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LIBYA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS, 1969-1986

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LIBYA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS, 1969-1986

by

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**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Master of Science
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Dedication

To my parents,
my children Rami, Riham and Routage, my wife,
my brothers and sisters,

and
in loving memory of my brother,
Mabrouk



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In the process of completing this thesis, I have been fortunate to receive numerous invaluable assistance from many peoples and institutions. I regret that I am only able to mention a handful and whose help have been particularly prominent.

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However, the sole responsibility for the final outcome and account of this thesis remains mine alone.



TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF PLATE .	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
ABSTRACT	x
ABSTRAK	xii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
1 1 Opening Remarks	1
1 2 Research Questions / Objectives	2
1 3 Scope and Importance of Study	4
1 4 Methodology	7
1 5 Theoretical Assumptions	8
1 6 Literature Review	13
1 7 Organisation of the Study	22
II COUNTRY BACKGROUND	23
2 1 Geography	23
2 2 Libyan History in Brief	26
2 2 1 Pre-historic Period	26
2 2 2 The Phoenicians	27
2 2 3 The Greeks	27
2 2 4 The Roman Invasion	28
2 2 5 The Ottoman Empire	31
2 2 6 Italian Colonization	33
2 2 7 The French-British Administration	35
2 3 Post-1969 Political Government	39
2 3 1 The Revolutionary Command Council	39
2 3 2 The Constitutional Declaration	40
2 3 3 Libyan Arab Socialist Union	41
2 3 4 People's Committees	42
2 3 5 People's Authority	44
2 4 Conclusion	48
III LIBYA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS I: 1951-1969	50
3 1 Introduction The Historical Origin	50
The Eton Plan	51
3 2 The Pre-Independence Period	53
3 3 The Post-Independence Period	57
3 3 1 Premier Mustafa Bin Haleem, 1954 – 1957	57
3 3 2 Libya-U S Relations and the Eisenhower Doctrine	59
3 3 3 Premier Abdul Majeed Ka'abar, 1957 – 1963	61
3 4 Implementation of U S Aids	62
3 5 Libyan-U S Relations, 1964-1969	63
3 6 Conclusion	66



IV	LIBYA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS II: 1969-1986	69
4 1	Introduction	69
4 2	Libyan Policy towards the Arab-Israel conflict	70
4 3	Libya Oil Policy	72
4 4	Libya's foreign policy toward the U S	76
4 5	Libya's Foreign Policy toward the Soviet Union	85
4 6	Libya's Foreign Policy in the African Continent	91
4 6 1	The Aims of Libyan Policy in Africa	92
4 6 1 1	Physical and Monetary Assistance	94
4 6 1 2	Loans	94
4 6 1 3	Participation in Economic Projects	94
4 6 1 4	Bilateral Agreements	95
4 7	Conclusion	97
V	UNITED STATES-LIBYA RELATIONS, 1969-1986	100
5 1	Introduction	100
5 2	Petroleum	100
5 3	Israel	103
5 4	The Soviet Union	104
5 5	The Stability of Friendly Arab Countries	106
5 6	U S Policy toward Libya (1969 – 1986)	107
5 6 1	Political Measures	114
5 6 2	Economic Measures	116
5 6 3	Military Measures	119
5 7	Conclusion	124
VI	IMPORTANT FACTORS IN LIBYA—UNITED STATES RELATIONS, 1969—1986	126
6 1	Introduction	126
6 2	Terrorism	127
6 2 1	General Concepts of Terrorism and Aggression	127
6 2 2	Concept of State Terrorism	131
6 2 3	The American concept of Terrorism	132
6 2 4	The Libyan concept of terrorism	134
6 2 5	Impact of Terrorism on Libya-U S Relations	137
6 3	Media Factor	140
6 4	The Personality Factor	145
6 4 1	The U S President's Men	145
6 4 2	The Libyan Leadership	148
6 5	Conclusion	149
VII	CONCLUSION	152
7 1	Preamble	152
7 2	Summary of Main Findings	152
7 3	Recommendations for Future Studies	157
7 4	Future Prospects in Libya-United States Relations	159
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	162
	APPENDIX A	165
	APPENDIX B	166
	APPENDIX C	167
	VITA	168



LIST OF TABLES

Table		
4 1	Libya-U S Trade	78
4 2	Libyan's Export to Selected Countries	88
4 3	Libya's Import from Selected Countries	89
4 4	Libya-USSR Trade	89
5 1	U S Oil Trade	102
5 2	U S Foreign Investment	102
5 3	U S Oil Imports from the Middle East	102
5 4	U S Foreign Military Assistance	104
5 5	Principal US Exports to Libya	110
5 6	US-Libya Trade, 1977-1980	112
5 7	US-Libya Trade, 1981-82	117



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		
1.1	The Process of Foreign Policy Making, 1969-1977	10
1.2	The Process of Foreign Policy Making, 1977-1986	11
2.1	Location of Libya	24
2.2	Map of Libya	25
2.3	Map of the Roman Expansion in Libya	30
2.4A	Structure of the Authority of the People	45
2.4B	Structure of the Authority of the People	46
3.1	Training Path of the American Military Aircraft	56
7.1	Complex Image of Libya-U.S. Relations, 1969-1986	153



LIST OF PLATE

Plate	
2.1	Portrait of Omar Al-Mukhtar: the National Hero of Libya36



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIPEC	Israeli Lobby group
AWAC	Radar Surveillance Plane
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (of the US)
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OAU	Organisation of African Union
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council
RDF	Rapid Deployment Force
SALT II	Strategic Arms Limitation Talk II
SAM	Surface-to-air missile
Sismi	Italian Military Intelligence Services
SWAPO	South West Africa Peoples' Organisation
US	United States
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union



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LIBYA-UNITED STATES RELATION, 1969—1986

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December 1999

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This thesis examines Libya-United States Relations from 1969 until 1986. The period between the September 1969 Revolution and 1986 saw an important development in the relationship between the two countries. The September Revolution marked a shift in the pattern of Libya-United States relations as Libya took a more independent approach to conducting its domestic affairs and establishing foreign relations not only with the United States, but with other countries as well. It was this shift in Libyan domestic and foreign policies that set a new trend in its relations with the United States.

This study was based on a historical approach and the re-examination of secondary documents such as books, newspaper clippings, official publications and my own experience as a foreign affairs officer. The study discovered several important developments and factors that shaped Libya-United States Relation between 1969—1986.

Firstly, relations between Libya and the United States deteriorated especially after the September 1969 Revolution when the leadership of the former passed over to Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, a military personnel, who brought in his personal style of leadership that was backed by popular Libyan support. Qadhafi's attempt to construct a new and truly independent Libya and make the country a key international player in the region were strongly met with resistance, especially



from the United States which had grown use to its increasingly dominant role in the region and which had also gone unchallenged.

Secondly, Libya's firm stand on its national independence and its actions to remove foreign influences and domination triggered the start of a sour relation with the United States. This turn of relation was not augmented by the fact that Libya was also a strong proponent of the Arab nationalism and its undivided support for pan-African nationalism. As Libya's began to take a more dominant role in the region, the country was becoming increasingly viewed in negative light. United States' perception of Libya was beginning to be couched in terms such as "terrorists" or "sponsors" of terrorism on the international scale.

Thirdly, the deterioration in the bilateral relations between the two countries was manifested by the trade volumes that plummeted especially in the post-1969 period. Before this period, relations between the two had been marked by friendly relations and was demonstrated by the presence of not only the American military personnel but also of a sizeable American business community, especially in Tripoli.

Fourthly, the deteriorating relations between the two countries were attributed to several factors such as the American perception of Libya as a state that supported terrorists and terrorist acts and Libya's negative image that was being perpetrated by the western media and prominent personalities that were close to the American leadership.

Lastly, this study ended in 1986 because this period represented the lowest ebb in Libya-United States relations. By this period, there was no formal relation as both countries withdrew diplomatic representations in each other's capital. Signs of better relations only seem to have resurfaced in the late 1990s. However, the extent to which this might develop further to benefit the peoples of the two countries remains to be seen. But this contemporary development in the Libya-United States relations is not within the scope of this study.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
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HUBUNGAN LIBYA-AMERIKA SYARIKAT, 1969—1986

Oleh

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Tesis ini mengkaji hubungan di antara Libya dan Amerika Syarikat di antara 1969 dan 1986. Tempoh yang bermula dengan 1969, semasa revolusi September 1969 sehingga 1986 menyaksikan perubahan penting dalam hubungan di antara kedua-dua negara. Sejak 1969 hubungan di antara Libya dengan Amerika Syarikat mulai berubah kerana mulai dari tarikh itu Libya mula menyusun semula hal-hal dalaman dan luarannya berdasarkan prinsip kebebasan dan kedaulatan sepenuhnya. Justeru itu, hubungan dengan negara-negara luar mula dilihat dan diatur semula termasuk dengan Amerika Syarikat.

Kajian ini telah dijalankan menggunakan kaedah persejarahan dan pengajian bahan-bahan sekunder seperti buku, tesis, suratkhbar dan penerbitan rasmi dan juga pengalaman sendiri sebagai pegawai diplomatik Libya. Kajian ini telah menjumpai beberapa trend dalam hubungan Libya-Amerika Syarikat dan juga beberapa faktor yang mempengaruhi hubungan tersebut.

Pertama, hubungan di antara Libya dengan Amerika Syarikat mula menjadi buruk selepas Revolusi September 1969. Ini adalah semasa kenaikan kepimpinan Kol. Muammar Qadhafi, seorang askar yang membawa cara gaya tersendiri yang mendapat sokongan rakyat jelata dalam mentadbir Libya. Usaha Kol. Qadhafi untuk menegakkan kebebasan dan kedaulatan sebenar Libya dan menjadikan negara tersebut sebagai pemain utama di arena politik antara bangsa, khususnya di Asia Tenggara dan Afrika, telah melahirkan tentangan terhadapnya. Tentangan ini

datang khasnya dari Amerika Syarikat yang sudah selesa dengan peranannya di kawasan-kawasan tersebut.

Kedua, usaha Libya untuk menegakkan kebebasan dan kedaulatannya melalui penyekatan pengaruh kuasa-kuasa asing mencetuskan hubungan tidak baik dengan Amerika Syarikat. Usaha ini bertambah meruncingkan hubungan apabila Libya juga menyokong kuat nasionalisme Arab dan gerakan nasionalisme di benua Afrika. Justeru itu, kemaraan Libya dalam arena politik dilihat dalam perspektif negatif oleh Amerika Syarikat dan Libya mula mendapat panggilan-panggilan seperti “pengganas” dan “penaja” pengganasan di peringkat antara bangsa.

Ketiga, hubungan tidak baik di antara kedua-dua negara ini dapat dilihat dari pelbagai perspektif seperti volum perdagangan yang menurun selepas 1969. Sebelum ini, hubungan di antara kedua-dua negara adalah baik. Ini dapat dilihat bukan sahaja dari kehadiran pegawai-pegawai ketenteraan Amerika tetapi juga kewujudan suatu komuniti pedagang Amerika di Tripoli.

Keempat, kajian ini jelas menunjukkan bahawa hubungan tidak baik di antara kedua-dua negara ini dapat dikaitkan dengan beberapa faktor seperti persepsi Amerika terhadap Libya sebagai negeri pengganas dan penaja pengganasan, pengaruh media barat yang menampilkan Libya dalam persepektif yang negatif dan personaliti-personaliti yang membantu menggambarkan Libya seperti yang ditampilkan oleh media barat.

Akhir sekali, kajian ini adalah sehingga 1986. Tahun ini merupakan titik penting kerana hubungan yang ada di antara Libya dengan Amerika Syarikat terputus atau terhenti pada tahun ini. Perwakilan, suatu indikator yang menunjukkan adanya hubungan di antara dua negara, ditarik balik oleh Amerika Syarikat dari Libya dan begitu sebaliknya. Harapan untuk mengwujudkan hubungan di antara kedua-dua negara ini mula lahir pada akhir 1990s. Pelbagai perkembangan positif di Libya dan di arena antara bangsa telah berlaku yang dapat membantu perkembangan hubungan Libya-Amerika Syarikat. Namun, apa yang akan berlaku dan corak apa yang akan muncul dalam hubungan itu sukar hendak diramalkan buat masa ini. Walau bagaimanapun, skop itu adalah diluar bidang kajian ini.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Opening Remarks

The study of relations between countries can reveal more than just what had transpired between countries engaged in a relationship. A relationship of one sovereign country with another is not only shaped by the former's national characters and interests,¹ but is also influenced by the perceptions the former has of the other sovereign nations that it is engaged in a relationship with.

It is clear that relationships that cut across certain divide—e.g. democratic and non-democratic, Islamic-non-Islamic, east-west, north-south, or developed-developing, etc.—appear to be courting more unstable relations. But on the other hand, relationships forged within the divide also have not been as smooth and stable as they had been generally expected. Relationships between sovereign

¹ See for examples, Daniel S. Papp. 1994. Contemporary International Relations: Framework for Understanding. 4th ed. New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company especially Parts One, Two and Three; and James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. 1996. Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey. 4th ed. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.



nations have produced various dimensions of relationship and they certainly have been forged across all divides.

The study of relationship between two sovereign nations will reveal both nations' national characters and national and international interests and agendas. It is inevitable that in a close bilateral relationship between two sovereign nations, both nations' characters, national or international interests or agendas will converge. Alternatively, a relations marked by hostility will reveal a divergence of not only characters, but conflicting national and international interests and agendas as well.

It is in those lights that the study of Libya-United States relationship is conceived. It is an attempt to understand what makes Libya and the United States tick and how their national characters, and national or international interests and agendas have pitted both countries against one another.

1.2 Research Questions / Objectives

Comprehensive studies of Libya's foreign relations in general, and on Libya-United States relations in particular, have generally been lacking. There are therefore many questions that remained unclear and need to be answered. In general, these covered a range of foreign policy alternatives that Libya has practiced, both before and after independence. In particular, the important questions are:

1. What are Libya's foreign policies?
2. How are they formulated?
3. What national interests dictate Libya's foreign policies?

4. How have its foreign policies changed over the years under the different leadership? And Why?

These are some of the main questions that this study sought to answer as a background to the study of Libya–United States Relations, 1969–1986. Answers to these questions would provide the rationale for Libya’s foreign policy option in general and the factors that shaped its relations with the United States in particular.

However, more specifically, this study will attempt to answer foreign policy questions specifically in relations to the United States. In this respect, some important questions that will be addressed are as follows:

1. What is the origin of Libya-United States relations?
2. How does the Libya-United States Wars, 1801-5, effect the relationship between the two countries?
3. What precisely are Libya foreign policies towards the United States?
4. What are the motivations for Libya’s foreign policy towards the United States?
5. How have Libya benefited from its relationships with the United States?
6. What is the future of Libya-United States relations?

As a relation is a two-way process, it is also important to understand the United States’ side to the Libya-United States relationship. Some of the questions that need to be answered are as follows:

1. What is the United States’ foreign policy towards Libya?
2. How does the United States’ foreign policy objectives in the Middle East and Africa affect its relations with Libya?

3. How does the “oil factor” feature in establishing the United States policy in the Middle East and Africa vis-a-vis Libya?
4. How does the Israel factor help shape United State’s foreign policy in the Arab region, and how does this effect Libya?
5. How does the United States Policy towards its friendly regimes affect its relations with Libya?

This study is also concerned with three main factors that have been important in shaping the relations between Libya and the United States. They are namely, the terrorism and its perception in Libya and in the United States, the media and its role in shaping Libya’ perception towards the United States and vice-versa, and important personalities that influence the United States foreign policies towards Libya and vice-versa.

Having stated clearly the research questions that this study sought to answer, it is therefore appropriate to now turn to the next question that will be elaborated in the next section: What is the importance of knowing the answers to all the above questions?

1.3 Scope and Importance of Study

The period of Libya-United States Relations under study is between 1969 to 1986. The year 1969 saw an important beginning because it marked the launching of the Constitutional Declaration by the Revolutionary Command Council under the leadership of Colonel Muammar Qadhafi. The Declaration made on 11 December 1969 sought to liberate the nation from dependency on foreign power, especially in term of its national economy.

The Declaration transformed Libya into a modern state that was then conscious of the need to establish its independence and self-determination. The post-1969 period was therefore a dynamic one. The first immediate departure taken by the Revolutionary Command Council was to get rid of foreign military bases in the country. Naturally, this evoked intense opposition, especially from the United States which had a past history of relations with Libya that had extended well into its past. The exertion of Libya's independence did not end there. It also took steps to ensure its economic independence as well. As the United States was the main foreign power that had banked on its Libya's relation to achieve its Middle East and African objectives and strategic advantages, it was also the country that was worse hit by the change of Libya's attitude and foreign policy.

In the post-1969 period, the newly independent Libya was also becoming internationally known. Much of what were fed to the world media came from Western sources that painted Libya as the terrorist-sponsoring state. This image continues to dog the country that was somehow linked to the tragic Pan-AM bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland in the mid-1980s.

The choice to study Libya's foreign relations with that of the United States is natural. The latter is the main foreign power that had established relations with Libya that dated back to several previous governments and periods. In fact, by the late 1960s relations between the two countries had been firmly established. Libya by then had played host to several U.S. military installations and American oil companies were among the major players for the Libyan oil.

However, the firm relation between Libya and the United States took a turn for the worse by the early 1970s. From then on, it was clear that both countries were pursuing policies that were antagonistic to each other. But for the major part, most explanations that came out from the Western media have painted Libya in a bad light—i.e. the aggressors or the terrorist-sponsoring state. Based on this concern, this study seeks to understand and present a balance picture of the Libya-United States relation. There have been some patchy works on Libya, cited in later part of this study, but they did not present the whole picture as each had been devoted to a specific event. In that aspect, this work will be a pioneering attempt at a comprehensive understanding of Libya's foreign policy in the context of its relations with the United States, in particular. At best, these works on Libya have been mainly descriptive and lacking in detailed analysis. Hence, there is still an unclear picture of the puzzle that constitutes the Libya-United States relations between 1969-1986.

This study is importance for several reasons. Firstly, this study is the first academic attempt to examine Libya-United States relations in the post 1969-period. Secondly, this study is focused on an important period in Libya-United States relations and that is between 1969 and 1986 when major developments in the relations between the two countries took place. Thirdly, Libya-United States relation mirrors potentials and drawbacks in bilateral relation between two disparate countries—that is, one a small power (e.g. Libya) and the other a world superpower (e.g. the United States).

Having outlined the study, its scope and importance, the next section focused on how the study was carried out.



1.4 Methodology

There is a general lack of sources for the study on Libya and especially on Libya-United States relations. Where published documents are available, they are generally narrative and descriptive in nature. Most lack the in-depth analysis. In view of this, this study will make every attempt to avail itself to the following lists of sources:

1.4.1 Official documents

Where available, attempts have been made to procure official documents relating to the relationship between Libya and United States. This may be in the form of treatises, communiqués and correspondences between officials of the two countries.

1.4.2 Newspapers and other reports

This constituted another major source, but they were discreetly used in order not to be unduly bias and persuaded by argument presented by certain papers and news agencies which may have their own agenda in so presenting their news coverage. To overcome this bias, effort will be made, whenever possible, to present coverage of the same event from different sources.

1.4.3 Publications

Published documents in the forms of studies such as books, theses and articles in journals were also consulted. There were not many of these sources, and where they were available, they tended to merely provide a

general overview of the country, piece meal publications on specific events such as the Lockerbie incident. For most parts, they were not based on in-depth studies.

For the major part, the main methodological approach of this study is historical and the analysis was based mainly on primary and secondary data and documents. For the major part, this study will rely heavily on secondary documents and where available, on certain original historical documents pertaining to relations between Libya and the United States. Particular attention was paid to the examination of these historical documents in an effort to come up with a comprehensive picture of and explanations for the relations between Libya and the United States. There are, however, certain disadvantages with this approach, but with the limited access to and the general paucity of documents and written works on Libya, the choice of this approach is still a better choice and most practical to reasonably accomplish the task set out in the study.

1.5 Theoretical Assumptions

The main theoretical assumption guiding this study is that the state and pattern of relations between any two given nations-state is shaped by both nations' domestic political and socioeconomic matrix as they are projected either by popular mode as in a democratic nation-state or as they are interpreted by the ruling elite as in a military-type nation-state.²

² Daniel S. Papp, 1994, especially Chapter 2.

In either nation, foreign policy is therefore a projection of the national character and national and international interest and agenda of that particular nation-state. Hence, in order to understand any given pattern of foreign relations forge between two nation-states, it is a prerequisite that an understanding of the national character and national and international interests of nation-states be first fully understood.

Relations between two nation-states therefore can be gauged through inter-national transaction between two nation-states. This can be deduced from several indications such as trade relations, student exchange, and political positions taken in respect of international issues that crop up from time to time. The study of Libya-United States Relations examined these variables as indication of the fluctuation of relations between the two countries. These fluctuations in turn were explained by the state of the national character and national and international interests of both nations over a given period.

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 briefly describe how Libyan foreign policies are made and these are consistent with the above theoretical assumptions. The first Figure showed how and what parties were involved, directly and indirectly, in the formulation process. Before 1977, diagram 1.1 showed that the process by which these foreign policies were made. The Revolutionary Command Council, which took over the government, formulated them based on their perception of the peoples. These policies, having being decided by the RCC, were then deliberated by the Arab Socialist Union whose endorsement were also important in the process of governing. Having passed these two stages, the policies were then accepted as the government policies and enacted by the relevant ministry or agency. Within the

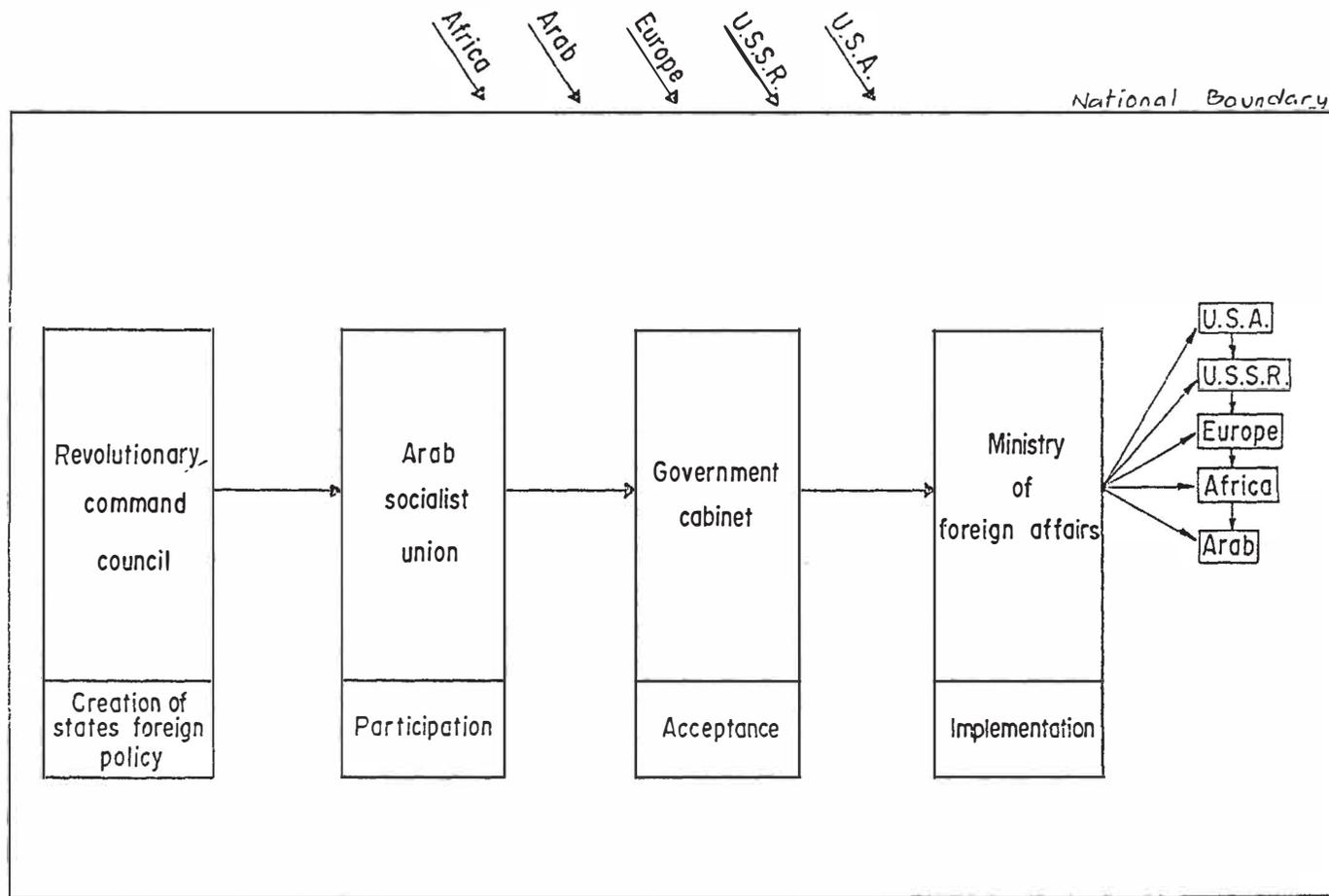


Figure 1.1 The Process of Foreign Policy Making, /1969 - 1977/

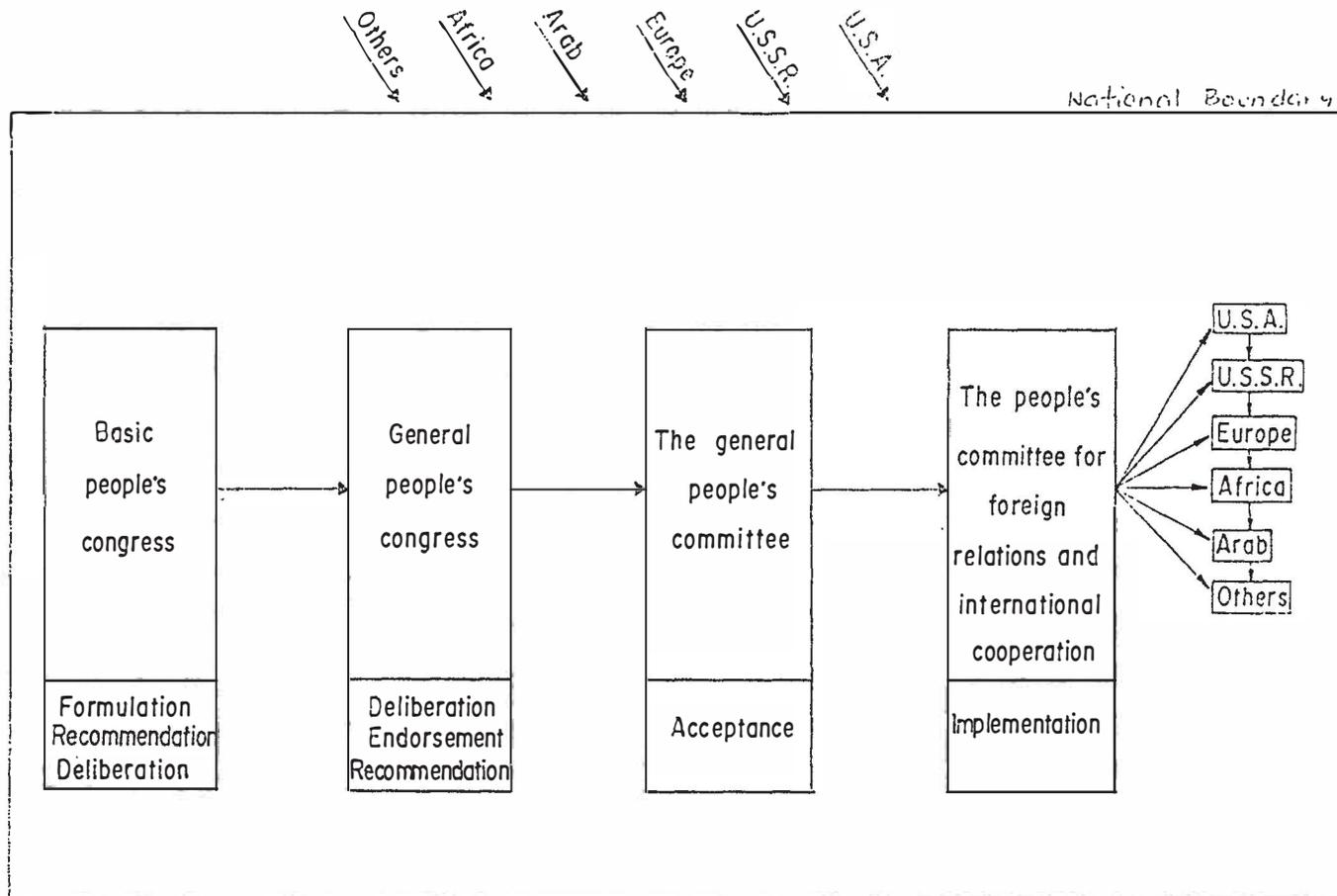


Figure 1.2 The Process of Foreign Policy Making, /1977 - 1986/