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# The Impact of the Internationalization of the Libyan Crisis on the Future of the Political Settlement

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**Abstract:**
The internationalization of the Libyan crisis and its accompanying militarization of the conflict have played a vital role in hindering to reach a comprehensive political settlement solution in Libya. The increasing international greediness in the Libyan energy resources and the geopolitical importance of the Libyan State led to the involvement of many international and regional powers in this crisis and transformed the Libyan crisis into "proxy war". Moreover, the Turkish direct military intervention in the Libyan crisis is considered as one of the main constraints facing the international and regional efforts to settle the Libyan crisis as a result of the Turkish insistence on its military existence in Libya to preserve its national interests in Eastern Mediterranean. So, the scenario of the continuing dispute over the legitimacy between the Libyan factions and the transformation of the Libyan crisis into a geopolitical dilemma, will be the closest to reality.
Keywords: Libyan conflict, Internationalization of the crisis, Libyan National Army, National Accord Government, Turkey.

# تأثير تدويل الأزمة الليبية في مستقبل التسوية السياسية

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**الملخص:**

أدى تدويل الأزمة الليبية وما صاحبها من عسكرة للصراع دوراً حيوياً في إعاقة الوصول إلى حل سياسي شامل في ليبيا. لأن الأطماع الدولية المتزايدة في موارد الطاقة الليبية

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والأهمية الجيوسياسية للدولة الليبية أدى إلى تورط العديد من القوى الدولية والإقليمية في هذه الأزمة وتحويلها إلى "حرب بالوكالة". علاوة على ذلك ، يعد التدخل العسكري التركي المباشر في الأزمة الليبية من المعوقات الرئيسة التي تواجه الجهود الدولية والإقليمية لحل الأزمة الليبية نتيجة إصرار تركيا على وجودها العسكري في ليبيا حفاظًا على مصالحها الوطنية في شرق المتوسط. لذا فإن سيناريو استمرار الخلاف حول الشرعية بين الفصائل الليبية وتحويل الأزمة الليبية إلى معضلة جيوسياسية سيكون الأقرب إلى الواقع.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الصراع الليبي، تدويل الأزمة، الجيش الوطني الليبي، حكومة الوفاق الوطني، تركيا.

## Introduction:

The fall of the Libyan colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime, on 20 October 2011, represented a turning point in the Libyan state's history, where there are two competing governments and two parliaments are fighting for power. The first one, is the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), based in Tripoli, and administered by "Fayez al-Sarraj", which emerged from the General National Congress (the outgoing parliament). The second one, is a parallel government in the East led by "Abdullah al-Thani" and the Tobruk Parliament, supported by the Libyan National Army, led by Marshal "Khalifa Haftar".

Although the strategic importance of Libya for many countries, but these countries have failed to adopt a unified policy towards the Libyan conflict. Moreover, they have seized the opportunity to increase their influence in the Middle East and North Africa, and this played a vital role in the Internationalization of the Libyan conflict and transformed it into a "proxy war" between many regional and international powers. So, some countries such as (Russia- Turkey and France) play a prominent role in the conflict and supporting the Libyan armed factions to increase their interests there. (Mackinnon 2020).

The noticeable absence of the United States' role in Libya has helped in exacerbation of the situation there. Where, the US doesn't include the Libyan conflict in its own foreign policy priorities, because of the desire of US President "Donald Trump" to reduce the American role in the rebel struggle and focus mainly on the Chinese and Iranian files. Moreover, the impact of Corona Virus on the American economy and imminent presidential elections. (Ryan and Raghavan 2020).

The direct Turkish military intervention in Libya plays a vital role in hindering the international and regional efforts to find a political settlement for Libyan crisis because of the Turkish insistence on its military existence in Libya to preserve its national interests in Eastern Mediterranean. So, the scenario of the continuing dispute over the legitimacy between the Libyan factions and the transformation of the Libyan crisis into a geopolitical dilemma will be the closest to reality.

**The Research problem:**

Libya's economic and geopolitical importance and the failure of the international community to adopt a unified policy towards the Libyan crisis have played a vital role in the internationalization of the Libyan crisis that led to the militarization of the conflict during the period (2011-2021).

Although, the United Nations' attempts to end this conflict by providing the "International legitimacy" for (GNA) in 2015, then the "Constitutional legitimacy" for the National Unity Government (NUG) in 2021. But, actually, it failed to convince all Libyan political groups because the dispute over legitimacy is considered as the basis and origin of the Libyan crisis and it is one of the main obstacles facing international and regional efforts to end the conflict among the armed factions. Also, the direct Turkish military intervention, to secure its national interests in the Eastern Mediterranean resources, and Ankara's refusal to withdraw its forces especially after the success of the "Libya Forum for Political Dialogue", was hold in Geneva on 5 February 2021. Moreover, the

objection of many Libyans to the agreements concluded between Turkey and the (GNA) will strengthen the possibility of the continuation of armed conflict. So, this paper tries to answer about the following questions:

- What are the main reasons behind the intervention of many international and regional powers in Libya?
- What is the impact of the internationalization of the Libyan conflict on the future of political settlement?
- What is the effect of the continuation of the Turkish military presence in Libya on the future of the political settlement?

**The Research Hypothesis**

Despite the prominent role of the UN and international partners to find a political settlement for the Libyan crisis and to end the current conflict. But, their attempts failed because the internationalization of the Libyan crisis and its accompanying militarization of the conflict, in addition to the increasing international greediness in the Libyan energy resources. So, this research supposes that the scenario of the continuing dispute over the legitimacy and the transformation of the Libyan crisis into a geopolitical dilemma, will be the closest to the reality especially after the Turkish refusal to withdraw from Libya and its insistence on staying there to protect its interests in the Eastern Mediterranean resources.

**Methodology/Approach:**

The study uses "International Conflict theory" to determine the impact of the internationalization of the Libyan crisis on the chances of a comprehensive political settlement, in addition to that it uses the "national interest" approach and "the comparative approach" to determine the main causes and motives of the active states involved in activating the Libyan crisis and their role in obstructing the efforts of national reconciliation to end the conflict in Libya.

**The Research Structure:**

This study is divided into five sections, they are as follows:

**I.** The most important internal actors in the Libyan crisis during (2011-2021),

**II.** International and Regional Situations and the Real reasons behind the Intervention in Libya during (2011-2021),

**III.** Assessment of the Current Situation of the Libyan Conflict,

**IV.** The Impact of Internationalization of the Libyan Conflict on the Political Settlement Process,

**V.** Foreseeing the future of the Libyan crisis.

**VI.** Results and Discussion.

## i. The most important internal actors in the Libyan crisis during (2011-2021):

The struggle over legitimacy between the main political actors is the main constraint facing the efforts to find the peaceful solution for the crisis because each one considers itself as the only legitimate entity in the country. Moreover, the armed militias try to strengthen their influence by providing the military support to those actors in their conflict for power (Stephen 2012). So, the main internal political actors can be classified as follows:

### 1.The General National Congress (GNC):

It is the legislative authority, it was elected on 7 July 2012 and took power from the Transitional National Council on 8August 2012 (Vandewalle 2012, 10). It formed the National Salvation Government (NSG), headed by "Khalifa al-Ghwell", it did not gain an international recognition, (Fitzgerald and Toaldo 2016). Also, it has been replaced by the (GNA) as a result of the Skhirat agreement on 17 December 2015. It is worthy to note that, it was supported by some Islamic militias, to control of Tripoli and its airport, such as:

### Libyan Dawn Militia:

It was launched by Islamic armed groups and it aimed at controlling the capital and its airport. It played a vital role in hindering the legitimacy and handing over the legislative authority to the House of Representatives because of Islamists lost their seats in the

elections compared to the previous GNC. Moreover, it refused the elected government in Tobruk "Abdullah Al-Thinni" government and it encouraged the "GNC "to consider itself as the only legitimate authority in Libya (BBC 2016).

**Libyan Shield Militia:**

It is a collection of different militias spread in the whole country; it considered as GNC's ministry of defense. The Central Libya Shield is divided into small groups, and its forces control "Brak Al-Shati" airport, located 700 km south of Tripoli (BBC 2016).

**2.The House of Representatives (Tobruk's Parliament):**

It appeared as a result of elections that hold on 25 June 2014. These elections revealed the great loss of the political Islam groups, including the Muslim brotherhood Movement, where they won by 23 out of 200 seats. While the liberal, federal and independent civil movements won most of the seats. Although this parliament has obtained international recognition. But, on November 6, 2014, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled that "Paragraph 11 of Article 30 of the Constitutional Declaration amended by the seventh constitutional amendment issued on 11 March 2014, is unconstitutional and all its implications". Which means dissolving the parliament and all institutions emanating from it, Including Tobruk's government (DW 2014).

**3.The Libyan National Army (LNA):**

It was established by the Marshal "Khalifa Haftar", it has the support from different countries such as: Egypt, the Emirates, Russia and France. "Haftar" launched "the Dignity Operation" against the armed Islamist groups in May 2014, especially in Bani Ghazi and its environs (Gartenstein-Ross 2015, 1-5).

The (LNA) is the main supporter for the Tobruk's government and the House of Representatives. Moreover, it controls over most the Libyan lands except Tripoli. It tried more than once to break into the capital and overthrow the (GNA), but it couldn't do that. Its main aims are as follows:

- Dissolving and dismantling all armed militias and submitting their weapons to the Libyan army.
- Expelling all foreign mercenaries from the Libyan territories.
- Demanding for the necessity of international intervention to force Turkey and Qatar to stop the military and material support for the (GNA) in western Libya.
- Maintaining the unity and integrity of Libya, against any external interference or attempting to dismantle the Libyan state, (DW 2020).

**ii. International and Regional Situations and the Real reasons behind the Intervention in Libya during (2011-2021):**

**The Attitude of International Powers:**

**1. The Russian Attitude:**

Since 2015, there were communications between Russia and "Haftar" to earn the Russian Support. In return, he promised Russia by Energy agreements and access to some ports. Consequently, Russia accepted the offer and provided military advices and the diplomatic support for the Tobruk's government in the UN. In 2016, "Haftar" visited Moscow many times, Russia provided the medical treatment for the LNA's soldiers and the actual military support either by using the "Wagner security group", estimated about two thousand, or by providing weapons and military equipment and drones (Marten 2019, 181-204)**.**

The main reasons behind the Russian Intervention in Libya, are as follows:

- Its desire to be one of the main policy-makers in the Middle East.
- Controlling the important ports and energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- Increasing its arms sales to Libya, where it is an important market for Russian arms companies, especially there is a strong competition with (France - Italy - the United Kingdom).
- Controlling Libya is considered as a pressure card in the hands of the Kremlin on the European Union countries In terms of Energy Resources - Refugees and illegal immigration (Torelli 2018).

**2. The Attitude of the United States (US) and NATO:**

They played a vital role in instability of Libya, Indirectly, either through supporting armed rebel groups against the Gaddafi's regime in 2011, or through the quick departure and leaving the country a torn by the armed factions. Moreover, the NATO does not have a unified policy towards the current scene due to the internal division among its members (Kuperman 2015, 66-77). Undoubtedly, the US and NATO approach regarding non-interference encouraged some countries (e.g., Turkey and Qatar) to direct the Libyan national elections in favor of ideological groups "the political Islam". (Nuruzzaman 2015, 226-238).

Although, the US launched a road map to renew international efforts, and to break a political stalemate in Libya, and to end the turmoil there, and it invokes all parties to ceasefire immediately, in accordance with what was agreed upon in the talks of the Joint Military Committee (5+5), which took place under the UN's auspices (Lotfi 2020). But, actually, the US focuses mainly on fighting the Islamic State (ISIS) in Libya through directing airstrikes more than ending the war there. Also, the American President "Trump" praised "Haftar" and its efforts to fight terrorism and to protect the Libyan oil resources (Ali 2017).

Many studies indicate that the US does not have a clear policy towards the conflict in Libya and it believes that achieving peace and stability in Libya can only come through conducting "peace negotiations" between the conflicting parties (Spassov 2014, 21-40).

**3. The EU's Attitude (France and Italy):**

The position of the EU's countries on the Libyan crisis differs from one country to another, depending on the strategic importance of Libya for each country (Koenig 2011, 11-30). For example, there is a prominent difference between France and Italy. While France supports the LNA, Italy supports the GNA (BBC 2020).

Since 2011, the UK and France played a vital role in the fall of the Libyan regime, when they participated in the NATO's airstrikes. Also, they supported the Security Council Resolution No. (1973),

which imposed "no-fly zone" on the Libyan territory, in order to stop the attacks of Gaddafi forces on civilians, which greatly contributed to end his ruling (Bucher 2013, 524-539). Italy taken a different approach, which it demanded to stop those attacks and allow to provide humanitarian aids to the Libyan people. Moreover, the Italian foreign minister "Franco Frattini" considered that NATO's credibility is at stake as a result of the fall of a large number of civilians in the raids launched by the alliance (Black, 2011). In addition, the Italian government accused France of fueling the conflict in Libya and playing a prominent role in instability in order to gain oil contracts. Also, Italy considered it as the main reason behind the influx of illegal immigrants to the EU because France did not stop colonizing dozens of African countries (TRTWorld 2019).

The competition between the two oil giants (the French company "Total" and the Italian company "Eni") increased the tension between them. Where, Italy accuses France of benefiting from Libya's instability to strengthen the presence of "Total", which bought about a 16.33% stake in the American "Marathon Oil" company (TOTAL 2018). This deal contributed in obtaining "Total" nearly 500 million barrels of crude oil reserves from the "city of Sirte" controlled by the LNA forces.

France aims at including General "Haftar" into the political dialogue process and supporting him through "international recognition" of the LNA, for the following reasons:

**1. Economic interests:** Because it controls the regions which the strategic interests of France are located, the "oil crescent region", where France wants to obtain oil exploration concessions and benefit from the oil reserves (CECI 2017).

**2. Political interests:** it seeks to fight armed Islamic groups in the Sahel and North Africa. Therefore, it believes that "Haftar" is the right person to eliminate the Islamic radicalism in Libya (Ilardo 2018, 1-4).

Italy, on the other hand, supports the (GNA) for the following reasons:

- **Economic interests**: Italy is associated with Libya through many economic interests such as energy and infrastructure projects. Also, Italy considers Libya as a part of its geographical influence, as a former colonial power, so it seeks to preserve its economic and strategic interests in Libya by providing the opportunity for the Italian company "Eni" to acquire as much as possible from the Libyan oil cake (Forbes 2011)**.**
- **Illegal Immigration:** Italy aims at restoring the stability in Libya to stop the influx of refugees and illegal immigrants from African countries. Also, the Italian populist government considers the political instability and insecurity in Libya is one of the main obstacles facing it.

**The Attitude of Regional Powers:**

**4. The Turkish Attitude:**

Turkey is the main supporter of the GNA, and it helped the GNA's militias to repel the LNA's attacks on Tripoli in April 2019. Also, it sent Syrian mercenaries, military advisors, and drones, which led to changing the course of the conflict and defeating the LNA's forces (BBC 2020). The failure of implementing the Skhirat Agreement and the LNA's announcement to liberate the capital are the main incentive behind the GNA's request from Turkey to intervene militarily (BBC 2020). This intervention has fueled the conflict between the Libyan factions, and undermined international and regional efforts to establish security and peace in Libya (INDEPENDENT 2020).

The Main Reasons behind the Turkish Intervention in Libya are as follows:

**1.Exploration for oil and gas in the Eastern Mediterranean:**

Ankara wants to expand its influence in the region to control and benefit from "Eastern Mediterranean gas", this explains why it has signed controversial agreements with the GNA that include "security cooperation and the demarcation of maritime borders",

ignoring the maritime borders of Greece "the island of Crete" (Butler and Gumrukcu 2019). Turkey seeks to reduce the cost of importing energy resources, where its domestic production is not sufficient for 7% of total demand ( International Trade Administration 2020).

**2.Strengthening the Turkish military presence in the Middle East:**

It aims at protecting its economic interests and providing security protection and logistical support for gas exploration operations in the Eastern Mediterranean, and to secure its share in the reconstruction efforts after the end of the war. This explains Turkey's control of both the "Misurata Naval Base" and the "Al-Wattaya Air Base" in Libya (Coskun and Gumrukcu 2020).

**3.Ideological support for the Muslim Brotherhood:**

There were some ideological motives accompanied the Turkish intervention, where Turkey supported groups close to the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood movement in the civil war in Libya, in order to serve Erdogan's project to revive the "new Ottomanism" and support political Islam groups in the region. Also, it tries to be a close to the Egyptian borders to confuse and disturb Cairo (Knipp 2020).

**The Attitude of Some Arab countries (UAE - Egypt - Qatar):**

Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) support the (LNA) and its leader "Hafter" (Reuters 2020) , because both of them have same views about the necessity of ending the conflict for the following reasons:

- Preserving the Arab national security, in general, and the Egyptian in particular,
- Combating the regional influence of the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood group and political Islam movements in general,
- Rejection of Ankara's policies in transferring mercenaries and weapons to fuel the conflict between the warring parties,
- Preventing Turkish attempts aimed at controlling ports and oil resources,

• The UAE supported the Egyptian state's vision of considering the "Sirte-Al-Jufra" line as a "redline" for its national security. Whereas, the city of Sirte is the main key to the "oil crescent" area in Libya, as it is about a thousand meters away from the Egyptian western borders. Moreover, Al-Jufra air-base is considered one of the most modern and largest Libyan air-bases. So, Abu Dhabi and Cairo share the view that controlling these two cities by armed militias, terrorist groups and mercenaries funded by some regional countries (e.g., Turkey) will threat the Egyptian national security, in particular, and the Arab national security in general (Al-Anani 2020).

**5.The Attitude of the Emirates (UAE):**

The UAE supports the LNA forces against the GNA militias, for the following reasons:

- **Confronting Islamic extremism:**

The UAE thinks that "Haftar" is the most suitable person who can defeat the terrorist groups and extremists "in Libya. So, it provided military support to him such as: Drone drones - and Russian-made defenses and armored vehicles (Reuters 2020).

- **Economic interests:**

Economically, the UEA aims to build group of ports to become a part of the "Belt and Road" project that will be conducted by China, because Emiratis think the future will be to this coalition, and the US will not be the most influential power in the next years. So, they look forward to control over seaports in Libya within the framework of this strategy (Callahan 2016, 226-243)**.**

- **The Geopolitical Importance of the Libyan State:**

Because of the geopolitical importance of Libya, it is a link between the Mediterranean and the Horn of Africa. So, Emiratis seek to secure their oil resources to pass away from the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian threats. (Song and Yang 2018, 1248-1262)**.**

- **The Regional Influence Race:**

There are some factors increase the diplomatic tensions between Turkey and the UAE such as their rival on the regional influence

and the Turkish support for Qatar against the boycott of (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt). So, the Turkish defense minister "Hulusi Akar" pledged to hold Abu Dhabi accountable for its harmful acts in Libya and Syria. On the other hand, the UAE Foreign Minister "Anwar Gargash" responded that "relations are not managed by threat and intimidation, and there is no place for colonial illusions at this time, and it is more appropriate for Turkey to stop its interference in Arab affairs" (Reuters 2020).

## 6.The Egyptian Attitude

Cairo thinks that the support of the LNA is a part of its national security. So, it aims at restoring the security and stability to Libya and support efforts to combat terrorism and undermine the activities of armed militias, as well as put an end to "illegal" foreign interventions that would further exacerbate the situation (Mourad and Fahmy 2020). Also, it believes that it is necessary to work with international partners to find a comprehensive political solution (Ahram Online 2020).

The main reasons behind the Egyptian support are as follows:

- **Egyptian National Security:**

The Libyan state represents the entire western border of Egypt, it is about 1050 kilometers. So, Egypt believes that the armed conflict and foreign interventions in Libya are the main obstacles facing its national security. Moreover, Cairo considers that the Turkish rapprochement with the GNA is a harmful to its interests and national security because the defeat of the LNA in Eastern Libya and the Turkish existence in this area will ease the return of mercenaries and armed groups who fled, to Misurata and Tripoli, under the strikes of the LNA (Abdelhadi 2020).

The tension in diplomatic relations and ideological differences with Turkey and Qatar formed a security concern to Cairo because both countries support the political Islam movements especially Muslim Brotherhood (Başkan 2016, 58-111). Cairo considers such support to present an opportunity for the growth of terrorist groups that fight

the Egyptian state in Sinai which constitutes a direct threat for the Egyptian national security (Boserup 2018, 2-21).

- **The Energy security "Eastern Mediterranean Gas":**

The maritime border demarcation agreement, between Turkey and the GNA, on 27 November 2019, is considered as a reaction to Egypt's establishment of the Cairo-based "Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum", in January 2019, in partnership with (Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Italy, Jordan and Palestine). Cairo seeks to establish a platform for Consumers and Producers of the Natural gas, to create a common vision and an organized dialogue on natural gas policies, to maximize their benefits from the region's resources. Moreover, the forum has a recognition from the US, EU and the World Bank (Ahram Online 2021).

According to Ankara's view, this agreement is based on the principle of "Continental Shelf", not the principle of maritime boundaries or territorial waters. So, as a result of Turkey's non-recognition of the Island of Crete and Cyprus, it believes that its water borders extend to the Libyan water borders, regardless Greece and Cyprus' rights (YILMAZ and ERTÜRK 2020, 11-26).

**7.The Qatari Attitude:**

Since the outbreak of the Libyan revolution / uprising in February 2011, Qatar has played an important role in supporting the protest movements against "Gaddafi". The Qatari role in Libya can be divided into two types:

- **The military role:**

The Qatari army participated in military operations in Libya to fall the regime, especially in the battle of "Bab al-Aziziya" in August 2011, where its role focused mainly on coordination between NATO and revolutionaries. Moreover, the Qatari Special Forces conducted training for revolutionaries, and the Qatari Air Force participated in NATO operations through its Mirage 2000 fighters (the Guardian 2011). Also, it provided a military support to the GNA by bringing in some mercenary pilots from "Ecuador" to operate

the "Mirage F1" fighter jets. In addition, it sent hundreds of Somali mercenaries to fight with the GNA forces (Mansour 2020).

- **The Financing role:**

It has provided a financial support for many armed militias such as (Tripoli Revolutionaries and Deterrence force militias), they supported the GNA to enter the capital. Also, Doha also provided a financial support to the oil units Protection Force, which launched an attack on the Oil Crescent region, in June 2018, in an attempt to prevent the LNA's attempts from the progress towards the west, and on the other hand, to deprive Eastern Libya from the card of controlling the oil crescent. Moreover, in 2011, it provided about 400 million Dollars to revolutionaries, to export the oil and to establish their own Television channel (Egypt Today 2020).

The main reasons behind the Qatari Intervention, are as follows:

- The desire to control the Libyan energy resources, especially the natural gas.
- Providing the financial and military support for Islamic armed groups, in line with the Qatari agenda, to extend their influence over the Libyan coasts over the Mediterranean.
- Because of the Egyptian and Emirati's support for the LNA, Qatar thinks that the support of the GNA is appropriate reaction for Egypt and UEA boycott for it (Irish 2019).

**iii. Assessment of the Current Situation of the Libyan Conflict:**

International interventions in the Libyan crisis indicate the desire of many countries to continue the current situation to maximize their benefit from the ongoing war there. According to many experts, the comprehensive political settlement requires the following:

**1.** The existence of an international guarantee to compel all international and regional powers to implement their commitments towards finding a peaceful solution and a comprehensive settlement to end the conflict,

**2.** Expelling all foreign forces and mercenaries,

**3.** Dismantling militias and collecting weapons,

**4.** Conducting fair national elections, under the supervision of the UN, to elect a unified government and a parliament representing all the regions in order to restore Libya's sovereignty and the democratic legitimacy of the Libyan institutions,

**5.** The American Administration should exert pressure on the supporting countries to oblige the Libyan warring factions to sit at the negotiating table and agree on a comprehensive settlement,

**6.** Adherence to the UN resolutions on stopping the sale of weapons to the warring parties.

Although all international conferences and talks aimed at finding a political solution. But the practical indicators reveal that the hardness of reaching to any solution without an effective mechanism to force all parties to accept a ceasefire and to effectively commit to implementing all the decisions agreed upon (Mezran and Badi 2020).

### iv.The Impact of Internationalization of the Libyan Conflict on the Political Settlement Process:

There are some factors play a vital role in hindering the political settlement process, they are as follows:

- **The Increasing International Interference and Militarization of the Libyan Conflict:**

The desire of many countries to maximize their benefits from the Libyan resources and its strategic location, led to "the militarization of the conflict" and transformed it into "proxy war", where both (Russia - France - Egypt - Jordan and the Emirates) support the LNA in the East. While both (Turkey - Qatar and Italy) support the GNA in the west (Megerisi 2020). For example, Russia, indirectly, supported the LNA through using "Wagner Security Group" and it used Syria as a transit point for Russian military aircrafts towards Libya (Nichols 2020). On the other hand, Turkey supported the GNA, directly, through sending its military forces, advisors and equipment such as drones. (Sanders IV and Knipp 2020).

- **The Turkish Greed in the Eastern Mediterranean's Resources:**

Turkey believes that the current conflict represents an excellent opportunity to exploit/ explore energy resources, so it signed the maritime borders demarcation agreement with the GNA. (Reuters 2019). This agreement angered Greece, Cyprus and Egypt because they consider it illegal and violates the UN's Sea law because there is not a common maritime border between Libya and Turkey (Politics Today 2019). Moreover, Egypt declared that the GNA has not the authority to sign this agreement without the approval of the elected Libyan parliament. So, it considered it "not binding" for any party (Allinson and Hussein 2019).

The riskiness of this agreement stems from establishing a new alliance/ bloc parallel to the existing one which includes (Israel - Arab countries - Cyprus and Greece), and both alliances will compete together to control the energy resources in the Mediterranean. This will lead to political, economic and military conflicts in the region to prove their influence. In addition, (Italian - French - American - Russian) companies are managing the exploration operations, this may push the countries of these companies to enter into an economic competition for the discovered wells, which means "internationalizing" the competition between the two main blocs in the region (Darbouche and Fattouh 2012, 1-37).

The Turkish support to the GNA has successfully transmitted the war from Tripoli towards the oil-rich city "Sirte". This prompted Egypt to launch its warning to the GNA from entering "Sirte", and exceeding the redline set by Cairo, the "Sirte-Al-Jufra line" (TRTWorld 2020). The strategic importance of this line can be clarified as follows:

- Al-Jafra Airbase is one of the most important military bases in North Sirte. It is the largest Libyan airbase and it is characterized by the presence of a strong infrastructure. The distance between it and Sirte is about 300 kilometers.

- Al-Jafra base forms an axis linking east, west and south, so the control over it means the control over large areas of Libya. This will represent a threat to the security and stability of the Egyptian state if militias controlled over it, because they can easily access to the Egyptian borders.
- Sirte is one of the main Libyan cities because of its strategic location, between Tripoli and Benghazi, so it is a link between east, west and south. Moreover, It is 1000 km from the Egyptian border,
- The "Sirte Basin" contains the largest oil reserve in Libya, it contains about 80% of the Libyan oil and gas. So, the control over the city will provide a financial source for the armed militias and terrorist groups who can then advance towards Eastern Libya on the border with Egypt.
- There is a port in Sirte that is among the largest in Libya, in addition to a military base (Al-Qardabiya) that is the largest in Libya, being located in the center of the city, which makes it a starting point for combat aircraft in any direction they want to go to in Libya (Tastekin 2020).

**The Competition between International Arms Companies to Control the Libyan Market:**

There is a strong competition between international arms companies to increase their sales to Libya. For example, the UK signed about 231 contracts (2010-2017) with total amount 43.7 Million GBP (AOAV 2018). Although, Germany support ceasefire initiatives but it has exported weapons about 331 Million Euros to Countries that support the warring parties such as (Egypt, Turkey and UAE) and its sales was (308.2 – 15.1 – 7.7) Million Euros respectively (Pladson 2020). In 2018, France's arms sales have reached at 295 million Euro. Moreover, it has granted licenses for arms deals to some countries that support the LNA such as Egypt and UAE (14.1 – 9.5) Billion Euros respectively (A. Rettman 2020).

**v.Foreseeing the future of the Libyan crisis:**

On 5 February 2021, under the auspices of the UN, the "Libya Forum for Political Dialogue" was hold in Geneva, and its main aims were:

- Holding political talks, as part of a multi-track process that includes military and economic negotiations to unify the country under the authority of a single government and paving the way for general elections on 24 December 2021 (BBC 2021).
- Electing a Presidential Council composed of three members representing (East, West and South), and electing a prime minister to form a ministerial team representing all Libyan regions ( Knipp 2020b).

As a result of these talks, "Muhammad Al-Manfi" and "Abdel-Hamid Al-Dabaiba" have been chosen as the president and prime minister respectively. Libyans and the international community hope that the new Government (NUG), where assumed its duties on 15 March 2021, to succeed in unifying state institutions and overseeing the transitional phase until the upcoming general elections.

Although the legitimacy's problem is the basis and origin of the Libyan crisis in its political character before it developed into a military conflict. So, initially, the UN and the International Community tried to find a solution for this problem by providing the "International legitimacy" for the GNA. But it failed to end the crisis and it increased the tension (Belkhairat 2020, 737-736). Then, they added the "constitutional legitimacy" to the new government by getting the parliament's confidence. So, it has succeeded to replace the previous governments and end their mandates (DW 2021).

Despite, Turkey welcomes to the (NUG) officially. But it insists on its military existence and the signed agreements with the GNA. Moreover, the Turkish President "Erdogan" and his adviser "Yasin Aktay" declared that "Turkey will increase its cooperation with the new government during the next phase. Also, the signed

agreements and the military presence will not be affected by the choice of the new government" (Tastekin 2021) .

The Turkish military presence plays a pivotal role in influencing on the future of the Libyan crisis because there are many demands for the departure of foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya. Despite Erdogan's statement "Turkey will withdrawal its forces if other foreign forces withdraw first" (Reuters 2021). But, the direct strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean for Turkey and other countries will remain a real obstacle for the military withdrawal which means the factors threatening the recent political settlement are still existing despite the consensus and reliance on the constitutional legitimacy that the (NUG) gained by the UN. So, the scenario of the political division and the civil war between the warring factions will continue unless there is an international consensus, under the auspices of the UN and the USA, to end the proxy wars, which destroyed the state, and oblige all foreign forces to exit from Libya.

**vi.Results and Discussion:**

Although, the international efforts to end the current crisis and to find a political settlement for the Libyan conflict either by providing the "International legitimacy" or the "Constitutional legitimacy" for the Libyan governments (GNA – NUG). But, the international greediness in the Libyan energy resources and the geopolitical importance of the Libyan state are representing the main stumbling block for any comprehensive political solution.

**Conclusion:**

The geopolitical and economic importance of Libya has played an important role in breaking out a proxy war between many international and regional powers, which led to militarization of the conflict among the Libyan warring factions. So, this undermined the international and regional efforts to end the state of fighting and conflict over legitimacy in Libya and reaching at a comprehensive political settlement.

Although, the "Libya Forum for Political Dialogue" has succeeded to form a new government (NUG), and replaces the two competing governments, by granting it the "constitutional legitimacy". But the Turkish military presence represents a stumbling block in the way of completing the peaceful solution process due to the Turkish desire to protect its interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, either by the insistence on legitimization of the two signed agreements with the GNA and considering them as "international agreements", or through providing the military support to its armed militias' allies. The formation of the (NUG) is not enough to guarantee the back of the security and political stability to Libya, but it requires the existence of the clear commitment from the US, UN and all international and regional partners to compel all foreign countries and mercenaries to withdraw from the Libyan territories.

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