the destabilisation of new regions and to increased migratory pressure. The National Military Strategy, which is based on the National Security Strategy, also identifies the North African region as a high priority for Hungary.

In the years to come, Italo-Libyan relations could be affected by several 'instability' factors on both sides, as the internal political life of both countries are unstable, from different perspectives and to different degrees. The Libyan internal politics is atomized, there is still no sign of a rising political force that could be capable of extending its power to the whole country. The spheres of influence of the smaller centres of power are influenced by their external supporters/sponsors, so the intra-Libyan balance of power is in a constant state of flux. The Italian domestic political situation wasn't stabilized by the reformed electoral system. The frequently changing Italian coalition governments have diverging ideologies regarding the migration issue, which has become a focal point of the Italian Libya-policy, thus the Italian migration policy is changing constantly, as is the personnel in the foreign affairs apparatus. A third factor of instability in the Italo-Libyan relations is the international context itself: the Libyan conflict has become internationalised, with different external sponsors behind different power groups, making it more difficult for Italy to increase its own influence in Libya within this proxy-war environment.

Based on the literature review I found that studies on the foreign policy behaviour of the Italian governments mainly focused on the European and Atlantic orientations of Italian foreign policy and the fluctuations between these strategic directions. Even if the Mediterranean foreign policy was examined, the Italian Libya-policy wasn't put in focus, thus a systematic analysis of the

Libya-policy of successive Italian governments was identified as a research gap to fill. The academic papers regarding Italo-Libyan relations encompass the historical aspects of bilateral relations and the Italian behaviour during the Arab Spring. In the period since the Arab Spring, only the migration-related aspects of Italian-Libyan relations have been examined.

This dissertation focuses on the securitization of the Italian Libya-policy in the period 2011-2021. I put emphasis on the relevant sectors of security identified by the Copenhagen School in the context of Italian-Libyan bilateral relations. In this thesis, I analyse Italian foreign and security policy within the framework of neoclassical realism, focusing on the concept of national interest. I define Italy's national interests in Libya and examine how Italian foreign and security policy sought to pursue them between 2011 and 2021. I examined possible shifts of emphasis in this period from two perspectives: first, I analysed the changes in the relative importance of Libya within the Italian Mediterranean foreign policy and second, I analysed changes in the political discourse on Libya. The dissertation also explored which external and internal factors influenced Italian policy towards Libya and how these factors affected Italy's role in Libya.

The novelty of the thesis lies in the fact that it applies the tenets of neoclassical realism and examines the changes of emphasis in Italy's Libya policy after the Arab Spring by taking into account the influence of domestic political factors as intervening variable. The thesis considers both internal changes in Italy (changes of governments and then, after the 2018 elections, an almost systemic transformation of the political balance of power) and external changes (the internationalisation of the Libyan conflict).

Research objectives

1. To identify the priorities of the Mediterranean orientation of Italian foreign policy.
2. To provide a comprehensive sectoral analysis of the Italian Libya-policy between 2011-2021
3. To examine the interaction between the subjective threat perception of the population and the country's foreign and security policy.
4. To examine the impact of coalition advocacy on foreign and security policy.
5. To examine pursuit of national interests with soft foreign policy tools in a proxy war context through the case study of Italo-Libyan relations.

Research questions

1. How does Italy define itself in relation to Libya?

2. What are Italy's interests in Libya? How and in what way does Rome seek to promote its national interests in Libya?
3. What shifts of emphasis have taken place in Italy's foreign and security policy towards Libya since the Arab Spring?
4. What are the reasons behind any shift in emphasis?
5. Has Italy been able to maintain its dominant role in Libya?

Hypotheses

I explore the following hypotheses in relation to the research aims and questions:

H1: For Italy, the priority in the Mediterranean region has historically been Libya, whose importance - in terms of securing national interests - has increased since the Arab Spring.

H2: Since the Arab Spring, Italy's Libya-policy shifted its focus towards the societal security.

H3: Regarding the whole Libya-policy the unstable internal political situation of Italy has only had an impact only on the societal sector of security.

H4: Italy doesn't consider the Libyan conflict as a proxy war, which reduces its capacity to pursue its interests.

H5: Despite the primacy of the Libyan conflict within Mediterranean policy, Italian foreign and security policy has not been characterised by independent initiatives between 2011 and 2021.

Research methodology

The two main methodologies used in this dissertation are the Analytic Hierarchy Process, applied in a novel setting and discourse analysis.

The Analytic Hierarchy Process is a methodology developed by Thomas Saaty in the 1980s for solving multi-objective decision-making problems. The explicit aim of creating AHP was to synthesise subjective and objective elements by integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. Saaty developed a comprehensive, logical, and structural system that provides a better understanding of the decision-problem by breaking it down into its components and organising it into a hierarchical structure. The AHP is particularly suited to solving decision-problems where decision elements that are difficult to quantify (such as national interests) need to be compared with each other. Regarding national interests the method allows to establish a hierarchy between topic (sector) and domain (geographically), allowing the decision-maker to decide on the allocation of resources.

By applying Analytic Hierarchy Process, I examine Italy's national interests in the southern shore of the Mediterranean from three perspectives: socio-cultural, economic and political-military, which cover the societal, economic, political-military sectors of the Copenhagen School's concept of security and can therefore be logically integrated into the framework of the dissertation. Since no hierarchical relationship could be established between the different sectors of security, these three major aspects are given equal weights within the analysis. On the one hand, weighing such broad categories would lead to significant distortions in the results and, on the other hand, the equal weighting of these aspects allows a better representation of the relative importance of each area. In other words, it is easier to determine whether Italy is most closely linked to a country in economic, cultural, or military-political terms.

The following list contains the examined aspects and their respective weight within the AHP analysis:

1. Societal - cultural aspects

- 1.1. Communication networks: relative importance 28%
- 1.2. Italian nationals living abroad: relative importance 28%
- 1.3. Migration: relative importance 21%
- 1.4. The partner country's influence on Italy: relative importance 11%
- 1.5. Influence on the partner country: relative importance 11%

2. Economic aspects

- 2.1. Raw materials: relative importance 50%
- 2.2. Commerce of finished products: relative importance 25%
- 2.3. Investments (FDI): relative importance 25%

3. Politico-military aspects

- 3.1. strategic-military relevance: relative importance 50%
- 3.2. historical-political relevance: relative importance 25%
- 3.3. governmental relevance: relative importance 25%

Discourse analysis is the most basic methodological tool for the study of securitisation.

I use software-assisted discourse analysis to examine the political communication of the Italian Libya-policy. In my analysis I observe two separate corpora, which I constructed according to the following logic:

I identified the potential securitizing actors in the Italian Libya-policy for the period 2011-2021. I selected them based on the assumption that their statements in their positions adequately represent the position of the current Italian government. Given that the Italian electoral system

favours the formation of coalition governments, it is a common phenomenon that different government positions are held by politicians from parties far apart on the political right-left spectrum. Taking political affiliation into account, I investigate whether the same political position is legitimised differently by different government parties in the eyes of the electorate. After identifying the securitizing actors, I constructed two separate corpora of their speeches (available on open sources), which I examine in different depths according to the same criteria:

Corpus1: statements made during official bilateral visits.

After identifying the potential securitizing actors, I researched the official events (visits, signing of treaties, memorandums, etc.) that took place during the period I studied, as they are symbolic events that provide opportunity to discuss the views and interests of the partners, thus they structure international (bilateral) relations.

Corpus2: Institutional sources

The second corpus is built from speeches made in the Chamber of Deputies (*Camera dei Deputati*) and the Senate (*Senato della Repubblica*) of the Italian Parliament between 2011 and 2021 as this is the most public forum available where policy makers discuss their intended policies. When selecting the speeches, I focused mainly on the hearings of the designated parliamentary committees. As these speeches are long, they contain a pre-designed set of arguments by the ministers and their target audience is different from the speeches analysed in the previous corpus (media, international public, vs. Italian politics), their analysis is relevant for the dissertation.

My research was problem-centred, within the discourse analyses I examined how and where (in which sectors of security) did securitisation appear between 2011 and 2021. I used specific coding for the different sectors, a list of which can be found in the Appendix to the dissertation.

| Theoretical background | Methodology | Research questions | Hypotheses |
|--|---|--|--|
| Buzan's sectors of security National interest-based foreign and security policy | Analytic Hierarchy Process | What are Italy's interests in Libya? How and in what way does Rome seek to promote its national interests in Libya? | For Italy, the priority in the Mediterranean region has historically been Libya, whose importance - in terms of securing national interests - has increased since the Arab Spring. |
| Securitization of Buzan's sectors of security | Discourse analysis Document analysis | What shifts of emphasis have taken place in Italy's foreign and security policy towards Libya since the Arab Spring? | Since the Arab Spring, Italy's Libya-policy shifted its focus towards the societal security. |
| Neoclassical realism of Buzan's sectors of security Securitization | Discourse analysis Document analysis | What are the reasons behind any shift in emphasis? | Regarding the whole Libya-policy the unstable internal political situation of Italy has only had an impact only on the societal sector of security. |
| Neoclassical realism of Buzan's sectors of security | Document analysis | Has Italy been able to maintain its dominant role in Libya? | Italy doesn't consider the Libyan conflict as a proxy war, which reduces its capacity to pursue its interests |
| Neoclassical realism | Discourse analysis Document analysis | How does Italy define itself in relation to Libya? | Despite the primacy of the Libyan conflict within Mediterranean policy, Italian foreign and security policy has not been characterised by independent initiatives between 2011 and 2021. |

Results of the research

Advocacy and power projection towards the Euro-Mediterranean area is a rational strategy for promoting Italian national interests and increasing the country's international weight: it covers a geographically well-defined area of prime importance, with objectives that affect the economic, societal, military, and political sectors of security, which have an impact on domestic policy as well as foreign policy.

Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process – thus taking into account both qualitative and quantitative aspects – it was demonstrated that Italian foreign policy should focus primarily on four areas: the North Atlantic, the MENA region, the "Europe of the Fifteen" and the Balkans, as this is where most of the country's national interests are linked. Of these, MENA and the Balkans fall within the region of the so-called enlarged Mediterranean, so the adoption of Mediterraneanism as a separate foreign policy direction is justified. In this dissertation I used the same methodology to examine the five states on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. In my research I found that between 2011 and 2021:

1. In the societal sector of security, Libya's relative importance shows a slight downward trend compared to the other four states. Within the complex social and cultural aspects, the area of illegal/irregular migration showed the most significant change by the middle of the period (2016), but by 2021 it declined to the levels of 2011. The peak of Libya's relative importance in the terms of illegal/irregular migration was balanced by regular migration: while Libya was the main point of transit for irregular migrants arriving to Italy, very few Libyan nationals arrived to Italy legally, which is in sharp contrast with the other four countries, mainly Morocco and Egypt.
2. In the economic sector of security, the relative importance of Libya was very low in 2011 compared to 2010. Italian FDI, exports and, most importantly, energy imports from Libya sharply decreased in 2011. Regarding the economic sector, Italy has the closest links with Algeria within this region. Egypt has overtaken Libya's relative importance since the outbreak of the Arab Spring. Although Libya's relative importance in terms of economic security steadily increased between 2011 and 2021, it is far from its pre-Arab Spring level.
3. In the military-political sectors of security, Libya's relative importance was roughly at the same level at the beginning and the end of the investigation period, with Libya being the country with the most Italian interests in the region. The observed aspect of "the current governmental relevance" was the highest for Libya throughout the whole period, while the risks posed by terrorism increased not only in Libya but in all the other

countries that I examined. Regarding Libya the large influx of military equipment from abroad constitutes a growing challenge.

Before 2011, for the Italian governments Gheddafi's Libya played a stabilising role in the Mediterranean region: it was considered a bulwark against Soviet expansionism and later against Islamic fundamentalism, and it was able to deter illegal immigrants from Libya arriving in Italy by sea. From a security point of view, keeping Gheddafi in power until the end was the Italian government's strategic goal. Gheddafi, aware that Italy needed energy resources (economic sector of security) and the stopping of illegal migration (societal sector of security), was able to increase considerably his room for manoeuvre, making the interdependence between the two countries asymmetrical, due to the differences in the *reasons* for interdependence.

Since 2011, there have been sub-sectors/areas in each of Buzan's sectors of security that closely link the two countries. However, power asymmetry and dominance varies over sectors. Italy is a more important trading partner for Libya than vice versa, as Italy's economic role in Libya (in terms of exports, imports, and market share in general) is much bigger. For Italy, economic relations are dominated by imports of energy resources, otherwise Libya does not play an irreplaceable role in the Italian economy. The energy aspects of the Italo-Libyan relations are roughly of equal importance for both countries. For Italy, it is a matter of securing and diversifying energy supplies, while for Libya, oil and gas exports account for a large part of the country's revenues. Italy is the main importer of Libyan oil and the sole importer of natural gas through Greenstream pipeline. As a consequence of the Arab Spring, oil and gas imports from Libya sharply declined, and reaching pre-2011 levels doesn't seem to be forthcoming (even though with Russia's war in Ukraine Libya's relative importance will further grow in the energy sector.)

Given that ENI has concessions in both the Eastern and Western parts of Libya, the need to ensure continuity of the oil extraction in Libya forces the Italian governments to maintain stable relations with power centres in control of each part of Libya. This poses a number of challenges for Italian diplomacy, as it has for too long been in favour of the UN-backed Government of National Accord.

A stable Eastern and Western Libya is needed for Italy to guarantee the economic and the societal sector of security, as well. The vast majority of migrants arriving illegally in Italy by sea come from Libya, and to prevent this, the entire coastline needs to be controlled, so the societal sector of security is closely linked to the political sector. Neither the Italian reception system nor the Italian society was prepared for such an increase in the number of sea arrivals

after the Arab Spring, which led to a change in social attitudes towards migration and then to a change in political preferences.

The disintegration of the Libyan regime after 2011 intensified the military threats arriving from Libya, as the weak state provides fertile ground for the expansion of jihadist terrorist organisations and the internationalisation of the unresolved conflict led to an increasing flow of arms into the country. Since the Arab Spring, bilateral and international military missions have been active in Libya. After reviewing their mandate, I demonstrated that from Italy's perspective, the missions seek to parallelly address challenges in the economic, societal and military sectors of security. The interdependence between Italy and Libya is nevertheless still characterised by a certain stable unpredictability/instability in their relationship. However, Italy's dependence on Libya has increased most since the Arab Spring in the areas that affect the most the subjective threat perception of the population.

Italian politics has been characterised by instability ever since the Republic of Italy was born in 1947, but until the death of Gheddafi, the Libyan interlocutor was a given: a constant Libyan partner negotiated with by the successive Italian governments, and the domestic (political) instability was an attribute of only the Italian part. With the outbreak of the Arab Spring, Italy's main interests in Libya have not changed, but now not only the Italian governments are changing, but the number, power and influence of the Libyan interlocutors are also constantly changing, so the maintenance of stability on both sides is threatened.

There is a consensus among Italian parties on the general objectives of the Libya-policy, but there are significant differences between them in certain sectors (most importantly the management of migration). Since the Arab Spring, the Italian Libya-policy has been dominated by addressing the challenges in societal sector of security (illegal migration). (Successful) migration management has become a major objective of Italian foreign policy towards the Mediterranean and, from a domestic policy perspective, it has consistently determined the appreciation of the governments among the electorate. From a sectoral point of view, the primacy of measures regarding the societal security, but attention should also be drawn to the area of military security, given the continued Italian military presence in Libya since the Arab Spring. Compared to these two sectors, the economic sector of security has been less dominant in shaping bilateral relations. Societal security has been the root of most conflicts between the Italian parties. The intervening variable's (coalition advocacy) influence in shaping foreign policy has typically been perceptible in this context, most importantly in the case of the right-wing League's policy. The Libya-policy is particularly characterised by governing by decree that excludes parliament, leaving little room for the intervening variable (coalition advocacy).

The stabilisation of the Libyan situation by Italian interests goes beyond the framework of bilateral relations. By itself Italy is not able to do it, either because of its power is too light, or because unlike the other countries involved in the Libyan conflict, Rome does not intervene in Libya with hard foreign policy tools as a sponsor state of the proxy conflict and does not consider itself a party to the proxy war at all. Between 2011 and 2021, the Gentiloni government was the only one to use a proxy, but this was only directed at one sector of security, the societal sector, the aim of supporting the proxy was to stop illegal migration to Italy.

The political discourse on bilateral relations as a whole is not securitized. Securitizing elements are to be found in the discourse on Libya, mainly in areas directly affecting or closely linked to the sector of societal security (illegal migration, terrorism, crime). The League is the party most marked by securitizing elements, as it linked the securitization of migration to the adoption of exceptional measures.

The non-participation in the conflict and the preference for soft foreign policy tools decreased the Italian influence in Libya. The penetration of NATO member Turkey into the vacuum around the GNA counterbalanced Russia's growing influence in eastern Libya, pushing Italy, which had refused to provide military assistance to the GNA, into the background. This illustrates that in the 'new' geopolitical context of the Mediterranean, where much more countries have influence on the strategic balance and power dynamics than a few years ago, a lack of action can almost automatically lead to a loss of influence.

Fulfilling the hypotheses

The thesis tested five hypotheses and the following results were obtained:

H1: For Italy, Libya has been historically the most important country in the Mediterranean region, its importance for securing national interests has increased since the Arab Spring.

Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process methodology, I analysed Italy's (geographically located) national interests based on a complex set of criteria, focusing on the societal, economic and military sectors of security. Libya's historical relevance for Italy is undeniable, also due to its colonial past, but since the early 2000s illegal migration by sea and the changing social attitudes made Libya a priority country for the Italian Mediterranean foreign policy.

The results of the dissertation demonstrate that Libya has had the highest governmental relevance among the states in the region throughout my investigation period. In addition, the analysis also identified several sub-sectors where Libya's relative importance was clearly the

highest (e.g. illegal migration, historical-political, strategic importance), while in other areas the relative importance of other Mediterranean states was higher (e.g. priority: economic issues, legal migration), which balanced Libya's primacy in other areas.

Based on the aggregate results of the AHP research Libya's relative importance did not increase between 2011 and 2021, it remained roughly at the same level as in 2011 compared to the other four states, and thus this hypothesis is not proven.

H2: Since the Arab Spring the Italian Libya-policy has shifted its focus towards the societal sector of security.

In the dissertation I examined in detail Buzan's societal, economic and military sectors of security, the closely related political sector was included in the discourse analysis. Economic security is constantly on the agenda of the bilateral relations, with Italy having clear national interests in maintaining and increasing oil and gas supplies from Libya, to guarantee the security of energy supply, to diversify supplies and counterbalance the growing dependence on Russia since 2011. Italy is no longer the largest foreign actor of the Libyan market, and the economic sector of security hasn't been emphasised neither rhetorically, nor by the governments' measures between 2011 and 2021.

The results of the discourse analysis show that the tasks related to the societal sector of security (migration) and the Italian interests in the political sector of security (stabilisation of Libya) appear in parallel and with approximately equal weight in the political discourses of the potential Italian securitizing actors. At the level of governmental actions, I found that the Libya policy from 2011 to 2021 was migration-focused, thus this hypothesis has been proved.

H3: The unstable internal political situation in Italy has a significant influence only on the societal sector of security within the Italian Libya-policy.

In the dissertation I demonstrated that coalition advocacy, examined as the intervening variable of neoclassical realist theory, did not fundamentally influence Italian Libya-policy between 2011 and 2021, only episodically. The findings of the research on cross-party political support of the Libya-policy in the period before 2011 are applicable for the period after the Arab Spring. The right-wing League made the most use of the advocacy opportunities offered by the coalition dynamics (intervening variable), but this did not change the fundamental directions of the Libya policy. In 2011, the League's strong stance on participating in the military intervention in Libya provoked a government crisis, but the fall of the 4th Berlusconi-government was eventually avoided by adopting the League's (junior coalition partner's) positions. In 2018-2019, when the

League was once again in government as junior coalition partner, it managed to impose its will on the larger ruling party, thus it managed to influence parts of the Libya-policy. When coalition advocacy had a significant impact on Libya-policy, it has always been indirectly related to the societal sector of security, as the issue of migration is a salient issue for the League (and its electorate). For the left and centre-left parties, coalition advocacy didn't influence Libya policy. Centre-left governments were characterised more by intra-party than by intra-coalition conflicts, but these did not lead to any substantive change to government policy regarding Libya. On the basis of the above, hypothesis H3 has been proven.

H4: Italy does not consider the Libyan conflict a proxy war, which reduces its advocacy capacity.

Between 2011 and 2021, only the centre-left grand coalition Gentiloni-government treated the Libyan conflict as a proxy war. This government used a proxy to stop illegal migration departing from Libya's shores. The migration focus of the Libya-policy at that time is illustrated by the fact that the person in charge of the Libya-policy within the Italian government was Marco Minniti, Minister of the Interior, thus an essentially foreign ministerial competence was brought under the control of the Minister of the Interior. Although, as I demonstrated both through the examination of the measures taken by successive governments and through discourse analysis, the Gentiloni government's Libya-policy was the most comprehensive within the period I studied, it contributed significantly to the reduction of illegal migration to Italy by sea, most elements of Minniti's Libya-policy were abandoned by the subsequent governments. Thus, between 2011 and 2021 Italy treated the conflict in Libya as a proxy war for only one and a half years, and even during this short period Rome supported its proxy ally only due to a certain topic that concerned the societal sector of security (illegal migration). Although the first Conte government that followed the Gentiloni government continued to give the Interior Minister a prominent role in the Libya-policy (and in shaping and representing Italian foreign policy in general), the rejection of the proxy nature/logic and of the internationalisation of the conflict characterised the Italian Libya-policy. This phenomenon became more evident as the internationalisation started to increase in 2018. By not taking part in the armed conflict and by refusing the Libyan GNA's requests for arms, Italy withdrew itself from a conflict that directly affects its national interests. However, as an external actor, it does not have the power to influence on its own the Libyan actors and their sponsor states on, thus hypotheses H4 has been proven.

H5: Despite the primacy of the Libyan conflict within the Italian Mediterranean policy, Italian foreign and security policy was not characterised by independent initiatives between 2011 and 2021.

In the dissertation I examined as a dependent variable the balancing behaviour of Italy regarding external actors involved in the Libyan conflict. Rome's behaviour has historically been characterised more by bandwagoning, but it is the Mediterranean foreign policy direction where Italy had taken independent initiatives in the past. After 2014 the Italian Libya-policy started to follow a short-term strategy focusing on stopping illegal migration, making the stability of Libya a priority for Rome, regardless of the legitimacy of the Libyan actors involved in the conflict. During the period under review, the Italian policy towards Libya was not characterised by independent initiatives that produced any meaningful results. The policy of equidistance (*equidistanza*) after 2018 marginalised Rome on both sides of the intra-Libyan conflict. States with a more assertive and clearer position than Italy, willing to use hard foreign policy tools in Libya, are in a better position and are weakening Italy's position in Libya. On the basis of the above, hypothesis H5 has been proven.

New scientific results

1. I have shown that the advocacy capacity resulting from the coalition dynamics influences Libya policy only sectorally. To prove this, I comprehensively analysed the Libya-policy of the eight Italian governments in power from 2011-2021, taking into account the coalition advocacy logic as intervening variable. The dissertation thus contributes to the application of neoclassical realism theory to the study of bilateral relations.
2. Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process, I developed a novel methodology to analyse Italy's national interests in the five states on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt). By conducting a longitudinal study, I explored the changes in the relative importance of these countries in relation to each other between 2011 and 2021.
3. I identified and verified the main patterns of political discourse regarding Libya made by Italian ministers of defence, interior and foreign affairs and prime ministers between 2011 and 2021, based on my discourse analysis.
4. I confirmed that bilateral relations *as a whole* were not securitized by the Italian Libya-policy in the period 2011-2021. I have also shown that some sub-areas of the Libya-

policy were indeed securitized, mainly by the League, securitized elements of the Libya-policy addressed the societal sector of security.

5. I have shown that Italy's disengagement from the Libyan proxy conflict left Rome with insufficient leverage to exert any meaningful influence on settling the conflict, despite the fact that Italy has the oldest and deepest knowledge of Libya among the countries involved.

Recommendations for the practical use of the research results

The results of the research can be used and further developed in several areas. The academic literature on Italy in Hungary is currently limited, so the dissertation can serve as a point of reference for those who wish to study contemporary Italian foreign and security policy.

By using the theoretical framework of neoclassical realism, the dissertation provides a toolkit for foreign and security policy analysis that can be adapted to other fields and case studies. The dissertation provides a model, methodological and theoretical background for the study of foreign, security and defence policy and bilateral cooperation. At the theoretical level, other intervening variables of neoclassical realism (strategic culture, perception of relative power, etc.) can be tested either specifically through the case study of Italian-Libyan relations or through other case studies.

Future research directions related to the topic of the dissertation could yield novel results in the study of Italy's advocacy towards the European Union and the analysis of the new Italian-French rivalry in the African continent. Apart from these new scientific results could be achieved in conducting qualitative discourse analysis on the communication of Italian politicians towards their own electorate, which was not the subject of this thesis. Domestic politics would probably show more signs of securitization.

The results of this research can be used in the higher education, especially in the courses of international studies and security and defence policy. The thesis can serve as a preparatory and background material for the Hungarian Defence Forces for a better understanding of the Libyan situation, which is a significant element amongst challenges arriving from the South. In line with the National Security Strategy, the stability of the region is also in Hungary's national interest. The Hungarian Defence Forces are also actively involved in addressing the challenges reaching Europe from the south through EU operations (EUNAVFOR MED Sophia, then Irini) and the NATO hub in Naples (NATO Strategic Direction South).

The events that determine world politics from the beginning of 2022 (the Russian-Ukrainian war) clearly indicated that the framework of the thesis captured a defined period in the Italian-Libyan relations, from the Arab Spring to the war of 2022. Italo-Libyan relations are likely to be significantly affected by the consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Libya's role could be enhanced for Europe and Italy due to its oil and gas supplies, furthermore, the balance of power in Libya could be broken by the withdrawal from Libya of groups linked to Russia (e.g. Wagner group). All this not only highlights the actuality and relevance of the issue, but also points to new research directions.

The relevant scientific publications of the author

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