

PORGMUN 2019



AIDING THE UNIFICATION OF LIBYA

Forum: Arab League

INTRODUCTION

The topic being discussed pertains to the period of civil unrest that has gripped Libya in 2011 and continued in varying degrees up to the present day. The Libyan Civil War is one of the focal points of contemporary geopolitics and one of the most heated conflicts of today.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

GNA

Government of National Accord, UN-recognised authority in Libya

LNA

Libyan National Army, insurgents led by General Khalifa Haftar

Shkirat Agreement/Libyan Political Agreement

A UN-brokered agreement between the two opposing political bodies in Libya in 2015, now defunct

Tripoli

Pre-war capital of Libya, now the seat of the Government of National Accord and an alternative name for the GNA

Tobruk

Base of operations of the LNA

R2P

Acronym for responsibility to protect, a doctrine of modern humanitarian intervention stating that when a state becomes unable to guarantee the basic rights of its citizens, the international community has the right and duty to intervene on the citizens' behalf

GENERAL OVERVIEW - Developments in Libya up to January 2019

A brief history of Libya in the 20th century

On the eve of the Second World War, Libya was one of the few colonial possessions of Benito Mussolini's Italy. It was lost by Italians during their retreat from Africa in 1943 and was subsequently administered by Britain and France, split into two parts, whose borders were mainly based on the respective spheres of influence of the two powers. The country as we know it today was united in 1951 under the reign of King Idris I.

Similarly as in Iraq, the kingdom did not last. Inspired by Gamal Abdel Nasser, the revolutionary leader of Egypt, and spurred on by the discovery of oil reserves on Libyan territory, the revenues from which were seen as distributed disproportionately and unfairly, a group of military leaders, the Free Officers Movement, led by Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, staged a coup in 1969, which saw King Idris deposed, the monarchy abolished, and Qaddafi installed as the Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council and *de facto* head of state.

The reign of Muammar Qaddafi is typically divided into two parts—his reign as head of the Libyan Arab Republic from 1969 to 1977 and his reign as Brotherly Leader and Guide of the Revolution of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya from 1977 to his untimely death in 2011. The official titles, particularly the latter one, were meant to reflect the claims that Qaddafi does not hold real power, but merely acts as a spiritual leader of the free Libyan people. Such claims were in line with The Green Book, an ideological manifesto written by Qaddafi in the 1970s, where he detailed the most desirable government—and the government he was helping build in Libya—as a direct democracy composed of so-called people's committees, which sprung up on the national, regional, and local level after 1973.

Though the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was in name and in appearance a fundamentally democratic and egalitarian country, it needn't be stated that the true power rested with Qaddafi and, by extension, his various aides. The true effectivity of Libyan democracy in those years cannot, for that reason, be truly judged.

Despite much criticism and vitriol that Qaddafi has received (arguably rightfully), he was a rather competent statesman, as he managed to remain largely neutral during the Cold War in

spite of all the difficulties of such an approach. Though Libya maintained good relations with the Soviet Union, Qaddafi sought to keep communism from spreading in the Arab world and to keep Libya in the Non-Aligned Movement. His domestic policy, based on his “Third International Theory”, was essentially a form of national bolshevism, wherein the state intervened greatly in the economy, but did not claim to be communist nor undertake the more radical steps against property common in communist countries of the time.

The main source of legitimacy of the Qaddafi government was the prosperity of Libya under the Colonel’s rule. Once again taking inspiration from Nasser, who triumphantly seized the Suez Canal, proclaiming its revenues would henceforth serve the people, Qaddafi nationalised the oil industry and mandated that the proceeds from the sale of oil be distributed among the people. While there certainly existed a stark inequality in the distribution, this move maintained relatively high living standards in the country, rivalled only by the emirates of the Arab Peninsula and Saudi Arabia in the Arab world.

However, the regime also had several flaws, the most notable of which was the stark authoritarianism, completely antithetical to Qaddafi’s claims and visions contained in the Green Book, with which the country was ruled. Political violence was common, restrictive property laws were signed, and dissent was ruthlessly quashed. Libya’s actions in the international sphere were also of questionable nature, especially because Qaddafi went to great lengths to undermine British influence in the world, even going as far as to supply the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) with automatic weapons and other equipment. He was also found to have orchestrated the Lockerbie bombing in 1988, where 270 people perished as a detonated bomb sent a plane crashing down on the Scottish village of Lockerbie. This particular action led to much hostility being displayed towards Libya and Qaddafi by the international community. The most notable step taken against Libya were sanctions imposed by the United Nations, which severely affected Libya’s economy. After this, the country remained an international pariah until Qaddafi’s overthrow.

Qaddafi’s rule was also marked by the exodus of the intelligentsia from the country, who were forced out for either political or economic reasons. While many found refuge within neighbouring countries such as Tunisia or Egypt, a small prominent group, mainly consisting of politically important persons, made their way to the United States. This included General

Khalifa Haftar, a former soldier under Qaddafi's command, who resided in the country along with a significant number of his soldiers, all of whom received funding from the U.S. government. Prior to the Arab Spring, Haftar attempted to topple Qaddafi in 1996, but failed to achieve his goal and returned to the United States quickly thereafter, where he remained until 2011, when he came back to Libya.

The Arab Spring and Libya

When the protests in Tunisia turned into a revolution, this event sent ripples throughout the Arab World in a hitherto unprecedented way. The idea of revolution spread from country to country and created a rare sight—general agreement and unity between large amounts of Arabs, who all protested in the name of political freedoms and democracy. While the ideas of the movement were largely the same in all of the affected countries, the execution and the results of the individual revolutions varied drastically. While Algeria and Tunisia emerged from the process changed but largely unscathed, the toppling of President Mubarak in Egypt saw the radical Muslim Brotherhood elected into government, a civil war erupted in Syria, leading not only to thousands of deaths, but to the rapid expansion of ISIL in 2014, and Libya was thrown into absolute chaos, from which it has not recovered since.

Similarly to another autocrat, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, Qaddafi used repressive measures to quell the sudden uprisings and demonstrations, further fanning the flames of discord and discontent. Civil war quickly erupted. Unlike in Syria, where the intervention of Western states was kept to a minimum, the Libyan Civil War saw Muammar Qaddafi and his loyalists fighting not only their angered countrymen, but also the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, who all took part in bombing campaigns against the Qaddafi regime. While the involvement of France and the United Kingdom has since been questioned as having been conducted mainly for political and personal reasons, the involvement of the United States seems to have been conducted mainly for ideological and geopolitical reasons, as the U.S. sought to turn a Libya mostly ambivalent or hostile to the West into a strong ally. Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, along with other politicians such as Republican John McCain, strongly advocated for intervention.

While the expressed goals of the intervention were achieved, as Qaddafi was toppled, the situation quickly deteriorated. Qaddafi was captured by an enraged mob while attempting to flee, was brutally tortured and finally executed. The video of his execution is widely available on the Internet today.

Post-Arab Spring developments

After the declaration that Libya has been liberated in October of 2011, chaos took reign. The National Transitional Council, recognised as the legitimate authority in Libya by a majority of UN members, was found unable to establish and maintain order in a country where sectarianism, tribalism, and secessionism, held in check by the authoritarian measures of Qaddafi's regime, were suddenly unleashed. A period of violence, terrorist attacks, and great national and regional tension, followed. During this time, the infamous attack on the U.S. embassy in Benghazi also occurred.

After the National Transitional Council was disbanded in 2012, power was handed over to the democratically elected General National Congress, which functioned with some success until 2014, when a split between the ruling and opposition parties led to a rift in the young democracy, the result of which would be a second violent split.

In May 2014, General Khalifa Haftar began a systematic attack on Islamist militants in Libya, later going on to proclaim the General National Congress illegitimate, ordering the troops to storm the building and forcefully disband it. This sparked the beginning of the Second Libyan Civil War, which quickly evolved from a bilateral struggle to a war between the two factions, ISIL, and other minor Islamist groups. In 2014, the war included various Islamist groups and two rival bodies, the Constitutional Committee proclaimed by General Haftar and his allies, which later formed the House of Representatives, ruling from Tobruk, and the General National Council, ruling from the former capital of Tripoli. Confused yet?

The United Nations eventually elected to become involved in the civil war and spearheaded the creation of an agreement between the General National Council and the House of Representatives, which would allow for the creation of a united front against ISIL, which had used the civil war as an opportunity to make gains and entrench itself in a part of

the country. This agreement was reached in December 2015 and is referred to as the Shkirat Agreement or the Libyan Political Agreement.

The UN-backed deal was supposed to lead to the disbanding of the General National Council, the creation of the Presidential Council and the Government of National Accord, transitional entities which would hold power until elections could be called, which was expected to happen either in 2017 or 2018. By the end of March 2016, key members of the new Government of National Accord had moved to Tripoli and the government was quickly established, with the former House of Representatives now changed into the High Council of State and consisting of members of both the House and the General National Council.

Small portions of the General National Council remained in opposition to the Government of National Accord, referring to themselves as the National Salvation Government after the Shkirat Agreement.

With the government seemingly recognised by all important parties in the civil war, excluding Islamists, it seemed that order would prevail at last and that the Government of National Accord could begin to establish legitimate authority over all of the country. A new offensive was launched against ISIL, leading to military successes and the diminishing of Islamist control over parts of Libyan territory. These operations were led by General Haftar, who shortly thereafter began to criticise the Tripoli government over what he perceived were connections to Islamist groups.

While signs pointed to the fact that the establishment of legitimate authority may prove difficult, with the House of Representatives already voting against proposed ministerial appointments in January 2016, the true blow to the hopes of uniting Libya under the Government of National Accord was dealt in August of that year, when the House passed a motion of no confidence, effectively proclaiming that it no longer considered the Government of National Accord to be legitimate. This in turn led to renewed hostilities between the eastern-based supporters of the House of Representatives, led by General Haftar, and the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord, with General Haftar eventually declaring the Shkirat Agreement void in late 2017.

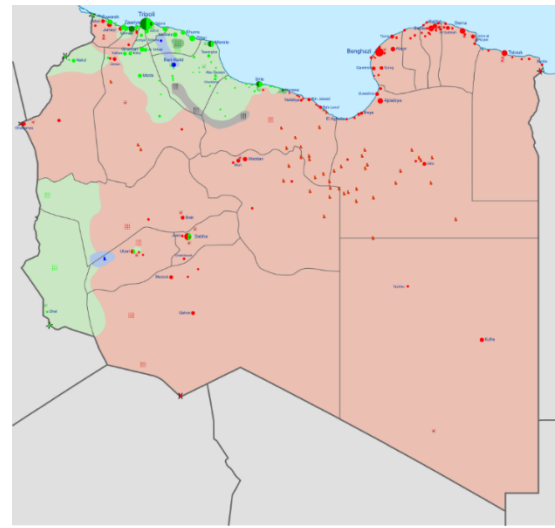
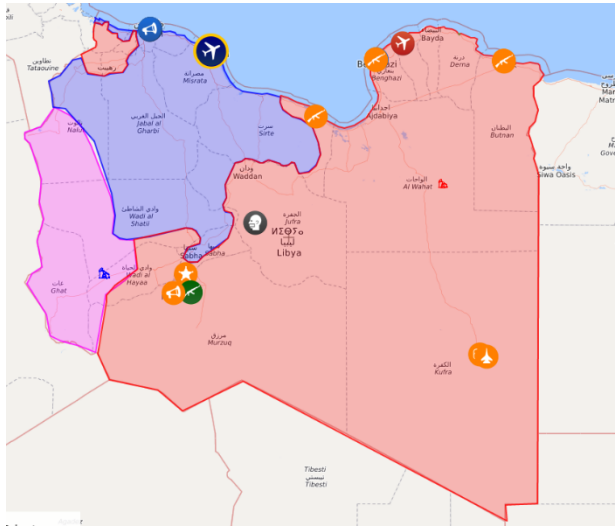
Current situation

The struggle between Haftar and the Government of National Accord has continued throughout 2017 and 2018, despite various attempts to address the problem, including a meeting between General Haftar and Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj.

Currently, the Government of National Accord holds a small portion of the country, mainly on the coast around Tripoli. Experts warn, however, that the government's influence does not truly extend beyond Tripoli itself, as all other territory considered to be "held" by the Government of National Accord, is ruled by militant groups, some considered Islamist, which support Tripoli in exchange for unprecedented autonomy.

The Libyan National Army and the Tobruk Government hold vast swathes of land throughout the country, and despite international support for their opponents, seem to be doing very well and overall prevailing in the conflict. This development could potentially complicate the situation in Libya greatly, as the Tobruk Government is not internationally recognised, while the Government of National Accord, being the result of an agreement brokered by the United Nations, had the recognition of most countries and the support of, among others, the United States of America. It is difficult to tell how strongly, if at all, the Libyan National Army is truly prevailing, as it is nigh impossible to determine who truly controls which part of the country. While a November 2018 map shows the holdings of the Government of National Accord as greatly diminished, a "live" map of the conflict maintained by LiveUAMap, a website tracking the civil wars in Syria and Ukraine in addition to the Libyan Conflict, shows the holdings of the Government of National Accord to be noticeably larger. While one may question the legitimacy of such sources, the website in question is perceived as quite accurate in its reporting of developments in other conflicts.

It is also impossible to estimate the influence of Islamists in the country, who despite having lost their strongholds, continue to conduct terrorist attacks on important targets and sowing chaos in the country, very similarly to post-2003 Iraq.



January 2019 LiveUAMap of the war (left) and November 2018 Wikipedia map (right)

The situation is further complicated by reports that General Haftar is in poor health and has suffered a stroke. He has since returned to Libya and resumed control of operations, pointing to the fact that he has made a recovery. The true nature of his health, however, remains shrouded in mystery. A popular leader in the fight both against Islamism and the Government of National Accord, Haftar seems to wield a great amount of influence. He is also described as a great military commander and tactician. His untimely death could potentially lead to some sort of breaking point in the war, although this is largely an assumption.

Elections were scheduled to be held after a meeting between Prime Minister Sarraj and General Haftar in Paris, but after fighting erupted between the two sides again, the elections seemed to have been postponed indefinitely.

Even if the Government of National Accord were to overcome the Libyan National Army and topple the Tobruk Government, there would still exist the issue of widespread distrust towards the government, particularly due to its inability to maintain order and ensure that the basic needs of the people are met. With the government at times failing to prevent electricity shortages, seeming almost powerless in dealing with continuing terror attacks by Islamist groups, and facing the unleashing of sectarian tendencies after the long reign of Muammar Qaddafi, could easily fail to establish order even in the absence of a strong, organised rival.

MAJOR PARTIES AND THEIR VIEWS

At present, as has been mentioned above, the main conflict is being waged between the Government of National Accord, which has the support and recognition of the United Nations and a majority of its members. While support for the GNA is prevalent in the outside world, their position in Libya is much shakier, particularly due to their failures in re-establishing the pre-war order in many key aspects, such as ensuring a steady supply of electricity and basic utilities. In addition to this, the GNA relies on loose alliances with tribal groups in the vicinity of Tripoli, some of which demand great levels of autonomy in exchange for their continued support, raising the concerns of the opposition.

The single greatest opponent of the GNA is the Libyan National Army, led by General Khalifa Haftar. Haftar views the Tripoli government as fundamentally corrupt, citing its supposed deals with Islamists and its inability to maintain order in the country. Despite that, the LNA is viewed as an insurgent group by much of the world and its road to recognition as a legitimate government is paved with many obstacles.

There also remain pockets of ISIL fighters in Libya, who primarily subsist by maintaining a rather lucrative and thriving slave market in Libya. While the GNA has officially pledged to fight ISIL in the Shkirat Agreement, their conflict with the LNA has kept them from doing so. The LNA, however, is fighting ISIL proactively.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Ironically enough, the whole issue being debated is the result of a previous attempt to solve the issue of Muammar Qaddafi's reign and the violent protests against it in 2011. As such, the NATO intervention in Libya broke new ground in the field of international law and international relations, as it was the first time that the concept of responsibility to protect (R2P) was used in mounting an international intervention. It was also the first time that the

United Nations Security Council voted to approve such a measure. While historic in nature, this intervention was, of course, a fundamental failure.

The international community continued to be invested in Libya, attempting to help the establishment of the National Transitional Council as a legitimate authority and then subsequently recognising the General National Council after the NTC's failure.

The UN was also key in brokering the now-defunct Shkirat Agreement, which was supposed to allow for the peaceful co-operation of the anti-Islamist factions in Libya, but ultimately broke down due to disagreements between the GNA and the LNA.

QUESTIONS A RESOLUTION SHOULD ANSWER

It cannot be overstated how fragile, complicated, and unprecedented the situation in Libya is. Even the civil war in Syria, perhaps the most related and similar conflict, is fundamentally very different. No framework for a solution or a previously tried approach exist, nor can they be expected to be created anytime soon.

What further complicates the creation of the solution in the Arab League is the fact that the assembly, while uniquely predisposed to tackle certain parts of the conflict, lacks the jurisdiction and overall capabilities to enforce its decisions and enact its plans, especially compared to bodies such as the United Nations Security Council. In spite of that, there is much that the Arab League can do to help the Libyan people. Achieving the goal of aiding the unification of Libya, as spelled out by the topic, however, will be a tall order.

There are many roadblocks which stand in the way of a comprehensive solution to the war. The fact that the majority of the world currently seems to be—at least officially—standing behind the losing side, which, as said previously, may not even be capable of truly controlling any territory with the exception of Tripoli definitely is the main issue. Even the situation in Syria, where President Bashar al-Assad, now a clear victor in the civil war, is opposed by much of the Western world and the United Nations, is different, as Assad's government can draw on the legitimacy of its pre-civil-war rule and rely on some amounts of

political experience. The Government of National Accord, endorsed by the UN, cannot draw on such legitimacy or rely on experienced experts. Both governments in Libya, while they may be staffed with educated politicians, suffer from the fact that no one now truly knows how the political process in Libya has worked in the four decades of Qaddafi's rule—everyone who did know has been murdered. Given the increased difficulty of attempting to rule a country so drastically shaken by unrest, terror, and war, the fact that the Government of National Accord seems bent on establishing a genuine democracy in a state which has not known such a thing for largely the entirety of its existence is not particularly helpful in easing the task of pacifying Libya.

The elections formerly agreed upon in the aforementioned meeting of Haftar and Sarraj should definitely be endorsed and a definitive date set. That must of course be preceded by a ceasefire agreement between the two sides. That is definitely an action that the Arab League well could undertake, thus meaningfully contributing to the process of quelling unrest in the country. The endorsement and brokering of a ceasefire agreement on neutral, Arab soil, could be a definitive step in the right direction.

Ultimately, there are many challenges presented by the current situation, which the Arab League may or may not choose to tackle. That is largely up to the members, and their respective policies and goals. Much can be achieved through the upcoming meeting of the forum, provided that all members are ready and willing to put their differences and individual interests in second place, and focus on the restoration of order and aiding the Libyan people as the foremost priority.

APPENDIX AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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