

The Fourth and Fifth Generations of Warfare and Conflict Resolution Process: The Libyan internal Conflict Case

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Abstract:

The article deals with the relationship between the fourth and fifth generations of warfare and the conventional conflict resolution process and approaches with a specific concentration on the internal Libyan conflict. It raises the question about the impact of the current stages of warfare on peacemaking process in general and the Libyan case in particular. In fact, the author aimed at explaining the reasons behind the conflict enduring situation in Libya which has recently entered another transitional period with another government split. The study concluded that the failure in achieving a complete resolution of the conflict is mainly caused by the lack of cohesiveness between the kind of the conflict, which really belongs to Fourth and Fifth generations of warfare, and the recommendations of the outdated peace resolution process and approaches. The article recommends a well-adapted approach of conflict resolution to the new current conflicts.

Keywords: Fifth Generation Warfare; Libyan conflict; Berlin summit; conflict resolution; enduring conflict.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The herein study treats the topic of fourth and fifth generations of warfare and their impact on conflict resolution process. In fact, the work of William Lind in 1989 has always been the reference for writers and Academics interested in Warfare Generations, as his work investigates the war phenomenon since the peace treaty of Westphalia in 1648, and foresees the new features of next warfare.

Since then, many authors and academics have followed his logic in classifying wars, but they significantly differ in the post 4th generation of warfare; some have mentioned five generations, others go further in listing seven generations. In fact, the number does not matter as the most important thing is the characteristics of warfare in the current era, and its impact on the conventional conflict resolution process.

In this context, the aim of this study is revealing the relationship between the fourth and fifth generations of warfare, and the reluctance of the conflicts gathering their characteristics towards resolution. For this reason, there will be an attempt to find out the main specificities of the Libyan internal conflict since the 2011 uprising, which constitutes the most responsible variables of the failure of several resolution processes in ending the conflict. The article suggests a new way to resolve conflicts sharing the characteristics of fourth and fifth generations of warfare.

As a result, the problematic of this article is as follows: why do conflicts in the fourth and fifth generations of warfare resist the conventional resolution process, and more precisely in the case of the internal Libyan conflict?

In order to provide a temporary answer to the above- mentioned problematic, the following hypothesis is suggested: as far as conflicts share the characteristics of fourth and fifth generations of warfare, the conventional process of conflict resolution becomes fruitless.

So, the coming parts of this study will contain the following elements: A conceptual background containing the definition of the different generations of warfare until the fifth one. Then, the characteristics of fourth

and fifth generations of warfare in the Libyan conflict. Finally, the reasons behind the failure of the several resolution processes to end the Libyan conflict being a fourth and fifth generation warfare instance.

2. Generations of Warfare:

The idea of Warfare generations concentrates on the evolution of the knowledge and the conduct of war phenomenon since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, i.e, the birth of modern State. It is revealed that major developments and alterations occurred starting with mass manpower in the first generation warfare to a silent indirect warfare in the current stage called fifth generation warfare, when war is said to be asymmetric, unconventional and hybrid.

2.1. First Generation Warfare

It is the era of organized war with armed forces under State control. It is generally referred to as a “mass warfare” or a “line and column warfare”, when battles were fought by organized military forces of Nation-States and numerous forces were disposed in fighting lines and columns.

2.2. Second Generation Warfare

It is called “trench warfare” or “linear fire and movement warfare”, where battles continued to be fought by organized military forces of Nation–States, but war became heavily relying on firepower and maneuver, or put differently; coordinated operations of indirect fire to support the advance of the battle lines, and on cavalry maneuvers.

2.3. Third Generation Warfare

It is known as “maneuver warfare”. Here, battles continue to be fought by organized military forces of Nation-States, but doctrine mainly focuses on the new tactics of attacking the enemy from the back by bypassing the front line.

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2.4. Fourth Generation Warfare

It is the age of “unconventional” warfare, which is highly influenced by the widespread of information and high technologies. The most important features of this warfare are:

- The decrease in the involvement of Nation-States along with the increase of the Non-State actors

- The widespread of asymmetric tactics such as low-intensity conflicts, insurgency and terrorist attacks.

- Psychological operations is the dominant operational and strategic weapon via media/ information intervention (Lind, 1989, p. 23).

- Information becomes a more powerful operational weapon than armored divisions.

- The use of all available networks: Political, economic, social and military (Hammes, 2006, p. 2)

- Attacks target the minds of enemy decision makers to destroy the enemy’s political will.” (Hammes, 2006, p. 2)

- The aim of fighting is no longer destroying the adversary’s forces, but exercising influence over decision makers to affect the Morale of the fighting forces.

- Fighting duration is measured in decades rather than months or years.” (Hammes, 2006, p. 2)

2.5-The Fifth Generation Warfare:

In many writings, the fifth generation Warfare is used synonymously to fourth generation warfare (Băhnăreanu, 2015, p. 57), because the 5th generation is actually a more and well- developed picture of the 4th generation

as foreseen by William S. Lind's initial work. However, the context has deeply changed becoming largely dominated by mass communication and information, which provides a new ground to launch hostile agenda on intended targets.

The new face of warfare is mainly characterised by:

- Endless efforts to shatter the confidence reposed on the national institutions.
- The dissemination of fake news, web sites, imitative themes, fabricated imageries, concocted stories and planted agents on media. (Ifraan Ahmed Tahir)
- Waging a global battle of «narratives» (Starbird, 2017, p. 2) played out over both virtual and physical space.
- The integration of information, cognitive, and social contexts. (Reed, 2008, p. 684)
- The creation of supra-conditions by adversaries.
- The use of kinetic and non-kinetic (influence) force. (Reed, 2008, p. 685)
- The creation of chaos, confusion and consternation in the enemy' camps.
- Affecting the morale of the nation through the spread of distrust among masses and their institutions.
- The destruction of the national fibre and cohesiveness of the adversary.

3. The Characteristics of Fourth and Fifth Generations of Warfare in the Libyan Conflict:

Since the uprising which took place in the context of the so-called "Arab revolutions" in February 2011, Libya has entered a new period principally dominated by chaos. Several elements of the previously mentioned features of the Fourth and Fifth generations of warfare will be tackled in the next few lines.

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3.1. A Long and Enduring Conflict:

Though the majority of studies dealing with the Libyan conflict trace it back to the NATO - led military intervention of March 2011, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, one can go back to several decades with the post Lockerbie incident, when severe economic sanctions were imposed by the United Nations resolution. In fact, those sanctions were targeting the collapse of the Libyan regime run by President Muaamer El Kaddafi, and paved the way to the so-called “Libyan revolution” in February 17th, 2011.

Since then, Libya has lived in a violent internal conflict mainly characterized by five successive transition periods. The first transition period started with the February 2011 uprising until the 2012 elections. The second began with the transfer of power from the transitional council to the General National Congress. The third went back to the struggle between General National Congress and the elected House of Representatives in Tobruk in 2014. The fourth from the establishment of the government of the national unity government by Abdul Hamid Dbeibah in 2021. The last one has recently begun with the February 10th, 2022 Libyan parliament and the high council declaration of the new road map, by which Fethi Bashagha was appointed as a new head of the Libyan government.

The four first transitional periods have witnessed three civil wars. The first civil strife was opposing insurgents against the Libyan regime from February 17th to October 20th 2011, when Muammer El Kaddafi was violently killed. The second civil struggle went back to the rivalry between domestic factions and their international supporters which reached its climax in the summer of 2014. At that moment the country was de facto split into two authorities: General Khalifa Haftar, and the newly elected House of Representatives in Tobruk in the East of Libya, and Islamist-leaning militia leaders and those in the city of Misrata in the West. The last civil war opposed the Libyan National Army led by Khalifa Haftar to the Government of National Accord forces led by Prime Minister Fayed al-Serraj over the

control of Tripoli during 2019 until the ceasefire agreement of October 23rd 2020.

3.2 An Asymmetric Warfare:

The second parameter of the fourth and fifth generation warfare in the Libyan internal conflict is an asymmetric conflict where States are not the main actors. The Libyan conflict started as an insurgency led by anti-regime movement helped by the NATO intervention from March 19th 2011, against the long lasted Kaddafi regime, and continued on the same path since the overthrow of the regime in October 2011, as several armed groups and militias dominated the Libyan military and political scene.

The second civil war was also an obvious asymmetric warfare opposing different non -state actors:

- **Operation Dignity:** an alliance between the parliament in Tobruk elected in June 2014, led by Speaker Aguila Saleh Issa, the Bayda-based government of Abdullah al-Thinni, and the majority of the Libyan National Army under the leadership of general Khalifa Haftar.

This first camp enjoyed a great control of Eastern Libya (Cyrenaica) and its oil export infrastructure, and a mountainous pocket of Northwest Libya as controlled by its ally, the Zintan militia. (Reeve, 2015, p. 2)

- **Libyan Dawn :** a coalition of militia from eastern and central Libya (Tripolitania) spearheaded by forces from Misrata, as a most powerful faction which emerged from the 2011 uprising. Libyan Dawn took control of Tripoli in August 2014 and reconvened the General National Congress as its parliament. (Reeve, 2015, p. 2)

- **Ansar al-Shari'a:** a radical Salafist group, listed by the US State Department as a terrorist group and accused of murdering the US ambassador in September 2012. This group controls parts of Benghazi and nearby Ajdabiya. It was Loosely aligned with Libyan Dawn, in battling Operation Dignity (Reeve, 2015, p. 2).

- **Shura Council of Islamic Youth :** a radical Islamist group that has largely controlled Derna since the early days of the revolution and pledged allegiance to Islamic State's caliphate.

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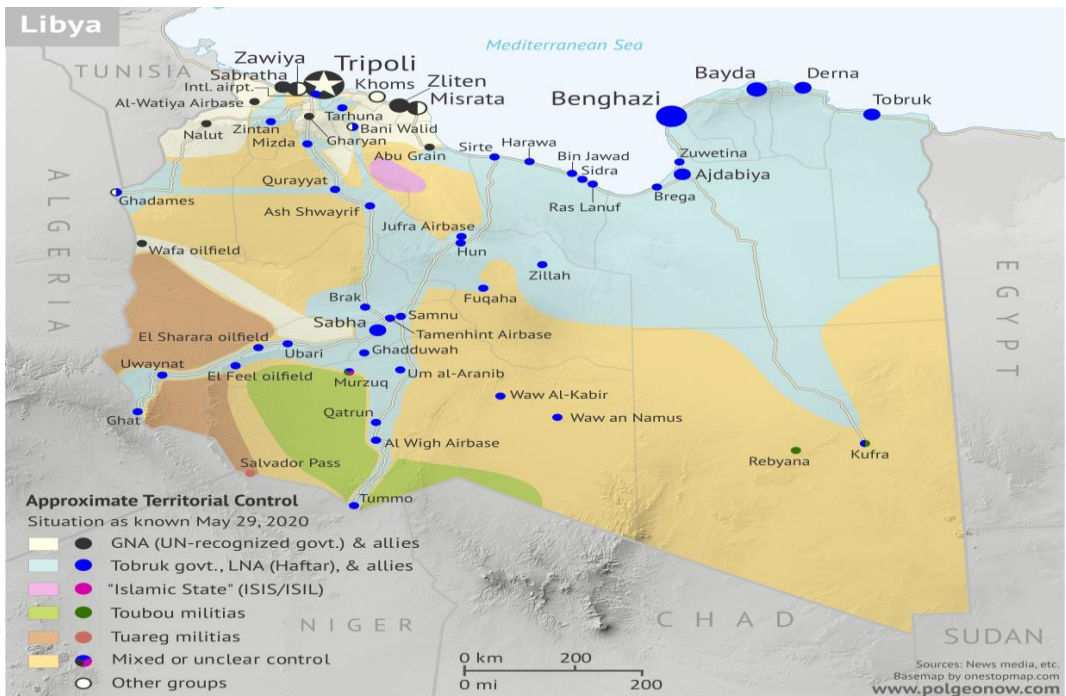
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- **Touareg:** the locally dominant actor in southwest Libya, controlling trade or trafficking routes to Algeria. The Touareg were reportedly aligned with Libyan Dawn.

-**Toubou:** a local non-Arab ethnic group controlling trade with Niger and Chad, as well as some Arab tribes. The Toubou fought with Operation Dignity in some southern battles.

This situation has not really changed in the third civil war which started in 2019 over Tripoli, as the main struggling groups are clearly shown in map .1.

Map .1.Mapping the Actors of the Libyan conflict From 2019 to 2020



Source: War-in-libya-haftar-control-map-2020.jp,

<https://1.bp.blogspot.com>, 2020-05-29, consulted on 20 February 2022.

Map .1. shows obviously that the Libyan third civil war in 2019- 2020 was an asymmetric warfare as several Non- State actors continued to dominate the fighting. However, the antagonists became more dependent on the

different internal armed groups and foreign fighters to enhance their killing forces. This fact makes the country a real battlefield of asymmetric warfare, and clarifies an extra- feature of fourth and fifth generation warfare.

3.3. A Conflict of Weaponized Information:

The Libyan conflict witnessed a significant shift from the physical dimension of war to a psychological one because actors of 5GW use kinetic and non-kinetic force to achieve an inside collapse of the Libyan State.

Since the event of Lockerbie on which severe penalties were inflicted on the Libyan regime ran by Muammer El Kaddafi, the western mass media have not stopped their offensive campaign against the Libyan leader. They endlessly portrayed him as a Foolish dictator person. Several books were also describing Kaddafi as a strange person.

Such campaigns spread in a remarkable pace few hours after the February 17th uprising in Libya. However, this time the campaign of hatred directed towards Kaddafi was no longer limited to Western mass media. Several Arab channels enlarged the circle of criticizing Kaddafi, and called for international intervention to halt what they described as war against civilians. The Qatari channel named el Jazeera was a clear voice of this call, and included some religious figures as cheikh El karadhaoui who made a fatwa to legitimize the killing of the Libyan leader, portraying him as a criminal engaged in murdering innocent civilians.

Great influential mass media and social media networks become the real voice of the anti -Kaddafi powers, as they not only called for intervention, but also spread fake news with fabricated pictures and videos to support their call for intervention.

Last, but not least French, British and American authorities called for a UN led intervention on the name of Responsibility to Protect, which is defined by the 2005 United Nations World Summit meeting as: «...The responsibility to help to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this context we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council... should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide,

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war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity» (UN General Assembly, 24 October 2005, p. A/RES/60/1)

Accordingly, the UN Security council passed two resolutions 1970 and 1973. The latter resolution was the one that the NATO used as a pretext to intervene in Libya in March 19th 2011. However, NATO's air strikes against Libyan infrastructure and Kaddafi's zone of influence had immediately revealed the western powers' intention to overthrow the regime.

After the great effort played by NATO in killing Kaddafi by Libyan protestors in October 20th 2011, it left the country without any reconstruction recommended by the Responsibility to Protect. The great role played by information war led to the implosion of the Libyan State with a vivid participation of the Libyan people who have long been under the influence of the western propaganda against Libyan leaders. The result is violence becoming « so diffuse and so dispersed as in any case of the fifth generation warfare ». (Abbot, 2010, p. 20)

Today, one can easily identify the real aims of such widespread propaganda and the pragmatic but malicious calculus of its sponsors, as a harsh proxy war devastated the country, while major regional and international powers do nothing than providing antagonists with high developed weapons, in order to spread chaos and sustain it.

3.4. Supra- Combinations Linking the Conflicting Parties to State and Non State Actors.

Throughout the Five transitional periods lived since the uprising of 17 February 2011 in Libya, there has been a clear foreign intervention in favor of the internal parties. Beginning with the NATO's strikes from March to October 2011, until the intervention of Turkey and Russia in the armed conflict over Tripoli in 2019. This foreign intervention has led to a real proxy war where adversaries were always supported by foreign Regional and international powers.

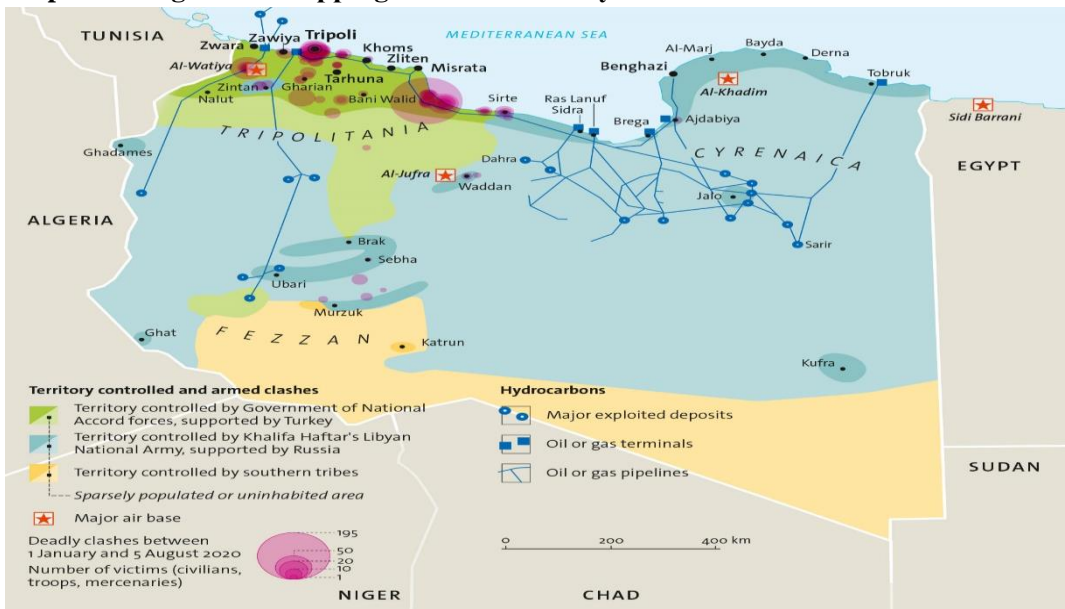
From the very beginning of the Libyan conflict there was a clear regional and international leaning towards the domestic Actors. However, the

direct support of the clashing factions became obvious during the second civil war from August 2014 to December 2015.

There were pro-dawn as well as pro- dignity supporters, the fact that resulted in a violent civil war. The regional pro-Dignity supporters included Egypt and the United Arab Emirates as both covert strike missions against Libyan Dawn targets and on behalf of Dignity, and supported this latter in the Arab League. On the Other side, pro-Dawn supporters appear to include Qatar, Sudan and Turkey, all of which have been active in supporting the post-«Arab Spring» expansion of the Brotherhood and its allies for ideological and economic reasons. (Reeve, 2015, p. 3)

European Powers also played a major role in the Libyan civil war, but their role will be clearer in the third one from 2019, which also witnessed the intervention of new powers. Map.2. points out to the great powers supporting the protagonists of the civil war from 2019 to 2020.

Map.2. Protagonists' Mapping in the Third Libyan Civil War



Source: <https://mondediplo.com/maps/libya-divided>, consulted on 23 February 2022.

As clarified by map.2, the third civil war was fought on the same logic of split, but with new political actors as the government of Accord Forces supported by Turkey since November 2019, and the Libyan National Army

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supported by Russia. In fact, the regional leaning remained more or less unchanged, but most influential European countries; the United Kingdom, France, and Italy played a more engaged role in this proxy war. While Italy has remained constant and coherent in its support for Serraj's forces, recognizing the importance of including Haftar in a settlement, the behaviors of the United Kingdom and France were more ambiguous. Both countries « have rhetorically supported Serraj, but their special operations forces have actively assisted Haftar's troops in their fight against Islamists in Benghazi ». (Karim Mezran, 2017).

As a result, these supra- combinations stand against any conflict resolution initiative that dismiss the interest of one party or another. For instance, Turkey made an immediate reserve against the statement of the immediate exit of foreign powers during the 2nd Berlin conference in June 2021.

4. The Impact of Libyan Fourth/ Fifth generation Conflict on Resolution Process:

The conflict resolution process of the Libyan conflict has been long as the main actors resisted its different phases, and interrupted it several times. In fact, the main characteristics of the conflict shown above have played a major role in postponing the resolution.

4.1. Conflict Resolution Process :

Conflict Resolution is the coming step after the conflict management process. However, many people use the two concepts interchangeably to mean the end of hostilities. However, conflict management concentrates on the settlement of an ongoing conflict, whereas conflict resolution belongs to the conflict transformation approach which focuses not only on ending violence, but also on changing negative relationships between the conflicting parties to positive ones.

It is worth noting that conflict resolution is not the only aim of conflict transformation. If conflict resolution concentrates on changing attitudes and improving relationships between conflicting groups, conflict transformation goes further by insisting on changing the context, i.e, to change the political, social and/or economic structures that cause negative relationships. (Specht, 2008, p. 6). So, conflict transformation approach is not limited to peacemaking process as an « action to bring hostile parties to agreement, essentially through such peaceful means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations » (UN Secretary-General, 1992), but moves forward to achieve the positive peace characterised by minimum levels of well-being, freedom and justice.

4.2. The Resolution Process of the Libyan Conflict:

The resolution process of the Libyan conflict is marked by its several rounds, and accords which generally include a cease fire agreement. However, the several agreements did not last for long. This part of the article will transcend the reasons behind the failure of the numerous attempts meant to end the Libyan conflict.

In reality, the Libyan conflict resolution process started as early as the 2014 civil war, and after several attempts a UN- sponsored accord was achieved in Skhirat in december 2015. The concluded accord was the basis for the famous National Accord platform, that gave birth to the government of National Accord in 2016, which was charged to prepare for democratic elections of institutions in Libya.

Soon after the founding of the government, the Skhirat agreement showed its limits, as the ground was full of disaccords, and pledged the country in another struggle lead to another civil war in 2019, with new regional and international powers entering the stage.

In fact, efforts to stop the renewed armed conflict were also multiplied, the most important of which were the Istanbul and Moscow Summits, but ended without any agreement. On January 19th , 2020, representatives from the governments of Algeria, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, the Republic of the Congo, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States, in addition to representatives from United

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Nations, the African Union, the European Union, and the League of Arab States, met in Berlin, Germany, for diplomatic discussion with attempts to assuage the conflict in Libya.

The Berlin summit meeting reached an agreement including: ceasefire; recognition of, and continued adherence to the arms embargo from 2011 established by UN Security Council Resolution 1970; a return to the political process focused on Libyan-owned and led operations; security sector reform; economic and financial reform, including the recognition of Libya's National Oil Corporations as the only "legitimate oil company."

As a result, a ceasefire was signed in October 23rd, 2020 between the representatives of both fighting parties, yet peace is not completely achieved, as several armed groups continued to operate in the three main regions of the country. With the recent parliament decision in February 10th to appoint Fethi Bashagha on the head of the new transition government, along with the refusal of the head of the existing government Abdel Hamid debeibah to retreat, the country is living again with two struggling authorities, the fact that can undermine the cease fire agreement and return to fighting.

4.3. The Causes of the Unrealised Sustainable Peace in Libya :

Being a conflict of fourth and fifth generation warfare, the Libyan conflict has long resisted the conventional based conflict resolution principles, and resulted in a non-stop internal conflict. The main reason behind the resistance against the conflict resolution is that peace process is not truly adapted to the kind of warfare. A process built on the traditional peacemaking and peace-keeping operations, as the Berlin 1 summit in January 2020 recommended, is not an adequate solution.

Instead, a comprehensive approach based on efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace, and which will advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people is needed. This can obviously be recognised from the recommended disarming of the armed groups, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, insisting on building security institutions, monitoring elections,

advancing efforts to protect human rights. The current situation is not fully peaceful because positive peace is missing in this conceptualization. Indeed, peace will be a strange concept if it does not address the real characteristics of the conflict, where several actors play different roles linked in nothing but their interests.

The postponing of the presumed december 24th 2021 elections, the unachieved exit of foreign powers and foreign fighters, the disarmament of Libyan non - integrated armed groups, and terrorism will hinder the Berlin peace process, and risks to return to the pre- ceasefire of October 23rd 2020 are imminent, especially since the new platform launched by the Libyan parliament and the High Council road map of February10th, 2022.

To put it in a nutshell, the conflict in Libya has resisted different conflict resolution approaches, because the different fighting groups and stakeholders did not arrive to an agreement which ensures the reciprocal interests. Since the conflict parties do not replace their attitudes with a mutual beneficial interests (SDC, December2005.), the conflict will continue to resist any resolution effort.

There are many reasons of this resistance, the first is that different armed groups have never been sure that the situation in Libya will move towards a sustainable peace, as shown by the several transitional governments. Second, many armed groups are not only linked to the political parties struggling over power, but also represent the interest of some foreign powers. Third, many of these groups benefited from the war economy especially as corruption spreads out in the different fields.

The Human Needs Theory is no longer a provider of solution, because the Libyan conflict is far from being a fight for “universal” human needs; rather it is a fight of supra combinations as thoroughly explained before. Consequently, the solution may be found in a conflict transformation process starting with the real recognition of the main domestic and foreign actors interests, then empowering them in terms of peace building process.

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4. CONCLUSION

To sum up the relationship between fourth and fifth generations warfare and conflict resolution process, we can say that this new kind of conflict cannot be solved according to peacemaking and peacekeeping conventional processes. The study reveals that conflict in Libya has several characteristics of the fourth and fifth generations of warfare like being a long lasting conflict, asymmetric conflict, with a deeply influential information war, and powerful supra- combinations of the domestic and foreign actors.

The implosion of the Libyan State then is a logical consequence of the previous characteristics of Fourth and Fifth generations warfare. Moreover, there is an endless resistance of the Libyan conflict towards several resolution processes that were initiated to end the conflict. The reasons behind this resistance are thoroughly listed, and some of them can be underlined. Firstly, armed groups have not the guarantees of a sustainable peace. Secondly, many armed groups continue to be employed by the parties struggling over power, or preserving the interest of some foreign powers. Thirdly, many of these groups find the war situation more beneficial than peace as they really developed high income from the so called “war economy”.

To put a long story short, the Libyan conflict which has lasted for several decades since the Lockerbie incident, and the state of endless civil war cannot break to peace, unless the true nature of the conflict will be truly understood. As a result, the resolution process must be entirely revised to meet the specificities of the Libyan conflict as a fourth and fifth generations of warfare.

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