

Another hidden relationship

# The UK and Libya

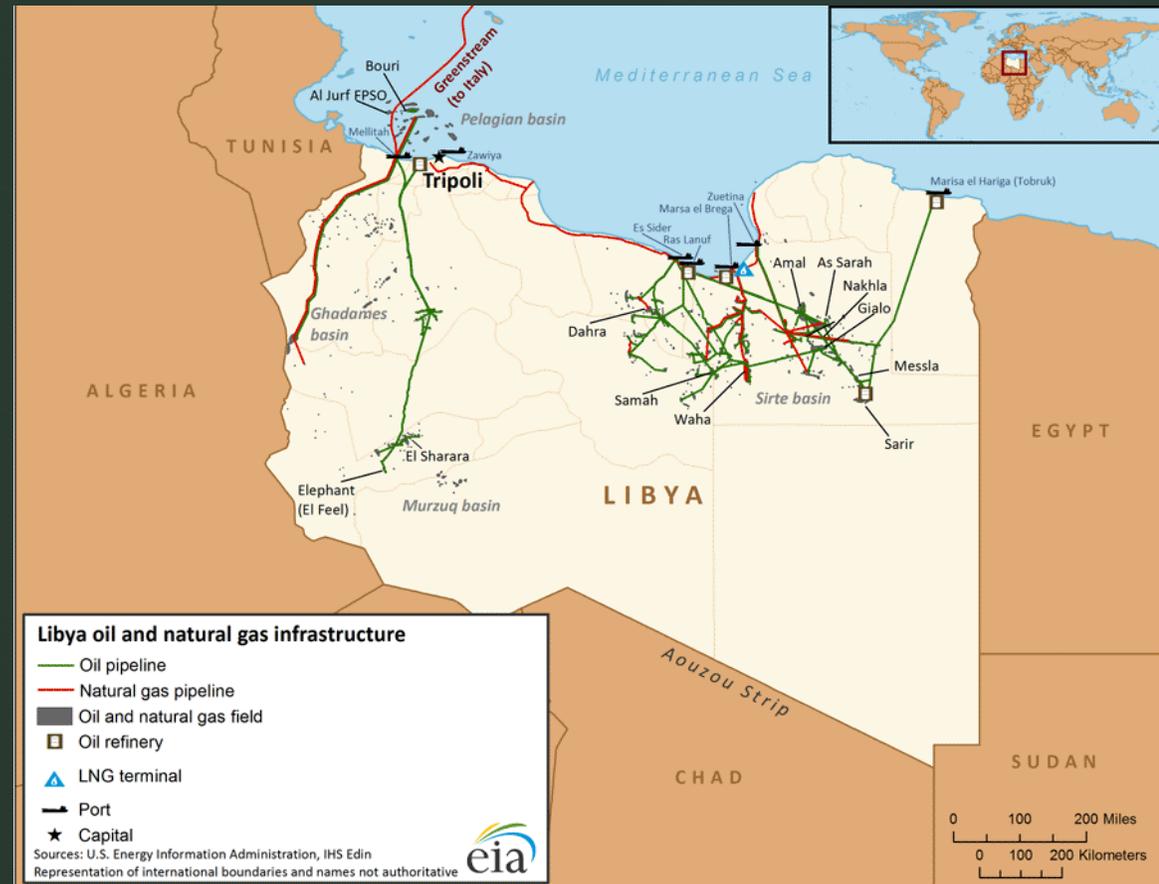


- Libya has a long history of UK involvement, since Allied forces replaced Italian rule in 1942 and divided Libyan territory between the French and the British



# 1961 pipeline assuring Libyan oil exports

- Since its independence in 1951, Libya has remained a key site of global oil production. The construction in 1961 of a 104-mile long pipeline linked oil fields in the interior to the Mediterranean sea, assuring Libya's position as a major oil exporter.



1969 coup leads to  
nationalisation of the oil  
industry



In 1969, Muammar Gaddafi becomes leader in a military coup and pursues a pan-Arabist and state socialist agenda. This includes nationalisation of the oil industry.

## The shooting of Yvonne Fletcher and the Lockerbie bombing

- The two incidents that have the greatest impact on UK popular opinion in relation to Libya are the shooting of WPC Yvonne Fletcher in 1984 and the Lockerbie bombing in 1988. Policewoman Yvonne Fletcher is shot dead outside the Libyan embassy while policing an anti-Gaddafi protest. It is believed that she was shot from inside the embassy and that her killer escaped under cover of diplomatic immunity. The killing of a British police officer while on duty had a huge impact on UK society and raised wider questions about embassy staff and their status on UK soil.





In December 1988, an airliner was blown up over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, allegedly by Libyan agents. This matter has been shrouded in controversy and has been a matter of ongoing international tension. Formal diplomatic links between the UK and Libya effectively cease from this time until 2003. In August 2003, after extensive negotiations, Libya takes responsibility for the bombing in a letter to the UN Security Council and also agrees a \$2.7 billion compensation package for the families of victims.

## Blair meets with Gaddafi, 2004



Following this, then British Prime Minister Tony Blair visits Libya and meets with Gaddafi in March 2004. In this period of renewed diplomatic relations between Libya and Europe, Libya is seen as a key partner in halting migration into Europe from the south and the European Union signs an agreement with Libya in 2010 that is designed to slow illegal immigration.

# GADDAFI REGIME OVERTHROWN

These efforts come under threat when violent protests against the regime begin in Benghazi in February 2011 and quickly spread to other cities, inspired by the Arab Spring. Gaddafi is captured and killed in October 2011 and an election is announced to take place within eight months.



## ▶ Migrant workers forced to flee Libya

However, despite the election in October 2012 of Ali Zeidan, a liberal and leading opposition envoy during the civil war, to the post of prime minister, Libya has continued to be wracked by violence. In July 2014, UN staff pull out and embassies close, with many foreigners evacuated in response to the deteriorating security situation. Migrant workers were less fortunate in evacuation routes and many joined the flow of irregular migration to Europe by dangerous routes.

## Libya warehousing migrants for Europe

Whereas during the Gaddafi era, migrants from Asia and other parts of Africa came to Libya for work, now those groups are very vulnerable and have joined the many displaced people trying to reach safety across the region. In response the European Union is pursuing further cooperation with Libya in its anti-smuggling naval mission, with a focus on halting migration. Amnesty International has denounced these plans as encouraging the abuse of migrants (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/06/eu-risks-fuelling-horrific-abuse-of-refugees-and-migrants-in-libya/>).

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