

**Table 2: Main actors in the Libyan conflict**

| 1. Domestic actors   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Political elites</i> who had flourished during the Gaddafi era, for instance technocrats, government contractors.</li><li>• <i>Local politicians</i> representing local interests such as the Misratan business community</li><li>• Local notables (<i>hukama</i>), including prominent personalities and family heads who played a key role in establishment of local councils and engaged in dispute resolution mechanisms, including negotiating ceasefires between warring communities.</li><li>• <i>Political parties</i> such as the National Forces Alliance, Justice and Construction, Salafists</li><li>• <i>The Government of National Accord</i> (GNA): borne out of the 2015 Libya Political Agreement, it was comprised of a 9-member Presidency Council made up of a prime minister (Fayez al Sarraj), five deputy prime ministers and three ministers.</li><li>• <i>The House of Representatives</i> (HoR): the 200-member legislature elected on 25 June 2014. As the parliament, the HoR is responsible for endorsing the GNA. The HoR was based in Tobruk and was allied to Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thini based in the eastern city of al-Bayda. Prime Minister Al-Thini and his government later resigned in September 2020 in the midst of protests across Libya over power cuts and deteriorating living conditions.</li><li>• <i>High Council of State</i> (HCS): advisory council created as part of the Libya Political Agreement</li><li>• <i>National Salvation Government</i>: a parallel government formed by political groups from the General National Congress blocs that refused to concede in the June 2014 elections. Based in Tripoli, the NSG was headed by Khalifa Ghwell and established a parallel parliament from the elections of 2012. The NSG stepped down in April 2016 after the arrival of the Presidency Council in Tripoli in March 2016.</li></ul> <p>(Sources: Winer 2019:7, ICG 2012, Fitzgerald &amp; Toaldo 2016)</p> |
| 2. Major armed groups  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Libyan National Army, LNA</i>: also known as the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), the LNA is the most high-profile non-state armed group headed by Khalifa Haftar, a former general in Gaddafi's army. Formed in 2014 to fight Islamist factions and terrorist groups in eastern Libya, the LNA is comprised of defected army and air force units; military brigades such as the Saiqa Special Forces, the 106<sup>th</sup> Brigade and the 166<sup>th</sup> Brigade and local and tribal militia such as the Awaqir, Awlad Suleiman and al-Ahlali, among others. Affiliated with the Tobruk-based HoR, the LNA is also backed by the UAE, Egypt, Russia and France, who have framed their financial and military support around Haftar's counter-terrorism and anti-Islamist agenda.</li><li>• <i>Militias affiliated with GNA</i>: opposed to Haftar's LNA, the armed groups and militias aligned with the GNA in Tripoli include a coalition of militias from Tripoli, Misrata, Zintan and Zawiya. Tripoli militias include the Tripoli Protection Force, Special Deterrence Force (SDF); Presidential Guard; Fursan Janzour Brigade and National Mobile Force. Militias from Misrata include the Infantry 301 Brigade, Al-Majoub Brigade, Anti-Terrorism Force (ATF), Abu Bakr Sadiq Brigade Operation Solid Structure (Al-Bunyan al-Marsous) and the Samoud Front, among others. Militias from the south include Ahrar Fezzan, Shuhadaa Sabha and Shuhadaa Murzuq.</li></ul> <p>(Sources: IISS 2020:196)</p>   |

### 3. Foreign actors

#### 3.1.Pro-Haftar camp

- *United Arab Emirates*: the largest and longest-standing military sponsor to the LNA, motivated by a mix of ideological, geopolitical and economic interests. The UAE's fear of spread of democratisation that drove the Arab Spring, as well as its aggressive stance against political Islam are major pillars of its support for Haftar's military campaigns. The UAE has been a major supplier of arms to LNA including drones, missiles and combat aircraft.
- *Egypt*: motivated by an anti-Islamist ideology, especially against the Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo's alignment with Haftar saw it use its vast border with Libya to funnel weapons and provide logistical support and training to LNA forces.
- *Saudi Arabia*: Riyadh was a major financial sponsor of Haftar, based on its established religious and ideological links with Madkhalist groups in Libya. Saudi policy in Libya is also influenced by its drive for economic diversification and expanding energy infrastructure seen as a key part of maintaining the UAE-Saudi led regional status quo favourable to authoritarian stability.
- *France*: France played a double game in Libya, officially supporting the internationally-recognised GNA while covertly providing military support to Haftar. A key driver of French policy is counterterrorism, linked to its interests and participation in counterterrorism operations in the Sahel. France has also provided diplomatic cover for Haftar in the UNSC, blocking attempts to condemn his operations against Tripoli as well as fending off criticism of the UAE's continued violation of the arms embargo.
- *Russia*: Russia engaged with both sides of the Libyan conflict, lending credence to its designation as a 'wildcard power' (Megerisi 2019a:10). Its links with the GNA are perceived as important for the re-establishment of contracts and deals signed with the Gaddafi government, as well as gaining greater access to Libya's oil and gas wealth. From a geopolitical standpoint, Moscow has its sights on establishing a naval base on Libya's coast as means of projecting military presence in the Mediterranean and undermining NATO and European interests in the region.

#### 3.2.Pro-GNA camp

- *Turkey*: As an ideological and systemic rival to the UAE, Turkey was the GNA's largest military backer, drawing on a maritime boundary agreement and military cooperation pact signed in November 2019. Turkey's foreign policy in Libya is influenced by its interests in the east Mediterranean where geopolitical competition from Cyprus and Greece, backed by Israel and Egypt have thwarted its energy security plans. The maritime demarcation agreement with the GNA has not only enabled Ankara to launch a counter-claim to the exclusive economic zone claimed by the East Med Gas forum, but to also advance its ideological outlook on civil-military relations and secular rule in Libya, in opposition to the UAE and LNA preference for authoritarianism and pivotal role of the military in politics. Turkey's intensified military support was a key element behind the GNA's counteroffensive against Haftar's siege of Tripoli in 2019, mainly through Turkish drones aided by Turkish-backed Syrian mercenaries on the ground.
- *Qatar*: Qatar played a major role in support of revolutionary armed groups during the 2011 uprising against Gaddafi. After the ascension of Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in 2013, Qatar scaled back on its intervention in Libya, opting to funnel financial support to Libyan factions that oppose

Haftar as a way of undermining systemic rivals, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Qatar has also played a key role in the disinformation and propaganda war of narratives through deployment of social media trolls, bots and prominent television channels and news networks.

(Source: Megerisi 2019a)

### ***United States of America***

The US policy in Libya was guided by the ‘leading from behind’ paradigm espoused by the Obama administration. Although it preferred to cede post-conflict transitions to Libyans supported by the UN and the EU, the US has acted to protect vital security interests such as its air support in the campaign against ISIS in 2016. Under the Trump administration, the US sent mixed signals with regard to Haftar’s offensive on Tripoli, following a phone call Haftar and Trump who expressed support for the General’s counterterrorism agenda. Signs of a shift in US policy emerged in 2020 following the threat of sanctions on Haftar, coupled with US Africa Command’s public information campaign to criticize Russia’s increasing militarized presence in Libya.

(Sources: Megerisi 2019a:12; Wehrey 2020: 36-37)

### ***European Union***

EU policy in Libya has been characterised by paralysis and division. The failure to advance a cohesive foreign policy on Libya has been evident in the competing agendas of member states particularly Germany, France and Italy who have found themselves on opposite sides of divides in Libya. For instance, French policy focus on counterterrorism has seen it side with Haftar, whereas Italy’s emphasis on migration control meant that a deal with the GNA was more favourable to its interests. Additionally, the weak enforcement of the EU naval operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, launched to monitor violations of the arms embargo on Libya, underlined the ineffectiveness of European policy and its entanglement in the geopolitics of the east Mediterranean entailing Turkey’s contested maritime boundaries claims and energy interests.

Germany’s championing of the Berlin process has been hailed as a positive for multilateral rules-based diplomacy, and a boost for the UN-facilitated talks. However, European policy faces risk of being undermined by member states’ interests and impediments to policy implementation such as politicization and lack of cohesion.

(Source: Megerisi 2020d:37)