Trends and Dynamics of the Libya Conflict

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ABSTRACT
The conflict in Libya manifests complex dynamics involving personal, group and international interests in a decade long struggle for power and its accruing benefits. Militia, terror and shadow groups are involved in moves and counter moves, flexible alliances and counter alliances based on interests that intricately maneuver fault-lines in the clash and dialogue of civilizations. This study looks at the trends and dynamics of the Libyan conflict; parties involved; the justification behind their actions. The study has recommended the complete withdrawal of shadow parties in the crisis to lessen the complexities involved in solving the crisis, implementation of proper Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration and power sharing under a federal structure.
Keywords: Conflict, Libya, Civil War, Dynamics, Civilizations, Identity

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the cold war, the dynamics of global politics have continued to sway as the United States became a hegemon in global affairs in a unipolar world (Onder 2019, 74). This change in dynamics have seen the surge of other vital global players that have become dominant in their regions and also having great power in influencing the affairs of other nations. Such regional powers have become even more powerful with the clash of civilizations at play as dynamic interests are created and managed within and between groups to either off-sit a regional power or to dominate as a regional power looking to expand. Conflicts are thus forged along the fault lines of culture and identity – in the case of this paper it is limited to rights, responsibilities, liberty, authority, equality and hierarchy (Huntington 1993, 23)– as varied identities grapple to access power to advance individual or group interests. Huntington (1993, 24) argued that the dialogue of civilizations will lead to increased cognizance of the variances and parallels between civilizations resulting easily to apprehension or collaboration. Over three decades, various nations such as China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, India, Turkey, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, the European Union and other like nations have improved their global image and regional dominance.The policies of the United States conversely have always advance their local, regional and international interests since President Woodrow Wilson (Onder 2020, 28) and have continued to do so with President Donald Trumps "America first" policies.

In Africa – and to an extent the middle east – Libya under Muammar Gaddafi was the most developed African country based on the 2010Human Development Index analysis and 53rd in the world according to the 2010 Human Development Report (Gebremichael, et al. 2018, 2). Gaddafi has been a part of that race to regional as well as global hegemony. Under his rulership with great influence from Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Gaddafi sought and followed a pan-Arab ideology that tried to unite the Arab nations under an umbrella that could make them powerful as a united conglomerate speaking and acting as one. When this failed, he sought a more united Africa under the auspices of the African Union to unite the continent under one government – United States of Africa. He believed that a united Africa would look inward to solutions for African problems without unnecessary intervention and interference from the west as their main reason for killing him can be assessed as an effort to enforce imperialism. Many pundits believed that this was only a ploy by the Libyan leader to amass more power that could rival any other in the world making him more dominant in Africa and become an even bigger power broker with remarkable contentions over a slice of global polarity. Gaddafi's Libya in its quest for international recognition and power had muddied itself in the bipolar war (Onder 2020, 29) – US and allies versus terrorists – that was introduced with the September 11th attack on the United States in

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2001.It has been alleged that Gaddafi sponsored terrorist organizations around the world. This as we would see in this study brought back the war to his doorstep as the US continued to confront states with link to terrorist groups. Nations were either with them or against them in this war and Libya was definitely against (Onder 2019, 74). This came against the backdrop of Gaddafi's speech at the United Nations challenging the five veto power members of the security council asking if the five were greater than the world (Onder 2019, 75) – this same rhetoric has also been used by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Within Libya, Gaddafi faced internal identity problems that had to do with disintegrations based on "tribalism, localism and regionalism (Mezran and Varvelli 2017, 13)that were accentuated with the 2010/2011 Arab spring that beleaguered most of the Arab world. This situation marked a turning point in the relationship between the government of Libya and opposition forces/groups that took advantage of the situation with great help from other external actors to oust the Gaddafi government. This however marked the beginning of even greater turmoil to bedevil the once very prosperous North African nation. This tumultuous reality have plagued the Libyan nation for a decade now as the road to peace has been marred by violence and death as the nation grapples with finding a political/military solution to the problem of leadership as varying warring factions with support from global and regional power players continue to wrestle to hold central authority in Tripoli.

This study will look into Gaddafi's rule, the agitations of the opposition, how he was ousted and what transpired after the power vacuum was created and the limitations that have been experienced in trying to fill this power vacuum. A brief history to the Libya crisis would also be looked at along with the dynamics of the conflict, the major actors in the crisis and the way forward with regards to the furlong conflict in Libya as it continues to devastate the nation, region and nations along the Eastern Mediterranean.

II. HISTORY OF THE CRISIS

Through history, Libya consist of three major/separate constituents (Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fazzan) brought together under the rule of King Sayyid Muhammad Idris in 1951 (Siebens and Case 2012, 4; Gebremichael, et al. 2018, 1). These constituents where allowed self-rule because of how they differed in terms of geography and culture. A lot of competition and enmity was said to have preexisted between them. The King consolidated his rule on the three groups by blurring the internal lines that physically and naturally divided the different constituent territories so as to bolster his reign over a unified Libya in 1963 (Siebens and Case 2012, 4). In 1969, King Idris was dethroned via a military coup led by Muammar Gaddafi (Gebremichael, et al. 2018, 1).

Libya under Gaddafi's rule experienced a lot of reforms which at first made him popular with the masses but estranged him from the political elites. He brought about rapid development and education in Libya resulting to a very high standard of living for Libyans. There existed some form of prosperity amongst most Libyans as a result of the positive economic outlook the regime was able to garner through its oil and gas sector (Pedde 2017, 94). During this time, he subsidized food, water, power, health and education in what Winer (2019, 3) calls a rentier socialist society.

He tried very hard to promote the Pan Arab ideology against tribal sentiments. However, Siebens and Case (2012, 11) argue that whenever he tried to quash rebellion or insurrections within Libya, he utilized the power of divide and conquer further accentuating tribal fault-lines as he favored some over others. They claim that the Berbers and other minority/Islamists tribes in the East of Libya where subjugated to the benefit of members from his own tribe and other dominant tribes. Most of the insurrections during his reign were from such subjugated and deprived regions.

Gaddafi ruled with an iron fist that grossly violated human rights and international law. His rule also subdued the media under his control limiting whatever information could be disseminated to the populace and the world. He did not hesitate to silence any form of dissent either through imprisonment, exile, torture or death. According to Bhardwaj (2012,82), he referred to "dissenters as stray dogs…rats and cockroaches to be exterminated". As such, what started as a simple revolt (Pedde 2017, 94) metamorphosed into a full-scale rebellion that eventually led to the death of Gaddafi and the fall of his regime.

III. DYNAMICS, TRENDS AND ACTORS IN THE LIBYA CONFLICT

First civil war

The Arab Spring exhibited demonstrations, revolts, rebellion and the ouster of a couple of governments in the middle east/north Africa. These societies were highly autocratic and undemocratic characterized by little or no opposition making their people to turn against them because their policies further led their people into poverty. Also, any form of opposition or dissent was violently silenced leading to the negative effect of little or no support from the embattled populace who wanted nothing short of a regime change and democracy to alleviate their suffering. Siebens and Case (2012, 14) opine that the handling of the situation by the Libyan security outfits was a far cry from what would have been expected from such a brutal regime especially in tandem with what had been obtainable in past experiences in Libya and in the other Arab Spring affected

nations. Some analysts believe that if the Gaddafi regime had taken the necessary steps to violently stem the rebellion at the early stages as was the norm, he may have not been ousted nor killed. His delayed action they perceive led to the loss of Bengazi, Bediya, Misrata and many other smaller cities when his troops had to withdraw from these towns completely to be taken over by the rebels under the rule of the National Transitional Council (NTC). This bold move led to the further capture of more cities as it emboldened several militant groups. These groups where constituted of local militia, Islamist militants and government security agents (police and military who had defected) who armed themselves with the small cache of weapons and vehicles they had taken from police and military instalments they had overtaken. The NTC was "a coalition body of anti-Gaddafi forces to consolidate resistance efforts all through Libya" (Bhardwaj 2012,81) with claimed links and sponsorship to the United States Central Intelligence Agency – the CIA has been involved in various plans through the decades to oust Gaddafi and during the Reagan administration in 1987 enlisting Khalifa Haftar (Gaddafi's former aide) as an asset that could lead a coup against Gaddafi (Barnes 2020, par. 7); provided weapons and logistics support (DeYoung and Miller 2011, par. 3) for the NTC; also offering training, intelligence and security for the rebels (Kelley 2012, par. 2).

These massive gains by the rebels eventually led Gaddafi to brutally respond to any form of protest regardless of its peaceful or violent nature. It became a large-scale military war with deaths and injuries to both parties running into thousands. The government forces where far more superior to that of the rebels because of their obvious capacity in terms of man power, intelligence, experience, training and sophisticated weapons. By the end of the first quarter of 2011 it became obvious that Gaddafi and his forces where winning the war as they had forcefully retaken most of the rebel captured territories as they zeroed in on Bengazi (the heart of the rebellion).

An intervention by the west (US, UK and France) under the guise of the "responsibility to protect" halted the offensive by the Libyan army when they intervened in the war by bombing government forces that were advancing against Bengazi repelling the army back in a forced retreat. Also, strategic government army instalments were targeted in the air raids by the international coalition to weaken the government forces and their ability to prosecute the war. The coalition forces transferred its mandate to NATO after two weeks of airstrikes and bombardment and they continued to decimate the government forces in several attacks. This would have been the best moment to negotiate as both parties are in a position to be susceptible to making concessions and reaching an agreement. Siebens and Case (2012, 19) believe that if NATO had toured this line of action, a political solution would have been accomplished but rather NATO was hard balled in their unwavering support for the rebels and the preconditions/demands that warranted Gaddafi, his family and allies be excluded from any political agreement. At this instance, via consensus, majority NATO countries agreed to the responses by NATO in Libya. Turkey who was a part of this consensus subsequently became a major party in the conflict – as wouldbe seen later in this study – and is opposite sides with other NATO member nations. This situation could attribute solely to Turkeys strategic interests in the area specially to do with Exclusive Economic Zone agreements in the Mediterranean. As such its interests are at odds with other NATO member nations with regards to the situation in Libya and who to support between the two main rival groups in Libya.

The support by NATO pushed the advantage to the side of the rebels as they retook their former strongholds and advanced to take even more territory from an already debilitated Libyan army. The Gaddafi led Libyan government continued to reiterate its inclination to find a diplomatic negotiated political settlement to the crisis via an African Union sponsored negotiation, but the rebels however stuck to their hitherto original stance. The rebels had gained enormous advantage (with the aid of NATO) over the government forces haven taken control of most of Libya and gaining essential grounds in Tripoli six months into the civil war and weren't willing to settle for less than their initial demands.

During the final phase of the civil war (August – October 2011) many members of the Gaddafi family and the ruling elites exiled themselves out of the country with Gaddafi himself withdrawing to the city of Sirte having boasted that he was never going to leave Libya after the fall of Tripoli into rebel hands. However, during a siege and eventual ransack of Sirte, Gaddafi was captured and executed on his attempted escape out of Sirte.

Post Gaddafipoliticalquagmire leading to the second civil war

Since the fall of Gaddafi, the Libyan state has been viewed by many as a "failed state" (Pusztai 2019, 1). The political and security landscape of the nation deteriorated into anarchy because of increased polarization along regional, communal and ideological 'fault-lines' (Weyreh 2014, 1)between Tripolitania against Cyrenaica and Fazzan (Pusztai 2019, 2). Dirsus and Eaton (2019,2) argued that this can be seen in a plethora of "violent competitions, fragmentation and breakdown of effective governance". This is largely in part due to the fact that among all the warring parties that came together to form a united force against the Gaddafi led Libyan government, none seemed to have the overall power and influence to take over the helm of governance in Libya. The hitherto entrenched 'fault-lines' that existed previously began to emanate as the factions began to dissipate back into their various nucleus where their true allegiance laid and the struggle/competition for power and

influence took over to fill the vacuum that now existed (Ilardo 2019, 1). This is characteristically so because all through its history, Libya's (even before the three regions where united as a nation) ethnic groupings and politics has always been intertwined (Al-Ashadeedi and Ezzeddine 2019, 1). One can hardly be separated from the other as individuals advance personal and ethnic (identity) interests rather than national – identity and interests has become pertinent in most conflicts including the one in Libya as shared ideas/interests unite and contrasting ideas/interests can easily conflict as interest gives identity the motivational power to easily influence actions in as much as identity gives interests a determinant direction (Mengshu 2020, par. 5). Prior to independence, the inhabitants of what constitute the present Libya have tried to unite under Pan-Islamism and Pan-Arabism but failed (Winer 2019, 3). Winer argued that it was persistent colonial rule that united them until they were handed over to King Idris at independence. This tribal and ethnic disunity had been perpetuated by Gaddafi through discriminatory policies (Arraf 2017, 2) that ultimately fueled anger against his regime from groups that felt relatively deprived. He was said to be a mastermind who utilized divide and rule by playing tribes against each other (Pusztai 2019, 2).

Politicians and militia commanders formed alliances in moves and counter moves that brought formerly opposing sides together and former compatriots ostracized as enemies all geared towards the forceful change of power (Lacher 2019, 11). The various tribes were only able to coexist because "pre-existing tribal divisions were temporally subdued under the NTC's anti-Gaddafi platform" based on their mutual grievance against the ruling elites (Bhardwaj 2012,82). According to Siebens and Case (2012, 23-25), open confrontations between Arabs and Berbers, within Arab factions and rival militias who once fought together against the government and Gaddafi loyalist was rife. This was corroborated by Ilardo (2019,2) when he stated that old tribal feuds were reawakened between the "Zintan and Wershefanas (Tripolitania), the Tuaregs and Tebus (Fazzan) and the Awaqeer, Magahrbeh and Obaidat (Cyrenaica)". He goes on to state that "tribal power dynamics historically represent a central element in national cohesion and identity". These statements above go on to show that there existed and still exist both intra and inter regional ethnic feuds. Dirsus and Eaton (2019, 7) therefore posited that no one group was powerful enough to take charge nationally as their power and control where limited to their locality hence the unavoidable need for partnerships locally and nationally.

The Libyan nation post Gaddafi struggled under the NTC to manage a fractured political landscape that seemed ungovernable as they initiated the process of transitioning Libya into a democracy. With no adequate police or army force, it became a herculean task for the NTC to maintain law and order and to ensure the rule of law as the security sector in Libya morphed into a hybrid of laxly aligned militia groups providing security for different factions of leadership as will be seen later on in this paper. Militia groups where placed on the government payroll called "revolutionary thuar" (Winer 2019,11) in a subsidization of militia security (Weyreh 2014, 6 and 31)despite having different commanders whom the NTC were forced to rely on (Alibony 2017, 36). These militia groups thus weren't akin to any disarmament processes and continued to operate in lawlessness. This is especially due to the fact that such groups bolstered their arms cache with new and sophisticated arsenals recovered from abandoned military depots as the armed groups took over defense ministries, barracks, bases and ammunition depots(Weyreh 2014, 7; Lacher 2019, 4; Winer 2019, 11). The nature and operations of these militia groups are very complex as they continue to change and metamorphose into blocs and counter blocs, coming together and disbanding and generally switching allegiances through the years depending on personal or group, tribal, political, regional and ideologies interests (Arraf 2017, 2; Winer 2019, 11). Some have been termed terrorist groups linked to ISIL and Al Qaeda.

The NTC conducted elections that ushered in the General National Congress (GNC) in 2012 marking the first democratic elections and smoothest transitioning of power in Libya (Gebremichael, et al. 2018, 5). The seats in the GNC where unevenly distributed within the initial three regions of Libya (Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan) leading to more tribal hostilities in their quest for power. Elections into these seats became largely along ethnic rather than party allegiances as over fifty percent of the seats were won by independent candidates who weren't affiliated to any political parties winning 120 of the 200 seats (Libya Herald 2012).The GNC was mandated with the herculean task of a new constitution and transitioning into a full democracy in a two-year time frame.

The GNC hadn't fulfilled their mandate at the expiration of their tenure and they illegally remained in power until they were forced (in part by demonstrations by Libyans and in part threat to and the use of force by General Khalifa Haftar) to conduct elections into the House of Representatives (HoR). After conducting and accepting the results of elections, the GNC still refused to step down. The second civil war however officially started with the kick start of Operation Dignity by Haftarin May 2014 which was primarily aimed at forcing the GNC to accept the results and the "eradicating Islamist militias" (Arraf 2017,3) linked to ISIL, Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The UN were able to bring the warring parties to a negotiated Libyan Political Agreement (Skhirat agreement) of December 2015 (Pusztai 2019, 2). This agreement advocated the creation of the Presidential Council (PC), Government of National Accord (GNA) and the High State Council (Aliboni 2017, 35). It was

this particular arrangement that saw the emergence of Fayez al Sarraj as the leader of the PC and the GNA. Sarraj in collaboration with the UN and other foreign leaders tried to propose and outline a plan that will involve Haftar in the transition with roles in the PC and the broader GNA. Plans were also in place to overhaul the military, the parliament and to organize elections into the parliament and also the presidency to give way to a democratic presidential system scheduled to take place in 2018. This agreement however fell out when the Haftar faction voided its arrangements in 2017 as the House of Reps who are aligned to Haftar also refused to endorse the GNA. It will seem that the GNC also refused to recognize Sarraj initially but later on they acquiesced to his leadership. The clear demarcation between the GNA in Tripoly and the HoR in Tobruk made Libya a fertile ground for the civil war to germinate with several forces armed to the teeth willing to align with either party and international backers with varying stakes in the conflicts.

The second civil war

The primary parties in the conflict are the House of Representatives who were elected into parliament in 2014 formerly based in Tripoli before being ousted to their present location in Tobruk. Aligned with them in the struggle for power is the Government of Al-Baydaand General Khalifa Haftar, the leader of the Libyan National Army (LNA). The second primary party in this conflict is the Sarraj group popularly known as the GNA led by the UN recognized Fayez al Sarraj and officially domiciled in Tripoli. Both factions have alliances with various militia groups even though other militia groups independent of the two major factions exist and profit in several ways off the chaos caused by the main parties. According to Ilardo (2019,1), the two main parties both rely on power arrangements brokered with various militia groups to consolidate their security needs. So, what can be seen is a perceived legitimate authority working in tandem with various militia groups to prosecute its wars on different fronts and also to ensure its hold over territories under them.

There was a third major party at the start of the civil war that included radical Islamists who took over several towns including major towns like Sirte, Benghazi and Derna. They carried out terrorist attacks even in Tripoli. The conflict in Libya had and continues to provide a safe haven for extremist groups linked to ISIL and al-Qaeda (Lacher 2012, 12). These groups however have been attacked and decimated by both parties and their allies in different assaults. The LNA were supported by the Egyptian air force while the Sarraj forces were supported by the United States. There are pockets of such groups however still existing in Libya.

The LNA and allied militia groups have launched several attacks to take over Tripoly but has been countered on many occasions by forces loyal to the GNA. LNA looked to have initially had the advantage in terms of trained fighters, equipment and air raids. The LNA were even successful in capturing some towns very close to Tripoli. However, the GNA has been able to rally support from strong militia groups from Misrata, Zintan and Zawiya in a successful twist that have been able to help them abate incursions and previous successes from the enemy LNA.

IV. INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES

Drawing from the constructivist ideas of Alexander Wendt, international relations, collaborations and linkages are borne out of shared ideas and interests which he termed "rump materialism" (Mengshu 2020, par. 2). The interests of the secondary/shadow parties in the Libyan conflict can be easily used to trace why certain countries support either parties in the conflict. Both parties have valuable international linkages with varying interests dependent on which faction takes over completely or in maintaining the status quo. The situation also presents itself as a proxy war for most of the shadow parties. The Sarraj faction is supported by "Qatar, Turkey, Italy and the United States" while Haftar is supported by "Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, France and Russia" (Ilardo 2019,2). All these secondary actors have supported their allies in varying degrees that includes weapons, training, logistics, air support and boots on ground. Some of the more highly invested shadow parties include:
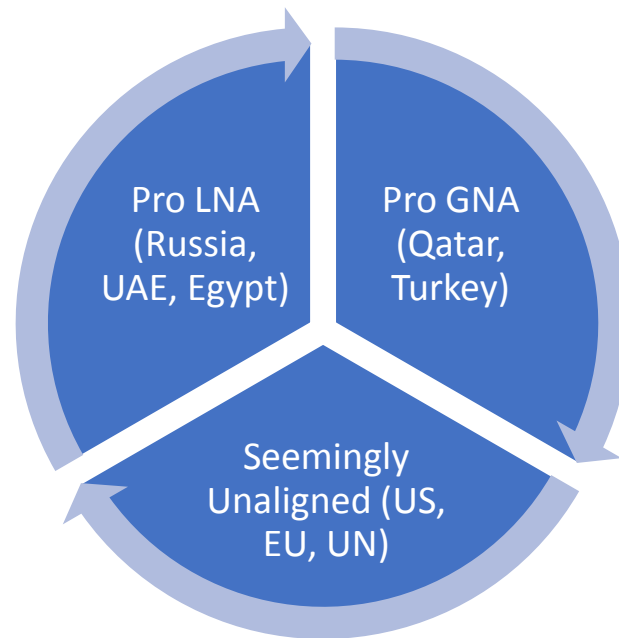
Figure 1

- *European Union* – since the conflict in Libya, there have been a steady migrant and refugee flow from Africa to Europe using the Libya corridor. The debate over the issue keeps growing as France and Italy are supporting different factions in the conflict to the point of sabotaging EU policies with regards to Libya (Barigazzi 2020, par. 5). Member nations of the EU have been calling for a greater involvement of the union in finding a solution in Libya coming after they had launched operation Irini by the EU naval force in March to enforce the UN arms embargo to Libya (Brzozowski and Michalopoulos 2020, par. 7). There are plans by the EU to support a NATO intervention in Libya.

Pro UN supported GNA
- *Qatar* – the involvement of Qatar is a spillover of the conflict between the Gulf States coalition against Qatar in the Middle East. Qatar was involved in the aerial attacks on the Libyan forces under Gaddafi and have provided arms and supplies to the revolutionary forces (Jamestown Foundation 2017, par. 5). Their intervention according Jamestown Foundations (2017, par. 2) have been both politically and militarily since then with further accusations of the sponsorship of Islamist forces in Libya. Qatar however absolves itself from such accusations and states their continued resolve to support the GNA in the economic and security sectors (Alharathy 2019, par. 3; Abdullah 2019, par. 2).
- *Turkey* – Turkey along with Russia and Egypt had tried brokering a ceasefire/political agreement in Libya. Haftar's refusal to sign pushed Turkey into playing a more primary role in its pro GNA support providing logistical and military support with substantial troops on ground to aid with the fight against the LNA (Koseoglu 2020, par. 13).Turkey has shown its tenacity to decimate Haftar and his forces (Bostan 2020, par. 2). Turkish firepower has been part of the offensive victories gained by the GNA over the LNA in the second quarter of 2020 (Walsh 2020, par. 2).Turkey has a significant interest in the gas fields off the coast of Libya (Bellut 2020, par. 6). They want to assert control over natural resources in the area, be the dominant supplier of gas in the Eastern Mediterranean and also sabotage the Israel/Greece agreements (Arab Weekly 2020, par. 4). Turkey signed an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) agreement with Libya in order to checkmate rival forces and agreements against Turkeys' interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. The main interest with Turkey is not directly gas fields but rather EEZ rights so as to prevent Turkey from being a prisoner if it loses control of the area.
- *USA*– The US have supported the GNA publicly (Polat 2020, par. 8) and had been providing military and logistical assistance to the GNA to counter terrorism in Libya but pulled out in early 2019 (Raghavan 2019, par. 4). However, the US have been accusedof not playing a more prominent role in the Libya crisis even asthere are speculations that the US would be sending in a "Security Force Assistance Brigade in Tunisia" (Koseoglu 2020, par. 8) due to increasing concerns of Russian military and political footprint in Libya (McKay 2020, par. 10). The US is also akin to a negotiated UN political solution even though it cannot be predicted

which direction their support might sway to in the future as their main interest in Libya is to counter any advances made by Russia to balance the scales.

Pro LNA

- ***Russia*–** Libya is of geostrategic importance to Russia and are invested in its politics and economy (Polat 2020, par. 12). Since September 2019, Russia has sent in mercenaries, weapons and air support to the LNA not minding the UN embargo on arms (Polat 2020, par. 10). These mercenaries number over 2000 and are linked to a Russian military contractor – Wagner (Lister, Kiley and Shukla 2020, par. 3). There has been reports of increased Russian presence in Libya as they now have two operational bases.

- ***UAE*–** Libyan officials claim that the UAE have made a 3000-ton delivery of military hardware to the LNA (Polat 2020, par. 2) even as they claim to also support finding a political solution. Their plan is to whittle out Qatari influence in the region in their proxy war.

- ***Egypt*–** Egypt also has vested interests in fighting terrorism in Libya even as they have advanced their support for a political solution (Mikhail 2020, par. 1). Despite this claim, Egypt had invested militarily in the LNA for a long time now especially in trying to fight the Muslim Brotherhood by providing training, weapons an aerial support (Mohamed 2020, par. 10).The Egyptian president has stated that his army would be ready to conduct an operation in Libya if any scenario that warrants this arises.

V. CONCLUSION (Current Situation of things and way forward)

Power in the Libya conflict provides unlimited access to the control of every facet of the Libyan life and economy. Power seem to be over centralized at the center which is Tripoli. Hence the constant attempts to take over Tripoli by various militia groups. Those close to the Sarraj government especially the main cartel of militia groups providing security for his government and Tripoli at large would do whatever it takes to ensure that the status quo is un-wavered. This solidifies their hold on various government positions, offices and the perks that accrue to them. However, those on the outside looking in want to be in that position so that they too can enjoy the power, connections and wealth that comes with the advantage of being in charge of Tripoli. Despite taking over various oil installations, creating a parallel central bank and controlling over half of Libya, the LNA would do whatever it takes to take over Tripoli.Central to this conflict also is the control of oil fields and export terminals. Access to oil whose proceeds are very much needed for the survival of any faction in control of it is now the most pertinent issue in the Libyan civil war. Oil resources in Libya aid in creating and maintaining coalitions (Constantini 2016, 414) in the struggle for power. The LNA have taken over a lot of oil and export terminals reducing the revenues that accrue to the Sarraj government in Tripoli. This has stifled economic growth as a whole in Libya.

The UN through its special representative Ghassan Salame have and continue to find political solutions to the conflict (Pusztai 2019, 2). Salame introduced a roadmap that advised resizing the PC to comprise only three members, a new interim prime minister, a UN convened national assembly and a new constitution that would lead to elections for president and parliament in 2018(Winer 2019, 19). In Salame's efforts to consult and convene stakeholders/warring parties to discuss and implement this road map, Winer explained that the process suffered from boycotts, retreats, prevarication, misinterpretations and a general lack of progress because of the usual trust issues and difference in regional, political and personal interests. When it looks like progress is being made, one or both factions will renege on the agreement. The division now mainly between the East and the West (together with their local and international allies) continues to entrench tribal and regional sentiments forming deeper allegiance to identity and further deteriorating relations/negotiations between the warring factions.

Continued political and material support for factions in the conflict from international allies promotes the era of instability in the country (Dirsus and Eaton 2019, 2) and has continued to be a bane to finding a solution making it a very strong reason behind the complicated nature of the crisis (Mezran and Varvelli 2017, 9). As long as foreign elements have a stake in in the conflict, the road to peace will be continually marred by complex limitations as they have blatantly further entrenched divisions between the warring sides with continued "financial, media and military support" (Megerisi 2019,1). This view was also expressed by Winer (2019,10) having stated that "the involvement of international powers and regional actors contributed to dividing the country and made it difficult to undertake a credible process of national reconciliation". He still however goes on to state that the Libyans cannot achieve progress on their own but will rather remain in their current impasse as long as some of them have access to state expenditures and receive support from their international backers. He thus advocates for a solution that will involve getting the foreign counterparts to ensure that their Libyan clients accept compromises (and hold them to account when they renege) that will allow the nation to move forward under the Salame led roadmap.

Some pundits believe that the solution does not lie in just a negotiated settlement between Sarraj and Haftar. They seemingly believe that the bulk of the work will lay in convincing the militia factions aligned to them because of the deep-seated hatred that some of them have against each other. The complex dynamics of the

Libyan war that has witnessed constant shifting allegiances allows one to easily predict that forces who aren't akin to a political solution but rather a military one can decide to form another block against whatever coalition that may come up. Alibony (2017, 40) puts this succinctly when he stated that during the talks in Cairo and Abu Dhabi when Sarraj was seeking a compromise with Haftar…his defense minister together with forces aligned to Sarraj (the Misratan third force and Benghazi defense brigades) organized and carried out a joint attack against the LNA without the prior approval of Sarraj.

Ilardo (2019,2) points at other factors responsible for the continued complication of the precarious nature of the conflict in Libya including "radicalization, violent extremism….hydrocarbon resources….attracting jihadist groups and various terrorist organizations". He claims that these groups are keen on ensuring that the status quo is maintained so that they can take advantage of the conflict to infiltrate vast ungoverned territories in the south of Libya.The conflict has allowed a steady patronage of human trafficking and forced labor which has become a very lucrative business in the region.

In a bid to find a solution, the stakeholders in the conflict were invited to Germany for a peace summit in January 2020. In a report credited to Aljazeera, those in attendance at the summit included the Italian Prime Minister, British Prime Minister, United States Secretary of State, Turkey's President, Russia's President, France's President and representatives from the UN, EU, AU, Arab League, UAE, Egypt, Algeria, China and Congo were present (Aljazeera 2020). The report states that the German Chancellor admonished all the parties involved in the Libya crisis to strictly uphold the arms embargo that is in place so that a clear-cut ceasefire can be achieved clearing the road for a political solution. In essence the summit was largely aimed at calling to order the various foreign backers of both factions in the Libya crisis. This however hasn't been the case.

Renewed hostilities have been kick started by forces loyal to the GNA when they made an attempt to retake an airbase from the Haftar faction at the outskirts of Tripoli (Saleh 2020) which was bound to incur reprisal attacks. The report insinuated these hostilities being inevitable as both factions have been stockpiling arms within the last three months and ramping up preparations for possible conflict escalation. The report also claimed that over a thousand trained mercenaries have come into Libya and also the involvement of the Turkish government with the use of drones on behalf of the GNA. This shows that international stakeholders haven't held up to their part of the agreements reached to at the Berlin summit. More recently, the GNA have made increased gains in areas that were formerly in the hands of the LNA in the west of Libya. Russian mercenaries that were loyal to Haftar have been seen withdrawing from frontlines (Aljazeera 2020, par. 1) and the huge gains made by the GNA have been capitalized on to draw Haftar back to the negotiating table. This is however threatened by a huge cache of Russian combat aircrafts arriving in east Libya – 14 MiG-29s and Su-24s – according to US reports (Lister, Kiley and Shukla 2020, par. 8).

The conflict in Libya is far from over as the identity fault-lines rooted in ethnicity, regionalism and the struggle for power continue to perpetuate the rift between all the parties involved in the conflict. A dialogue of civilizations must come into play in the long run to abate the clash of civilizations. The zero-sum (win-lose) approach to this conflict by the main parties involved together with their national and international allies must be scrapped. New approaches must be tailored towards bringing the parties together to find a solution where both must make concessions that allows all parties to benefit (win win). Options for mutual gain must be created between and within all the groups.

If nothing is done to bring about a political solution in Libya, the conflict will continue to paint a bleak future for Libya with its internecine ripple effects plaguing the region and beyond. Further persistence of the conflict could ultimately lead to regional instability, European insecurity and even energy (oil and gas) insecurity (Megerisi 2019, 1). Secondary parties in the conflict must be put at bay to allow Libyans to come to a solution without the interference of foreign economic and proxy interests. The two seemingly strong international contenders – Russia and Turkey – continue to have rising stakes in Libya and even though they are presently engaged in negotiations for a ceasefire and political solution, it is more likely to their strategic benefits rather than that of Libyans. The study thus adopts the following recommendations:

• Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration must come into place to ensure that the entire nation is demilitarized. All militia groups have to be disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated into society.

• A system of all-inclusive governance under a federal structure with adequate power sharing arrangements that delivers more powers to the constituent units and reducing power in Tripolishould be pursued.

• A well trained and equipped army and police outfit must be put in place to ensure the rule of law and the safety of the populace.

• The UN must be involved in coordinating, maintaining and building peace after lasting ceasefire has been agreed upon.

The journey remains long, arduous and torturous but is one that must be made to ensure a return to peace in Libya and reversing the effects the war has had in further entrenching underdevelopment in the region. If the war in Libya isn't finalized, Libya has the tendency to separate into two or more parts and it can become a huge problem for the entire region. The situation in Syria may seem to be the most problematic in the larger –

Middle East – region, however, if warring sides in Libya cannot reach an acceptable solution, this problematic zone may be the reason of much more bigger problems that may culminate into the 3rd World War.

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