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A decade on from the February 17th revolution, how the global disorder transformed Libya into a battleground for interest, ideology and influence.

LONG READ • Editors: **Nadja Berghoff, Anas El-Gomati**

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THE GREAT GAME

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Chapter 1

Introduction

by Anas El-Gomati

In the decade that has passed since Libya's February 17th revolution, one cannot easily determine whether the story reads as an obituary or a love letter. Certainly, it was not the near dream-like sequence of events that took place in neighbouring Tunisia, which despite the inevitable challenges remains to date a functional democracy. Equally, events in Libya did not replicate those of Syria and the ensuing human tragedy; nor did it result in the theft of the revolution, as it did in neighbouring Egypt at the hands of it's military. Unique in many ways, the Libyan experience shares elements with all of its neighbours.

Early signs of promise were there from the start; a peaceful transition of power from the National Transitional Council (NTC), Libya's official anti-Gaddafi opposition and the political custodia of the revolution to the country's first democratic elections to select the General National Congress (GNC) in 2012. This was followed by two brutal civil wars first in 2014 and again in 2019 following two attempted military coup d'etats by a former Gaddafi-era official, General Khalifa Haftar. In the last year Tunisia has hosted Libya's political talks, alongside Egypt who supported the latest civil war that drew thousands of Syrian mercenaries supplied by Turkey and the United Arab Emirates and Russia to fight one another.

The role the international community played in securing the conditions to support Libya's revolution are well known, namely the high profile passing of UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1973 in March 2011 under the doctrine of the 'Responsibility to protect'. Often missing from the commentary surrounding Libya's revolution and its aftermath is how it opened the floodgates to a new global disorder that established the conditions for a new Great Game that has drawn new and old powers to it's vast expanse in a battle for influence, interest and ideology.

The diplomatic rifts and regional aftershock that followed the NATO-led campaign Operation Unified Protector (OUP) culminating in the overthrow of Mu'ammar al Gaddafi and his Jamahiriya after 42 years of autocratic rule continues to be felt a decade on. The US took a step back to 'lead from behind' during the NATO campaign marking a broad unwillingness to carry the burden of the campaign. The Arab Spring coincided with America's decision to withdraw from the Middle East and North Africa, leaving a void to be filled by others. Washington delegated the operation to European partners, who were increasingly pulling in different directions and unable to fill the void. At a diplomatic level, the NATO operation's mission creep established a new bipolar faultline amongst the permanent members of the UNSC -- in particular Russia and China vs the US, UK, and France -- that have paralysed it since 2011 from it's conceived vision of managing tensions, preventing military confrontations and preserving peace and stability.

These rivalries prevented the UNSC from averting a humanitarian catastrophe in Syria in 2011, but by 2019 had revealed new fault lines within the UNSC and it's inability to deal with this multipolarity in the context of Libya's latest conflict. The UN secretary general Antonio Gutteres landed in Tripoli on April 4th 2019 to offer his backing to a political roadmap to democratic elections in Libya only to be met with heavy gunfire as the Libyan Arab Armed Forces led by General Khalifa Haftar, who confidently marched on Libya's capital from the town of Gharian. The UN chief departed Libya failing to condemn Haftar by name. That same day the US, United Kingdom (UK), France, Italy and United Arab Emirates (UAE) issued a joint-statement opposing any military action and promising to hold to account any Libyan faction that would precipitate further conflict. Despite this threat, Haftar continued his assault undeterred by the vocal and prominent diplomatic threats. It would later transpire that the Trump administration had privately endorsed Haftar's war, that French Special Forces had been discretely embedded with Haftar's forces and that the UAE were conducting airstrikes in order to support Haftar's assault.

The events of the Arab Spring have also reshaped the regional order, and established new ideological rifts. Qatar's early, proactive support to the Arab Spring primarily through it's soft power irked their Gulf neighbours, the UAE, who set to reverse the course of the revolutions by also intervening in Libya. A decade and a Gulf crisis later, the UAE's main adversary in Libya is no longer Qatar, but Turkey -- demonstrating the extraordinary shifts across the region, and the introduction of powerful new actors pursuing their own geo political and economic interests in Libya across the region.

Libya's own civil wars have in no doubt been shaped by the failure of their political elite to compromise, forge consensus, and cooperate. Many have pointed to the emergence of a conflict between 'Islamists' and 'secularists' or the historic rivalry between it's regions in the east and west of the country. These binaries offer some explanatory power to aspects of the war, underlying tensions and much of the competition above the surface but fails to address the shadow cast by the demise of Gaddafi's Jamihiriya and the competing structures that underpin the state and define its political character. The Jamahiriya was essentially a tightly controlled patrominal network that tied aspects of the state's security infrastructure to particular tribal constituencies in order to maintain Gaddafi's authoritarian grip on the country. When this patrimonial network collapsed in 2011 it left little in terms of tangible institutions that could provide a foundation for a new Libya. At the heart of the February 17th revolution's narrative was a deep rejection of this patronage network and the authoritarian concept and definition of tribal identity that underpinned it. As this tribal patronage network collapsed during the revolution many constituencies would lose their patronage to the state and by extension their social and political privilege following the emergence of new armed groups who began to establish their own discrete rival patrimonial structures.

Much of Libya's intercommunal conflicts can be traced back to this moment, and the ensuing power struggles and competition defined by their relationship to either the old or new socio political order. This power struggle became more overtly political

following the passing of a political isolation law in 2013 (under duress from new armed groups) to marginalise former Gaddafi era officials from holding positions in the new state. This attempt at De-Gaddafication would delegitimize much of this patronage network, and ripen constituencies and stakeholders alike to conflict with years of low level power struggles and a scarred social fabric acting as the fuel. The emergence of Khalifa Haftar in the summer of 2014 and his attempt to discreetly reestablish the Jamahiriya's tribal patronage network through the establishment of the LAAF was the spark that lit the flame as the country became engulfed in a civil war that divided the country. The resulting political divisions and parallel institutions illustrate the degree to which these patrimonial networks matter. The seven years of UN brokered diplomatic talks between rival elite players hosted by a variety of external players in Libya's conflict to reconfigure a new Presidency to accommodate Haftar's patrimonial network reflects the degree to which civil-military relations still matter to the state and and how the prevailing political character of Libya's post Gaddafi state still remains up for grabs.

In the context of this global disorder, competing patrimonial networks and the ideological vacuum left behind in Gaddafi's demise, Libya's civil wars have become the theatre for global powers to pursue their own unilateral interests.

This Long Read seeks to explore the foreign policy of 12 key states that have either intervened militarily or diplomatically over the past decade since the February 17th revolution in 2011. The paper is unique in that it not only examines the key turning points in Libya over the past decade, but also the key domestic issues and the impact of the collapse of the global liberal order as determinants of each country's uniquely different foreign policy towards Libya.

These papers broadly reveal a variety of uniquely different perspectives as to Libya's unique geo strategic importance and the variety of micro conflicts at play in Libya that have determined it's complexity. Beginning with how Libya's vast hydrocarbon reserves drew in states seeking it's riches and the resulting competition. How it's strategic importance differs from each country's vantage point; as either Europe's migration corridor, NATO's soft underbelly in a geo politically contested meditaranean, an ungoverned space where Salafi Jihadists could take root or as a gateway and source of instability towards the Sahel and the Maghreb, matters which depending from where you view them determine the order of priority in each state's view of it's foreign policy towards Libya.

Finally, in the context of the Arab Spring this paper sheds light on the emergence of a broader region wide ideological struggle to determine Libya's political character a decade on from the Arab Spring. This paper examines the emergence of these ideational alliances and their collision with alliances and actors pursuing their own geo-political interests to form a complex multi layered and multi polar conflict that despite recent local political progress illustrates the intractability of Libya's conflict.

Chapter 2

United States: A Chance for Improvement?

by Karim Mezran and Alissa Pavia

Libyan-American relations have always been contentious. After a period of good relations following American support for Libyan independence in 1951 and the short monarchical period, since the 1970s, belligerent confrontations and periods of strong tension have characterized this relationship with the regime of Gaddafi. In 1986, the U.S. President Ronald Reagan ordered a series of airstrikes on Tripoli and Benghazi that led to more than 40 casualties. The strikes were in retaliation to a bombing that occurred at a West Berlin discotheque, a frequently attended nightclub by U.S. soldiers, which the U.S. accused Libya of orchestrating. The situation further deteriorated during the later part of the 1980s, when Pan Am Flight 103, a transatlantic flight from London to New York, was bombed mid-air. Relations grew more strained as, what is known as the Lockerbie bombing, which left 270 dead, became the subject of an international investigation led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Subsequently, after the FBI found Libya to be the main culprit behind the Pan Am Flight attack, the U.S. placed Libya under heavy sanctions through the United Nations Security Council, a move which set the two countries at even greater odds. These violent outbursts laid the foundation for fraught relations between the two countries for the following ten years at least.

The relationship between the two countries took a turn for the better in the late 90s when Gaddafi began to cooperate with the U.S. and the international community by surrendering two suspects of the Lockerbie bombing following a warrant issued by the FBI. This rapprochement was further strengthened by Gaddafi's strong public condemnation of Al-Qaeda's attacks against the U.S. and by his public call to donate blood for the victims[1]. Additionally, Gaddafi also stated that the U.S. and Libya had a common interest to fight Islamic extremism[2]. In essence, the resolution of the Lockerbie bombing and Gaddafi's public willingness to cooperate on all matters

1 Ken Silverstein,' How Kadafi Went From Foe to Ally' 4 September 2005, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-sep-04-fg-uslibya4-story.html
2 Ibid.

> **Since the 1970s, belligerent confrontations and periods of strong tension have characterized the U.S. relationship with the regime of Gaddafi.**

concerning the 'global war on terror' saw the de facto alignment around common interests and therefore a rapprochement between the two countries, so much so that in 2011, on the eve of the Libyan revolts, the US State Department welcomed Khamis Gaddafi, the youngest of the Colonel's sons, for an official visit of the United States[3].

Once the Libyan revolts commenced in 2011, the U.S. was reluctant to get involved. However, President Sarkozy of France, who took the lead for the anti-Gaddafi front, was conscious of the need for U.S.-led military involvement and thus exerted strong pressure on its American allies to do so. France was not the only country that sought a U.S. military presence in Libya; many Arab countries, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and the UK also supported France's political gambit of seeking a U.S.-led intervention. These countries advocated for an intervention based on the United Nation's 'Responsibility to Protect' principle, according to which the international community must protect any population from the threat of genocide and other war crimes[4]. They were fearful Gaddafi might turn against his own population. As a result, the pressure to intervene, coupled with the fear that Gaddafi may commence a genocide, finally convinced the US to intervene directly and triggered the U.S. to approve a NATO-led intervention in Libya.

After the victory of the anti-Gaddafi rebels, the U.S. initially adopted a policy aimed at backing a peaceful and democratic transition from the Gaddafi regime by becoming actively involved in Libya's politics. The U.S. primarily focused on advancing security sector reforms through demobilization and reintegration (DDR) initiatives, through which they planned to train and provide guidance to ministries and other national institutions that had collapsed following the end of the Gaddafi regime. The U.S.' stance changed following the fateful attack on the US consulate in Benghazi on September 11 2012 by Salafi Jihadists, resulting in the death of the U.S. ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other American nationals[5]. US diplomacy towards Libya was radically reshaped as a result. With the U.S. bunkered up in its embassy in Tripoli and reduction of its diplomatic personnel to a bare minimum, US diplomatic presence and power significantly diminished as a result.

The situation further deteriorated in May 2014 when Khalifa Haftar, prior to Libya's second democratic elections launched Operation Dignity, sparking Libya's bitter civil war that would later see the country divided by rival administrations and parallel institutions. Already in a state of emergency and practically locked down in its compound since the consular attack in 2012, the American authorities decided to withdraw completely from the country and thus evacuated their embassy[6].

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3 Joby Warrick, 'U.S. officials assisted visit by Gaddafi son' 25 March 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-officials-assisted-visit-by-gaddafi-son/2011/03/25/AFT017YB_story.html

4 Article 139, Responsibility to Protect, available at: https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml

5 'US confirms its Libya ambassador killed in Benghazi' 12 September 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19570254

6 Barbara Starr, Joe Sterling and Azadeh Ansari, 'U.S. Embassy in Libya evacuates personnel' 27 July 2014, https://edition.cnn.com/2014/07/26/world/africa/libya-us-embassy-evacuation/index.html

Following its depature, the U.S. limited its involvement in Libya to a strategy of containing terrorism in the region, as well as towards an effort to maintain international norms and unity despite rogue attempts to divide the country, a policy which was made evident by operation Morning Glory of the US Navy SEALS. In March of 2014 the U.S. Navy's special forces seized a tanker flying the flag of North Korea, the Morning Glory, which had illicitly obtained oil from the eastern fields and escaped Libyan authorities[7]. Through this operation, the U.S. demonstrated its readiness to contain a potential fragmentation in the region ensuing from the Libyan conflict, and to ensure no illegitimate force would take over the country.

The U.S.' strategy of containment was further evidenced by a number of events that took place starting from 2014. First and foremost, the U.S. backed the actions of the United Nations Support Mission to Libya (UNSMIL), whose mandate is to support the peaceful transition of power and the establishment of a democratic 'post-conflict' political framework[8]. Secondly, in 2015 the U.S. promptly supported the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) signed in the Moroccan city of Skhirat, as well as those institutions that the agreement established, the Presidential Council (PC) and the Government of National Accord (GNA) led Fayez al-Sarraj[9]. These US-led actions, coupled with the fact that the U.S. was still operating on all matters pertaining to Libya from its Embassy in Tunisia, are a testament that the U.S. was willing to remain engaged in Libya in an effort to contain a spillover effect of the instability in neighboring countries, even if from afar.

The priority of fighting terrorism and containing its spread within Libya was the trigger for the massive counter-terrorism operations, which ultimately defeated the Islamic State in Libya. In 2016, the U.S. military launched over 500 airstrikes[10] against Islamic State strongholds in the city of Sirte through Operation Odyssey Lightning. This US-led operation supported the GNA's armed groups mostly from the city of Misrata, which drove the Islamic State out of Sirte, thus enabling the GNA to take over the city along with its key entry points to important oil and gas terminals. U.S. interest was also expressed through its support of the National Oil Company in Tripoli, which it viewed as the only legal collector of oil sales revenues, along with the Central Bank of Libya in Tripoli.

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7 Chritian Caryl, 'SEALed and Delivered in Libya' 18 March 2014, https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/18/sealed-and-delivered-in-libya/
8 UNSMIL Mandate, https://unsmil.unmissions.org/mandate
9 '7598TH Meeting' 23 December 2015, https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12185.doc.htm
10 Eric Schmitt, 'U.S. Military Again Strikes ISIS in Southern Libya' 27 September 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/27/world/africa/strikes-isis-libya.html

> **The priority of fighting terrorism and containing its spread within Libya was the trigger for the massive U.S. counter-terrorism operations, which ultimately defeated the Islamic State in Libya.**

U.S. President Joe Biden

Libya's second civil war

Comparatively to these U.S. actions in Libya, the Trump administration implemented more ambivalent ones. While immediately after Haftar's attack on Tripoli the State Department officially backed the GNA and demanded Haftar's withdrawal from the Western part of the country[11], Trump parted with this stance when, in April 2019, he made a sympathetic phone call to Haftar to praise his counter terrorism efforts and to thank him for ensuring the security of Libyan oil fields[12]. Trump's ambivalence also emerged because of his personal preferences for the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and the UAE's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Zayed (MbZ) who strongly recommended the U.S. support Haftar's efforts to control Libya. However, when Turkey militarily intervened in Libya to aid the GNA in January of 2020[13], Trump dropped his ambivalence and allowed US institutions to operate in support of UNSMIL. During the last quarter of his presidency, the Trump administration looked favorably at the ongoing Libyan peace talks, although without a deep commitment and involvement in them.

Currently, the U.S. officially backs the GNA because it is the legitimate actor recognized by the UN, and because it was formed under the auspice of the internationally endorsed Libyan Political Agreement. With the exception of the period of ambivalence that marked the Trump administration, the U.S. has maintained a solid foreign policy strategy in Libya, one that has not been influenced by foreign actors. Egypt and the UAE have tried in different instances to sway the U.S.' political agenda in favor of Khalifa Haftar. While these attempts were unsuccessful, they nevertheless obtained

11 Ashish Kumar Sen, 'Trump wades into Libyan crisis, and why that's not good news ' 22 April 2019, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/trump-libya-haftar/

12 Steve Holland, 'White House says Trump spoke to Libyan commander Haftar on Monday' 19 April 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-trump/white-house-says-trump-spoke-to-libyan-commander-haftar-on-monday-idUSKCN1RV0WW

13 Patrick Wintour, 'Turkish troops deploy to Libya to prop up embattled government', 5 January 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/05/turkish-troops-deploy-to-libya-to-prop-up-embattled-government

some complacency from the then National Security Advisor Bolton by taking advantage of President Trump's lack of interest in the region to continue their support for Haftar's conquest of the West.

The incoming Biden administration will likely adopt a more coherent approach than that of Trump in supporting the newly established Government of National Unity (GNU). However, most observers consider it doubtful that Biden will reveal any grand strategies that will bring about real change in the region. He will focus his foreign policy on safeguarding human rights and ensuring that the GNA implement transparent decision-making processes for the country. Biden will also most likely support the upcoming presidential elections in Libya scheduled for December 24, 2021.

A key challenge for the Biden administration will be Russia's military presence in central Libya. The Kremlin has taken advantage of America's withdrawal from the region, and intervened to fill the gap and establish a presence that could threaten the Southern flank of NATO, that threatens more than Libya. The US and it's NATO allies will need to adopt a more coherent and decisive foreign policy strategy in

Libya in order to pave the way for the formation of a unified government capable of continuing the transition to a stable democratic Libya. To do so, it must avoid at all costs that new actors become entrenched in the country.

In conclusion, the US will have to do its utmost to prevent a Russian entrenchment in the conflict, and can do so by aligning the interests of all foreign or external actors involved, including France, Turkey, the UAE and Egypt around supporting the UN-led mediation that aims to obtain a government of national unity that, thanks to its consensus, can can require the departure of all foreign forces. This would render any foreign presence in Libya illegal, and thus would allow the expulsion of all foreign troops and mercenaries. This strategy should also be coupled with one that seeks to build on a pro-American sentiment that is ever present in the country. In fact, a poll released in 2012 showed that Libyans are more pro-American than Canadians are. The U.S. has always failed to build on this consensus. It has allowed for the excessive personalisation of its Libya policy centered upon each US president's animosity for the libyan leader rather than look at it through the lens of a more objective national security and global, geopolitical analysis. It is time that it realizes the importance of Libya for its global strategic plan, and that it intervenes with more determination in helping the Libyan political class to resolve the current crisis and propel the country and it's people into a brighter future.

Chaper 3

United Kingdom: Navigating Uncertainty

by Peter Millett

History is important across the Middle East and North Africa and Libya is no exception. The graves of over 10,000 British soldiers, airmen and sailors in Tripoli, Benghazi and Tobruk pay testament to the British military's role in the Second World War in North Africa. And the fact that those cemeteries are beautifully preserved and respected also pays testament to the lasting memories for Libyans of the sacrifices made by the British during that conflict.

Historical ties between the two nations endured following the establishment of the Kingdom of Libya when Libya won its independence on 24 December 1951. The United Kingdom supported the Libyan state during this period when oil revenues were low and the administration of the country needed support.

That relationship collapsed in 1969 when Gaddafi came to power in a bloodless coup. Despite spending 9 months of military training in England, Gaddafi had no affection for Britain. He moved quickly to demand the removal of British (and American) military bases, nationalized the hydrocarbon concessions of British Petroleum and withdrew approximately US$550 million invested in British banks. Gaddafi's association with Soviet Russia and support for Arab nationalism also conflicted with British policy during the Cold War.

The 1980s saw a sharp deterioration in relations as the Gaddafi regime began to assassinate Libyan dissidents living in the UK. The murder of PC Yvonne Fletcher in 1984, when Libyan diplomats opened fire on protesters outside the Libyan mission in St James' Sq led to the breakdown of diplomatic relations until 1999. The Gaddafi's regime's violations of diplomatic norms and use of violence on British soil meant that former British Prime Minister Thatcher responded positively to President Reagan's request to allow the US Air Force to use its British bases to attack Tripoli in 1986, in retaliation for a bomb attack on a discotheque in Berlin that was frequented by Americans[1]. The bombing of a Pan Am Boeing 747, which crashed over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in 1988 killing a total of 270, passengers, crew and people on the ground was also attributed to the Gaddafi regime[2].

Underpinning the antipathy between the countries' leaders was Gaddafi's active support for the Irish Republican Army (IRA)[3]. During the 1970s and 1980s, Gaddafi supplied large quantities of weapons and explosives including machine guns, rifles, pistols, rocket-propelled grenades, surface to air missiles and Semtex explosive.

1 'Libya: President Reagan letter to MT' 8 Apirl 1986, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/143431
2 'Pan Am 103 Bombing' https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/pan-am-103-bombing
3 'The 38-year connection between Irish republicans and Gaddafi' 23 February 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-12539372

These weapons were used to carry out terrorist outrages in Northern Ireland and England.

Diplomatic relations were restored in 1999 and the relationship began to warm as Gaddafi needed western support to modernise his economy. Following his announcement that Libya would abandon its weapons of mass destruction programmes, Prime Minister Tony Blair travelled to Tripoli in 2004 and met Gaddafi declaring a new relationship between the countries.

The Libyan revolution in 2011 would change this. Following Gaddafi's violent suppression of protests across Libya, Prime Minister David Cameron joined President Sarkozy of France in pushing for military intervention. In March 2011, the UK drafted and secured the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 which allowed "all necessary measures" to be used to protect civilians[4]. Two days later the UK and France launched air attacks on Gaddafi's forces, supported by American missiles.

As the conflict in Libya wore on, the UK froze Gaddafi's assets and expelled Libya's ambassador, transferring diplomatic recognition to the National Transitional Council, the nascent political opposition in eastern Libya.

Following Gaddafi's defeat, Cameron and Sarkozy visited Tripoli and Benghazi to celebrate the end of the Gaddafi regime. They reassured the Libyan people that they would support them in restoring stability and prosperity to their country after 42 years of dictatorship.

The British government offered significant programmes of support, including capacity building in government and in security sector reform, though Libya's 2014 civil war and the subsequent institutional divisions saw a shift in foreign policy from technical assistance and state building to diplomacy and peace building.

In 2017, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, then Foreign Secretary visited Libya twice, meeting Prime Minister Serraj in Tripoli, the President of the House of Representatives Aguila Saleh in Tobruq and General Khalifa Haftar in Benghazi. He offered strong support for the UN-led political process.

Following the selection of a new Presidency Council and Prime Minister, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has renewed that commitment, calling the new UN backed Prime Minister Abdulhamid Debaiba to assure him of his support.

4 'Libya UN Resolution 1973: Text analysed' 18 March 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12782972

UK Prime Minister Cameron in Benghazi

UK Foreign Policy

Since World War II, British Foreign Policy has been trying to adjust to the fact that Britain is no longer a superpower. The economic burden of rebuilding the country, the slow disintegration of the British Empire and the humiliation of the failed Suez campaign all meant that UK diplomacy was seriously weakened. The Cold War enabled London to forge a close alliance with Washington and with NATO partners in Europe. The European Union, during the years that the UK was a member, slowly tried to establish a co-ordinated and multilateral foreign policy but has largely failed, as individual capitals launched their own initiatives and pursued their unilateral interests.

The underlying objectives of Britain's foreign policy concentrate on security, both of the home nation and of British interests and citizens overseas. The threat to British interests from weapons of mass destruction and a desire to be a close partner with the USA drew the UK into conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 2000s, the legacy of which is still apparent. The perceived failure of these interventions played a significant role in the UK's response to the 'Arab Spring' in 2011.

The revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt were watched with fascination in London where diplomats and politicians saw the toppling of dictatorial regimes by popular movements as a positive development.

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If the people wanted to remove their leaders, they should be allowed to do so without outside intervention. But if those leaders used violence against civilians to prop up their regimes, then the international community had a responsibility to protect those civilians.

The turmoil in the region raised the question of how to balance interests and values. Should our relations with a country be based on economic advantage, even if that country abuses the human rights of its citizens? The concept that it was in the UK's interests to promote its values was a useful soundbite, but it would not be easy to apply in practice. Nonetheless, championing democracy, freedom of expression, the rule of law and respect for human rights became central to foreign policy.

Other priorities raised their profile, such as climate change, biodiversity and protection for refugees and migrants. In addressing all these issues, the UK's Foreign Office regarded partnerships as a vital platform for achieving change. The UK could not solve problems by itself. Working with like-minded countries, in Europe, Asia and North America was crucial.

These drivers formed the backdrop to the UK's approach to Libya, both during the Gaddafi era and thereafter. Relations with Gaddafi were driven primarily by security. Once those security issues had subsided, economic interests came to the fore. The approach to the 2011 revolution was partly driven by security, but the military doctrine had shifted away from putting boots on the ground. It was also important to work with partners, not only France and the USA, but other NATO partners and countries from the Arab world such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates who joined the campaign.

Following the revolution, the UK's strategy has been based on three main objectives: stability in a country on the edge of Europe, preventing the growth of terrorism, and the need to tackle the plight of migrants crossing the Mediterranean to Europe.

The link between terrorism and Libya was highlighted by terrorist attacks in neighbouring Tunisia in 2015 when 22 foreign tourists were killed at the Bardo Museum and 38 tourists, including 30 British citizens killed in Sousse. The Tunisian perpetrators were trained in Libya[5]. The May 2017 bombing of the Manchester Arena which killed 22 concert-goers was carried out by the son of a Libyan refugee.

London recognised that this terrorist threat had been exacerbated by the divisions caused by civil war in Libya, and that in order to tackle them, Libya required a stable and united government. The UK therefore strongly backed the efforts of the United Nations to find a political solution to the divisions in the country since 2014. British diplomats played a role in Skhirat in 2015 where the Libya Political Agreement was negotiated, working with European, American and regional representatives to

5 Chris Stephen, 'Tunisia gunman trained in Libya at same time as Bardo museum attackers' 30 June 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/30/tunisia-beach-attack-seifeddine-rezgui-libya-bardo-museum-attackers

encourage the Libyans present to work towards compromise. They also played a role, both with other international partners and by lobbying Libyan domestic actors years later, in helping to implement the 'Berlin Process' that culminated in the selection of the latest Presidency Council and Government of National Unity in February 2021.

The UK's policies are not without its critics. Many observers complained that the military action in 2011 was not followed up with an effective plan to help Libyans adapt to new leadership. As Alistair Burt, who was Foreign Office Minister at the time commented: "We rushed to build capacity to enable the new government to govern. But it was all done in the absence of a political settlement which reflected both the interests of the warring elites and the aspirations of the Libyan population. We should have prioritised the politics over technocratic state-building."

Some officials and politicians have also suggested that the UK should "pick winners", ie back a specific individual or group such as Khalifa Haftar. This approach was rejected. The UK maintained relations with all the key players, including Haftar and tried to encourage them all to compromise and return to the political process led by the UN.

The Berlin Conference on Libya, 2020

The UK also played a strong role at the United Nations in New York where the UK delegation "holds the pen" on Libya, ie produces the first drafts of resolutions, statements for the Security Council. This role proved problematic in 2019 when a UK-drafted resolution calling for an end to Haftar's bombardment of Tripoli met resistance, including from countries formerly regarded as partners.

Conclusion

In the last 2-3 years, the UK's political machinery has been dominated by Brexit and Covid; there has been limited bandwidth for active engagement overseas. That is now beginning to change and the British government wants to play a significant role on the world stage, for example in this year's G7 Presidency and the Chairmanship of the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in December.

The UK will continue to play a constructive and supportive role to the UN in implementing the agreement reached in Geneva by the Libya Political Dialogue Forum and in supporting the key aim of a new Libyan government to organise elections in December. Drafting and negotiating a Security Council resolution to legitimise the outcome and cement the ceasefire will be an important part of the UK's support.

The British Ambassador and his team in Tripoli can also play a supportive role with key Libyan actors on the ground in designing and implementing programmes to help build capacity in Libya's political, security and economic institutions to help bring stability and prosperity to the Libyan people.

The economic element of this approach is important. The three main Libyan economic institutions, the National Oil Corporation, the Central Bank and the Libyan Investment Authority all have strong links with the UK. Any unity government will have to prioritise public services, infrastructure and modernising oil production to create a more sustainable economic base. British companies can be part of that work.

Chapter 4

Italy: In Pursuit of a new Role

by Mattia Giampaolo

Italy has a long and complex history and relationship to Libya that predates the events of the past decade. Italy is conscious of this history, and on February 17th 2011 unlike it's european neighbours in France and the United Kingdom expressed deep concerns regarding Libya's future. This is largely as a result of the pre 2011 revival of ties between the two countries.

The 2008 Treaty on Friendship Partnership and Cooperation Italy and Libya[1] – also known as the Benghazi Treaty - signed between Libya's former leader Mu'ammar Gaddafi and former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, aimed to put an end to the long dispute regarding Italy's colonial legacy in Libya and to open a new chapter of strategic cooperation. Libya and Italy, by signing the treaty, intensified their bilateral relationship in terms of state investments and countering illegal migration from Libya to Italy's shores. Italy, from its side, pledged to pay 5 billion euros of reparations to its former colony for 32 years of occupation, to be invested in basic infrastructures[2].

On the base of this treaty, Italy established itself as Libya's strategic European partner, resulting in Italy gaining privileged access to Libya's energy resources, and also being capable of stemming the migration wave which had begun to alarm Rome.

The Italian oil giant Eni, who had maintained a footprint in Libya throughout it's estrangement from the West, played a quiet but key role behind the scenes in engineering the deal behind the treaty. By 2010, a year before the revolution Libya became Italy's largest oil supplier and third largest gas supplier, accounting for almost 80% of bilateral trade between the two countries.

The 2011 NATO operation not only brought an end to the Gaddafi regime, but an end to the five year long reconciliation process, and Italy's privileged economic partnership with Libya[3]. Its initial neutral position[4] on NATO operations well underway in July 2011 demonstrated how strong the ties were between the two countries, and the risks to Italy.

Moreover, the proactive foreign policy of France, the UK and the USA preceding and following NATO's Operation Unified Protector led to these countries leapfrogging Italy in it's diplomatic relations with the political body that replaced the Gaddafi

1 'Il trattato Italia-Libia di amicizia, partenariato e cooperazione' 2009, http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/pi_a_c_108.pdf
2 Natalino Ronzitti, 'The Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya: New Prospects for Cooperation in the Mediterranean?' 2009, https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_126121_smxx.pdf
3 Lamine Chikhi, 'Italy's Berlusconi exposes NATO rifts over Libya' 7 july 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-idUSTRE7270JP20110707
4 Ibid.

Libyan Prime Minister al-Sarraj and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe

regime, the National Transitional Council. Despite UN endorsement, and EU backing the NATO operation would later become divided over muliteral policies and policy priority. In the aftermath of the foreign intervention in Libya, Italy and France, entered into a long and excruciating diplomatic crisis over their conflicting policies towards Libya that would ultimately divide Europe, and negatively affect the union's role as a unified diplomatic actor during the April 2019 civil war. This intra European rift with France has served to diminish Italy's prominence, it's mediation role and diplomatic capabilities in Libya.

Italy's foreign policy in Libya

Italy's support to the UN brokered Skhirat agreement, which aimed to construct a unity government in the ashes of Libya's 2014 civil war and guide the country to future democratic elections, is not only rooted in Italy's diplomatic regard for UN, but also reflects the safeguarding of its own strategic interests in Libya (energy and migration). In the aftermath of the Gaddafi regime, Italy's foreign policy has continued to be shaped by legacy issues such as energy security, and migration policy. In the years since, Italian diplomacy has worked hard to build relationships with Libyan political figures, particularly in Tripolitania, Western Libya in order to facilitate these policies. In terms of energy, the whole Tripoli province is strategic for gas and oil export. The

city of Mellitah, represents the most important pole for oil and gas export. All the gas produced in Wafa and the offshore field –Bahr Assalam- passes through the Mellitah pipeline and reaches Italy (Gela, Sicily) through the Greenstream Pipeline.

These relationships in western Libya would be a key determinant of Italy's foreign policy after Libya became divided between east and west following the 2014 civil war, and the UN led political process to resolve its policy engagement to Libya. Following the establishment of the Government of National Accord (GNA) in 2015, Italy tried to promote, by backing the UN road map, a unifying process in order to have a stable partner to talk with. However, Italy's foreign policy has also been influenced by domestic affairs, the inability to forge consensus and the resulting weakness of Italian governments since 2014.

The migration 'crisis' has played a crucial role for the stability of the Italian politics. The weakness of the Italian governments from 2014-2018 and 2018-2019 and the increasing spread of anti-migration sentiment led Italy to have a shifting role within the Libyan crisis. Between 2014-18, despite Italy's center-leftist line under both Renzi and Gentiloni administrations, the government began to shape its foreign policy agenda around the issues of security and migration.

The so-called 'migrant's emergency'[5] in Italy became a national security issue, resulting in the government giving the Ministry of Interior the metaphorical keys to manage the crisis at the expense of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Minister. This had severe consequences for Italy that negatively impacted the Italian role in Libya , provoking Italy to take on short-term and short sighted policies which, in some respects, jeopardised Libya's stability.

In order to halt illegal migration, Italy and the GNA signed in 2017 the Memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the development sector, to combat illegal migration, human trafficking and contraband and on reinforcing border security. The document contained an eight points agreement that aimed to manage illegal migration and reinforce the instruments (Libyan Coastal Guards and border security) for the surveillance of the Libyan shores and the terrestrial borders.The scope of the memorandum was not only to manage illegal migration, but aimed to reinforce the GNA's territorial and border control, especially in the South of Libya wherein the government control was poor in terms of security and migration trafficking.

However, considering the fragmentation and institutional weakness of the GNA and the deteriorating conditions on the ground, the Libyan coast guard and the police border were not able to handle the problem on their own. This brought the Interior Minister to contract –quasi informally- with informal armed groups, smugglers in the north and city mayors of the Libyan south to stop migrant flows[6].

5 'Accoglienza rifugiati: un'ordinaria emergenza' 2017, https://www.inmigrazione.it/it/dossier/accoglienza-rifugiati-unordinaria-emergenza

6 'The negotiation of Italy with the Libyan authorities and the role of the trafficker Bija: the Avvenire investigation' 3 November 2019, https://sciabacaoruka.asgi.it/en/the-negotiation-of-italy-with-the-libyan-authorities-and-the-role-of-the-trafficker-bija-the-avvenire-investigation/

In this way, Italian foreign policy became increasingly incoherent; the continuous stress on promoting a unitary institutional path for Libya was followed with the MoU and an contradictory approach that ultimately legitimized the power of armed groups and local tribes. This strategy, predictably did not pay off in the end for both sides. On the one side, Italy was able to stem the migration flow toward its own shores, yet on the other side, the GNA's formal authorities, began to face direct consequences linked to the deal.

The gradual loss of Italy's influence in Libya further increased in May 2018 following Italy's parliamentary elections. The new elected government did not change its foreign policy on Libya; Indeed, the increasing division between the Interior Ministry and the Foreign Affairs Ministry shaped, even more, their controverse decision making process.

In addition the new government of the Lega Nord (North League, nationalist movement), a right wing populist government intensified its relationship with US ex-president Donald Trump, with whom they shared ideational synergies, and with whom Trump regarded as potential allies in Europe, and a key player in Libya.

During a visit to Washington three months earlier, on 30 July 2018, Italy's President Conte obtained President Donald Trump's endorsement to establish an Italian "control room", as the Italian leader defined it, that would make Italy the United States' primary interlocutor in Europe for "Mediterranean challenges" such as terrorism and, particularly, the Libyan crisis. The US support for the Italian government pushed Italy to organize the Palermo conference in November 2018 with the aim of reinforcing the intra-Libyan political dialogue, putting an end to the conflict and replacing its European competitor France in taking a new leading role on Libya.

However, as demonstrated by the poor results of the Palermo conference, Italy, once again demonstrated a lack of coherent strategy in Libya and rather got into a dispute with France over the diplomatic way forward for Libya. Indeed, the new prime minister and former Minister of Interior, Matteo Salvini, adopted a strong anti-migrant rhetoric and started a diplomatic war with France, accusing it of having destabilized Libya and having triggered a migration wave to Italy.

This French-Italian skirmish not only influenced Italy's diplomatic approach to Libya's conflict, but also the quick organization of the Palermo Conference in November2018. The conference was mostly a response[7] to the Paris conference that convened Haftar and Serrak organized by the Elyseees in late May 2019. Italy's new leadership demonstrated during that conference its lack of a coherent strategy in dealing with the Libyan internal political disputes and, moreover, with competing European powers and the foreign policy of France.

7 Marco Magnano, 'Khalifa Haftar and the Palermo conference - Arturo Varvelli' 2 November 2018, https://rbe.it/2018/11/02/khalifa-haftar-e-la-conferenza-di-palermo-arturo-varvelli/

The conference, congratulated by the Lega Nord as a success, failed to elicit any strategic result for Italy or the diplomatic process; on the contrary it provoked further diplomatic turmoil and outrage from important regional actors. Turkey's vice president who attended the conference was requested to leave by Khalifa Haftar, and was excluded from aspects of the meeting leading to his withdrawal from the Palermo conference [8].Behind the failure of the conference, was a reshaping of Italian foreign policy towards Libya and its increasing legitimization of Khalifa Haftar. Italy, as outlined, was a crucial supporter of the Skhirat Agreement that produced the GNA in 2015. Italy's departure from an exclusive relationship to the GNA to building a relationship with Haftar in Palermo in 2018 demonstrated Italy's ambition to carve out a space in France's soft power territory in Libya. The role of France has concerned Rome since the NATO intervention in 2011, but it's relationship to Haftar since 2016 has provoked a sense of urgency and competition. The presence of Italy's neighbor in Libya means potentially jeopardizing Italian strategic interests, in particular it's energy security.

The timing of this reshaping in Italy's foreign policy led to an incoherent strategy following Haftar's attack on Tripoli in April 2019, and exemplifies the paralysis of Italian foreign policy engagement in Libya.

In that moment, Italy simply remained on the sideline, waiting for the battle to produce a winner. A clear example was the Italian silence when Haftar bombed an area only 400 meters away from the Italian military hospital in Misrata. Instead of expressing concern and condemnation of the attack, Italy remained silent and released no statement. President Conte at the time reacted to Haftar's assault claiming: 'Italy is neither with Haftar nor with al-Sarraj, we are with the Libyan people'.

Nevertheless, Italy's attitude towards Libya changed once more through two important events: the Turkish intervention in Libya and the Berlin conference. The signing of the MoU between Turkey and al-Sarraj in November 2019, on maritime border issues triggered the rage of some European countries, amongst them Italy, since the agreement was a direct attack on Italy's energy interests in the East Mediterranean. This event resulted in Italy acting more as a European player and putting aside internal rivalries with France to work within a European Union framework. This change of heart has been facilitated by the Italian government's re-shuffling in 2019 which excluded the far-right movement from the executive and included pro-European forces) within the government coalition.

In the midst of Haftar's attack on Tripoli and Turkey's growing presence in Western Libya, Italy's reinvigorated and multilateral approach has gained more ground in particular during the Berlin conference in January 2020. Italy seemed to put aside its own unilateral interests by promoting a central role for Europe as a 'neutral' actor in the Libyan political peace process.

8 'Turkey withdraws from Libya summit in Italy: vice president' 13 November 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-turkey-idUSKCN1NI1JJ

> During Haftar's 2019 attack on Tripoli, Italy simply remained on the sideline, waiting for the battle to produce a winner.

Airstrikes on tanks belonging to forces loyal to the GNA, April 2019

Conclusion

With the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, Italy has had to return to the drawing board and reshape its role. Thus far, it has been unable to foster strategic relationships with the key political actors who matter on the ground, and return them to the strength they had been prior to the revolution a decade ago. The weakness of subsequent Italian governments and the constant pressure and pursuit of short-term objectives over a long-term strategy has led to a series of incoherent policies. The transformation of the conflict in 2019 into a global civil war has both negatively influenced Italy and Europe's role in the country.In this new phase of the conflict, Italy seems to be more integrated within a European mechanism. Crucial issues regarding Libya, namely energy and migration, seem to be arriving in Brussels rather than Rome.

The same approach is being applied by Italy towards the Berlin process and the UN brokered political dialogue and unification process. Italy has supported all of the UN brokered initiatives taken in Bouznika and Tunis and sees the involvement of Libya's neighbor countries as a positive move on the part of the international community.

In addition, the latest visit of GNA Prime Minister al-Sarraj in Rome and of the Italian External Security Services (AISE) in Benghazi represent the return of Italy to Libya. Yet this return could also be jeopardized by a new internal political crisis within the Italian government that could threaten to short circuit it's new foreign policy before it takes off. If there will be a radical domestic change in the Italian government coalition, Italy should first rebuild its credibility and forge new alliances in order to establish a stable long term strategy, but perhaps Libya's next government cannot wait for Rome to find it's rhythm.

Chapter 5

Algeria: Preventing Chaos

by Dr Yahia H. Zoubir

The fall of Gaddafi in 2011 and the ensuing conflict worried Algeria considerably even if Algerian-Libya relations were often tense due to Gaddafi's impulsive policies. Indeed, despite periods of amity and political affinities Gaddafi's Libya represented an intermittent threat to Algeria's security. His foreign policy caused great concern to Algerian decision makers throughout his reign, regardless of the often trumpeted friendly and brotherly ties of the two neighbours (e.g., when Libya stood with Algeria in 1971 when Algeria nationalized its hydrocarbons resources or the signing of the Arab Maghreb Union in 1989). There are several examples that stand out over Gaddafi's 42 years in power. His manipulation of the Tuareg question (calling for a unified Tuareg state, for instance), the inconsistency of his regional policy (interventions in Africa), his alliance with regimes in conflict with Algeria (e.g., when he signed the Oujda Treaty with Rabat in 1984, thus reneging on his support for the Algerian-backed POLISARIO, the Sahrawi liberation movement) , the non-ratification of the border demarcation with Algeria, his obsession with unions of all kinds, the creation of the Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) in February 1998 without associating Algeria, his use of terrorism and his military adventures, and his confrontation with the United States created serious frictions with Algeria.[1] In the 1990s, Algerian officials were convinced that Gaddafi was supporting Islamist insurgents operating in Algeria[2]. The West's rehabilitation of the Gaddafi regime (2003-2011), accentuated tensions between Algeria and Libya as they became rivals in the energy market; indeed, Libya wanted to replace Algeria as the main supplier of natural gas to Europe[3]. Of course, there were also periods of rapprochement. In 1971, for instance, Libya supported Algeria when it nationalized oil companies or when the two countries contemplated entering a political union in 1987.

During the 2011 revolution, despite misgivings about Gaddafi, Algerian decision-makers opposed military intervention by foreign forces, particularly NATO's Operation Unified Protector. Algerian policymakers were apprehensive that, because Libya had weak institutions, a marginalized military[4], and personalized power, the intervention would result in chaos and thus affect Algeria's national security[5]. Despite what the

1 See, Yahia H. Zoubir, "Tilting the Balance toward Intra-Maghreb Unity in Light of the Arab Spring," International Spectator, Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 2012), p. 92.
2 Author's interview with high-level advisor on national security, March 5, 1993.
3 Yahia H. Zoubir and Louisa Dris-Aït-Hamadouche. Global Security Watch—The Maghreb: Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Press, 2013), 73.
4 Ibrahim, Sharqieh, "Reconstructing Libya: Stability Through National Reconciliation," Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, No. 9, December 2013, p. 4.
5 Author's interviews with officials in Algiers, September 22, 2018.

Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) believed at the time, Algeria did not support the Gaddafi regime during the revolution. It sought a political solution through an African Union led mediation. Algeria had opposed Western intervention, not so much out of sympathy for Gaddafi, but out of realism, fearing that the collapse of the regime through military intervention, without a political solution, would lead to chaos in Libya and a destabilization of the Sahel. This proved to be the case[6].

Following the revolution in 2011, Algeria's main concerns were in regards to security. Algiers was concerned about the emergence of Salafi-Jihadist groups becoming armed with sophisticated weapons; officials were also worried about the influx of refugees into neighbouring countries, the potential destabilization of Tunisia through arms flows from neighbouring Libya, as well as northern Mali with the return of the armed Tuareg who had served in the ranks of the Gaddafi regime[7]. In addition, in the absence of a regular military force to control Libya's border with Algeria, Algiers feared an increase in Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) terrorist attacks along the Algerian-Libyan border—which eventually occurred in 2013 when terrorist groups who had travelled from Libya attacked Algeria's gas plant in Tinguentourine. By 2014 these fears would be exacerbated. The institutional divisions and existence of two rival governments in Libya concerned Algerian policymakers who believed that such conditions favored the rise of jihadist groups linked to Al-Qaeda and later the presence of the Islamic State (Daesh). The absence of a coherent Libyan state, the existence of various rival armed groups, and the return of foreign powers have raised great concern in Algiers, especially since 2014 with the emergence of Khalifa Haftar about whom Algerians have great reservations seeing him as a proxy for foreign powers whose interests are antithetical to the region and Algeria in particular[8]. Not only that; with support from his international backers, Haftar has undermined Algeria's years of diplomatic mediation. Indeed, Haftar represents a serious problem for Algeria's policy toward Libya. Not only is his alignment and close proximity with Egypt, the UAE, and France, but that his propensity for conflict has short-circuited Algeria's mediation efforts and attempts to deescalate the situation in Libya since 2015. Haftar's stretching of the term terrorist to target the UN appointed Government National Accord and his hostility towards the Muslim Brotherhood, close to the GNA in Tripoli, contrasts with Algeria's constructive dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood, whom Algiers had engaged amongst a range of actors in Libya in order to broker reconciliation in Libya.

Algeria takes the threat of terrorist groups seriously, and this conflation by Haftar's camp has exacerbated Libya's problem. There is a prevalent belief in Algiers that whilst Salafi-Jihadist groups have been defeated, they have not been destroyed. The greatest concerns relate to the south and west of Libya where jihadist groups have retreated to pockets of territory in preparation for attacks beyond Libya's borders. Algeria's security forces have reasons to be concerned because the attackers against

6 A senior US official told the author late 2011 that the Algerians were right; they had predicted that a violent overthrow of the regime in Libya would result in chaos. See, Yahia H. Zoubir, "The Libya Spawn, What the Dictator's Demise Unleashed in the Middle East," July 2012, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137796/yahia-h-zoubir/qaddafis-spawn.
7 Yahia H. Zoubir, "The Libya Spawn, What the Dictator's Demise Unleashed in the Middle East," July 2012, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137796/yahia-h-zoubir/qaddafis-spawn
8 Author's interviews with Algerian officials, Algiers, 2016.

the Tinguentourine (In Amenas) gas plant in January 2013 were planned in and carried out from Libya. Algerian authorities fear similar attacks but also terrorist groups settling in the Algerian desert to conduct attacks against various targets or kidnappings as had happened in the early 2000s. Furthermore, while arms trafficking from Libya has diminished considerably, it has not stopped; thus, the porous nature of the border has compelled Algeria to spend enormous resources (troops, sophisticated surveillance equipment) to protect its more than 900-kilometer border with Libya from terrorists and smuggling of all kinds.

Foreign Policy

The quasi-civil war experience in Algeria during the bloody 1990s decade has had a major impact on Algerian policymakers. Based on that experience, Algiers has advocated vis-à-vis the Libyan crisis, an inclusive dialogue involving all factions and especially the Muslim Brotherhood, whom General Haftar, like the UAE and Egypt, consider a terrorist organization. The external support he has received from foreign powers has dissuaded Haftar from making concessions or accepting a political solution, as he has often shown disdain for political processes since 2015[9]. It is precisely this impediment to the political solution advocated by Algiers that has created tensions between Haftar and Algerian decision-makers. For Algeria, "Haftar is only one actor amongothers,"[10] and is therefore not considered as the key actor in the resolution of the Libyan crisis. For Algiers, military interference from France, Egypt and the UAE since 2015 have been a real hindrance to Algeria's policy towards Libya. Algeria has pursued, unsuccessfully, precisely because of those foreign interferences, a strategy of stabilizing Libya by urging Libyans to resort to national reconciliation, akin to the Algerian experience in the late 1990s, to end the civil war and return to state-building. The basic doctrinal principle of Algeria's foreign policy is that conflicts in the Middle East and Africa (and elsewhere) must be resolved peacefully and in which Algeria can play a mediation role as it has done since its independence in 1962[11]. Indeed, Algeria has mediated numerous conflicts, e.g., Mali, Iran-Iraq, US-Iran, Ethiopia-Eritrea, including the hosting of the UN peace process in 2015 that established the GNA. Algeria wishes to see the reconstruction of a strong and stable Libya, which it would view as beneficial since it would lighten the burden of Algeria's military spending in the defense of its borders in the east and south-east to ward off the numerous trafficing of all kinds.[12]

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9 Tarek Megerisi. "Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia. Neighboring States - Diverging Approaches." In Karim Mezran and Arturo Varvelli. Editors. Foreign Actors in Libya's Crisis (Washington, DC & Milan: Atlantic Council & ISPI, 2017), p. 26.

10 Author's telephone interview with an Algerian senior official based in Algiers, 25 September 2018

11 Yahia H. Zoubir, "'The Giant Afraid of Its Shadow'": Algeria, the Reluctant Middle Power," in, Adham Saouli, Editor, Unfulfilled Aspirations: Middle Power Politics in the Middle East, Oxford University Press (2020), pp. 67-90.

12 For more details, see, Yahia H. Zoubir and Djallil Lounnas, "L'Algérie face à l'arc des menaces en Libye et au Mali : Quelle stratégie ?" [Algeria facing the arc of threats in Libya and Mali: What strategy?] The Maghreb Review, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2019, pp. 58-90.

Libyan Prime Minister al-Sarraj and former Algerian Prime Minister Ouyahia

Since Libya's April 2019 conflict, Algeria has undergone a severe political and economic crisis[13], which resulted in the removal of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. A new president, Abdelmadjid Tebboune was elected in December 2019; and is cognisant of the necessity of helping resolve the Libyan conflict as a matter of national security.[14] Algeria participated in the Berlin Conference on Libya on January 20, 2020. Soon afterwards, Algeria's foreign minister Sabri Boukadoum traveled to eastern Libya, but was unable to meet with Haftar. While Algeria has adopted a neutral position, each official meeting with one or the other Libyan rivals resulted in strains with both. The new diplomatic initiatives regarding Libya provided more visibility and legitimacy for the new president but domestically were also meant to warn the population about the seriousness of the threat at Algeria's borders.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, since the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, Libya has represented major security challenges for Algeria. The various terrorist attacks emanating from Libya (and Mali), added to the instability in the Sahel in general, and, since December 2020, the resumption of hostilities between Morocco and the Polisario Front, have compelled Algeria to play a leading role in the resolution of the conflict in Libya. The current shifts in alliances, such as the normalization of relations between Israel and Arab states, particularly with Morocco have forced Algeria to reassess its alliances.

13 Yahia H. Zoubir, ""The Algerian Crisis: Origins and Prospects for a 'Second Republic.'" 21 May 2019. http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2019/05/algerian-crisis-origins-prospects-republic-190520100257161.html.
14 Alia Brahimi and Akram Kharief, "Why Algeria is suddenly more interested in Libya," 6 March 2020, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/why-algeria-is-suddenly-more-intersted-in-libya/

Being one of the most pro-Palestinian states in the MENA, Algeria sees itself as the target of the Arab states that normalized relations with Israel. The presence of the UAE in Libya and its support for Morocco in seeking annexation of the Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara has raised considerable concerns in the political-security establishment. There is pressure from public opinion to leave the Arab League, perceived as an instrument of the Gulf states in imposing their policies in the North African region. However, Algerian policymakers are reconsidering their external relations, but will not make drastic changes until they know whether the US Administration under Joe Biden will rescind Donald Trump's decision to recognize Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara. They are also watching closely whether Washington will play an active role in resolving the Libyan crisis. If the Joe Biden administration chooses to play such a role, Algeria may offer its good offices. In the meantime, Algeria has operated important changes with the internal structures of its intelligence services, which had been all but destroyed by the previous regime and prevented Algeria from playing a more assertive role in the resolution of the Libyan crisis.

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The presence of the UAE in Libya and its support for Morocco in seeking annexation of the Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara has raised considerable concerns in the political-security establishment. There is pressure from public opinion to leave the Arab League, perceived as an instrument of the Gulf states in imposing their policies in the North African region.

Chapter 6

Tunisia: Between Diplomatic Doctrine and Revolutionary Reality

by Habib M. Sayah

Tunisia, the birthplace of the 2011 revolutions, has much in common with its neighbour Libya. Tunisia and Libya have a long and rich shared history and following the revolutions in many ways an intertwined fate as a result of the deep relationships and ties between its peoples. What transpires on one side of the border often has an affect on the other side. Much of this pre-dates the revolution, and is outside of the grip of either state. The shared economies of borderland and transnational communities along the 461km land border have established strong intercommunal bonds but hang on their ability to trade outside of the state's control. Whilst the two countries also face common transnational threats: from Tunisian terrorist networks that employed Libya's terrain as a safe haven to mount attacks on their home country to the new shared threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the state of the official border has oscillated between openness and closedness since the 2011 revolution, reflecting the need to balance economic and national security imperatives.

Most importantly, the two countries are traversed by analogue – often imported – fault lines, such as the Turkish rivalry with the UAE, leading actors on both sides to align with cross-border counterparts rather than along national lines. Yet, Tunisian diplomacy appears to have been stuck on the side-lines while the country's military took the path of least resistance: building a border fence.

The endurance of the Bourguiba doctrine

Prior to the revolution of 2011, Tunisian diplomacy had never dealt with conflicting domestic perspectives on foreign policy. Following Tunisia's independence in 1956, the state was characterised by a symbiosis that defined both it's political character and it's foreign policy. A highly centralised state apparatus, including its diplomatic branch, and a single party that had retained control over the state. The Tunisian revolution would change this. The emerging pluralist political forces in Tunisia enabled the emergence of a multipolar political landscape representing a variety of foreign policy perspectives and exerting conflicting pressures on Tunisia's diplomacy.

Despite various attempts made by post revolution political parties to influence and reshape Tunisia's foreign policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, staffed by career civil servants sharing a strong organisational culture inherited from the previous regime, have been able to maintain relative arms length and autonomy from competing political factions.

It is in this context that the Tunisian diplomatic apparatus since 2011 has sought to perpetuate the country's post-independence foreign policy doctrine which is deeply ingrained in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Inherited from President Habib Bourguiba, this doctrine is characterised by the following principles: positive neutrality (manifest in the avoidance of conflict), non-interference – especially in the domestic affairs of other Maghreb countries – and the respect of international legality.

2011-2015: Diplomatic paralysis

Following the overthrow of the Ben Ali regime, Tunisia welcomed Libya's first post Gaddafi democratic elections and enjoyed warm diplomatic relations with its first elected government in 2012. However, following the emergence of Khalifa Haftar in 2014 the Libyan civil war that produced rival administrations and parallel economic and security institutions would prove to be the first post Gaddafi challenge to Tunisian diplomacy. The continuation of the Bourguiba neutrality doctrine allowed the Tunisian government to avoid being dragged into a conflict which could have spilt over into Tunisia, during its own transition and fragile stability. However, the deeply Westphalian worldview underpinning this doctrine proved sorely problematic in a new post revolutionary environment. Inherited from a Cold War context, Tunisia's foreign policy doctrine, not unlike its military doctrine, only accounts for a world of inter-state relations. It could not cope with Libya's fragmentation into hybrid state and non-state actors and the resulting intricate web of power relations and political divisions. Foreign policy doctrine turned into dogma, as Tunisia could not find indisputably legitimate interlocutors on the Libyan side as a result of the civil war. In 2014, at the peak of Libya's civil war the most relevant stakeholders to Tunisia's border security were local non-state actors across the Tunisian-Libyan border, the Tunisian government kept desperately looking for a Libyan state – or at least central institutions – to talk to.

As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs froze into a confused paralysis, informal Tunisian actors took matters into their own hands and filled the vacuum. Political parties, businesspeople and local officials from borderland communities – often with ties to smuggling networks and/or regional powers invested in the Libyan civil conflict – established or activated pre-existing relations on the Libyan side to deal with issues which would traditionally fall under the remit of Tunisian diplomacy such as border closures or the repatriation of hostages. Rather than mobilising those actors with cross-border ties, Tunisian diplomacy remained on the side-lines, uneasy with increased interference by actors pursuing agendas which did not necessarily conform to the state's policy objectives, but powerless to stop them.

If it looks like a state, treat it as a state

In 2015, the formation of a Government of National Accord (GNA) following the UN brokered Skhirat Agreement came as a welcomed relief to Tunisian diplomacy. Regardless of its effectiveness, influence and legitimacy, the existence of an internationally recognised government in Libya provided an institutional framework Tunisian foreign policy could finally build a constructive relationship with.

> **Foreign policy doctrine turned into dogma, as Tunisia could not find indisputably legitimate interlocutors on the Libyan side as a result of the civil war.**

This new state of affairs afforded Tunisian diplomacy the ability to shelter behind international legality – one of the fundamentals of the Bourguiba doctrine – rather than decisively taking sides in a bitter civil conflict as other regional actors had. However, Tunisia's recognition of a GNA whose legitimacy was disputed by various Libyan actors has been interpreted as a breach of Tunisia's neutrality, notably by Haftar's Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) which issued threats against the Tunisian government as it was attempting to wrestle control of the Ras Jedir border crossing.[1]

While regional powers' recognition of the GNA did not prevent them from engaging with other Libyan factions irrespective of their legitimacy to advance their interests. Tunisia's conflict-insensitive 'state-to-state' approach led it to disregard important local actors on the Libyan side. Indeed, Haftar's challenge to the GNA resulted in a GNA that was consumed by domestic legality and a new round of diplomacy that diminished its effectiveness and influence on the ground. The GNA became limited and could not be a suitable interlocutor to solve bilaterally challenges and real-world problems Tunisia was facing.

In pursuit of a Libyan-Libyan solution

Timidly re-asserting that "we stick to international legitimacy" before adding that "such legitimacy is not eternal"[2] after having engaged with in January 2020, President Kais Saied took act of the expiry of the GNA's mandate pursuant to the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA). In doing so, he steered diplomacy towards a more nuanced, pragmatic and proactive stance on the Libyan dossier.

Rather than passive neutrality, Tunisian diplomacy's renewed stance seeks a Libyan-Libyan political solution to the conflict, in concert with their shared Algerian neighbour. However, this pursuit is met by challenges posed by both foreign and domestic interference. While Saied resisted Turkeys' request to use the Tunisian territory to enable military assistance to the GNA during the Battle of Tripoli in 2019, tensions appeared between the Tunisian president and Ennahdha's leader and Chairman of the Parliament Rached Ghannouchi. Under the guise of parliamentary diplomacy, the latter stepped over the President's reserved domain by expressing support for Turkish intervention in Libya and congratulating al-Serraj for the recapture of al-Watyia airbase.

As long as the rivalry between the Turkish axis and the UAE-Russian axis, which translates into proxy warfare in Libya, continues to play out in Tunisian politics through alliances with polarised domestic factions, pressures from within and from without will threaten to derail the continuity of Tunisian diplomacy.

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1 Samir Hamdi, 'What does Haftar want with Tunisia? 2 April 2020, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200402-what-does-haftar-want-with-tunisia/

2 Watania 1 TV, 'Interview with the President of the Republic Kais Saied,' 30 January 2020, https://youtu.be/jImUcUsZcXc?t=1010.

The Bourguiba doctrine, still vivid in the Tunisian diplomatic corps, may act as a fixed-point attractor Tunisian foreign policy could fall back to. But the price to pay could very well be further sinking into irrelevance as other regional powers aggressively level-up their meddling into Libya.

Chapter 7

Morocco: Positive Neutrality

by Noamane Cherkaoui

Stretching back centuries, Morocco and Libya have an ancient history of geographical, ethnolinguistic, cultural, and religious connections. Politically, their bilateral relations were mostly favourable until 1969, when they began to deteriorate after Mu'ammar Gaddafi deposed King Idris I in a military coup. This would launch the start of a frictional relationship, in which Libya became a Maghreb neighbour with antipathetic policies towards Morocco. During Gaddafi's era, there were various lows, with the most enduring becoming his support for the Polisario Front, a separatist group founded in 1973 and based along the Algerian–Moroccan border[1]. Gaddafi provided them with consequential backing and aid for decades, and his support was initially indispensable for the Front's armed conflict against Morocco. Another low was when the late King Hassan II accused Tripoli of backing a coup against him in 1971 – Libyan media had been among the first to offer support to the unsuccessful putschists[2].

Accordingly, with bilateral relations strained, Morocco began playing an important role in Libya's opposition movement. In 1982, the Libyan opposition group National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL) held its inaugural "National Council" in Rabat[3]. That relationship essentially continued until 1984, when a thaw in Libya-Morocco relations began to ostensibly be observed. The two nations signed the Arab-African Union treaty, the apex of King Hassan II and Gaddafi's newfound reconciliation, with developments like Libya withdrawing from Chad[4] and the establishment of a joint legislature[5] transpiring shortly thereafter. Additionally, as a sign of goodwill, Rabat deported a prominent Libyan opposition figure, Omar Muhayshi, to Tripoli – the latter had safe haven in Morocco for years[6]. Gaddafi's support for the Polisario Front also declined considerably as a result of the treaty[7], though he kept their Tripoli office

1 Nisrine Amel Lamamra, 'Western Sahara Since the Arab Spring' January 2015, https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/western-sahara-since-arab-spring/
2 'Soldiers attack Moroccan palace; King keeps power', 11 June 1971, https://www.nytimes.com/1971/07/11/archives/soldiers-attack-moroccan-palace-king-keeps-power-hassan-on-radio.html
3 Al-Sadiq Shukry, 'A thundering in politics and history', 7 June 2006, http://archive.libya-al-mostakbal.org/MinbarAlkottab/June2006/assadeq_shukri_hadraza070606p2_11.htm
4 Edward Schumacher, 'Morocco justifies union with Libya', 18 September 1984, https://www.nytimes.com/1984/09/18/world/morocco-justifies-union-with-libya.html
5 'Around the world ; Libya and Morocco Move Toward Union' 7 July 1985, https://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/07/world/around-the-world-libya-and-morocco-move-toward-union.html
6 Adrar Nefoussa, 'In the memory of Kikhia, and for history ... the disappeared Forcibly Omar Abdullah Al-Mahishi' 10 Decemeber 2009, http://archive.libya-al-mostakbal.org/MalaffatKhassa/adrar_nafosa_alm-heeshi_101209.html
7 Christopher Paul et al. 'Western Sahara, 1975–1991', 2013, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.7249/j.ctt5hhs-jk.46.pdf

open[8]. Nevertheless, the reconciliation would prove to be short-lived, and King Hassan II abrogated the treaty in 1986, to the "pleasure and delight" of the United States[9]. This step did not happen in a vacuum, with dynamics including how Gaddafi had initially aimed to use Rabat and its diplomatic network via the treaty to assuage US concerns about Gaddafi's links to international terrorism[10]. Yet, following the 1986 West Berlin discotheque bombing, the US launched retaliatory air strikes against Libya[11], and this escalation all but ensured a hardline stance was to prevail. Another notable dynamic was King Hassan II's hosting of Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres for talks in Ifrane a few months afterwards[12]. This was a move that was denounced by hardline Arab nations, particularly Libya, and would prove to be the nail in the coffin for the treaty and bilateral relations. Rabat used the resultant Libyan-Syrian communique as a pretext to abrogate the treaty and jettison the corrosive connection with Gaddafi[13], a development which noticeably preceded the rescheduling of its external debt after years of issues[14]. Incidentally, following these events, Gaddafi reportedly plotted to have Morocco's monarch assassinated in 1987[15].

The thaw moderately renewed after King Mohamed VI's ascension and the cascade of developments following September 11, 2001. Gaddafi became more obliged to accept US stipulations, such as dismantling Libya's modest nuclear program, and tilt westwards[16]. This essentially marked the beginning of quasi-normal relations between Rabat and Tripoli, with the influence of the principal stumbling block, the

Polisario Front, already waning significantly by that time due to the 1991 ceasefire and the conflict's evolution. Nevertheless, the developing apathy meant Morocco would view the events that eventually transpired in 2011 with great interest.

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8 Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 'South–South Educational Migration, Humanitarianism and Development' 14 November 14 2017, https://www.routledge.com/SouthSouth-Educational-Migration-Humanitarianism-and-Development-Views/Fiddian-Qasmiyeh/p/book/9780815379362 (p.110)
9 Edward M. Gabriel, 'King Hassan II Abrogated a Treaty with Libya in 1986: The United States was "Delighted" '18 January 2019, https://moroccoonthemove.com/2019/01/18/king-hassan-ii-abrogated-a-treaty-with-libya-in-1986-the-united-states-was-delighted-ambassador-edward-m-gabriel-ret/
10 Ronald Bruce St. John, 'Terrorism and Libyan Foreign Policy, 1981-1986' July 1986, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40395836?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents
11 Steven Erlanger: '4 Guilty in Fatal 1986 Berlin Disco Bombing Linked to Libya' 14 November 2001, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/11/14/world/4-guilty-in-fatal-1986-berlin-disco-bombing-linked-to-libya.html
12 Judith Miller: Peres and Hassan in talks; Syria breaks Moroccan ties' 23 July 1986, https://www.nytimes.com/1986/07/23/world/peres-and-hassan-in-talks-syria-breaks-moroccan-ties.html
13 'Morocco canceling treaty aimed at union with Libya' 30 August 1986, https://www.nytimes.com/1986/08/30/world/morocco-canceling-treaty-aimed-at-union-with-libya.html
14 François Soudan, 'Sahara : Mohammed VI ou l'art du deal' 21 December 2020, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1093888/politique/edito-sahara-mohammed-vi-ou-lart-du-deal/
15 'Morocco-Libya: Gaddafi Plotted to Assassinate Hassan II, CIA Reveals' 21 January 2017, https://northafricapost.com/16081-morocco-libya-gaddafi-plotted-assassinate-hassan-ii-cia-reveals.html
16 Målfrid Braut-Hegghammer, 'Libya's Nuclear Turnaround: Perspectives from Tripoli' 2008, https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/mei/mei/2008/00000062/00000001/art00004

Foreign Policy Towards Libya Since 2011

After Gaddafi was deposed in 2011, Rabat kept a keen eye on unfolding events. While there was no deliberate policy per se, Rabat aimed to ensure Libya did not become a failed state. Morocco was one of the most active actors during the revolution; it was quick to establish a military hospital on the Tunisia-Libya border for displaced Libyans in March 2011[17], a member of the Libya Contact Group, one of the first to recognise the nascent National Transitional Council (NTC), and the location of the former interim Prime Minister el-Kib's first official visit in 2012. Indeed, unlike the suppressive reflex of dictatorships in the region, Rabat's underlying doctrine was not opposed to the Arab Spring or political reforms, which is a historical characteristic. By way of example, after an Islamist party was poised to emerge victorious in Algeria's first free parliamentary elections in 1992, Rabat's reaction was to encourage letting the wheels of democracy turn[18]. However, elections were instead annulled by military coup, leading to a civil war and a brutal 'black decade' in Algeria[19]. The Moroccan monarchy also benefits from domestic legitimacy, and its pragmatic response to protests in 2011 allowed it to assuage public concerns effectively. The shock absorber is robust under Morocco's monarchy – which dictates the nation's foreign policy, not parties or politics – and even craftily co-opted Morocco's most prominent Islamist party, the Justice and Development Party (JDP)[20]. Incidentally, the rope the JDP, in power since 2011, has been given as a legitimate electoral candidate has allowed citizenry to evaluate the party mostly on its merits. Moreover, as the events of 2011 transpired, an opportunity likewise presented itself for Rabat to undercut Algeria's foreign policy in general, and its approach to Libya's revolution in particular. Algiers was sympathetic to Gaddafi's cause and provided refuge for his family, and an undercutting opportunity, due to entrenched regional dynamics, is rarely unwelcome.

Morocco's foreign policy is driven primarily by its soft power, and it has made noteworthy inroads in the African continent in the last few years. After King Mohammed VI's ascension, Rabat orchestrated a thoughtful shift towards Africa, with dozens of bilateral agreements being signed and a focus being placed on strategic partnerships. This approach has reaped fruit, and its pragmatic policy making saw it rejoin the African Union in 2017. Moreover, its strategic location along the strait of Gibraltar and long-term vision have allowed it to leverage its capabilities and develop into a valuable partner for Western allies. Morocco's soft power, focused mainly on diplomatic and humanitarian aspects, has likewise been actively deployed in Libya. Following the outbreak of the 17 February revolution, it supported efforts to isolate Gaddafi, being privy to the Arab League's suspension of Libya and its request for a no-fly zone on 12 March 2011, and attending the Paris Summit for the Support of the Libyan People on 19 March.

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17 Abdul Rahman Al-Ash'ari , 'Tunisia honors the staff of the Moroccan Military Field Hospital' 29 Decemeber 2011, https://www.arrabita.ma/blog/تونس-تكرم-طاقم-المستشفى-العسكري-المغربي-الميداني/

18 Mohammed Jaabouk, 'Quand Abbassi Madani rassurait Hassan II sur la position du FIS sur la question du Sahara' 25 April 2019, html https://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/77536/quand-abbassi-madani-ras-surait-hassan.html

19 'Algeria Conflict Insight' April 2020, https://media.africaportal.org/documents/ALGERIA-Conflict-Insights-.pdf

20 https://carnegie-mec.org/2015/03/23/his-majesty-s-islamists-moroccan-experience-pub-59442

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Morocco's then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Taieb Fassi Fihri, said that Rabat believed that the solution in Libya could only be "political and forward-looking,"[21] a view it still shares now, with its desired outcome remaining consistent: the Libyan people being put at the forefront of any sustainable settlement.

In Rabat's view, the revolution in Libya offered this brotherly nation an opportunity to introduce new political players and develop a lively public sphere, particularly given factors such as political parties being hitherto outlawed. In this regard, it considered some Arab countries' stances against forces affiliated with the Arab Spring as counterproductive.[22] For Rabat, the preferred approach is to encourage dialogue among stakeholders; a political path is ultimately more conducive to stability and formalises the capacity to co-opt, unlike the violence in Libya that has introduced fragmented and localised actors.

The guiding principles of Morocco's foreign policy in Libya are three-fold. Firstly, while Morocco regards Libya in fraternal terms, it also benefits from the latter's stability. Conflict in the country has had significant reverberations in the region, including in the Sahel, where an arms and combatant flow has exacerbated violent extremism and threatened Morocco's national security. Another dynamic is Rabat's economic interests with Libya, which can act as a gateway to sub-Saharan Africa for Morocco. Morocco is also a net energy importer, so Libya's possession of the largest proven crude oil reserves in Africa can be a conduit for a mutually profitable relationship[23]. Secondly, Morocco wants to counter Algeria's professed regional hegemony and advance its relationships with allies. This would allow Rabat to consolidate its anti-encirclement strategy and expand its power projection capabilities. In the post-Cold War era, Algeria's sphere of influence in the Maghreb has included Mauritania and to a lesser extent Tunisia, while Morocco likewise views Tunisia as a constructive partner, which leaves Libya as a wildcard that dovetails with Rabat's longstanding holistic links with the country. Thirdly, the role that Morocco's southern provinces play is important. The Polisario Front, for years aided and abetted by Algiers in bad faith, has been reduced as a force and Rabat would like to avoid the revitalisation of its separatist aspirations. As a result, Rabat has a strong preference in seeing partners in Libya that are not in the Gaddafist mould and respect its sovereignty – the latter also a concept its efforts have aimed to preserve within Libya.

Morocco's engagement in Libya has been most conspicuous through the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) of 2015, co-mediated by Morocco under the auspices of the United Nations (UN). It was signed in 2015 in Skhirat and represented a significant success for Moroccan diplomacy. The LPA was an opportunity to bring actors together around a unity government – ultimately the Government of National Accord (GNA) – with Libya requiring a political settlement to move forward constructively. Rabat has maintained that, as in the words of its Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser Bourita, the

21 Souhail Karam, 'Gaddafi envoy holds talks in Morocco' 19 April 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/libya-morocco-idAFLDE73I00B20110419
22 Antonino Occhiuto and Giorgio Cafiero, 'Why the downward spiral in Morocco-UAE relations?' 31 March 2020, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/03/31/why-the-downward-spiral-in-morocco-uae-relations/
23 "Country Analysis Brief: Libya" 19 November 2015, https://www.eia.gov/international/overview/country/LBY

Libyan conflict is a "strategic nonsense and a no-win situation for all in the long run."[24] The LPA was also an attempt to offer a consensus-based solution to domestic ails that had already torpedoed internal organic peace processes. It was only a first step, and since then its gaps have regrettably been exploited in bad faith by adverse actors, both internally and abroad. Rabat's next notable soft power projection came in 2020; it organised several meetings in Bouznika and Tangier with representatives of institutions legitimised by the LPA. In Rabat's view, the LPA remains a sufficiently flexible and UNSC-endorsed framework for Libya's conflict resolution. As a result, it aimed through solution-oriented mediation to facilitate headway on some existing stalemates in Libya via the deal's mechanisms, including Article 15 to manage sovereign positions. These meetings occurred after the Berlin Conference in January,

which Morocco did not receive an invitation to – a myopic decision rued in the capital and likely an attempt to placate Libya's neighbour, Algeria.

Ultimately, Morocco has a deposition towards UN-backed and internationally-recognised institutions in Libya. While adverse attempts by internal and external spoilers have been a staple of Libya's conflict dynamics and political landscape, Morocco's open channels with all sides is indicative of its pragmatism and aim to support, not negative interference. Furthermore, some aspects of the East-based counterrevolutionary Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) are in disharmony with Rabat's regional strategy. This includes its head Khalifa Haftar's reliance on Madkhali-Salafism, a brand of Islamism that clashes with Morocco's moderate Maliki-Sufism – a key part of its soft power – and his penchant for a structurally unstable autocrat model.

24 'Libyan Dialogue is an Important Milestone that Transforms Years-long Impasse into Real Momentum: FM' 30 September 2020, https://www.mapnews.ma/en/actualites/politics/libyan-dialogue-important-milestone-transforms-years-long-impasse-real-momentum

Additionally, a key backer of the LAAF, Egypt, and its President al-Sisi are aiming to establish better ties with Algeria, the location of al-Sisi's first official visit abroad after assuming office in June 2014[25]. Indeed, suspicions have emerged of coordination between Cairo and pro-Polisario circles, with the former refusing to support Morocco's stance on the issue and hosting Polisario delegations in 2015 and 2019.

Moving Forward

A decade on from Libya's revolution, Morocco's foreign policy towards Libya is still dictated by an emphasis on the traditional dyad of security and stability – and therefore a representative political settlement. Rabat will benefit from an equitable solution that unites institutions and turns the page on Libya's conflict, and from Libya being in a position to employ its considerable resources to progress and prosper. Peace is ultimately conditional on equitability, and tensions in southern Libya and the odious Sirte-Jufra line's consolidation by the LAAF, coupled with the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum's (LPDF) limitations, means a sustainable conflict resolution may remain elusive in the foreseeable future. The aim of some foreign backers also continues to be divide and rule – the country, the UN-backed government – and military build-ups will not vanish overnight. As a result, Rabat's position is expected to remain flexibly steadfast; it will not budge on an inclusive Libyan-Libyan solution, but its pragmatism means the particulars of this scenario are not fixed. In any case, the objective for Morocco, and the basis of its positive neutrality, will remain the same: a successful political track and a thriving, stable Libya.

25 'Egypt's Sisi make Algeria his first foreign trip, security tops agenda` 25 June 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/instant-article/idAFKBN0F01SZ20140625

Chapter 8

Turkey: The Geo Political Knot

by Bilgehan Öztürk

There are a multitude of differences between respective Turkish foreign policies of the past under the Gaddafi era and the foreign policy of the last decade in the post-revolution climate, resulting in a major shift in Libya's strategic importance to Turkey. It is challenging to reduce or define over four decades of foreign relations to a distinct policy or a certain mode of bilateral relations between Turkey and Libya during the Gaddafi regime for two reasons. Firstly, Gaddafi himself was an unpredictable figure with whom it was difficult to maintain a consistent and stable diplomatic or even personal relationship with; secondly, Gaddafi ruled for 42 years, which is a long life span that was bound to experience fluctuations in any engagement. This was also the case for Turkish-Libyan relations, which ranged from Gaddafi's solidarity with Turkey against the US-imposed embargo after Turkey's military intervention in Cyprus in 1974, to intermittent harbouring of members of designated terrorist organisations such as the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) and ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) in Libya. Asides from the political turbulence, the most discernible and consistent hallmark of Turkish-Libyan relations during the Gaddafi era were primarily economic in nature with bilateral trade and investments being most notable. Libya served as one of the most profitable foreign construction destinations for Turkey following Gaddafi's rapprochement with the West in 2003. By 2010, around 200 Turkish construction firms operating in Libya had secured contracts for over 300 construction projects worth 20 billion US dollars[1]. While the economic and commercial aspect of bilateral relations was robust, the political aspect of bilateral relations was only peripheral to the former.

The Revolution

When popular uprisings erupted in Libya at the beginning of 2011, it was an 'either/or' moment for decision-makers in Turkey. By the time Libyans had started to demonstrate against the regime on February 17th 2011, their neighbours in Tunisia and Egypt had already demonstrated proof of concept, and it became clear that this was a region-wide phenomenon, not a local one endemic to Libya. With revolutions toppling neighbouring regimes in a matter of weeks, a sense of urgency began to build over Libya that required rapid decision making in Ankara. Decision-makers were under significant pressure to reshape their foreign policy, not only in Libya across the region. Turkey declared its support for the National Transitional Council in July 2011

1 "Info Note on Turkish-Libyan Economic and Commercial Relations", Tripoli Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, 4 July 2012, http:// trablus.be.mfa.gov.tr/ShowInfoNotes.aspx?ID=157183.

concerned that they would miss the opportunity of cultivating fruitful relations with the future political actors and decision makers of Libya if they waited any longer. Turkey participated in the NATO led operation that eventually toppled the Gaddafi regime, and with it felt that despite their initial hesitance, the NTC would look favourably on Turkey's policy position.

This was not only a pragmatic 'investment' by Turkish decision-makers but also became a moment of introspection between the foreign ministry and the executive, as Turkey began to reshape its regional foreign policy position towards the new post Arab Spring order. This new foreign policy would be based on a position to be maintained on normative grounds such as support for democracy, the reflection of national or popular will in government, the rule of law and a peaceful transition of power. In short, a new foreign policy to reflect the new era and realities of the region.

In terms of Turkey's preferences and goals in post-revolution Libya, there has been continuity and consistency in it's foreign policy position over the past decade. Turkey aims at ensuring the presence and viability of an amicable administration in Libya, a position which has become the hallmark of its foreign policy towards post revolution Libya. This position has matured as a result of the regressions to the post Arab Spring order. A sense of urgency has underpinned this goal following the 2013 coup d'état in Egypt and Haftar's attempted coup in 2014. In political terms, Ankara did not want to see a replica of the 'Sisi Regime' in Libya. Turkey had begun to lose considerable influence in the wider Middle East and North Africa as a result of the Egyptian coup. Before the Egyptian coup, Turkey enjoyed positive political and economic relations with all MENA countries that were experiencing the Arab Spring and particularly those that had produced democratic and amicable governments to Turkey. So much so that the so-called 'Turkish model' had become a catchphrase of the time[2]. The region was dominated by like-minded governments and actors, which shared at least the common vision of a region free of dictatorships or military rulers with Turkey. Once Egypt was eliminated as the most influential heavyweight in the Arab World among the ranks of the revolutionary actors through the 2013 military coup, Turkey not only lost its main partner in consolidating a new regional order but also faced a powerful foe that embodied and exported a counter-revolutionary vision. As Al-Nahda fell from prominence in Tunisia and Haftar arrived soon after, in Libya, Turkey's short-lived gains in the post-Arab Spring period were effectively rolled back.

Geo politics of Foreign Policy

However, what made Libya indispensable to Turkey in this respect, were the resulting adverse energy security and geopolitical dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean which resulted in the encirclement of Turkey by it's regional competitors in the years following the arrival of the military to power in Egypt. The years following the coup saw increasing exploration and drilling activities for oil and gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean by especially Israel, Egypt and Greek Cypriot Administration (GCA).

2 See Kemal Kirişci, "The Rise and Fall of Turkey as a Model for the Arab World", Brookings, 15 August 2013, The Rise and Fall of Turkey as a Model for the Arab World (brookings.edu); See also Akin Unver, "The Forgotten Secular Turkish Model", Middle East Quarterly, Winter 2013, pp. 57-64.

East Mediterranean Gas Forum Meeting 2019

The latter's activities were especially worrisome for Turkey since they involved disputed maritime zones between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the GCA surrounding the island of Cyprus, which added a sovereignty dimension to the issue beyond the regional scramble for natural resources. Strategic alignment between Israel, Egypt, Greece and the GCA, which culminated in the form of EastMed Gas Forum (EMGF) aimed at exporting natural gas to Europe via a pipeline under the Mediterranean Sea only compounded Turkey's concerns of being doomed to geopolitical irrelevance and exclusion. Greece's maritime claims, granting islands continental shelves as much as mainlands convinced Ankara that Turkey was being boxed in its shores by an aggressive regional alliance. What's at stake was not only a share of natural resources in the Eastern Mediterranean but also Turkey's freedom of navigation. The only way out of this encirclement was a common position with Libya. These geo-political dynamics have been in play since 2013, but had not dramatically changed until Libya's second civil war. Haftar's assault on Tripoli in April 2019 was the parting shot of this geopolitical encirclement, triggering Turkey's military assistance in order to preserve the existence of the GNA, viewed as an amicable alternative to Haftar by Ankara. In this sense, the military dimension of Turkey's intervention to preserve the GNA was a tool for Turkey to achieve its strategic goals in the Eastern Mediterranean such as securing its maritime zones through bilateral agreements with Egypt, Israel and Lebanon based on the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ankara and the GNA; and taking part in any energy project that would export oil and gas from the region to Europe. Turkish decision-makers believe that a stable and politically amicable Libya that is not under military rule backed by its regional adversaries would serve Turkey's interests in the best way.

Determinants of Foreign Policy

Turkey's foreign policy towards post Gaddafi Libya has been largely determined by three key phenomena, namely; Turkey's own political experiences, the opportunities and threats present in Libya, and finally the emerging geopolitical realities in the region. These determinants have combined to transform Libya into a key strategic theatre for Turkey's foreign policy. Between 2011 and 2014 Libya remained interesting but peripheral to Turkey. Ankara's foreign policy engagement was economically driven and focused on supporting the reconstruction process in Libya and in turn strengthen bilateral economic ties, but as the conditions on the ground began to radically change these policies would be short-lived. Following Haftar's emergence and the civil war in 2014, Turkey shifted to the periphery, avoiding becoming a party to the conflict in the way regional powers had and called for a solution based on dialogue and national consensus[3]. Turkey's early calls for dialogue were in line with the subsequent UN brokered efforts to convene the rival parties to the conflict and produce a Government of National Accord (GNA) in Skhirat, Morocco in 2015[4]. Following the rejection of the GNA by Haftar in 2016, Turkey maintained a reluctant belief in subsequent diplomatic efforts to overcome the crisis through a second separate UN backed process that began in 2017. However, Haftar's rhetoric growing anti-Turkey rhetoric and attempts to marginalise Turkey's role in the diplomatic process at the U.N brokered Palermo talks alerted Ankara to the new realities in Libya[5]. Haftar's subsequent unilateral withdrawal from diplomatic talks in favour of overthrowing the GNA in Tripoli on April 4th 2019 was a game changer and provoked a major shift in determining Turkey's foreign engagement policy towards Libya.

For Ankara, Libya's second civil war was a perfect storm. Haftar's war had the backing of an international alliance of actors in Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and France perceived in Ankara as a hostile geopolitical 'anti Turkish camp'. Their military backing to Haftar's assault on Tripoli transformed Ankara's perception of Libya into a dangerous geo-political knot, that if tied would threaten Turkey's relevance and survival as a power in the MENA region and in particular the Eastern Mediterranean. The diplomatic landscape had also radically changed for Ankara. The fact the UN Security Council and European Union had failed to sanction or deter Haftar and his international backers and thus failed to fulfil their promise to support to the GNA and uphold the peace talks made it clear that Turkey could not maintain its existing mode of foreign policy engagement and would be forced to reassess its approach to Libya.

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3 Personal Account of Emrullah İşler, Turkey's Former Special Envoy to Libya, in "Türkiye-Libya İlişkileri: Tarihsel Perspektif, Güncel Analiz" in Libya Krizi (eds.) Burhanettin Duran and Muhittin Ataman, 2020, SETA: İstanbul, pp. 51-69.

4 In his first visit to Libya, Emrullah İşler, Turkey's Former Special Envoy to Libya met HoR officials and HoR appointed prime minister Abdullah al-Thinni as well as GNC appointed prime minister Omar al-Hasi, See "Türkiye, Libya'da El Hasi ile görüşen ilk ülke oldu", BBC Türkçe, 22 October 2014, Türkiye, Libya'da El Hasi ile görüşen ilk ülke oldu - BBC News Türkçe; Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stated that Turkey was not a party [between two rival governments] in Libya, that it strived for a political solution and that it supported Bernardino Leon's efforts, See "Çavuşoğlu: 'Türkiye'nin Tutumu Baştan Sona Nettir'", Haberler, 13 January 2015, Çavuşoğlu: "Türkiye'nin Tutumu Baştan Sona Nettir" - Son Dakika Haberleri; Turkey became the first actor to take initiative in the negotiation process between parties and supported the peace talks initiated by Leon, See Emrullah İşler's personal account.

5 "Turkey pulls out of Libya conference in Italy with 'deep disappointment', VP Oktay says", 13 November 2018, https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2018/11/13/turkey-pulls-out-of-libya-conference-in-italy-with-deep-disappointment-vp-oktay-says.

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Turkey’s foreign policy towards post Gaddafi Libya has been largely determined by three key phenomena, namely; Turkey’s own political experiences, the opportunities and threats present in Libya, and finally the emerging geopolitical realities in the region.

This dramatic change in foreign policy is exemplified through the establishment of a Maritime and Security Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Turkey and the GNA in late 2019. Turkey was able to repel Haftar and his backers' advance on Tripoli through its deployment of troops, military advisors and sophisticated weaponry in support of the GNA. Moreover it was able to explore new ways and means to counter a key strategic threat in the Eastern meditaranean through its new alliance.

Turkey's cooperation with the GNA has also been determined by the range of actors present in Libya, with whom it shares a common strategic vision. Turkey's criteria has been shaped by its own domestic experiences with military interference in political life, and it has neither chosen to cooperate with nor cultivate a military strongman to rival Haftar's backers. Ankara's engagement with the GNA was based on the desire to find partners who sought to build a civic and democratic Libya and precisely those who would resist an authoritarian model of military rule that Haftar has come to represent. Turkey's diplomatic engagement to these actors and their predecessors predates the April 4th conflict, though Haftar's war offered a platform to strengthen these ties through the maritime and security MoU and offer it's military support in exchange. Turkey's military support materialised in the form of limited troop deployment, officers of the Turkish Army that served as military advisors especially during the assault on Tripoli and continues in the form of training of the GNA's armed forces as a way of realising both its strategic vision and it's strategic interests in Libya with its partners.

Conclusion

A decade on from the revolution, and despite the major shifts in Libya's transition and the emerging geo political dynamics, Turkish foreign policy towards Libya has remained consistent with regards to its goals, vision, and relationships with Libyan partners who share the same vision. The military instruments of Turkish foreign policy are the only conspicuous change over the past a decade, and Ankara's MoU with Tripoli reflects the strength of its relationships with important players on the ground in post-revolution Libya.

Given recent domestic political opposition to Turkey's military engagement in Libya and an attempt to orchestrate parliamentary opposition at a recent vote, Turkey's current policy towards Libya is primarily led by President Erdogan and its main ally MHP (Nationalist Movement Party).

In the event of a change in government in Turkey, which would require President Erdogan's defeat in the next presidential elections in 2023, Turkey's foreign policy towards Libya could change. Alternatively, external geo-political realities such as the Biden presidency in the US could also impact Turkey's engagement in Libya, if not change it altogether. The Biden administration is perceived by Ankara to have a pro Greek position regarding the Eastern Mediteranean dispute, and his administration could put pressure on the new Government of National Unity (GNU) in Libya to rescind

the MoU between Libya and Turkey, and pressure Tripoli to eject Turkish military assets and presence in Libya. Such policies would have deep implications for how Turkey employs it's foreign policy instruments, but would not reshape it's perception of Libya of the essence of its foreign policy which has matured over the past decade.

Albeit difficult, Turkey's foreign policy engagement in Libya could go through a shift in the form of a rapprochement with Egypt, if Turkey's presence and interests are conceded. This possibility could only materialise based on another memorandum of understanding between Turkey and Egypt: delimitation of maritime zones between the two in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, the respective irreconcilable political visions of Turkey and Egypt over Libya's renders this scenario a remote possibility. Turkey will likely stand firm to maintain its presence and protect its interests in Libya, even if it entails serious confrontations with the Biden administration as well as other international players.

Finally, as Turkey has been a vocal supporter of a political solution for years, it has welcomed the results of the UN brokered political process in Libya with the hope that it will generate a satisfying interim government under Abdulhamid Dbeibah and under a Mohamed Al Menfi presidency to carry the country towards democratic elections on December 24 2021. Turkey is conscious that a considerable part of the country, in particular the east, remains under de-facto military rule by the LAAF and Haftar. For Ankara, holding free and fair elections under such conditions seems unlikely, a matter it perceives would undermine the legitimacy and integrity of the results. However, Ankara perceives that if free and fair national elections were to at least take place in Tripolitania, where the majority of Libya's inhabitants are situated, based on these demographics and projections alone, Turkey would see its interests served well in many respects in the future.

Chapter 9

Qatar: From Activism to Pragmatism

by Dr Andreas Krieg

Qatar's engagement in Libya over the past ten years has been all but coherent with it being one of the first Arab nations together with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to support the NATO-led effort to first protect civilians and then topple the Gaddafi regime. Overall, Qatar's changing role in Libya has been guided by the same ideational vision of overcoming authoritarianism in the Arab world but has witnessed different strategies being used over the years to support this vision. While between 2011 and 2014 Qatar played an active role shaping the conflict on the ground through direct support to a variety of nascent actors, Doha effectively withdrew from the conflict in 2014 to re-evaluate its strategy. Qatar only returned to the conflict in 2020 to support the UN-backed process using ways and means that are profoundly more discreet from the means used in their earlier engagement in the first phases of the Libyan conflict.

Vision

Qatar's readiness to aid the NATO-led effort to stop the Gaddafi regime from mass atrocities being committed against protestors, was inspired by the overall vision of the then Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani (HbK) and his Foreign and Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim al Thani (HbJ) to exploit the opportunity presented by the Arab Spring to reshape the socio-political outlook of the Arab world. Libya unlike Syria or Yemen seemingly provided a considerably easier conflict to manage without meaningful sectarian fault lines and a promising wealth-to-capita ratio. The protests that by early 2011 had spread widely across North Africa provided a mobilization unseen in the region since the beginnings of Arab nationalism and thereby a chance to overturn the authoritarian regimes that had undermined progress and development in the Arab world for decades – a chance Qatar's Emir HbK and his Foreign Minister HbJ were willing to take.

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King of Saudi Arabia Salman ibn Abd al-Aziz and Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani

On the one hand, Qatar' engagement in Libya was guided by the same ideational vision that informed Qatar's actions in other Arab Spring conflicts, most notably Syria, Tunisia and Egypt: replacing authoritarian and nepotistic regimes unable to cater for the needs and desires of its people, with more pluralistic and inclusive forms of governance. The vision of Doha in 2011 revolved around the idea of socio-political pluralism to create a new Middle East where rulers are more accountable to their populace. Qatar – an autocratic tribal monarchy itself – thereby repeatedly invoked narratives of 'democratisation' and 'supporting the people' in justifying their decision to engage in Libya and elsewhere. This ideational vision was borne out of Qatar's inexperience of acting unilaterally on the world stage and the resulting grand-strategic naivety over its ability of post-revolutionary state and nation-building in the region.

On the other hand, Qatar witnessed an opportunity during the Arab Spring to fully emerge from the shadows of Saudi dominance and carve out a geo-strategic position of its own right in the region. In so doing, Doha used the Arab Spring as a catalyst to move from the position of a regional mediator to a country taking and defending clear policy objectives – all with a view to also deepen relations with Western partners. The fact that the United Kingdom and France were actively looking for Arab support

for the NATO-led operation against the Gaddafi regime, suggested to Doha that it could use the opportunity to present itself as a constructive and committed Western partner able to assume some of the burden of regional conflict.

Strategic Ends

When British Chief of Defence Staff Sir Richards called his counterpart Hamad bin Ali Al Attiyah in Qatar in early March 2011 to ask whether Qatar was able to support the NATO operation on the ground, Qatar accepted the invitation. Qatar's government involving the Emir, the then Heir Apparent Tamim bin Hamad al Thani and the Foreign Minister HbJ, decided on a strategy for Libya in a fairly pragmatic manner. The strategic end game from a Qatari point of view morphed quickly from merely supporting the opposition to overthrowing the regime in parallel with a mission creep developing within NATO's strategic headquarters. The idea in Doha was that upon the removal of the Gaddafi regime, an inclusive state and nation-building effort would allow for the reintegration of the various rebel forces into a security sector accountable to a civilian authority chosen by the Libyan people.

With only a relatively small military force, the Qatar Armed Forces required local partners on the ground that needed to be empowered and mobilized to first defend and push back against the Gaddafi regime. In search for local partners, the Qatari leadership was looking close to home in Doha for Libyans who could provide inroads into the opposition that was mobilizing against the regime in Tripoli. Doha, which at the time had already become a meeting place for the Arab diasporas from across the region, provided a range of networks that Qatar could exploit to build bridgeheads in Libya to support the NATO air operation from the ground.

The Libyan partners that were chosen by Qatar during the early stage of the operation were diverse, comprising all elements of the broad anti-Gaddafi front inside Libya and within Libya's diaspora. However, as in other Arab Spring conflicts, the Islamist milieu appeared to be the best organized presenting a network of reach that far exceeded networks of other actors. Nonetheless, reducing Qatar's engagement merely to Islamists fails to appreciate the breadth and width with which Doha tried to tie in different actors into the revolutionary campaign. Unlike Egypt, Libya lacked a coherent unified Islamist actor such as the Muslim Brotherhood and many of the actors Qatar engaged such as the politically diverse National Transitional Council's leadership to the local factions in Misrata or Zintan would not identify themselves as Islamists. It might therefore be more appropriate to speak about an Islamist milieu that was in its infant stage in 2011.

Overall, Qatar's approach to Libya was pragmatic within the context of its vision for reshaping the post revolution Arab world. The selection of partners on the ground followed a rationale of operational effectiveness and not ideological alignment. Allegations that Qatar was pursuing an Islamist agenda in Libya or elsewhere, are often politically motivated and do not account for strategic considerations in Doha

at the time, which were all driven by the objective of finding local partners that could provide an effective lever of power Qatar could use to support NATO's operation in pursuit of its own ideational and geo-strategic objectives.

Strategic Ways and Means

Qatar intended to use largely the information and military lever of power to implement its strategic objectives of empowering the opposition to overthrow the Gaddafi regime. In a first instance, Qatar's Al Jazeera network became an important force multiplier in the information environment providing a platform for all opposition groups to have their opinion heard. Al Jazeera's slogan of providing "a voice to the voiceless" meant that the network's Arabic channel primarily focused on civil societal platforms for the opposition groups to share and spread revolutionary narratives, directly targeting the regime and its inability to provide for the people. Al Jazeera had been an enabler for the first movers in the revolution to build followership and mobilize wider parts of society showcasing the extent to which the regime was unfit to rule. Much of Al Jazeera's coverage thereby was preoccupied with the reasons for why the regime had to be removed and much less with proposing avenues for post-revolutionary state and nation-building.

The second lever of power that specifically in the first part of the revolution played a critical role for Qatar's engagement on the ground was the military. The Qatar Armed Force (QAF) set up a training and equip mission aimed at supplying the various rebel factions with material support against regime forces. Further, QAF Special Forces were involved in training and directing rebel groups in their vital push on Tripoli – a contribution that NATO leaders and British Chief of Defence Staff Sir Richards called critical for the NATO operation, which was almost exclusively conducted from the air. QAF Special Forces helped consolidate forces on the ground and provide operational support and direction that helped build a more coherent revolutionary force from the multitude of different rebel factions on the ground. This surrogate warfare approach taken by both Qatar and the United Arab Emirates on the ground, promised to be short-sighted as it disregarded the dynamics of the armed groups environment where groups morphed, merged and arms were proliferated. The inherent problem of the surrogate warfare approach was that it did not prove sustainable as surrogates continued to evade patron direction despite having received extensive funds and material support. In hindsight, the surrogate approach taken by both Doha and Abu Dhabi and endorsed by NATO partners in the UK and France paved the way for the polarization of the post-revolutionary environment in late 2011.

Strategic Failure

After the death of Gaddafi in October 2011 the increasingly polarized post-revolutionary environment imposed a strategic challenge on Qatar that its government did not predict. Instead of facing a unitary rebel movement happy to engage in inclusive dialogue over setting up a new governance structure after the fall of the regime, Qatar was confronted with a multipolar environment of competing

political interests with groups promising to help implement Qatar's vision of an inclusive state and nation-building effort. By late 2011 actors on the ground had started to compete for external support from a variety of actors with armed groups appearing to the most potent powerbrokers in the country. Doha was lobbied by a variety of actors for their political, financial and material support in securing a post-revolutionary order. By 2012 Qatar had increased its support to a variety of actors with a growing focus on existing networks in the Islamist milieu – something that would place Qatar on a confrontational course with some political elites emerging in Tripoli. The belief in Doha that Islamist groups could be coopeted and appeased later on proved thereby at the heart of a strategic miscalculation.

Libyan Prime Minister al-Sarraj and Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani

Amid ongoing political consolidation first in the National Transitional Council and from 2012 in the General National Congress, Qatar continued to engage and support armed groups in the belief that they held the necessary leverage in the fight for the post-revolutionary order in Libya. Qatar's dual approach of supporting the political process while at the same time trying to secure inroads to the armed groups network undermined its ability to play the role of an honest broker that it was able to play in the first phase of the conflict. It became apparent in 2013 that Qatar was hopelessly overstretched with desperate attempts to secure influence in Libya through ongoing channelling of funds and material support to competing actors claiming to fight on behalf of the "people's cause".

Re-assessment

By late 2013 and early 2014 the new government under the new Emir Tamim bin Hamad al Thani had to concede strategic failure in Libya, as Qatar's vision, ends, ways and means were no longer aligned. As part of the new Emir's more domestic focus, Qatar withdrew its support from the Libyan theatre, disengaging from North Africa. The costs of intervention in the Arab Spring both in terms of financial and reputational costs for Qatar were no longer aligned to the benefits they once hoped could be achieved through reshaping the regional order. The experience of the military coup in Egypt following a year of Muslim Brotherhood rule starkly brought home the reality for Doha about the limits of the small state's reach and strategic depth – especially when acting unilaterally.

As other actors and forces would go to dominate the post-revolutionary environment in North Africa, Qatar's role in Libya effectively came to an end in 2014. Instead of trying to unilaterally shape the outcome of Arab Spring, Doha under the new Emir became ever more quietist, working through multilateral channels and supporting the UN-backed political process in Libya. The reputational risks of strategic overstretch and allegations of having supported extremist groups between 2012 and 2014, meant that Qatar had to find other ways to play a more constructive role in the Libyan process.

Thereby, Qatar's vision for inclusive and pluralist governance in Libya legitimised by and accountable to the people remains unchanged. Its strategic re-evaluation of 2014, however, meant that the means and ways to achieve its ends changed. Multilateralism replaced unilateralism and instead of supporting non-state actors, Doha engaged with internationally recognized government entities – more recently with the Government of National Accord (GNA). Qatar has provided support for the UN-backed arms embargo and helped the GNA to receive more international recognition and legitimacy. The fact that Qatar continued to engage with a leader such as former Prime Minister Serraj goes to show that Qatar's engagement in Libya is far from ideological but shaped by pragmatism while placing great importance on the issue of international legitimacy.

In 2020, Qatar re-appeared as a more direct actor following the Libyan conflict. Instead of merely supporting Turkey's policy in Libya from behind the scenes, Qatar signed several agreements with the GNA to assist with security sector reform and the creation of state institutions following two lengthy civil wars in Libya since 2014. In doing so, Qatar's engagement is closely aligned with partners in Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

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Conclusion

Qatar's role in Libya has undergone an extensive learning process over the past decade. Premised on a wider ideational vision of liberalizing the political order in the Arab world, the emirate's Libya strategy manifested the limitations of its strategic depth and reach, which led to the country's reassessment of its engagement in Libya. The lessons learned from Libya have allowed Qatar to play a more constructive role in the process following its withdrawal in 2014. Multilateralism, international legitimacy and transparency make Qatar today a more reliable partner for the West when dealing with the various power brokers.

Chapter 10

Egypt: In Deep Waters

by Hafsa Halawa

In June 2020, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi made a public visit to inspect the preparation of troops at the Sidi Barrani airbase in Egypt towards the Libyan border, announcing publicly that Egyptian troops were to be mobilised and deployed to Libya. For the first time in over 40 years, Egypt appeared to be organising and preparing its expeditionary forces for direct intervention into a military conflict, a neighbouring country at that. Egypt's call to war came two weeks after President al-Sisi had called for a ceasefire in Libya. These high profile shifts between peace and war by the Egyptian President not only illustrate the fluid dynamics in Libya and their impact on Egypt, but Libya's geo-political importance to Egypt and it's willingness to overturn decades of established foreign policy as a result of developments across its border.

Egypt has played a critically important role in Libya's modern history. Over the course of the last century people and ideas have migrated across both sides of the desert border. During the Italian occupation of Libya in the early 20th century, thousands of Libyans sought refuge in Egypt, establishing a community of prominent political exiles who would return to Libya after its independence in 1951. Ideas travelled across borders too. Gaddafi himself, who arrived in power in 1969, took inspiration and modeled his early political thinking on Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser's Arab Nationalism.

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Relations between Egypt and Libya throughout Gaddafi's 42 year reign were complex, ranging from an attempted Pan Arab union - the Federation of Arab Republic (including Syria) in 1972 to a four day border war between the two in 1977. By the 1980's, despite early tensions with the Hosni Mubarak relations between Egypt and Libya were less erratic. Gaddafi had turned his back on his early Pan Arab ideas, and began instead to turn towards Pan Africanism in the late 1990s, and later a rapprochement with the West in 2003 following the Iraq war.

Hosni Mubarak, 1980s

The Arab Spring in 2011 would radically reshape the political trajectory of both countries. Egypt's January 25th revolution culminated with the toppling of its powerful long time leader in Hosni Mubarak on February 11th days before Libya's own revolution was sparked in Benghazi. Egypt in this period, too consumed by managing the aftermath of its own revolution to shape the outcome of it's neighbour resulted in it's foreign policy towards Libya being on autopilot throughout 2011. Despite Cairo being a hub of anti Gaddafi dissidents and pro Gaddafi figures in 2011, Egypt waited until the fall of Tripoli on August 22nd 2011 to recognise Libya's newly established National Transitional Council. Following the election of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt in 2012, Libya's authorities deposited 2 billion dollars to the Egyptian central bank

in order to stave off an economic crisis, in addition to attempting to arrest Ahmad Gaddaf al Dam, Gaddafi's cousin and former special envoy to Egypt.

Egyptian Foreign Policy since 2013

Cairo's aggressive foreign policy towards Libya began to take form following President Sisi's rise to power. An important component of its foreign policy and threat perception began to be shaped by its own experience with the Egyptian revolution and the military's takeover that followed in June 2013. The new tools of the Arab Spring such as popular protest, organised civil society, and a pervasive democratic discourse were viewed as an existential threat to the staying power of the Egyptian regime. It is within this context of a local consolidation of power in Egypt and the continued political transitions across the region, that focussed and hardened the foreign policy mindset of the military institution who began to respond and reshape Egypt's regional foreign policy accordingly.

Egypt's early foreign policy engagement in post Gaddafi Libya was primarily driven in a fear deeply rooted in the Arab Spring. At the heart of this is a fundamental rejection of 'Islamists', a term prior to the Arab Spring that almost singularly infered the Muslim Brotherhood, but since 2013 has been deployed widely to define political actors and social movements of all stripes who favoured a democratic transition and challenged the model of 'authoritarian stability' Cairo seeks to promote at home.

This new authoritarian 'anti-islamist' narrative first became the anchor of President al-Sisi's domestic crackdown in 2013 but would later inspire his foreign policy agenda across the region, and in particular Libya. This foreign policy outlook has allowed President al-Sisi to find sympathy and support from Gulf neighbours who shared similar fears of the Arab Spring's demoraticising potential, in particular the UAE and its de-facto leader Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MbZ) who had supported the military's takeover in 2013.

In 2014, Egypt found a willing partner in Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) to support politically and militarily in order to execute their foreign policy vision in Libya. Fresh from a failed power grab in Tripoli in February 2014, Haftar turned his attention to the East of the country and launched operation Dignity on May 15th 2014 in Benghazi, a military operation with clear ideational parallels to Egypt's narrative and foreign policy - 'a vow to purge Islamists across Libya'[1]. Egypt quietly offered Haftar military support in Benghazi, and conducted airstrikes alongside the UAE in Tripoli in August 2014 in support of armed groups allied to Haftar. The move sparked Libya's 2014 civil war, and though Haftar ultimately failed to capture Tripoli at his first attempt, with a clear anti-Islamist narrative ideologically in line with Egypt and their partner the UAE, Khalifa Haftar established himself as Egypt's focal point in Libya. Egypt's military furthered their cooperation with Haftar

1 Khalid Mahmoud, 'Khalifa Haftar pledges to "purge" Libya of Muslim Brotherhood' 20 May 20 2014, https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/khalid-mahmoud/news-middle-east/khalifa-haftar-pledges-to-purge-libya-of-muslim-brotherhood

and their military involvement in Libya following the beheading of 21 Egyptian Copts by Islamic State in Sirte in 2015[2]. Despite not launching airstrikes on Sirte, Egypt assisted Haftar in capturing much of eastern Libya under the pretext of counter terrorism, would flourish during this period as he was promoted to the position of Field Marshal in 2016, and later began to remodel the LAAF's structures around Egypt's military eastern Libya. Haftar established a military investment authority

Egypt's engagement on Libya has transitioned in the time between Libya's last two civil wars, particularly since the establishment of the UN backed Government of National Accord in 2015 but it's foreign policy objectives have remained the same, and it's engagement with the LAAF has only strengthened. Egypt welcomed the GNA in 2016 and used its soft power to encourage the GNA to unify with the LAAF after it was rejected by the House of Representatives in Eastern Libya during three years of diplomatic negotiations between the LAAF and GNA. To this effect, Egypt held the Cairo security talks in 2018 intended to unify the rival armed forces on both sides of the conflict under the precondition they remain loyal to Khalifa Haftar[3]. This strategy would collapse as Haftar began to capture GNA territory moving swiftly from Eastern Libya to Southern Libya in February 2019 before, without warning he withdrew from U.N brokered talks and launched an assault on Tripoli in April 2019, sparking Libya's second civil war.

2 'Bodies of 20 Egyptian Christians beheaded in Libya arrive in Egypt ' 14 May 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-egypt-idUSKCN1IF0J4

3 Amr Emam , 'Talks in Cairo focus on Libyan military unity, differences persist' 25 Feburary 2018, https://thearabweekly.com/talks-cairo-focus-libyan-military-unity-differences-persist

Geo-politics behind Egypt's foreign policy

Libya's latest war demonstrated the limitations of Egypt's hard power. Cairo's principal foreign policy interest since 2014 has been preserving the integrity of the LAAF and by extension maintaining Egypt's influence over eastern Libya, and the security of its western border. Egypt threatened to send its military into Libya in June 2020 as a result of Turkey's entry into Libya's civil war and Ankara's pursuit of its own foreign policy in Libya that have dramatically shaped Libya's conflict and Egypt's foreign policy ambitions. In November 2019, the GNA and Turkey established a military and maritime memorandum of understanding (MoU) to repel Haftar's attempt to overthrow the GNA exchange for the redrawing of maritime boundaries between Libya and Turkey that threatened Egypt's territorial waters in the Eastern Meditaranean. Turkey's claim against Greece in the longstanding Continental Shelf dispute established a new geopolitical battline line in Libya and introduced an economic dimension into Egypt's foreign policy towards Libya.

n the time since Egypt's foreign policy began to take shape in 2014, the geopolitical landscape in the Eastern Meditaranean has undergone a radical transformation. Egypt has been buoyed domestically by significant gas production, following the discoveries of the Zohr field in the Eastern Mediterranean and others in the Western Mediteranean since 2015. By 2018, these discoveries leant greater credence to Egypt's regional ambitions. President al-Sisi has moved significantly on these discoveries to market Egypt as a 'gas hub' for the EU's southern Neighbourhood, and promote itself among its EU partners, specifically Greece and Cyprus as a gateway to the continent[4]. It has strengthened established ties with Israel and Jordan in relation to the logistical network and pipelines gas deliveries and undertaken plans to activate two dormant Liquefied Natural Gas plants in the country. Haftar's war and the resulting maritime and security MoU between Turkey and the GNA have essentially thrown Egypt's geo-economic ambitions off course.

Following Turkey's military intervention in early 2020, military dynamics in Libya shifted dramatically culminating in the collapse of Haftar's assault on Tripoli in June 2020, but threatening to erode six years of Egypt's foreign policy investment. The GNA, emboldened by Turkish military support, forced the retreat of the LAAF, from Tripoli to Sirte, the regional frontier between West and East Libya. As a result, Egypt accelerated its soft power influence, and within days launched the Cairo initiative[5] on June 7th 2020 aimed at establishing a permanent ceasefire at Sirte and stalling Turkey and the GNA's advance into the east. The Cairo initiative was rejected[6] by Turkey on June 10th 2020, leading to the belief Turkey and the GNA could be preparing a military offensive to move past Sirte into eastern Libya, territory Egypt

4 Peter Stevenson, 'Egypt Gas Hub Ambitions Gather Pace' 5 October 2018, https://www.mees.com/2018/10/5/oil-gas/egypt-gas-hub-ambitions-gather-pace/8c676fb0-c897-11e8-be83-45e5b809cbab

5 'Egypt announces new plan to end war in Libya as Haftar offensive loses ground' 6 June 2020, https://www.france24.com/en/20200606-egypt-announces-new-plan-to-end-war-in-libya-as-haftar-offensive-loses-ground

6 'Turkey dismisses Egyptian proposal for Libya ceasefire: Hurriyet' 10 June 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-turkey/turkey-dismisses-egyptian-proposal-for-libya-ceasefire-hurriyet-idUSKBN-23H1OU?edition-redirect=uk

had assisted the LAAF to capture in 2014 and a region Egypt considers its sphere of influence.

Egypt took several measures between June and July to ensure it's 'redline policy' would alarm the US into taking action to stop the war and enforce a ceasefire beginning with the June 20th 2020 claim that it would be willing to intervene militarily[7] if Turkey and the GNA captured or crossed Sirte. Egypt took further significant steps and measures including inviting Libyan tribal elders[8] in July 2020 to offer their support to Egyptian military intervention followed by Egyptian parliamentary approval [9]for a military operation days later. Egypt's reiteration of it's intention to intervene militarily was pivotal in alerting former US President Donald Trump to the urgency of the situation in Libya, who called President Sisi on July 20th 2020 and agreed the need to establish a ceasefire in Sirte[10] that would both stem Turkey's advance on Sirte and return Libya to a U.N brokered political process. By August, this strategy had worked as the US National Security Council published a statement claiming the "United States is pursuing a 360 degree diplomatic engagement with Libyan and external stakeholders"[11], the precursor to UN brokered military talks between the two rival Libyan factions that would be hosted by Egypt in September, before culminating in a permanent ceasefire agreement signed in Geneva in October 2020.

Egypt essentially used the threat of it's hard power to induce US diplomatic efforts to stop Turkey from advancing on Sirte, and return Libya to a diplomatic and political process under the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) where Egypt is well placed to use its soft power to influence the process and produce a favourable outcome. Egypt continues to host diplomatic talks between rival Libyan factions on behalf of the UN, sent a delegation to meet with the GNA in December 2020, has welcomed the result of the UN's political process and the resulting interim executive authority and is expected to reopen its embassy in Tripoli in the coming days. However Cairo will be monitoring Libya's transition over the next 10 months and is unlikely to deviate from its foreign policy goals in Libya since 2013, namely to establish the LAAF as the institutional cornerstone of Libya's post Gaddafi state through the UN's military track.

Cairo believes it can acquire more in it's foreign policy engagement through negotiations that it can shape through it's soft power as it navigates its priority interests rather than through complex geopolitical conflict that demonstrates the limits of it's hard power. Egypt is keen to continue with the UN's military unification track that will result in the very same outcome as it had intended during the Cairo

7 Heba Saleh, 'Egypt threatens military action in Libya if Turkish-backed forces seize Sirte' 21 June 2020, https://www.ft.com/content/e6aa87b0-5e0b-477f-9b89-693f31c63919

8 'Egyptian president meets Libya's tribal leaders' 17 July 2020, https://www.africanews.com/2020/07/17/egyptian-president-meets-libya-s-tribal-leaders//

9 Mahmoud Mourad and Nadine Awadalla, 'Egypt's Sisi wins parliamentary approval for possible Libya intervention' 20 July 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-libya-security-egypt/egypts-sisi-wins-parliamentary-approval-for-possible-libya-intervention-idUKKCN24L2BI

10 'Egypt says Sisi and Trump agree on need to maintain Libya ceasefire' 20 July 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-usa/egypt-says-sisi-and-trump-agree-on-need-to-maintain-libya-ceasefire-idUSKCN24L1UK?edition-redirect=in

11 'Statement from National Security Adviser Robert C. O'Brien Regarding Libya' 4 August 2020, https://2017-2021-translations.state.gov/2020/08/04/statement-from-national-security-adviser-robert-c-obrien-regarding-libya//index.html

security talks in 2017; an internationally recognised LAAF. The question of Khalifa Haftar's future remains relevant over the short term, but it's deeper investment in the LAAF as an institution with which to work with over the long term will remain the focus of Egypt's foreign policy.

> **Cairo believes it can acquire more in it's foreign policy engagement through negotiations that it can shape through it's soft power as it navigates its priority interests rather than through complex geopolitical conflict that demonstrates the limits of it's hard power.**

Chapter 11

Russia: From Retreat to Resurgence

by Samuel Ramani

In early February, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pledged to work[1] with Libya's new political administration, as Russia quietly transferred[2] 310 new Syrian mercenaries to Libya. This contradiction encapsulated Russia's broader approach to the Libyan conflict. Russia is currently a leading military backer of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) chieftain Khalifa Haftar, an indispensable player in Libya's diplomatic process and a potentially vital stakeholder in Libya's post-conflict reconstruction. Russia's rising influence in Libya also bolsters its standing in the eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa, which are critical theatres for its great power status ambitions.

Russia's leverage in Libya has deep historical roots, but it also reflects Moscow's opportunistic capitalization on Libya's post-2014 descent into civil war. During Gaddafi's 42-year tenure in power, relations between Moscow and Tripoli were generally cooperative. Libya was a vital purchaser of Soviet military equipment and following Gaddafi's 1976 visit[3] to Moscow, the Soviet Union deployed 1,000 technical advisors to Libya. Due to their ideational support for socialism and adversarial relationships with the United States, the Soviet Union and Libya found common cause in conflicts ranging from Palestine to Nicaragua. This anti-American partnership cooled during Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin's tenure in power but returned to the fore with Vladimir Putin's 2008 visit to Tripoli. During Putin's trip, Russia cancelled[4] $4.5 billion in Soviet-era debt in exchange for arms deals and a $3.48 billion contract with Russian Railways.

The 2011Arab Spring protests upended Russia's historic partnership with Libya. On March 9, Russia banned[5] arms sales to Libya, which cost Moscow at least $2 billionin revenues. Russia abstained from UNSC Resolution 1973, which imposed a no-fly zone on Libya for the purpose of protecting Libyan civilians. Russia's alignment with the international consensus on Gaddafi's illegitimacy created deep rifts within the Kremlin.

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1 Sami Zaptia, 'Russia ready to work with new Libyan government' 10 February 2021, https://www.libyaherald.com/2021/02/10/russia-ready-to-work-with-new-libyan-government/

2 Burak Karacoğlu and Ahmet Karaahmet, 'Russia sends 310 more mercenaries to Libya' 5 Feburary 2021 https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/russia-sends-310-more-mercenaries-to-libya/2135156

3 Federica Saini Fasanotti, 'Russia and Libya: A brief history of an on-again-off-again friendship' 1 September 2016, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/09/01/russia-and-libya-a-brief-history-of-an-on-again-off-again-friendship/

4 Oleg Shchedrov, 'Russia, Libya seal debt accord, eye arms deals' 17 April 2008, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-libya-idUSSHC61895920080417

5 'UPDATE 2-Russia announces ban on arms sales to Libya' 10 March 2011, https://www.reuters.com/article/russia-libya-sanctions-idAFLDE72905220110310

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Russia’s leverage in Libya has deep historical roots.

The 2011 Arab Spring protests upended Russia’s historic partnership with Libya

Russian President Putin

Vladimir Putin stated[6] that UNSC Resolution 1973 resembled "medieval calls for crusades," while Russian President Dmitry Medvedev warned that such rhetoric could lead to a "clash of civilizations." Russian policy towards Libya accommodated both perspectives. In September 2011, Russia recognized[7] the National Transitional Council (NTC) as Libya's legitimate government. However, Russia also emerged[8] as the international community's most strident critic of NATO's military intervention in Libya.

Despite this balancing act, Russia's influence in Libya plummeted after Gaddafi's overthrow. In addition to Russia's loss of arms deals with Libya, Russian Railways abandoned its Benghazi-to-Sirte railway project, which was a critical component of its economic presence in Libya. The NTC awarded reconstruction contracts to countries that backed Gaddafi's removal from the outset. In October 2013, the Russia-Libya bilateral relationship reached a nadir[9], as gunmen stormed the Russian embassy in Tripoli and Russian diplomats fled from Tripoli to Tunisia. Although Russian Ambassador to the UN Vitaly Churkin[10] asserted in February 2015 that U.S.-Russia cooperation against the Islamic State in Libya was possible, Moscow remained a peripheral player in Libya's counterterrorism struggle.

The gradual resurgence of Russia's influence in Libya since 2016 is driven by two principal aims. First, Russia views Libya as an easy-access theatre to build on the successes of its military intervention in Syria. In particular, Russia wishes to secure a naval base[11] in Benghazi or air base in Tobruk, which would connect with its facilities in Syria. Russia also wants to burnish its reputation as the diplomatic arbiter of choice in Middle Eastern conflicts. Second, Russia wishes to ensconce itself as a vital stakeholder in Libya's post-conflict reconstruction. Rosneft's February 2017 oil offtake deal[12] with Libya's National Oil Company and the Wagner Group's lead role in seizing the El Sharara oil field in the Murzuq Desert gives Russia an entry point[13] into Libya's oil industry. The gradual erosion of international sanctions on the Tobruk-based government, which began with the removal[14] of EU sanctions against LAAF-aligned House of Representatives (HoR) speaker Aguila Saleh in October, could

6 ' Medvedev rejects Putin 'crusade' remark over Libya' 21 March 2011, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12810566

7 Tom Balmforth, 'Russia Plays Damage Control In Last-Ditch Effort To Save Business Interests In Libya' 2 September 2011, https://www.rferl.org/a/russia_libya_rebels_recognition_ntc_contacts_lost/24316006.html

8 'NATO interference in Libya caused more casualties - Lavrov' 6 October 2011, https://www.rt.com/russia/lavrov-nato-libya-victims-201/

9 Thomas Grove, 'Russia says embassy staff in Libya evacuated after attack' 3 October 2013, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-libya-embassy-idUSBRE9920GU20131003

10 Alexander Bratersky, 'Together against ISIS' 19 Feburary 2015, https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/02/19_a_6418217.shtml

11 Ravil Mustafin, 'Does Russia need military bases in Libya' 19 Janurary 2017, https://www.ng.ru/world/2017-01-19/1_6906_2livia.html

12 Aidan Lewis, 'UPDATE 1-Russia's Rosneft, Libya's NOC sign oil offtake deal' 21 Feburary 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/libya-oil-rosneft-oil-idUSL8N1G61XJ

13 'Libya Oil Company: Russian Mercenaries Enter Major Oil Field' 26 June 2020, https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/libya-oil-company-russian-mercenaries-enter-major-oil-field

14 'EU removes Libya's powerbroker Saleh from sanctions list' 2 October 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-eu-idUSKBN26N2QI

eventually translate into Russian arms contracts and lucrative infrastructure projects in eastern Libya.

Although Russia's ambitions in Libya are clearly defined and have remained consistent over time, Moscow has used a fluid array of tactics to achieve its ends. In contrast to its resolute support for Bashar al-Assad in Syria, Russia has eschewed hard alliance commitments in Libya. Russia sees the LAAF as helpful in its efforts to consolidate influence over eastern and southern Libya, but Moscow has periodically expressed[15] displeasure with Haftar's non-cooperative attitude during peace negotiations. These frustrations were especially pronounced after Haftar's walk-out[16] from the Moscow peace negotiations on Libya in January 2020. Russia has also maintained close relations[17] with Aguila Saleh, GNA-aligned President of Libya's High Council of State Khaled al-Mishri[18] and anti-systemic figures, such as Saif al-Islam Gaddafi.

This balancing strategy reflects Russia's event-driven approach to the Libyan conflict. Once the LAAF ensconced its hegemony over the historic Eastern region of Libya Cyrenaica and secured Libya's critical oil-producing ports in September 2016, Russia provided[19] material and diplomatic support for Khalifa Haftar's goals. Russia supplied 4 billion Dinars to the Tobruk-based government, which helped the LAAF skirt international sanctions. In November 2016, Moscow dispatched[20] technical experts to eastern Libya. As Haftar's staying power was uncertain and Russia did not want the GNA to view it as an aggressor, Wagner Group PMCs (Private military company) primarily operated[21] as stationary forces in Benghazi and Tobruk until 2019 and were marginal players in the LAAF's triumph in Sabha oil field.

The LAAF's April 2019 offensive on Tripoli gave Russia an opportunity to expand its military involvement in Libya. Although Russian officials were skeptical of Haftar's ability to achieve a decisive victory over the GNA, Russia was quietly optimistic that a successful LAAF offensive would bolster his bargaining power in future peace negotiations. Russian PMCs enhanced[22] the effectiveness of LAAF snipers, mortar and artillery crews, operated Pantsir S-1 missile defence systems and provided defensive cover for advancing LAAF forces. Turkey's January 2020 military intervention in Libya stalled the LAAF's momentum and caused Russia to embrace a hybrid military and diplomatic approach to the Libyan war. Through the recruitment

15 Elena Teslova, 'Russia warns against call to war by Libya's Haftar' 31 December 2020, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/russia-warns-against-call-to-war-by-libyas-haftar/2094136
16 'Libya conflict: Haftar 'leaves' Moscow ceasefire talks without deal' 14 January 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-51104846
17 'Aguila Saleh: Russia will play an important, pivotal role in the post-conflict reconstruction of Libya' 25 November 2020, http://duma.gov.ru/en/news/50115/
18 Kirill Semenov, 'Whose side is Russia on in Libya?' 22 March 2019, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/03/russia-libya-hifter-sarraj-mishri.html
19 Tarek Megerisi and Mattia Toaldo, 'Russia in Libya, A Driver for Escalation?' 8 December 2016, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/66391
20 'Russian experts support Haftar's forces under Egyptian-Emirati sponsorship' November 2016, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/
21 'Putin Plants Troops, Weapons in Libya to Boost Strategic Hold' 9 October 2018, https://www.albawaba.com/news/putin-plants-troops-weapons-libya-boost-strategic-hold-1197206
22 https://www.rbc.ru/opinions/politics/12/12/2019/5df1f9439a7947354e2adc6d

of Syrian mercenaries and deployment of MiG-25 jets, Russia tried to stall the GNA's military advance and expand its diplomatic profile in Libya. Russia's synthesized approach to power projection in Libya allowed it to remain largely immune to the conflict's shifting balance of forces. While Russia's balancing strategy benefits its post-conflict reconstruction and diplomatic aspirations, it is also shaped by domestic considerations. Russia's approach to the Libyan civil war accommodates rival perspectives within the Russian political establishment. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and the Main Intelligence Director (GRU), which oversees the Wagner Group PMCs, view Khalifa Haftar as a secular authoritarian bulwark against the

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and Khalifa Haftar

Muslim Brotherhood and Turkey's rising influence in the eastern Mediterranean. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov views Aguila Saleh's greater pragmatism[23] as an appealing strength. Russian state-owned corporations regard a balancing strategy as the most effective means of safeguarding their future reconstruction revenues. Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who is a close ally of Vladimir Putin and serves as Russia's informal envoy to the Arab world, supports businessman[24] Lev Dengov's Contact Group on the Intra-Libyan settlement. This contact group acts[25] as a bridge between Russia and GNA officials. Russia's fluid tactics aim to avoid a repetition of the overt intra-Kremlin rifts, which surfaced during the 2011 civil war.

23 Marianna Belenkaya, 'The Speaker of the House of Representatives of Libya said that his peace initiatives were prepared by the "Russians"' 5 January 2020, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4335501
24 Alla Hurska, 'Lev Dengov: Ramzan Kadyrov's Middleman in Libya' 29 October 2018, https://jamestown.org/program/lev-dengov-ramzan-kadyrovs-middleman-in-libya/
25 Abdullah Ben Ibrahim, 'Russian official: GNA seeking military-technical cooperation agreements with Russia' 24 October 2019, https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/russian-official-gna-seeking-military-technical-cooperation-agreements-russia

Although major Russian polling agencies, such as the Levada Center or VtSIOM, have not surveyed public opinion on Russia's policy in Libya, Moscow's actions in Libya could also strengthen popular support for Russian foreign policy. As Vladimir Putin has denied links[26] between the Wagner Group and the Russian state, public awareness of the pernicious conduct of PMCs, such as the use of landmines and chemical weapons, is limited. Russia's efforts to frame itself as a stabilizing force in Libya which counters the aftershocks of NATO's military intervention complements its counter-revolutionary actions in Syria. This reinforces the Kremlin's efforts to consolidate Russia's foreign policy identity around anti-Western norms.

While the domestic political benefits of Russia's strategy in Libya are apparent, the impact of Moscow's actions on its international partnerships is more ambiguous. The United States and European Union have both imposed sanctions[27] on the Wagner Group's lead figure Yevgeny Prigozhin for the conduct of PMCs in Libya. Western powers also view Russia's base ambitions as a threat[28] to the freedom of navigation in the Mediterranean. The detachment of the United States from Libya and the willingness of European powers, such as France and Italy, to engage with Russia in Libya dilutes the impact of these condemnations. President Joe Biden might increase[29] U.S. diplomatic involvement on the GNA's behalf, but Libya is unlikely to feature prominently in his Middle East strategy. Turkey has also chosen to diplomatically engage with Russia on ending the Libyan conflict. However, Turkish media outlets scathingly criticize the Wagner Group's conduct and the trajectory of Russia-Turkey negotiations on Libya is periodically intermeshed with their disagreements over Syria.

Russia's engagement with other crucial backers of the LAAF, such as the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, has also yielded mixed results. Due to Russia's strident opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood and support for authoritarian stability in Libya,

Moscow has established close ideational synergies with Egypt and the UAE. Russia's treatment of these regional powers as equals is also appealing. However, the failure of the LAAF's offensive against Tripoli has exposed strategic disagreements between Russia, Egypt and the UAE. Although Russia enthusiastically supported the Cairo Declaration, Moscow was alarmed[30] by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's threat to militarily intervene in eastern Libya. Russia and the UAE regularly consult each other on developments in Libya, and Abu Dhabi is reportedly the Wagner Group's leading financier. However, the UAE Embassy in Moscow's obstruction[31] of

26 ' Russia's Putin: Russians fighting in Libya do not represent the state' 11 January 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-russia-idUSKBN1ZA0N4
27 Michael O'Kane, 'EU designates Yevgeniy Prigozhin for violating Libya arms embargo' 15 October 2020, https://www.europeansanctions.com/2020/10/eu-designates-yevgeniy-prigozhin-for-violating-libya-arms-embargo/
28 Colin P. Clarke, William Courtney, Bradley Martin, Bruce McClintock, 'Russia Is Eyeing the Mediterranean. The U.S. and NATO Must Be Prepared' 30 June 2020, https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/06/russia-is-eyeing-the-mediterranean-the-us-and-nato.html
29 Federica Saini Fasanotti, 'The Biden administration inherits a rapidly deteriorating Libya' 19 January 2021, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/01/19/the-biden-administration-inherits-a-rapidly-deteriorating-libya/
30 'Brotherhood war: Libya awaits invasion by Egyptian army' 7 April 2020, https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2020/07/14_a_13152697.shtml
31 Ali H. M. Abo Rezeg, 'UAE embassy in Moscow obstructed Libya cease-fire' 15 January 2020, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/uae-embassy-in-moscow-obstructed-libya-cease-fire/1703346

the January 12, 2020 Russia-backed peace talks reveals that its Libya strategy is much more Haftar-dependent than Russia's. This could create tensions[32] between Russia and the UAE if Moscow ultimately distances itself from Haftar and aligns more firmly with Aguila Saleh.

As the tenth anniversary of the Libyan revolution approaches, Russia's policy towards Libya is at a crossroads. Russia publicly supported UN-backed ceasefire negotiations and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has publicly called[33] for an intensification of intra-Libyan dialogue. However, its commitment to these peace initiatives is unclear. UN efforts to expel foreign forces[34] from Libya require the removal of Wagner Group

PMCs. As Turkey does not wish to withdraw its own foreign fighters, Russia will likely circumvent new Libyan Prime Minister Mohamed al-Menfi efforts to expel Wagner Group PMCs from Libya. Russia has also maintained its relationships with anti-systemic groups by blocking UN sanctions[35] against Mohammed al-Kani's al-Kaniyat militia and supporting the inclusion of Gaddafi loyalists[36] in Libya's political process. These actions and Khalifa Haftar's continued mobilization of troops in eastern Libya suggests that Russia could remain a spoiler of peace in Libya.

In the short to medium term, we should monitor three dimensions of Russia's conduct in Libya. The first is Russia's response to national democratic elections in Libya, which are expected[37] to be held on 24 December 2021. In July 2019, the GNA arrested Russian political operatives aligned with Prigozhin's Fabrika Trollei organization, as they were artificially inflating[38] support for Khalifa Haftar and Saif al-Islam Gaddafi in published polls.

Given this trend, Russia could use Wagner Group personnel to interfere on behalf of its preferred candidates and leverage the popularity of its Arabic-language media outlets, such as RT Arabic and Sputnik Arabic, to spread disinformation.

The second is Russia's potential support for an informal partition of Libya between GNA and LAAF-controlled spheres of influence. This outcome could be optimal for Russia's balancing strategy in Libya. The third is Russia's partial divestment from the Wagner Group in favour of using a more diverse array of PMCs.

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32 Samuel Ramani, 'Putin, Mohamed bin Zayed seek to reclaim common ground on Libya' 15 July 2020, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/07/russia-uae-libya-policy-hifter-egypt.html
33 'Russia says efforts to reach Libya peace settlement should be stepped up - RIA' 23 December 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/libya-security-russia-int-idUSKBN28X14N
34 Patrick Wintour, 20 January 2021, ''Kleptocrats' will try to block Libya elections, says UN envoy' https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/20/kleptocrats-will-try-to-block-libya-elections-says-un-envoy
35 Michelle Nichols, 'Russia stops U.N. blacklisting of Libya militia, leader' 21 November 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-un-idUSKBN28101P
36 'Russia: Gaddafi loyalists should participate in Libyan dialogue' 5 January 2021, https://www.middleeast-monitor.com/20210105-russia-gaddafi-loyalists-should-participate-in-libyan-dialogue/
37 'Russia: Gaddafi loyalists should participate in Libyan dialogue' 5 January 2021, https://www.middleeast-monitor.com/20210105-russia-gaddafi-loyalists-should-participate-in-libyan-dialogue/
38 Kirill Semenov, 'New challenges for Moscow with arrest of 'Russian trolls' in Libya' 12 July 2019, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/07/russia-libya-troll-factory-prigozhin-hifter.html#ixzz6moiiqQKi https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/07/russia-libya-troll-factory-prigozhin-hifter.html

> **As the tenth anniversary of the Libyan revolution approaches, Russia's policy towards Libya is at a crossroads.**

The deployment of PMCs, such as Shield, which has battlefield experience in Syria; Patriot, which has experience in other African conflict theatres, and the de-mining focused RSB Group, could enhance Russia's ability to intervene in a deniable fashion. It could also rectify increasingly apparent shortcomings of Wagner Group personnel and help Russia withstand a potential U.S. pressure campaign against the UAE's financing of the Wagner Group. Although Russia's short-term objectives in Libya remain in flux, Moscow's focus on indispensability over consolidating hard alliances and synthesized use of economic, political influence, military and diplomatic means of power projection will continue for the foreseeable future.

Chapter 12

United Arab Emirates: Reversing the Revolution

by Matthew Hedges

At surface level, Libya's relationship with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was unremarkable during the 42 years of Muammar Gaddafi's regime. In late December 2010, economic ties were strengthened after Tripoli and Abu Dhabi signed an $11 billion dollars investment deal to overhaul Libya's failing critical infrastructure[1]. Below the surface, much of the Gaddafi family's private wealth - subject of United Nations investigations - is believed to have been discretely stashed in banks across the world, with an estimated $50 Billion dollars of dark money in the UAE alone[2]. These economic ties would become little more than a footnote with the onset of the Arab Spring in early 2011 as Libya became the platform of the UAE's extraordinary transformation into one of the most assertive actors in the region. The UAE had sat back and watched the revolution unfold in Tunisia, but by the time protests had reached Egypt in January 2011, and were endorsed by the United States (US), Abu Dhabi became alarmed at the unfolding events and their potential to reshape the wider regional order. According to former US President Barack Obama, the UAE's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Zayed (MBZ) warned him of supporting the Arab Spring, claiming that if Mubarak fell the Muslim Brotherhood would take over and "eight other Arab leaders would fall"[3]. As a result, the Arab Spring's third theatre in Libya rapidly grew in importance and developed into the frontline of Abu Dhabi's new counterrevolutionary engagement. The infectious revolutions were perceived by elites in Abu Dhabi as an existential threat to regime security, and the UAE's foreign policy towards Libya offered an opportunity to not only shape its outcome, but inoculate itself in the process.

The revolution

In 2011, the opportunity to remove Gaddafi was energised by the international community's call to arms under United Nations Security Council resolution 1973 and NATO's Operation Unified Protector (OUP). To Abu Dhabi, this mission presented a favourable proposition to demonstrate its military capabilities while buying influence not just with Western partners but with revolutionaries on the ground. The UAE had already engaged with NATO and its allies in Afghanistan, however in Libya it contributed to combat operations by establishing relationships on the ground and helped enforce the no-fly zone over the skies. Despite initial issues integrating its airpower component into NATO's operation, the UAE's Special Forces operations

1Tamsin Carlisle, 'Libya Cementing Ties with the UAE', 27 December 2011, https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/libya-cementing-ties-with-uae-1.558909
2 Bel Trew, 'Gaddafi's freed son Saif 'has access to $30bn', 20 June 2017, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/gadaffis-freed-son-has-access-to-30bn-n8znm36md
3 'A Promised Land', Penguin Books, Obama, Barack, November 2020

on the ground in Libya alongside Qatari Special Forces operations provided an important support tool to the alliance. Their training and equip missions merged local rebel groups into a coherent fighting force that would ultimately topple the Gaddafi regime in August 2011.

While the UAE's engagement in Libya seemed to have started in good faith, it was merely exploiting NATO's platform of internationally sanctioned legitimacy and influence to construct its own long-term project for a future Libya; one which it could control, not just influence. The aggressive and shrewd foreign policy strategy that it would pursue in the years that followed was a consequence of the UAE's frustration

UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan

to navigate Libya's post Gaddafi transition in 2011. Despite the UAE's relationships with a broad range of influential political actors and powerful armed groups on the ground that toppled Gaddafi in 2011, they would find these relationships were meaningless in post-Gaddafi Libya. The revolution had birthed a multitude of armed groups, not just the ones who toppled Gaddafi, none of whom alone could control more than small patches of turf beyond their own locale, and by consequence only offered limited influence to their patrons at best. Libya's first post Gaddafi democratic election of the General National Congress (GNC) in July 2012 also reset the UAE's political influence it had acquired during the revolution. The establishment of a

new pluralist legislative institution split between 60% independent candidates and 40% political parties who would vote to appoint a new government introduced new unknown political actors who could not be so easily co-opted or controlled.

Changing gears

By 2013 Abu Dhabi would shift gears, accelerating its aggressive new regional foreign policy engagement strategy. At this juncture, the UAE's regional partnerships became noticeably defined by ideational synergies, with an overt 'counterterrorism' narrative becoming the backbone of its strategic communications approach. The goal was to reinforce the perception of the Arab Spring as a vehicle for Islamists widely framed by Abu Dhabi as 'terrorists' to take control of the region; and by consequence rebrand authoritarian regimes and institutions - in particular the military - as the 'antidote'. This narrative not only justified authoritarian power grabs during democratic transition, but also legitimised the UAE's muscular foreign policy tools and use of its military power to intervene should it be required. This counterterrorism strategy was successful in Egypt where the UAE kept a light footprint in support of the 2013 military coup, but Libya would prove to be more complex. Egypt had a military, Libya did not. The UAE's foreign policy would require a deep strategic investment in Libya in order to overcome the political and military challenges it had faced since the overthrow of the regime. As a result, Abu Dhabi started to back a former general in Gaddafi's military, Khalifa Haftar. He was a figure who had drifted into obscurity following his return from exile in the US in 2011 but had re-emerged following a failed military coup attempt in Tripoli on February 14th 2011.

On May 15th, 2014, Haftar announced the establishment of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) and launched 'Operation Dignity' in Benghazi, a counter terrorism campaign supported by the UAE and Egypt through airstrikes and later by French Special Forces. The LAAF offered the UAE the opportunity to present their campaign as the reconstruction of the military institution to fight terrorism, whilst tearing down Libya's nascent democratic institutions. The operation targeted Salafi Jihadist groups in Benghazi but also Libya's first democratically elected government and parliament, and the variety of tribal and Islamist orientated armed groups loyal to it.

Abu Dhabi's strategic relationship to General Haftar was publicly founded on the narrative of fighting 'terrorism'; however, the application of focus developed more on political and institutional adversaries in Libya rather than the Salafi Jihadist threat. Haftar's LAAF was presented as a "secular" army, battling their armed and political rivals the "Islamists"[4]. Ironically, Haftar's LAAF included prominent Islamist groups known as Salafi Madkhalis, who had joined the LAAF following a fatwa released by a Saudi based cleric mandating their loyalty. The operation failed and, in the process, thrust Libya into a complex civil war that divided the country into parallel competing political, economic and military institutions. The international community's preoccupation with fighting the Islamic State in Syria meant that the UAE's support

4 Wolfgang Pusztai, 'Armed Groups in Libya After the Elections, What Can Be Expected?', 25 June 2014 https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/armed-groups-libya-after-elections-what-can-be-expected-10720

for Haftar and strong stance on fighting 'terrorism' in Libya would be well received internationally.

Despite the UN's call for a ceasefire and the establishment of the UN backed Government of National Accord in 2015, the UAE continued to support Haftar. Incremental advances were made to expand kinetic engagement within Libya with the initial success being the capturing and control of Benghazi in 2017. During that time the UAE developed its first overseas military facility in Eastern Libya. Military cooperation and ideational synergies with France over the fear of Islamists. It granted the UAE's strategy in Libya and Haftar the legitimate endorsement of a permanent member of the UN Security Council and European Union with a crucial diplomatic veto to shield it from sanction. With advanced technology being employed, including Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), helicopters and fighter jets Haftar had a clear strategic advantage over his opponents. While a UN arms embargo was still in effect across Libya, the UAE whilst not acknowledging it's role publicly, privately justified its actions to the West by arguing its military support to the LAAF was essential for countering 'terrorism', as opposed to preparing for a future offensive and a second power grab in Tripoli. From this position, direct foreign military and diplomatic assistance provided Haftar with sufficient military strength to force his newly established political rivals in the GNA into a binary of negotiation or war. Following two years of diplomatic negotiations hosted by Paris and Abu Dhabi, and in parallel military encroachment into western Libya, Haftar withdrew and launched his latest assault on Tripoli on April 4th, 2019.

The battle for Tripoli: Expansion and contraction

Haftar's latest war would have serious geopolitical repercussions in Libya. Years of Emirati coordination with Egypt, France and Russia to provide support to the LAAF in its bid to capture Tripoli and in effect Libya, neglected the rise of Turkey's regional ambitions.

While the UAE had clearly been efficient in supporting Haftar secure Eastern Libya, Abu Dhabi and Haftar clearly required further assistance in order to move West. Haftar's LAAF had become deeply unstable, with tribal rifts and internal competition undermining Haftar's authority whilst threatening its cohesion. The UAE, Russia and France's backing of Haftar's advance on Tripoli displayed a significant commitment to the cause and its grand strategy in Libya: this was Abu Dhabi's moment of ascendance. To ensure the operation's success it secured the deployment of the Wagner Group, Moscow's proxy mercenary force, who drafted Russian and Syrian mercenaries to fight on behalf of the LAAF in Tripoli. Meanwhile, the UAE continued to support Haftar's offensive with aerial cover and additional deployment of Sudanese mercenaries[5].

5 Hiba Zayadin, 'Recruited as Security Guards in the UAE, Deceived into Working in Conflict-Ridden Libya Instead', Human Rights Watch (HRW), 1 November 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/01/recruited-security-guards-uae-deceived-working-conflict-ridden-libya-instead

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Haftar’s latest war would have serious geopolitical repercussions in Libya. Years of Emirati coordination with Egypt, France and Russia to provide support to the LAAF in its bid to capture Tripoli and in effect Libya, neglected the rise of Turkey’s regional ambitions.

What emerged was a complex network of likeminded partners of both state and non-state actors that by November 2019 saw the UAE's proxy forces on the ground encroaching on downtown Tripoli. With the UAE's complex network of surrogates developing an uncontrollable dynamic on its own, regional competitors felt provoked to intervene. Turkey's intervention not only foiled Haftar's power grab, it transformed the geopolitical dynamics causing the United States and the European Union to reprioritize its objectives in Libya. Ankara's decision to establish a maritime and security memorandum of understanding (MoU) sparked anger in the Eastern Mediterranean in particular with Greece and Egypt. Abu Dhabi's plan to forcefully unify the country under the military leadership of Haftar had failed, but for its partners it became a costly miscalculation and source of geo-political anxiety.

Future Emirati Designs

The UAE has a clear ideologically driven foreign policy strategy across the region and has pursued it with focus and determination. Its support for Haftar was discernible and bolstered by significant Egyptian, French and Russian support, but took place in a peculiar chapter in global politics. The fact that the Trump administration had turned a blind eye to ongoing developments in Libya, meant that Abu Dhabi was able to not only pursue its foreign policy agenda in Libya but deepen its integration with Moscow in North Africa - much to the detriment of U.S. interests in the region. The new Biden administration might take a more proactive view on Libya for this reason, forcing Abu Dhabi to at least nominally distance itself from Russia's operations in the country.

The failure of General Haftar to secure Tripoli has blunted Abu Dhabi's plan for the country, and despite its strategic failure in Libya, the UAE maintains a considerable investment across the country. Its military base in Eastern Libya, mercenary presence in Sirte, and its relationship to a key armed group's leader in the capital; Haitem Tajori of the Tripoli revolutionary brigade give it strategic leverage across Libya's vast coastline. On the diplomatic front, the conclusion of the UN's political process saw its main candidate Aguila Saleh fail to prize control of the Presidency following his loss to Mohamed Al Menfi. However, the UN's unification process will conclude with an internationally recognised LAAF as part of the new Government of National Unity, and in this regard offers confidence to the UAE, and its ability to renew bilateral cooperation with its favoured institution whether Haftar remains at the helm or not. The UAE may have lost the battle for Tripoli, but following the last round of negotiations, not the war.

Chapter 13

France: Strongman Syndrome

by Jihâd Gillon

Libya occupies a unique place in France's history in the Maghreb. Neighbouring it's former colony in Algeria, and protectorate in Tunisia, French foreign policy and the colonial strategists who initially crafted it saw their wider geo-strategic interests in Libya's vast expanse. General De Gaulle's insistence during World War II to take control of the Fezzan region was more than just about the French free forces countering Italian troops between 1942 and 1943, it was also about countering their allies in the race for influence in the Sahelo-Saherian region[1]. It was considered of the utmost strategic importance to establish a foothold in a region that shouldn't be part of the British empire in post-WWII Africa.

During the Gaddafi era, a perception of Libya as a potential threat and source of instability to the former French colonies of the Sahelo-Saharan region and their post independence status-quo began to grow, and moreover the need to respond to such a threat. This was epitomised by the Chad-Libyan conflict (1978-1987), during which rebel commander and then President of Chad Hissene Habré managed to expel Gaddafi's troops with the critical support of Paris during Opération Manta in 1983-1984 and the beginning of Opération Epervier in 1986. French socialist President at the time, François Mitterrand, confessed that "if Gaddafi were to stay in Libya, that's not really a matter of concern…Gaddafi isn't eternal and the problem is therefore circumscribed. [However] Gaddafi must stop working to expand Islamic Integrism[2]", a vague description of Gaddafi's ideas outlined in the Green Book, but an early French tendency to describe complex political ideologies as being vaguely Islamic.

Relations would reach a new low following the accusation that Libya was behind the crash of the DC10 UTA civil French airplane in 1989 in Ténéré desert, in Niger, killing 170 civilians, the incident reminding the French authorities that even a weakened and increasingly isolated Muammar Gaddafi could create problems[3]. The trial in absentia of the six Libyan suspects – including Abdallah Senussi, Gaddafi's step brother and chief of intelligence and life sentences in 1999 would lead fifteen years of virtually non existent bilateral ties.

1 'La « Colonne du Tchad » s'empare de Koufra et du Fezzan' (décembre 1940-janvier 1943), 20 January 2009, https://www.france-libre.net/koufra-fezzan/
2 Les dossiers de la CIA sur la France, 1981-2010, Vincent Nouzille
3 Sylvain Cornil, 'Attentat du DC10: de nouveaux documents accablent l'entourage de Kadhafi', 22 June 2018, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/attentat-du-dc10-de-nouveaux-documents-accablent-l-entourage-de-kadhafi_2019563.html

Gaddafi's famous rapprochement with the West following the Iraq war in 2003 included conditions in order to open a new chapter with France. Libya's recognition of responsibility for the DC10 crash and the offer of financial compensation to the victim's families became the platform to reestablish bilateral ties. These ties would deepen following the 2007 election of French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Four months after he was elected, Sarkozy flew to Tripoli to secure the release of five Bulgarian nurses held in Libya since 1999[4]. Weapons contracts and a nuclear cooperation agreement soon followed. This period remains a matter of great controversy in France, where Gaddafi is believed to have been a major contributor to the financing of Nicolas Sarkozy's electoral campaign in 2007. The trial of the now former president is still pending, yet these suspicions have fueled suspicion to ulterior motives behind France's military intervention in 2011.

The Revolution

France's active role in spearheading the military campaign in the early days of the Libyan revolution is difficult to reconcile with it's broader Arab Spring policy. Paris' aggressive response towards the Gaddafi regime in 2011 was not exclusively motivated by humanitarian concerns of Benghazi, under threat from Gaddafi's encroaching forces. Only a month earlier, in ex-French protectorate Tunisia, the birthplace of the revolutions where popular uprisings toppled president Zin el Abedine Ben Ali, the French Interior Minister Michèlle Alliot-Marie proposed technical support to confront and put down the protestors[5]. This policy highlighted not only the French leadership's lack of concerns towards the aspirations of the Arab street, but it's initial policy to the Arab Spring that was out of touch with Western diplomacy at the time. Following the Egyptian revolution, French foreign policy would not miss a third window of opportunity as protests erupted in Benghazi on February 17th 2011. In the following weeks, France would become the loudest advocates at the UN Security Council and within a nascent NATO coalition of military intervention in Libya to protect the revolution Benghazi's civilian population, amidst increasing rumours at the time circulating amongst the business milieu in Paris of eye watering commercial opportunities in post-Gaddafi Libya. Despite many pointing to French philosopher Bernard Henry Levy as France's key interlocutor following his trip to Benghazi, the French military establishment had begun to deploy it's military on the ground in Benghazi, and would rely on their intelligence and relationships - in particular those of Paul Soler a French military officer, who had established relationships to rebel commanders and groups on the ground[6].

With the election of François Hollande in 2012, Libya would take a back seat as French diplomatic attention would turn to another theatre of the Arab Spring, taking place in better-known Syria.

4 Michel Despratx, 'Infirmières bulgares: le deal secret entre Sarkozy et Kadhafi,' 30 April 2012, https://www.lesinrocks.com/2012/04/30/actualite/actualite/infirmieres-bulgares-le-deal-secret-entre-sarkozy-et-kadhafi/
5 Samuel Laurent, 'Voyage en Tunisie : la défense de Michèle Alliot-Marie s'effondre' 16 Feburary 2011, https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2011/02/16/voyage-en-tunisie-la-defense-de-michele-alliot-marie-s-effondre_1480787_823448.html
6 Jihâd Gillon, 'France-Libye : le maréchal Haftar, l'ami controversé de l'Élysée' 19 March 2020, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/909987/politique/le-marechal-haftar-lami-libyen-controverse-de-lelysee/

French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian

The Libyan file would shift away from the Foreign ministry to the ministry of Defence under Jean-Yves Le Drian. With the electoral victories of Islamist political parties in Tunisia and Egypt, and a complex civil war in Syria, Paris' new administration's foreign policy would progressively favor a more security and stability focussed approach towards the Middle East and North Africa. This period is notable for the increasingly close ties the Hollande administration had built with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Under the Sarkozy administration, France established a military base in the UAE, it's first and only base in the Middle East. The Hollande administration would seek to capitalise on this by establishing deeper strategic ties across defence, energy and cultural ties, and in 2013 would begin military cooperation with the UAE in Mali, their first joint military cooperation. At an ideological level, In France, the UAE found a strategic partner who would not split hairs over a broad definition of the term Islamist to include violent and non-violent groups irrespective of it's consequences for the region's democratic transition, bringing France closer to the UAE's own foreign policy in the region. During this period as the Sahel became further destabilised, the Libyan file would move from the periphery to one of the French President's top foreign policy priorities. Towards the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013, Salafi Jihadist groups began threatening Mali's capital Bamako, forcing the French military to intervene under Operation Serval to repel Al-Qaida-linked fighters. This period reshaped France's view of Libya. From Paris' point of view, and with the support of

regional heads of state like Chadian president Idriss Déby, post Gaddafi Libya, a wash with weapons for arms trafficiking in addition to porous borders became viewed as the source of the Sahel's instability and the main causes of the Salafi-Jihadist threat to the whole sahelian region. This sparked a major change towards France's Libya policy in late 2013 and early 2014 as Paris began to search for a simple solution to the complexities of post Gaddafi Libya.

The Strong Man Illusion

The emergence of Khalifa Haftar, who offers an uncompromising 'Strong man' approach to 'solving Libya' could not have come at a better time. When Haftar launched Operation Dignity in May 2014 he offered a seductive 'reset button' to the perceived chaos and complexity of the Libyan revolution in 2011 and with it the simplest of solutions to Libya's complexity, a war against all those that stood against democratic institutions, political parties, and Salafi Jihadists alike under 'a purge of the Muslim Brotherhood'[7]. France's need for a 'strong man' in Libya was also fueled by increasing concerns in France about illegal immigrants passing through the Meditaranean from Libya, against a backdrop of increasing European populist rhetoric and the ideological progress of far-right parties in Europe, Haftar's solution seemed ideal. Moreover, the General seemed like a reliable figure given his military support by Abu Dhabi and Egypt in the early days of Operation Dignity with whom Paris had begun establishing strong ties to. As a result Paris quietly develops military cooperation with Haftar in Benghazi, a point revealed after the fact in 2016, following the death of several french military personnel in a helicopter crash in Benghazi[8].

France's foreign policy and strategic alliance to these two key authoritarian Arab powers is indirectly favored by the consequences of the 2008 economic crisis. France's economy had been hit badly, and the sale of military material and combat aircrafts to Cairo and Abu Dhabi became justified as a promotion of the French workforce. This 'commerce first' approach gave Egypt and the UAE substantial leverage on French foreign policy, in particular Libya. The clear ideological synergies that developed between the three with the cultivation of a growing anti-Islamist rhetoric cemented the alliance. In this convergence of economic ties, military cooperation ideology were the seeds of a new geo political 'anti-Islamist axis' that began to grow between France, the UAE and Egypt as they established close cooperation in Libya.

Significant domestic changes in France strengthened the Elysees' conviction towards it's Libya policy despite Haftar's failure to take power in 2014, and the subsequent United Nations brokered peace talks to end the war through establishing the Government of National Accord (GNA) under Faiez al-Sarraj in 2015.

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7 Khalid Mahmoud ,"Khalifa Haftar pledges to "purge" Libya of Muslim Brotherhood' 20 May 2014, https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/khalid-mahmoud/news-middle-east/khalifa-haftar-pledges-to-purge-libya-of-muslim-brotherhood

8 Cyril Bensimon, Frédéric Bobin, 'Trois membres de la DGSE morts en Libye, le gouvernement libyen proteste' 21 July 2016, https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2016/07/20/trois-militaires-francais-tues-en-libye_4972142_3210.html

Khalifa Haftar

The traumatizing Islamic State attacks in Paris in November 2015 Paris, a month before the establishment of the GNA gave policy weight to the personality of Khalifa Haftar. Haftar promoted in several french media outlets as a Libyan "De Gaulle" fighting to free his country from the plague of Salafi Jihadist, and remains France's favoured candidate in Libya despite France's public commitment to the GNA[9]. In contrast Faiez Serraj, is perceived as weak, with little leverage on the multitude and undisciplined armed groups controlling Tripolitania. As Haftar rejected the GNA following it's arrival to Tripoli in 2016, Paris was faced with a difficult decision as to how to respond to Libya's new political crisis.

Officially, France approves the Skhirat agreement and its outcome but privately has many doubts over its implementation. Paul Soler, the French officer that had fought in Benghazi in 2011 had by this time become elevated to the status of a trusted insider in the Elysee and doesn't hide his preference for Haftar, leading to the French Defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian to meet Haftar's political adviser Fadel al-Deeb in Paris in 2015[10], and begin closer political cooperation following the establishment of the GNA.

Despite Emmanuel Macron's election as President in May 2017, France's policy engagement towards Libya would only deepen as a result of the nomination of Jean-Yves Le Drian as minister of Foreign affairs. The new president, the youngest one of the Fifth Republic, wishes to demonstrate France's stature on the global state early on in his Presidency and selects the Libyan crisis, viewed in the Elysee as a potential easy win only two months into his Presidency. France's state apparatus becomes the subject of intense lobbying in favor of Haftar, by Emirati and Egyptian networks in the French capital, but also by the Elysée's military advisors and Le Drian that transitioned Haftar from a military general to being viewed as a statesman as opposed to a General under the state in Libya.

This reshaping of the crisis is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of France's foreign policy since 2011. Despite Haftar's role as a spoiler in Libya following his rejection of the UN brokered Libyan Political Agreement, and the GNA, he is invited in July 2017 by the Elysee to La Celle Saint Cloud, to meet with Sarraj on equal footing. Haftar is not only reshaped as a statesman, but reshaped from his role as the spoiler of Libya's 2015 peace process to a key part of it's solution in 2017. Macron would host both Serraj and Haftar again in 2018 to agree unifying the LAAF under the GNA followed by democratic elections, despite Haftar's high profile claim in French media that "Libya is not ready for democracy"[11].

9 'Accusée de soutenir le maréchal Haftar, la France réaffirme son appui à Tripoli' 18 April 2019, https://www.france24.com/fr/20190418-libye-france-khalifa-haftar-fayez-al-sarraj-paris-reaffirme-soutien-gna
10 Jihâd Gillon, "Les hommes de l'ombre de la crise libyenne, 24 February 2019, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/739702/politique/les-hommes-de-lombre-de-la-crise-libyenne/
11 Laurent De Saint Perier, "Khalifa Haftar La Libye n'est pas encore mure pour la democratie", 5 February 2018, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/507758/politique/khalifa-haftar-la-libye-nest-pas-encore-mure-pour-la-democratie/

Haftar's unilateral withdrawal from diplomatic talks to launch an assault on Tripoli in April 2019 would be a diplomatic embarrassment for Paris as it faced accusations by the GNA of having encouraged his warmongering, with al-Sarraj calling Macron personally. The suspicion stems from Haftar's meeting with Jean-Yves Le Drian days before the attack, and the response to Haftar's question as to why he hadn't seen him for so long being "we were waiting for your victories"[12]. Despite France's explicit denial of it's support to Haftar during this period, Paris fails to explicitly name or condemn Haftar in it's diplomatic communique's as being chiefly responsible for Libya's latest civil war. The embarrassment would continue after Haftar's staging ground for the assault, Gharian falls to GNA forces in July 2019 who retrieved French procured US anti tank missiles amidst Haftar's arsenal of weapons, casting suspicions as to whether French special forces coordinated the attack with the LAAF[13].

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Haftar's unilateral withdrawal from diplomatic talks to launch an assault on Tripoli in April 2019 would be a diplomatic embarrassment for Paris.

12 Jihâd Gillon, "France - Libye: Le Marechal Haftar L'ami Libyen et la controverse de L'élysee" 18 March 2018, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/mag/909987/politique/le-marechal-haftar-lami-libyen-controverse-de-lelysee/
13 "Libya conflict: French missiles found on pro-Haftar base", 10 July 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48935242

Conclusion

Since July 2019, France has retreated to the diplomatic and political periphery. Frances' principal military ally in Libya the UAE were bolstered by Russian military support, and in turn drew in Turkey and has further complicated the geo politics of Libya's conflict. As Haftar's Tripoli campaign collapsed in June 2020, diplomatic talks resumed in search of a compromise between the GNA and LAAF. Despite Haftar's loss of momentum, the future of Paris's foreign policy may not have entirely changed as it begins to identify actors within the GNA with whom it could build a strategic relationship.

The GNA's Minister of Interior Fathi Bashagha, with powerful relationships to the armed groups in Tripolitania and influence in the powerful Western city of Misrata is perceived as being a potential alternative 'Strong man' from the GNA camp. Despite Bashagha's harsh criticism of France during Haftar's assault, his recent overtures and two visits to Paris in the latter part of 2020 suggest he is willing to establish a new relationship with the french authorities. However, the latest chapter of Libya's transition has challenged Paris' foreign policy assumptions. Visible divisions amongst the GNA's armed groups and in particular the key armed groups who control the capital and have voiced their opposition to Bashagha demonstrate the challenges ahead in Libya, and the assumptions of a strongman.

Similarly in Haftar's stronghold in Benghazi, feuding armed groups and tribes within the LAAF have begun to demonstrate the fragility of Haftar's strong and stable approach. The conclusion of the UN political process and emergence of outsiders such as Abdelhamid Debeiba and Mohamed Menfi has also demonstrated Libya's unpredictability and the costs of tying itself too closely to actors whose influence could be dwindling. France's coming elections in 2022, their lack of confidence in understanding the new complex environment and the return of the United State's under the Biden administration could signal a lessening of Libya's priority in Paris.

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