

Moscow School Model UN 2020

Security Council

Expert Report

Situation in Libya

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Origins of the Libyan Conflict

The ongoing conflict in Libya is a continuation of the civil war which began in 2011 to overthrow Muammar Gaddafi. It is difficult to consider the events which unfolded in Libya a merely internal matter, for throughout the fighting foreign mercenaries participated in it. Some European countries intervened directly by supporting anti-government rebels, for instance, France supplied them with weapons violating UN resolutions. Belarus went as far as to send government troops, weapons, and military advisers.

Colonel Gaddafi coped with political problems quite successfully and, most likely, would have won if NATO had not intervened. With the support of the United Nations (resolution 1973), the Alliance began an intervention in Libya for the safety of civilians.

According to NATO, securing peace in the region could have been achieved by material assistance to the rebels, the bombing of government forces and supporting revolutionaries in battle. Consequently, in October 2011, disturbing photographic evidence of lynching, and inhumane executions without trial appeared in the Internet. The investigation of a 69-year-old man who for many years was the leader of the Libyan Jamahiriya was featured in headlines. However, the fighting did not cease there.

Colonel's death did not put out the fire but rather extinguished the flame of war. There used to be two apparent conflict parties but after 2011 a huge number of warring factions appeared. Among them were Gaddafi's supporters, Libyan tribes previously removed from power, the black population of the south, radical Islamists, and ubiquitous ISIS (a terrorist organization banned in Russia). Moreover, they all had their own ideas about the future of the state, or its individual regions.

At the very beginning of the civil war in Libya, the Interim Transitional National Council of the Libyan Republic was created. This interim government was recognized by most UN member states. In 2012 it was replaced by the first post-revolutionary parliament, the General National Congress. With the Congress consisting mainly of followers of radical Islam, domestic politics were affected. There was no prosecution for crimes on religious grounds, Sharia laws were proclaimed state while the government was unable to address pressing issues like creating efficient law enforcement to protect citizens.

After the expiration of the term of office, Congress refused to dissolve provoking a protest from one of the most respected generals of the Libyan army, Khalifa Haftar. The military leader attempted a coup d'etat urging parliamentarians to resign and hold elections in accordance with legislation. They had refused to do so, and the general launched

Operation Dignity in order to eliminate the supporters of the parliament from Benghazi, and later the capital, which marked the beginning of a new war. Despite the parliamentary elections in the summer of 2014 hostilities were not ceased.

The Islamists who used to be the majority in the previous years lost a lot of parliamentary seats during this election, hence radical groups (the Libya Shield Force and others) captured Tripoli, restored the General National Congress and proclaimed it to be sole legitimate authority. At the same time, many opposition politicians were abducted, so the newly elected members of parliament had no choice other than to flee and seek refuge. As a result, the House of Representatives moved to Tobruk, and it was recognized by the international community as legitimate.

The Libyan cell of ISIS (a terrorist organization banned in Russia) was founded in the country after the revolution in 2011, but it remained fairly inactive. From 2014 to 2017, the terrorists gained control of Sirte, and committed a series of terrorist attacks throughout the country. Their actions were aimed at gaining more influence. Libya could not rebut the expansion of ISIS for lack of a single strong government.

Thanks to mediation and negotiations assisted by the UN the Shirat Agreement was signed in December 2015. According to the document, the House of Representatives became the only legislative body, and executive functions were transferred to the Government of National Unity and the Presidential Council, the head of which was the Prime Minister.

At first, the National Congress opposed this agreement. However, when the Islamists occupied most of the seats in the Presidential Council, it had a change of heart, and transferred its own powers to this legislative body, after willingly dissolving in April 2016.

Given that the House of Representatives controlled 90% of the country's territory, and was in the minority in the Presidential Council, it refused to recognize the new power structure and withdrew from the agreement in March 2017. The fighting continued, and there was no probable solution to this conflict once again.

Negotiations were held anew. The Prime Minister, Faiz Saraj, and the army commander, Khalifa Haftar, supported by parliament represented two opposing parties. They agreed that the Presidential Council should consists of three people. Unfortunately, agreements reached during this negotiations were violated.

In 2019 General Haftar launched an attack on Tripoli again in order to free the city from terrorists and the Islamists. Haftar's offensive accounts for a large number of civilian casualties, and causing a great refugee outflow. According to the UN, 146

thousand people have been forced to leave their homes since the beginning of the Haftar offensive on Tripoli.

Current Situation in Libya

Gaddafi introduced his own style of government, the Jamahiriya, which is an [Arabic](#) term generally translated as 'state of the masses'.

At the moment the West of the state is ruled by the Government of National Accord, formed with the support of the UN and the EU. Its head is Prime Minister Faiz Saraj. There is a parliament elected by citizens in the eastern part of the state. It is supported by the Libyan National Army which is led by Field Marshal Khalif Haftar.

The two aforementioned factions have been at war for a long time. The field marshal's army launched an offensive last April. The offensive was aimed at the city of Tripoli where the opposition resides.

«The Libyan national army moved to the capital to fight the armed groups which had seized our capital», the speaker of Libyan Parliament Speaker Agila Saleh said.

Multinational Libya is fragmented, with its society fractured. Among different ethnic groups comprising it are the Arabs and the Berbers, the Tuaregs and the Tuba who are struggling to find a middle ground.

Once the leading nation in North Africa in terms of GDP per capita and an economy with record low inflation, Libya now faces high unemployment rate and poverty. Gaddafi sought independence from imports. He directed oil production revenues to social needs.

On January 19, a conference on the Libyan conflict was held in Berlin. In addition to the parties to the conflict, the meeting was attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Egyptian President Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and representatives of several other states. On the same day, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced the creation of a military commission. Sergei Lavrov, Russian Secretary of State, explained that the commission would include five representatives from the Libyan National Army, and five from the Libyan government.

Stances of the Countries Participating in the Conflict

As more and more foreign actors try to gain influence in Libya, we have to take a look at the powers willing to shape events in the war-wracked country.

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is considered to be one of Haftar's main supporter, having supplied him with advanced weapon systems in violation of a 2011 UN arms embargo imposed at the beginning of the uprising described in the first paragraph of this report.

Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) has relied heavily on UAE air support, which includes the suspected deployment of Chinese-made Wing Loong II drones during its months-long offensive against the GNA.

A UN report released in November¹ mentioned that the UAE also had supplied Haftar with the Russian-made Pantsir S-1 advanced air defence system that was installed at the al-Jufra base near the town of Gharyan.

'The complexity and costs of the system make it very unlikely that the United Arab Emirates has supplied it to any other entity who could have subsequently transferred it to Libya', the report said.

Another UN report in 2017 claimed that the UAE built an airbase at Al Khadim in eastern Libya and provided Haftar with aircraft as well as military vehicles.

The UAE considers Haftar a trusted partner capable of curbing the spread of political Islam, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood.

As a researcher Jalel Harchaoui has put it, 'Abu Dhabi has no tolerance for political Islam, including its most moderate manifestations, [...] The only way for them to sleep easy at night and be sure proponents of political Islam do not wield any power in Libya is to prop up strict autocracy instead. [...] The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood happens to be very weak politically in Libya is not going to reassure or appease the Emiratis. The latter prefer erring on the safe side, by combating any form of democratic opening, whether legitimate, corrupt or dysfunctional'.

Egypt

¹ https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2019_914.pdf - Letter dated 29 November 2019 from the Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council

Like Abu Dhabi, Cairo's aversion to the Muslim Brotherhood has meant that it found in Haftar a natural ally.

President Abd al-Fattah as-Sisi seized power after a 2013 military coup that toppled Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected head of state and a member of the Brotherhood. The group was outlawed that same year and declared a terrorist organisation by Egyptian authorities.

Haftar's endorsement by wealthy Gulf states, his military background and ability to rein in armed groups in eastern Libya's sparsely populated desert region have also earned him the support of as-Sisi.

Egypt has used its vast border with Libya to funnel weapons and provide logistical support to Haftar, according to Libyan officials and Egyptian foreign ministry documents.

During a recent trip to Cairo, Haftar who received part of his military training in Egypt said he would take over Tripoli 'within hours' if Egypt were to send troops to assist his forces.

France

French President Emmanuel Macron has officially backed efforts for achieving peace in Libya.

That stance, however, is counterweighted by France's diplomatic support for Haftar, which includes the blocking of a European Union statement calling on the renegade military commander to halt his assault on the capital, prompting GNA Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj in April to accuse the Macron administration of backing a 'dictator'.

There are also concerns that France is providing Haftar with military support.

In June US-made Javelin missiles belonging to France were found at a base used by Haftar's troops in the town of Gharyan, located some 80 kilometers south of Tripoli.

In 2016 a French helicopter crashed near Benghazi, killing three soldiers, during what then-President Francois Hollande described as a «dangerous intelligence operation». The GNA said the incident was a «violation» of its sovereignty.

Russia

Much like France, Russia has publicly supported the mediation efforts led by UN Special Envoy Ghassan Salame. However, Moscow vetoed a UN Security Council statement that would have called on the Libyan commander to halt his advance on Tripoli.

Russian mercenaries from the private Wagner group have also reportedly joined the battle alongside Haftar's forces.

Some experts believe that this could not have happened without the Kremlin's approval. 'While Russia may lack the political influence to launch an Astana-like process in Libya, its gamble on the inaction of its counterparts may still position it as a power broker', wrote Emadeddin Badi, a fellow at the Middle East Institute.

Moscow denies sending troops to back Haftar.

United States

The USA were among the states that supported the efforts that led to the GNA's creation in late 2015. However, soon after assuming office in January 2017, US President Donald Trump said he did not consider the USA to have any role in the region.

However, in an April 19 phone conversation with Haftar, who is also a US citizen, Trump recognised «Field Marshall Haftar's significant role in fighting terrorism and securing Libya's oil resources».

Washington vetoed a UN SC statement condemning an air raid on a migrant detention centre that killed more than 40 people in July, for which the GNA blamed the ally of the US, the UAE.

Saudi Arabia

The Wall Street Journal reported that Saudi Arabia offered tens of millions of dollars to help fund Haftar's Tripoli offensive.

According to the US publication, the offer came during a visit by Haftar to the Saudi capital, Riyadh, in late March 2019, days before the launch of his assault on Tripoli.

Citing senior advisers to the Saudi government, the WSJ said the offer of funds, which Haftar accepted, was intended to buy the loyalty of tribal leaders, recruit and pay fighters and other such military purposes.

However, Riyadh, which views the Muslim Brotherhood with the same level of apprehension as the neighbouring UAE, has been bogged down by a conflict of its own in Yemen.

Turkey

Turkey has been one of the GNA's foremost supporters since its inception in 2015.

Ankara has stepped up its military support for the GNA in the face of Haftar's military campaign.

In addition to armoured vehicles, the GNA was reported to have bought 20 Bayraktar TB2 drones from Turkey last summer.

Ankara has started deploying troops to Libya, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Sunday, after parliament recently approved the move. He said the objective of the deployment was "not to fight" but "to support the legitimate government and avoid a humanitarian tragedy".

The move follows the signing of two agreements in November relating to maritime border demarcation and enhanced security cooperation between Ankara and the GNA.

The maritime border delineation deal is a way for Ankara to affirm its position as a leading power in the region, according to analysts, who are quick to point out that drilling rights in the contested seabed only tell part of the story.

«Turkey is going to Libya to make sure that any discussion in the Mediterranean includes Ankara because neighbouring countries are trying to exclude it, [...] If Libya falls under Haftar, who is an ally of the UAE, which in turn is antagonistic to Turkey, that essentially puts all of Turkish maritime interests in the Mediterranean at the mercy of the UAE, Egypt and Greece,» Samdi Hamdi (the editor in chief of the International Interest) said.

Qatar

Qatar's dispute with its Gulf neighbours is reflected in Libya. Doha supports the Tripoli government which is more tolerant of the Islamist such as the Muslim Brotherhood than the Haftar-affiliated House of Representatives (HoR), which in turn enjoys the support of the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Doha played a key financial role in the 2011 overthrow of Gaddafi but has since remained rather inactive.

Italy

Italy has remained largely neutral throughout the conflict raging across the Mediterranean.

In April Italy's then Secretary of the Interior Matteo Salvini warned France against supporting any of the warring factions for "economic or commercial reasons".

Experts claim that Italy is concerned France is trying to undermine the privileged position that an Italian oil company by the name of ENI enjoys in this African country.

The United Nations

The UN believes that consequences of a large scale civil war could lead to a 'humanitarian nightmare', exposing the country to further division. A civil war can destabilize the Sahel and the Maghreb regions aggravating the threats of terrorism, human trafficking, and drug and firearms smuggling.

The Secretary-General, Mr Guterres, welcomed ceasefire, and urged them to 'engage in good faith dialogue on political, economic and military issues in a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned inclusive process', which will be supported by the UN.

'We will stand with the Libyan people as they work to resolve their differences through discussion and compromise in good faith', the Secretary-General concluded, 'and chart a way to a more peaceful future'.

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