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EDITOR'S NOTE

MUHİTTİN ATAMAN

Libya is one of the most important regional actors in the Middle East and North Africa region in terms of its geographical location and geo-strategic importance. In 2011, Qaddafi was ousted from power raising the hopes of the Libyan people for a democratic regime. Unfortunately, Libya, one of the most interesting fronts of the Arab insurgencies and revolutions, has disintegrated into a severe civil war and a regional crisis.

The reasons behind this are both internal and external. While the clash between the state, non-state, and armed actors within Libya have threatened the internal stability, the intervention of some regional and global actors has incited the conflict further. Authoritarian regimes and pro status-quo states such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have been against the Arab uprisings as they did not want the will of the people to be reflected in the Middle East and Arab countries' administrations. Within this context, these states did not allow the emergence of an encompassing and pluralist political structure in Libya. Furthermore, most international and regional powers such as France, Russia, and the United States have also been supporting this authoritarian coalition. Haftar, who had little influence during the revolution and lived outside of Libya for a long time, attempted a military coup in 2014 by rejecting the authorities of legitimate political actors in the country, with the support of these states. The Government of National Accord (GNA), which is recognized as the only legitimate representative of the Libyan

state and people by many international institutions, most notably the United Nations, suppressed Haftar's coup attempt.

However, the abovementioned states continue to invest in Haftar's forces. After having amassed enough armed forces with the support of a large coalition of states, Haftar launched a comprehensive military attack to take over the capital city of Tripoli in April 2019, to offset-up another autocratic regime in Libya. While everyone saw the capital Tripoli passing into the hands of Haftar as inevitable and only a matter of time, turning a blind eye to the situation, Turkey stepped in and upset all the calculations. As a result, Turkey increased its presence in Libya after two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed with the GNA in November 2019. With these two memorandums, Turkey has determined and declared its sea border in the Eastern Mediterranean and made a commitment to the GNA. Accordingly, when needed and requested by GNA, Turkey is ready to provide all kinds of military support. Especially since January 2020, Turkey has supported the GNA militarily and financially in its struggle against Haftar. The GNA forces supported by Turkey defeated the Haftar troops and forced them to withdraw from a large area in the Western part of the country.

Turkey, which has altered the whole balance of power in Libya within a short time with the new dynamics, has changed the course of the crisis and the civil war in the country. Haftar and his supporters, who preferred only military methods, had to declare a unilateral ceasefire and to sit down at the diplomatic negotiation table. At the same time, Turkey persuaded some countries that are flirting with both sides to strengthen their relationship with the GNA.

Developments in Libya directly influence Turkey, since Libya is a very important country for Turkey in the context of both the history of bilateral relations as well as the regional balance of power. Therefore, since the first days of the revolution, Turkey has been in close relations with the legitimate actors in order to protect the territorial integrity and political independence of the Libyan state. With its support both in the conflict area and at the negotiating table, Turkey ensured that the GNA remains an effective actor. Thus, Turkey has prevented the persons and groups which are under the control of the anti-Turkish coalition during the post-Arab spring period. On the other hand, Turkey has negated all anti-Turkey moves, formations, and processes within the newly emerged strategic regional equation. In this sense, the legitimate Libyan government came to the fore as a regional actor that it can work with.

After signing a ceasefire agreement in October 2020, in Geneva, the political peace talks started under the auspices of the United Nations acting envoy to Libya, Stephanie Williams, and the warring sides have reached a preliminary agreement to a roadmap for elections. The two rival sides have agreed to hold

both parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2021. If the process is completed successfully, the future of the country will be determined after these elections hopefully with an end to the discord in the country.

The Libyan issue is a complex crisis with which many local, regional, and global actors have become involved. Therefore, the resolution of the crisis will only be possible with international consensus. In order to solve the crisis, a negotiation process must begin after securing a sustainable ceasefire agreement, all segments of the Libyan society must be included, and the two sides must reconcile on civil and democratic principles. Only then can a reconstruction of the state and a reform process in political, economic and security spheres be initiated.

This issue of *Insight Turkey* focuses on underscoring both promises of internal reconstruction and challenges fueled by different external actors intervening in the Libyan crisis. This latest issue includes five commentaries and three insightful research articles that explore the Libyan conflict from different perspectives. While some pieces focus on the role of different actors in the crisis, others analyze the reconstruction efforts.

While the civil war has pitted Libyans against each other, foreign interventions have hindered the resolution of the civil war. In this regard, Yahia H. Zoubir's commentary presents a coherent framework of the foreign powers involved in the Libyan conflict and their interests. Zoubir argues that unless those foreign powers have achieved their goals in Libya, an end to the civil war anytime soon remains unlikely. Talha Köse and Bilgehan Öztürk provide a rigorous analysis of the external interventions in Libya and the logic behind each intervention, between offensive, defensive, opportunistic, or ideological.

Understanding the full picture in Libya requires us to fully grasp the Turkish role and motivation for the Libyan conflict. To do so, İsmail Numan Telci underlines the factors and challenges that made it difficult for Turkey to implement its peaceful plans in Libya and argues that Turkey will continue to be an active supporter of peace and stability in the country.

Tarek Megerisi briefly analyzes Europe's relations with post-revolutionary Libya and European policies on Libya to conclude by stating that a continuing struggle between the EU member states over how to handle the new world, that is emerging in the wake of the pax-Americana, is also exposed in European policy on Libya.

Ali Bakir's article aims to discuss the United Arab Emirates' interventions in Libya in terms of their nature, extent, motives, goals, and repercussions. Bakir tries to answer the questions of why Abu Dhabi has been able to act with im-

punity in Libya despite being the top foreign player fueling the war there for many years, and whether it will be able to achieve its goals and continue its interventions in Libya or not.

France, while actively allying with the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, has aggressively confronted Turkey and undermined the internationally recognized Libyan Government of National Accord. On this basis, Timothy Reid seeks to examine the premises of the French policy toward Libya and its real intentions behind these actions.

Guma el-Gamaty highlights the strong foundations and drivers for the Turkish-Libyan strategic alliance which allowed Turkey eventually to provide timely and decisive support for the legitimate Government of National Accord. He argues that the Turkish strategic relationship and cooperation with Libya over the coming decades will contribute to lasting peace as well as institution and state-building.

Based on empirical evidence, Shatha Sbeta and Mohamed Abufalgha advocate for a comprehensive framework to address the political, economic, and social challenges facing Libya. Their proposal draws a clear roadmap that begins with establishing trust and extending the authority of the government across the Libyan territory.

Murat Aslan, focusing on state, non-state, and armed actors, analyses Libya's post-Qaddafi fragile state structure and struggles to build the internal order. He argues that these actors pose a repeating and paradoxical dilemma in which the root causes can be scrutinized by investigating the security culture inherited from Qaddafi's regime.

Four off-topic manuscripts conclude this issue of *Insight Turkey*. This issue places a special emphasis on the insurmountable deadlock that tackled the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict resolution process. Farid Shafiyev and Vasif Huseynov in their off-topic commentary assert that this deadlock is due to the failure of the peace negotiations brokered by different actors to deliver any progress as well as the constant provocations of Armenian military and political leaders, which eventually led to the outbreak of an almost full-scale war on September 27, 2020.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, refugees are in constant danger because they live in highly congested environments. Within this context, Mahmood Monshipouri, Burcu Akan Ellis, and Cassidy Renee Yip call for a new approach to cope with the pandemic while arguing that helping refugees to curb the spread of the current coronavirus cannot be divorced from social contexts.

Lukáš Tichý, Jan Mazač, and Zbyněk Dubský present a modified concept of the EU actorness in energy relations and deals with the identification of its criteria. Based on a predefined methodology, the article also analyses dimensions of actorness in the external energy relations with Algeria.

Written by Shamkhal Abilov, Ceyhun Mahmudlu, and Natig Abdullayev, the last research article focuses on the dispute between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan over the delimitation of the Caspian Sea. This article aims to find out whether the new Convention of 2018 on the status of the Caspian Sea resolved the long-standing dispute and to assess the potential of implementing the Trans Caspian Pipeline under the new conditions.

With one more year coming to an end, we are pleased to present to our readers yet another insightful issue of *Insight Turkey* that aims to bring the Libyan crisis to the attention of the politicians, intellectuals, and academicians. With the hope that you will find this issue informative and interesting, we are looking forward to providing you with more next year. ■

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