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**"A crisis within the crisis: Franco-British negotiations
in the war in Libya (2011)"**

Introduction

According to Charles-Philippe David, a (international) crisis is characterised by "a period and a situation of instability. It is a transitory state" that can turn a conflict into an armed conflict, and potentially a war[1]. Because it threatens a group's or a state's objectives and reveals the importance of actors' stakes in the situation, and because its outcome is unknown, it is a "dramatic moment", as Moreau-Desfarges has put it[2].

It has been demonstrated that while they are designed for responding to crises, international organisations are also, in return, shaped by crises[3]. This is true even, if not especially, for a defence organisation like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (cf. Olivier Schmitt's paper in this section). We know less, however, about the case of interstate defence and security partnerships that are less formal and more flexible than international organisations. Specifically, this paper is concerned with bilateral defence cooperation agreements, which Brandon Kinne summarises as agreements which "coordinate and regulate the entirety of their respective member states' defence-related interactions, covering such areas as defence industrial cooperation, weapons acquisition, mutual consultation, joint exercises, training and military education, research and development, and exchange of classified information"[4]. Thus, just like IOs, such agreements share the purpose of enhancing and facilitating international cooperation between the parties concerned. And they can have, in return, an impact on the workings and decisions of multilateral organisations, as has already been explored by authors such as Ulrich Krotz and Gery Alons[5].

From there, the question this paper asks is: how do international crises challenge and shape bilateral defence partnerships, notably allies' very ability to align and cooperate? As I shall demonstrate, responding to international crises indeed questions the priorities and objectives of international actors, their ability to act and their choice of instruments, their conception of the trade-offs, as well as their choices in terms of partners – all of which require negotiations in situations where unilateral response is impossible or undesirable.

The crisis in Libya in 2011 provides a telling case of the kind of tensions that partners or allies have to manage when facing international crises. "Libya: diplomatic battles behind the scene"[6], "The Franco-British alliance put to the test"[7], "Libya strategy splits Britain and

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[1] David, 2000, p.134.
[2] Moreau-Desfarges, 1990, p.277, cited in David, op. cit., p.134.
[3] Ambrosetti and Buchet de Neuilly, 2009.
[4] Kinne, 2015, p.x.
[5] Krotz and Schild, 2012 and Alons, 2014.
[6] Jean-Pierre Stroobants, "Libye: batailles diplomatiques en coulisses", *Le Monde*, 24 March 2011.
[7] Isabelle Lasserre, "Libye: l'axe Franco-britannique à l'épreuve", *Le Figaro*, 4 April 2011.

France"[8]: this is the sort of headlines French and British newspapers ran during the period of February-March 2011 when the allied intervention against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi was decided and launched. The situation took place only four months after President Nicolas Sarkozy and his British counterpart Prime Minister David Cameron had signed a treaty, which significantly reinforced military cooperation between the two countries. As the newspaper headlines illustrate, the events in Libya were a challenge for the bilateral relationship, as they prompted disagreements about the pertinence of a military intervention, its purpose and the means of its implementation. Despite these developments, the war in Libya became *ex post*, for French and British policy-makers, diplomats and militaries, the illustration of a joint success that consolidated their partnership and demonstrated its relevance.

Empirically, this paper thus looks at Franco-British interactions around the 2011 intervention, from their joint call for an international reaction to their role in the military intervention. It focuses on the weeks prior to and after the nodal point of 19 March on which the military operations were launched. From a theoretical perspective, this paper shows how relations among defence partners can be analysed through the prism of four dimensions identified through a synthesis of existing literature on international negotiation and theories of cooperation. This paper argues, that in cases of international crises, when governments are aligned in terms of strategic objectives, it is the *embeddedness*[9] of bilateral partnerships within networks of other bilateral relationships and multinational organisations that creates the most tensions and needs for compromise. I also propose, that the fact of having an institutionalised partnership explains the transformative dynamics through which Libya subsequently became a symbol for the military partnership between Britain and France, and the baseline for their future cooperation.

The paper starts by presenting the theoretical framework with which international cooperation dynamics can be studied. Then, I turn to the empirical development, from the outset of the crisis in Libya to the military intervention. I conclude by proposing an analysis of cooperative and conflictual dynamics based on the theoretical framework.

Four determinants of international cooperation

This section proposes a framework for analysing relationships between allies in international crises around four dimensions or determining conditions: the compatibility of their formulated interests; the existence of common organisations or norms with which to act; the existence of expected rewards for each party; and a favourable international environment.

The authors used for identifying the relevant determinants are authors of international negotiation theory[10], cooperation theory[11], international relations theory, especially regime theory[12], as well as the sociology of organisations[13]. Dialogue between these different strands of literature or disciplines has been scarce and, when conducted, rather concerned with multilateral negotiations and cooperation. Yet what unites this literature is a search for the dimensions that constitute negotiations and condition successful outcomes, i.e. cooperation.

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[8] Ian Black and Helen Pidd, "Libya strategy splits Britain and France", *The Guardian*, 15 April 2011.
[9] The term is borrowed from Krotz and Schild, 2012.
[10] Bertram Spector and William Zartman, 2003; Saadia Touval, 2010; Terrence Hopmann, 2010.
[11] Robert Axelrod, 1984; Kenneth Oye, 1985.
[12] John G. Ruggie, 1975; Robert Keohane, 1986 and 2005; Oran Young, 1992.
[13] Robert L. Kahn and Mayer Zald, 1990; Karen Cook, Russel Hardin and Margaret Levi, 2005.

As the table on the next page indicates, we can identify in the selected literature four dimensions/conditions (we will call them determinants for the purpose of this paper).

Determinant *Synonyms and associated terms*		Authors
Common or compatible objectives *Mutual/Shared interests/preferences/incentives*		Ruggie (1975), Axelrod (1984), Oye (1985), Kahn and Zald (1990), Spector and Zartman (2003), Cook, Hardin and Levy (2005), Keohane (2005), Hopmann (2010), Zartman and Touval (2010)
Social structure [14]	**Organisation** *Framework/rules/contract Predictability/ iteration*	Axelrod (1984), Oye (1985), Kahn and Zald (1990), Young (1992), Culpepper (2003), Spector and Zartman (2003), Keohane (2005), Cook, Hardin and Levy (2005), Zartman and Touval (2010)
	Norms *Beliefs/values Habits/principles of conduct /intellectual order*	Ruggie (1975), Axelrod (1984), Kahn and Zald (1990), Young (1992), Cook, Hardin and Levy (2005), Hopmann (2010), Zartman and Touval (2010)
Payoff *Benefits/gains/rewards Reciprocity/trade-offs/exchanges*		Axelrod (1984), Oye (1985), Keohane (1986), Zartman and Touval (2010)
Externalities *Third parties/external shell/nesting*		Spector and Zartman (2003), Keohane (2005), Hopmann (2010), Zartman and Touval (2010)

<u>Table 1:</u> **The determinants of international cooperation**

Among the selected authors, only William Zartman and Saadia Touval[15] have identified all five determinants of cooperation presented in this table. However, they have applied them to negotiations at the multilateral level: what about negotiations between two allies? Indeed, we can note a deficit of academic knowledge on the mechanisms of bilateral negotiations while, according to Guillaume Devin they differ from multilateral negotiations in a "palpable, precise and significant" manner[16]. Besides, Devin also noted, that there is no multilateralism without bilateralism[17]. Thomas Gomart recalls, that bilateral relations have extensively been studied in the history of IR, insofar as dialogue between two powers constitutes a "diplomatic practice" at the heart of the international system, but not with theoretical outlooks[18]. There is

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[14] For the purpose of this research, I have chosen to synthesise constructivists' emphasis on norms and others' emphasis on organisations and rules into one single "social structure" dimension. Indeed, values and norms are impossible to disentangle from organisations and rules, all the more so when we are dealing with military institutions. See, for instance, Huntington, 1957, Schweisguth, 1978, de Saint Vincent *et. al.*, 2007.

[15] Zartman and Touval, 2010.

[16] Devin, 2013a, p.79.

[17] Devin, 2013b.

[18] Gomart, 2002.

thus a blatant need to get a more thorough understanding of bilateral negotiation and cooperation, be it only to understand how it relates to multilateral frameworks of action.

Besides, a cross-disciplinary or even trans-disciplinary approach to cooperation arguably permits to go beyond simplifications and "wars of paradigms[19]" that provide partial explanations of international phenomena.

The combination of negotiation theory, cooperation theory, regime theory and the sociology of organisations is all the more suited that France and Britain operate in an institutionalised bilateral environment. British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy indeed signed on 2 November 2010 a treaty aimed at enhancing bilateral defence cooperation between the two countries. This includes the goal of cooperating during international crises. Indeed, Article 1 of the Lancaster House treaty stipulates:

> "The parties undertake (…) to build a long-term mutually beneficial partnership in defence and security with the aims of (…) deploying together into theatres in which both Parties have agreed to be engaged, in operations conducted under the auspices of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy or in a coalition or bilateral framework […]"[20].

In this context, the Franco-British campaign in Libya in the spring of 2011 is often presented as the first test of "post-Lancaster House" cooperation, particularly in terms of their political-strategic alignment and of the concrete workings of their cooperation. The next section thus explores the following question: How did the two countries relate during the crisis? Did they act as a joint political-diplomatic driving force as they committed to in November 2010? How has the operation subsequently affected the terms of their bilateral cooperation?

The burst of the crisis in Libya and the calls for an international response

This section presents how the Libyan question made it to the international agenda up to the United Nation Security Council in late February, early March 2011. It appears that the British and French governments, despite facing internal debates as well as some disagreements as to the best way forward, both took an active part in setting the agenda and in shaping the way the international community could react via the United Nations.

February 2011: The first diplomatic moves and Resolution 1970

The popular contestation started on Tuesday 15 February in Benghazi. Government forces, under the authority of authoritarian ruler Colonel Muammar Gaddafi were reported to have killed six civilians that day during a demonstration, which prompted a wider rebellion. Gaddafi's government's repression of the protests was quickly denounced among states and international organisations. On 21 February, the EU and its member states, UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon and the US President condemned the repression and called for and end to violence. The Libyan ambassador to the United Nations abandoned the regime and called for the imposition of a no-fly zone (NFZ)[21]. On the following day, the Organisation of Islamic

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[19] Fearon and Wendt, 2002, p.3.

[20] Article 1 of the Treaty of Cooperation in defence and security between France and the United Kingdom, London, 2 November 2010.

[21] Imposing a no-fly zone consists in taking control of a state's airspace in order to counter (a) threat(s) in this airspace, the threat being in this case the use of air assets against civilian population. This requires

Conference also condemned the repression, fearing a humanitarian disaster. The League of Arab States suspended Libya's membership, and the African Union also denounced the inappropriate use of force. In other words, there was a wide and rapid consensus for reprobating the behaviour of Muammar Gaddafi. On 22 February, European and other countries started evacuating their nationals.

President Nicolas Sarkozy and Prime Minister Cameron were the main proponents of action, first economic and diplomatic and later military, against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi. They reacted early to the crisis and maintained the pressure both on the Libyan government and on their own other allies. On 23 February, Nicolas Sarkozy called for economic and financial relations with Libya to be suspended, with the enforcement of a maritime embargo and the freezing of regime assets. Sarkozy had the support of the UK and Germany, but other EU countries like Italy and Cyprus were reluctant to move, given their strong economic ties with the regime[22].

On 24 February, US President Obama gave his first speech on the situation Libya condemning the regime's violence[23]. At the same time, British and French diplomats started to work together on a UN resolution to condemn the Gaddafi regime and call for international sanctions. They drafted a Resolution, which, after approval from the United States, European partners, and later Russia and China, was submitted to the UN Security Council. The resolution proposed economic sanctions as well as provisions for an enquiry via the International Criminal Court on the regimes' acts of violence. For Pouliot and Adler-Nissen, the proponents of the resolution used it to "build momentum" on the Libya case while being convinced that it would not be sufficient[24].

UN Resolution 1970 was passed on 26 February 2011. While the diplomatic "momentum" was indeed built and Libya was on top of the agenda at the UN, the following two weeks were characterised by the main players stepping forward and backward as domestic and international debates developed. While from the onset of the crisis, French and British political leaders were "the most vocal proponents of taking action against Gaddafi[25]", there were some internal divisions within their governments. In Britain, France and the US, most Defence officials were "reluctant to launch a major military mission"[26]. One of the key reasons was that NATO's commitment in Afghanistan was then at its most significant point"[27].

In Britain, David Cameron announced to the Parliament on 28 February, amidst an intensification of the strikes against the population in Misrata, that he had asked the military to consider, with Britain's allies, options for an intervention and he started calling for a no-fly zone[28]. Yet, military chiefs as well as the Secretary of State for Defence were reluctant. One of the arguments against intervention was that the initial plan of a no-fly zone would be insufficient and that it would necessitate a heavier engagement. Other arguments against were that polls showed that the British population was generally not favourable to conducting more "wars of choice" and the Attorney General was concerned with legality (even if the Libyan

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gathering intelligence, ensuring surveillance and potentially using air-to-ground missions, possibly with the backing of naval assets such as aircraft carriers[21].

[22] O'Brien and Sinclair, 2011, p.7-8.

[23] Notin, 2012, p.33.

[24] Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014, p.12.

[25] Gertler, 2011, p.16

[26] Michaels, 2014, p.18-20.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Smith, 2011, p.2; O'Brien and Sinclair, 2011, p.9.

case would end up receiving broad parliamentary support)[29]. Cameron committed personally and "stated privately that he was determined Benghazi would not become another Srebrenica – not on his watch"[30]. On 2 March, Cameron ecnouraged his government to "team up with French officials" to design proposals for an EU response to the events, with a view to an emergency summit that the British and French called to take place on 11 March[31].

In France, much attention was devoted to domestic debates and governmental quagmires. The discussions on Libya took place amid a governmental crisis that ended in the resignation of Minister for Foreign Affairs Michèle Alliot-Marie who, after less than four months in office, was accused of providing an inadequate response to the popular uprisings in Tunisia (she offered France's support to train Tunisian police forces to crowd management) and was facing various personal scandals[32]. In this context, the French reaction to the events in Libya had to be designed carefully. While Cameron was announcing the preparation of military plans for a no-fly zone, on the other side of the Channel, François Fillon, head of the French government, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Alain Juppé expressed doubts about the idea of a NFZ whose implementation would necessitate NATO involvement. Indeed on 25 February, a North Atlantic Council gathering NATO members had been dealing with the possible involvement of the Alliance in case of intervention. The French "did not see the point" of NATO's involvement[33]. Newly appointed Alain Juppé announced on 3 March:

> "we must think twice about a military intervention. I do not know how the public opinion in Arab countries would react if it saw NATO forces land on a territory of the southern Mediterranean. This could prove extremely counter-productive"[34].

Thus in fact, the French government's scepticism was more about the means of a military action than about the idea of an intervention. Indeed, Juppé's speech was pronounced right after a meeting at the Elysée in which the no-fly zone and other military options had been discussed. From there, for the French government, there were two main points to settle: NATO's involvement was the big issue; and any military action would require UN backing. Along with the British, French diplomats thus started to work on a new draft of UN resolution.

The American administration was also initially divided. Obama appeared publicly very reluctant: he took a cautious posture that hardened only after 8 March, when the support of Arab states to an operation was guaranteed. During the build-up to the intervention, it was Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and not the President, who managed diplomatic relations and discussions with allied countries and other key international actors such as the Arab League. The Defence Secretary Robert Gates, for his part, was against, as he considered that this would require conducting a military intervention potentially involving sending troops onto Libyan the ground.

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[29] Clements, 2013.

[30] Clarke, 2012, p.8.

[31] O'Brien and Sinclair, 2011, p.9.

[32] Raphaëlle Bacqué, "MAM et POM, couple encombrant", *Le Monde*, 28 February 2011.

[33] Notin, 2012, p.35.

[34] "Une intervention militaire mérite d'être regardée à deux fois, a-t-il dit. Je ne sais quelle serait la réaction de l'opinion arabe si elle voyait des forces de l'OTAN débarquer sur un territoire du Sud méditerranéen. Cela pourrait être extrêmement contre-productif". Alain Juppé, quoted in Natalie Nougayrède, "Paris n'exclut pas une interdiction de survol de la Libye", *Le Monde*, 3 March 2011.

Resolution 1973: no-fly zone and "all necessary measures"

The initial moves by France and Britain quickly appeared as an insufficient answer to Gaddafi's aggressions against the Libyan population. As a consequence, French and British diplomats worked together to set the stage for a military intervention. This, however, could not happen until they were rallied by a number of other countries, particularly, the United States, European partners and Arab countries.

Things accelerated from the second week of March, when the Gulf Cooperation Council first, then the Organisation of Islamic Conference and finally the League of Arab States issued calls for the UNSC to take the measures necessary to protect the Libyan people, including through a no-fly zone[35]. Simultaneously, Sarkozy and Cameron sent a joint letter to the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy calling for the EU and its Member States to support to a no-fly zone. The letter stated France and Britain's shared position and objectives on Libya[36]. Their main aims were to ally with European partners and other allies as well as with Arab and African states to push Gaddafi out of power, to support the National Transition Council as a "valid political interlocutor", to carry on planning for "all possible contingencies" including a no-fly zone "or other options against air attacks" and to support humanitarian action, the ICC prosecution, and the enforcement of the arms embargo. The letter announced, that on-going work at the UN was aimed at a Resolution defending the same posture.

The French and British governments were thus clearly aligned on most aspects of the Libyan crisis and possible responses, and their actions at the UN were coordinated. In the wider international discussions, several NATO and partner nations, namely Italy, Germany, Turkey or Russia, were initially blocking British, French and American calls for international (including military) reaction. One of the consequences of European discord over the Libya crisis was that the European Union was unable to provide a significant response and act as a political entity in international security. Notably, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton refused to recognise the NTC, and EU member states rejected plans for a no-fly zone during the EU summit initiated by Britain and France on 11 March. As for the Americans, it is only after Hilary Clinton's encounter with representatives of the NTC in Paris[37] that Washington engaged in the UN Resolution in the final line of its drafting.

The Resolution 1973 was presented to the Council and adopted on 17 March, with five abstentions (Germany, Russia, China, India and Brazil) and no vote against. UNSCR 1973 could only pass with a carful wording that combined UNSC members' conflicting postures and prevented a Chinese and/or Russian veto. The Resolution authorised "all necessary measures… to protect civilians… while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory"[38]. Both the nature of the measures and the extent of the protection of civilians could be discussed and interpreted. Yet, in spite of the vagueness of the objective, a coalition of countries willing to intervene quickly formed around the P3 (France, UK and US) and Canada, and a NATO meeting was planned for the following day[39].

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[35] O'Brien and Sinclair, 2011, p.9-10.

[36] David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy, joint letter to His Excellency President Van Rompuy, 10 March 2011. The text of the letter can be found at: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/10/libya-middleeast (accessed on 13 October 2014).

[37] Michaels, 2014, p.20; Kandel, 2013, p.29.

[38] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, §4.

[39] *Le Monde*, "Le Conseil de sécurité approuve le recours à la force en Libye", 18 March 2011.

Towards a military intervention: Debates among allies on the means

UN Resolution 1973 was passed on Thursday 17 March and on Saturday 19 March a coalition of Britain, France and the United States initiated the first strikes against Libyan armed forces. In the meantime, the maritime blockade had started under NATO command. On 31 March, the national campaigns came under NATO command based in Naples. These two weeks were characterised by intense discussions and negotiations on the shape of the political, strategic and tactical command of operations over Libya. The main issue was whether the intervention would take the shape of a "coalition of the willing" led, among others, by the French and British, or if a NATO operation would be launched.

The issue of command

On the British side, Foreign Affairs Secretary William Hague announced as early as 7 March that NATO had been tasked to draft contingency plans for the establishment of a no-fly zone[40]. As we noted earlier, however, the French were uneasy with the idea of resorting to NATO. Alain Juppé stated at the National Assembly on 8 March that the Atlantic Alliance was "not the appropriate organisation" to conduct an operation against the Gaddafi regime[41]. Indeed as Alder-Nissen and Pouliot explain, Sarkozy favoured leading a coalition with the British, with strong EU involvement, and certainly not NATO[42].

After the EU option was quickly wiped out of the table, there were "talks about UK and France leading an operation"[43] but a headquarter was needed[44]. Only four months after the signing of the Lancaster House treaties, there were no "Franco-British tools" yet and thus the implementation of a joint command appeared very complex[45]. When it became clear tat the US would participate in the intervention, on 16 March, the French sent a general to Ramstein air base (Germany) where the US Air Force in Europe (USAFE) and NATO's Allied Air Command are located, to liaise with the Americans[46]. But in parallel, they also sent the Chief of Staff of the French Air Force Command[47], to the British headquarters in Northwood to explore the possibility of joint bilateral planning and command with the UK. This was apparently an initiative from the French side – it seems from Sarkozy himself[48] – that did not meet with on-going British plans:

> "The French wanted to send a four-star to Northwood to do the planning of the operation. And they did. But we on the British side we wanted to plan the operation with the US, as it is what we usually do. So the French four-star was there, but he could not be part of the planning […] because of the restrictions on intelligence sharing"[49].

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[40] William Hague, "Oral answers to questions: Libya and the Middle East", House of Commons, 7 March 2011, available at:
http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110307/debtext/110307-0001.htm#11030711000002 (accessed on 14 October 2014).
[41] Alain Juppé, "Réponse à une question d'actualité: Libye", Assemblée Nationale, 8 March 2011, available at: http://www.rpfrance-otan.org/spip.php?page=mobile_art&art=957 (accessed on 14 October 2014).
[42] Alder-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014, p.17.
[43] Interview with top-ranking British officer, December 2013.
[44] Interview with high-ranking French officer, December 2013.
[45] Interview with a former adviser to the Elysée, September 2014.
[46] Tanguy, 2012, p.33.
[47] Commandant des Forces aériennes (CFA).
[48] Interview with a former adviser to the Elysée, September 2014.
[49] Interview with high-ranking British officer, October 2013.

In theses contingencies, restrictions to intelligence sharing are arguably not the central problem, as they can be circumvented in case of operational necessity. To some extent, the discussions on how to go about an intervention in Libya were complicated by France and Britain's different decision-making systems on military matters. President Sarkozy, with the recommendation of his personal military adviser, could easily order the Chief of the Defence Staff to start planning an operation with the British. In London, the process required consensus among the participants to the newly created National Security Council, which included a variety of ministers as well as the Attorney General, tasked with validating the legality of any military action. Such a process takes more time and also leads to more consensual outcomes: it thus was unlikely that it would lead to an innovative and risky command structure with the French; on the contrary, the safety of an experienced American-NATO leadership and legitimacy of a wide, multinational alliance made more political sense. Indeed arguably, the main point of disagreement was about the role the Americans should have in the operational process. Thus, Jean-Christophe Notin recounts, that the French General arrived at Northwood on 18 March only to witness that the British had already planned everything with the Americans[50].

It is unclear whether a Franco-British lead would have had sufficient command infrastructure to ensure the coordination of a multinational operation. For the British, bilateral command was undoable:

> "We did not have the capacities to set up a command and control structure, deal with air defence and sustain the campaign. We did not think it was doable. Guillaud [French Chief of Defence Staff] gave Sarkozy advice that we could do that… This was for political reasons."[51]

Yet according to a French high-ranking officer: "We could have commanded it [the operation] from Lyon [where the French National Air Operations Command is located]. But the British did not want that it be the French who commanded"[52]. Despite this argument, eventually, more interviewees confirmed that with the Americans in, it made complete sense to settle in Ramstein.

The issue of command was as much political as it was military, and it had a broader international dimension. A British top-ranking officer recalls, that "European nations were waiting for Obama's decision"[53] to commit and some did not want a French or a Franco-British command. This was especially the case for Italy and Turkey who "threatened to boycott any other arrangement […]. Italy early on set an ultimatum that the operation had to be led by NATO for their bases to be used"[54]. The Turkish government, for its part, refused that the French take command and control[55] and "chafed at France assuming the posture of 'enforcer of the UN Security Council'"[56]. Eventually, it was reported that two experienced British diplomats, including soon-to-be ambassador to France Peter Ricketts "helped shepherd the negotiations to persuade France that a NATO-led operation would work much more

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[50] Notin, 2012, p.192.
[51] Interview with top-ranking British military officer, April 2014.
[52] "Les Britanniques et les Américains ont imposé l'OTAN. […] On aurait pu la commander depuis Lyon. Mais les Britanniques ne voulaient pas que ce soit les Français qui commandent". Interview with high-ranking French military officer, December 2013.
[53] Interview with top-ranking British military officer, December 2013.
[54] Lindström and Zetterlund, 2012, p.55.
[55] Nygren, 2014, p.112.
[56] Stephen Flanagan, "Libya: Managing the fragile coalition", *CSIS Commentary*, 24 March 2011, available at: http://csis.org/publication/libya-managing-fragile-coalition (accessed on 13 October 2014).

smoothly than an Anglo-French one alone"[57]. NATO did not take command of the operation until 31 March. Before that, the first two weeks of the intervention took the shape of national campaigns in a "coalition of the willing" coordinated by the Americans.

The tension around 19 March

The 19 of March was a "dramatic" moment in the international crisis, both in terms of actual developments – the first Western bombs were dropped on Gaddafi forces – and in terms of the narrative construction of the events, during as well as after their unfolding.

As I pointed earlier, France and Britain have different decision-making systems when it comes to military interventions. On the French side, the Libya crisis once more demonstrated that the decision-making system in France is centralised (if not unipersonal) and that the link between the President and the military chiefs is direct and quick. In Paris, a "restricted" Defence and Security Council, in which the President gave his orders for the entry into war, took place on the morning of 18 March[58]. French Prime Minister gave a speech at the *Assemblée nationale* on 22 March and military action was debated[59] but no vote was required until 12 July, when the *Assemblée*'s assent was necessary for continuing the intervention[60].

Since the scandals about the Iraq war, the British government has been accountable to the Attorney General who was "present at all meetings in which issues requiring a legal opinion were raised and discussed" – altogether 39 times during the crisis[61]. According to an interviewee, this slowed down the intervention process in London because the CDS had to discuss with the NSC over matters related to operational conduct, and needed to get to a consensus. There is also a tradition to ask for the Parliament's approval prior to launching a military intervention. Thus, in London an emergency management committee meeting, presided by the deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, took place in the morning of 19 March[62] and at the House of Commons on 21 March, the vast majority of MPs voted in support of a UN-backed military intervention[63].

In the meantime, on 19 March, Nicolas Sarkozy had convened in Paris a summit for the Libyan people gathering, heads of states and governments as well as representatives of NATO, the UN, the EU and of Arab countries. At 2:45 PM GMT, as the meeting finished, President Sarkozy announced live on French television: "Our aircraft are already preventing air attacks on the city. Other French aircraft stand ready to intervene against any armoured

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[57] Patrick Wintour and Nicholas Watt, "David Cameron's Libyan war: why the PM felt Gaddafi had to be stopped", *The Guardian*, 2 October 2011.

[58] Notin, 2012, p.134.

[59] Assemblée nationale, "Déclaration du Gouvernement sur l'intervention des forces armées en Libye et débat sur cette déclaration", 22 March 2011, available at: http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/cri/2010-2011/20110144.asp (accessed on 4 May 2015).

[60] Assemblée nationale, "Débat et vote sur l'autorisation de la prolongation de l'intervention des forces armées en Libye", 12 July 2011, available at: http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/cri/2010-2011-extra/20111012.asp (accessed on 4 May 2015).

[61] Prime Minister's Office, "Libya crisis: National security adviser's review of central coordination and lessons learned", report, not dated, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libya-crisis-national-security-advisers-view-of-central-coordination-and-lessons-learned (Accessed on 10 November 2014).

[62] BBC, "Cameron meets allies for Libya crisis talks", 19 March 2011, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12794031 (accessed on 17 October 2013).

[63] Parliament, "MPs debate military action taken against Libya", 22 March 2011, available at: http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2011/march/debate-on-military-action-in-libya/ (accessed on 4 May 2015).

vehicles that threaten unarmed civilians"[64]. That is to say, that some planes had taken off from French air bases in the morning and in early afternoon, while the meeting was taking place. The first strikes occurred at 4:45 GMT. Arguably, a swift reaction was consistent with earlier calls to stop the atrocities, the diplomatic initiatives at the UN, the contingency planning and other declarations. However, the events of 19 March have been heatedly debated as the French are accused of having acted unilaterally, without informing their allies or coordinating with them. The 19th March can be considered the culmination (or epitasis) of the crisis and it is, as such, a node for contradictory accounts and interpretations. Did the French act unilaterally by sending their aircraft to Libyan airspace before British and American forces came in? If so, why?

At one end of the spectrum are "official-friendly" accounts from the French side participate in creating a narrative in which the French took the right decision to intervene quickly (with or without allies being informed, this is not stated). For instance, the spokesman of the French General staff of the armed forces told that France "had to act fast" to prevent more civilian deaths in Benghazi[65]. On the British side, some official accounts rather denounce the unilateral nature of the French strikes. The Royal Aeronautical Society for instance states that "the first attack mission was flown on 19 March by the French Air Force, in a unilateral national action, while the principal coalition nations were still involved in the Paris Summit"[66]. No evidence is provided to back either affirmations but some actors close to the decision-making processes make the same arguments. Other sources consider that early French strikes we actually part of a strategy agreed among the three participating countries. According to a *Guardian* report, as Britain and the United States were hitting fixed targets, they had to intervene at dusk to "make sure that [they] did not hit people" while it had been agreed that "the French would go for mobile targets in the first stage"[67]. Finally, it has been put forward that responsibilities for uncoordinated action on the first day may actually be reversed, and that it was the British who let the French down. According to that version, France's unilateralism would in fact reflect the Royal Air Force's refusal to participate in the mission with French *Rafales*[68] for two reasons: they lacked intelligence that would ensure that risks were not too high for engaging British military assets before Gaddafi's air defence were down; and they lacked the operational experience for conducting such long-distance raids[69].

The continuation of the campaign and the transfer to NATO

The tensions built around 19 March did not reproduce with the same strength as the intervention continued, although it has been written that their competition for leadership "continued to dog the enterprise throughout the first four months of the operation"[70]. In the first 10 days, it consisted on four national operations coordinated by the United States at

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[64] "D'ores et déjà, nos avions empêchent les attaques aériennes sur la ville. D'ores et déjà d'autres avions, français, sont près à intervenir contre des blindés qui menaceraient des civils désarmés". Nicolas Sarkozy, "Déclaration lors du Sommet de Paris de soutien pour le peuple libyen", 19 March 2011, available at: http://www.franceonu.org/la-france-a-l-onu/espace-presse/declarations-presse/communiques/article/declaration-de-m-le-president-de (accessed on 15 October 2014). The translation is form the website of the French embassy in the United States, available at: http://www.ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article2241 (accessed on 15 October 2014).
[65] Drape, 2012, p.72; also in *Air Actualités*, "Libya: Airmen in operation Harmattan", Special issue, 2012.
[66] Royal Aeronautical Society, 2012, p.5.
[67] Senior British official, cited in Patrick Wintour and Nicholas Watt, "David Cameron's Libyan war: why the PM felt Gaddafi had to be stopped", *The Guardian*, 2 October 2011.
[68] Cameron, 2012, p.20
[69] Interview with a high-ranking French military officer, April 2014.
[70] Clarke, 2012, p.9.

Ramstein, and from 31 March these came together under NATO Operation Unified Protector. Before command was transferred to NATO under Operation Unified Protector, the coordination of the national operations of coalition countries relied heavily on American assets one the one hand, and on individual knowledge and skills on the other. While the width of the coalition grew, and as the US desired to quickly withdraw to a support role, it became clear that loose coordination would not suffice and that NATO's involvement would be necessary to provide command and control infrastructures and coordination mechanisms. Yet a few days before the actual transfer of command, the French were still reluctant to have a NATO operation. On 25 March, the Americans and the British eventually managed to strike a compromise with the French, whereby NATO would perform the *military command*, like for any allied operation, but the *political leadership* would be in the hand of an *ad hoc* creation, the Libya Contact Group.

NATO officially took charge on 31 March, but this did not ease all tensions not cease cooperation between the British and the French; these were simply transferred into another context. A new element to negotiate was the nationality of the commander of the NATO operation. As the US was withdrawing, he or she could not be American. Yet he or she could not be French or British either. Indeed, both the British and the French "attempted to place one of their own officers in charge" which prompted tensions between the two and met with Turkish objection[71]. As a compromise, the Allies opted for a neutral commander, French Canadian Lt Gen Charles Bouchard, then deputy commander of the NATO Joint Force Command in Naples[72].

Throughout the intervention, the US continued to provide "extensive combat support"[73], including mostly intelligence and surveillance, and air refuelling. NATO Secretary General Rasmussen "conceded that without US intelligence-gathering systems, NATO would not have been able to complete its mission in Libya"[74]. In terms of strike missions, however, French and British forces were the two main participants to the maritime and air components, as well as the airmobile operation of May and June, when helicopter launched from sea platforms permitted strategic breakthrough. That being, two significant differences between British and French approaches to airmobile assets in this campaign limited the extent of their effective cooperation. Firstly, the French helicopters had an autonomous national command on-board a French vessel, while the British submitted the command of their mission to the NATO Air operation centre in Naples. In other words, the British proceeded with the air command centre designating the targets, while the French proceeded using cockpit delegation where no authorisation is needed for target identification and strike[75]. Because the French did not include their helicopters under NATO command, there was no joint air tasking order and thus cooperation was limited to coordination of national missions. Secondly, British and French helicopter doctrines are very different with the French rules of engagement being "very loose, very flexible"[76] and the British being "risk averse"[77]. After a first joint raid, there was thus a

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[71] Michaels, 2014, p.24.

[72] *Ibid*.

[73] Clarke *et. al.*, 2011, p.5.

[74] Gerard O'Dwyer, "Secret Report Criticizes NATO's Command in Libya", *Defence News*, 28 October 2012, available at: http://www.defensenews.com/article/20121028/DEFREG01/310280001/Secret-Report-Criticizes-NATO-8217-s-Command-Libya (accessed on 27 October 2014).

[75] Szternberg, 2012, p.172 ; interview with a high-ranking French military officer, December 2013.

[76] Interviews with a high-ranking British military officer, February 2012 and October 2013.

[77] Interview with a high-ranking French military officer, December 2013.

fragmentation of the missions: "There was no synchronisation of effects given that we were operating in different zones […]. So there was no cooperation!"[78].

Concluding section: Managing the partnership in the conflict and the *post-hoc* transformation of the crisis

Libya: from inter-ally tensions to shared glory

Going back to the four determinants of cooperation that I presented in the first part of this paper, we can note that tensions appeared between the two partners in all four dimensions:

1. While there was an agreement on the necessity of a military intervention, the French and the British disagreed on the mode of the intervention – whether resorting to a regional defence organisation like NATO was the right thing to do.

2. When it came to the social structure of partnership during the crisis, it was challenged due to different decision-making processes, a lack of shared "tools" for the joint planning and command of the operation, as well as the absence of shared norms (in this case, doctrines) for conducting the missions.

3. We noted that there were tensions about sharing the leadership of the operations, on 19th of March as well as when it came to picking the commander for the NATO operation, which can be explained by the symbolic (rather than material) nature of the gains involved in the military operation. This arguably led to the adoption a "tit for tat" strategy[79] by the French on 19 March.

4. Last but not least, the external dimension of the bilateral partnership was the *epicentre* of tensions, as these mostly revolved around the role that US-dominated Atlantic Alliance should play.

Determinant	Challenges	Adaptation
Common or compatible objectives	Agreement on the ends (need for military intervention)	The French make concession on the role of NATO, but the extent of cooperation is limited to certain missions
	Disagreement on the means (role of NATO and the US)	
Social structure	Lack of bilateral structure for command; different doctrines and decision-making processes	Reliance on individual links during coalition phase
		Resort to multilateral structures during the NATO phase
Payoff	Symbolic gains of operations leads actors to have a competitive rather than cooperative approach	Limited: Ad hoc exchanges (*quid pro quo*)
Externalities	Necessity to gather international support; and disagreements on the role of NATO are at the heart of tensions between the partners	Resort to UN Resolution, American support, and NATO

Table 2 Challenges to cooperation in Libya and adaptation strategies

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[78] Interview with a high-ranking French military officer, December 2013.

[79] Tit for tat means cooperating on the first move, and then doing whatever the other player did in the previous move (Axerlrod, 1984)

In terms of the actors' objectives, we note that the Anglo-French partnership was effective in the build-up to the intervention, after domestic debates had been settled. This alignment at the politico-diplomatic level was maintained throughout the operations. For instance, it is together that David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy visited Libya to give a speech celebrating the liberation of the city of Benghazi on 15 September[80]. Apart from that, the two partners had to adapt, negotiate and make concessions for their cooperation to occur effectively. It was notably difficult for the British to conceive military planning and intervention without the Americans. Part of the adaptation was done through adopting *ad hoc* modes of functioning, relying significantly on the experience of certain military officers. The second strand of adaptation concerned France's compromise over NATO (which was in reality a way out of diplomatico-strategic isolation), which permitted to circumvent the incongruity between the partners, the lack of bilateral command structure or joint force, and the tensions around other participating countries.

Thus in a sense, the point that was the most debated between the two partners – the role of NATO and the US – is also that which permitted to conduct the operation successfully and to share the fruit of the military victory. Indeed, despite the press headlines cited in the introduction, and the series of tensions between France and Britain that punctuated the crisis in Libya, the conflict is remembered as a building block in their long-term partnership.

Transformation dynamics

Tensions were transformed in three manners after the war, as part of larger process of institutionalisation of the bilateral relationship: 1) a common official narrative was constructed, which underlined the positive achievements of the Franco-British couple in Libya; 2) "lessons learned" exercises were conducted in order to improve cooperation in future conflicts; 3) and military and diplomatic actors on both sides of the Channel developed social links and internalised shared memories from the campaign.

Firstly, there appears to have been a phenomenon in which tensions among allies, while they may not have been solved on the ground, were transformed in the official narrative in a manner that matches the defence and security partnership. This was done with David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy's joint visit to Benghazi (cf. above), as well as by referring to the success of the operation at each subsequent bilateral meeting. For instance, at a meeting of the Franco-British "Senior Level Group", it was declared that:

> "The successful outcome of Operation Unified Protector in Libya bolstered our partnership and further demonstrated the relevance of the numerous projects announced at our summit last year"[81].

With the more solemn tone appropriate for bilateral summits, the two heads of state and government declared in February 2012:

> "Last year, we have seen our bilateral agreements on security and defence put to the test. We met today on the first anniversary of the Libyan uprising. Our cooperation in Libya has been a defining moment - and one on which we will continue to build in the future"[82].

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[80] *Public Sénat*, "Discours de Nicolas Sarkozy, David Cameron et Moustapha Abdeljalil à Benghazi", 15 September 2011, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bhtPbkbKCA (accessed on 30 October 2014). The operations terminated at the end of October with the death of Muammar Gaddafi on the 20th.

[81] Présidence de la République/Cabinet Office, Joint Franco-British communiqué, London, 9 November 2011.

[82] David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy, Joint declaration at the Summit, Paris, 17 February 2012.

This declaration indicates that despite a treaty being in place, effective cooperation is not something that is portrayed as following automatically, but rather as an idea that has to be measured up against facts. And Libya is portrayed as having validated the partnership. Only in unpublished documents are the problems related to the operation in Libya mentioned: capability shortcomings, limits to intelligence sharing[83].

Secondly, the Libya conflict also served as an operational experience from which to enhance the bilateral cooperation. The lessons learned by the two partners were as much military (related to operational conduct) ad as they were political (related to their broader defence partnership). Thanks to lessons learned exercises, Libya permitted to identify the challenges actors had faced while conducting the operation, and thus it guided the direction of ensuing work, including work done as part of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force currently being developed[84]. Typically, lessons learned are exercises of scrutiny conducted in the military headquarters, the concepts and doctrine centres, the air, navy and army staff, as well as Defence policy departments. These are conducted mostly nationally, but also, in the UK-France case they were partly shared.

To have effect, operational-level lessons, expressed in internal notes and reports need to be seized by the political level to then be turned into "directives of objectives". Top-level priorities then serve to feed official announces for future cooperation. Thus, at the February 2012 Summit following the Libya campaign, Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron indicated:

> "Following an analysis of lessons identified, we have decided to prioritise our joint work in the key areas of: command and control; information systems; intelligence, surveillance, targeting and reconnaissance; and precision munitions"[85].

From a capability perspective, as a consequence from Libya, a bilateral working group "was designed following Lessons Learned from Harmattan and Afghanistan to think about propositions for mutualisation"[86].

Thirdly, with Libya, French and British military officers (and, to a lesser extent, diplomats) got to build much stronger links than those that existed prior to the campaign. As a French officer noted: "before, we [French and British military officers] didn't know each other at all, in terms of organisations and functioning"[87]. Libya had the effect of forcing actors to getting in touch, either in order to be able to manage the operation or as part of the bilateral activities that developed subsequently. Thus one consequence was that, as another French officer explains, "today, everyone knows his counterpart on the other side of the Channel"[88]. This was the case at all levels of the military hierarchy as, in the words of a British high-ranking officer, "the Chiefs […] went from general awareness to contacts several times a week"[89].

But also, aside from creating institutional links, the campaign served to give the strategic partnership a new kind of legitimacy: "Libya has been a positive factor, because it showed that we are able to do things together" and as a consequence "it has facilitated the

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[83] Participant observation and informal conversations, French Ministry of Defence, September 2011.

[84] The Combined Joint Expeditionary Force is a Franco-British project of non-permanent military force for responding to international crises that is being developed as part of the 2010 bilateral cooperation treaty. It is due to be operational by the spring 2016.

[85] David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy, Joint declaration at the Summit, Paris, 17 February 2012.

[86] Interview with a French DGA officer, February 2012.

[87] Interview with a French high-ranking military officer, February 2012.

[88] "Aujourd'hui, tout le monde connaît son partenaire de l'autre côté de la Manche." Interview with a French DGA officer, February 2012.

[89] Interview with a high-ranking British military officer, March 2012.

appropriation of this cooperation in the headquarters"[90]. This "appropriation" was not given. Indeed, prior to Libya, "there was no impulse between 2 November 2010 and the meeting between [the military chiefs] in February 2011. There was in fact inertia at the level of the chiefs of staff, especially the Royal Navy. They were reluctant to commit"[91]. In a sense, the Libya intervention is seen by military actors to have accelerated an implementation process that would have been less effective had personal links not been developed during the crisis.

<p align="center">*   *   *</p>

To conclude, the crisis in Libya was a test for the partnership between Britain and France signed just a few months before the conflict. It questioned their ability to respond together, align on ends and means, build bridges across their different political and military functioning, accept to "share the glory"[92] of the campaign and to clarify their partnership's relationship to NATO and other allies. Interestingly, Anglo-French negotiations involved diplomats at the UN and in Brussels (EU, NATO), the executive level (on the issue of military command, and the setting up of the Libya Contact group) and military actors down to the operational level (with the discussions on doctrine and rules of engagement, especially for the airmobile operation). The paper has showed that subsequently, the conflict had a transformative effect on the Franco-British defence and security partnership, through processes of narrative-building, military learning and the development of social bond and shared memories.

It can thus be said, that just as is the case for international organisations, international crises also play a key role in shaping the functioning of bilateral agreements. Moreover, this paper has showed how international organisations can shape bilateral partnerships between member states and that in return, "bilateral will"[93] shape the action of international organisations (in the present case, the UN and NATO).

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[90] "La Libye a été un facteur positif, ça a montré qu'on est capables de faire des choses ensemble, et ça a facilité l'appropriation de la coopération par les états-majors". Interview with a top-ranking French military officer, January 2012.

[91] "Il n'y a eu aucune impulsion entre le 2 novembre 2010 et la rencontre entre le CEMA et le CDS en février 2011. Il y avait en fait une inertie au niveau des chefs d'états-majors, surtout la Royal Navy. Ils étaient réticents à s'engager". Interview with a French high-ranking military officer, February 2012.

[92] Phrase used by an interviewee, top-ranking British military officer, April 2014.

[93] Krotz, 2011, p.98.

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