PEACEKEEPING IN LIBYA: FAILURES AND MISTAKES

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Annotation. This scholarly article analyses the steps and tools employed for peacekeeping in resolving the Libyan crisis, which has persisted since 2011 following the collapse of statehood and the country's transformation into a Gordarik. The thesis posits that diverse views on the issue were held by participants who advocated for peace initiatives, owing to the changing political climate in the country. It is observed that the UN's "Responsibility to Protect" concept aimed to oust Colonel M. Gaddafi's regime and construct robust democratic institutions modelled after the Western system. Nevertheless, the Libyan context, with its strong tribal influence and the proliferation of armed militias, precluded the formation of a new state. Most of society has already become accustomed to living autonomously from central authorities and managing their own affairs. This article examines alternative tools for addressing the Libyan problem after the revolution, including the active engagement of UNSMIL, tasked with providing peacekeeping aid to Libya. Observing the challenges of holding presidential and parliamentary elections, UNSMIL began working on creating interim governments, which ultimately exacerbated the country's fragmentation. In this context, the study evaluates proposals from other actors, such as individual states, which may initiate dialogues between warring factions. The author concludes that the chief impediments to settling the Libyan crisis are the reluctance of Libyan players to compromise, the imposition of externally imposed initiatives, and the active involvement of external forces in the conflict.
Key words: Libya, United Nations Assistance Mission to Libya (UNSMIL), Government of National Accord (GNA), Government of National Unity (GNU), interim government, Libyan National Army (LNA).

Introduction

The conflict in Libya that commenced in 2011 precipitated the country's disintegration and the establishment of city-states. The recurrent bouts of hostilities between the leaders of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania demonstrate their determination to resolve the prolonged dispute through military measures. Despite numerous negotiations and discussions aimed at reunifying the eastern and western regions, the efforts have been futile due to the political participants'

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disinclination to share power and the apprehension of potential physical harm should they acquiesce to concessions.

The Libyan conundrum is a formidable challenge to tackle, mainly due to the country's tribal social structure, which entails the preservation of clan aspirations and a reluctance to subject themselves to authoritarian rule. For over a decade, the majority of tribes have become accustomed to resolving internal frictions and disputes either independently or with the involvement of their most esteemed figures. Meanwhile, the leadership of the principal political stakeholders in the country is contingent on their capacity to engage in dialogues with the clans (Lacher, 2020).

The imperative for numerous civilians to provide for their own safety has engendered a rise in armed militias and warlords. This circumstance has significantly contributed to the inability of all provisional governments to assert control, even over the capital. The sustenance of these governments in the city has been dependent on financial remunerations to unregulated armed factions. Meanwhile, these same groups could be purchased by other interested parties at any given time (Oakes, 2021).

A further complication for Libya is the propagation of diverse strains of political Islam. In the aftermath of the demise of Colonel M. Gaddafi, the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood permeated the north-west of the country, with its adherents assuming prominent positions within the state machinery. The rise of Salafism was also notable, resulting in physical aggression against proponents of Sufism. The Islamic State represented an exceedingly extremist manifestation of political Islam, effectively gaining control of several cities between 2014-2016. Wahhabism and Madhalism have come to the fore in the east of the country and certain western regions. As a result, Islam as a unifying force for the future of Libya can no longer be regarded as feasible due to its splintering into different ideological currents (Zinin, 2019).

The escalation of crisis-related events in the North African nation can be attributed to the involvement of external actors who are fanning the flames for various political factions and armed militias. This conduct is primarily motivated by an endeavour to address the mounting concerns of national security in the region, which have exacerbated following the disintegration of the Libyan state system. Furthermore, this country's abundant natural resources render it immensely attractive to prominent oil and gas companies, hence becoming a theatre for competition among regional powers.

R2P diplomacy

Despite this, the resolution of the Libyan conundrum has relied predominantly on external forces rather than the Libyans themselves. In the nascent stages of the uprisings in 2011, the concept of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P diplomacy) emerged, aimed at overthrowing the authoritarian regime for the benefit of the civilian populace. The establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Libya (UNSMIL) swiftly followed, providing and executing various measures to

unite the country. Multiple initiatives have been launched by individual nations with the objective of burnishing their image in the region and securing a foothold in North Africa.

The theoretical domains of peacemaking and peacebuilding are exceedingly intricate, and their practical application in conflict hotspots characterized by the absence of a spirit of compromise among warring factions is a formidable challenge. Moreover, as posited by the American scholar S. Autesserre, the utilization of the liberal concept of intervention to promote the welfare of the civilian population may not always be an acceptable approach to achieving peacebuilding objectives. This is particularly applicable to countries with complex ethnic compositions, where the intervening party may possess limited insight into the unique characteristics of the populace, resulting in the formation of a negative perception of the intervening actor (Autesserre, 2011).

Since 2005, the international community has adopted the concept of "Responsibility to Protect," upon which UN Resolution No. 1973 was drafted. This concept was initially proposed by Canada, and it is premised on the suspension of a country's sovereignty in favour of its populace, with the responsibility for safeguarding society resting on the international community. Nevertheless, it is vital to note that the "Responsibility to Protect" document contains unfinished terminology, and there are no definitive criteria for determining when the international community should intervene in the affairs of another state. This uncertainty raises doubts about the legitimacy of Resolution No. 1973. In relation to the UN Security Council's resolution on Libya in 2011, the wording for the NATO operation authorization was based on this doctrine. Resolution 1973 included the phrase: "[...] the large-scale and systematic attacks on the civilian population currently taking place in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya can be qualified as crimes against humanity." Thus, the international community deemed that the M. Gaddafi regime was engaged in the extermination of its citizens. The formulation's basis is derived from the principal tenets of R2P (Hoffmann, Nollkaemper, Swerissen, 2012).

The Nigerian scholar D. Abubakr has underscored that the noble notion of employing R2P is subverted by exploiting its principles for geostrategic objectives, including intervention in Libya. The bedrock contradictions, encompassing divergent motives for the implementation of this concept, the issue of causing harm, and inconsistency, undermine the very rationale of humanistic ideals. Aiding insurgents in the overthrow of an authoritarian leader swiftly transgressed beyond R2P as the country devolved into an airstrike arena, resulting in damage to civilian infrastructure and the deaths of numerous civilians (Bah, 2017).

The demise of M. Gaddafi marked a pivotal moment that appeared to pave the way for the establishment of a new state, built upon Western institutions, and culminating in the emergence of a conservative government. However, even during the civil war, the nation began to splinter into city-states, thereby raising questions regarding the eventual reconciliation of the numerous parties. According to the European scholar D. Last, conflict resolution and peacebuilding as social disciplines only surfaced in Western scientific thought in 1956 and still have a

restricted number of success stories. For moderate factions, one of the principal concerns with regard to conflict resolution is security, given the proclivity of extremist elements and adversaries to orchestrate physical reprisals. International forces must bear the responsibility for the safety of moderate negotiators, while actively partaking in promoting peace, as evidenced by press monitoring to preclude incitement to hatred and sponsorship of the establishment of an equitable trial system.[1]

Undoubtedly, the paramount concern of Libyan society since 2011 has been the physical safety of its populace and the incessant waves of violence that have engulfed the region, arising from the protracted hostilities between armed militias and tribes. The proponents of Western ideology were confronted with the stark reality that, in the aftermath of the revolution, a process of party genesis took hold in Libya, with even its foremost leaders having no clear vision of the manner in which the state's governance structure would be forged, given the complexities associated with its clan and ethnic nuances. According to the European scholars L. Rachler and A. Langer, achieving a lasting peace is achievable when several key elements are in place. These elements encompass democratic governance, the restoration of a fair justice system, the establishment of a free market economy, a free press, education, and resolving the refugee crisis (Reychler, Langer, 2020). These concepts are predominantly raised by external actors such as international organizations or Western nations, as they strive to participate in the establishment of peace in Libya and develop a roadmap for progress. Nevertheless, the conflicting parties within Libya evince through their actions a predilection for resolving the issue through the use of force, and utilize the state institutions that emerged in the aftermath of the revolution to legitimize their involvement in the political process.

The United Nations Support Mission in Libya

The second pivotal measure adopted by the international community to resolve the Libyan crisis was the formation of United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) in September 2011. Its remit encompassed ensuring public security, establishing state authority, fostering economic development, and coordinating political dialogue between various factions. During the initial stages, UNSMIL representatives primarily focused on the organization of forthcoming elections. In the early years of its establishment, scant attention was given to local conflicts and tribal tensions, and the mission was relatively modest in scale, serving essentially as a support mechanism for a nascent government. UNSMIL representatives were primarily based in Benghazi and Tripoli and made only sporadic visits to the southern region. Despite the existing opportunities, the initial UNSMIL representative, American Ian Martin (2011-2012), struggled to establish widespread appeal among the Libyan population. Nonetheless, initial optimism persisted regarding the transition towards a constitutional government. In light of the societal divisions and the prevalence of tribal structures and militias following the fall of M. Gaddafi's authoritarian system, Jan Martin endeavored to engage

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[1] Last D., "From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding",
https://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/5_1last.htm#N_1 (accessed: 15.12.2022)

with all strata of Libyan society, including clan elders and local warlords (Manici, Vericat, 2016).

Subsequently, the following head of UNSMIL, Tariq Matri, a Lebanese national, assumed the role in 2012 and served until 2014. Matri advocated for an inclusive dialogue among Libyans and actively supported the involvement of women in the political process (Sawani, 2022). During his tenure, the Mission undertook efforts to reduce tensions in Beni Walid and Benghazi, where hostilities between armed militias had escalated. UNSMIL also endeavored to support the General National Congress by providing advisory support to the constitutional process. Despite numerous peacekeeping endeavors, Matri believed that the most daunting challenge lay in the armed conflict between revolutionary groups and government-backed armed forces. Concurrently, the majority of the civilian population remained marginalized from the political process, engendering skepticism regarding personal participation and a sense of a preordained outcome (Chiese, 2016).

Spanish diplomat Bernardino Leon took over as the head of UNSMIL in 2014, serving until 2015. During his tenure, Leon witnessed a high level of conflict in the country and encountered difficulties in holding a constitutional referendum. While providing technical support, Leon informed members of the UN Security Council that the Mission would encourage participants in the political process to engage in peaceful dialogue, but would not force its own projects or apply pressure on them, as it would be a display of respect for the Libyans. Meanwhile, UNSMIL remained resolute on the question of the future regime in Libya and advocated for a democratic process. Under Leon's leadership, the Mission faced challenges in establishing a dialogue with Tripolitan authorities and placed the responsibility for the non-observance of citizens' political rights on them.

It is worth noting that the basis for the Skhirat agreements on the formation of the Government of National Accord (GNA) was laid during the tenure of B. Leon, who subsequently passed the entire process to his successor, the German diplomat Martin Kobler (Bustos, 2018). However, during this period, the legitimacy of UNSMIL was undermined due to the scandal surrounding B. Leon's connections with the UAE. Initially, the political dialogue on the formation of a new interim government was unstructured and included various political forces. The lack of time to agree on all the points of the Skhirat agreement led to a risky maneuver by UNSMIL, as M. Kobler realized that he would not be able to achieve a majority of votes in both the Tripolitan and Tobruk parliaments. Furthermore, the heads of both legislatures even revoked the mandates of their respective delegations (Elliesie, Seidel, 2020). It was then decided that the agreement would be personally signed by various representatives of civil society, including 21 individuals in total, 11 of whom were deputies, and the rest were selected by UNSMIL and did not have broad political representation (Asseburg, Lacher, Transfeld, 2018).

During the negotiations in July 2015, representatives of the General National Congress were apprehensive that the formation of the GNA would deprive them of their previous political influence. In order to legitimize the process, the House of

Representatives had to provide its approval, however, UNSMIL failed to achieve this. The situation was further complicated by the power struggle between the GNC and the GNA, which kept Tripoli in a state of unrest for several months, as incidents of armed clashes increased. Such actions impeded the negotiation process throughout 2015. Even after the formation of the GNA, representatives of the GNC obstructed resolutions on recognizing the new government.

Nevertheless, after the ascendancy of Marshal of the Libyan National Army (LNA) Khalifa Haftar and his takeover of oil terminals in Sidra, M. Kobler conceded that the GNA lacked legitimacy, and the Skhirat agreement required revision (Sánchez-Mateos, 2018). In the wake of the defeat of ISIS in Libya in early 2017, UNSMIL advanced a new provision in the Skhirat Agreement, proposing the introduction of the position of army chief, alongside changes to the composition and role of the presidium.

Gasan Salama (2017-2020), successor to M. Kobler, sought to introduce new elements to the resolution of the Libyan crisis. During the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, he presented the "Action Plan for Libya", comprising three stages. The first aimed to amend the previously concluded Libyan political agreement, with a proposal to modify the composition of the Government of National Accord. The Supreme Council of State and the House of Representatives were to engage in two rounds of negotiations aimed at reducing their composition and changing their roles. Through the formation of commissions from the two parliaments, it was intended to conduct a dialogue that would focus on reforming the Presidential Council. Based on the proposed plan and the development of a consensus, the aim was to unite both political institutions. At the second stage, G. Salame suggested using the instrument of inclusive dialogue to discuss the constitution, with a plan to convene a National Conference involving individual Libyan groups under the auspices of the UN. If successfully conducted, it would be possible to achieve reconciliation. Finally, at the third stage, the plan called for the organization of presidential and parliamentary elections, as well as a referendum on the constitution.[2]

The UNSMIL has been significantly engaged in this process, proffering technical assistance and making recommendations. Particular emphasis has been placed on the imperative need for elections. The Supreme National Electoral Commission, established in 2012, has emerged as a completely autonomous body responsible for the planning and administration of elections.

With the aid of the mediation of regional actors, delegates of the GNA and the Eastern bloc reached an agreement to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in 2018. However, the failure to implement the basic points of the previously discussed proposals did not lead to progress. The constant travels of the representative of the UNSMIL to different parts of the country appeared to contribute to a breakthrough in the settlement of the Libyan problem. The primary political actors agreed to hold a conference in Ghadames in 2019 to determine the

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[2] Step by Step, UN Action Plan for Successful Transition Takes Hold in Libya // UNSMIL.
https://unsmil.unmissions.org/step-step-un-action-plan-successful-transition-takes-hold-libya
(accessed: 15.12.2022)

principles for the implementation of the general elections. Nevertheless, the start of the LNA's military operation to seize Tripoli a few weeks before the conference demonstrated that the Libyan players themselves intend to resolve the conflict by force (Bartolo, 2021).

With the aid of German diplomacy, G. Salame endeavoured to steer Libya back towards a peaceful resolution by arranging a summit in Berlin, attended by regional and global powers. The main conflict participants did not even sit at the same negotiating table, but were housed in separate hotels. Mediators attempted to engage them in dialogue to reach agreement on fundamental terms for a ceasefire. Despite the summit's conclusion, the war raged on for several more months until LNA troops were redeployed to Sirte. Thanks to the UN's mediation efforts, a new format of dialogue was created between the Western and Eastern blocs – the Joint Military Commission "5+5". This commission featured five delegates from each side, but despite holding numerous meetings in various locations, no progress was made.

In March 2020, G. Salame stepped down and the leadership of UNSMIL was handed over to his deputy, American Stephanie Williams. Following the end of the active phase of the conflict, Williams utilised the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF), established in 2019, and created an Advisory Committee aimed at forming a new interim government. To accomplish this task, the United States prevented the appointment of a new head of UNSMIL for an extended period. Although the position was briefly filled by Slovak diplomat Jan Kubiš, he resigned for unknown reasons. In 2021, 72 Libyan representatives, unknown to the Libyan public, were selected for the LPDF, which was responsible for electing a new prime minister and representatives of the executive branch. UNSMIL proposed a system of regional division of ministerial posts; however, the process of forming a new interim government was marred by bribery of electors. Alongside the newly formed Government of National Unity (GNU), the idea of introducing a constitution was suggested, which bore similarities to that of Iraq during the time of Paul Bremen. Following the sharp commencement of the GNU's activities, the House of Representatives in Tobruk protested against the government and passed a vote of no confidence.

The primary objective of the GNU was to prepare the country for presidential and parliamentary elections by the end of 2021. However, its leadership failed to establish the requisite legal framework. Furthermore, violating the initially agreed framework, Prime Minister of the GNU, Abdel Hamid Dbeiba, attempted to nominate himself as a candidate for the post of new head of state. He also proposed a law prohibiting H. Haftar from running for president on the grounds of his dual citizenship or performance of duties in the military structure (Melcangi, Mezran, 2022). The inability of A.Kh. Dbeiba to organize the elections led to questions regarding the legitimacy of the GNU. It became evident that no effective efforts were being made to resolve the crisis. The attempted coup by former GNA Interior Minister Fathi Bashagi, who colluded with the Eastern bloc in 2022, was proof of this. Despite this, UNSMIL reaffirmed its support for the GNU, led by A.Kh. Dbeiba, even after the formation of the Government of National Stability by F. Bashaga.

In September 2022, the position of head of UNSMIL was filled by Senegalese diplomat Abdoulaye Batili. In his address to the members of the UN Security Council, he highlighted the detrimental impact of the tactics employed by Libyan players to postpone elections, which only serves to exacerbate the fragmentation of the country[3]. Negotiations between the two Libyan blocs continued within the framework of 5+5, and discussions arose regarding the inclusion of armed groups in the west of the country into the LNA. However, despite negotiations between the two Libyan parliaments, the head of the GNU, A.Kh. Dbeiba, persisted in obstructing the resolution of this matter. He declared his readiness to transfer power to an exclusively elected government.

A. Batili has been relying on the mechanisms previously established for negotiating between the warring parties. Specifically, he attempted to activate the Joint Military Committee "5 + 5" and proposed the inclusion of leaders from various armed groups. The efforts of UNSMIL were recognized in international circles, leading to the organization of an international conference on Libya in the United States on February 23, 2023. This conference was attended by officials from Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Qatar, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom. The absence of a representative from any side of the intra-Libyan dialogue resulted in criticism from the Libyan people. In response to the political impasse, the head of UNSMIL, A. Batili, proposed the creation of a special committee consisting of 30-40 individuals to develop electoral legislation. In this committee, the head of UNSMIL would have the final say. During a meeting of the UN Security Council, A. Batili emphasized his commitment to forming a commission at the highest level to facilitate the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections in 2023.

International mediators

The issue of Libya has become increasingly pressing for numerous European countries. Its significant hydrocarbon reserves have certainly captured the attention of large oil and gas companies. It is vital to acknowledge, however, that the unregulated conflict has a detrimental impact on European security. The destabilisation in North Africa has led to a rise in illegal arms sales, drug trafficking, and a potential increase in migration flows.

The future of Libya, represented by GNA Foreign Minister Mohammed Siyala, was the focal point of the Mediterranean Conference in Vienna in 2016. OSCE members placed an increased emphasis on an interdimensional approach aimed at enhancing the security of citizens through the empowerment of youth organizations. The aim was to diminish the level of extremism and radicalism by offering more political opportunities to the country's young populace (Morana, 2020). However, this idea proved unfeasible in light of Libya's specific circumstances, where many young citizens began joining armed groups since 2011

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[3] Zaptia S., "'Some (Libyan) institutional players are actively hindering progress towards elections': UNSMIL head Bathily", *Libya Herald*.
https://www.libyaherald.com/2022/11/some-libyan-institutional-players-are-actively-hindering-progress-towards-elections-unsmil-head-bathily/ (accessed: 15.12.2022)

to provide local security for their families and earn a minimum income. During the Vienna conference, the issue of easing the UN arms embargo to aid the authorities in their fight against ISIS was also debated. However, members of the UN Security Council opposed this step.

European countries made independent efforts to establish peacekeeping measures. As a result, the Mediterranean policy of Paris is grounded in national interests and realpolitik. France regards itself as a top-tier power in the region, with several advantages at its disposal. It is a member of the UN Security Council, has had several African states as its colonies, and French continues to be spoken among the local population (Daniel, 2020). Furthermore, the Elysee Palace has become a pivotal partner for trade and investment with these countries. It also initiates military campaigns to counter terrorism in the Sahel region.

Despite Paris always declaring its neutrality at the diplomatic level, the private military company Secopex provided assistance in training the LNA military forces. Additionally, France also conducted illicit arms supplies, which it subsequently denied (Megerisi, 2020). With the accession of E. Macron, the Libyan problem was actively discussed in diplomatic circles and perceived as a tool by which Paris could enhance its image if it had a key influence on the resolution of the conflict. Furthermore, at that time, there was no active involvement from global players in this matter. French diplomacy focused primarily on two leaders: H. Haftar and the head of the GNA, Faiz Sarraj. These two individuals were viewed as the main leaders of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, respectively. However, they not only held different positions in established institutions after 2011, but also had different functions. Subsequently, as a result of the Paris Conference, diplomacy was no longer solely a privilege for F. Sarraj, but became a field for H. Haftar as well. Following talks in La Selle Saint Cloud, the parties reaffirmed their commitment to earlier agreements (Skhirat 2015, Abu Dhabi 2017). The principal outcome was an agreement to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2018, which never materialised.

Italy's foreign policy towards Libya was grounded in security concerns and the need to address the migration crisis emanating from Tripolitania. Additionally, Rome aimed to safeguard its energy interests. Keen on boosting its political standing in Libya, Italy began actively promoting its interests prior to the Skhirat agreements' conclusion. In 2015, at Italy's initiative, an international conference was convened, paving the way for the formation of the GNA. Successive Italian governments have consistently sought to enhance cooperation with the UN-recognized authorities in Tripoli (Mikhelidze, 2019). Prior to the failed elections in 2018, Rome organized a conference in Palermo, where it met with H. Haftar and F. Sarraj. However, the meeting proved fruitless.

It is noteworthy that Italy and France's interests in different political players resulted in the EU's foreign policy agenda on Libya being divided. Simultaneously, competition between countries for hydrocarbon deposits was rife, fuelled by the illicit shipment of weapons and agreements to train local militias (Ilardo, 2018). This state of affairs persisted until 2020 when Turkey and Russia, alongside a

coalition of Arab nations that supported the LNA (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt), displaced them from the Libyan arena.

In the context of the competition between Rome and Paris, Berlin championed the peacekeeping agenda. German diplomacy has long sought to pursue a peaceful policy aimed at achieving a consensus between the warring parties. Some success was achieved through the leadership of German diplomats in UNSMIL and MINURSO. During the 2019-2020 escalation of hostilities, representatives of the German Foreign Ministry sought to engage in dialogue with the warring factions and even visited Libya during the most perilous periods. For Germany, the most significant goal was to overcome the EU's split on the foreign policy agenda. The 2020 conference in Berlin was largely made possible through the early activities of Russian and Turkish diplomats who organized a dialogue between F. Sarraj and H. Haftar in Moscow with the help of intermediaries. However, it was not successful then as the Eastern bloc could not provide a positive response. German diplomacy secured UNSMIL's advance support and worked towards reconciling Rome and Paris's positions on Libya. The proposals made to resolve the conflict were not new and were put forward only by the mediators, ultimately making them imposed on participants who did not attend the conference and stayed in different hotels. However, the foundation for the 5+5 dialogue was laid then (Tanchum, 2021).

A portion of the political efforts to resolve the Libyan conflict can be attributed to the Arab countries, which base their policies primarily on national security concerns. After the Arab Spring of 2011, the UAE became active supporters of counter-revolutionary tendencies by backing the Egyptian revolution in 2013. The royal family's primary concerns are related to the spread of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas, which they view as a threat to their political survival. Meanwhile, the UAE diligently fuels Islamist movements that support the ruling regime's legitimacy. It is possible that the ruling elite is contemplating the prospect of replicating the Egyptian political system in Libya.

It is worth noting that a portion of the political efforts to resolve the Libyan conflict rests with Arab nations, which build their policies on national security above all else. Following the Arab Spring of 2011, the UAE became actively involved in counter-revolutionary tendencies after supporting the revolution in Egypt in 2013. The royal family's primary concerns are linked to the spread of ideas promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood, which they view as a threat to their political survival. Simultaneously, the UAE is purposefully fueling Islamist movements that support the legitimacy of the ruling regime in the country. It is possible that the ruling elite is considering the possibility of transplanting the Egyptian political system into Libya. In this context, Abu Dhabi is pursuing its policy towards Libya alongside Saudi Arabia, which is sponsoring the spread of Madhalism and Wahhabism within the ranks of the LNA. According to Bruce Riedel, a former Central Intelligence Agency official with extensive ties to senior Gulf officials, the personal qualities of President Mohammed bin Zayed strongly influence UAE foreign policy. He is described as: "He thinks he is Machiavelli, but he looks more like Mussolini." 2014 marked the height of the UAE's active involvement in the internal affairs of other Arab countries, and Libya was no exception. Relying on H. Haftar, who is fighting against the Muslim Brotherhood, Abu Dhabi provided him with military equipment

and funding. In 2016, the UAE established a military base at Al Khadim Airport, 70 km south of Al Marj, where the LNA military command is located (Bakir, 2020).

The discussions between the Western and Eastern blocks of Libya took place twice in Abu Dhabi, and were conducted in a private setting. The first meeting occurred in 2017, where the political leaders of both sides discussed the possibility of restructuring the GNA. The aim was to create a State Presidential Council consisting of H. Haftar, Speaker of the House of Representatives in Tobruk Akila Saleh and F. Sarraj. The council would then hold presidential and parliamentary elections within six months[4]. However, the agreements were not implemented. In 2019, during the LNA campaign to establish control over the Ash-Sharara oil field, the second meeting was held. The parties made promises to end the transition period and hold general elections, but a few weeks later, the LNA launched an attack on Tripoli[5]. It is possible that the private meeting was held to understand the position of the PNS and its willingness to make concessions. Not receiving clear intentions, Kh. Haftar, with the support of the UAE and other allies, resorted to a military solution to the conflict.

Conclusion

Numerous proposals have been put forth to resolve the Libyan crisis. It is worth noting that these initiatives have primarily been suggested by external actors at different times, which has affected the perception of the existing challenges and the methods employed to address them. Despite this, all attempts at peacekeeping in Libya have proven to be futile for a prolonged period due to the reluctance of domestic political players to resolve the accumulated problems through consensus, whereby each side must relinquish its interests for the common good. Moreover, to establish a stable peace, it is necessary for political leaders to perceive that the risks associated with attaining peace are lesser than those involved in continuing to confront one another.

It is worth noting that the Western states' approach to the Libyan problem in 2011 was motivated by the idea of "Responsibility to Protect", which called for the removal of an authoritarian leader from power to establish a civil society with democratic rights. This wording was undoubtedly driven by the personal fears of Great Britain and France regarding their own national security if M. Gaddafi remained in power. However, the revolution did not yield the expected results, but rather exposed all the long-standing contradictions that had been simmering in Libyan society for years.

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[4] Libya Expectations for a meeting between Sarraj and Haftar in Abu Dhabi today. Al Arabiya. www.alarabiya.net/north-africa/2017/05/02/ليبيا-توقعات-عن-لقاء-بين-السراج-وحفتر-في-أبوظبي-اليوم (accessed: 15.12.2022)

[5] Agreement between Haftar and Sarraj after meeting in Abu Dhabi to organize elections. France 24. www.france24.com/ar/20190228-اتفاق-بين-حفتر-وسراج-بعد-اجتماع-في-أبوظبي-على-تنظيم-انتخابات (accessed: 15.12.2022)

Established in 2011, UNSMIL's initial objective was to assist the Libyan people in holding general presidential and parliamentary elections, as well as to establish robust state institutions following the Western model. However, as time progressed, it became apparent that there were numerous contradictions and criminal activities at this stage. Consequently, UNSMIL shifted its focus to forming interim governments whose task was to prepare the society for the elections. Nonetheless, politicians in the interim governments used this tool to legitimize their power and had no intention of transferring it to others. Furthermore, an important problem that arose after the formation of the GNA and the GNU was the failure to include the leaders of Cyrenaica in the established institutions, which led to the strengthening of alternative, independent institutions.

The primary challenge facing international mediators is their eagerness to resolve national issues, which inevitably results in distrust from the warring factions who are concerned about their political and physical survival. Additionally, the mediators often impose their solutions without collaborating with the Libyans, and the leading figures of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania have shown little interest in a peaceful resolution to the long-standing problems.

The Libyan crisis remains a pressing issue for international organizations and global and regional players. The prospect of a resolution appears remote and unlikely due to a fragmented society and the unwillingness of key political players to make concessions to one another. These players remain uninterested in proposed peace initiatives and instead continue to pursue a resolution through force in order to maintain their positions.

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