

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST OVER THE LIBYAN CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF ARMENIA**

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The Arab Spring, a chain of anti-government protests and uprisings, had major implications throughout the Middle East region and it particularly affected oil-rich countries, including Libya. Libya is the largest holder of proven oil reserves in Africa (48 billion barrels). Before 2011, Libya's oil production averaged about 1.64 million barrels per day, about 96% of the government's revenue, which accounted for 60-65% of the country's GDP.<sup>2</sup> During the reign of Muammar Gaddafi, Libya's oil industry was run by the state-owned National Oil Corporation (NOC), which was responsible for implementing Exploration and Production Sharing Agreements (EPSA) with international oil companies (IOCs). Among these international oil companies were ENI (Italy), Total (France), Repsol (Spain), OMV (Austria) and Equinor (Norway).<sup>3</sup> Colonel Muammar Qaddafi was not considered to be a reliable partner for the above-mentioned international oil companies. He used to demand tough contract terms, frequently raised fees and taxes and made other restrictions. This policy was in stark contrast with the interests of foreign actors, especially a number of Mediterranean European states, which led to their active participation in Libyan politics with the desire to gain a greater share of oil production and increase their influence in Africa.

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<sup>2</sup> "Oil Production, Libya, Annual," US Energy Information Administration, [https://www.eia.gov/opendata/qb.php?category=1039874&sdid=STEO.COPR\\_LY.A](https://www.eia.gov/opendata/qb.php?category=1039874&sdid=STEO.COPR_LY.A), last accessed 8 August 2021.

<sup>3</sup> According to the International Energy Agency, over 85% of the country's oil and gas was exported to the European countries, while only 13% was exported to Asia. Libyan reserves of "sweet" crude oil can be used with very little refinement, making European and Asian markets heavily reliant on the high-quality crude coming from this country. This fact explains the involvement of foreign actors and their interest in the Libyan conflict. Italy in recent years has relied on Libya for more than 20% of its oil imports. And France, Switzerland, Ireland and Austria all depended on Libya for more than 15% of their imports before the fighting began.

The main struggle over Libya is for control over oil resources which are highly necessary for a number of external actors in order to ensure the dynamic development of their economies and strengthen their geopolitical position but which are also needed by regional actors to ensure their own security. From the point of view of global governance, each actor in this conflict is trying to implement its global agenda by having political control and a military presence in Libya.

The main aim of this study is to analyze the conflict of interests between local, regional and international actors over the Libyan issue, which, undoubtedly, affects the policy of these forces towards our region, and to understand how these developments in a country “far from” Armenia can influence the Republic of Armenia’s national security and foreign policies.

### **Internal actors**

Since 2014, Libya’s political landscape has been divided between the two main parties to the conflict: the **Libyan National Army (LNA)**, based in Tobruk and the **Government of National Accord (GNA)** based in Tripoli. Each of these two conflicting parties has its own government, parliament, armed forces, central bank and national oil company.

Eastern Libya is under the control of the Libyan National Army (Arab Libyan Armed Forces) and the other groups allied with it. The LNA, led by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, controls the oil crescent areas on the Mediterranean coast and the largest share of the oilfields (Amal, Sharara, Farigh, Zelten, Sarir, Messla and Nafoora), the production share of which is estimated at 900,000 barrels per day. Five (Sidra, Ras Lanuf, Zueitina, Brega, Harika) of Libya’s six major oil ports are also under the control of the Libyan National Army.

The forces of the Government of National Accord, led by Fayez al-Sarraj, control western Libya, which is not rich in oilfields but contains the ports of Misrata, Zliten, Tripoli and Zawiya, in addition to a number of refineries that depend on the flow of oil from fields in the west.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> Libya Political Agreement, Skhirat, 17 December 2015, <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/Libyan%20Political%20Agreement%20-%20ENG%20.pdf>, last accessed 2 June 2020.

Government of National Accord in Tripoli and the Presidential Council were formed under the terms of the Libyan Political Agreement signed on 17 December 2015 in Skhirat, Morocco. Under the terms of this agreement, the functions of the country's legislature were to be performed by the House of Representatives, which was elected in 2014. The House of Representatives in Tobruk led by Aguilah Saleh, however, supports the Libyan National Army, which controls the eastern part of the country.

Another important internal actor in the Libyan conflict is the **National Oil Corporation**. Libya's oil extraction and export processes are under the supervision of this organization, which was established in 1970 to replace the general Libyan Petroleum Corporation (1968). After the nationalization of foreign oil companies in Libya in 1973, Libya's oil production fell sharply from an unprecedented level of three million barrels per day in 1970 to about one million barrels per day in the 1980s. Libya's relatively stable period of hydrocarbon production and export started only in the 2000s, after UN, U.S. and EU sanctions on Libya were lifted and investments by foreign companies increased. Among these investment projects are the implementation of the West Libya Gas Project and the construction of the 520 km Green Stream gas pipeline from Mellitah to Gela in Sicily, operated by a joint venture between Eni and the NOC. Libya's gas production more than doubled during the 2000s, from an average of 6.0 bcm in 2000–2004 to 13.6 bcm in 2005–2010.<sup>5</sup>

The political and security instability in Libya since 2011 has caused great obstacles for the normal operation of this organization. In January 2012, production was mostly restored after a temporary halt in the oil industry due to the armed conflict in Libya. However, this was a short-lived restoration because of the subsequent reactivation of the struggle between armed groups and violence and insecurity in the country, which also resulted in the targeting of oil production terminals.

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<sup>5</sup> "Oil and Gas in a New Libyan Era: Conflict and Continuity," The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, February 2019, <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Oil-and-Gas-in-a-New-Libyan-Era-Conflict-and-Continuity-MEP-22.pdf>, last accessed 4 July 2020.

The Libyan conflict was also accompanied by the activation of the Islamic factor though it did not gain as much momentum here as in Syria and Iraq. Among the Islamic extremist groups operating in the country are the Islamic State, Ansar al-Sharia and the Shura Council of the Benghazi Revolutionaries.

### **External actors**

The foreign actors involved in the Libyan conflict are pursuing their specific interests in the country in the economic, political, military, security, ideological and other dimensions. After the ouster of Muammar Gaddafi by NATO intervention in 2011, foreign actors quickly became more involved in Libyan developments, providing financial, military and political assistance to local players. However, this does not mean that foreign actors have gained full political control over the actions of local players.

### **European countries**

For the EU's Mediterranean member-states, Libya is a country within a region of vital interest to them. Libya is strategically important for European security, especially for the mitigation of migration flows and crises and for providing stability to the entire Mediterranean Sea. Control over Libya means re-controlling and addressing potential threats and challenges to Southern Europe.

The EU member states have conflicting interests towards Libya and these interests are mainly conditioned by the need to secure their oil investments in the country. The Italian ENI (considered to be the biggest foreign company in Libya), the French Total and the German Wintershall have been operating in the country since the 1950s. As for the other company, Spain's Repsol, its first exploration and production activities in Libya date back to the early 1970s. The above-mentioned companies have continued to build their presence in Libya despite the tense political situation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In October 2018, ENI signed a letter of intent (LOI) with the Libyan National Oil Corporation and BP, which set in motion the process of assigning a 42.5% interest to ENI and BP's EPSA operatorship in Libya, with the aim of re-launching exploration and development

Italy has played a key role in Libya both before 2011 and throughout the Libyan crisis thanks to its huge interests in the country and its dependence on Libyan oil and gas resources, as well as due to migration and security issues. The main representative of the Italian capital in Libya is ENI, which is the leading foreign energy operator in Libya and responsible for 45% of Libyan oil and gas production. Although ENI is considered a private company, about one third of ENI's shares (30.33%) is under the control of Italy's Treasury Department. Thus, it is clear the activities of this company in Libya reflect the geopolitical needs of Italy. The main investments of ENI in Libya are concentrated in the western Tripolitania region (ENI being a 50% shareholder in the Western Libya Gas Project), and the country has naturally been supporting the western authorities of Libya although since 2020 it has also pursued a policy of openness to all conflicting parties.

Italy and France are pursuing a policy of counterbalancing each other's influence, which is manifested by their support to the different conflicting parties in Libya. France has huge investments in North Africa and its role in Libya is also outlined in the need to secure its capital. The competition between Italy and France over expanding their influence in North Africa dates back to the nineteenth century. Nowadays, the French Total and Italian ENI see each other as a major threat to their respective operations in Libya's oil industry. Unlike Italy, France provided military support to the country's eastern authorities during the Libyan crisis, believing that they would better resist armed groups and terrorists, thus securing French interests.

The other European state involved in the Libyan conflict, Germany, conducts a more neutral policy towards the conflicting parties in the country.

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activities and promoting favorable conditions for investment in Libya. In 2019, Total and the National Oil Corporation (NOC), with the agreement of the Libyan government, signed an agreement to implement Total's participation in the Waha concessions, located in the Sirte Basin in Libya. See "Eni, BP and NOC sign deal to resume Libyan exploration," Eni, 8 October 2018, <https://www.eni.com/en-IT/media/press-release/2018/10/eni-bp-and-noc-sign-deal-to-resume-libyan-exploration.html>, last accessed 27 July 2022 and "Libya: Agreement Between NOC and Total Endorsing the Group's Entry into the Waha Concessions," TotalEnergies, 12 October 2019, <https://totalenergies.com/media/news/press-releases/libya-agreement-between-noc-and-total-endorsing-groups-entry-waha-concessions>, last accessed 6 April 2021.

For its part, Germany has an obvious economic interest in ensuring stability in the country and protecting its ports. The German company Wintershall has an investment of approximately US\$2 billion in exploration and production in Libya. The role of Germany as a mediator for the peaceful resolution of the conflict was manifested in the initiation of the Berlin process, which led to the organization of the first Berlin Conference on Libya in January 2020 and the second in June 2021. This process led to some positive yet fragile changes in the country, as a new interim unity government was elected.

The policy of European countries towards Libya in general should be considered within the context of competition for influence in North Africa and can be characterized by the lack of a common agenda, which has allowed other international actors to become more actively involved in this conflict.

### **The United States**

The United States played an important role in NATO's intervention in Libya, which supported anti-Gaddafi rebels. Soon after the attack on the U.S. liaison office in Benghazi, the U.S. mission in Libya relocated to Tunis. Since then, the United States has taken a relatively passive role in Libya and has not invested sufficiently in post-conflict stabilization. Even if the United States' diplomatic engagement with Libya's major political players continued, during the subsequent years of the ongoing Libyan conflict, U.S. policy towards Libya was mainly anchored on counter-terrorism actions. This policy was especially noticeable during the Trump presidency, as Trump did not signal any willingness to be engaged in the Libyan conflict. Due to American inactivity in Libya and the lack of any common EU policy towards Libya, other actors, including Russia and Turkey, have pursued their interests in the country.

### **Russia and Turkey as the major external forces in Libya: cooperation or competition?**

Turkey and Russia are now the most highly interested and involved external actors in the Libyan conflict. The two countries have experience with intervening in regional conflicts and cooperating with each other in the context of such intervention, as we have seen in Syria followed by Libya and,

finally, Artsakh. The dynamics of the relations of the two countries have gradually changed within the context of the above-mentioned conflicts.

Turkey and Russia pursue different policies towards the Middle East region, including Libya, based on their historical backgrounds and national interests and priorities. Both countries consider the Libyan crisis, on a larger scale, as part of geopolitical rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean.

## **Turkey**

Turkey has deep-rooted relations with Libya. Until 1912, Libya was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, Turkey still considers Libya a country within its sphere of influence. Turkey's motivation to intervene in the Libyan conflict can be represented by its interest in three dimensions: economic pretensions, geopolitical interests and ideological ambitions. Turkey, being highly dependent on energy imports, aims to become the region's main energy trading hub, using its market and geostrategic position to increase its presence in the Mediterranean basin. These drivers forced Turkey, which has been present in Libya from the very beginning of the crisis, to show more active participation, especially over the last two years. Turkey's ambitions include becoming a regional energy trade center, diversifying supplies, and gradually achieving more or less full control over regional hydrocarbons infrastructure. It should be noted that a number of pipelines transporting oil and gas to European markets pass through Turkey, which plays an important role in energy relations between Russia, Europe and the Middle East.

The close trade and economic relations between Turkey and Libya were established in the 1970s and 1980s through numerous joint agreements as a result of which Turkey gained a significant stake in Libya's construction industry. According to the data from 1972-2010, 19% of Turkish contractors' businesses were concentrated in Libya. According to the Turkish minister of commerce in 2011, Zafer Çağlayan, after the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi, Turkish companies in Libya had projects worth about US\$15.3 billion. (Two hundred Turkish firms were carrying out more than 214 projects at over one hundred construction sites.)

Those businesses indeed suffered huge losses due to the political crisis in Libya. Both Turkey and Libya are now interested in the speedy resumption

of their joint projects. In order to strengthen bilateral relations and create sufficient opportunities for Turkish companies to complete their half-finished projects, the Turkish-Libyan Joint Working Group organized a meeting on 31 January 2019 in Libya that was attended by Turkey's minister of commerce and the LNA's minister of planning. Participation in post-crisis reconstruction work in Libya is also considered by Turkey as a good business opportunity for its construction companies.

During the Libyan crisis, Turkey paid special attention to ensuring the smooth operation of its diplomatic missions in the country. Turkey welcomed the signing of the Libya Political Agreement on 17 December 2015, which was also attended by Turkish Foreign Minister M. Çavuşoğlu. In the years following the signing of the agreement, Turkey supported the government of the Libyan National Accord, which was reinforced by regular meetings of high-ranking Turkish officials and Fayed Saraj, the president of the Libyan Presidential Council.

Turkey has signed two important documents with Libya's western authorities over the last two years. On 27 November 2019, Turkey signed a maritime agreement with the Libyan Government of National Accord delimitating maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean. Libya's internationally recognized government in Tripoli had previously declined to consider this document several times. This memorandum, which makes Libya and Turkey neighbors as far as their coastal zones and establishes the borders of the continental shelf and an exclusive economic zone (EEZ), was sharply criticized by Egypt, Greece and Southern Cyprus. The issue was later discussed at a NATO meeting in London with the participation of the representatives of France, Germany and the United Kingdom.<sup>7</sup> Turkey is

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<sup>7</sup> The Greek side claims that the memorandum violates the UN law on the sea, as Libya and Turkey do not have a sea zone and there are no maritime borders between the two countries. The borders set out in the new agreement intersect in the continental shelf of the southern Mediterranean, particularly in the islands of Crete, while the Turkish authorities do not accept the declaration of the exclusive economic zone of Crete. One of the important points in the agreement, however, is that "In case there are natural resources extending from the EEZ of one party to the EEZ of the other, the two Parties could cooperate in order to reach an agreement on the modalities of the exploitation of such resources." See: "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of National Accord-State of Libya On Delimitation of the Marine Jurisdiction Areas in the



deeply concerned about the cooperation of a number of actors in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Greece, Egypt, Israel and Cyprus, in the energy and security spheres and is trying to take more proactive steps in Libya to thwart their plans. The establishment of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum in 2020, from which Turkey was excluded, is an example of successful cooperation between these countries.

Another important document is the military and security agreement on the basis of which the Turkish Parliament approved a one-year military intervention in Libya on 2 January 2020 and officially deployed its troops in the country. With the active participation of Turkish forces, the Libyan Government of National Accord was able to push the Libyan National Army back from the outskirts of Tripoli. Thousands of Syrian mercenaries who were previously relocated by Turkey remain in Libya today and have become an instrument of Turkey's foreign policy goals. The Turkish military presence in Libya is a mirror image of the Russian presence in Syria, as both countries justify their presence through being invited by the legitimate government.

In Libya, we are also witnessing the rivalry of two major Sunni civilization programs in the religious, political and ideological spheres: the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis. The biggest regional supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood is Turkey, with which the Muslim Brotherhood has been cooperating since the end of Ataturk's rule, after the Democratic Party came to power. In 1969, Nejmeddin Erbakan founded the Turkish branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. This fast-growing network has spread to Sudan, Libya and elsewhere.

## **Russia**

Russia-Libya relations are inherited from USSR-Libya relations. The Soviet Union was trying to expand its presence in Libya in order to improve its geostrategic positioning and spread its political influence in the

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Mediterranean," signed 27 November 2019, United Nations, [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/TREATIES/Turkey\\_11122019\\_\(HC\)\\_MoU\\_Libya-Delimitation-areas-Mediterranean.pdf](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/TREATIES/Turkey_11122019_(HC)_MoU_Libya-Delimitation-areas-Mediterranean.pdf), last accessed 14 March 2021.

Mediterranean basin. USSR-Libya economic relations strengthened after Gaddafi came to power, particularly during the second half of the 1970s. The bilateral relations were not limited to trade-economic ties but also had a certain nature of political-military cooperation with the purchase of Soviet arms and ammunition by the Libyan side. Libya acquired heavy industrial products from the USSR, and a number of Soviet engineers and instructors worked under bilateral agreements to build missile bases in Libya.<sup>8</sup>

The USSR was trying to confront the Western powers with its presence in the Mediterranean and take part in the political issues of North Africa and the Middle East. Soviet naval diplomacy sought to gain access to Libyan port facilities, which would not only enable the country to strengthen its position in the region but also to control the navies of other countries, especially the United States. During Vladimir Putin's visit to Libya in 2008, Libya's debt of about US\$5 billion to the USSR was canceled. The two countries signed contracts worth US\$10 billion including arms sales and the construction of a 550 km railway between Sirte and Benghazi.

“Strengthening Russia's position as one of the most influential centers of the modern world” is listed in the Russian Foreign Policy Concept (2016) between the country's security interests and strategic priorities. To this end, Russia finds it also necessary to strengthen its presence in the areas of the Three Seas region, considering NATO's numerous anchors in the same region. Today, the only Russian military base in the Mediterranean is located in Syria, and Russia does not have much leverage over the Mediterranean basin states. The Libyan crisis has allowed Russia to once again remind the world of its role as a center of influence in the modern world and to promote its own visions of international peace, security and stability as enshrined in the country's foreign policy concept.

Russia has been working with all of the political forces in Libya to help them come to an agreement. Thus, Russia maintained relations with the internationally recognized Tripoli government led by Fayeze al-Saraj while actually supporting Haftar and being one of LNA's committed allies. Russia

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<sup>8</sup> Ronald Bruce St John, “The Soviet Penetration of Libya,” Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The World Today* 38, no. 4 (April 1982):136-137, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40395373>, last accessed 6 February 2021.

attaches great importance to the House of Representatives and its speaker, Aquila Saleh, as it is considered to be a legitimate body elected in Libya.

Russia has been repeatedly accused of having not only a geopolitical but also a military presence in Libya, particularly of deploying foreign mercenaries in the country. In the UN Libya Sanctions Committee report released in May 2020, the United Nations first expressed concern over the presence of 1,200 Wagner Group militants in Libya (since 2018). At the beginning of the year, the Russian president stated at a joint press conference with Angela Merkel that “if there are Russian citizens in Libya, they do not represent the interests of the Russian state and they do not receive funding from Russia.” For a number of local and regional actors, the Russian military involvement is important in Libya as a countervailing force to Turkey’s increasing military role in the country.

Another important issue in Libya is the migration flows. Libya, particularly its Fezzan region, is a hub for Libyan as well as sub-Saharan African migrants to cross the Central Mediterranean into Europe. Most of the illegal immigrants to Libya are from Niger and Chad but some are from Algeria, in total numbering about 150,000 each year. By strengthening its position as a guarantor of peace in Libya, Russia will have some leverage over the flow of migrants and it can use this situation in its relations with EU countries. The issue of migrants can also become a trump card in the hands of Turkey, experience in which the latter has already gained by raising the issue of immigrants from Syria from time to time.

Russia is cooperating in Libya with Algeria, which of the regional Arab states has a relatively large Russian influence, and Egypt, which has entered a new phase of relations since 2014. This policy of Russia suggests that the latter has assumed the most advantageous position—the guarantor of security in the Libyan conflict and the mediator of the conflict settlement.

As a part of Russia’s mediation mission, Russian President Vladimir Putin, along with the Turkish President Recep Erdoğan, called for a ceasefire in Libya in January 2020. But their attempts to broker a peace process in the country failed because Khalifa Haftar refused to sign the agreement.

Thus, the developments in Syria, Libya and Artsakh have brought Russia-Turkey cooperation closer and more interconnected in different

dimensions. In particular, Turkey is purchasing S400 missile systems from Russia and a deal has been signed for a natural gas pipeline project (TurkStream) to export gas from Russia to Europe via Turkey. However, it should be remembered that, in all regional conflicts, Russia and Turkey are on different sides of the table. At present, the relations between the two countries are somewhat balanced due to their interdependencies. However, this is gradually changing; for example, in the energy field, Turkey imported more than 50% of its natural gas from Russia in 2017 but only 33% in 2020.

Russia's interest in the region can also be explained by its budgetary needs. The relatively cheap Libyan gas could also be an alternative for the European market, which relies mainly on Russian gas, and that, of course, would not be in Russia's economic interests. By establishing control over the Libyan oil and gas reserves, Russia can play a major role in dictating the pricing policy and organization of this market in the future.

### **Arab countries**

Like the EU countries, the Arab countries do not have a common agenda for resolving the Libyan conflict either. Among the Arab countries, the Libyan crisis has mostly affected Libya's neighbors—Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia. Egypt has tried to position itself as a regional power broker considering the importance of a secure and economically stable Libya for the country. The two countries share over seven hundred miles of desert border where different tribes are engaged in smuggling activities that present a big security challenge to Egypt. Egypt has mainly supported Haftar and provided military and logistical support to him since 2014, believing that this could help to provide border security and prevent weapons smuggling without direct intervention in Libya.

Egypt's main concerns here are to secure its western borders, to prevent the coming to power of Islamic forces in the country and to stop Turkey from strengthening its position in North Africa with its presence in Libya. To this end, Egypt is cooperating with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

In the last decade, the Gulf countries, especially the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, have become more involved in international affairs and regional developments, which has also been evident in Libya. Initially

providing political support for the international intervention in Libya, these forces later provided operational, financial and material assistance to Libya's conflicting parties. Qatar is more inclined to defend the country's western authorities, thus falling into the same camp with Turkey, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with their anti-Muslim Brotherhood agenda, support the eastern authorities of the country and cooperate with Egypt. Despite being in different camps, all the Gulf countries are highly interested in stabilizing Libya in order to continue their development programs in the country.

### **The Libyan crisis and Armenia**

Due to the change of the meaning of the term "region" and considering that every small region is now connected with almost the whole world, we can state that even countries located relatively far from Libya also bear the effects of the developments there. There have been no special relations between Armenia and Libya since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Despite there being no Armenian presence in Libya, no Armenian organizations there and no partners with a pro-Armenian position, in December 2019 Libya's eastern interim government decided to declare April 24th as a National Day of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of this government issued a statement on 24 April 2020 which called on countries around the world to recognize and remember this crime. The statement targeted Turkey and its blatant illegal interference in the internal affairs of different countries. It is clear that the Armenian Genocide in this case was a tool in the hands of the Libyan interim government used to impose pressure on Turkey. From the very beginning of the conflict, the Armenian side did not comment on the developments in Libya at the level of the Foreign Ministry. The first remark on the issue was on 8 June 2020, when the Armenian Foreign Ministry Spokesman welcomed the initiative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to declare a ceasefire and start a political dialogue between the conflicting parties. This statement was a clear indication that Armenia is interested in seeing regional cooperation, peaceful coexistence and stability.

The deployment of mercenaries and terrorists by Turkey to Nagorno-Karabakh during the 2020 Artsakh War once again proved that Armenia

could not stay out of the wider processes in the Three Seas region. The agreements and competitive cooperation between Russia and Turkey in the context of regional conflicts might also be accompanied by mutual concessions in some areas, which could directly affect our security issues.

### **Libya's fragile peace: the mines under the new agreement**

After nearly ten years of struggle, on 15 March 2021, Libya's conflicting parties formed a unified interim government headed by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dabaiba. This followed the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the warring parties on 20 October 2020. Later, in February 2021, the UN-backed Libyan Political Dialogue Forum nominated Abdulhamid Dabaiba as a Prime Minister and Mohamed Mnefi to head the Presidential Council. Despite the formation of the National Unity Government, the country remains split not only geographically but also politically. The new government should organize elections by the end of 2021 and reunify the country's different state institutions, including the armed forces and Central Bank.

Organizing all this, in fact, requires great efforts if we take into account that even the scope of the elections is unknown, that is to say, whether the country will choose the parliamentary or presidential elections. Another important problem is the one related to the position of supreme commander of the armed forces. According to the UN-backed roadmap, a three-person Presidential Council is considered to be the "commander" of the armed forces, yet this is not ratified by the parliament, which means that the Libyan authorities now need to define the legal ground for implementation of the ceasefire agreement. This must be done as soon as possible to ensure the country's peaceful transition; otherwise, the situation on the ground could change under the influence of external actors and this could lead to the resumption of hostilities.

- The Libyan crisis can be described as a struggle between various internal and external actors for control over the country's main oil and gas resources. Here, we witness the clash of interests of local, regional and international actors in several dimensions: ideological, economic,

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geopolitical and military. The rivalry between the two Sunni models, the Salafi Movement and Muslim Brotherhood, and the civilization programs enshrined in them, is also evident in the Libyan conflict.

- Since 2011, the Libyan conflict has been accompanied by a political, security and economic crisis, as a result of which both ordinary citizens suffer and state institutions gradually weaken and cease to function effectively.

- The key to resolving the Libyan conflict is understandably not in the hands of one force. Thus, the states involved here find difficulties in reaching a mutually beneficial agreement.

- The ceasefire in Libya and the formation of an interim government of national unity does not mean a complete transition to peace in the country, considering the fact that foreign mercenaries remain there and the prospect of new elections remains bleak.

- In the context of regional conflicts, including the Libyan crisis, Turkish-Russian relations can be described through the logic of one of the laws of dialectics—unity and the struggle of opposites.

- For Russia, participation in the Libyan conflict is an opportunity to expand its influence in the Mediterranean and to counterbalance the influence of the West.

- Turkey-Russia relations are unlikely to deteriorate in Libya, considering their interconnected/interdependent levers in other regional issues.

- Armenia cannot stay out of the regional developments. Thus, it must be vigilant and actively respond to the realignment of the forces in the region in order to safeguard its vital interests.