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**To what extent did the Arab Spring trigger a transformation
of dominant paradigms in French foreign policy?**

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I. Introduction

To what extent did the Arab Spring trigger a transformation of dominant paradigms in French foreign policy? This thesis will scrutinize dogmata of the external affairs manifested during the last five decades in France under the presidencies of Charles de Gaulle, Georges Pompidou, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, François Mitterrand, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy.

In the course of the Arab Spring 2010/2011, the influence of the dominant principles of French foreign policy can be examined by analysing the engagement of France in the Maghreb region. Is de Gaulle's philosophy of the French Grandeur still a decisive leitmotiv, or did France's integration in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) mark a change of mind in the international arena? Does the deep-rooted belief in the values of the French Revolution provide guidance for the handling of conflicts nowadays, or was it replaced by more pragmatic or opportunist practices? This thesis gives answers to those questions by describing basic theoretical concepts that influence the French external affairs (II), by pinpointing its core elements (III) and by outlining the historical involvement of France in Tunisia and Libya (IV). Subsequently, the contemporary foreign policy in the course of the Arab Spring will be analysed (V).

The term “Arab Spring” was chosen over “Maghreb crisis”, since it does not allegorise an ideological indoctrination. Albeit words such as crisis or conflict are commonly used by the media and by many politicians, they are easily perceived as being biased. Speaking of a “crisis” in that context conveys the impression of a purely geopolitical point of view and is most likely perceived as very cynical by the people that are directly affected by oppressive regimes. While the term “protest” may not reflect the full scale of the political transformation process, the term “revolution” implies that the overthrowing of the authority is yet accomplished. In the light of the smouldering civil war in Libya, an overhasty conclusion.

This thesis will give an overview over the various concepts of Franco-Arabian and Franco-African partnership. Since Tunisia and Libya as the countries of interest belong both to the African continent and to the Arabian region, they are included in the French foreign affairs under the frameworks of “Françafrique” and “Politique Arabe”. To avoid redundancy, this thesis will use the term “Françafrique”, in recognition of the prominence of the concept in the political and historical discourse¹.

1 Compare among others: Verschave, Glaser, Smith, Clapham, Hugué (as cited in Höschele, 2008, p. 15)

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A. Relevance

Albeit the upheaval of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was successful, political struggles continue in Tunisia. In Libya, the protest movement turned into a bloody civil war, where the heinous crimes of Muammar Muhammad Al-Gaddafi triggered a military intervention by the NATO. The role of France in regard to the two conflicts could not have been more different. This thesis will scrutinize the dominant paradigms that provide the basis for French foreign policy during the Arab Spring.

In December 2010 the protests in Tunisia set the spark for what would become a conflagration of the whole Maghreb region. An unprecedented event, which has the power to transform the political structure all over the Arab world. For people living under constant repression, the reaction of Western countries is of utmost importance, since their effort can help to overcome the suffocating diktat of despotic regimes. France is an especially interesting choice to analyse, due to its long history in the Maghreb and the geographical and political closeness in the Mediterranean region. The decision to focus on Tunisia and Libya as case studies for this thesis is based on the rationale that their analysis covers both ends of the spectrum of the events in the course of the Arab Spring. It is assumed that the external affairs towards Tunisia, as a former protectorate that still maintains close political and economical relations to France, are different to those towards Libya.

For decades, the external affairs of France were determined by certain dogmata that arose in the wake of the French Revolution, the era of de Gaulle or during and after the cold war. These paradigms were reliable indicators in the analysis of French foreign policy. The Arab Spring is an event that triggered a transformation of the French external affairs. In times of change it becomes apparent which paradigms remain the basis of France's rationale and which drift into insignificance.

B. Methodology

This master thesis is segmented into the theoretical background of the paradigms of French external affairs and an analysis of their evolution in regard to the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Libya in the beginning of 2011.

Often times contemporary newspaper articles allude to various important events as motives or indicators, without putting them into context or even clarifying what these events mean. In order to overcome this lack of depth, this thesis seeks to give a profound analysis by adding the historical context in which the current transformations of French foreign policy have their origins.

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For that matter the core concepts of French external affairs and the historical relations between France and the Maghreb states are a fundamental part of this thesis. As a consequence, there is a division into a historical part (IV) and a contemporary part (V-VI). Whereas the historical part focuses on how influential persons or key events coined paradigms of the French foreign policy, the thematic structure of the contemporary part gives it a more detailed account in regard to the Arab Spring. This results in a systematic connection between historical as well as contemporary incidents and the paradigm shift in the external affairs of France. The indicators that will be used for the analysis derive from the traditional core elements of French foreign policy (i.e. Grandeur, Françafrique, Mission Civilisatrice and Europe Puissance) as well as from theoretical assumptions which influence the paradigms of the external affairs (e.g. the role of the national identity or of supranational institutions). The analysis is characterised by an open outcome to allow the use of antagonising concepts (e.g. NATOisation vs. Grandeur).

The underlying source material consists of mainly academic literature and scientific journals for the historical part and of newspaper articles, interviews and papers of various institutes or Non-Governmental Organisations for the contemporary part. This is done to allow the coverage of more recent developments in the French foreign policy regarding the North African region.

C. Limitations

This thesis is subject to various structural limitations to guarantee clearness and avoid redundancy. While in the chapters three and four a recourse to historical events is beneficial to incorporate decisive sociocultural norms which were internalised prior to French involvement and form the basis for contemporary paradigms of French foreign policy, their analysis is carried out in the confined time frame of the Arab Spring 2011. Whenever a historical perception does not prove to be of salience for the topic of this thesis, the time frame encompasses the 5th republic of France. This is done, as most of the paradigms, namely Europe Puissance, Grandeur and the French stance towards NATO, were essentially refined or even created in the time between the presidencies of de Gaulle and Sarkozy. A comprehensive overview over the origins and the development of the paradigms hence provides the necessary foundation for a meaningful analysis of potential transformations within the external affairs.

In regard to the restricted extent of this thesis, the focus is set on the developments in Tunisia and Libya. While in some cases the events could reflect happenings throughout the other Maghreb

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states, it is more likely that they mirror a specific national situation. However, concerning a potential paradigm shift in the external affairs of France, the chosen countries are suitable examples showing a detailed picture of the French reaction to the Arab Spring.

II. Theoretical Framework

How did the paradigms of French foreign affairs change in the wake of the Arab Spring? What influence derives from the self-conception of the French? How are nation and identity defined? The following theoretical concepts facilitate the understanding of those questions and illuminate the roots of the dogmata of French foreign policy. In that regard, highlighting contemporary tendencies in global politics like Europeanisation, NATOisation or Democratic Interventionism is of equal avail as analysing the fundamental characteristics of identity and nation.

A. Conceptions of Identity and Nation

To justify the relevance of French identity in international relations, the idea of constructivism is of avail. Alexander Wendt suggests two basic tenets of constructivism in his book “Social Theory of International Politics”. For him the *“structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces”*. Furthermore, he believes that the *“identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.”* (Wendt, 1999, p. 1).

To give a more holistic approach, the following paragraph outlines the concepts of identity and nation.

i. Concept of Identity

For this thesis it is important to understand to what extent those shared ideas constructed the French national identity and therefore formed paradigms in the foreign policy of France.

In general, identity alludes to the specific characteristics of a person in relation to, or in separation from the other, argues Bernhard Stahl (Stahl, 2006, p.47). In addition to the personal and individual identity, every person develops social identities identifying one with groups or other persons. Hence, social identities define the individual's membership in groups (ibid.). Coherently, Tajfel gives the following definition:

Social identity's are *“that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership.”* (Tajfel, 1981, p. 6).

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In line with the idea of social-constructivism, Thomas Risse states, that the decisive point of social-constructivist research is the endogenisation of identities, interests and preferences (Risse, 1999, p. 37). He emphasises, that identities are determined by structures such as the system of international security (ibid.). A change of the structures directly affects the national identity of a community, which will only give permission to politically adapt to the new situation, if it is not to the detriment of the national identity itself (ibid.). The power of the French president to act is hence crucially determined by the characteristics of the nation's identity.

ii. Concept of the Nation

In France, the concept of the nation facilitates to understand the characteristics of the national politics. For this thesis, I will follow the definition of Benedict Anderson:

“In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” (Anderson, 1991, pp. 5-6)

Although Anderson provides a more comprehensive analysis of his definition², for this thesis the terms “sovereign” and “community” matter most. He describes the sovereignty of the nation with reference to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, which destroyed *“the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm”* leaving nations with the *“dream of being free”* (ibid.). In his words, the sovereign state symbolises the *“emblem of this freedom”* (ibid.). For Anderson the nation is also an *“imagined community”*, because it is *“always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship”* (ibid.)

In the light of Thomas Risse's initial remarks, in conveying this understanding to the French reality, the sovereignty and the fraternity of the French nation are decisive factors of influence in any political activity.

B. Integration Theory

In times of growing interdependence of countries world-wide and in response to dominant globalisation processes, the concept of regional integration in international relations is fundamental to understanding the processes of Europeanisation and NATOisation.

2 Compare Anderson 1991

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i. Two Families of European Integration Theory

Broadly speaking, the theoretical discourse about European integration is dominated by two schools of thought embodied in the “two families of integration theory”³. In the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Donald J. Puchala phrased two distinct definitions for the concepts of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism. Supranationalism, i.e. neofunctionalism, in the words of Schmitter, the “most insightful and helpful in understanding European integration’s underlying dynamics” (Schmitter, 2006, p. 265), is defined as:

“Here, the advance of European integration is both indexed by and contained within the expanding authority, competence and jurisdiction of supranational institutions, accompanied conversely by the constrained autonomy, diminishing competence and contracting exclusive jurisdiction of national governments. Though international integration may be initiated by agreements among governments, international institutions, once established, take on a political life of their own, and the rule-making authority delegated to them by states collectively binds and bounds governments by locking in patterns of collective behaviour and ratcheting supranationality.” (Puchala, 1999, p. 318)

In addition, he defines intergovernmentalism as the following:

“For their part, intergovernmentalists attribute little influence to supranational agents or institutions, and some detect little genuine supranationality in the European Union. They recognize, accept and welcome the historical progression [...] and they acknowledge the contribution of international secretariats in managing co-operation among states and the role of international courts in enforcing it. But they see the movement toward, and the timing of, closer international co-operation in Europe as resulting from the converging national interests of states (economic interests in particular) emerging out of the currents and pressures of national politics.” (ibid., p. 319)

In short, while in the concept of supranationalism the decision-making power is held by institutions like the EU or NATO, whose influence is not bound by national borders, the intergovernmentalists suggest that the level and speed of integration to these institutions is controlled by the national governments. The delegation of power to a supranational institution is therefore a rational decision by each member-state.

The two theories are commonly understood as antagonising concepts, whose validity can be testified by decisive political events. Regarding the beginning of the EU integration for example, the supranational behaviour was seen as the main driving force.

3 For further information compare Schimmelfennig&Rittberger, 2006

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However, in response to the empty chair crisis triggered by de Gaulle's scepticism towards supranational institutions, Ernst Haas called neofunctionalism "obsolete" (Haas, 1975).

ii. NATOisation

The term "NATOisation" describes the process of international socialisation in security studies, where national actors and especially their military institutions adapt themselves to the norms and the operational and structural conduct of the NATO (Frank, 2010, p. 44). In the words of former American President Bill Clinton, the "*NATO's success has involved promoting security interests, advancing values, supporting democracy and economic opportunity. We have literally created a community of shared values and interests, as well as an alliance for common defence.*" (as cited in Frank, 2010, p. 98).

C. Democratic Interventionism

Democratic interventions against authoritarian regimes are publicly justified by oppression and human rights violations in the respective country. The question of their legitimacy constitutes an enigma between scientists, contemporary or antique. On the contestation of the righteousness of war for a noble cause, already Thukydides scrutinized the legal, ethical and moral argumentation of the Peloponnesian war (Thukydides, pp. 63-72).

Following the remarks of Holzgrefe and Keohane, democratic interventions, i.e. humanitarian interventions conducted by democracies towards authoritarian states, can be defined as "*the threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied*" (Holzgrefe & Keohane, 2003, p. 18).

The crux of the matter is the legal interpretation of international law. The "*paramount international convention governing the exercise of armed force*" is the Charter of the United Nations (ibid., p. 37). The focus lies on the articles 2(4) that require "*all states [...] to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of any state*" and the article 2(7), stating that "*nothing in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.*" (Charter of the United Nations). Regarding this principle of non-intervention, there are broadly speaking two approaches

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of legal interpretation⁴. Tom J. Farer coined them a “classicist view” and a “legal realist view” (Farer, 1991, p. 186). To simplify matters, it can be outlined, that the classicist view recognises “positive law”, is based on pure textual analysis, insists on the indefeasibility of the treaty and therefore dismisses the justification of humanitarian interventions through the Charter (Holzgreffe&Keohane, 2003, p. 38). In contrast, in the legal realist view, the text of the treaty is regarded as “one among a larger number of means for ascertaining original intention.” (ibid., p. 19). They hence see the legal status in a large measure as dependent on the attitude of the international community. In the legal realist view, a humanitarian intervention could be legitimate, if for example inherent rights, granted by natural law, are violated.

“Natural law is the naturalist doctrine that human beings have certain moral duties by virtue of their common humanity. Like human nature, they are also universal and immutable.” writes Holzgreffe (ibid., p. 25). For natural law theorists, these moral duties can include humanitarian interventions (ibid.). *“Moral obligation to others”*, adds Joseph Boyle, *“are not limited to people with whom we are bound in community by contract, political ties, or common locale. We are obliged to help whoever [...] we can.”* (ibid., p. 25-26). A well-known proponent of this conviction is Hugo Grotius, a Dutch jurist, who emphasised the necessity of international engagement in his book *“De Jure Belli ac Pacis”*, in which he argues that the right to exercise a humanitarian intervention may be granted if a tyrant *“inflicts upon his subjects such treatment as no one is warranted in inflicting”* (Grotius, 1925, p. 584).

In the political arena such a tyrant could well be the ruler of a sovereign state. The question that derives from this constellation is the question of legitimacy. In that sense, Thomas Hobbes' notion of a legitimate ruler remained highly influential in the international political philosophy (Schweidler, 2004, p. 139). In *“Der gute Staat”* Walter Schweidler argues, that Hobbes' legal-positivist⁵ declaration of *“authoritas, non veritas, facit legem”*⁶ empowers the ruler to pass any legislation, without being limited by the people (as cited in Schweidler, 2004, p. 140).

In Hobbes conviction the state's main task is to be a protector of its people, who are endangered by the anarchic state of nature and by potential heteronomy among each other (Schweidler, 2004, p. 140). The state of nature is seen as a war off all against all, which poses a threat to mankind. In his book *“The Leviathan”* from 1651, the social contract constitutes the solution to the conflict by

4 For further information on the question of legitimacy of humanitarian interventions see Holzgreffe&Keohane, 2003

5 For legal-positivists law is binding when noted down. It can however be changed by jurisdiction. It depends on social facts and not on its merits. For more see: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/legal-positivism/>

6 Latin for “Authority, not virtue makes the law”, (Hobbes, 1839-1845, p. 202)

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delegating the power to the Leviathan, a “mortal god”, who will be the sovereign of the society and the enforcing mechanism of the agreement (Hobbes, 1839-1845), pp. 200-205)⁷. On this basis, Schweidler argues, that if the sovereign can not provide the essential security, the preconditions for the social contracts become futile and it loses its validity (Schweidler, 2004, p. 149). The boundless arbitrariness of the Leviathan is thus effectively constricted by the postulate that it derives its power from the people and loses its legitimacy if it cannot guarantee the public's security any more (ibid.). Niklas Luhmann shares the idea about legal-positivism by accentuating that the legislative process itself bestows the rightfulness upon the law (Bolsinger, 2001, pp. 3-5). However, in his eyes the positive law is constantly confronted with the difficulty of having to prove its legitimacy (Schmitz, 2008, p. 65). Since it cannot overcome this deficit on its own, Luhmann argues, that it needs to make use of political justification, i.e. through elections in democracies (ibid.).

To round up the theoretical background on humanitarian interventions, the philosophy of John Locke and his primacy of natural law over positive law is noteworthy. He states, that in a condition of total absence of positive law, political institutions, norms and manners, it becomes apparent that individuals have certain rights, like equality and freedom, which are perceived due to the rationality of the human mind (ibid., p. 83). In reference to and in theoretical agreement with Locke's “Second Treatise”, Schmitz concludes, that the natural right of freedom would be impeded by any other form of rule, than by a government by consent of the governed (ibid., p. 87).

To conclude, while Schweidler and Luhmann see limitations to the rule of the sovereign by depicting that the source of legitimate power lies with the people and that only democracy is able to guarantee a just representation, Locke's constraint is inherent in the argument, that natural law has to be primacy over the ruling of the authority. These theoretical convictions constitute the basic reasoning for interventionists and remain important for the interpretation of international law until today.

Following the latter view and by reference to the empirical evidence of the democratic peace theory, indicating that democracies do not tend to wage war among themselves, a school of thought developed which claims that the moral high ground of democracies legitimises democratic interventionism (Rotte, 2002, pp. 380-404).

In this thesis, it will be scrutinized to what extent the French bias towards democratic interventionism constitutes a traditional paradigm of French foreign policy and how this influenced the events of the Arab Spring in 2011.

⁷ “Social contractarianism is the naturalist doctrine that moral norms derive their binding force from the mutual consent of the people subject to them.” (Holzgrefe&Keohane, 2003, p. 28)

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III. Core Elements of French Foreign Policy

The French foreign policy is built up of concepts that fundamentally describe not only the external affairs but the French vocation as it is perceived by many in the population and by the presidents alike. Guiding principles like Grandeur, Françafrique and among others the Mission Civilisatrice proved to be core elements of French external affairs. In some cases, these paradigms originated prior to the 5th republic, for instance in the wake of the French Revolution, but they all played a role from the time of de Gaulle until today.

As the leader of the French resistance during the second world war, general Charles de Gaulle not only embodied the Grandeur, but was ennobled to be the reincarnation of France. No other president influenced the domestic and foreign policies to the extent of de Gaulle, eventually leading to the term “Gaullism” to describe his particular way of governing. By taking up the notion of the French Grandeur and complementing it with his personal ideology, he decisively determined the French national identity. For Charles de Gaulle, who called the nation “*the most complete product of history, goal and coronation of all politics*” (Ziebur, 1970, p. 277), the nation-state is the only relevant actor in the international community. In his notion of politics, the ultima ratio of every activity in the foreign affairs is the enforcement of national interests.

For him supranationalism posed two threats to France. Firstly, in the introduction of qualified majority voting in the Council of the European Union he saw an impediment to French national interest. In that light, de Gaulle's criticism towards the European integration, the policy of the “empty chair” and his polemic towards the “stateless bureaucrats” in Brussels were motivated by his dismissive stance over supranationalism (Personal Communication, Waechter, 2011).

Secondly, the interference of the joint military command of the NATO with the French dogmatic conviction of an independent foreign policy was unacceptable for de Gaulle (ibid.). Subordinating the operational command to what was in his eyes a supranational embodiment of US-dominated view of the world would mean a commitment which is an inadmissible limitation of the scope of French external policies. The reluctance to fight in a war, were French interests are not at stake eventually coined the term “conditional engagement” (Sirjacques, 1977, p. 86). Similarly to his philosophy regarding the “force du frappe”⁸, de Gaulle was keen on maintaining unbiased and unrestricted foreign affairs (ibid.).

8 “Force du Frappe” informally describes the “Force de dissuasion nucléaire de la France”, meaning the power and range of deterrence of French nuclear weapons

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The coherent components of Gaullism remained a fundamental but weakened part in the policies of his successors. With the death of de Gaulle, the Gaullists not only lost their symbolic embodiment but also the de-facto legitimacy of using the myth of de Gaulle, argues Matthias Waechter in “Der Mythos des Gaullismus” (Waechter, 2006, p. 418). As a result, none of de Gaulle's successors could personify the general's historical glory, collective worship and could attain a comparable degree of effectiveness in forming the political system of France (ibid., p. 417). In addition, the transformations in world politics of the last 50 years influenced French foreign policy and alleviated the exclusiveness of Gaullism to an undeniable extent. The ongoing Europeanisation during the presidencies of Giscard d'Estaing and Mitterrand is as important to support this assumption, as the lack of transatlantic rivalry under Sarkozy (Waechter, 2011).

Consequently, during the campaign to run for president, Nicolas Sarkozy repeatedly announced that it is time to break with the long-lasting habits of French Foreign policy (Woyke, 2010, p. 290). A renunciation of the practice, that external affairs were commonly seen as the “domaine réservé” of the president, as well as an improvement of the cooperation with the National Assembly were among his plans to modernize the institutional balance and thereby to set him apart from his various predecessors (ibid., p. 290-291).

In his philosophy, the elements of greatest salience in French foreign affairs are the fight against terrorism, the EU, especially regarding the Franco-German partnership, a prompt rapprochement with NATO, a close relation to the United States of America (USA), Russia and China and new approaches for a Union for the Mediterranean as well as for Africa and the Middle-East (ibid., p. 290f).⁹

The following part intends to give an overview over French external affairs and their institutional structure. In the light of Sarkozy's aforementioned announcements, a focal point will be to fathom if real institutional and operational change occurred, or if statements made remained rhetorical. This chapter is relevant in the context of the core elements of France's foreign policy, which are often times based on tradition and internalised norms. They are embodied in and at the same time determine to a large extent the national identity and influence almost every sector of French activity on the international stage. Hence, understanding the paradigms of French foreign policy facilitates to coherently evaluate reactions to the upheaval in the Maghreb region.

⁹ Although the relations to the USA, China and Russia play an important role in the French foreign relations today, this thesis does not dedicate chapters to those issues, as the interaction is not essentially relevant for the Franco-Maghreb relations. However, some paragraphs on NATO and de Gaulle put emphasis on the American influence. For further information about these topics, I recommend: USA: (Woyke, 2010), (Kempin, 2008), China: (Gill&Murphy, 2008) and Russia: (Gomart, 2007)

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A. Institutional Balance

The constitution of the 5th Republic defines the President of France as the central actor in the state (Woyke, 2010, p. 29). Unlike the norm in the 3rd and 4th Republic, constitutionally foreign affairs are seen as a “*domaine réservé*”, hence a field of work, where the president is the exclusive decision-maker and where no consultation is required (ibid., p. 35).

This strong role has to be attributed to the unprecedented influence of Charles de Gaulle in the 1958 constitution. In the second chapter describing the competences of the president, article 5, written by de Gaulle himself, lays down that the president is the “*guarantor of national independence, of the integrity of the federal territory and of all national contracts*” (ibid., p. 34). Although the terms “independence” and “integrity” are vague and in times of globalisation and supranational cooperation practically impossible, in the political reality of de Gaulle and his successors they were used to promote the concept of national sovereignty in regard to not only foreign affairs but also security and defence policies (ibid., p. 34). To underline the exclusiveness of the French president in the decision-making in the aforementioned domains, it is noteworthy to mention that he represents at the same time the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.

The competences of the prime minister in questions concerning foreign affairs are specified in the articles 20 and 21 of the constitution of the 5th French Republic. While the prime minister is by law entitled to co-decide issues regarding national security and external relations, in practice those rights are limited by the president (ibid., p. 35). The ministry of foreign affairs at the Quay d'Orsay¹⁰ is equally constricted by the superordinated president (ibid.).

As a result, the fact that the external affairs are a de-facto “*domaine réservé*” in the constitutional reality triggered a shift of power towards the president to an extent beyond the normative political order granted by the constitution (Woyke, 2010, p. 34-35).

In times of “Cohabitation”¹¹ this imbalanced power divide is marginalized, thus enabling the prime minister to play a more active role on the international stage (ibid., p. 36). Since the last president governing by “Cohabitation” was Jacques Chirac in 2002, it can be concluded that from the presidential elections in May 2007 onwards, Nicolas Sarkozy dominates the decision making in the external affairs of France.

10 The French “Ministère des affaires étrangères et européennes” (Foreign Ministry) resides at Quay d'Orsay n° 37

11 “Cohabitation” describes the case, when the majority in the presidential elections do not represent the majority in the parliament.

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B. National Identity of the French Security Policy

The self-conception of French security policy stands in close relation to the national identity. While the classical identity is entrenched in the French Revolution and was revitalised under the presidency of Charles de Gaulle, the concept of a France as a civilian power came into existence in the context of the war in Iraq in 2003.

The classical identity of the French security policy is engrained in its historical self-conception. With the storming of the Bastille on the 14th of July 1789, not only the balance of power, but also the relation between the nation and the state itself were changed (ibid.). In line with Anderson's conception of sovereignty, the people of France transformed from dependants of the king to a community based on the "souveraineté nationale" (ibid., p. 35). With the introduction of the individual denomination, the nation, hitherto held together by the absolutist monarch, became the authority of state legitimacy (ibid., p. 201). Referring to the initial remark of Risse, the dependence of the government on the mandate given by the nation itself constitutes the real power of the French "third estate"¹².

Henrik Larson accentuates: "*Thus, the state was seen as an expression of the general will in the sense of Rousseau. It fully embodied the republican values of the nation and was the defender and protector of these values.*" (Larson, 1997, p. 79).

Following this ideological transformation, the new French state had the responsibility to protect the nation not only against attacks from the outside, but also against secessionists from the inside (Kempin, 2007, p. 201). The perpetuation of the nation was hence incumbent upon the state and could not be delegated (ibid.). This peculiarity effectively determined the French decision to remain independent in their foreign policy, whereas for example Germany or the United Kingdom (UK) maintained close coordination with the NATO already during the cold war (Kempin, 2007, p. 201). In addition, Dr. Kempin emphasises that the French state is the legitimate guardian of the Mission Civilisatrice by protecting democracy, freedom and human rights as the guiding principles of the revolution, not only within its borders but wherever they were endangered (ibid.).

The French national identity aggrieved by the trauma of the German occupation, was revitalised with the inauguration of Charles de Gaulle as the first president of the 5th republic. During his presidency, he valued the core ideas of the nation and managed to re-establish the classical identity of the French security policy in accordance to a symbiosis of state, nation and the "Mission

12 Prior to the French Revolution, the French society was divided into 3 estates: clergy, nobility and the third estate, the commoners)

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Civilisatrice” (Marcussen et al., 1966, 619). Consequently, Marcussen et al. Conclude that “*None of these nation-state identity constructions were particularly new, but de Gaulle combined them in a special way and managed to use them in order to legitimize the political institutions of the Fifth Republic.*” (ibid., p. 620).

Moreover, with his notion of an independent foreign policy, he set the foundation for the inconsistent relation to the NATO, which is determined by an early distinct antagonism, followed by a long-lasting period of subtle rapprochement. While France withdrew from the joint military command of the NATO under the presidency of Charles de Gaulle, his successors pursued politics of rapprochement. Even if they were willing to fully join the NATO, due to the domestic dominance of the Gaullists, Pompidou's and d'Estaing's power to act was restricted to the act of communicating closer relations (Woyke, 2010, pp. 116-117). However, in retrospect the defence concept of d'Estaing must be considered a harmonisation with the NATO. He accentuated, that France, in case of a conflict in Europe, will be in the battlefield from the very beginning (Sirjacques, 1977, p. 86). Françoise Sirjacques assumes that d'Estaing took a common identity of interests between the NATO and France for given and therefore considered the central Gaullist concept of “conditional engagement” to be obsolete (ibid.).

Under Mitterrand, France drifted even further away from de Gaulle's “splendid isolation policy” and acknowledged that the NATO will be indispensable for a stable and secure Europe (ibid., pp. 139-140). Although Jacques Chirac, already in 1996 stated in a letter to Bill Clinton: “*We are ready, as I said, to go all the way into NATO*” (Asmus, 2002, p. 168), only in 2009 Sarkozy announced the full return to the integrated military command of the NATO (Woyke, 2010, p. 297). Responsible for the delay of 13 years is mainly the relation between France and the United States of America, which can be described as full of ups and downs. When France in 1996 and 1997 suggested a new structure of leadership within the NATO, the USA blocked the reform which should have put the south command of the organisation under European control (Woyke, 2010, p. 244). In the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, Chirac emphasised a “*total solidarity*” with the USA (ibid.,p. 245). Only one year later, the French refusal to recognize the US propagated “*axis of evil*” illustrates the deterioration of the partnership (ibid.).

Only in 2009, when Sarkozy recognized that a strong cooperation with NATO was a precondition for a successful Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), France reintegrated into the military command of the NATO.

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In a nutshell, de Gaulle's conception of prioritising the national interest, keeping an independent foreign policy, emphasising the force du frappe and following the notion of conditional engagement coloured the national identity of the French security policy for decades and was only slightly alternated by his predecessors and the globalisation of international politics.

After the cold war, France's post-imperial self-conception has been determined mainly by two themes: “*the pursuit of a strong, integrated Europe as a guarantor of peace*” and “*a benign, wise, big-brotherly presence in former colonies in Africa and the Arab world*”, argues Bruno Tertrais, senior research fellow at the Foundation for Strategic Research (The Guardian, 23.03.2011). Although the described paradigm of a supranational Europe Puissance and the global tendency to act multilateral, e.g. within the framework of the NATO, can sometimes be regarded as antagonising concepts to the Gaullist tradition, both belong to some extent to the modern French self-conception and play distinct roles in enforcing national interest.

An example for the alteration of the national identity of the French security policy constitutes the war in Iraq. In her book “Frankreichs neue Sicherheitspolitik” Dr. Kempin thus argues that in 2003 France shifted from a military to a civilian power (Kempin, 2007, pp. 201-202).

To define the concept of a civilian power, it is adjuvant to refer to Hans Maull, an influential German political scientist. In his words the identity of a civilian power can be defined as the following: “*Taking the domestication of the use of force in democratic communities as a matrix for international behaviour, civilian powers try to replace the military enforcement of rules (politics based on power) with the internalisation of socially accepted norms (politics based on legitimacy)*” (Maull, 2001, p. 3).

In the light of this definition, Maull depicts the primary objective of a civilian power as being the “civilization” of international relations by applying three fundamental principles: the limitation of military power, the implementation of internationally accepted norms and the development of supranational institutions (ibid.).

In conclusion, the national identity of the French security policy is entrenched in the values of the French Revolution, revitalised by de Gaulle's strong leadership and alternated by the globalisation and transformation of world politics after the cold war and the colonial times.

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C. Mission Civilisatrice

When in 1789 the French Revolution culminated in the formulation of human and civil rights as well as the announcement of adhering to democratic and republican principles, the Mission Civilisatrice became a fundamental part of the foreign policy of France (Kempin, 2007, p. 38).

Deriving from the belief in the concept of the “universal citizen”, France felt obliged to promote and preserve their values worldwide (ibid.). Under the slogan “*Guerre aux châteaux! Paix aux chaumières!*”¹³ the French soldiers enforced their missionary commitment (ibid.). In 1991, François Mitterrand described the mission of France's foreign policy as the following: “*France cannot be absent because the war is waged in the name of international law and fundamental principles. France fought in 1972 because France was the carrier of principles which it had defined for itself and which ought to become the principles of the entire world. That is why France could not allow itself to stay outside the intervention.*” (as cited in Holm, 2000, p. 180).

The quintessence of this statement was also shared by de Gaulle, whose understanding of the state is summarised by Larsen: “*The state had to be strong and interventionist in order to defend these values against its (ever-present) enemies.*” (Larsen, 1997, p. 88). De Gaulle emphasised, that those values provide the basis for international involvement, when he assured the French population in a New Years speech in 1967: “*Our action aims at goals that are interconnected and which, because they are French, reflect the desire of all men.*” (as cited in Grosser, 1980, p. 184).

D. Grandeur

The concept of the French Grandeur, i.e. its greatness, cultural heritage and international vocation, stands in close connection to the personality of Charles de Gaulle. The following quote from de Gaulle's memoirs is a striking example for his admiration for the French nation-state: “*The emotional side of me tends to imagine France, like the princess in the stories or the Madonna in the frescoes, as dedicated to an exalted and exceptional destiny. But the positive side of my mind also assures me that France is not really herself unless in the front rank; that only vast enterprises are capable of counterbalancing the divisive ferments which are inherent in her people. In short, to my mind, France cannot be France—without greatness.* (de Gaulle, 1954, p. 9).

It is apparent that de Gaulle, deeply influenced by the values of the French nation-state, not only desired to sharpen the administrative efficiency of France, but also craved to restore the country's dignity and greatness, as embodied by the notion of the Grandeur (Waechter, 2006, p. 200).

In the international arena this self-conception was reflected by France's strive for being one of the

13 i.e. “war to the palaces, peace to the cottages“

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Great Powers. As a result the antagonism to the USA and the NATO was mainly based on the feeling that the American superiority impeded the French Grandeur by limiting the sovereignty and the independence of the foreign policy and therefore the enforcement of France's national interest.

The idea of greatness “*carries heavy costs*” argues Julian Borger of the Guardian (The Guardian, 23.03.2011). Keeping a completely independent nuclear arsenal that Sarkozy accentuates as being “*an absolute imperative*” is equally expensive as the French profound diplomatic corps, with its 160 embassies and 96 consulates all over the world (ibid.).

E. Françafrique

Since the time of colonisation, close political and economical ties with regional authorities as well as cultural and military presence on the ground made the African continent the “*pré carré*”, i.e. the backyard of the French geopolitical interest (Woyke, 2010, p. 305). The belief that France due to its sociocultural heritage and its political importance has to be regarded as a pivotal global power was shared by all presidents of the 6th Republic (ibid., p. 312). This conviction is also reflected by the French engagement in Africa, which continuously prioritised national benefits over moral integrity of the African partners (ibid., p. 307). “*Françafrique*”, the non-transparent affiliation of France and regional despots, hence became a dominant and recurring theme in the external affairs from de Gaulle to Sarkozy (Vernet, 2007, p. 28).¹⁴

The roots of the French relationship to the Maghreb can be traced back to the time prior to the promulgation of the 5th Republic. “*Violence has formed France’s relationship with North Africa*” argues Karl Sörensen of the Swedish Defence Research Agency FOI in a report about “the foundation, reorientation and reorganisation of France’s Africa politics” named “*Beyond Françafrique*” (Sörensen, 2008, p. 34). Rooted in the French violent invasion in 1830, which led to oppression on the one, and bloody uprisings on the other side, Algeria “*has always played a key role in the Maghreb, and still does*” (ibid.). In many cases, resentments in the Maghreb region towards the Françafrique derive from its historical hegemonic ruling in Algeria (ibid., p. 33). Nowadays, this is seen as one cause of the emergence of Algerian Islamic groups and their spread to neighbouring countries such as Morocco, Libya and Tunisia, complicating the relationship with each other as well as with France (ibid., p. 32-34).

Albeit formally decolonised in the beginning of the 1960's, France persistently remained present on

14 Additionally, the special focus of France towards the Arab countries resulted in the concept of the “*politique arabe*”, that was made famous by de Gaulle and continued to play an essential role in French foreign policy (Wood, 2002, p. 1-2). However, it was replaced with the term “*la politique méditerranéenne*” in the early 1990's and for reasons of avoiding redundancy will be integrated in the concept of “*Françafrique*”.

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the African continent resulting in the French engagement being labelled as “*modern neocolonialism*” (Woyke, 2010, p. 313). In contrast to the claim that France pushed for a “*gentle decolonisation*” of the 14 francophone African countries, the reality is “*very different*”, argues Odile Tobner, chairwoman of Survie, an NGO striving for an abolishment of the Françafrique policy (Jung, 2010). Among others, Tobner condemns the French involvement in the 1960 genocide in Cameroon¹⁵, the extensive corruption of the state-owned petrol companies Total and Elf-Aquitaine in regard to African dictators in Gabon, Congo and Cameroon and the ongoing support of authoritarian regimes, who are accused of being responsible “*for torture, crimes against humanity and corruption*” (ibid.). In 2010, when France and the former francophone colonies celebrated 50 years of decolonisation, Survie launched a campaign requesting a liberation from 50 years of dominance of Françafrique (ibid.). Indeed, as of 2010, political and military contracts existed with seven African states and for Paris, the French army and its five military bases in Africa, are seen as the guardian of the status-quo (Woyke, 2010, p. 313).

Another means to cultivate the traditional relation with partner countries is the foreign cultural policy. The presidents of the 5th republic regarded this component of France's external policy as an essential tool to strengthen the French role within the international community and to promote the image of a good France around the globe (Steinkamp, 2010, p. 73f). With a special focus on Europe and the Maghreb region, mainly through a multitude of “*Instituts Français*” and “*Centres Culturels*”, France is trying to countervail the decreasing importance of its culture and language in times of global Anglo-Saxon dominance (ibid., p. 78). Shortly after Nicolas Sarkozy was elected to be the 6th president of the 5th Republic of France, he addressed Bernard Kouchner, head of the “*Ministère des affaires étrangères et européennes*”, emphasising the peculiar significance of foreign cultural policy (ibid., p. 75). As this policy is considered an influential instrument for the cultivation of the image of France, especially in regard to the Maghreb region, that currently ranks second only to Europe in terms of the presence of French cultural institutions, it will be scrutinized whether it plays a role in the Arab Spring 2011.

F. Europe Puissance

15 According to Tobner, in 1960 French troops under the command of General Max Briand slaughtered 300.000-400.000 Bamilékés in Cameroon

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For Arthur Goldhammer, chairman at Harvard's Center for European Studies, the European integration emblematised quite clearly, that the post-war France was by then “*just one of a number of midrange powers vying for influence in a global arena*” (Goldhammer, 2008). In adapting to the conditions in world politics, the French concept of Europe Puissance describes a “*European partnership between pragmatism and tradition*” to create a powerful global actor (Demesmay&Marchetti, 2010, p. 51).

Among the various presidents of the 5th French Republic the European ideas and the significance of an “Europe puissance” were sometimes shared but often times diverse. Under general Charles de Gaulle, the gloriousness of the French “Grandeur” was outshining the idea of a simultaneous “Europe puissance” eventually leading to stagnation in the European integration in the 1960's. Towards the USA and its “vasall” the UK, de Gaulle maintained a suspicious scepticism (Woyke, 2010, p. 58). As a matter of fact, he dismissed the British requests for membership twice in the 1960's and gave primacy to a continental Western European alliance, embodied by the concept of a “Europe européenne” (ibid.). De Gaulle imagined the EU as a counterweight to the USA and regarded the exclusion of the British “*trojan horse*” as a necessary step to achieve a balance of power (ibid., p. 282).

Although he was convinced that the only essential actors in the international arena are the nation-states, the French participation in the EU was inter alia based on de Gaulle's rational choice that only from the inside France could use its power to obstruct supranational tendencies and instead establish an Europe of nation-states (ibid., p. 52-53).

His successor George Pompidou set a strong priority on improving the economic situation. For him, the EU was the right tool to effectively renew the French economy by “*completing, deepening and enlarging the European Community*” (ibid., p. 78). In the international arena, he wanted Europe to play an active role in promoting a policy of détente (ibid., p. 79).

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's conviction of the EU can be summed up with the term “*necessary union*” (ibid., p. 106). By emphasising that only the member-states' governments possess the power to set common European aims, the strong intergovernmental focus of d'Estaing becomes evident (ibid., p. 107).

His successor François Mitterrand was often labelled a driving force of European integration. In the field of foreign affairs it was especially the successful tandem with Helmut Kohl that increased the political capacities of Europe (ibid., p. 134).

Jacques Chirac, 5th president of the 5th French Republic, expressed the strong will to turn Europe

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into a global decisive power by developing a Common Security and Defence Policy (Woyke, 2010, p. 217).

During the term of Nicolas Sarkozy, the French policy towards Europe resembled a process of trial and error and was affected by a broad ambiguity (Demesmay&Marchetti, 2010, p. 51-54). In the first two years as president of France, traditional paradigms seemed to coin the French national discourse, which associated the EU with an institutionalised construct designed to pursue ambitions of national power (Dembinski, 2002, p. 21). Translated to the political reality, this approach resulted in several unilateralist leanings as for example the stark criticism towards the European Central Bank, or the project of the Union for the Mediterranean, which lacked essential European coordination (Demesmay&Marchetti, 2010, p. 51). For the Maghreb states Sarkozy's impulsive action to add yet another institution to the European landscape did not open up new vistas. Criticised by human rights activists for being co-chaired by Egypt's President Mubarak, the Union for the Mediterranean, for many a unnecessary "*doublure*" of the already existing Barcelona Process, did not achieve substantial progress and has largely "*receded into irrelevance*" (Abadi, 2011, p. 6). The reactions of the European partners and especially Germany made it very clear to France that a unilateralist French conception of Europe is a dead end (ibid.). As a result, during the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in the second half of 2008 the French perception of Europe shifted towards regarding it as a multilateral embodiment of common ideas and resulted in pleas to find joint approaches to immigration, energy and security (ibid., p. 52)

Claire Demesmay and Andreas Marchetti further emphasize, that Sarkozy's announcement of France's return to Europe does not necessarily intend to foster a persistent European integration but instead is rather meant to accept the leading role of the big member countries in an intergovernmental Europe. While this change of heart by no means represents an abandonment of French national interest, it broadened the president's horizon by acknowledging other countries as additional driving forces of a Europe, where the responsibility of a member state directly derives from its weight (ibid., p. 54). In that context, Matthias Dembinski of the Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung describes the French conception of Europe as a pragmatic attempt to bundle the resources of decreasingly powerful European states in order to regain the ability to influence global politics, if necessary also by military means (Dembinski, 2002, p. 21).

With the guiding principle of "*L'Europe, c'est nous*", i.e. we are Europe, the change of mind

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resulted in a revised French philosophy including tradition and pragmatism in the concept of Europe Puissance while recognising the EU not as an exotic construct, but rather as a significant part of the French self-conception (Demesmay&Marchetti, 2010, p. 52).

In a nutshell, the Europeanisation of France did not occur without tensions and contradictions. The previous paragraph shows that while the French European policy is embodied in the idea of an “Europe puissance”, it is at the same time riddled with conflicts of interest between the national and the European layer (Demesmay&Marchetti, 2010, p. 54).

Regarding the public opinion however the picture is clear-cut. A survey conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations highlights that unlike in Germany, a vast majority of people in France would prefer Europe to develop to be a superpower (Worldviews, 2002).

IV. Historic Ties between France and the Maghreb Region

Solely regarding the contemporary French foreign policy conveys a rather limited if not one-sided view on regional developments. Complementing this view by adding the historical component offers a more holistic explanation, which subsequently renders an adequate analysis possible. In addition, often times the emergence of dominant paradigms of the French foreign policy cannot be comprehended by analysing current happenings without regard to the historical background.

The French involvement in northern Africa is old-established, but persistent. Changing political systems and actors influenced the relation as well as events that transformed global politics itself.

In this thesis, the analysis of the close ties between France and the Maghreb region is threefold by focussing on the historical, the political and the economical partnership of the countries involved.

Historically, the French involvement is determined by expansion and colonialism to northern Africa. Being a former protectorate of France, the French influence in Tunisia is more apparent than in Libya. The strong increase in bilateral relations during the last decade could hence be interpreted as a move to make up for lost time.

In terms of political liaison joint projects like the Union for the Mediterranean, frequent official state visits and public announcements bear testimony to a friendly and complaisant relation. Another aspect of political cooperation can be seen in the domain of immigration. Since Europe, and due to the largely francophone population in Tunisia, especially France is concerned with flows of immigration from north Africa, the authoritarian regimes of Gaddafi and Ben Ali render their services in keeping migration under control (Saif, 2011, p. 106).

Regarding the economical relation, there has been a “*sharp increase*” of the foreign direct

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investment in Tunisia and Libya prior to the Arab Spring (ibid.). Ibrahim Saif, Jordanian Economist and Secretary General of the national Economic and Social Council, highlights the development of shared interests, as a result of cross-border investment (ibid.).

The downside of the growing interdependence is brought to attention by Anne-Marie Le Gloanec of the European Union Institute for Security Studies. She is concerned about the imbalance of the relations and criticises that while the collaboration became more and more fruitful, the EU and the French foreign relations “*failed to recognise how the economy and politics are enmeshed and intertwined*” (Gloanec, 2011, p. 1). Hence, she attests the European actors blindness in regard to the “*real nature*” of the dictatorships, by emphasising, that they “*glossed over the regime's total disrespect for human rights*” (ibid.).

Additionally, there were three events that strongly influenced the bias of French foreign relations towards the Maghreb region as a whole. Firstly, the participation in the 1991 Gulf War constituted a rupture with the “*Politique Arabe*”, which up to this moment alluded to the “*special friendship*” between France and the Maghreb (Wood, 2002, p. 1). Secondly, the civil war in Algeria raised fears about the growing fundamental Islamic influence in the region (ibid., p. 2). Lastly, a wave of terrorism on French soil in the 1990's marked the straw that broke the camel's back (ibid.). As a result the French foreign policy adapted to the deteriorating situation and made regional stability a guiding principle (ibid.).

In that light, the following paragraph scrutinises to what extent France's foreign political paradigms in relation to Tunisia and Libya are determined by political and economical cooperation and if relevant refers to the underlying historical background.

A. Tunisia

Although officially still a province of the Ottoman empire, Tunisia enjoyed de facto autonomy under the re-established Husainid dynasty in the beginning of the 19th century. While the modernisation reforms in the whole Ottoman empire advanced, similar efforts took place in Tunisia, especially in terms of the liberalisation of foreign trade, resulting in a growing number of French merchants residing in the country (Perkins, 2004, pp. 10-11). However, the economic progress was severely hampered by elitism and political disorder, eventually leading to the involvement of European banks, which were asked to grant loans to satisfy the growing debt (ibid., p. 28).

The detrimental conditions of those loans and the stagnation of the economy culminated in the 1869

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declaration of Tunisian bankruptcy (ibid., pp. 28-30). France sought for increasing their sphere of influence from Algeria to Tunisia, among others to countervail persistent British and reinvigorated Italian advances (ibid., pp. 35-37). When rebels frustrated with the domestic developments launched attacks that spread over the border into Algeria, France reacted in rapidly invading Tunisia in 1881 (ibid.). With the signing of the “Treaty of Bardo”, Tunisia became the “Protectorat français en Tunisie” (ibid.). Other than what this expression implies, the power to rule was centred in Paris, where the French government insisted of keeping a close eye on every relevant domain of the Tunisian affairs (ibid., p. 87). Within the framework of the French cultural policy, Franco-Arabian Schools were created based on the believe that “*education held the key for viable relations*” between the two countries (ibid., p. xiii).

During the second world war Tunisia was occupied by Germany until France reclaimed it in the aftermath of the victory. Within Tunisia the growing dissatisfaction with the French occupation led to an increase of nationalist tendencies that triggered a strong opposition movement under the leadership of the lawyer Habib Bourguiba who was educated in Paris (Sörensen, 2008, p. 27). In his strive for reforms and greater autonomy, he was repressed on numerous occasions (ibid., p. 28). Among the Tunisian public, the behaviour of the French authorities caused a “*moral outcry*” and “*sparked civil unrest*”, sowing the seeds for the Tunisian independence in 1956 (ibid.)

With a coup d'état in 1987, Ben Ali became the leader of Tunisia and rapidly safeguarded his monopoly of power by suffocating the national Islamist movement (Wood, 2002, p. 1). Among the crimes the newly empowered regime committed are the strong oppression of political and press freedom and the confinement of political opponents (ibid.). Although French media sharply criticised the course of action, President Mitterrand and later Chirac gave primacy to the strong economical development and the gain in regional stability (ibid.).

In the commercial relation, the enforcement of French local activity at the end of the 19th century provided the basis for continuous economical cooperation, which culminated in giving Tunisia and Egypt the top spots on the list of recipients of foreign capital in between 2002 and 2008 (Saif, 2011, p. 106). The investment was combined with the hope of rapid revenue, facilitated by the absence of mechanisms to regulate and control (ibid.). The beneficiaries on the Tunisian side are according to Ramachandran a very small circle in the orbit of Ben Ali's family.

With French exports and Tunisian imports amounting to 3 Billion Euro each in 2006, the strong

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economical interdependence cannot be neglected (France Diplomatie). Under consideration of the fact that Ben Ali's regime is rooted in corruption and in full control of the economy, those figures provided the basis for resentment among the Tunisian population and protests against “the accomplice” France (FAZ, 19.01.2011).

With regard to Franco-Tunisian political cooperation it is insightful to elaborate on the intimate relations between French government officials and members of the Tunisian regime. In the early 1990's, the “*rise of Islamic fundamentalism, terrorist attacks on French soil and Algeria's descent into civil war*” severely alarmed both Mitterrand and his successor Chirac (Wood, 2002, p. 1). Assuming that Ben Ali's Tunisia would act as a “*bulwark against instability*” in the area and as a “*safeguard of French and European commercial and strategic interests*”, continuous strong support was given to the authoritarian regime (ibid.). In the end of the 1990's, the violent breakdown of the opposition led to a vociferous media campaign in France that eventually triggered a change of the French foreign policy (ibid.). The attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 constitute a sudden end to the French policy of distance towards Ben Ali (ibid.). The fight against terrorism again demanded for a strong partner to provide stability in the region. Ever since then, close political relations between France and the regime of Ben Ali can be observed (ibid.).

When Nicolas Sarkozy was elected to become the 6th president of the 5th French republic, he chose Tunisia as his first presidential attendance outside of Europe to emphasize the close relation between the two countries (Pape, 2011). Throughout his presidency various official meetings indicate an ongoing intimate partnership that was subject to stark criticism. The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information argued in a statement in April 2008: “*The European Union states generally, and France in particular, are entirely aware of the Tunisian government black record in public freedoms and press freedom, and the Tunisian government allegations about its efforts in combating terrorism should not be accepted as a justification to disregard the continuity of suppress the civil community institutions and journalists, and praise an oppressive government, the citizens rights should not sacrificed in the sake of few economic interests*” (ANHRI, 2008).

Around the same time, Ben Ali held a dinner “*in Sarkozy's honour*”, during which the French president emphasised the “*growing free space*” and the “*shift towards democracy*” in Tunisia (Pape, 2011).

In reference to Dr. Christina Wood, director of international studies at Wake Forest University, the

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conclusion of the Franco-Tunisian relation prior to the Arab Spring 2011 identifies that “*Economic progress, political stability and French national-security interests were considered sufficient to ignore the lack of democratic political reforms, the censorship of the media and the problems of human rights.*”

B. Libya

Not sharing as much joint history as France and Tunisia, the Franco-Libyan relations can be characterised as occasionally and mainly based on the French demand for oil and the Libyan interest in the French weapon and nuclear industry. The political relation is one of constant ups and downs.

Even before Gaddafi claimed the power in 1969 in connection to the Middle East conflict, a business deal between the two parties involved made the headlines and caught global interest. In the wake of the Six-Day War between Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Syria in 1967, nationalised French arms dealers and Libya developed “*particularly close relations*” (Library of Congress Country Studies, Libya, 1987). Due to ideological restraint that hindered the USA and the UK to actively sell arms to Middle-Eastern countries, France “*relaxed its arms embargo on non-frontline [...] combatants*” and became the most active arms dealer in the region (ibid.). On the 23rd of December 1969, in the first year of Gaddafi's dictatorship, a delegation from Libya came to France to seal a deal including among others 100 Mirage fighter jets, 200 tanks and helicopters for a total of about 750 million Euros (Der Spiegel, 02.02.1970).

In 1974, Libya and France signed a contract, whereby Libya affirmed “*a guaranteed oil supply for technical assistance and financial cooperation*” (Library of Congress Country Studies, Libya, 1987). Not surprisingly, the French method to sell arms not only to Libya and other Arab states but also to Israel led to stark criticism from both sides. While Libyan authorities hence called France an “*arms merchant*” (ibid.), the Jerusalem Post labelled the policy as being a “*French perfidiousness*” leading to a worsening of the situation (Der Spiegel, 02.02.1970). As a result, in his book “The War Business”, George Thayer denounced the French arms-dealers as being “*the most ruthless worldwide*” and added that “*no country sells its arms as unreserved and mostly without any ideological or political restraint as France*” (Thayer, 1969, p. 280).

In 1983, when France conducted a military intervention in Chad to counter attacks by rebels who

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were supported by Gaddafi's Libyan forces, the two nations found themselves patronising the opposing forces in the conflict (Brecher, Wilkenfeld, 1997, p. 92). To circumvent a spill-over that could have led to the abolishment of the Franco-Libyan relation, the conflict was determined by a mutual avoidance of French and Libyan troops (ibid.). It was eventually resolved by agreeing on a withdrawal in April 1984, which left Chad with the feeling of being abandoned by the French and threatened by Libyan forces (ibid).

Four years later, a terrorist attack significantly changed the international perception of the Libyan regime and made Gaddafi a persona non grata for most of the Western countries. When in 1988 an American plane exploded over Lockerbie in Scotland, all 259 people aboard and 11 citizens of the town were killed. Following “exhaustive investigations”, the Scottish police accused two Libyans, one of them a member of the intelligence service, with the planing of the attack (Freedom House, 2011). The trade sanctions, imposed by the UN Security Council in response to the act, triggered an economical and diplomatic isolation and a de facto exclusion of Libya from the international community, which impeded Franco-Libyan relations substantially.

While the following years set in motion a continuous improvement of the economical relations, the events in Chad and Lockerbie still cast a cloud over the political cooperation of the two countries. The gradual rapprochement over the next few years culminated in 2001, when Gaddafi surrendered the Lockerbie attack suspects for trial (ibid.). He further declared himself responsible “*for past acts of terrorism*” and offered to pay compensation to victims' relatives (ibid.). As a result the UN suspended the sanctions against Libya and the EU lifted its arms embargo and re-established direct relations with Gaddafi (ibid.).

More recently the international case of the Bulgarian nurses affected the Franco-Libyan relation. In 2007, Sarkozy's first “adventure” in the external affairs concerned Libya (Abadi, 2011). European diplomats negotiated for months with Gaddafi about the release of 5 Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor, who were accused of having infected hundreds of Libyan children with HIV (ibid.). After outbidding other countries involved in regard to the ransom, he send his wife Cecilia to Tripoli to bring the hostages back. When the nurses returned to Paris, Sarkozy did not mention the efforts made by other countries and European colleagues prior to his involvement (ibid.). While his action displeased EU partners, the successful negotiations left Libya and France closer than before. The Times titled, that “*Sarkozy flew to Tripoli to welcome Colonel Gaddafi back into the*

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family of nations“ (The Times, 24.11.2007). As a result, Gaddafi followed an invitation to Paris where he was allowed to erect his Bedouin tent in the middle of Paris, causing criticism from the French public and members of the parliament (Pape, 2011). During the official visit, Gaddafi and Sarkozy negotiated to cooperate on the creation of a nuclear power plant in Libya (SZ, 26.07.2007). Additionally, a closer liaison regarding economical issues, research and education as well as counter-terrorism and immigration was agreed upon (ibid.). While the financial benefits of Franco-Libyan contracts lay substantially below the expectations of Sarkozy, in regard to the issue of immigration, the close partnership was of high importance for Europe and France. The restrictive immigration policy of the EU “*shaped much of Europe's economic and foreign policies*”, argues Ibrahim Saif (Saif, 2011, p. 106). The extensive control and monitoring of potential migrants at the Libyan borders was a much appreciated service of the Gaddafi regime (ibid.). It is hence not a big surprise that Libyan leader Gaddafi recently threatened Europe “*with unprecedented waves of immigration*” in case his regime would fall (ibid.).

As a conclusion of the previous paragraphs, it can be said that the driving forces of Franco-Libyan relation are on the one hand economical benefits and on the other hand stability measures. The primacy of trade and investment, complemented by anti-terrorism efforts and migration control, left issues such as democracy and human rights “*low on the list of priorities*”, agrees Ibrahim Saif in the report of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung (ibid.). The Freedom House group adds that the diplomatic and economic transformations were not accompanied by “*noticeable improvements in political rights or civil liberties*” (Freedom House, 2011).

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V. Foreign Policy of France in response to the Arab Spring 2011

Shastri Ramachandran describes the despotism in Libya and Tunisia by accentuating that Gaddafi and Ben-Ali are “*autocrats presiding over authoritarian regimes for personal aggrandisement*”. The ruling elite “*enriched themselves, looted public money and stashed it abroad*”. The countries are seen as “*being run for personal power and profit alone*”, leaving no room for the people's rights (Ramachandran, 2011). As the previous paragraphs indicate, prior to the Arab Spring 2011, France and Libya as well as France and Tunisia share a rich history providing the basis for fruitful economical and growing political relations. For decades Northern Africa had the reputation of being a stable region able to adapt to new challenges in the international arena (Asseburg, 2011, p. 32). In Tunisia and Libya, this stability is symbolised by the persistence of the ruling regime with Muammar Muhammad Al-Gaddafi taking power in 1969 and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 1987.

However, the support of the dictatorships by Western countries like France left the local population wondering “*if the West [is] not aware of their [Gaddafi's and Ben Ali's; L.S.] failed records in achieving development, or promoting human rights?*” (Saif, 2011, p. 109). While business and stability interest was given primacy over the blatant grievance within the countries, it was not the West that articulated sharp criticism towards the status quo but the local population. In 2011, the striking imbalance of financial distribution, the arbitrariness of the authorities, the kleptocracy in the orbit of Gaddafi and Ben Ali and the increasing unemployment, mixed with the wide-spread availability of communication and information channels triggered the phenomenon now called Arab Spring.

The following paragraphs will give an overview over the happenings in Tunisia and Libya in regard to the Arab Spring and subsequently describe the French involvement in the “Jasmine Revolution” and the Libyan civil war. Inherent in this approach is the focus on existing paradigms of French external affairs.

A. Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia

Prior to the “Jasmine Revolution” that slowly began in December 2010 and developed into a full scale movement with the aim to overthrow Ben Ali, the past years have witnessed numerous “*tremors*” that could have given the regime a premonition of the “*political earthquake*” that was in the making in Tunisia (Carpenter/Schenker, 2011). Already in 2008 an organised labour strike led to the shut-down of the mining industry in Redeyef followed by vociferous protests against the government's plan to raise the maximum age for president candidates in order to allow Ben Ali to run for a sixth term in the year 2014 (ibid.).

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The wide-spread frustrations enrooted in the “economic malaise”, the lack of freedom and the apparent kleptocracy of the ruling elite, turned into a revolutionary movement when a fruit-vendor responded to police harassment by self-immolation on December, 17th 2010 (Freedom House, 2011). In death, Muhammad Bouazizi became the symbol of the daily oppression, humiliation and powerlessness of the Tunisian population (Carpenter/Schenker, 2011). Albeit Tunisians were well aware of the state oppression, the globalisation of social networks and the availability of foreign information channels were given credit for the rapid spread and the professional organisation of the protests (ibid.). Sparked by the lack of economic prospects due to the dramatic unemployment of the young generation, that according to World Bank estimates reached around 30% (ibid.), the claims went from demanding social, economical and political reforms to the abolishment of the Ben Ali government (Asseburg, 2011, p. 32). The movement also represented an awakening from a long lasting inertia. This perception is inherent in the slogan of the protesters, who reportedly chanted “*If the people one day decide to live, destiny will inevitably respond*” (Atassi, 2011, p. 28).

The authoritarian regime responded with a mixture of carrots and sticks. In the beginning of the Jasmine Revolution the security apparatus resorted to the use of violence to quickly and fiercely oppress the movement while appeasing the population by simultaneously announcing reforms, an end of the internet censorship, a gradual withdraw from power and the timely release of imprisoned protesters (Time Magazine, 12.01.2011). Notwithstanding the official announcements, the protests continued and according to an UN investigative panel resulted in at least 219 casualties and an estimated number of 510 injured people (Washington Times, 01.02.2011). Shortly after, the Ben Ali regime was overthrown and the dictator fled to Saudi Arabia (Al Jazeera, 15.01.2011). The issuing of an international arrest warrant for Ben Ali at the end of January 2011 marks the final act of the regime and offers the opportunity for highly anticipated transformations (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 26.01.2011).

However, the final outcome of the revolution is not yet foreseeable. With some of the members of the old regime still in power, the role of the national army uncertain and the economical situation still problematic, protests are continuing throughout Tunisia.

i. French Foreign Policy in response to the Jasmine Revolution

Many observers coined French foreign policy during the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia as being tacit and overcautious. In a report published by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Ibrahim Saif explains that the collapse of the Ben Ali regime “*revealed the extent of trade, investment, and personal relationships between members of the French ruling elite and Tunisia’s deposed government*” (Saif,

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2011, p. 107). Consequently, France was labelled an “*accomplice of Ben Ali*” at demonstrations in Paris, Lyon and Marseilles celebrating the revolution (FAZ, 19.01.2011).

The following paragraph will scrutinize the influence of these close relations and illuminate the underlying reasons for the obvious reservations of French authorities in the beginning of the Arab Spring.

At the turn of the year 2010, while violent clashes between protesters and security forces triggered a rising death toll, French politicians were concerned with a debate about the question whether Ben Ali can be called a dictator or not (Time Magazine, 12.01.2011). By limiting the official political discourse to enquiries about matters of factual accuracy, perception of the regime or comprehension of the role of Tunisia's government, the French diplomats effectively avoided an active involvement. The French minister of agriculture, Bruno Le Maire, rejected any responsibility in regard to the close allies of France by stating that “*It's not to me to judge the Tunisian regime*” (ibid.). By then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michèle Alliot-Marie took the same stance in emphasising that “*our duty is to make a calm and objective analysis of the situation*” and that “*We must not stand out as lesson-givers.*” (ibid.). Inherent in both statements is the reluctance to condemn the violent attempts of the Tunisian security apparatus to strike down the movement.

On January 24th 2011, Nicolas Sarkozy justified the French reservations towards a potential engagement by explaining the difficulty of acknowledging feelings, frustrations and anxieties of the Tunisian people, if you are “*as close*” to each other as France and Tunisia are (Europe1, 24.01.2011). He added, that “*a former colonial power should never make judgements on the internal workings of countries that once made up its empire*” (The Guardian, 24.01.2011).

The strong bond between the French government and the Ben Ali regime is further underlined by the impiety of Aillot-Marie on two occasions. In early February 2011, the former foreign minister was confronted with calls to resign after using a private plane of Tunisian businessman Aziz Milad, who is said to have close ties with the Ben Ali regime (Guardian, 08.02.2011). In the wake of the public outrage, her relation to the Tunisian authorities culminated in the offer to export the “*savoir faire*” of French security forces to “*restore order*” and “*solve this sort of security situation*” in Tunisia (FAZ, 19.01.2011). The last straw in the affair was a detailed report on real-estate deals between Ben-Ali's clan and Aillot-Marie's parents, evidently forcing her to step down (FAZ, 27.02.2011).

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Another protagonist of the Franco-Tunisian “*amitié spéciale*” was Prime Minister François Fillon. He admitted, that two days before Ben Ali was overthrown, French authorities “authorized a shipment of tear gas grenades” to Tunisia (Los Angeles Times, 05.02.2011).

After his inauguration, Alain Juppé, Aillot-Marie's successor as foreign minister, broke with the rhetorical gaucheness by expressing forthright self-criticism. His statement that “*Western governments cherished Tunisia as a political stable country*” and therefore “*underestimated the resentment of the society*” was perceived as a change of heart towards a more unbiased evaluation of the events (FAZ, 19.01.2011). This change of the mindset of French authorities is also reflected by the refusal to grant entry to Ben Ali after he was overthrown and fled Tunisia. Already on his way to France, the dictator was informed, that he would not be allowed to set foot on French soil, leading to the decision to resort to Saudi Arabia instead (ibid.).

However, the French support for the Ben Ali caused “*outrage*” in the region is said to have “*weakened the former colonial power's diplomatic standing*” (The Guardian, 24.01.2011). In response, the president tried to draw a line under the criticism by promising to trace the dictator's “*wealth and property in France*” and to support Tunisia's transitional government with emergency aid (ibid.).

The French foreign policy towards the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia was characterized by reservation and silence. In an overwhelmingly peaceful manner the protests for democracy, free elections, jobs, equality and for freedom of expression “were met with brutality” causing the death of hundreds. Yet French diplomats not only remained reluctant to condemn the repression and violence, they initially even offered support in controlling the riots. After the regime was toppled, French politicians slowly adapted to the new scenario, took steps to justify their behaviour and showed cautious self-criticism. In an Amnesty International report, the hypocrisy of the sudden change of heart within the Western countries is described as an “*immediate amnesia about their previously unswerving support of autocratic regimes and their long-practised double standards*” (Amnesty International Report, 2011, p. 31).

However, as slogans during recent demonstrations indicate, for the reputation of France in the region the new conception came too late. They read “*France as an accomplice of Ben Ali*” (FAZ, 19.01.2011).

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B. Libyan Civil War

Sparked by the success of the revolution in Tunisia, movements throughout the region gained popularity. In Libya, where Brother Leader Gaddafi symbolises the autocracy since 1969, protests arose in Benghazi and other cities on January 13th 2011. The demonstrations were linked to corruption and arbitrariness in regard to housing and other grievances (Amnesty International Report, 2011, p. 12). With the revelations of Wikileaks, that “*Gaddafi often speaks out publicly against government corruption, but the politically-connected elite has direct access to lucrative business deals*”, at the end of 2010 the suspected kleptocracy of Gaddafi's regime became increasingly manifested within the society (Wikileaks, 2010). After the upheaval of Ben Ali, the Libyan government tried to becalm tendencies of rebellion by announcing the provision of 24 billion Dollars for housing and development (Amnesty International Report, 2011, p. 12).

Notwithstanding, on February 15th the protests gained unprecedented impetus after the arrest of Fethi Terbil, a lawyer for human rights, and quickly spread to other regions (ibid.). Two days later, on the proclaimed “*day of rage*”, hundreds of people marched to demand the “*downfall of the regime*” (ibid.). As an initial reaction, the regime rapidly censored foreign media as well as internet websites and urged the security apparatus to resort to violence (ibid.). Already in the beginning of the movement, the sharp response resulted in a significant number of injured and imprisoned protesters, leaving no doubt about the regime's approach to suffocate the uprising (ibid.).

In contrast to the movement in Tunisia, the protests in Libya cannot be labelled peaceful. Setting fire to police stations and the immediate heavy armament of the rebels are characteristic for the militant connotation of the uprising that eventually turned in to a civil war. Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court estimated that there were between 500 and 700 protesters killed by security forces, before the rebels “*hastily assembled*” themselves to countervail the attacks (The New York Times, 04.05.2011). Accordingly, Amnesty International reports, how Gaddafi's security forces “*violently repressed*” the protests with the use of live ammunition (ibid.).

Within a week of expansion to the west and the south, the rebels seized control of numerous Libyan districts, while in the capital Tripoli, protests both against and in favour of Gaddafi took place (ibid.). The rebels' gain of control and influence was also reflected by large numbers of defects of Gaddafi's diplomatic corps. A prominent example is Libya's ambassador to the UN, Abdurrahman Shalgam, a former ally and personal friend of Gaddafi. In a speech to the Security Council he

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compared the actions of Gaddafi to those of Hitler and Pol Pot. He demanded decisive action “*within hours*” to stop the “*bloodshed*” in the country, where he claimed “*over 90%*” of the inhabitants supported the protest movement (The Telegraph, 25.02.2011).

In Benghazi, other defects and heads of the rebels formed an opposition, that resulted in the formation of the “Interim Transitional National Council”. Ever since, the newly created institution serves as a provisional government in charge of their own law enforcement mechanisms such as security forces, courts, prisons and armed forces (Amnesty International Report, 2011, p. 12). Additionally, with the distribution of nutrition and the organisation of local councils in the western part of the country, the council represents a de facto full-scale government recognized by several Western countries led by France (BBC, 11.03.2011). In response to the growing opposition, the Gaddafi regime waged a fierce counter-attack using live ammunition, enforced disappearances, war equipment and anti-aircraft machinery (Amnesty International Report 2011, p. 12). As a result, regime forces got a hold of several cities, before focussing the attack on Benghazi, the stronghold of the opposition (ibid.). On March 17th government controlled media stations announced a merciless invasion to cleanse the city of the “*rats, dogs, hypocrites and traitors*”, who are “*mercenaries and terrorists linked to the al Qaeda organisation*” (Reuters, 15.03.2011).

The clear military momentum of the regime and ongoing reports of atrocities committed by Gaddafi's troops triggered the active involvement of the international community. After the UN Security Council sanctioned the Brother Leader and his family and referred Libya to the International Criminal Court already on the 26th of February, a subsequent resolution was issued on the 17th of March giving member states room to manoeuvre a “*ban on all flights in the airspace of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in order to help protect civilians*” (Security Council Resolution 1973). Two days later, after a heavy siege of Benghazi by Libyan troops, the NATO under French and British lead began the air bombardment targeting Libyan military (ibid.).

The International Crisis Group emphasises, that the UN authorized intervention saved the protest stronghold “*from immediate defeat*”, but did not substantially change the balance of power in favour of the rebels (International Crisis Group, 2011,p. 1). Their report on the current happenings stretches the role of civilian victims, by pointing out that the resolution's ambition of protecting the population stands in sharp contrast to the reality, where “*civilians are figuring in large numbers as victims of the war, both as casualties and refugees*” (ibid.).

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The organisation estimates that during the ongoing conflict about 500.000 refugees fled Libya mostly into Tunisia and Egypt (Amnesty International, 2011, p. 13)

Under the framework of the UN resolution all parties are bound to fully comply with international humanitarian law. However, as Amnesty International investigators on the ground report, the Libyan security apparatus is not refraining from “*targeting civilians or civilian objects, and from indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks*” (ibid.). Additionally, since the protests begun, hundreds of people disappeared or were “*deliberately killed or died as a result of excessive or indiscriminate use of lethal force at the hands of security forces*” (ibid.). According to largely uncorroborated reports, mainly on Al Jazeera television, the regime is also responsible for bombing hospitals, destroying blood banks and ordering the raping of women as well as the execution of the wounded (as cited in International Crisis Group, 2011, p. 4)¹⁶.

While the declared rationale of the NATO enforced UN resolution is the safeguarding of the Libyan population, civilian casualties in the wake of NATO attacks were called an “*unfortunate accident*” by the chief of allied operations, Brigadier General Mark van Uhm (RFI, 05.04.2011).

In the political discourse, scholars and experts express different views on whether the intervention and its implementation is covered by the Security Council Resolution 1973, or whether it constitutes a breach of the principle of non-intervention¹⁷. The different reactions within the international community reflect this dissent about the matter of legitimacy of the NATO involvement. With China's, Russia's and Germany's abstention from voting on the resolution, the endorsement of the limited military action cannot be seen as unconditional. Moreover, the much anticipated approval by the Arab League, who suspended Libya after the brutal response by the regime to the pro-democracy uprising, turned into criticism of the “*broad Western bombing campaign*” (Washington Post, 20.03.2011). On 20th of March the Arab League's Secretary General Amr Moussa considered calling a league meeting to review the Arab approval of the intervention, based on his judgement that the events in Libya differ “*from the aim of imposing a no-fly zone*” (ibid.).

16 Western media coverage presented a very one-sided view of the logic of events, portraying the protest movement as entirely peaceful and repeatedly suggesting that the regime's security forces were unaccountably massacring unarmed demonstrators who presented no real security challenge. This version would appear to ignore evidence that the protest movement exhibited a violent aspect from very early on (International Crisis Group 2011, p. 4)

17 For more information on this highly salient issue: FAZ, 23.03.2011, Tomuschat & FAZ, 22.03.2011, Merkel

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The situation in Libya as of now is all but evident. The country is split and along the lines the protests turned into a civil war with the regime resorting to brutal violence to suffocate the rebels on the one hand and the heavy armed protesters supported by NATO air-strikes on the other hand. Countless casualties and an estimated half a million refugees put the international community to the test. Most of the experts initially believed that the intervention was a necessary step to save civilians, but the endorsement turned to criticism in many places, raising questions about the legitimacy, the duration and exit strategies of the NATO mission.

i. French Foreign Policy in response to the Libyan Civil War

Inspired by the successful outcome of the Jasmine Revolution, the Libyan protest gained momentum in the beginning of February 2011. When the Gaddafi regime resorted to brutal violence to suffocate the uprising, the international community and especially France rapidly condemned the dictator's inhuman response. The French foreign policy in reaction to the happenings in Libya was determined by a strong rhetoric and decisive unilateral as well as multilateral activity. In the political discourse and in the media, France was perceived as the spearhead of the international community. This perception was gladly accepted and rhetorically fuelled by Sarkozy and various French diplomats.

Jean-David Lafitte, Sarkozy's diplomatic advisor demanded that the Libyan army immediately refrains from shooting at protesters and called for legal punishment of those who are responsible of the *“ongoing massacres”* (RFI, 23.02.2011). On the 23rd of February, the French president himself promoted the sanctioning of Libya with an appeal to *“propose to our European Union partners the swift adoption of concrete sanctions so that all those involved in the ongoing violence know that they must assume the consequences of their actions”* (ibid.). Taking the same line, the French Prime Minister Fillon accentuated that *“France was in the forefront of the decisions taken to sanction Colonel Gaddafi”* and that *“We were the ones who called on the European Council to adopt a joint position on this matter”* (BBC, 28.02.2011). The latter statement refers to the Paris meeting of Arab League officials, the European Council president and senior representatives of all states willing to support an UN-mandated intervention in Libya, on the 19th of March. With insisting on holding the meeting in Paris and not in Brussels, where the NATO's European headquarters are located, Sarkozy made sure that France would be the centre of action regarding Libya. In response to the resolution, Fillon added that *“We cannot allow these warmongers to go on. We cannot let international law be flouted”*. Moreover, he welcomed the *“beginning of a massive operation of humanitarian support*

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for the populations of the liberated territories” (ibid.). Moreover, the French president's rhetoric changed in tone. While he initially made clear that *“the strikes would be solely of a defensive nature if Mr Gaddafi makes use of chemical weapons or air strikes against non-violent protesters”* (The Guardian, 11.03.2011), after Resolution 1973 was passed, eventuality turned into assertiveness: *“Today we are intervening in Libya under the U.N. mandate with our partners and notably our Arab partners. We are doing it to protect the civilian population from the murderous madness of a regime that in killing its own people has lost all legitimacy”* (Reuters, 19.03.2011). However, Fillon emphasised, that France is *“not at war with Libya”* and the involvement is *“excluding explicitly any occupation forces”* (France 24, 24.03.2011).

The strong French rhetoric was accompanied by decisive steps of the Quai d'Orsay and the president's office. From the very beginning of the uprising, French diplomats were involved in multilevel negotiations. Sarkozy debated with the European Council on a joint position, while Foreign Minister Alain Juppé lobbied UN officials in New York (BBC, 18.03.2011). Simultaneously, France sent a first consignment of humanitarian aid to the Libyan protesters. Two planes carrying medical personnel and equipment to support local hospitals reached Benghazi on March 1st (Le Parisien, 01.03.2011). When the newly assembled Libyan Transitional National Council declared themselves to act *“as the sole legitimate representative of the Libyan people”*, the first country to officially recognise the institution was France (The Economist, 14.03.2011). According to media reports neither Juppé and his diplomatic corps at Quai d'Orsay, nor Prime Minister Fillon were informed prior to this step (ibid.).

When Resolution 1973 was issued and the Arab League announced their support of operation *“Odyssey Dawn”*, the first strikes on Libyan military facilities were conducted by French fighter jets (CNN, 19.03.2011). Consequently, Mahmoud Jibril, the leader of the Libyan Transitional National Council addressed a letter to Sarkozy to express his gratitude for the French role in the intervention. *“In the middle of the night, your planes destroyed tanks that were set to crush Benghazi... The Libyan people see you as liberators. Its recognition will be eternal”* he wrote (Jordan Times, 27.03.2011).

When it was suggested to transfer the command of the operation to the NATO, Sarkozy initially refused by insisting on solely using NATO's military equipment, while *“the political co-ordination is with the 11-member coalition”* (The Guardian, 25.03.2011). After the NATO formally took over

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at the end of March, the civil war and its uncertain power dynamics continued, prompting France to demand for the employment of combat helicopters (LeFigaro, 23.05.2011). Simultaneously, Sarkozy suggested the use of special forces on the ground (Die Welt, 23.05.2011).

As legal experts doubt that those steps are covered by Resolution 1973, the French foreign policy faced sharp national and international criticism (ibid.). As a matter of fact, the initial support of the Libyan National Transitional Council is fading and the encouragement of prominent politicians such as former prime minister Dominique de Villepin (France24, 24.03.2011) turned into a warning to not let the involvement become a long-term conflict like in Iraq (LeFigaro, 24.04.2011). Moreover, practical reasons determine the French interest to bring the engagement in Libya to an end by late July. While the fasting during the Ramadan in August could severely weaken the rebels' movement, in France Sarkozy is in need to obtain a parliamentary permit to prolong the operation, when it reaches a duration of four months (Die Welt, 23.05.2011).

In a nutshell, the French foreign policy in Libya is characterised by strong rhetoric and impulsive action. France was and is perceived as a driving force of the intervention that begun in March 2011.

VI. Paradigm Shift in the French Foreign Policy?

The French foreign policy in response to the Tunisian uprising differs substantially from France's reaction to the escalating protests in Libya. While in both cases manifested paradigms of the French external affairs are observable, it is striking that they underwent transformation in the course of the Arab Spring.

The following paragraph scrutinises to what extent the response to the Maghreb uprisings constitutes a rupture with the dogmata of Grandeur, Mission Civilisatrice, Europe Puissance and Françafrique. Consequently, it will be analysed what the transformation means for the historically entrenched notion of Gaullism and for the contemporary French national identity.

A. Paradigms of the French Foreign Policy and the Jasmine Revolution

In a speech to members of the UMP¹⁸ four months before his inauguration, Sarkozy promised to be *“the President of a France of human rights”* (van Herpen, 2010). He emphasised, that he does not *“believe in realpolitik¹⁹, that makes one to give up one's values”* and is unwilling to *“be the accomplice of any dictatorship in the world”* (ibid.).

Contrastingly, when in December 2010 the protests in Tunisia set the spark for what would become

18 The “Union pour un Mouvement Populaire“ was founded by Chirac in 2002 and is currently led by Sarkozy

19 Realpolitik describes a policy based on the notion of power rather than idealistic premisses

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a conflagration of the whole Maghreb region, the French government led by Nicolas Sarkozy stayed “cosily entwined” with the Ben Ali regime (Time, 19.03.2011). While the Tunisian population turned against the dictator, the French offer to support and deliver expertise ridiculed Sarkozy's statement. In reference to Wichard Woyke's definition of the French Africa policy, it appears that the ongoing prioritisation of national benefits over moral integrity of the African partners was a guiding principle for the French response to the Jasmine Revolution (Woyke, 2010, p. 307). The economical and political partnership seemed to be of greater salience for the “*President of France of human rights*” than the outcry of Tunisia's population for freedom and civil rights. Consequently, Dominique Moisi, special adviser at the French Institute for International Relations argues that “*the Arab uprising has revealed France's much-vaunted intimacy with Africa and the Middle East to be skin deep – a cosy arrangement between elites, rather than a bond between nations*” (The Guardian, 23.03.2011)

Many scholars of international politics stretch the importance of personal relations, friendship and trust (see Frevert, 2003). In this light the strong personal bond between the French and the Tunisian president has to be taken into consideration for the analysis of the French reaction. When President Sarkozy addressed Ben Ali for the first time in 2007, he emphasised that “*There is a very strong friendship between France and Tunisia, made of respect and mutual trust, and this must be maintained and developed*” (The Epochtimes, 18.01.2011). Niklas Luhmann analysed role and impact of trust, distrust and intimacy in the framework of his systems theory in 1968. He argues, that trust is a means to reduce the complexity of nature and a precondition that renders interaction possible. In his book “*Vertrauen*” Luhmann accentuates, that on the one hand trust facilitates to make projections about the future and on the other hand constitutes a continuation of the established circumstances in the future (Luhmann, 1968, p. 16). In regard to France's reluctance to condemn the actions of the former friend's regime, the rationale of Sarkozy could have been to favour the well established partnership to a predictable dictatorship over an unknown potential threat to the national interest and the regional stability.

Philippe Moreau-Defarges, co-director of the French Institute of International Relations (Ifri), takes the same approach in evaluating the French reaction to the happenings in Tunisia as a rational choice of Sarkozy based on the preference of rather having a “*benign dictatorship*” in the Maghreb, than a potential alternative Islamic regime (ibid.). The Ben Ali regime “*did bring a form of stability to Tunisia*” that was welcomed by the French authorities, he argues (ibid.).

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In her analysis of the situation, Ulrike Borchardt agrees, that *realpolitik* determined the French response to the upheaval. In the *Friedensgutachten 2011*, she suggests that the French reservation towards the Tunisian transformation process is based on the national interest for stability and security (Borchardt, 2011, p. 70). The fear of Islamic terrorism is wide-spread in France since the 1990's, when France and the EU tolerated that Algerian military nullified the national elections, in order to circumvent a victory of the "Front islamique du salut" (ibid., p. 69). In the resulting civil war that lasted almost ten years and claimed 150.000 to 200.000 lives, France did not take steps to distance itself from the Algerian government (ibid.). The French tacit compliance was based on the fear of having an Islamic state at one's doorstep (ibid., p. 70). In the wake of the war, a series of bomb attacks conducted by the "Groupe Islamiste Armé" on metro stations in Paris aggravated the French anxiety (ibid.). In 2001, the events of the 11th of September irrevocably made the issue a priority on the agenda of global politics, giving room for populist agitators to put fuel on people's fears by stigmatising Muslim migrants as potential terrorists (ibid.). Especially in France, this propaganda fell on fertile ground, since the waves of immigration that came with the end of the Algerian civil war still dictated the mindset of many people (ibid.). For Borchardt, the notions of stability and security that reflect traditional ideas of the classical identity of the French security policy were hence the main factors for the French reservations towards the Jasmine Revolution.

Mansouria Mokhefi, expert for Tunisia at the Ifri complements her colleagues statement by emphasising that even prior to Ben Ali's coup in 1987, France's and Tunisia's joint history provided the basis for both a close friendship and a profound economical relationship (Mokhefi, 26.01.2011). The latter was especially valuable for the French in regard to the "delocalisation", a practice described as the integration of young, qualified Tunisians in the textile or telecommunication sectors in France (ibid.). Furthermore, her claim that Sarkozy has no clear strategical or tactical framework for his Maghreb policy (ibid.), is further fuelled by an anonymous letter of numerous French diplomats, who criticise Sarkozy's unilateralist leanings of neither consulting the embassies, nor asking for expertise in regard to the Tunisian uprising (Le Monde, 22.02.2011).

In a recent panel discussion in June 2011, Juppé affirmed that the French vision and policies towards the Maghreb *"have for years been inspired primarily by a concern of stability"* (Juppé, 06.06.2011). Moreover, he admits that the French government allowed themselves *"in the name of security and the fight against terrorism to demonstrate a certain level of tolerance for the governments that were flouting human rights and curbing their countries' development."*, before he

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concluded that “*We turned a blind eye to certain abuses as if this region of the world didn’t have the right to freedom or modernity*” .

The clear-cut break with the Gaullist tradition that is determined by Grandeur, foreign political independence and a suspiciousness towards supranational institutions, which quite a few analysts expected after Sarkozy expressed his idealistic approach in 2007 (Woyke, 2010, p. 75), is not observable in the French response to the Jasmine Revolution. As a matter of fact, the national interest out-weighted the demand for universal rights and French activity can be characterised as bilateral and independent from supranational organisations. Contrary to the bold steps that Sarkozy announced at his inauguration, his political response to the Jasmine Revolution aimed at strengthening the status quo and supporting the established partnership to his friend Ben Ali. Both aims are characteristic for the foreign political paradigm of *Françafrique* and are in line with the Gaullist tradition and the classical national identity of French security policy, embodied by a strong focus on the national interest of stability and economical benefits as well as by a striking independence of the external affairs.

In the French reaction to the Jasmine Revolution the notions of the *Mission Civilisatrice* and the *Europe Puissance* were clearly subordinated to the paradigm of the *Françafrique*. It seems that in Sarkozy's conviction, a French intervention to protect universal values, or a strong Franco-European response is not able to adequately guarantee the enforcement of the national interest in the *pré carré*.

In regard to the French Grandeur, quite a few scholars argue that the hesitant response to the Jasmine Revolution significantly damaged the French reputation and severely diminished France's sphere of influence in the Maghreb region. In the eyes of many Tunisians and the international community “*Paris seemed to have more to do with a despotic past than a democratic future*” argues Julian Borger in *The Guardian* (*The Guardian*, 23.03.2011).

B. Paradigms of the French Foreign Policy and the Libyan Civil War

After the upheaval of Ben Ali, President Sarkozy was confronted with sharp criticism from the inside, as well as from the international arena. For him, the dramatic damage to France's international reputation and the wide-spread assumption that the French government preferred the Tunisian regime to stay in power, required a “*dramatic act*” to adjust France's image and restore its Grandeur (*The Guardian*, 23.03.2011). The Libyan Civil War gave Sarkozy the stage to present such an act, please his constituents in France and the Arab population alike.

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The following paragraph scrutinises to what extent the French reaction to the Libyan Civil War was and is determined by dogmata of France's external affairs. Moreover, it outlines how the paradigms transformed during the conflict and how the national identity of the French security policy as well as the notion of Gaullism influenced and still influence the ongoing confrontation. As the French response to the Libyan uprising stands in stark contrast to the Tunisian revolt and was determined by strong rhetoric and decisive actions from the very beginning, it is required to analyse factors such as lessons learned from the upheaval of Ben Ali, Sarkozy's personality, the nature of the Franco-Libyan partnership, the international community and domestic pressures.

A question many people asked themselves in the wake of the Security Council Resolution 1973 was why France spearheaded the activity of the international community in regard to Libya. Why did French and British diplomats take the lead in the negotiations that resulted in the adoption of the resolution? Why did French fighter jets fire the first shots at Gaddafi's military? In an article published in *Time Magazine*, it is suggested that France took the lead on Libya to recover the French reputation. In the Arab world, the upheaval of Ben Ali left Sarkozy with the image of dictator's friend rather than an enthusiast for the democratic movement. Quickly taking the side of the pro-democracy movement thus could be regarded as an act of compensation. Indeed, the French president was the first to officially recognise the Libyan National Transitional Council and to promise support for the movement. Additionally, it seems that Sarkozy intends to cast a cloud over the another source of criticism: the pretentious welcome he gave to Gaddafi in 2007. The consternation with the French behaviour is especially strong in the Maghreb region itself. *"There is no real justification for the late awakening of the West and its attempts to display a more ethical side in its dealings with Arab regimes"*, argues Ibrahim Saif of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung (Saif, 2011, p. 108). The resulting lack of credibility is fuelled by the fact that *"the connection between democracy, improving public spending transparency, enhancing good governance, foreign aid, and investment became relevant only when spotted by the media, or when used to discredit and weaken governments or leaders"*, as the sudden change of heart in the course of the Arab Spring underlines (ibid.).

Others try to explain Sarkozy's resoluteness with his personality. Arthur Goldhammer from the Center for European Studies at Harvard describes crisis as Sarkozy's element (Goldhammer, 2011). The French president first came to prominence, when he ended a hostage-taking in a school by talking the perpetrator into surrendering before encountering the TV cameras holding a child in his

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arms (ibid.). Goldhammer emphasises, that *“the Libyan uprising has given French President Nicolas Sarkozy an opportunity he has long coveted: to lead a risky international mission that holds out promise of ultimate glory”* (ibid.).

While some see his personal strive for splendour as the main driving force of the French involvement, Stefan Simons argues that the rationale of the intervention is determined by power politics. Stung by being criticised for the slow reaction in Tunisia, France's move aimed at regaining the initiative in the Maghreb by decisive rhetoric and distinct action (Der Spiegel, 18.03.2011). Simons sees Sarkozy's impulsive response as an indicator for avoiding to let the USA or the UK take the lead once again, after the French were seemingly surprised by the happenings in Tunisia (ibid.). Additionally, France struggled not only with other Western powers, but held a growing suspicion towards the emerging role of Turkey in the Mediterranean region, as Professor Gun Kut of Bogazici University pinpoints (SETimes, 13.03.2011). As a matter fact, France did not invite Turkey to the Paris summit prior to the start of the Libyan operation, leading to accusations that *“France was handling the whole situation and monopolising it”* (ibid.).

Although Sarkozy unilaterally recognized the rebels and was perceived as the protagonist of the Western response, one cannot explain the French rationale in Libya with the Gaullist tradition. Neither was the national interest of France at stake, nor was the foreign policy independent. The diplomatic negotiations at the UN and the multilateral action, first within the coalition of the willing and subsequently in the framework of NATO's operation “Odyssey Dawn” constitute a clear renunciation of Gaullism. However, as it aimed at restoring the Grandeur, it shared at least a part of the Gaullist conviction.

In line with the notion of the *Françafrique*, keeping a high level of influence is important to countervail the *“steady erosion of global influence in past decades”*, argues Julian Borger (The Guardian, 23.03.2011). According to Dominique Moisi, a special adviser at the French Institute for International Relations, the decrease of the French sphere of influence does not only determine the external perception of France, but also the self-conception (ibid.). A recent opinion poll indicated that 72% of the French people think that the national image deteriorated under Sarkozy's presidency (ibid.). *“For the French the international image has always been a key ingredient of our national image, which means the way they are perceived in the world matters for how the French perceive themselves”* pinpoints Moisi (ibid.). He adds, that this way of thinking is based on the idea of the

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French Grandeur in saying: *“That is the product of a long history, and the idea of the great nation”* (ibid.). In that light, the rapid reaction to the protests in Libya is based on the rationale that the key for France's Grandeur lies in regaining international reputation.

Michael Elliott doubts, that the intervention is a qualified means to recover France's reputation in the Maghreb region (Time, 19.03.2011). In his conviction, neither the French constituents nor the Arab population are all too prone to a military intervention, which has not yet proven to be successful and which evoked sharp criticism by legal analysts that question its legitimacy (ibid.). However, as initially portrayed, the classical national identity is reflected by the Mission Civilisatrice, a conception that regards democratic interventionism as a legitimate means to protect universal rights. In the Libyan case, the legal positivist conviction that prompted the intervention is most likely based on Max Weber's notion of legitimate power. In his book *“Economy and Society”*, Weber defines *“the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory”* as a salient characteristic of the state (Weber, 1968, p. 56). Following this argumentation, the repression of the own population and the violent suffocation of demonstrations cannot be seen as the *“legitimate use of physical force”* any more. Prior to the intervention, President Sarkozy accentuated that *“If we intervene on the side of the Arab nations it is because of a universal conscience that cannot tolerate such crimes”* (Time, 19.03.2011). Inherent in this statement are two important thoughts, which give an impression of Sarkozy's philosophy. Firstly, he believes that France is entitled to intervene if universal rights are at stake. Secondly, he restricts the legitimacy of an intervention by making the support of Arab nations a requirement. While initially, Sarkozy announced that he has many reservations about a military intervention in Libya *“because Arab revolutions belong to Arabs”*, the decision by the Arab League to support the Security Council Resolution 1973 gave crucial legitimacy to the states willing to intervene (The Guardian, 11.03.2011). The following statement by Foreign Minister Juppé gives another detailed insight on the French rationale. He said: *“I’m thinking above all of Libya, where in light of the Gaddafi regime’s heinous crimes against its people, my country did everything to get the international community to intervene within the framework of the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 and in accordance with the principle of the responsibility to protect. We must assume this principle, the responsibility to protect the civilian population to the very end. That’s why we are continuing to exert strong military pressure in Libya.”* (Juppé, 06.06.2011). It is striking that Juppé emphasises the role of his country as the spearhead of the involvement. Moreover, the principle of the *“responsibility to protect”*, which was jointly adopted by 150 heads of state at the UN World

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Summit in 2005 is used as a legitimisation of external interference. It authorises international collective action “*to protect [a state’s] population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity*” (United Nations, 2005). Regarding France's desire to enforce this principle in Libya, one could ask the question why the French president not even mentioned an international intervention in regard to Tunisia, where the security apparatus killed hundreds of people. The selective use of the principle is even more striking in regard to more pressing cases such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo or in the Ivory Coast.

The most logical reason for Sarkozy's rapid reference to the responsibility to protect is that in contrast to Tunisia, the economic interest in Libya is limited, making the impact of sanctions or military activity manageable. With only about half the population of Tunisia and indisputable less joint relations, an involvement in Libya would not constitute a serious impediment to the French economy. As a result the president called for sanctioning the Libyan regime 24 hours ahead of the other countries in the UN (BBC, 28.02.2011).

Moreover, unlike Ben Ali, Gaddafi cannot be labelled a trustworthy and predictable friend of Sarkozy. Following Luhmann's assumptions on trust as a facilitator of future projections, it is hardly imaginable that Sarkozy trusted the Brother Leader, whose support for terrorism in connection to his reputation of being eccentric, resulted in Ronald Reagan coining his nickname “*mad dog of the middle east*” (BBC, 19.05.2011). Breaking the personal bond between the two leaders thus is not as much of an impediment to future prognoses as it would have been the case in Tunisia.

Prior to the civil war in Libya, Dr. Ronja Kempin of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik argued that the new French security policy constitutes a shift from a military to a civilian power. In regard to the French role in spearheading the military intervention of the international community, the foreign policy cannot be described as completely adhering to the concept of a civilian power. Albeit the military intervention could be described as an effort to implement internationally accepted norms and strengthen the development of supranational institutions, it transgresses the primary objective of a civilian power: the civilization of international relations by effectively limiting the use of military power (Mauil/Harnisch, 2001, p. 3).

Arguably even more salient for President Sarkozy are the domestic pressures that arose out of the French role during the Jasmine Revolution. While his approval ratings decreased to less than 30%,

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Sarkozy is confronted with a strong challenge from the far-right Front Nationale of Marine Le Pen (BBC, 28.02.2011). For several years now, he has been criticised over the way foreign policy was handled. The criticism culminated in an anonymous letter published in LeMonde on the 22nd of February 2011, claiming that the president's external action is based on “*amateurism*” and “*impulsiveness*” (LeMonde, 22.02.2011). The unknown diplomats who leaked the letter, pinpoint that “*Contrary to the announcements trumpeted for the past three years, Europe is powerless, Africa escapes us, the Mediterranean will not talk to us, China has tamed us and Washington ignores us!*” (ibid.).

In conclusion, the atrocious crimes committed by Libya's Brother Leader Gaddafi gave Sarkozy the opportunity to lead a military intervention promising compensation and a more important role in global politics. Although the involvement in Libya reflects essential components of the Mission Civilisatrice, which were continuously emphasised by Sarkozy and Juppé, it is not likely to be the determining factor for the military intervention. Historically, the Mission Civilisatrice entitled France to protect universal rights everywhere in the world. However, in line with de Gaulle's notion of conditional engagement, they only did so if French interest was at stake, which was not the case in Libya.

In regard to the preceding analysis, the extreme U-turn in the French foreign policy towards the Maghreb region was rather based on the self-conception of France and domestic pressures. The discredited Grandeur therefore required decisive engagement aiming at providing a head-start for Sarkozy at the presidential elections in 2012.

VII. Conclusion

As this thesis outlined in the beginning, the dominant paradigms of French foreign policy are entrenched in the French history. The French Revolution laid the foundation for the Mission Civilisatrice and the French Grandeur. With the colonisation France established close ties with African nations that coined the concept of Françafrique and remained an important aspect of the external affairs also after the formal decolonisation in the 1960's. In the era of general Charles de Gaulle the alleviating dogmata were revitalised and complemented by his notions of the force du frappe and conditional engagement. His influential style of politics continues to play a crucial role not only in the Foreign relations, but also for the French national identity. After the German occupation it was de Gaulle, whose patriotic if not nationalist policies ignited the enthusiasm and relumed the French greatness, i.e. the Grandeur. His conviction to regard states as the only relevant

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actors and an independent foreign policy as essential, antagonised the emergence of the EU and the growing sphere of influence of the NATO.

Nowadays it seems that the accelerating globalisation and the interdependence of states to an undeniable extent are incompatible with de Gaulle's philosophy. Thus, Rieker argues that *“it is clear that there is no longer a Gaullist consensus on defence and that in certain areas of French military and civil-military activity, such as peace operations, Gaullism has little to say”* (Rieker, 2006, p. 510). However, his predecessors remained reluctant to completely abolish the Gaullism, which is deeply entrenched in the French history and has numerous advocates and admirers among France's population.

After the cold war, the French foreign policy was driven mainly by the pursuit of an integrated and strong Europe to guarantee peace and a beneficial relation to the former colonies in Africa and the Arab world. In the rapidly evolving and globalised world these conceptions seem outdated. The focus on Europe bares the risk to be left behind by emerging powers such China, India, Turkey and Brazil. Hence, Dominique Moisi of the Ifri concludes, that *“There is now less Europe in the world and there is less France in Europe”* (The Guardian, 23.03.2011). Although Rieker argues, that the EU *“shapes French security thinking in a way that can be referred to as Europeanization”*, in the Jasmine Revolution and in the Libyan Civil War Europe remained a paper tiger (Rieker, 2006, p. 510). In light of the de facto non-existent role of the EU and the dramatic dissent of the two main powers Germany and France, the paradigm of a Europe Puissance, which seemed to be increasingly important after the Georgian crisis in 2006, drifted into irrelevance during the Arab Spring. It can be concluded that there was neither a common European strategic culture, nor a common European reflex in the mindset of French authorities in the course of the Arab Spring.

The Arab Spring is no homogeneous process, which makes it difficult to draw single conclusions. Within the two countries that were analysed in this thesis, there are striking differences on all levels. While the Tunisian movement was labelled peaceful and successfully overthrew the Ben Ali regime, the protests in Libya were violently suffocated, resulting in a rapid armament of the conflict that turned into a civil war. Moreover, the happenings of the Jasmine Revolution effectively influenced the behaviour of the international community towards Libya. In the case of France, where Sarkozy turned from a silent supporter of Ben Ali to an impulsive advocate of a military intervention in Libya, this is especially obvious. His immediate reference to the responsibility to protect could be regarded as a reflection of the paradigm of the Mission Civilisatrice through democratic interventionism. However, the analysis showed that it is more likely that the operation in Libya was

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based on power politics, compensation to restore the French Grandeur and domestic pressures mainly in form of the presidential elections 2012. The strong endorsement of a military solution in Libya also constitutes a turn back from what Dr. Ronja Kempin called a shift from a military to a civilian power.

The French external policy concerning Africa showed obvious signs of a renunciation of old practices. In regard to the Jasmine Revolution, there was neither a dominant military presence, nor did France feel entitled to interfere in its *pré carré*. On the other hand, there was a clear bond between the two countries elites and a striking prioritisation of national and economic benefits over the moral integrity of the Tunisian regime. However the Arab Spring showed that the civil society is not willing to tolerate this alliance. The sharp criticism towards the French role as an accomplice of the regime during the Jasmine Revolution is exemplary for the outdatedness of the paradigm of *Françafrique* and could trigger a change of France's the policy, as the Libyan Civil War indicates. Already in 2010, the Wikileaks cable on Libya concluded that the controversy is “*indicative of the degree to which [...] cultivating close relations with ageing Arab world dictators is increasingly out of step with current realities and prevailing media opinion in France*” (Wikileaks, 2010).

The reintegration into NATO's military command under Sarkozy constituted a rupture with tradition. In stark contrast to de Gaulle's notion of relevant actors in the international sphere, in the course of the Libyan Civil War the French operational conduct was subordinated to the command of the NATO. However, Woyke argues that this step does not mean a complete renunciation from Gaullist tradition, since Sarkozy emphasised that the sovereignty and independence in the decision-making will always remain solely with the French authorities (Woyke, 2010, p. 310). As the same applies for the *force du frappe*, the reintegration into the military command of the NATO cannot be seen as complete.

During his campaign for the French presidency in 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy announced to break with the old ways of his country. Four years later, his statement cannot be labelled entirely false or correct. Indeed, the French foreign policy changed and traditional paradigms were transformed to a certain extent. The traditional adherence to solemn grandeur was at least partly replaced by policies that reflect the current role in the global arena. The active stance in the NATO and the partnership with the UK in the Libyan Civil War are symptomatic for mid-range powers vying for influence.

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The national and international consternation in regard to France's role in the Jasmine Revolution illustrated clearly that the traditional policy of the *Françafrique* will not be tolerated in the long run. With an increasingly sensitive civil society, an explicit discrepancy between political propaganda and actual *Realpolitik* will result in damaging the French reputation.

The French Mission *Civilisatrice* also deviates from its historical narrative. Non-existent during the Jasmine Revolution, Sarkozy presented himself as the guardian of universal rights in the Libyan Civil War. Although the conflict is not primarily of French national interest and therefore does not fit de Gaulle's notion of conditional engagement, it figures as a means to restore the national credibility and Sarkozy's reputation within and outside of France. Accordingly, the traditional Gaullist policies were not completely renounced, but were given an entirely new face in the Arab Spring.

The Libyan conflict is also thought to serve as an indicator of the French capability to act. Consequently, the strengthened self-conception resulted in the recent announcement to convene a Middle East peace conference in Paris in late summer 2011 (Haaretz, 13.06.2011). It seems that Sarkozy uses his latest activism as a multiplier of power so as to weigh on the world's affairs.

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