



Professional Research Thesis

Titled

*The Impact of Armed Conflict on Libyan Foreign Policy:
Between Dependence and Independence.*

Researcher

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SUMMARY

Foreign policy is a vital reflection of a state's internal structure and its interactions with the external environment. It serves as a central tool deployed to achieve national interests within a complex international system shaped by interactions, alliances, and shifting alignments. From this perspective, the foreign policy of any state cannot be understood in isolation from its domestic reality, especially when the state is undergoing profound political and security transformations, as is the case with Libya following 2011. During this period, the country entered a protracted armed conflict with multiple actors and intertwined regional and international agendas.

The armed conflict in Libya represented a critical turning point in the formation of the modern Libyan state, imposing fundamental changes on its institutional structure, sovereignty boundaries, and national cohesion. It also had a profound impact on the nature of Libya's foreign policy decisions and its regional and international orientations. Since the fall of the previous regime, the unity of central authority has deteriorated, and multiple centers of decision-making emerged, creating a political environment oscillating between chaos and hybrid governance. This situation has made Libyan foreign policy a field of influence struggles among local and international actors, amid contested legitimacy, conflicting interests, and weak state institutions.

In this context, Libyan foreign policy appears to be conducted within a space of instability, making it susceptible to factors beyond national control. This raises



fundamental questions regarding the independence of Libya's foreign policy and the extent to which it is subjected to foreign pressures and intrusions, whether from regional actors or international powers. The severe internal conflict, institutional division, and entanglement with external agendas have all contributed to reshaping the nature of Libyan diplomatic action. Foreign policy has sometimes been used as an extension of internal conflict and, at other times, as a mechanism to ensure the survival of competing political elites or to secure military and financial support from external powers.

Hence, the importance of this study emerges, aiming to analyze the impact of the armed conflict on Libyan foreign policy, with a focus on the interplay between dependence and independence. The research seeks to understand whether Libya, amidst conflict, is capable of producing foreign policy that reflects its national interest, or whether it has become a stage for international powers to largely determine its foreign orientations. The study also examines the internal dynamics that have contributed to this situation, such as political division, multiple governments, weak state institutions, and the influence of armed militias, in addition to exploring the capacity of local actors to formulate an independent foreign policy despite these challenges.

The study adopts a critical analytical methodology, based on a comprehensive examination of the development of Libyan foreign policy before and after the conflict, with emphasis on key milestones that witnessed shifts in Libya's international relations. It also analyzes the discourse of Libyan political elites, the behavior of local actors, and the extent to which internal and external factors



intersect in shaping Libya's diplomatic orientations. The study is grounded in the hypothesis that the armed conflict has produced a political reality that makes the independence of Libyan foreign policy exceedingly complex.

Examining the Libyan case in this framework provides a significant analytical dimension, particularly in light of structural changes in the region, the maneuvers of regional actors seeking to expand their influence in fragile states, and shifts in the international system, including the relative decline of some powers and the rise of others. Consequently, this study not only analyzes the Libyan reality but also contributes to the literature on the impact of armed conflicts on foreign policy in fragile states, offering a critical perspective on sovereignty and independence in a world of intertwined interests.

Against this background, the study poses the following central research problem: To what extent has the armed conflict in Libya influenced the orientations of its foreign policy, balancing attempts to maintain independence with tendencies toward dependence? From this central question, several sub-questions emerge, including:

- What internal and external factors have contributed to shaping Libyan foreign policy after 2011?*
- How has political division and armed conflict affected the tools and content of Libyan diplomatic action?*
- What are the limits of autonomy available to decision-makers in Libya amid foreign interventions?*



- *To what extent has foreign policy been employed as a tool in the internal Libyan conflict?*

This thesis aims to provide a thorough analytical reading of these questions, with the hope of contributing to a better understanding of Libyan foreign policy and exploring ways to reconstruct it on independent national foundations, despite the complex challenges imposed by the ongoing armed conflict.



The study Problem.

The problem of this study emerges from the profound changes that Libyan foreign policy has undergone since the outbreak of the armed conflict in 2011—a conflict whose impact was not confined to Libya’s domestic sphere but extended to shape the country’s interactions with its regional and international environment. The collapse of central authority and the emergence of multiple decision-making centers led to fragmentation in Libya’s diplomatic vision and the appearance of a disjointed foreign policy discourse, varying from one government to another, and even among actors within the same state. Consequently, Libya transitioned from being a state with a foreign policy characterized by a clear orientation—even if contested by some—to a state conducting its foreign relations amid fragmentation and contradiction, depriving its foreign policy of institutional and strategic coherence.

As the conflict deepened, Libya became enmeshed in a network of regional and international alignments, which were not always the result of free sovereign choices, but often responses to external pressures, military and security necessities imposed by the realities of war, or temporary alliances shaped by local power balances. This reality gave rise to a new pattern of foreign policy, frequently characterized by dependency on supporting international actors or political bargaining at the expense of sovereignty, in the absence of national institutions capable of steering foreign relations toward serving the broader national interest.

The core problem that this study seeks to unpack lies in the apparent contradiction between the principle of Libya’s independent foreign policy decision-making and the



reality of dependency or subordination to external actors, driven by the factors of conflict and division. Does Libyan foreign policy still reflect a unified national vision, or has it become a tool of internal conflict and subject to external dictates? Can we even speak of a coherent foreign policy for a state experiencing severe internal division and lacking unified representation on the international stage? Moreover, what are the limits of autonomy available to Libyan decision-makers amid a fragile political and security context where international interests intersect with local calculations?

These questions, with all their complexities, form the focal point of this study, which aims to provide a scientific and objective analysis of the impact of the armed conflict on Libyan foreign policy, amid declining sovereignty and increasing external influence. This is pursued through an understanding of historical contexts and an analysis of internal and external dynamics that have shaped Libya's foreign policy between two opposing options: dependency or independence.



The importance of studying:

The significance of this study stems from the nature of its subject matter and the sensitive phase that the Libyan state is experiencing, where violent internal transformations intersect with increasing external pressures, in the absence of stable institutions capable of framing foreign policy within a clear national vision. In this context, it becomes essential to examine how Libyan foreign policy has been affected by the armed conflict, particularly given the complex interplay between local, regional, and international dynamics, which often makes it difficult to distinguish between autonomous decisions and responses to external dictates or alignments.

The importance of this research also arises from its attempt to provide an in-depth analytical reading of Libya's foreign policy through the lens of conflict, and the resulting fractures in state structure, divisions in legitimacy, and multiplicity of political and diplomatic instruments. It does not focus solely on the outcomes of war but seeks to unpack the structural and political causes that have turned Libya into an arena for external interventions, and its foreign policy into a contested space among competing domestic and international forces.

Moreover, the study's significance is reinforced by the scarcity of research that has addressed this aspect with rigorous analysis. Libyan foreign policy is often treated in the literature from a traditional perspective, without systematically linking it to the state of conflict and its repercussions. This study seeks to fill a clear knowledge gap by adopting an approach that combines political and international analysis, while considering the role of non-official actors—such as militias, independent



political figures, and informal economic networks—in influencing foreign policy decisions.

The study also gains importance by shedding light on the issue of national sovereignty in fragile contexts, and on how a state emerging from violent conflict can reclaim its independence in shaping foreign relations amidst multiple loyalties and divisions. Furthermore, the findings of this research could provide a knowledge base for policymakers, scholars, and those interested in Libyan affairs, offering a deeper understanding of the constraints governing Libya’s foreign policy and exploring prospects for its reform in ways that support internal stability and reposition Libya as an independent actor in its regional and international environment.



Objectives of the study:

- ✓ To analyze the impact of the armed conflict on the orientations of Libyan foreign policy after 2011.
- ✓ To examine the relationship between internal political division and the multiplicity of external decision-making centers.
- ✓ To determine the extent of Libya's foreign policy independence amid regional and international interventions.
- ✓ To study how foreign policy has been employed as a tool in the internal conflict among competing parties.
- ✓ To evaluate the role of local and international actors in shaping Libya's foreign policy decisions.

Libyan Foreign Policy Post-2011 Analysis

Characteristic	Description
 Impact of Armed Conflict	تحليل أثر النزاع المسلح على توجهات السياسة الخارجية الليبية بعد عام 2011.
 Relationship Between Internal Division and External Decision-Making	الكتف عن العلاقة بين الانقسام السياسي الداخلي وتحدد مراكز اتخاذ القرار الخارجي.
 Independence of Libyan Foreign Policy	تحديد مدى استقلالية السياسة الخارجية الليبية في ظل التدخلات الإقليمية والدولية.
 Foreign Policy as a Tool in Internal Conflict	دراسة كيفية توظيف السياسة الخارجية كأداة في الصراع الداخلي بين الأطراف المتنازعة.
 Role of Local and International Actors	تقييم دور الفاعلين المحليين والدوليين في صياغة القرار الخارجي الليبي.
 Prospects for Building an Independent Foreign Policy	تقديم تصور علمي حول آفاق بناء سياسة خارجية ليبية مستقلة في مرحلة ما بعد النزاع.



Study hypotheses and questions.

1. Research Questions

This study is guided by a central question:

- *To what extent has the armed conflict in Libya influenced the country's foreign policy, particularly regarding the independence of decision-making versus susceptibility to external dependence?*

From this main question, several sub-questions emerge, including:

- *What are the most significant transformations that Libyan foreign policy has undergone since 2011?*
- *How have political division and the existence of multiple governments affected the coherence of Libyan foreign policy decision-making?*
- *What is the nature and form of regional and international interventions in Libyan affairs, and how have they influenced the orientations of foreign policy?*

2. Research Hypotheses

Based on the above questions, this study posits the following hypotheses:

- *The armed conflict in Libya has weakened state institutions, thereby negatively affecting the independence of foreign policy decision-making.*



- *Political division and multiple centers of power have contributed to the fragmentation of Libyan diplomatic orientations and the absence of a unified vision.*
- *Libyan foreign policy has been significantly influenced by regional and international actors, leading to a decline in national sovereignty.*
- *External alliances formed by some Libyan actors have often been driven by internal power struggles rather than the overarching national interest.*
- *An independent Libyan foreign policy cannot be established without achieving internal political consensus and restoring unified state institutions.*
- *There is potential for the recovery of Libyan foreign policy decision-making, but this requires a comprehensive national strategy that reorganizes priorities and addresses imbalanced external dependencies.*



Study Approach.

The descriptive-analytical method was employed to examine “The Impact of the Armed Conflict on Libyan Foreign Policy: Between Dependence and Independence.”



The limits of the study:

Spatial boundaries: Libya.

Time limits: 2007-2025.



Study plan:

The study will be structured into several chapters, sections, and sub-sections, followed by a conclusion, as follows:

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework and Scientific Concepts

Section One: An Introduction to Understanding Armed Conflict and Foreign Policy

- 1. The concept of armed conflict: types and causes*
- 2. The concept of foreign policy: objectives and instruments*
- 3. The dialectical relationship between armed conflicts and national sovereignty*

Section Two: The Libyan Context and Transformations in Foreign Policy after 2011

- 1. The political and security background of the Libyan crisis following the fall of the regime*
- 2. Historical stages in the development of Libyan foreign policy post-2011*

Chapter Two: The Impact of the Armed Conflict on Libyan Foreign Policy Orientations

Section One: Manifestations of Dependence in Libyan Foreign Policy

- 1. International and regional interventions and their effect on sovereign decision-making*



2. *Internal political division and the multiplicity of external decision-making centers*
3. *The use of foreign policy as a tool in the conflict among Libyan actors*

Section Two: Opportunities for Restoring Independence and Unifying Libyan Foreign Policy Decision-Making

1. *National reconciliation initiatives and rebuilding diplomatic institutions*
2. *Reshaping regional and international relations based on national interests*
3. *Future scenarios for achieving independence in Libyan foreign policy decision-making*



Conclusion.

Amid the profound transformations that Libya has experienced since 2011, the armed conflict emerged as a pivotal factor reshaping the state's structure and functions, foremost among them its foreign policy. This study has highlighted the extent of entanglement between internal divisions and regional and international interventions, resulting in the erosion of Libya's foreign policy independence and, in many cases, its transformation into a tool in the hands of competing domestic and external actors.

The findings indicate that the armed conflict not only weakened the diplomatic capacities of the Libyan state but also led to multiple centers of decision-making and the absence of a unified foreign policy vision. Competing claims to legitimacy among successive governments, coupled with each party's reliance on external supporters, have made it difficult for Libya to formulate foreign policy that reflects its national interests independently of external dictates or dependence.

Conversely, the study shows that restoring the independence of foreign policy decision-making is not impossible; rather, it requires a set of objective conditions, foremost of which are ending political division, unifying state institutions, and rebuilding a professional diplomatic system founded on a national vision that balances external engagement with the preservation of sovereignty.

This reality imposes a historical responsibility on Libyan decision-makers, political elites, and civil society institutions: to break free from the cycle of conflict and steer



the country toward national consensus, which is an essential condition for restoring Libya's international standing and reconstructing its foreign policy on the principles of independence, effectiveness, and national interest.



Results:

- ✓ *The study concluded that the armed conflict in Libya led to multiple centers of decision-making in foreign policy.*
- ✓ *The study revealed a direct impact of external interventions on the independence of Libyan political decision-making.*
- ✓ *The study showed that internal division among institutions resulted in the fragmentation of foreign policy and a loss of its effectiveness.*
- ✓ *It was found that Libyan foreign policy has become a tool for competition among conflicting domestic actors.*
- ✓ *The study highlighted that the absence of sovereign institutions weakened the state's ability to formulate an independent foreign policy.*
- ✓ *The study emphasized the role of regional and international actors in shaping Libya's foreign policy positions.*
- ✓ *The results indicated that political solutions and state reconstruction are prerequisites for restoring independent foreign policy decision-making.*
- ✓ *The study concluded on the necessity of a unified national strategy to redirect Libyan foreign policy.*
- ✓ *The study found that the independence of foreign policy decision-making in Libya is directly linked to achieving internal stability.*



Recommendations:

- *The study recommends accelerating the implementation of a comprehensive national reconciliation project to unify political and foreign policy decision-making.*
- *The study calls for rebuilding state diplomatic institutions based on professional competence and independence.*
- *The study emphasizes the importance of enacting legislation to limit the interference of armed groups in political and foreign affairs.*
- *The study recommends establishing a Higher Council for Foreign Policy that includes representatives from all legitimate political actors.*
- *The study urges a review of treaties and foreign relations to ensure alignment with the supreme national interest.*
- *The study advocates adopting a balanced foreign policy that preserves sovereignty while considering regional and international developments.*
- *The study recommends strengthening the role of academics and experts in shaping Libya's foreign policy positions.*
- *The study calls for reducing excessive dependence on external support in political and diplomatic decision-making.*
- *The study stresses the importance of intensifying cooperation with regional and international organizations within a framework that safeguards national independence.*
- *The study recommends launching a unified official media strategy to promote the core principles of Libyan foreign policy.*

The reviewer:

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