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LIBYA AFTER GADDAFI: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract
This paper explores the multifaceted challenges that have plagued Libya since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. It analyses the country's descent into political fragmentation, armed conflict, and institutional collapse, while assessing the role of internal divisions, regional actors, and international interventions in shaping Libya's post-revolution trajectory. Drawing on a wide range of academic literature, policy reports, and recent developments, the study examines key themes such as governance crises, foreign interference, proxy warfare, humanitarian issues, and the struggle for national reconciliation. The analysis finds that Libya's turmoil is not merely a result of domestic rivalries but also a product of overlapping geopolitical agendas. The paper concludes that a sustainable resolution requires a coherent international approach, inclusive political dialogue, and robust support for state-building mechanisms. This study contributes to understanding the complexities of post-conflict reconstruction in deeply divided societies and highlights the urgent need for a unified strategy to stabilise Libya's future.

INTRODUCTION

"I will die here with the glory of Libya." These defiant words, reportedly uttered by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi moments before his death in October 2011, encapsulate not only the personality of the man but the complex legacy of the regime he built over four decades. For many, Gaddafi was a brutal authoritarian who crushed dissent and monopolized power. Yet for others, especially in hindsight, his rule represented a period of national unity, infrastructural development, and relative stability that contrasts starkly with the fragmentation and chaos that engulfed Libya after his fall.

Gaddafi came to power in 1969 through a bloodless coup that ended the monarchy of King Idris I. He quickly abolished the constitution, closed foreign military bases, and introduced a new political philosophy rooted in Arab nationalism, socialism, and what he termed "direct democracy," as outlined in his *Green Book* (Vandewalle, 2012). Under his rule, Libya evolved into a rentier state, heavily reliant on its vast oil wealth, which constituted over 95% of export earnings (El-Katiri, 2012). Gaddafi used this revenue to fund education, healthcare, and infrastructure projects, raising Libya's Human Development Index substantially by the early 2000s.

However, Gaddafi's governance model was deeply centralized and personalized. He deliberately dismantled formal state institutions to prevent

potential rivals from gaining power. Civil society was stifled, political parties banned, and opposition brutally suppressed through an extensive security apparatus (Lacher, 2020). Libya had no functioning parliament, judiciary, or constitutionally grounded political framework. In effect, the state was an extension of Gaddafi's will, and dissent equated to treason. Nonetheless, the very authoritarian structures that limited personal freedoms also maintained territorial integrity and contained tribal rivalries.

Despite criticisms, Gaddafi's Libya was relatively stable in regional terms. It was one of the few countries in Africa with free healthcare and education. Literacy rates rose from 25% in 1969 to over 80% by 2010, and infrastructure such as the Great Man-Made River Project demonstrated ambitious, albeit controversial, state-led development (Wehrey, 2019). The regime's ability to provide social services, combined with high oil revenues, helped maintain a level of public quiescence. Moreover, Libya's foreign policy, though erratic and often confrontational, positioned it as a significant player in both Arab and African geopolitics.

The 2011 uprising, sparked by the Arab Spring and influenced by regime collapses in Tunisia and Egypt, opened the floodgates of political change in Libya. Initially, the protests called for reforms, more transparency, political inclusion, and jobs. Yet the regime's violent crackdown escalated the situation into a full-blown civil conflict. The international community, under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, intervened militarily with NATO airstrikes under the pretext of preventing a humanitarian disaster in Benghazi. By October, Gaddafi was captured and killed in his hometown of Sirte (United Nations, 2011).

Rather than ushering in a new democratic era, the fall of Gaddafi dismantled the last remaining threads holding Libya together. The post-Gaddafi period was characterized by a rapid descent into political fragmentation, armed conflict, and institutional collapse. The National Transitional Council (NTC), which assumed power after Gaddafi's fall, was bereft of institutional legitimacy and administrative capacity. It failed to disarm the hundreds of militias that had formed during the revolution, groups often aligned along tribal, regional, or ideological lines (Lacher, 2020). This failure proved catastrophic. Without a centralized force to restore order, Libya slipped into a security vacuum filled by competing warlords, armed groups, and foreign proxies.

Unlike in Tunisia, where civil society helped steer a post-revolutionary transition, Libya had no comparable institutions. Gaddafi's legacy of political atomization meant that no credible opposition could step into the vacuum. The country's state apparatus had been so thoroughly personalized that its collapse led to total administrative paralysis. Elections held in 2012 did little to solve these issues, and by 2014, rival governments emerged, one based in Tripoli and the other in Tobruk, signaling the beginning of Libya's second civil war (El-Katiri, 2012; International Crisis Group, 2023).

Libya's geography and resource wealth further complicated matters. With the largest proven oil reserves in Africa, control over Libya's oil infrastructure became a key objective for militias and external powers alike. Various factions vied for access to revenue streams from oil exports, often using blockades or sabotage as leverage. Meanwhile, Libya's porous borders and strategic Mediterranean coastline turned the country into a hub for human trafficking, arms smuggling, and jihadist infiltration, affecting security in the Sahel and beyond (Zoubir & Rózsa, 2018).

Adding to the complexity was the scale of foreign intervention. Egypt, the UAE, and Russia threw their support behind General Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army (LNA), viewing him as a bulwark against Islamist groups. On the other side, Turkey and Qatar supported the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli. The result was a proxy war that made any meaningful national dialogue nearly impossible. Attempts at peacebuilding, including the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement and the 2020 ceasefire, have repeatedly broken down under the weight of foreign interests and local power struggles (Kausch, 2020; UNSMIL, 2021).

The contrast between the pre- and post-Gaddafi eras is stark. While Gaddafi's rule was undeniably authoritarian, the state retained territorial integrity, basic service provision, and a degree of international agency. In contrast, the post-Gaddafi landscape has been defined by statelessness, militia rule,

humanitarian catastrophe, and endless political deadlock. As Belloni and Petrovic (2019) argue, the international peacebuilding model often applied to Libya has failed to account for the country's unique political culture and historical grievances, instead imposing top-down frameworks unsuited to local realities.

The Libyan case thus raises important questions about regime change, state-building, and foreign intervention. What happens when a dictator is removed without a clear plan for transition? Who bears responsibility for post-conflict reconstruction? And how can a country fractured along tribal, regional, and ideological lines rebuild itself?

This study aims to examine Libya's post-Gaddafi trajectory through the lens of three guiding questions: What has Libya become in the wake of regime collapse? Is the country moving toward stabilization or deeper fragmentation? And what roles have both domestic and international actors played in shaping its current state? These questions are critical not only for understanding Libya but also for informing broader debates on post-conflict governance and the unintended consequences of externally driven regime change.

Literature Review

The overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 caused a deep rupture in the political trajectory of Libya, and has led to a large literature in both academic and policy-oriented fields about the political transition following the fall of Gaddafi. A wide range of scholars, international institutions, and think tanks have analyzed different aspects of Libya's collapse, state failure, armed group proliferation, foreign intervention and the challenges of peacebuilding to name a few. This literature review synthesizes the key themes and scholarly viewpoints that help in understanding the post-2011 Libya crisis.

The fragility of Libyan state institutions after Gaddafi's fall is one of the most consistently emphasized themes in the literature. As Vandewalle (2012) puts it, "The Gaddafi regime was extremely personalized and centralized and succeeded in hollowing out institutions to resist opposition." Thus, when the regime did collapse, there was no institutional legacy to inherit or reorganize. In agreement, El-Katiri (2012) adds, Libya had no constitution or working state structures able to manage a democratic transition. This institutional vacuum allowed armed groups (rather than the state) to assume the dominant role of political and security actor.

Lacher (2020,) gives a careful structural analysis showing that Libya's fragmentation was, in fact, not accidental, but due to the National Transitional Council's failure to disarm militias and establish a monopoly over violence. Stretched thin, ill-trained and poorly armed, as hundreds of revolutionary brigades refused to disarm they found themselves entrenched in Libya's political economy and acquired legitimacy without effective state control. Chivvis and Martini (2014) explain that the idea that Libya would stabilize on its own without a substantial international stabilization effort was deeply misguided.

The spread of armed groups is at the heart of studies of post-2011 Libya. These groups differ widely in origin, ideology, tribal affiliation and foreign patronage. Scholars (Wehrey, 2019) have thus characterized Libya's security landscape as "hybrid," where informal militias and revolutionary brigades coexisted, often uneasily, with formal state institutions. These actors have established territorial control, regulated resources and provided parallel or competing authority to the central government.

Part of literature is focused on the struggle of the GNA based in Tripoli against the general Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army based in east of the country. Per Toaldo (2016), international actors' premature recognition of the GNA without gaining buy-in from rival factions only served to further polarize Libya's political field. Since 2014, Haftar's military campaigns, notably the siege of Tripoli (2019–2020), have been extensively analyzed as key moments of militarization and peace failures (Faleg, 2020).

More recently, researchers have sought to scrutinize the security vacuum's role in empowering terrorist groups. A case in point is the emergence of the Islamic State in Libya, specifically in Sirte in 2015–2016. The lawlessness in the failed state of Libya was utilized by ISIS eshliving there (Gartenstein-Ross & Barr, 2016). They established a foothold in the country, pulling foreign fighters through Libya via a foothold and attacking oil and civilian targets. And

though ISIS has been territorially defeated, its remnants remain active in the south, underscoring Libya's persistent security weaknesses.

The political schism after 2014, with rival governments in the east and west, has dominated analysis. Describing Libya's post-Gaddafi political landscape as a "Faustian bargain,". Mezran and Eljarh (2014) have argued that international actors placed short-term stability over inclusive political processes. The establishment of the GNA in 2015 with the UN-backed Libyan Political Agreement was viewed as a potential breakthrough. But the agreement had no internal legitimacy (Badi 2019), and it was also vitiated by the existence of local power centre, tribal affinities, and foreign powers that armed their proxies.

An increasing amount of literature has interrogated the international community's role in deepening, rather than containing, Libya's schisms. Barfi (2014) argues how top-down governance models failed to acknowledge local facts and historical grievances. On a similar note, Megerisi (2020) argues that international peace initiatives often proceed from the premise of a singular Libyan identity, as if the country is not cleaved apart, on tribal, regional, and ideological lines.

A second major focus of the literature has been on foreign intervention in Libya, particularly post-2014. The perceived proxy nature of the conflict has drawn significant foreign focus, most notably with countries like Egypt, UAE, Russia, and France backing Haftar, and Turkey and Qatar backing the GNA and then GNU post-election. Libya has become a case study, writes Eaton (2020), of "proxy war," in which foreign military supplies, drones and mercenaries have greatly increased the intensity and duration of the conflict.

The participation of Russian Wagner Group mercenaries and Turkish troops highlights just how internationalized Libya's war has become. The United Nations Panel of Experts has reported numerous violations of the arms embargo on Libya (2021) and with very limited enforcement. According to analysts like Lounnas (2021), this intervention of foreign powers has transformed Libya into a geopolitical theatre, eroding its sovereignty, and rendering negotiated peace exponentially more difficult.

A more recent literature studies foreign intervention and economic interests. The seizure of oil terminals, for instance, has allowed foreign-backed militias to wield leverage. While Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) tries to keep neutral, armed groups are blocking or using oil exports for political objectives (Eljarh, 2023). The blending of political and economic conflict means that Libya's civil war isn't only about who gets to govern, but also about who gets to control the resources.

Libya's economy, reliant on hydrocarbons, has been one of the major casualties of the post-2011 turmoil. The oil infrastructure was severely damaged and suffered from blockades, which mrp in oil production from 1.6 million barrels per day in 2010 to as low as 200,000 in 2016 (World Bank, 2021). While production has partially rebounded, it is still at the mercy of political developments and militia control.

Libya's economy is characterized by currency instability, dual exchange rates, high unemployment and an unsustainable public sector wage bill (International Monetary Fund, 2023). Public services like electricity, water and health care have deteriorated drastically, particularly in conflict zones. Human rights concerns about internally displaced persons and migrants trapped in detention facilities or subjected to trafficking networks have been documented by human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic compounded these challenges. Libya's fractured governance institutions resulted in patchwork public health responses and uneven vaccine availability. As noted by the United Nations Development Programme (2022), decades of conflict had left Libya's healthcare sector in tatters, most of the population vulnerable.

There is copious academic literature analyzing that international peacebuilding architecture that has sought to stabilize Libya. Many points to the Berlin Conference on Libya (2020), the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF), and the UN ceasefire agreement in October 2020 as turning points. Yet, as Abo-Zaid (2022) argues, these initiatives achieved fragile and usually superficial agreement, and were persistently undermined by implementation gap and elite co-optation.

Much of the literature on state-building addresses the difficulty of imposing a central authority that different factions in Libya will accept. According to Belloni and Petrovic (2019), conventional liberal peacebuilding models lack relevance in Libya as there is no shared national identity or democratic tradition in that country. Instead, they illuminate needs for locally driven processes, and hybrid governance frameworks that can transcend formal and informal power structures.

Another focal point in the literature is the elections originally slated for 2021, and delayed several times. Scholars like Volpi (2021) claim that elections are important to achieve fuller reconciliation, but that if carried out too early, without a consensus on constitutional frameworks and laws governing elections, would risk reigniting conflict. The International Crisis Group (2023) reinforces this perspective by noting that rigid deadlines and outside pressure for rapid solutions have frequently offset rather than facilitated Libya's peace process.

Finally, there has been much focus on Libya's role in the global migration crisis. Its porous frontiers and strategic position have turned it into a major transit hub for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa trying to make their way to Europe. Migrants in Libya are subject to abuses including extortion, slavery, and torture, as documented in the migration and human security literature (Achilli 2018). These claims have been both corroborated and condemned by Amnesty International (2023) who state that EU policies backing the Libyan Coast Guard are complicit in the human rights violations that evidence shows have taken place.

Libya's instability has also affected its neighbours in the Sahel and North Africa. Insurgencies in Mali, Nigeria and Niger have been fuelled by weaponry looted from Libyan stockpiles. The spillover of arms following Gaddafi's downfall was partly responsible for the Tuareg rebellion and subsequent jihadist takeover of northern Mali in 2012 (Zoubir and Rózsa 2018).

To sum up, the academic and policy literature on post-Gaddafi Libya describes it as a highly fractured state suffering from the chronic pathology of political polarization, economic collapse, militia-based rule, and foreign meddling. Cautious optimism is articulated by a minority of scholars who believe that evolutionary progress may still be possible through diplomacy and inclusive governance; however, the dominant view is that Libya is still a cautionary tale of regime change without a plan, external intervention without coherence, and peacebuilding without accountability.

The Fall of Gaddafi and Its Immediate Aftermath

The overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 was a watershed in modern Libya's history, bringing an end to more than four decades of erratic and oppressive rule. Gaddafi ruled since a bloodless military coup in 1969, and the regime he established became a deeply centralized and highly personalized form of governance. His political thought, as laid out in his Green Book, merged socialism, Arab nationalism and direct democracy, all circumscribed by coercion, clientelism, and repression (Vandewalle, 2012). Although Libya benefitted at certain intervals a hot economy based on the vast oil reserves, the wealth was distributed unevenly and was centered upon patronage networks that were centered around the Gaddafi family and tribal loyalties (Lacher, 2020).

What followed the fall of Gaddafi, though, would paradoxically not be of transition but fragmentation. Control of the country proved difficult to consolidate under the National Transitional Council (NTC) that took charge in the aftermath of Gaddafi's demise. But while international support and recognition were extensive for the NTC, its institutional capital, legitimacy, and security/defense apparatus to manage the post-revolutionary state were low (Chivvis & Martini, 2014). A national army was never created, so the armed groups that fought against Gaddafi and held on to their weapons soon took full control of the several regions. Many of these militias with ideological, tribal or regional loyalties quickly moved to fill the vacuum left in the wake of the regime collapse (Wehrey, 2019).

Elections for the General National Congress (GNC) were held in July 2012, giving rise to hopes of democratic transition, but these were soon dashed. The transitional authorities could neither disarm the militias nor integrate them into a national framework. By 2014, political disagreements over governance and legitimacy had erupted into open conflict, with competing governments based in

Tripoli and Tobruk. This signaled the start of the Second Libyan Civil War, which would encapsulate a large part of the following ten years (El-Katiri, 2012; International Crisis Group, 2023).

The disintegration of centralized power and the lack of a common national blueprint have become one of the hallmarks of the post-Gaddafi era. Unlike Tunisia or Egypt, Libya didn't have an organized opposition or civil society to step into the vacuum left by Gaddafi's end. His strategy of demolishing independent institutions made sure that, when his regime collapsed, there was little left to serve as a foundation for a functioning state. What had been presented as a central route towards unification through the constitutional process became bogged down in the political fray and its content was never sufficiently durable to be a long-term solution (Belloni & Petrovic, 2019).

Adding to the precariousness was the flow of arms and instability across Libya's porous borders. The weapons plundered from Gaddafi's vast arsenal poured into the Sahel and beyond, fuelling regional insecurity and strengthening jihadist movements in Mali, Niger and other countries (Zoubir & Rózsa, 2018). Domestically, arms stoked competition among militias, fuelling cycles of violence and territorial control.

The post-Gaddafi transition also experienced a deficit of coherent international strategy. Although NATO's intervention accelerated Gaddafi's fall, ultimately, no proper post-conflict plan was executed. The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) sought to promote dialogue with transitional arrangements in mind but was repeatedly undermined by competing regional interests and local spoilers (Faleg, 2020). The failure to have peacekeeping forces stabilizing the country in the immediate aftermath of the conflict allowed armed actors to entrench. (Khan et al., 2021)

By 2015, Libya had essentially broken into a number of redoubts, controlled by various coalitions of militias, political forces and tribal actors. On 17 December 2015, on the back of diplomatic efforts made by the UN, the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) was signed in Skhirat, Morocco in an attempt to achieve national unity under a Government of National Accord (GNA). Yet the agreement lacked wide domestic consensus, especially from the HOR in the east and General Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA), who refused to recognize the GNA's authority (Lounnas, 2021).

In hindsight, Gaddafi's end did not produce the liberation of a coherent Libyan polity but, instead, the unboxing of a Pandora's box of entrenched conflict, foreign intervention and institutional collapse. The ousting of the dictator without a transitional justice structure or overarching disarmament strategy was disastrous. Libya turned into a cautionary tale of a regime change that was envisioned without foresight or post-conflict planning: a failed state where governance is contested, the economy is fragmented, and civilians are left to endure ongoing cycles of violence and displacement (Human Rights Watch, 2023; International Monetary Fund, 2023).

Political Fragmentation and Governance Challenges

In the wake of Muammar Gaddafi's ouster in 2011, Libya has endured years of fragmentation, political infighting, and overall governance failures. One of the most important developments in the post-Gaddafi political arena has been the emergence of two dominant opposing centers of power, the Government of National Unity (GNU), based in Tripoli, which was born from the UN-backed Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) of 2015, and the Libyan National Army (LNA), under General Khalifa Haftar, which dominated the eastern part of the country. Founded to restore stability under a unified government, the GNU immediately faced challenges, including resistance from rival factions and outside forces, resulting in limited authority over the state. At the same time, Haftar's LNA, which was originally viewed as a force that would try to defeat Islamist militias and deliver stability, also grew increasingly militaristic and autocratic while gaining the backing of regional powers like Egypt and the UAE (Kausch, 2020; Lacher, 2020).

The division between these twin factions, Tripoli-based and Haftar's eastern forces, has made it impossible to build a united government. This rivalry has precipitated Libya's fragmentation, as both factions use militias and tribal allegiances to extend their control over regions of the country and create a situation where territories are held by different actors

(Dorman & Harch, 2019). Many of the militias have loose ties to political factions and helped make the power struggle so intractable that no single authority could ever hope to dominate the entire country. This has made it impossible for the state to consolidate political authority and has produced profound governance dysfunction.

The collapse of state institutions is arguably the most remarkable feature of Libya's post-Gaddafi course. Though authoritarian, Gaddafi's regime operated through a highly centralized nature; with a virtual governing monopoly over nearly all walks of life from the military to the judiciary to the civil service. The fall of the regime led to the destruction of these institutions and the creation of a power vacuum that hindered state-building efforts in Libya (Wehrey, 2020). The government crisis is aggravated by the failure of the state to take control over important categories of functioning, such as enforcement, security, and public services. Thus, Libya has been of limited benefit to its citizens, and the country's infrastructure has fallen short.

This absence of unified government has also led to an economy collapsing. Libya sits on massive oil reserves, and the persistent fighting has stalled oil production, with rival factions battling for control of the country's valuable oil fields. Once the linchpin of the Libyan economy, oil revenue south-east libya has cemented itself as a bone of contention, with different groups scratching their heads in a bid to control it. The result is an economic crisis, an economy immersed in mismanagement on one hand, and lack of basic services on the other, and this has resulted in high unemployment, hyperinflation, and a high rate of poverty (Lacher, 2020).

International actors have been critical both to the aggravation and the effort to mediate Libya's political fragmentation. The ones who were working on up until wrote just the end of October 2023 data. In 2015, the UN facilitated the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) during negotiations to form a united government called the Government of National Unity (GNU) to lead the transition. The GNU was meant to unite the various political factions, parties and militias under a national umbrella, but implementation was fraught with difficulties. The GNU never fully established its authority and in fact many key players, Haftar's partisans among them, rejected the agreement (United Nations, 2021). Despite the UN's best efforts, the agreement did not result in the hoped-for political reconciliation and stability.

Libya's situation has been exacerbated by foreign interventions. Various countries, including Turkey, Russia, the UAE and Egypt, have no less entrenched the division by supporting different factions. Turkey and Qatar have backed the GNA, while Russia, Egypt and the UAE have supported Haftar's LNA. But these New interferences have not only prolonged the conflict but also transformed Libya into a battleground for regional rivalries (Kausch, 2020) Libya has fractured along multitude of divides and internal warlords and factions have entrenched control over the regions and ports, which fueled foreign interests[4]; these regimes have responded to the external influences with mimicries, creating a geographical trafer that has been cemented by foreign powers, whose actions have complicated rather than resolved Libya's travails.[5] The conflicting agendas of these outside parties have stymied UN mediation initiatives and complicated the pursuit of a durable political settlement.

International Involvement and Foreign Interventions

NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011 was a historic inflection point in the country's post-Gaddafi trajectory. In response to the outbreak of protests during the Arab Spring in 2011, the Libyan government under Gaddafi violently repressed the protests, garnering wide international condemnation. March 2011, UN Security Council (UNSC) voted on 1973 Resolution, which authorized no-fly zone and NATO intervention in Libya in order to protect civilians. The operation was never intended to topple Gaddafi, and indeed, its objective was to protect civilians in rebel-held territory, most notably in Benghazi, from the massacre by Gaddafi's forces. NATO's military backing of the rebels was decisive in ousting Gaddafi, yet the environment that replaced him was much more complicated and splintered than expected.

The intervention was successful, however in the short term, in removing a brutal dictator but it created unintended consequences that echoes in Libya's stability. After the fall of Gaddafi, Libyan

politicians engaged in a complex dance of rivalry; a deeply divided country. In contrast, NATO established regime change as its main objective without any overarching post-Gaddafi reconstruction strategy in place. As a result, the country has remained susceptible to civil unrest. We intervened and tore down Gaddafi's centralized hold on power, but we weren't able to put anything capable of governing in its place. This lack of post conflict planning had a long-lasting influence on the situation in the country, contributing to the systemic instabilities and civil war we continue to see in Libya today (Kausch, 2020; Lacher, 2020). NATO's role, then, is largely viewed as one of the causes of the country's long-term political fragmentation.

Beside NATO's intervention, Libya's civil war has been heavily shaped by regional powers with conflicting stakes at play. Egypt, the UAE, Turkey, and Russia have each played influential roles in shaping the country's trajectory, aligning with different factions all while seeking to achieve their respective geopolitical and economic goals.

Egypt and the UAE back the forces of General Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army (LNA), viewing him as a bulwark against Islamist groups and a force for stability. These countries have supplied Haftar's LNA with significant military assistance, encompassing air support, weaponries, and training (Wehrey, 2020). For these regional powers, Libya is an arena to extend influence over North Africa, control migration routes and curb the ascendancy of Islamist movements that might challenge their own regimes.

In contrast, Turkey has backed the GNU in Tripoli, and has deployed drones, troops, and mercenaries to support it. Turkey's role stems from its aspiration to obtain influence in Libya's oil-rich Mediterranean area and to set naval borders in the eastern Mediterranean, where Ankara has challenged drilling rights both Greece and Cyprus (Kausch, 2020). Turkey's backing of the G.N.A. has complicated international mediation efforts for peace, because it has turned the conflict into a regional proxy war between Turkey and its allies and the U.A.E. and Egypt.

Russia's role in Libya has likewise been interventionist. Although, on record, [Russia] has claimed a neutral role, it has also been accused of supplying Haftar's forces with military and political support as part of its grand strategy to extend its influence in the Middle East and North Africa. Among the various Russian domestic and international undertakings is the presence of private military contractors particularly, the Wagner Group which were sent to the aid of Haftar's forces in exchange for access to oil resources in Libya (Lacher, 2020). The presence of Russia also complicated dynamics of the peacebuilding process, as Moscow's interests, which frequently compete with those of NATO and the EU, have made a diplomatic resolution harder to pursue.

Such competing interests by regional powers have not only dragged the battle out even lengthier but have also become Libya a theatre for affect, turning the potentialities for a pacific settlement languidly wire.

International diplomacy, through numerous attempts at resolution of the Libyan conflict, has mostly not succeeded. The UN-backed Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) done in 2015 orchestrated a power-sharing arrangement between the factional actors in the country. But the deal never got off the ground amid a lack of support from important forces, including Haftar's LNA and numerous militias. Rejuvenating political processes is further complicated by the fact that many of the local actors were in fact more loyal to their own foreign backers than to any negotiated agreement (United Nations, 2021).

Much of this foreign influence has provided the biggest hurdle for a sustainable peace. Each power has undermined internal peacebuilding, further deepening the divisions that external actors have instigated. These and other decisions by external actors have deepened divisions within Libya, as each power has prioritized its own strategic and economic interests over peacebuilding. Moreover, since the international community does not hold foreign actors accountable for their direct involvement in the conflict, foreign intervention has continued, thereby further threatening the country's stability. As a result, Libya has been a fractured state, with political solutions difficult and military clashes persistent.

This undermining of Libyan sovereignty and internecine conflict has wide ranging repercussions for foreign interventionism. The arrival of foreign

military aid has also made it harder for Libyans to settle their differences through dialogue, since outside powers tend to translate their involvement into the imposition of their own interests on the country's political settlement. Higher than that, and the foreign military presence aggravated the level of violence and intensified divisions among rival factions.

The foreign involvement had also led to a situation where Libya's sovereignty has been massively undermined. With foreign military contractors, advisors, and shipments of weapons of all kinds pouring into the country, Libya's capacity to make independent decisions has been severely curtailed. Meanwhile, the situation has been further complicated by the nature of support (either protection or antagonism) Libyan factions receive from external powers, which have led many factions to make decisions around the foreign support they receive (Wehrey, 2020). This dynamic has locked in the political and military fragmentation, making the prospects for national unity all the more remote.

Economic Consequences and Resource Management

Libya's economy, which used to be among Africa's richest because of its huge oil reserves, has been ravaged by the war and the political turmoil that has followed. Oil revenues were used to finance the state's budget, and Gaddafi's regime relied systematically on this dependency as part of its economic structure. Since the fall of Gaddafi, however, the country has failed to control its oil resources, sending the oil-dependent economy into free fall.

The country's political fragmentation has sparked disputes over the control of the oil fields and pipelines, with rival factions and militias aiming to dominate the lucrative trade. This jousting for oil riches has contributed additional instability, as oil exports, which previously yielded a good portion of government revenues, have been disrupted (Lacher,2020). As well, the inability to build a unified and functioning government that can administer the oil sector has left Libya susceptible to economic shocks domestically and abroad.

The interruptions in oil and gas production were among the most tangible effects of the conflict gripping Libya. Different groups and militias have gained control of significant oil fields and infrastructure, resulting in a steep drop in oil production. Libya produced 1.6 million barrels of oil per day in 2011, but production had dropped to 100,000 barrels per day as recently as 2020 (Wehrey, 2020). The drop in production has been devastating for Libya's economy, since oil exports comprise nearly all of the country's foreign income.

Additionally, not centralizing control over Libya's oil resources resulted in disputes between competing political and military factions trying to seize the resources for themselves. The fragmentation of the country and the proliferation of armed groups has made the Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) a key arena for political power, with different factions fighting for control of the company's oil assets (Lacher, 2020). These bitter disputes not only have crippled Libya's ability to stabilize its economy but also have drawn in international players eager to turn the country's oil wealth to their advantage.

Libya's inability to diversify its economy beyond oil has also played a big part in its economic downturn. With little opportunity for development of other sectors of the Libyan economy under Gaddafi, and for agriculture, manufacturing, or services, the country's economy relied on oil revenues. Fuelled by the flow of cash into the state-controlled oil industry, which was used to launch social programs and finance infrastructure projects. But since 2011 the country has been unable to build a stable government, and the economy has been incapable of managing the oil wealth or investing it in the economy.

The mismanagement of oil revenues has been especially pronounced in the absence of transparency and accountability within Libya's financial systems. Lack of a government and corruption have led to an inefficient allocation of resources, hindering attempts to diversify the economy (Lacher, 2020). Tentative efforts at economic reform have been hobbled by the ongoing conflict, meaning Libya will remain oil dependent for the time being.

The economic impact of Libya's political fragmentation is also evident in the major downturn in the country's economy itself. The country has been hit with inflation and a sharp spike in youth unemployment. Public services, like healthcare and

education, are falling apart, further deepening poverty and inequality, thanks to the collapse of state institutions. The conflict has also heavily affected Libya's banking system. The political fragmentation and absence of a central authority have led to the collapse of the banking system, making it almost impossible for citizens to get hold of their savings or carry out financial transactions. The lack of an operational financial system has hindered Libya's capacity to draw in foreign investment, causing a further stagnation in economic growth and development (Wehrey, 2020).

Libya has been experiencing fragmentation, and the banking system has been one of the main victims of this life in the conflict in Libya. The central bank has been unable to function because rival factions have taken over different parts of the country. The inability of the rival authorities to reach an agreement has resulted in a disjointed financial system that sees some citizens unable to even access banking services or exchange currency depending on where they are in the country. The fragmentation of the economy reflects a broader trend of increasing economic disintegration in Libya, as the financial divergence has further complicated business activity across regional divides (Lacher, 2020). In addition, without a cohesive monetary policy, Libyans have experienced rampant inflation, which has dampened their purchasing power.

Libya has found itself in a state of economic fragmentation due to the lack of an inclusive recovery and diversification of the economy, the inflationary impacts of political instability and the subsequent unemployment and collapse of the banking system. These economic challenges, combined with persistent political instability, have hindered Libya's efforts to attain sustainable development or restore its economy.

Humanitarian Crisis and Social Consequences

Libya has been in the grip of a humanitarian crisis since the 2011 overthrow of the Gaddafi regime, with basic public services collapsing. Hospitals and clinics are in dire need of medical supplies, qualified personnel and access to electricity and water. The health system, once one of the best in North Africa, is now critically weakened in areas affected by conflict (El Tarhuni & Elrayes, 2020; WHO, 2023). The education sector has also worsened, with over 1,200 schools either damaged or used by armed groups, in addition to leaving thousands of children out of school (UNICEF, 2023).

Such institutional failures have resulted in mass dislocation and migration. By early 2024, more than 135,000 Libyans were still displaced internally and hundreds of thousands of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa seeking passage through Libya were also trapped in conditions of extreme deprivation (IOM, 2024). Arbitrary detention, trafficking or forced labour affects both Libyans and migrants alike.

Women and children have been particularly affected. Access to maternal healthcare has dwindled, and gender-based violence has risen sharply during the conflict. Children are at risk of malnutrition, disrupted education and trauma from exposure to violence that can affect them long after (UNICEF, 2023).

A handful of armed militias have complicated humanitarian relief even more by controlling aid distribution. Militias in many locales politicize food and medical supplies, only providing services to populations they can politically win over, while denying access to rival communities(Lacher & Cole, 2021). Aid is being instrumentalized to deepen social divides which, in turn, exacerbates the suffering of already vulnerable groups.

The Path Toward Stability or Continued Fragmentation

The bleak outlook notwithstanding, efforts have surfaced to pursue peacebuilding and political reconciliation. Initiatives such as the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF), which were facilitated by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), have sought to produce a roadmap to democratic governance. The GNU was then established in 2021, an event that was initially greeted positively as a significant step, only for political rifts to re-emerge rapidly and highlight the fragility of the arrangement (UNSMIL, 2023).

Ceasefire negotiations, as well as institutional reform, have always enjoyed the support of the United Nations and its international partners. The ceasefire in October 2020 represented an unusually optimistic moment, as it stipulated the exit of

foreign fighters, along with the unification of the military institutions. The failure to hold national elections in December 2021, owing to disagreements on electoral laws and candidate eligibility, highlights how deep the political impasse runs (ICG, 2023).

While forming a united government should be the final destination, and there are many hurdles ahead. Deep-seated distrust between rival factions, competing claims to legitimacy and persistent militia control of territory all make political unity hard to realize. Unless, a credible disarmament strategy and restructuring of state institutions are established, efforts of national reconciliation might just remain as lip-service (Badi, 2023).

But local peace efforts and grassroots initiatives still provide some hope. In many councils and tribes, local ceasefires have been brokered and dialogue expanded. Civil society groups have also emerged as key actors, demanding inclusive governance and accountability.

Conclusion

The past decade since Gaddafi in Libya has been defined by fragmentation, conflict, and institutional collapse. The political environment is still highly divided between competing governments, militias and foreign interests, creating immense difficulty in governance managing and reforming. The humanitarian emergency has deepened: millions have been denied even basic services, and the country's economy remains tied down by its oil dependence and the mishandling of revenues.

This research has shown a light on how, in the absence of a coherent transitional framework following Gaddafi's downfall, a vacuum opened, filled by militias and rival foreign powers. If well-meaning, peacebuilding efforts may have struggled because of weak institutions and foreign meddling. The Libyan case mirrors some of the challenges inherent in post-revolution state-building efforts and highlights the need to move beyond short-term power-sharing through international actors, towards long-term institutional development.

International stakeholders are encouraged to learn from past mistakes and reduce foreign military footprints, to strengthen Libyan-led reconciliation processes, to support rebuilding institutions like the judiciary, the security forces, electoral commissions, and to support reunification efforts. Libyan actors must put the national interests above factional gains and create inclusive governance that is based on legitimacy and rule of law.

"Future research should examine the impact of local peacebuilding, the changing role of civil society in conflict resolution, and compare with other post-conflict states. Focusing on these and other dimensions will shed light on ways forward to achieve sustainable peace and state reconstruction in Libya.

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