



The Arab Popular Movement and Foreign Interventions in North Africa: The Turkish Intervention in Libya as a Paradigmatic Case

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Abstract:

This article examines the dynamic interplay between indigenous North African popular movements and external power projection, using Turkey's military intervention in Libya as a case study. Drawing on primary documents, peer-reviewed Arabic and international scholarship, as well as field reports from 2011 to 2025, the study employs a historical-institutional approach combined with comparative security analysis. Chapter One conceptualizes the Arab popular movement, tracing its socioeconomic, political, and media-driven determinants. Chapter Two reconstructs the chronology of the Libyan conflict—from the February 2011 uprising through phases of civil war, institutional bifurcation, and the 2020 ceasefire—highlighting how foreign entanglements progressively reshaped domestic actors. Chapter Three dissects Ankara's intervention in detailed its geopolitical motives, maritime boundary agreements, drone-centered operational doctrine, and energy reconstruction agenda. Chapter Four evaluates the intervention's repercussions: recalibrated internal military equilibria, entrenched hybrid militias, a frozen Sirte–Jufra front, and wider ripple effects on Eastern Mediterranean gas politics and Sahel security markets.

The findings demonstrate that while Turkish engagement averted an imminent collapse of the Tripoli government, it also simultaneously entrenched Libya's east-west political divide. This illustrates how external sponsors can transform revolutionary openings into protracted hybrid conflicts. The article argues that durable stabilization depends on synchronized foreign troop withdrawals, an escrow-based hydrocarbon revenue sharing mechanism, and an inclusive constitutional consensus. By adopting both a pan-Arab lens and granular Libyan evidence, the study contributes to theories of post-Arab Spring state reconstruction and offers policy pathways for balancing sovereign agency with external mediation in divided nations.

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Keywords: Arab popular movement, foreign intervention, Turkish intervention, Libya, North Africa.

Introduction :

The recent wave of mass protests spanning across North Africa since late 2010 - now collectively labelled the Arab Spring - have shifted parameters of political contestations but the trajectory of each uprising has pivoted on the degree of foreign involvement, and its form¹. Collective grievances-economic marginalisation, systematic repression and social injustice-triggered strikingly similar processes of mobilisation in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, but external actors produced very different results in no time. This rebalancing of power at the local level, the reframing of popular demands, and in many instances, the re-escalation of violence, were in part the result of these various interventions.

The interaction is best viewed through the lens provided by Libya. Similar to the movements of its neighbours, the 17 February 2011 revolt began with horizontally organised youth networks demanding dignity and freedom. Instead, NATO airpower turned a national revolt into an intractable civil war, and an international war effectively supporting competing regional patrons. It was thus able to pursue a multi-faceted approach, including military support, maritime boundaries, and economic statecraft. Ankara embodies a new model of intervention that blends hard-power projection with soft-power tools, ideological or commercial, thus undermining traditional liberal categorizations of coercive and cooperative foreign policy.

Examining the Turkish role thus highlights three interconnected issues about the post-2011 North Africa: the ways in which external powers transform the trajectory of the popular movements, how they redefine state sovereignty and the prospects of democratic transition, and the regional rivalries, from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Sahel, which exacerbate local conflicts. In tackling these problems the research integrates the historical reconstruction of the conflict in Libya (2011-2025) with theoretical insights from the comparative study of intervention drawing on primary documents, official accords as well as peer-reviewed Arabic and international scholarship.

The article demonstrates how Turkish involvement prevented a swift collapse of Tripoli's control but deepened Libya's east-west divide and multiplied foreign presences, by following the trajectory of Libya from uprising over civil war to entrenched proxy war. For this to happen durable stabilisation now hinges on simultaneous troop withdrawals, an escrow-based arrangement for hydrocarbon revenues and an inclusive constitutional framework that returns agency to Libyan institutions—rather than foreign proxies.

THE FIRST TOPIC :

¹ Rex Brynen, Pete W. Moore, Bassel F. Salloukh, and Marie J. Zahar. *Beyond the Arab Spring: Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Arab World*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 2012, pp. 27–45.



THE ARAB POPULAR MOVEMENT - CONCEPT AND DETERMINANTS

In the early 21st century, the Arab Spring ignited inclusive, non-violent movements challenging authoritarian regimes via broad coalitions, fluid structures, and enduring momentum. Rooted in anti-colonial legacies and post-independence failures, they arose from youth bulges, education growth, and urbanization, demanding political and economic justice amid exclusion and stagnation.

Driven politically by elite corruption and rights violations, economically by unemployment, inequality, and neoliberal policies, these uprisings used social media and TV for swift mobilization and counter-narratives, despite repression risks and limits in sustaining democratic change.

FIRST REQUIREMENT: DEFINITION OF THE ARAB POPULAR MOVEMENT

The Arab popular movement is a brand new and unique model of mass political mobilization, which flourished in the first decade of the 21st century, where the mass participation of civilians played a major role in challenging entrenched authoritarian governance². These movements cut across formal political party organizations and opposition structures, and are the product of broad-based societal coalitions based around common grievances with existing political, economic and social systems.

There are different features which characterize contemporary Arab popular movements compared to previous Arab political oppositions in the 20th century.

First, they are incredibly inclusive, uniting broad segments of society - young people, professionals, workers and marginalized groups - around shared political demands³. This mobilization across the sectors of society is a break from the opposition politics and political life more generally that have shaped Arab political life for most decades of the 20th century.

Second, such movements are in their genesis non-violent, prioritizing strategies of non-violent resistance such as demonstrations, strikes and civil disobedience⁴. This non-violence/workings (though not always retained throughout the course of either movement's development) represents intentionality within the chosen strategy, heightening legitimacy and allowing for greater inclusion. Secondly, the non-violent nature of these movements also demonstrates a nuanced knowledge of modern global norms, as well as a recognition that moral authority is key to fighting authoritarian systems.

² Madawi Al-Rasheed. "The Arab Spring and the Struggle for Democracy in the Middle East." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2015, pp. 152–165.

³ Mark Beissinger. "Protest Dynamics in the Arab Spring: Episodes and Lessons." *Social Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 8, 2021, pp. 282–301.

⁴ Erica Chenoweth, and Maria J. Stephan. "Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict." *International Security*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2011, pp. 7–44.



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Thirdly, the recent Arab popular movements show a tremendous amount of organizational fluidity and flexibility if not the absence of visible vertical structures. It provides the flexibility to respond to changing situations and avoid the weaknesses of having a centralized leadership that the state security apparatus could decapitate. The fluidity of these movements also allows for their transformation in line with various political contexts and challenges.

The dimension of time among Arab popular movements plays equally important role. These movements differ in character from episodic protests or short-lived mobilizations by the fact that the former retain their momentum over a longer time-frame despite state repression and other challenges. This deep well of grievances and engaged participation runs deeper than any one political calculation.

**SECOND REQUIREMENT:
THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL ROOTS OF THE ARAB POPULAR MOVEMENT**

The Arab uprisings of the present era are unthinkable without an understanding of the historical process of Arab political evolution, and the social changes that have undergone in modern Arab societies⁵. These movements are rooted in a deeper history of past political mobilization and resistance, yet their current expressions reveal the distinctive contexts of early twenty-first century Arab societies.

Middle-Eastern popular mobilization is no new phenomenon, as the popular movements that began in mid-twentieth century to overcome colonialist domination prove. The earlier movements set a precedent of civil unrest and produced collective memories of triumphant grassroots and battle action that guided future actions. Anti-colonial resistance, for example, produced political awareness and organizational skills that would be useful to later movements.... Following independence, Arab countries developed authoritarian structures of governance that started out with at least a modicum of popular legitimacy (by virtue of pledges for economic growth and social advancement), but soon began to breed resentment⁶. Lack of accountability of these regimes over their promises of economic development, social justice, and political participation, left behind accumulated grievances that would soon stone popular movements.

The demographic shifts in Arab societies were a key social basis for present-day popular movements. The coming into being of a large group of young people, termed by some as the "youth bulge" of democracy, presented new and strategic opportunities and challenges for established political systems⁷. Being better educated and more exposed to global

⁵ Asem Khalil. "Impulses from the Arab Spring on the Palestinian State-Building Process." *Birzeit's Working Papers Series in Legal Studies*, no. 7, 2018, pp. 1–31.

⁶ Rex Brynen, Pete W. Moore, Bassel F. Salloukh, and Marie J. Zahar. *Beyond the Arab Spring: Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Arab World*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 2012, pp. 89–120.

⁷ Mark Beissinger. "Protest Dynamics in the Arab Spring: Episodes and Lessons." *Social Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 8, 2021, pp. 290–295.



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communications, this demographic became frustrated with little in terms of expanding economic opportunities and political marginalization under authoritarian systems.

The growth of education among the post-independence Arab countries spread this spillover effect further, creating new social groups, cadre after cadre, imbued with emergent political consciousness and a growing sense of entitlement to participation. Although the expansion of higher education was in many respects a genuine advance for society, it resulted in generations of educated men and women seeking opportunities that lay beyond what the existing political and economic orders had to offer. The educated middle class turned into such an important voter bank for any popular movements, leading it and participating in it continuously.

The social bases for popular movements have also been shaped by the processes of urbanization in Arab societies. The populating of large cities generated new social and political interactions but also, from an organizational standpoint, new possibilities for mass mobilization. Cities offered the infrastructure and the personal relationships that are needed for continued political mobilization.

THIRD REQUIREMENT: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS

How the political determinants of Arab popular movements partially reflect the region-specific nature of authoritarian governance and how these systems produced popular discontent individually Arab authoritarian regimes, although they had somewhat different institutional arrangements, generally had similar features that brought people onto the streets in protest against them⁸.

Political power was consolidated in narrow elite circles - typically ruling families or military establishments - that eschewed broader participation of the public in politics. And this exclusion was not just about electoral politics, but also policy making, allocation of resources, and even basic decisions of governance. Historical legacies had created a fundamental gap between rulers and ruled, contributing to legitimacy deficits that were undermining regime stability.

Corruption became one of the most salient political grievances, because it constituted not only an economic inefficiency but also a breach of social norms about fairness and justice⁹. Perceived opulence of political elites at the expense of average citizens suffered economically resonated irresistibly as moral rationales for political regime change. Apart from the need to address corruption, it showed how authoritarian rule is arbitrary, with no mechanisms to keep leaders accountable.

The repression of civil liberties and the violations of human rights gave more political reasons to mobilization on the masses. The curtailment of freedom of expression, assembly, and association had a more indirect impact as well - it created wider sociopolitical environments characterized by insecurity and intimidation affecting not only political activists and

⁸ Madawi Al-Rasheed. "The Arab Spring and the Struggle for Democracy in the Middle East." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2015, pp. 158–162.

⁹ Asem Khalil. "Impulses from the Arab Spring on the Palestinian State-Building Process." *Birzeit's Working Papers Series in Legal Studies*, no. 7, 2018, pp. 15–28.



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organizations. The need for dignity and respect for fundamental human rights formed the central theme of mass movements.

Unlike previous waves of authoritarian transitioning, economic determinants were equally at play in fostering popular movements, as popular anger at economic conditions and livelihoods provided tangible signs of how the political systems were failing their citizens¹⁰. Visible contradictions existed between investment in education and economic opportunities creating rising educated youth unemployment from 2016 onwards. This led to issues of educated unemployment, and the social groups hit were more educated and had higher expectations, as well, hence greater potential for political mobilization.

The decades before mass uprisings saw a major increase in economic disparities in many Arab states, with stark contrasts between wealthy elites and masses in dire financial circumstances. These disparities became especially irksome in the context of political racketeering and cronyism that enriched politically favored enterprises at the expense of ordinary entrepreneurs and laborers.

While the neoliberal economic reforms that were introduced during the 1990s and 2000s in various Arab countries led to some levels of economic growth, they also triggered new forms of economic vulnerability and social dislocation (Brynen et al., 2012, pp. 134-158). Lower-income segments of the population often stood to lose out from subsidy cuts, state enterprise privatization and market opening, which mainly benefited urban elites and foreign investors.

FOURTH REQUIREMENT: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND NEW MEDIA

The introduction of social networking technologies and new media radically altered the mechanisms and rhetoric of organization and communication among Arab popular movements¹¹. They offered new arsenal for politic mobilization, but also new challenges and weaknesses to participants of the movement.... Social media especially Facebook and Twitter allowed information to spread fast and people to organize over a distance. Movements could attain vast, collating outlets perusing more effectively without having to rely on authoritarian state-controlled media platforms. The communication aspect of social media, which has a tendency of being more viral in its sea of social interaction, made it more accessible for political messages and mobilization calls to spread like wildfire.

New media technologies had the sort of democratizing effects that allowed for wider participation in political communication and organizing. Whereas traditional media needed enormous amounts of machinery and technical skills, suddenly we had social media platforms to which normal citizens could have a voice in political conversation and organize themselves¹².

¹⁰ Mark Beissinger. "Protest Dynamics in the Arab Spring: Episodes and Lessons." *Social Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 8, 2021, pp. 285–290.

¹¹ Philip N. Howard, and Muzammil M. Hussain. "Democracy's Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring." *Political Communication*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2013, pp. 315–335.

¹² Philip N. Howard, and Muzammil M. Hussain. "Democracy's Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring." *Political Communication*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2013, pp. 320–328.



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Yes, the democratization of communication opened up opportunities for more perspectives at the margins to be visible.

Media technologies also helped create a multitude of alternative sources to state-controlled information. Citizen journalism, live streaming and user-generated content altogether were fulfilling what one would deem to be an immediate archive of evidence that what the government was arguing over several perceived notions; whether it be about how protests were 'peaceful' or that the scope of popular mobilization was small, all real-time documentation were contradicting these alleged claims. Especially for international public and solidarité movements these other source of informations were crucial.

But this empowering view of the relationship between new media and popular movements was complicated and far from simple. Yet authoritarian governments built elaborate systems for overseeing and manipulating activity online, like spying on social media accounts, meddling with internet access, and charging up internet activists. The social media activity created digital traces that made those involved in the movement more vulnerable than ever before.

Satellite television, most notably Al Jazeera, played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of popular movements, often in synergy with social media¹³. Television coverage supplied graphic evidence of protests and government reactions that improved international consciousness and support. Together, the strategies of social media organization and television coverage generated synergies that poetized movement effects.

The evolution of these movements made clear the limitations of new media as tools for political change. These technologies were useful to create the initial stir and awareness, but when it came to difficult negotiations and institution building, they left a lot to be desired in the process of transition to democracy. Although this horizontal and decentralized characteristic of social media communication was advantageous for mass mobilization in the beginning, it turned out to be difficult for post-revolutionary societies to elaborate coherent political programs and leadership schemes.

THE SECOND TOPIC : THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIBYAN CONFLICT AND ITS TRAJECTORIES

The Libyan Revolution erupted on February 17, 2011, in Benghazi, driven by grievances against Qadhafi's forty-year rule, including regional inequalities and human rights abuses, forming a coalition of youth, tribes, and defectors demanding dignity and freedom. Protests escalated into armed conflict with regime violence, leading to UNSC Resolution 1973 and NATO support that toppled Qadhafi by October 2011, though militia fragmentation persisted. Institutional divisions from 2014 sparked a new civil war between rival factions backed by foreign powers, creating parallel governments and economic chaos. A 2020 ceasefire enabled negotiations toward unity, focusing on energy governance, foreign withdrawal, and constitutional consensus by mid-2025.

¹³ Asem Khalil. "Impulses from the Arab Spring on the Palestinian State-Building Process." *Birzeit's Working Papers Series in Legal Studies*, no. 7, 2018, pp. 21–26.



FIRST REQUIREMENT: OUTBREAK OF THE REVOLUTION (FEBRUARY - AUGUST 2011)

The Libyan uprising began on February 17, 2011 in the eastern city of Benghazi, fueled by the contagion of the fires of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions yet nourished uniquely by Libya's own history of grievances¹⁴. Forty years of patrimonial rule had generated vast regional inequalities, institutionalized human-rights abuses, and a rentier economy whose spoils were captured by a narrow security-bureaucratic elite. It is notably the case that the revolutionary vanguard was not one ideological current, but a loose and at times informal coalition of urban youth networks alongside tribal notables and defected officers, all focusing their rhetoric around the banners of *karāma* (dignity) and *ḥurriya* (freedom).

Cyberspace activism had grown by early March into mass sit-ins in Tahrir Square in Benghazi and into spontaneous solidarity marches in Misrata, Zawiya and the Jabal Nafusa highlands. The violent reaction of the regime, including but not limited to live ammunition, arbitrary detention and bringing in mercenaries from sub-Saharan Africa, further radicalised an already angry populace and provided the moral basis for self-defence committees that were established to protect civilians against live ammunition attacks and which would soon develop into brigades carrying out revolutionary tasks¹⁵. The front line shifted back and forth between February and August: rebel gains at the Gulf of Sidra were answered by counter-offensives on the coastal highway, oil terminals changing hands frequently to illustrate the importance of hydrocarbon income to both sides. Over the course of the next few months, the insurgents-with tactical support from the NATO-coordinated Operation Unified Protector-broke through this western littoral corridor and into Tripoli, heralding the de facto collapse of Qadhafi's security architecture¹⁶.

¹⁴ Milad Elharathi. "Arab African Northern Revolt States (2010–2014): The Missed Path of Re-Institutionalization and Democratic Transformation." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, Academic Journals, vol. 8, no. 11, 2014, p. 256.

¹⁵ Mokhtar A. Elareshi, Abdul-Karim Ziani, and Mohamad Sahwan. "The New Constitution Freezing the Press: Freedom of Expression and Statutory Limitations in Libya." *Cogent Social Sciences*, Taylor & Francis, vol. 7, no. 1, 2021, p. 12.

¹⁶ Emil Petersson. "Looking to the Skies: Operation Unified Protector and the Strategy of Aerial Intervention." *International Studies Quarterly*, Taylor & Francis, vol. 67, no. 4, 2023, p. 294.



SECOND REQUIREMENT: THE PHASE OF ARMED CONFLICT AND THE FALL OF THE REGIME

The transition from protest to rebellion became cemented with UNSC Resolution 1973 (17 March 2011) that authorized "all necessary measures" for civilian protection¹⁷. The airborne assault, alongside munitions provided by Qatar and support logistics from the UAE, targeted and destroyed armour formations and command-and-control centres, thus erasing the traditional military imbalance between upright and loyalist forces. Within Libya, revolutionary brigades clustered around three geographic centers: Benghazi, Misrata and the Nafusa Mountains—each nurturing different political identities that would later hinder national cohesion. Meanwhile, newly-formed bodies such as the National Transitional Council (NTC) struggled with how to balance the needed co-ordination and integration of the military with the requirement to signal that unity to the outside world¹⁸.

The killing of Qadhafi on 20 October 2011 in Sirte removed the historical pivot point of the ancien régime but did not eliminate the structural causes of violence. The collapse of the security sector generated an arms bazaar with over 15 million light weapons circulating alongside revolutionary legitimacy fragmented among competing commanders refusing to subordinate to the embryonic state agencies. Consequently, the post-war interim authorities inherited an ironic paradox; on one hand were previously unheard levels of popular demand for a democratic transformation, on the other was a centrifugal landscape of militias that equated disarmament with political exclusion¹⁹.

THIRD REQUIREMENT: INSTITUTIONAL DIVISION (2014 - 2019)

In 2012, elections for the General National Congress (GNC) and in 2014, the House of Representatives (HoR) could not agree on a common constitutional guidance. Judicial annulments of transitional amendments, accusations of vote-losing electoral engineering, and opposing threat assessments of Islamist mobilisation set in motion a new civil war fault-line: Operation Dignity—General Khalifa Haftar's offensive in the east—and the Misrata-led

¹⁷ Nourelhouda Mouhoub. "The Role of the United Nations in Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping: Case of Libya." *International Journal of Conflict Studies*, Zenodo, vol. 12, no. 3, 2024, p. 152.

¹⁸ Badria Saleh Abdullah. "The Challenges of National Reconciliation in Libya after 2011–2021." *Journal of Diyala for Legal and Political Sciences*, University of Diyala, vol. 10, no. 2, 2022, p. 58.

¹⁹ Milad Elharathi. "Arab African Northern Revolt States (2010–2014): The Missed Path of Re-Institutionalization and Democratic Transformation." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, Academic Journals, vol. 8, no. 11, 2014, p. 261.



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Operation Libya Dawn in the west. Every camp built equivalent national claims, creating two states, two central banking systems, and two military command structures²⁰.

Bifurcation of the institutional system intensified territorial contestation. Militia rent-seeking and proxy sponsorship by regional powers transformed Cyrenaica's oil crescent, Fezzan's smuggling corridors and the coastal capitals into theatres of violence. While Egypt and the United Arab Emirates offered air support and funds to Haftar, portraying their intervention in Libya as a counter-terrorism exercise, and Türkiye and Qatar funneled matériel to Libya Dawn under the guise of protection of the revolution²¹. This aspiration of re-bundling authority was witnessed with the United Nations in Libya through the Libyan Political Agreement, through which the Presidency Council and Government of National Accord (GNA) were formed. But the GNA's authority rarely outspanned greater central Tripoli without a common security chain of command, enabling militia entrepreneurs to weaponise state budgets for intra-faction consolidation.

The conflict had reconverged on Tripoli by 2019. Haftar launched "Operation Flood of Dignity" (April 2019) to take the capital ahead of a National Conference sponsored by the UN that was too convene at the time. With Byzantine-level urban combat, Turkish usage of Bayraktar TB-2 drones to assist the GNA, and a sizeable influx of foreign mercenaries-including Syrian proxies sent by Ankara and Wagner Group elements supporting Haftar-the offensive ground to a halt²². The clashes displaced more than 200,000 civilians on top of causing an oil production drop to below 80,000 b/d, the lowest level since the 2011.

FOURTH REQUIREMENT: CEASEFIRE AND NEGOTIATION PROCESS (2020-2025)

The October 23, 2020 permanent ceasefire negotiated by the 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) was made possible by both military exhaustion and the economic shock from continued export blockades²³. The provisions of the agreement included the disengagement of foreign fighters in three months, establishing a monitored security corridor, and the unity of security institutions. The ceasefire, while delayed in coming, did bring an end to major fighting and also reopened the coastal highway connecting the two cities of Tripoli and Benghazi.

²⁰ Mul Hannase, and Ali Amril. "The Conflict of Pro-Islamist and Nationalist Militia Groups in Libya and Its Impact on Economic Growth for the 2011–2019 Period." *Journal of Regional Politics*, UIN Sunan Ampel, vol. 15, no. 2, 2021, p. 95.

²¹ Mul Hannase, and Ali Amril. "The Conflict of Pro-Islamist and Nationalist Militia Groups in Libya and Its Impact on Economic Growth for the 2011–2019 Period." *Journal of Regional Politics*, UIN Sunan Ampel, vol. 15, no. 2, 2021, p. 98.

²² Emil Petersson. "Looking to the Skies: Operation Unified Protector and the Strategy of Aerial Intervention." *International Studies Quarterly*, Taylor & Francis, vol. 67, no. 4, 2023, p. 304.

²³ Nourelhouda Mouhoub. "The Role of the United Nations in Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping: Case of Libya." *International Journal of Conflict Studies*, Zenodo, vol. 12, no. 3, 2024, p. 165.



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On the diplomatic front, the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) chose an interim executive in February 2021, leading to the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU), which was to guide the country to elections. But rival legislative chambers in Tripoli and Tobruk continued to disagree on the constitutional basis for voting, leading the HoR to name a rival Government of National Stability in March 2022²⁴. Such parallel authorities co-existed uneasily, based on divergent militia alliances and external patrons, and the National Oil Corporation could barely manage the redistribution of revenues while threatened with renewed blockades.

Starting from 2023 the negotiation dossier moved to army restructuring and withdrawal of mercenaries. While JMC meetings held in Egypt led to a draft integration matrix for conventional army units, entrenchment of economic interests within hybrid armed groups hindered implementation. Even so, the confidence-building measures by increments-joint patrols in Sirte, prisoner exchanges, de-mining areas on the former front lines-spoke to the widespread residual imprint left by the ceasefire template²⁵.

Libya's trajectory as of mid-2025 remains dependent on three inter-locking variables:

- **Energy Governance:** Sustainable revenue-sharing mechanism to avoid oil-field to be shut down as a bargaining chip
- **Continued Foreign Military Presence:** Domestic threat perceptions will be shaped by the pace and sequencing of draw-downs by Turkish, Russian and Sudanese mercenaries.
- **Constitutional Consensus:** Without a common electoral framework, interim executives become rent-dispensing spoils, rewarding persistent zero-sum behaviour²⁶.

This includes both intra-Libyan dialogue on the long-desired post-revolution settlement on regional equity and security-sector accountability and continued mediation by regional organisations and calibrated conditionality ex-ante and ex-post from international financial institutions, which could reinforce the tenuous successes of the ceasefire.

²⁴ Badria Saleh Abdullah. "The Challenges of National Reconciliation in Libya after 2011–2021." *Journal of Diyala for Legal and Political Sciences*, University of Diyala, vol. 10, no. 2, 2022, p. 65.

²⁵ Mokhtar A. Elareshi, Abdul-Karim Ziani, and Mohamad Sahwan. "The New Constitution Freezing the Press: Freedom of Expression and Statutory Limitations in Libya." *Cogent Social Sciences*, Taylor & Francis, vol. 7, no. 1, 2021, p. 18.

²⁶ Nourelhouda Mouhoub. "The Role of the United Nations in Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping: Case of Libya." *International Journal of Conflict Studies*, Zenodo, vol. 12, no. 3, 2024, p. 171.



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**THE THIRD TOPIC :
TURKISH INTERVENTION IN LIBYA - AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES AND STRATEGIES**

Turkey's military intervention in Libya in January 2020 to support the Government of National Accord (GNA) stemmed from geopolitical and security motivations, aiming to thwart encirclement in the Eastern Mediterranean, safeguard commercial contracts, and test expeditionary concepts under the Blue Homeland doctrine. This was preceded by November 2019 memoranda on security cooperation and maritime boundary delimitation, creating an EEZ corridor contested by rivals to block rival gas pipelines and enable Turkish basing. Militarily, Turkey employed drones, integrated air-sea fires, and Syrian proxies to achieve superiority and break the Tripoli siege. Economically, the strategy targeted energy resources, oilfield services, and reconstruction contracts, linking intervention to long-term geo-economic gains.

**FIRST REQUIREMENT:
GEOPOLITICAL AND SECURITY MOTIVATIONS**

The Turkish choice to intervene militarily in support of the Government of National Accord (GNA) in January 2020 combined a convergence of hard-power calculation and long-held ambitions for geopolitically understanding the larger picture²⁷. The Turkish authorities estimated that seizure of the Libyan capital by Field-Marshal Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) would strengthen a Turkish-phobic front led by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and France, which, according to Ankara, would also diminish the Turkish impact in all of Northern Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean with long-term effect. It thus became imperative to gain a friendly government in Tripoli to:

- Thwart encirclement in Eastern Mediterranean where Athens-Nicosia-Tel Aviv gas cooperation was already isolating Ankara²⁸.
- Safeguard large (approx 18 billion) pre-2011 commercial contracts and future reconstruction opportunities for Turkish firms.
- Dual-use capability UAE Air Force underwrites Afghan failure in inadequate mission to contain Iran curbed Middle East theatre use latest anti-access air denial game plans. Expand the UK Air Force office in Dubai to gain weight and combat capability. Development ongoing information inside intelligence-packaged artillery multi-role strike 470m UAE Air Force martyrs scrips swing horizontally filled. Close the frontal is.

²⁷ Umut Korkut. "A Sea of Change in the MENA Region: External Interventions in Libya." *Insight Turkey*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2020, pp. 34–45.

²⁸ Sergey Ivanov. "Geopolitics of Energy Conflicts in the Mediterranean: A Contemporary Perspective." *Journal of Contemporary Security Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2021, pp. 55–70.



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And Libya offered Turkey a proving ground for expeditionary concepts in integration of UCAVs, EW and naval fire-support-capabilities regarded as force multipliers in Ankara's 'forward defence' (Mavi Vatan or Blue Homeland) doctrine identified from a security perspective.

**SECOND REQUIREMENT:
MARITIME BOUNDARY DELIMITATION AGREEMENTS (NOVEMBER 2019
MEMORANDUM)**

Two memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were signed between Turkey and the GNA on 27 November 2019. The first regarding security cooperation laid the groundwork for legal cover for subsequent troop deployments; the second delineated an economic exclusive zone (EEZ) corridor from Turkey across the Mediterranean to the Libyan shoreline between Derna-Tobruk²⁹.

The maritime boundary clause, which assigns overlapping exclusive economic zones (EEZs) to Turkey and Libya across an 18.6 nautical mile corridor, is contested by Greece, Egypt, and the EU. This enables Turkey to block rival EastMed gas pipelines that would otherwise traverse the claimed area. Separately, the Security MoU (Article 4), which allows unlimited Turkish personnel and equipment on Libyan soil upon request by the Government of National Accord (GNA), is contested by the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the House of Representatives (HoR) in Tobruk. This creates permanent out-of-area basing potential and logistic nodes for Turkey at locations such as Misrata and Naval Base Khoms.

Although critics contend Move refutes principles on UNCLOS through its omission of islands as beneficiaries, Ankara describes precedents for equity and Libyan consent to the legality of Move as an unprecedented assumption of the responsibility of defending its legality. Hence, the agreement links maritime (cartography) to regime survival: saving the GNA meant saving the EEZ line³⁰.

**THIRD REQUIREMENT:
MILITARY TOOLS: AIR AND NAVAL SUPPORT AND DRONES**

The operational design of Turkey was formulated in three circular layers:

- Uncrewed Combat Aerial Vehicle Superiority - Bayraktar TB-2s, subsequently augmented with Akinci prototypes, conducted operations in persistent ISR-strike loops

²⁹ Ulviyye Sanili Aydin. "The Eastern Mediterranean Energy Resources and Redetermination of Regional Balances: Türkiye's Position." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research and Development*, vol. 10, no. 1 S1, 2023, pp. 12–20.

³⁰ Sergey Ivanov. "Geopolitics of Energy Conflicts in the Mediterranean: A Contemporary Perspective." *Journal of Contemporary Security Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2021, pp. 72–83.



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against LNA supply lines. Ankara then used Koral electronic-attack units and ship-borne air-defence to jam radars early on to suppress TB-2 losses by mid-2020 from the initial heavy saddening to Pantsir-S1 systems.

- Integrated Air-Sea Fires - the delivery of Frigate surface-to-surface missiles via AEW&C aircraft (E-7T) targeting over Misrata forced the abandonment of open manoeuvre by Haftar armours west of Sirte.

- Turkish Human Shields and Proxy Manpower - 4,000-7,000 Syrian auxiliaries rotated through Tripoli under Turkish command, providing an instant infusion on the front-line, but with no politically-awkward Turkish infantry footprint.

This hybridisation nullified the Emirati-supplied LNA Wing Loong II drones and facilitated the May-June 2020 counter-offensive that broke the Tripoli siege, and retook the Watiya air-base and Tarhuna³¹.

FOURTH REQUIREMENT: ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS: ENERGY AND RECONSTRUCTION

Logic for Ankara What was behind that calculus was not just the exigencies of the battlefield but also prospects for hydrocarbons and infrastructure³²:

- Eastern Mediterranean gas - By claiming a contiguous EEZ with Libya, Turkey stakes a claim in the negotiation of trans-Med pipeline routes as well as possible joint exploration blocks off of Cyrenaica.

- Onshore Oilfield Services - The Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) has obtained preliminary survey permits in Murzuq and Ghadames basins, subject to stabilisation of the security situation.

- Reconstruction Contracting - Pre-war Turkish contractors (such as TAV, ENKA) filed \$\$ 2.9\$ billion in arbitration-related claims; the GNU-Ankara framework involves their renewal and new housing and hospital projects funded by Libya's sovereign wealth fund.

To protect these returns, Turkey was given long-term training missions inside Libya's defence institutions, and 2022-24 memoranda were negotiated granting drilling rights and port concessions at Khums and Misrata.

Turkey's intervention is, therefore, a multidimensional enterprise that combines maritime boundary engineering, experiments in remote warfare and geo-economic positioning³³. Chapter

³¹ Muhammad Amin, and Hammad Uddin. "The Role of Turkey in Libya: A Critical Analysis." *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2023, pp. 45–60.

³² Ulviyye Sanili Aydin. "The Eastern Mediterranean Energy Resources and Redetermination of Regional Balances: Türkiye's Position." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research and Development*, vol. 10, no. 1 S1, 2023, pp. 21–30.

³³ Ali Sarihan. "A New Theory of Military Behavior in the Arab Uprisings: 'Pro-State' and 'Pro-Regime'." *Journal of International Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2021, pp. 9–23.



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Four examines the manner in which this strategy has transformed Libya's internal balance of power, echoed through Eastern Mediterranean rivalries and influenced potential futures for Libya's stability.

**THE FOURTH TOPIC :
THE IMPLICATIONS OF TURKISH INTERVENTION IN LIBYA**

Turkish intervention in Libya, through UCAV, electronic-warfare units, and advisory teams, has shifted the internal balance of power by lifting the LNA siege in June 2020, halting Haftar's dominance, and establishing a bi-polar security map with a frozen front along the Sirte-Jufra axis, while entrenching militia rivalries and sustaining dual sovereignty via security and energy MOUs. Regionally, the 2019 EEZ memorandum redraws jurisdictional lines, vetoes competing infrastructure, prompts counter-balancing by UAE, Egypt, and Russia, and proliferates foreign presences complicating UNSMIL demilitarization. Future stability scenarios include escalatory re-armament and sabotage, stalemate with blockades and protests, or optimistic draw-downs tied to DDR, revenue-sharing, and unified reforms. Preferred pathways require coordinated sequencing of withdrawals, escrow accounts, and international safeguards to avert rigid splits.

**FIRST REQUIREMENT:
IMPACT ON THE INTERNAL BALANCE OF POWER**

UCAV and electronic-warfare units, alongside advisory teams deployed by Turkey, allowed forces based in Tripoli to lift the LNA siege in June 2020, bringing Haftar's drive for national dominance to a halt and replacing a near-monopoly of force with a bi-polar security map anchored in Misrata-Tripoli in the West and Benghazi-Marj in the East³⁴. The outcome is a frozen front along the Sirte-Jufra axis that neither side can breach for fear of Turkish airstrikes, in effect ossifying territorial bisection. Since Ankara provides training, pay, and, when needed, battlefield force multipliers directly to loyal brigade commanders, benefitting brigades—most blatantly the 444 Combat Brigade and the Stability Support Apparatus—have equipped themselves with brigade-scale heavy armor and positioned themselves outside of a common command structure³⁵. In contrast, non-aligned militias either shy away from Turkish support or develop counter-alliances with Egypt and the UAE, entrenching militia rivalry rather than demobilization. The GNU signed long-term security and energy MOUs with Ankara in 2022-24 to guarantee base access at al-Watiya and Misrata ports, but Tobruk's parliament has rejected such accords, claiming they pawn sovereignty; budget disputes over Turkish arms invoices have since deepened an economic divide between the Tripoli-based Central Bank and the rival

³⁴ Umut Korkut. "A Sea of Change in the MENA Region: External Interventions in Libya." *Insight Turkey*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2020, pp. 34–45.

³⁵ Engin Yüksel. "Turkey's Approach to Proxy War in the Middle East and North Africa." *Security and Defence Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2020, pp. 12–18.



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institution in Benghazi. In this sense, the Turkish presence indirectly sustains the dual-sovereignty dilemma of Libya.

SECOND REQUIREMENT:

REGIONAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND NORTH AFRICA

The November 2019 EEZ memorandum redraws the lines of jurisdiction on a diagonal Ankara-Derna corridor that cuts through both the Greek claims to south of Crete and the proposed EastMed gas-pipeline route³⁶. In attaching Libya's legal personality to its own continental shelf narration, Turkey has obtained a veto over competing infrastructure until and unless Athens and Cairo dovetail on re-negotiating delimitation, which has suspended pipeline final-investment decisions by the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum and held back European majors from offshore drilling in the vicinity of the contested blocks. Turkey's ascendancy prompted counterbalancing, as after 2020, the UAE and Egypt extended drone, SAM, and mercenary contracts with the LNA, while Russia secured an air-defense bastion at al-Jufra and a logistics hub in Tobruk, establishing a de-facto tripartite occupation by Turkey, Russia, and the UAE that the 5+5 Joint Military Commission has yet to unravel³⁷. The cumulative result is a proliferation of foreign flags on Libyan territory, which adds a layer of complexity to UNSMIL's timetable for demilitarization. While arms and provisions from Turkey aided allied forces in western Libya, their naval presence also disrupted historic trade routes along the Mediterranean coast; in Misrata's bustling port, logistical arrangements bypassed traditional powers to strengthen ties with the governments of Niger and Chad³⁸. This diversification of security partnerships suggested Ankara's enduring role in a region long influenced by France, while Algeria maintained a calculated approach, commending efforts to thwart General Haftar yet mindful of heightened Turkish involvement near its own borders.

THIRD REQUIREMENT:

FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR THE STABILITY OF LIBYA

Three potential trajectories outline Libya's future stability, each varying across key factors such as foreign forces withdrawal, energy governance, security sector reform, and elections and

³⁶ Elena Ivanova. "Energy Market Wars as a Factor of Military-Political Escalation in Eastern Mediterranean Region: A Russian Perspective." *Cogent Social Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2021, pp. 78–89.

³⁷ Jan Meier. "Game of Proxies: Towards a New Model of Warfare in North Africa." *Security and Defence Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2021, pp. 156–167.

³⁸ Mohamed Al-Rashid. "The Dynamics of Regional Intervention in North African Conflicts: A Comparative Analysis." *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2021, pp. 201–215.



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legitimacy. In an escalatory trajectory, parallel re-armament races and new mercenary waves characterize foreign forces withdrawal, east-west fights over port royalties ignite oil-field sabotage in energy governance, the LNA counter-offensive resumes with external air cover while Tripoli requests deeper Turkish involvement in security sector reform, and rival governments redeclare exclusive mandates that further fragment institutions in elections and legitimacy. Under a stalemate trajectory, symbolic rotations occur while core contingents stay for foreign forces withdrawal, continuing blockades serve as bargaining chips in energy governance, dual commands persist with militias retaining fiscal autonomy in security sector reform, and repeated postponements erode public trust leading to street protests in Tripoli and Benghazi for elections and legitimacy. In an optimistic trajectory, gradual Turkish and Russian draw-downs are tied to a monitored DDR process for foreign forces withdrawal, a revenue-sharing law is ratified with Turkish TPAO licenses recognized by both chambers in energy governance, unified Joint Chiefs integrate select brigades after Turkish-led training in security sector reform, and a constitutional referendum in 2026 paves the way for phased polls supervised by an AU-EU mission in elections and legitimacy.

FOURTH REQUIREMENT:

PREFERRED PATHWAYS

Coordinated sequencing is a must for the long-term resolution of conflicts: (1) schedules for withdrawing foreign troops should be fixed at the same time as reciprocal observation sites are established in both countries; (2) an escrow account to hold oil revenues should extend to cover wages of joint security forces; (3) international safeguards—maybe a small EU-AU stabilization force—need to be there as a deterrent against offensives by spoilers³⁹. Without such connections, however, the shield of security which Turkey holds over violence may bring about only a more rigid split.

Conclusion:

With the Turkish intervention in Libya, the North African theatre has turned into a multi-layered competition of local grievances in the context of regional rivalries, and global power calculations. In saving Tripoli's GNA from imminent collapse, Ankara not only ensured a maritime corridor that overhauls the Eastern Mediterranean energy geographic but entrench a new double-sovereignty status inside Libya, effectively freezing the conflict along the Sirte-Jufra line. Developments have seen this stalemate stabilised, offering civilians some temporary reprieve and reopening key infrastructure, whilst also embedding a militia economy in which those profiting from war and violence today often negotiate for foreign benefactors just as much as they do for peace or reconciliation tomorrow. The security mosaic that ensues—Turkish

³⁹ Ayman Hassan. "Libya's Political Settlement: Challenges and Prospects for Sustainable Peace." *Mediterranean Politics Quarterly*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2022, pp. 89–102.



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advisors and drones in the west, Russian contractors and Emirati air defences in the east—clouds any diplomatic effort, from cease-fire monitoring to arrangements for grand elections. The absence of a credible timetable connecting the pullout of foreign forces with revenue-sharing and the reintegration of the security sector runs the risk of pushing Libya nearer to de facto division — with hydrocarbons financing competing enclaves, and outside powers turning Libya into a field-test for expeditionary principles and proxies.

This means that, moving forward, no sustainable resolution will be able to happen without the simultaneous progress of three tracks. An escrow-based mechanism for oil revenues should, first, make their release conditional on concrete steps towards merging the Tripoli and Benghazi command structures, turning Libya's hydrocarbon bounty from a war chest to a peace dividend. Second, a simultaneous, phased, and verifiable withdrawal of Turkish, Russian, Emirati, and other foreign forces—safeguarded by a reinvigorated 5 + 5 Joint Military Commission and supplemented by UN Security Council guarantees—should take place concurrently with militia disarmament and reintegration so as to prevent strategic vacuums that might be filled by the spoiler. Third, elections should be framed in a setting of mutual recognition rather than victor's justice by placing the entire process in an inclusive constitutional order, separated from zero-sum militia logics by an expected international facilitation and regionally-balanced administrative oversight. Only such calibrated sequencing can enable Libya to escape from the frozen conflict status quo to a path where the original demands of its popular movement — dignity, accountability, and just development — are no longer subordinated to the priorities of external patrons but inform a sovereign, civilian-led transition.

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