Even Isungset

Changing Relations? A Comparative Study of the European Union's Relations with Tunisia and Libya

Bachelor's project

NTNU

Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

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Abstract

The thesis explores the EU's relations with Tunisia and Libya in the period of 2014 to 2020, to investigate if there has been a change in relations and how this relationship differs with the two countries. The thesis also investigates if Ursula von der Leyen's new commission signals a change in these relations. The methods the thesis employs are comparative document case studies, which is chosen because these methods help produce deep knowledge of specific cases, while requiring less resources than other methods. The thesis has three main findings. Firstly, that the EU's relations with Libya is mostly focused on security aspects, like border control and upholding arms embargoes. The EU's relations with Tunisia, however, focuses more on normative issues. Secondly, that the new Commission has not yet changed much in the relations with the two neighbor countries. Nevertheless, the commissions new ambitions on green transitions and digital transformation might be more likely to succeed in Tunisia based on the constructivist "model student" concept. Further, in Libya the new Commission is already struggling with its geopolitical ambitions as other actors including Russia and Turkey has taken the lead on the ground in Libya, and the EU's new Operation IRINI is already encountering difficulties. Lastly the thesis finds that the concept of the EU as a normative empire, can explain the EU's relations with the two countries by combining realist and constructivist assumption and therefore explaining the differences in relations the EU has with Tunisia and Libya.

Oppgaven undersøker EU sine relasjoner til Tunisia og Libya i perioden 2014 til 2020. Det for å se om det har vært endringer i forholdet og hvordan EU sine relasjoner er forskjellige til de to landene. Oppgaven undersøker også om Ursula von der Leyen sin nye kommisjon har ført til endringer i EU sitt forhold til Libya og Tunisia. Forskningsmetodene som blir bruk for å analysere dette er komparative dokumentcasestudier. Metoden er blitt valgt for å få dyptgående kunnskap om enkelte saker, samtidig som metodene ikke krever altfor mye ressurser. Oppgaven kommer til tre hovedkonklusjoner. For det første at EU sitt forhold til Libya er basert på å skape sikkerhet, for eksempel grensekontroll og våpenembargo. Forholdet til Tunisia derimot er i større grad basert på normative områder. For det andre har den nye kommisjonen ikke enda skapt store endringer i forholdene til de to nabolandene. Det kan allikevel tenkes at det er mer sannsynlig at den nye kommisjonen får gjennomslag på sine ambisjoner om en grønn transformering og digitalisering i Tunisia, basert på det konstruktivistiske «modell student» konseptet. I Libya strever den nye kommisjonen allerede med sine geopolitiske ambisjoner ettersom andre land inkludert Russland og Tyrkia har begynt å ta ledelsen på bakken. EU sin nye Operasjon IRINI har også møtt på problemer. Til slutt finner oppgaven at å konseptualisere EU som et normativt imperium er nyttig for å forstå de forskjellige relasjonene EU har til Tunisia og Libya. Dette basert på en kombinasjon av realist og konstruktivistiske antagelser.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The new president of the European Commission (EC), Ursula von der Leyen went into office with the intent of leading a "geopolitical Commission" (Bayer, 2019). Von der Leyen has stated she envisioned 2020 as a "pivotal year for relations between Europe and Africa" (von der Leyen & Mahamat, 2020). The EC has since published a new document called *Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa*. The strategy includes suggestions for five partnerships between the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU), it also proposes ten points of action where EU should work together with Africa (European Commision, 2020a). The EU already has existing relations with Africa, including the implemented joint EU-Africa strategy from 2007 (European Commision, 2019c). There are also EU policies towards specific regions of Africa; North Africa in particular, is part of the southern neighborhood of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), a policy including both Tunisia and Libya (European Commision, 2020c).

Tunisia is one of the North African countries that has followed their agreements and cooperation with the EU as a "model student" together with Morocco. Libya has not followed this path and has not taken part in the full ENP framework like Tunisia has. Additionally, the countries differ economically, where Libya relies on their natural energy resources Tunisia has had to follow other economic strategies, like closer cooperation with the EU (Schumacher, Marchetti, & Demmelhuber, 2018, pp. 323-334). In 2019, Libya was the least democratic country in North Africa and Tunisia was the most democratic country in the region - another exemplar of their difference (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020). As stated, Libya and Tunisia have major economic and political differences but represent the same geographic population, the Maghreb region in the west of North Africa. The two countries are therefore chosen as cases for the thesis based on diverse case selection (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, pp. 300-301). The limited size of this research project makes it too ambitious to include more countries in the study, even if it would have been relevant.

This thesis will study and compare Libya and Tunisia and try to explore how the EU-Maghreb relationship and interests has evolved through the period of the last two commission presidencies from 2014 to 2020. The goal of studying this period is to see the evolution in the relationship and compare it to see if the new commission signals a shift in the relations. Further it seeks to understand what implications the evolution of the relationship can have for Libya and Tunisia comparatively as these countries and their relations with the EU differ widely. Lastly, it will consider how and if von der Leyen's new Commission has had an impact on the relations and interests of the EU in these countries, and the relationship overall.

The way the thesis answers these questions is first to clarify the methods that will be used and why those are chosen. Second there will be a literature review of existing research on the topic. Then the main body will consist of sub chapters that will go into detail and discuss the research questions through a document analysis. The conclusion finds that the EU's relations with Tunisia is more normative and the relationship with Libya is more security based. Still both countries have relations in both fields, and the new commission has not changed the relationship in any major ways yet. The concept of the EU as a normative empire is found to be helpful to explain EU's role in the relationship, and the "student" concept to explain the different roles of the two neighbors.

2. Methodology

The comparative research consists of two document case studies of the EU relations with Libya and Tunisia. The advantage of cases studies here and the reason they fit this research, is that the limit on time and resources fits the modest scale of case studies. Case studies are appropriate to investigate "why?" and "how?" questions as their deep and detailed research style allows exploration of such questions. Fittingly, this research project aims to answer how the relationship with the two case studies has evolved. Another strength of the case study method is it allows a real-world investigation into a phenomenon; something this thesis aims to do with the EU's relation with countries in their neighborhood (Rowley, 2002).

A goal when choosing which case studies to compare is to choose cases that can represent a larger population. This thesis has chosen the cases Libya and Tunisia based on diverse case selection, where cases are chosen to represent the full variation of variables. This makes them cover the whole spectrum of variables and increase their representation to the whole population; here that would be the Maghreb (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). As mentioned, the reason this thesis chose to focus specifically on Tunisia and Libya is because they are very different countries in the same region, and have very different relations to the EU, but are also in the same framework and representing the same population. These cases are therefore appropriate to start gaining an understanding of how the EU's complex relations differ with each neighboring country. There has also been an earlier problem of not looking at specific countries when it comes to research on Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and looking at the area as one big study trying to find what general type of power the EU is. What has been found when studying the research agenda on the relationship is that it is necessary to study individual countries to develop more refined theories and a stronger empirical understanding (Cavatorta & Rivetti, 2014).

The thesis will compare the two countries through a document analysis. The way this will be done is by analyzing current documents from the EU. Document analysis is a good fit for case studies, as it can help produce deep and varied understanding and descriptions of specific cases, as is the aim of this thesis. Document analysis is also a good fit for the scope of research this thesis is aimed at since it is a way to gain empirical data at a low cost. The data is nonreactive which is a plus since the data collection does not have a potential to alter the data, which is a problem with other methods. Still, these other methods have their own advantages that a document analysis cannot replace. A problem with the document analysis method is that the researcher interprets and uses the data subjectively and therefore the research will have to be as transparent and thorough as possible. The documents themselves are not objective either and the thesis will therefore have to analyze factors such as the usefulness, the purpose, and the context of the documents (Bowen, 2009).

3. Literature Review

The current literature on the EU-North Africa relationship, or more specifically on the EU and Tunisia/Libya thoroughly covers the Arab spring and the period after. Colombo (2019) discusses the EU's relationship with North Africa and finds it has become more bilateral since the introduction of the ENP in 2004. Specifically, the ENP marked a shift away from the arguably unsuccessful region building with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) which began in the 1990s, and more recently the 2008 Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Colombo also found that Tunisia has always been closer to the EU –

and especially France - than its neighbors while keeping close ties to its Arab and Muslim identity and that relations with Arab countries has a large influence on Tunisia to this day. Furthermore, the Arab Spring made Tunisia a model of democracy and reform for the rest of North Africa. However, when the EU published the 2015 ENP review, the EU's goal in Tunisia was integrated into a shift in interest of the whole region towards stabilization, with the priority of ensuring EU's security interests in the region. The chapter identifies another driving concept for the EU which is "diversification" with each neighbor diversification also includes "more for more", a bilateral approach based on incentives. The EU emphasized the need to balance this with social, economic, and political reforms. However, this is often hard to do and has been undermined in the unstable region. Therefore, the ENP review aims to be more proactive and agile when responding to the rising level of crisis in Europe's neighborhood (Colombo, 2019).

With a more specific focus on the ENP *The Routledge handbook on the European neighbourhood policy* identifies the European Neighborhood Policy as: "the EU's most important and wide-ranging foreign policy instrument" (Schumacher et al., 2018, p. 3). The book chapter on the Maghreb, discuss the structural characteristic of the ENP relationship in this area. The author finds that more recent events like the Arab Spring has had minor effects on the structure of the EU-Maghreb relations and that the relationship is still based on structures from the European colonial period (Fernández-Molina, 2018). Another chapter on Libya and Syria as a crossroad for the ENP and EU crisis management finds that the EU has learned from the recent conflicts in these countries when it comes to EU as a security actor. Still, lack of vertical coherence with the EU Member States remains a hindrance for EU's crisis management (Koenig, 2018). Like Fernández-Molina's findings, Hill also found that the EU had little impact on Tunisia and Mauritania during the Arab Spring. Hill came to this conclusion by critically examining Levitsky and Way's model for regime transition. Hill also found that the EU had the means to help these countries towards democratization before the Arab Spring, but that the EU did not seize the opportunity (Hill, 2018).

Dandashly (2015) found that the EU's relationship to the MENA region became more present after the Maastricht Treaty, and that these relations were based on stability and security. The MENA actors cooperated as the EU wanted, and in exchange, the EU let the internal situation be and gave economic favors. The Arab spring however changed this relationship. By studying Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, Dandashly (2015) found that the EU reacted differently in these three countries where the government was overturned. Still, through the Arab Spring and the new spotlight put on democracy, security remained the focus of the EU. The EU became more invested in Tunisia than Libya - partly based on the difference of internal political situations. Even as the EU focused temporarily on democracy – were they were unsuccessful as they chose to prioritize security - they have now turned back to a focus on stability and security. Additionally, it was found that the instruments the EU used in Tunisia and Libya varied, and were based on the stability in the individual countries - a strategy fitting a realist theory. While they used financial assistance in both countries, the EU gave more support to democracy in Tunisia – the most stable country, where they used technical assistance and support based on conditionality. As for Libya – the most unstable country – the EU focused on border security with technical instruments and provided humanitarian aid (Dandashly, 2015). This shows that the EU's approach to engaging with Tunisia and Libya has differed.

Interestingly, most recent general studies (excluding Koenig (2018)), have not focused on Libya. This seems to be a trend in that Libya is not typically covered with the other

ENP countries in the Maghreb, but instead is researched in isolation, or together with Syria (Gaub, 2014; Koenig, 2018; and Pradella & Taghdisi Rad, 2017). However even if authors like Colombo (2019); and Fernández-Molina (2018) focus on Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, and exclude Libya from their main discussions, Fernández-Molina still examines EU-Libya relations, and refers to Libya as more of a "bad student"; a concept the thesis will come back to. Here Fernández-Molina finds that until the end of the 1990s, Libya was kept out of cooperation with the EU and pressured by sanctions, as it was then viewed as a "rouge state". Since the 1969 Ghaddafi led revolution, Libya has maintained a foreign policy following an "atypical and idiosyncratic path" (Fernández-Molina, 2018, p. 325). However, when Gaddafi started to cooperate at the end of the 90s, this quickly led towards a closer relationship, when the EU took a realist turn in engaging with Libya in 2003-2004. Still, Gaddafi declined becoming a full UfM member and instead, Libya started negotiations for a bilateral Framework Agreement. However, the Arab Spring revolution against Gaddafi's regime in 2011 put an end to these negotiations (Fernández-Molina, 2018).

Recent literature on Maghreb often studies Morocco and Tunisia together, sometimes including Algeria too (Colombo, 2019; and Fernández-Molina, 2018). These studies rarely focus on Libya, for reasons like Libya's frequent absence from the ENP cooperation (Fernández-Molina, 2018). For such reasons, this study will include Libya, and evaluate the EU's differing relationship with Libya and Tunisia. In the literature covered, there is a lack of research on the most recent evolution of the EU-Maghreb relationship following the 2015 review of the ENP. This thesis will fill this gap by evaluating the relationship from 2014 to 2020, to account for the newest developments as of May 2020. Especially with the new Commission and the pivotal year for Africa relations. It will also fill the lack of studies comparing Libya with other countries in the southern neighborhood. There is another gap in the literature in that it does not often consider the perspective of the neighbor states (Schumacher et al., 2018). Still, some have done this, like Fontana (2017) who looked at what has been seen in academia as an unsuccessful implementation of EU external policies in the Mediterranean, where she took a different approach, and looked at the implementation within Tunisia and Morocco. What Fontana found was that the capability of the civil society and of political actors domestically in Morocco and Tunisia had been influencing factors on the implementation of the ENP (Fontana, 2017). Gaub (2014) came to a similar conclusion in relation to Libya, in that EU support only could go as far as Libya was willing or able to let it go (Gaub, 2014). However, this thesis does not have access to these sources or the capacity to take this into account, but it will acknowledge this as a limitation and try to account for the perspectives of Libya and Tunisia, respectively.

4. Theory
Fernández-Molina analyzes the EU's ENP relationship to Maghreb through different international relations theories. She found that in the ENP, the political economy structure is established, and realist power politics in the region have sustained a hub-and-spoke relationship. This has been a hinderance for liberal region building and has sustained bilateralism. The hub-and-spoke model is based on historical, colonial ties with France and from a constructivist perspective is based on foreign policy roles formed by their self-definitions and European "expectations or prescriptions" (Fernández-Molina, 2018, p. 329). Fernández-Molina identifies Tunisia together with Morocco as "model students" of the EU and identifies Libya as a now integrated former "rouge state". The concept of "students" is based on the idea of Tunisia and Morocco quickly negotiate and

act on the EU's expectations. While Libya has not become a contractual ENP partner like Tunisia, despite attempts to fully integrate Libya since the 2000s. This concept of different roles showcases the different bilateral paths each country has taken with the EU (Fernández-Molina, 2018). This can also be seen in relation to Fontana (2017); and Gaub (2014) who found that the domestic situation in Tunisia and Libya is important for the implementation of EU's external policies.

Another relevant concept when evaluating the EU's interests is what type of interest the EU has in Maghreb. Cavatorta and Rivetti (2014) found that EU's interests in the region had been more realist than normative, however as contructivism became more used and researchers started to focus on single states in the MENA, these concepts became too simple to explain these complex individual relationships (Cavatorta & Rivetti, 2014). Youngs (2004) came to a related but different conlusion; that research on the EU's external identity should focus on both realist and normative concepts since they are interlinked and informed by eachother (Youngs, 2004). Therefore, attempts to explain the EU's interests as normative or realist are too simplistic when doing more in-depth case studies on Tunisia and Libya relations. However, to understand how the EU acted in the Arab Spring Del Sarto (2016) developed the concept of the EU as a "normative empire". The concept finds that the EU uses its normative actions to reach its own economic and security ends. It is then a rationalist/realist-constructivist explanation for the relationship where the two sides are connected and are mutually reinforcing like what Youngs found. The way that the EU has acted as a normative actor is "by exporting its rules, standards and governance patterns beyond its borders" (Del Sarto, 2016, p. 219). This includes adopting EU's practices in general. The normative empire concept is also helpful because it closes the contradictive gap between the normative and realist concepts of Europe. In that when the EU acts normative, it is often done as a cost-efficient way of increasing stability and economic benefits in neighboring countries, still it also builds a normative identity. The normative empire concept is also useful to understand the asymmetry in power, and EU's interest in rule transfer to the region as it is an advantageous way for the EU to exercise its power on neighbor countries. Lastly, the theory is helpful in explaining the contradictory gap between the normative rhetoric of the EU and their trading relations with authoritarian states (Del Sarto, 2016). The normative empire theory will be discussed in the analysis that the thesis now turns to.

5. Document analysis

There has been identified a gap in the literature on the evolution of the relationship after the 2015 ENP review. This thesis will therefore start with where previous research left of, with the 2015 ENP review, and continue to the most recent documents as of May 2020. First the more general frameworks for cooperation will be discussed. Most of the documents that will be analyzed here are published by the EU, this can give the analysis a biased view since EU is only one half of the relationship. The might EU also has an incentive to publish documents that put them in a good light and promotes their interests so this will have to be considered. The analysis will start with the ENP as it makes the main framework of the EU's external relationships to its neighborhood, then Tunisia and Libya, respectively. Lastly documents on EU Africa relations in general will be analyzed to a gain insight not available in other documents.

5.1 ENP reports and review

The literature review found that the EU temporarily had a change in interest towards democracy in Maghreb during the Arab Spring. Focusing on humanitarian aid and border control in Libya and more of a focus on promotion of democracy in Tunisia as it became a

model for democracy for the rest of North Africa. Then with the 2015 ENP review turned the focus towards more differentiation and security (Colombo, 2019). This is plainly shown in the review where it states that: "The new ENP will take stabilisation as its main political priority in this mandate" (European Commision, 2015b, p. 2). And that "Differentiation and greater mutual ownership will be the hallmark of the new ENP […]" (European Commision, 2015b, p. 2). It is also mentioned multiple time through the review that the EU will work with partners in a differentiated way based on the interests of the individual partner (European Commision, 2015b).

The review states that the UfM can take a larger responsibility in promoting cooperation in the southern neighborhood, and that the EU will prioritize this. It further states it will continue to work on the already existing relation's with Tunisia. For the countries that did not have satisfying results from the incentive based "more for more" approach the EU will look for alternative solutions. The review says it will address the root causes of irregular migration and cross border threats, this trough a proactive arrangement with the partners. The EU also wanted to communicate to other actors and the public more clearly what they do with the ENP program. For Tunisia, the report states that the EU just started DCFTA negotiations (European Commision, 2015b). The Del Sarto (2016) article was originally published in 2015 and did not take the 2015 ENP review into account. Explaining the turn towards security priorities over democracy is well explained from the normative empire theory as security is one of the main interests on the empire and it will therefore be prioritized over normative values like democracy. The usual concept of EU as just a normative power would not be able to account for this change. The continuation of the DCFTAs fits in with the concept of normative empire Europe, as DCFTAs conditions ENP countries to follow EU rules even closer. This follows the normative empire principle of exporting norms and economic cooperation to maximize EU's economic and stability interests (Del Sarto, 2016).

In 2017 the Commission published a report on the implementation of the ENP so far. The report found that the ENP had overall taken substantial steps towards the goals of the 2015 report (European Commision, 2017c, p. 29). The report continues to have stability together with resilience as its main objectives. Still, the report continues its focus on the promotion of values including democracy, good governance, human rights, and rule of law. The report still states that the EU's cooperation reflects the partners individual commitment with the "tailor-made partnership" with each individual partner. One new aspect is that it will be in line with the EU Global Strategy from 2016 (European Commision, 2017c).

The 2017 report goes more into details on the specific partner countries, than the 2015 review did. For Tunisia respectively the report finds that it has continued to deepen current forms of cooperation with a new Joint Communication – that the thesis will discuss later – which the report claims will deepen "actions to promote long-term stability, including good governance, justice reform, socio-economic development and security" (European Commision, 2017c, p. 5). So, with Tunisia the EU has continued work on strengthening the already existing commitments. When it comes to economy the cooperation has among other things continued work on a DCFTA, supported the Tunisian economy with olive oil import in 2016 after the 2015 terrorist attacks, worked on improving Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), financing support, and has also worked on regional development in Tunisia trough regionalization and decentralization. A cooperation on youth has also been launched and there has been cooperation on strengthening the security and migration sectors (European Commision, 2017c).

When it comes to Libya the EU will continue to work on full implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) from 2015. Even with this being signed, Libya remains unstable, the EU will therefore continue working towards the ends of stabilization with means such as support to municipalities and to

> […] mediate with the objective of bringing all Libyan actors together to find a comprehensive agreement to restore law and order, enhance the rule of law, bring the armed and security forces under civilian control, avoid financial collapse, preserve the country's unity and tackle terrorism and irregular migration. (European Commision, 2017c, p. 6)

There is extra urgency on immigration and human right as the recent conflicts has worsened these issues. The EU has deployed experts on security and counterterrorism to Libya and has cooperated with Tunisia and other neighboring countries to handle the migration flow. The EU has also deployed and funded civilian Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions in Libya. When it comes to other areas of cooperation the EU has acted in some other areas like online training to increase employability of young people in Libya. However, the other areas gain less attention in Libya compared to Tunisia. When it comes to the region in general, the EU want to continue supporting regional integration and region building (European Commision, 2017c).

When looking at the differences of how the relationship from 2015 to 2017 has developed, there is a clear distinction between the approaches to Tunisia and Libya. While the focus in the ENP relationship to Tunisia focuses on factors such as good governance, democratization, economic cooperation and assistance, and youth, but also migration and security. The report on the relations with Libya on the other hand almost exclusively seems to focus on areas related to security interests such as counterterrorism (also in Tunisia), CSDP, and migration. Still there are some other areas of interest such as human rights and online training of the youth to increase employability. These areas of cooperation are still limited especially when compared to Tunisia. Applying the Del Sarto (2016) normative empire theory works for both countries but in different ways, as it has promoted its security interests more directly in Libya and trough relations based on norms export to Tunisia for example trough exporting models of governance. This pattern also fits with the concept of Tunisia being a "model student" while Libya has generally kept out of the cooperation, as Fernández-Molina (2018) found. The 2015 review stated that future reports on the ENP will usually be done at a bilateral level (European Commision, 2015b, p. 5). The analysis will now turn to these.

5.2 Tunisia
For Tunisia, the EU has published annual reports on the action program and reports on the implementation of the revised ENP[1]. Starting off with the more general, a Joint Communication on *Strengthening EU support for Tunisia* was published in 2016. It states that the EU would need to give more effective and stronger support to Tunisia, preferably with support from EU Member states. This was required to meet the goals of democracy, security, human rights, and prosperity in the EU's neighborhood (European Commision, 2016b). The EU published the following ENP reports based on these commitments. The ENP report on 2017-2018 found that special progress had been made based on the Joint Communication with the EU on *Strengthening EU support for Tunisia*, the specifics

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[1] Documents on Tunisia are often published only in French. Since the author is not fluent in French and had to rely on google translate, it is important to note that the analysis of these documents may lack nuance.

included that municipal elections was held, new laws on elections, a law on violence against women, a new Tunisian Commission was created to deal with freedom and equality reforms, and a new strategy on public administration reforms. Still challenges when it comes to governance, democracy, and economy remained. The reforms on this need to be accelerated according to the report, both the EU and Tunisia is committed to do this trough the privileged partnership of Tunisia. Improving conditions for the youth will also stay as an important priority. The report states it will continue to work on these strategic priorities, but with a new focus on strengthening the regional dimension. The relations in this period is based on Tunisia's privileged partnership and the differentiation principle from the 2015 ENP review (European Commision, 2018b).

The ENP report on 2018-2019 states that democratic transition, economy, and youth remains the main priorities. The areas where progress had been made in this period included a law against racial discrimination. The report also found that the regional dimension of the relationship had seen progress in areas including counterterrorism, culture, and journalism. Still, continued reforms were still needed for socio-economic developments. The ENP report is related to the privileged partnership with the EU and is in line with EU's strategic priorities (European Commision, 2019b).

For the years 2018-2020 the guidelines on the EU-Tunisia Privileged Partnership is based on the document on EU-Tunisia Strategic Priorities (European Commision, 2019d). The new strategy states that its agreed between the two parts, the EU, and Tunisia that working towards socioeconomic development – including a conclusion to the DCFTA - and democracy in Tunisia should be the strategic priority. The two counties shall also strengthen their commitment to counterterrorism, security, migration, and mobility. The strategy will remain focused on increasing prospects for the youth in Tunisia. Other factors like good governance and implementation of the 2014 constitution should also stay important goals. The report states that Tunisia has remained the country who has gained the most on the "umbrella" program where countries who work on human rights and democracy gets more financial support. This is still based on the 2016 Joint Communication on *Strengthening EU support for Tunisia* (The EU-Tunisia Association Council, 2018). Here it can be seen that the EU has continued to export its own norms and laws to Tunisia based on conditionality with the umbrella program. These goals are financed by the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI). Long term the financing follows the Single Support Framework (SSF), and on an annual basis Annual Action Programs (AAP) (European Commision, 2019d). Looking at the SSF to see the long-term evolution of the program, the first one covering 2014 to 2017. Proposes 13 priorities within the areas of rule of law and democracy, cooperation in the field of migration, mobility and security, wider economic and social integration, and sustainable development. This will be done to expand the cooperation beyond free trade and borders, this commitment is based on mutual willingness. The SSF also found that the Tunisian economy was struggling and needed funding, but that the future was looking promising (European Commision, 2014b). The second SSF finds that the Tunisian economy is struggling to recover after the Arab Spring. The EU has continued with financial support for Tunisia increasing it to potentially 300 million Euros a year compared to 77 million in 2010 and a gradually increasing to 213 Million by 2016. As for the goals of the SSF it remains mostly the same as the earlier one, but with a special focus to overcome the economic problems as this is holding the rest of the country's progress back. The goals of this SSF is based on the same 2016 joint communication as referenced earlier. Youth will remain an important part of the relationship (European Commision, 2017d).

Analyzing documents on EU-Tunisia relations has shown that from 2014 the SSFs has mostly had the same goals. Since 2016 EU's goals and strategy has largely been based on the 2016 Joint Communication and its goals of democracy, security, human rights, and prosperity. There has been a focus on Tunisian youth since 2016. Special attention has been given to economic help to Tunisia as the country has been struggling with problems including lack of external financing and decentralizing the economy, but even with increased support this has remained a problem for Tunisia. In Tunisia then the EU is pursuing normative objectives. Tunisia is also the southern neighbor of the EU who has gained the most from though the "more for more" incentive based program, based on the 2014 umbrella program, where the Tunisia was granted 50 million Euros as the first country getting funds through this program. The assistance had reached 99.8 million Euros in 2018 (European Commision, 2019d). This reinforces the "good student" concept in Libya since this money is given based on working on the normative values of the EU such as democracy. Tunisia has as a result adopted more European practices.

5.3 Libya

The EU and Libya has not produced ENP reports as Tunisia has done. Instead in 2014 an AAP for Libya was published with annual reports until 2016, when documents on annual Special Measures in favor of Libya started to be published annually instead (European Commision, 2020b). Based on this the analysis on Libya will build on these annual reports. To start with the 2014 APP the proposed objectives was:

> […] to strengthen the democratic transition process and the institutions of democratic governance at both central and local levels to respond to citizens' needs, ensure respect of the rule of law, and improve delivery of public services and social protection programmes, and to improve the capacity of civil society organisations to participate in and support the democratic transition. (European Commision, 2014a)

The documents state that three components will be the basis for implementation including "Flexible support to the transition processes; Public Finance Management; [and] Local governance" (European Commision, 2014a, p. 2). The program considers *the Strategy Paper/Multi-Annual Indicative Programme Libya (2014-2015)* and its main priorities: "democratic governance, youth: active citizenship and socioeconomic integration and health" (European Commision, 2014a, p. 2). Democratic Governance would be the main objective and would be allocated the most, 45% of the budget (European Commision, 2014c). *The Strategy Paper/Multi-Annual Indicative Programme Libya (2014-2015)* further states that the EU wants to start new negotiations with Libya like the Association Agreements that already exists with other countries in the Maghreb, as soon as possible. (European Commision, 2014c).

The 2015-2016 AAP report was published as a two-part document. The document focuses firstly on health to help the worsening situation of the Libyan health sector, this trough the WHO with a two-year budget of 5 million Euros. Secondly it focuses on youth and increasing their social inclusion and resilience. This will be done with non-government actors because of the unstable situation with two governments, through UNICEF, with a budget of 3.3 million Euros (European Commision, 2015a). The second part of the document published the following year focuses on democratic governance and strengthening institutions, especially trough supporting independent media and good governance by the Deutsche Welle Akademie and public finance institutions and investment management done by the World Bank. The report was split into two part was

because the contract between the World Bank and the commission was not finalized within the deadline of the previous year. The AAP is still based on the 2014-2015 strategy. This third democratic sector would be granted 6.4 million from the EU budget (European Commision, 2016a). Here democracy remained the area with the most funding.

In 2017 the title of the document changed to *Implementing Decision on the Special Measure in favour of Libya*. The reason was the expiration of the previous 2014-2016 strategy, and as the country remained unstable the EU chose to adopt annual special measures instead of AAPs. The 2017 adaption of special measures focuses only on health, this to increase security and stability in Libya's transitional prosses to stability and peace. However, even here good governance remains a main objective. At this point the documents are not based on any program like the previous strategy (European Commision, 2017a). The same year a Joint Communique was published on Libya. This is made with the Libya quartet, consisting of the EU, the AU, the UN, and the League of Arab States, to discuss the Libyan situation. The goal was to return to ceasefire and political negotiations, which according to the European External Action Service is what the EU finds as the only solution to the ongoing civil war in Libya (European External Action Service, 2019a). The Joint Communique's themselves seems to have this as their general focus as both documents supports the democratic transition in Libya and supports the UN and their work with the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA). These reports do not specifically seem to say what the Quartet will do but instead use vaguer wording e.g. "welcomed", "expressed their willingness", and "recognized". This is the case in both the 2017 and the 2018 Joint Communique (European External Action Service, 2017b, 2018).

The 2018 document on the special measures in favor of Libya was again more comprehensive and laid out three articles. The first article was on public administration, it aimed to strengthen Libyan domestic institutions to improve stabilization and the democratization process in Libya. Three sectors would be prioritized: rule of law and justice, governance, and decentralization. The second article was private sector development, this had now replaced democracy as the sector who gained the most funding. Since Libya had a week private sector the EU would strengthen Libyan institutions especially by supporting Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs), entrepreneurship by youth and women, and private investments. The third article was capacity building of Libyan civil society organizations (CSOs), to increase their visibility and participation (European Commision, 2018a).

The most recent Commission implementing decision on Libya was published September 2019. The document calls for two actions. The first one called "Mousanda" focusses on public administration by supporting Libya in strengthening rule of law and governance. This is done to help democratization in Libya. The action will be multiannual and covers 2019 and 2020. The EU will contribute 28 million Euros to this first action. The second action was granted 4 million to support the week Libyan private sector. This will be done through giving support to private enterprises and "public-private dialogue" to connect the private sector and the public sector. Another way the program will help is to continue supporting SMEs (European Commision, 2019a).

When analyzing the relationship with Libya aspects of peace and immigration will be important, as the EU has civilian CSDP missions in the country. One mission is the Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission (EUBAM) in Libya which is part of EU's

comprehensive approach on Libya (European Commision, 2020b). The CSDP was launched in 2013 in Libya but moved to Tunis in Tunisia in 2014 and had its size reduced as Libya had become unstable due to internal conflict (European External Action Service, 2019a). EUBAM Libya was launched by the EU to assist Libya to increase its border security (The Council of the European Union, 2013). The first CSDP report was published in 2016, the report stated that with the EUBAM the EU had mostly done planning and worked with the GNA to map the security sector, this with a staff of 21 (European external Action Service, 2016). The 2017 report said they supported the GNA in border management, criminal justice, and law-enforcement, with a staff of 24. The mission had also established itself to some extent in Tripoli again (European External Action Service, 2017a). The most recently published report from 2018 said the EUBAM worked on the same as in 2017, but with a staff of 34 (European External Action Service, 2019b). In 2018 EUBAM Libya also became a "fully-fledged" mission lasting until June 2020. This entails that the EU will actively work with Libya to "disrupt organised criminal networks" (Council of the EU, 2018, para. 1). So over time the EU has committed more to the EUBAM Libya mission.

There is another mission relevant to EU-Libya relations, Operation Sophia. The Operation has now been canceled and there is a new mission, Operation IRINI, as of the 31 of March 2020 (Council of the EU, 2020). Still Operation Sophia will be relevant to see the evolution of the relationship since 2015 when it was launched to disrupt trafficking and human smuggling in the Mediterranean (The Council of the European Union, 2015). In 2016 the CSDP report found that Operation Sophia helped reduce trafficking and human smuggling (European external Action Service, 2016). The report for 2017, found that the mission did the same as last year, and led to increased security and stability both in Libya and the Mediterranean Sea (European External Action Service, 2017a). The 2018 report remained like the one from 2016, however this year the Operations saw decreased migration through the Mediterranean (European External Action Service, 2019b). Operation Sophia was cancelled in 2020 and a new Operation took its place called Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI. The operation's main task is to enforce UN's arms embargo. Still, reducing trafficking and human smuggling remains a secondary objective together with strengthening the Libyan navy and coast guard, and to monitor illegal oil export. Josep Borrell said this mission was needed as an action towards the solution of a full ceasefire and peace in EU's neighborhood (Council of the EU, 2020). Based on the document analysis done on the EU's relations with Libya and Tunisia respectively, *Table 1* has been produced to compare and showcase the difference in the relations.

Table 1

The development of EU's relations with Tunisia and Libya

Year	Tunisia	Libya
2014	Based on the 2014 SSF areas of rule of law and democracy, cooperation in the field of migration, mobility and security, wider economic and social integration, and sustainable development.	Priorities based on the multiannual strategy including: Democratic governance as the main priority, together with health, youth, active citizenship, and socioeconomic integration.
2015		
2016	2016 joint communication on security, prosperity, democracy, and human rights. There has been established a focus on Tunisian youth, and economic recovery.	In 2015 Operation Sophia was launched to disrupt trafficking and human smuggling.
2017		No longer based on the multiannual strategy, the special measure this year only focused on health. However, the 2017 ENP report committed to other areas too.
2018	2018-2020 the guidelines on the EU-Tunisia Privileged Partnership with two main strategic priorities: socioeconomic development and democracy. The document is still based on the 2016 Joint Communication.	Based on the 2018 special measures on private sector development, public administration, and civil society. The two latter had democracy as an objective.

EUBAM Libya became a fully-fledged civilian mission. |
| **2019** | | Based on the 2019 special measure that included Public administration with a goal of democracy, and support for the private sector. |
| **2020** | | Continuation of public administration with a goal of democracy.

Operation Sophia ended. Operation IRINI launched to uphold UN's arms embargo on Libya. |

Based on the documents analyzed so far it has been demonstrated that security has since 2015 been the primary focus of the ENP in general. Still the EU has stayed committed to other values in both countries including democracy and economic developments. As the ENP is based on a differential approach these countries have had different relations with the EU since they have acted differently. For Tunisia this has meant more economic support in their process on democracy and economic recovery through the umbrella program. The two countries also differ on security, as Libya has seen the adoption of annual special measures based on the countries deterring security levels. Libya does not have a privileged partnership with the EU either like Tunisia has. Therefore, it can be argued that Libya remains on the outside of the ENP compared to Tunisia. Accordingly, the primary way the EU's relations differ with the two countries is that EU is more of a normative actor in Tunisia supporting the democratic process, economic recovery, and other areas like laws on gender equality, and racism. In Libya, the EU continues to state they support the economy and democracy, the latter more as a secondary objective. The EU does not have the same long terms plans and commitments in Libya either. Rather the EU has CSDP missions in Libya with security objectives like border security and arms embargos. As mentioned earlier the normative empire concepts remains useful to explain this as the EU exports its norms to these countries, but will still prioritize their real interest directly when its needed as seen with the security focus in Libya, but also with the general ENP guidelines. The student concepts also remain relevant as Tunisia continues to follow the EU as a "model student" while Libya remains on the outside.

5.4 EU-Africa documents

To answer the sub-question of how and if von der Leyen's new Commission has had an impact on the interests and relations of EU with Tunisia and Libya, it is necessary to turn to the general EU documents on Africa. Based on the absence of any country specific documents or strategies on Tunisia and Libya since von der Leyen took office in December 2019.

The ECDSPM think-tank published in October 2019 a briefing note covering the potential of Ursula von der Leyen's "geopolitical Commission". This based on documents such as her mission letters to the College of Commissioners. Here they argued that the current situation is one that has the potential for the EU to become a genuine actor in Africa and go beyond the relationship that has often remained rhetorical and become more political as an actor. Still this would require the EU to get the member states on board with this, something the EU has struggled with in the past resulting in it not being to act with its full cohesive potential (Teevan & Sherriff, 2019). After this briefing note was published the EU released a strategy called *Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa* to lead up to the upcoming 6th Africa-EU summit in Brussels in October 2020 between Africa and the EU. To see if this document signals a change it is necessary to look at the document leading up to the previous summit in 2017 in Abidjan called *for a renewed impetus of the Africa-EU Partnership*. This document started out saying "2017 is a defining year for the partnership between Europe and Africa" (European Commision, 2017b, p. 3). The newest document starts out with "2020 will be a pivotal year in living up to our ambition of an even stronger partnership" (European Commision, 2020a, p. 1). So, the rhetoric about how important the upcoming meeting will be is not necessarily new. Still the details on what will be done can still differ.

The 2017 meeting in Abidjan that this document led up to, produced two documents relevant for this discussion on EU's relations to Libya and Tunisia. Firstly, a joint declaration called *Investing in Youth for Accelerated Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development*. Here the EU and the AU state that they will continue to cooperate within the 2007 Framework from the Lisbon treaty. The document proposed four joint strategic priority areas: "Investing in people – education, science, technology and skills development; Strengthening Resilience, Peace, Security and Governance; Migration and mobility[; and] Mobilizing Investments for African structural sustainable transformation" (AU-EU, 2017, p. 4). The EU's new 2020 strategy proposes five partnerships with Africa: "A partnership for green transition and energy access; A partnership for digital transformation; A partnership for sustainable growth and jobs; A partnership for peace and governance; and A partnership on migration and mobility" (European Commision, 2020a). Some of the areas stayed the same from 2017, including the focus on migration and mobility, and on peace and governance. The priorities that has clearly changed, is the added focus on a fifth area: green transition and energy access. Climate is an area where the new commission has aimed to take a bolder and more ambitious role. Another area where this is the case is on digitalization, where the new Commission want EU to become a leader (Medinilla & Teevan, 2020). As the EU aims to "Partner with Africa to boost the continent's digital transformation" (European Commision, 2020a, p. 5). Using the constructivist "student" concept this could be more likely to be implemented in Tunisia than in Libya as Tunisia has taken the role as a "model student" in its previous relations with the EU.

Secondly, a *Joint statement on the migrant situation in Libya* was developed from the 2017 EU-AU summit. This was a declaration that condemned criminal action against African refugees and immigrants in Libya. The two partners declared that they would immediately work on stopping these criminal actions. The EU and the AU would be supporting the side of the GNA's and the Presidential Council in the Libyan conflict. The EU and Africa wanted to support this on an international level with instruments that included freezing assets, and police and judicial cooperation. To find a solution to the root cause of the problem, this trough a political solution. Important actors in this process included the EU, the AU, the UN, and the League of Arab States (European Council, 2017). The new 2020 strategy also mentioned this when it explicitly uses Libya as an example "In order to achieve our objectives, summits and high-level diplomacy will notably focus on developing strategies and concrete steps to help solve crises in, for example, Libya […]" (European Commision, 2020a, p. 11). This is related to the sixth proposed action of the strategy that proposes that the EU and Africa partners up to "adapt and deepen EU support to African peace efforts through a more structured and strategic form of cooperation, with a particular focus on regions where vulnerabilities are the highest" (European Commision, 2020a, p. 18). The UN also remains an important actor as it did in 2017. Another aspect of the report that is relevant for Libya is irregular migration and loss of life at sea. The strategy suggests actions to strengthen the engagement to prevent this (European Commision, 2020a) No area is specifically referenced here but this applies to Libya as it is one of the areas targeted to stop the irregular migration flow in the Mediterranean. The migration situation in Libya could also worsen because of the ongoing Corona pandemic according to the EU asylum agency (Baczynska, 2020).

In regards to how the EU-Africa documents were produced, the most recent general document on the EU-Africa *Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa* published the 9th of March 2020 says the strategy is following the priorities from the EU-AU meeting in

Abidjan in 2017, and is inspired by what the strategy calls a "very fruitful" discussion by the EU-AU Commissions earlier this year in Addis Ababa. The report states that "The AU-EU Heads of State and Government summits and ministerial meetings will provide political steering to EU cooperation with Africa" (European Commision, 2020a, p. 16). The way this strategy was produced consequently points towards an increasing symmetry in the relationship as African actors has been included in the process of developing the strategy. The strategy also states that "our partnership should be based on a clear understanding of our respective and mutual interests and responsibilities, reflecting the comprehensiveness and maturity of our relationship" (European Commision, 2020a, p. 1). The strategy then goes on to make a list of all these interests (European Commision, 2020a). The focus on the both continents interests, signals a willingness to move towards a symmetric relationship. However, this has been seen in the rhetoric of the EU since 2007 but not much has happened (Teevan & Sherriff, 2019). And from the perspective of the normative empire theory this might just be a way for the EU to exert its asymmetric power by using a normative rhetoric while working towards maximizing its own utility (Del Sarto, 2016). If the rhetoric implies an actual change in the relationship is too early to tell since this is just the strategy leading up to the summit and has not yet led to the EU committing to anything. Still the development of this document did include Africa more in the development process compared to the strategy leading up to the 2017 meeting. As the EU developed their own strategic objectives, based on the EU's global strategy and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy from 2007, and considering the Africa's Agenda 2063 (European Commision, 2017b). While in the 2020 one the priorities were in line with a recent discussion with the AU and might therefore indicate a more symmetrical process. Another aspect relevant to Tunisia who has an Association Agreement with the EU the new 2020 strategy should also be coherent with the Association Agreements with North Africa (European Commision, 2020a). This does not matter for Libya as they still have not agreed on one (European Commision, 2020b). The ECDSPM think tank published a discussion paper which found that the current EU-Africa relation calls for one that is more heavily based on the interests of the two partners. For this to work the two parts must negotiate compromises that works in the interests of both parts (Medinilla & Teevan, 2020). The increased cooperation on developing the strategy could then point towards a realization of these objective.

6. Discussion

After analyzing the EU's relationship with the two neighbor countries in general, it is evident that since the Arab Spring, democracy has become less prioritized, and security has replaced it as the main priority of the EU in the ENP. Initially, the EU was committed to normative values like democracy during the Arab Spring, then as shown earlier with the 2015 ENP review, the EU turned their focus towards security, and now the new Commission is starting to focus on geopolitics (Medinilla & Teevan, 2020). The European Parliament Think Tank found that what the new "geopolitical Commission" implies is "[…] a political agenda in which reinforcing the EU's role as a relevant international actor, and trying to shape a better global order through reinforcing multilateralism, is to become a key priority ('A stronger Europe in the world')" (Bassot, 2020, p. 1). However, the EU has met difficulties realizing this, something the discussion will come back to.

As this thesis focuses on Libya and Tunisia relations it will now turn to these countries, respectively. As the overall focus of the ENP turned towards security, another concept became important in EU's relations with its neighbors - differentiation. Differentiation means that the EU would work with partners individually and based on the commitment

of each country. Tunisia has continued working on strengthening its democratic transition, through its privileged partnership with the EU, and as a result has Tunisia gained extra financial support from the EU through an incentive-based umbrella program. Democracy has remained a goal in Libya too, but is currently more of a secondary goal, under the EU support on strengthening Libya's public administration. Another area where the EU's relations with the two countries is similar is that the EU assists the countries in strengthening their economies, especially the weaker private sector. Both countries cooperate with the EU on security, however this is more evident in Libya, as the EU now has CSPD missions in Libya to increase border security and uphold UN's arms embargo (Council of the EU, 2020). Contrarily, the focus of EU-Tunisia cooperation is on normative areas such as the implantation of laws on violence against women and against racism. The main difference between the EU's relations with the two neighbors is that the relations with Libya focus more directly on security, while the relations with Tunisia are less security based and more normative. Still EU's relations with both countries include both normative, and security and stability aspects.

When it comes to the question of whether von der Leyen's new commission and their pivotal year in Africa relations has had an impact on the EU's relationship with the two countries respectively, this differs for each country. As Tunisia has been viewed as a "model student" of the EU, it might be expected that Tunisia will follow closely the new goals of the Commission including digitalization and green transition. Still there is no empirical evidence that this has happened yet, as no country specific documents have been published after the new Commission took office. Based on Libya's history of not adopting EU practices like Tunisia has, and Libya not being a "model student" of the ENP, this implementation could be less likely there. Furthermore, the "geopolitical Commission" can be seen struggling, as other actors (namely Russia and Turkey) have taken the lead on the ground in Libya (Jégo, Vitkine, & Bobin, 2020; Medinilla & Teevan, 2020). This is not promising for the "geopolitical Commission", another area where the Commission's geopolitical aspiration is running in to problems, is with Operation IRINI. The Operation was launched by the EU to uphold UN's arms embargo on Libya, replacing the previous Operation Sophia. Operation IRIN has already run into problems. Malta has pulled out of the mission in protest of what they see as a failure on the side of EU to handle the situation with immigrants from Libya, Malta will also use veto where they can to hinder Operation IRINI (Scicluna & Emmott, 2020). As of now, the new Commission has not had a big impact on either country. However, based on Tunisia's history with close cooperation with EU and the constructivist "student" concept, it is more likely they will continue work with the new Commission's ambitions.

The concept of the EU as a normative empire remains helpful to explain its relations with the two neighbors, as normative values are present in the EU documents on both Tunisia and Libya. The focus on security interests over values such as democracy in Libya and not in Tunisia is an area the normative empire concept explains well. This as economic gains, stability, and security are the main interest the imperial Europe would have in its periphery. Therefor the EU chooses to prioritize these over the normative values, that it usually uses as it is a cost-efficient way for Europe to reach its own interests (Del Sarto, 2016). This then explains an aspect of the EU's external relations that realist or constructivist theories would have problems explaining alone as the EU's security relations with Libya seems to have become more realist and security based and the normative relations with Tunisia better fits a constructivist theory. One aspect of the normative empire theory was not covered in depth this thesis - the EU's supposed economic gains from exporting norms and practices to its periphery. The economic

aspect is therefore something future research could investigate further to test the explanatory power of the normative empire theory. A change that could weaken the normative empire theory is that the EU now might be turning towards more compromises on interest, and symmetry in developing the EU-AU relationship. If this is the case and the EU starts to compromise on interests with Africa, this might imply that the relationship is no longer as strongly based on the EU's interests and practices, and might therefore reduce the explanatory power of the EU as a normative empire.

7. Conclusion

This thesis completed a comparative document analysis of the EU's relationship with Tunisia and Libya and had several interesting findings. Firstly, it found that the EU's relationship with the two neighbor countries has shifted since 2014, with its focus being less on promoting democracy between the two countries. Since the 2015 ENP review the EU has focus on security in the ENP, and now von der Leyen's "geopolitical Commission" lead to another shift towards geopolitics and a reinforced cooperation with Africa, at least in rhetoric. Following this, the new commission might also be moving towards more symmetry in their relations with the AU, as producing the most recent EU strategy with Africa was done in a more symmetrical way than in the past. When it comes to the differences between the EU's relations with the two neighbors, it is evident that a normative relationship continues, still with a focus on democracy and economic recovery for Tunisia. These aspects have been present in the EU's relations with Libya but have been subordinate to stability and security interests - as seen with the increasing focus on CSDP missions in the country. Both the EU's relations with Tunisia and Libya fit within the normative empire theory, which combines realist and constructivist assumptions. A move towards asymmetry in the EU's relations with Africa could however reduce the explanatory power of the normative empire theory. This thesis has not been able to confirm that the EU still maximizes its own economic interests by exporting norms to its periphery, and future research could investigate this. Another aspect of the theory that future research could investigate, is to include other countries, to see how the EU's relations with these countries differ from the one with Tunisia and Libya and if this would weaken or strengthen the normative empire concept. Although the inclusion of Tunisia and Libya's points of view was outside the scope of this thesis, this thesis has started to gain a stronger theoretical and empirical understanding of the EU's relationships with countries in its neighborhood.

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