

TÜRKİYE-LIBYA RELATIONS: TÜRKİYE'S EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN POLICY

Ahmet Burak³⁰

PhD in Political Science, Independent researcher, Türkiye

Abstract: Without a doubt, Türkiye is one of the most important Mediterranean powers and has made a significant contribution to the creation of Mediterranean culture for many centuries. And since the Justice and Development Party (**tur.** *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, *AKP*) came to power in 2002, Türkiye has made significant progress in strengthening the status of a regional power. When the intervention of the NATO military coalition in Libya started (March 19, 2011), which led to the fall of the government of Muammar Gaddafi. Thereby, Libya has become the scene of a civil war and a clash of geopolitical interests. It should be noted that Libya is an Ottoman heritage. This country is a familiar territory for Türkiye: for over 350 years, Libya was part of the Ottoman Empire. In connection with this today Ankara is actively involved in the conflict in Libya and increasing its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. The article is devoted to Türkiye's foreign policy at the present stage. Author in this study analysis that relations between Türkiye and Libya also Türkiye's activities in the region within the sphere of its geopolitical interests in the Eastern Mediterranean are carried out at the political, economic, cultural and military.

Keywords: Türkiye, Libya, Eastern Mediterranean, relations, security, geopolitical interests

Introduction

Türkiye's foreign policy towards African states has been particularly active over the past two decades. It is part of the world occupies a priority place in the country's multi-vector foreign policy. Despite the fact that Türkiye's economic, political also military presence in Africa isn't so extensive, notwithstanding, Ankara is becoming a more prominent player on the continent.

Analyzing the forms and methods of Republic of Türkiye's presence in Libya at the present stage, we can accentuate that the existence of some ethnopolitical paradigm. Therefore, since in power 2002, the AKP led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a course was announced to generalize the experience of Ottoman rule in Africa, Türkiye's real political steps in this direction demonstrate the present more or less successful implementation of the neo-Ottoman idea. In this context, it is significant that Türkiye has been on the side of the Government of National Accord (GNA) against the events in Libya since 2011. The two countries with historical ties have an important geopolitical importance in the Mediterranean Sea, which is why Türkiye and Libya signed a mutual Memorandum of Understanding in 2019 for the equitable sharing of the use of energy resources in the field of security and energy in the Eastern Mediterranean and thus determined their maritime borders. However, Türkiye has resumed hydrocarbon drilling operations in the Eastern

³⁰ Contact address: ahmet83burak@gmail.com

Mediterranean. In addition, there have been very serious changes in the foreign policy of the Republic of Türkiye. The state with the *"Blue Homeland"* strategy to return Türkiye to a dominant role in the Mediterranean, as well as commercial and naval power. In 2006, the idea of a *"Blue Homeland"* (See: Gürdeniz, 2015;2021;2023) was outlined by retired admiral Cem Gürdeniz as well as the level of state doctrine was refined to by another former rear admiral Cihat Yaycı (See: Yaycı, 2020a;2020b) who is currently heads the Center for Maritime and Global Strategies at the University of Bahçeşehir. The essence of the doctrine is that the continental shelf and the water area of Türkiye are of the same importance and importance to the state as its land part. That is to say, the water part of the homeland is as sacred as the land part. In summary, we can say that Türkiye's future lies in the seas, as it isn't only a source of livelihood in the form of fishing, however a source of energy. Seismic exploration conducted by Turkish vessels within the framework of the *"Blue Homeland"* idea has already shown that there are huge reserves of natural gas on the Black and Mediterranean Sea shelves, the production of which can significantly change Türkiye's position in the modern world. For understanding that, in front of this reality, it's essential to inquire of this question: Why does Türkiye in Libya?

In this respect, this article is devoted to identifying Türkiye's foreign policy aims in Libya also analyzing the current state of bilateral relations between Türkiye-Libya. The object of the study is the foreign policy strategy of Türkiye, the subject is Türkiye-Libya relations at the present stage. During the course of working on the scientific work, the author has attracted a significant body of scientific publications in English, Turkish, Russian likewise Polish to ensure coverage of studies on Türkiye-Libya issues. The analysis of events presented in this study, compiled, on the basis of that the methodology of this study comprises of the analysis of the literature by reveal of the existence of Türkiye in Libya. Thus, this research is a qualitative study. Within the framework of the subject, the information obtained on the basis of the examination of the printed books, researches and articles were evaluated also the current situation in Libya was analyzed, and solution proposals were presented on the steps Türkiye has taken here and how it is following a path.

Relations between Türkiye and Libya

In 1551 the Ottoman Empire captured Tripoli and established the province of Tripoli. After the Ottoman Empire dominated the region, it attached importance to the territorial integrity of Libya in order to consolidate its dominance in the Mediterranean basin (Afşar, 2023: 23). Şaban Öztürk underlined that „As it is known, Libya, one of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire located in North Africa, was the part of the territory that remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire for the longest time (until 1911)” (Öztürk, 2023:11). The Italians, in 1911, encouraged by the British and French, attacked the three Ottoman provinces known today as Libya in a bid to acquire a colony in North Africa (Clark, 2020: 36). Thus, the Ottoman Empire had to leave North Africa after hundreds of years. Any post-Ottoman Türkiye would likely be partitioned, and would have a marginal presence in the Mediterranean (Smith, 2016: 8). The most important lesson to be learned from this is the inevitability of having maritime dominance, as we all know. On October 18, 1912, the Ottoman Empire formally ceded Libya to Italy under the Treaty of Ouchy. Until 1947, Libya formally remained an

Italian colony, when Italy relinquished its claims upon Libya, which had been under joint Franco-British occupation since 1943 (See on: The Office of the Historian). Italy owned Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan from 1911 to 1943. In 1934, the colonialists united these areas and named them Italian Libya. During this time, 110 thousand Italians (12 percent of the total population of the colony) moved here from Calabria and Sicily (Lenta ru, 2015).

The newly installed King Idris Al-Sanussi, accompanied by the country's first prime minister, Mahmoud Muntasir, proudly proclaimed Libya's independence from the balcony of the Al-Manara Palace in Benghazi, on 24 December 1951 (Pargeter, 2012: 35). Richard A. Lobban Jr. and Chris H. Dalton pointed out that „King Idris, the grandson of the Grand Sanusi, became promoted as the new constitutional monarch of Libya from 1951 to 1969. This pre-Gaddafi history concludes in 1969 when a young military officer, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, toppled King Idris and started a new era in Libya” (Lobban & Dalton, 2014: 51).

Neslihan Kibar Önder explains the policies of the Gaddafi era in the following words: “Libya became the country with the most active and intensive foreign policy. Libya's foreign policy has developed under the Gaddafi axis and has adapted to changing conditions. Gaddafi based his foreign policy on Arab nationalism, ensuring global support for groups fighting against imperialism also protecting Muslim communities” (Önder, 2021: 141). In this period, the relations between Türkiye and Libya have grown over the subsequent years. Türkiye-Libya bilateral relations entered a period of revival with Türkiye's Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974. Muammar Gaddafi, who perceived Türkiye's Cyprus operation as a jihad movement carried out by Muslims, provided military, political, material also moral backing to Republic of Türkiye with an understanding that would bring the dose of relations to the top (Ceviz, 2011: 89). The memoirs of retired Ambassador Taner Baytok, recalling the support of the late Libyan former leader Muammar Gaddafi to Türkiye in the days immediately after the Cyprus Peacekeeping Operation, were included. Baytok said that „in the days immediately after the Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974, when Türkiye was suffering from a serious lack of weapons, Gaddafi reported that they could send the abundant amount of weapons and missiles that were located at the US base that he had closed. Then, soon after, 4 plane loads of weapons and materials were sent to Türkiye, and Gaddafi refused to take the money for these weapons” (See on: Şarku'l Avsat, 2020). The year 1975 is a milestone event in the relations of the two countries. An agreement was reached between the prime ministers of the two countries by holding talks on issues such as cooperation in cultural, commercial, economic, scientific and technical issues, military training and material production. So, a great friendship process has started between Libya and Türkiye. The signed agreements have been lined up one after the other. Many Turkish companies had flocked to Libya and contributed to the development of the country (Üstün, 2020: 124-129). Throughout Turgut Özal's tenure as prime minister also president, in the 1980s, Ankara had an open policy towards North African countries, notably Libya making the relations grow (Maalim, 2023: 34).

There had been interesting developments in bilateral relations in the 90s. The most important of these was the visit of the Turkish former prime minister Necmettin Erbakan to Libya in 1996. Alan Makovsky has presented that in his analysis „Erbakan continues to take positions very much at odds with those of Türkiye's NATO allies. During his controversial trip to Libya in October, he condemned the U.N. sanctions imposed on Libya in 1992 (for its role in the bombings of Pan Am 103 and a UTA flight), calling for their early

abrogation... Erbakan even declared Libya to be “the country suffering most from terror” (a seeming allusion to the U.S. aerial attack on Libya in 1986)” (Makovsky, 1997). However, in Tripoli on 6 October 1996, Gaddafi’s words at the joint press conference also had a huge influence in Türkiye. MEED (Middle East business intelligence) was publishing this news as follows: “Gaddafi, with a visibly embarrassed Erbakan standing alongside him, called for the independent Kurdish state long opposed by Ankara. He also lambasted Türkiye’s hosting of US military bases, and military connections developed earlier in 1996 with Israel which cover air-force training and defense industry co-operation” (MEED, 1996). After this incident, there was a reaction by Turkish politicians against to Erbakan. Among the reaction was: „The left wing has called for it censure motion against Mr Erbakan for leaving Türkiye open to scathing attacks from both his hosts and Ankara’s close ally, Washington, after his Libyans visit” (The Irish Times, 1996). As a result, Gaddafi’s rhetoric has affected Türkiye-Libya relations and his personal thoughts have been reflected in foreign policy. Changes are observed between states from time to time depending on policies, and in this sense, Gaddafi did not hesitate to express his personal thoughts in decisions regarding his country.

Türkiye has been ruled by the AKP since 2002. It was the end of the coalition government that had lasted since 1991. In the current century, many events have taken place that have modified the new policy. After coming to power in 2002, the Justice and Development Party, led by president of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, challenged the political line of the Kemalist predecessors. The new government focused on economic development and expansion in the region, actively took an interest in the affairs of other countries, especially the countries of the Middle East. Foreign policy has been enriched by new vectors known as the “concept of strategic depth”, the strategy of “zero problems with neighbors” (resolving disputes through dialogue, promoting the development, prosperity and economic independence of neighboring countries) and striving to play the role of leader of Muslim states (Burak, 2021: 64-65). Hüseyin Bağcı and Serdar Erdurmaz stated that „During the Gaddafi period, both sides put in efforts by common accord in order to keep Turkish-Libyan relations open to development. Minister of State Zafer Çağlayan made a visit to Libya in early January 2009 during which the two countries reached an agreement regarding investment, construction, and trade” (Bağcı & Erdurmaz, 2017: 40). In 2009, Prime Minister Erdoğan made a historic visit to Libya Erdoğan became the first prime minister to travel from Türkiye to this country after the visit of the then Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to Libya in 1996. At that time, relations went down that path of reorganization with this visit. (Sabah Gazetesi, 2009). About this meeting, Buğra Süsler emphasized that „In Tripoli in 2009, highlighted that the Turkish government saw Libya as a “vital partner in Türkiye’s Opening to Africa strategy”, underlined the importance of enhancing political and economic cooperation in the Mediterranean, and signed bilateral agreements covering a wide range of sectors” (Süsler, 2022). It was observed that: in 2008 the trade volume between Türkiye-Libya was 1.4 billion US dollars. This rate increased by 57% in 2009 and reached 2.2 billion US dollars (Bağcı & Erdurmaz, 2017: 41). However, in 2010, popular uprisings began in the Middle East independently of the country’s administrations. These events, called the “Arab Spring”, have influenced many countries. Libya was also affected politically and economically by this, and a civil war began in the country. The area where Türkiye was most affected was faced with the migrant problem.

Libyan civil war 2011

In Tunisia on December 17, 2010, the so-called “Arab Spring” started, when a young vegetable vendor, Muhammad Bouazizi, lit himself on fire in one of the least turbulent countries in the Arab world. This act of protest resulted from being repeatedly denied a license to ply his modest trade at the impoverished interior town of Sidi Bouzid (McCaffrey, 2012: 9, Ghada Hashem Talhami, Preface). Besides, the Arab Spring – is utter more identified with the events in the four states where the revolutions took place most dramatically: Tunisia, Egypt, Syria also Libya (Lakomy, 2013: 275).

Correspondingly, 2011 on February 17, after forty-two years of tyranny, the Libyan people rose up against Colonel Muammar Qaddafi. He was passed away eight months later—killed in Sirte, his hometown. Libyans celebrated the collapse of the Qaddafi regime, and their NTC (National Transitional Council) declared the country’s liberation. And Ibrahim Fraihat laid stress on that „They soon realized, however, that some of their greatest challenges were still ahead. Less than three years after revolutionaries removed Qaddafi from power, they themselves turned against each other, waging a brutal civil war that spread to large parts of Libya” (Fraihat, 2016: 21). It should also be added here, Qaddafi was overthrown in an uprising that received vast military support from the NATO (Majid, 2015: 71). As NATO bombs were falling on Libya, in March 2011, the White House Middle East strategist Dennis Ross told the press this was a “limited humanitarian intervention, not war” (O’Sullivan, 2017: 167). NATO’s political end goals for its Libya campaign were determined during the Berlin Ministerial Meeting on 14 April 2011: all attacks on civilians and civilian populated areas were to end, Qaddafi was to withdraw his forces, and access to humanitarian aid was to be unhindered. (Holst & Fink, 2013: 75-76).

Vijay Prashad summarized the bombardment of Libya incident as follows: „The bombardment of Libya between March and August 2011 was massive campaign, with twenty thousand sorties launched to erode the power-base of Qaddafi. No regime can last such an assault. It was remarkable that Qaddafi was able to hold off for as long as his regime did” (Prashad, 2012: 215). Asif Majid evaluated this issue in this way: „After Qaddafi was eliminated, direct military support was withdrawn and limited support for the reconstruction process was offered, leaving the NTC (National Transitional Council) to deal with rebel forces. The West had learned its twenty-first-century lesson in interventionism the hard way in Iraq and wasn’t about to repeat the mistake of a lengthy and costly restoration process. In the words of historian Hugh Roberts, “shadow play” limited Western liability” (Majid, 2015: 73-74). After all, if we list the characteristic features of the Libyan operation:

- a) the United Kingdom and France pushed for a military operation which they saw as critical to European security (Hallams & Schreer, 2012: 322). M. Cherif Bassiouni noted that, “France’s motivations have been characterized as stemming from domestic politics, regional agendas, economic goals, and the desire to reassert itself as a leader on foreign and military affairs. France was also a major supplier of weapons to Libya, and continued to do so as the conflict was underway. Whatever the specific interests of the different states that took part in military intervention, their actions helped secure the end of the Qadhafi regime” (Bassiouni, 2013: 121).

- b) the United States didn't regard the conflict as affecting its core national interest but still provided some limited leadership and participation;
- c) Germany and Poland openly criticized the operation and didn't take part;
- d) only six European nations – Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Norway and Denmark – contributed to the strike mission – also one of those (Norway) pulled out of the air strikes during the campaign (Hallams & Schreer, 2012: 322).

As a NATO country, Türkiye's stance in this crisis has been primarily humanitarian. Türkiye with the United Arab Emirates which is motivated by similar humanitarian considerations, to undertake a joint humanitarian assistance operation. The operation envisages the ferrying of humanitarian relief material to Benghazi. The aid provided to Libya was as follows: approximately 4 million US Dollars' worth humanitarian assistance, including 32 tons of medicine also medical equipment, 20.000 blankets, 388 tons of basic foodstuffs, 2.000 tents, 72 tons of drinking water, two ambulant kitchens as well as a mobile bakery able to produce 10.000 loaves of bread per day, is being dispatched to Libya (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011). On September, 2011, on the political front, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was in Tripoli, boosting international support for the NTC a day after Britain's and France's leaders won a hero's welcome there for helping to overthrow Gaddafi (France 24, 2011). Attended Friday prayers at Tripoli's Martyr Square, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, said to the people of Sirte „I am happy to have been a witness to the advent of democracy in Libya" and he talked about that „how the age of tyranny and dictatorship is over". However, should be mentioned it, Al Jazeera reported that „France and Britain spearheaded the air campaign that toppled Gaddafi, but Türkiye – which had contracts worth \$15bn in Libya – backed it reluctantly and was slow to recognize those now leading the oil-rich North African country" (Aljazeera, 2011).

Second Libyan civil war (2014–2020)

Libya has been on the agenda of the international community with the internal conflicts since 2011 to the present. The first wave of the civil war in Libya more or less ended after the assassination Gaddafi on October 20, 2011. The internal situation started to normalize also the construction of new state structures began in 2012. However, Libyans held their first parliamentary elections in July 2012. (Коротаев & Исаев & Шишкина, 2021: 111). Therefore, Mohamed Eljarh remarked that „the struggle for power and resources was easily convoluted with strife between political Islamist groups dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and the former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) on one side, and the National Forces Alliance on the other side. After the 7 July 2012 elections these two competing sides were pitted against each other in the newly elected General National Congress (GNC)" (Eljarh, 2017: 102).

Interestingly enough, considered free and fair, the elections were doubly remarkable in that they took place after the fall of the Muammar Qaddafi regime and the electorate strongly assisted moderate political parties, reversing a regional trend favoring Islamist groups. Libya's liberal political party, the National Forces Alliance (NFA) won 39 of the 80 party seats, and the Justice and Construction Party (JCP) secured the second largest number with 17 party seats (St. John, 2015: 88). Then, the GNC elected Muhammad Yousuf Magariaf, leader of the National Front Party, as speaker of the GNC and de facto

head of state, on 9 August 2012 (St. John, 2015: 89). Except this, Wolfgang Mühlberger gave utterance to „on election day a voter turnout of roughly 1.6 million voters, a total corresponding to 62 percent of registered voters, gave proof that Libyans were eager to support the new political system in the making” (Mühlberger, 2012: 7). In October 2012, Ali Zeidan was elected as Libyan prime minister, just weeks after failing to secure the chairmanship of the Libyan parliament, the GNC (BBC, 2013).

However, things didn't go as they were expected. By virtue of the fact that political significant differences of opinion within the government were a matter of competition, the parties couldn't demonstrate a holistic approach to solving country problems, also the ground for security couldn't be created as regional polarizations increased in the process (Çügen, 2023: 3). When the powers of the General National Congress were to end, on February 14, 2014, Khalifa Haftar³¹ appeared on television, announcing the dissolution of the Congress and the creation of a government that would rule until new elections. Haftar, on May 16, 2014, announced the begin of a large-scale air and ground operation by units of the armed forces under his control in the Benghazi area. The armed confrontation took place and is taking place mainly in the north of Libya between the cells of the Islamic State, the Muslim Brotherhood and their opponents, the troops of Field marshal Khalifa Haftar, on the other hand. So, the Field marshal's troops were 20 km from Tripoli (Pushin, 2020). As a result, Haftar attempted a coup in 2014, but this attempt failed because he couldn't enter Tripoli due to the resistance of the militias, by the way a compromise was reached. Here it is necessary to add that, one of the most important issues to be considered is actually the places that Haftar has captured: the Oil Crescent region, Benghazi, Derna, after the cities, in January 2019, he advanced to the Fizan region in the south of the country (Canlı, 2019).

From a general point of view, in line with the relations of interest, Haftar received effective support from other countries as well. Some of them are: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt. US President Donald Trump has also made statements supporting him, especially in the attacks he has launched against ISIS. For Russia, Haftar as the only realistic bulwark against extremism in Libya. According to France, on the other hand, argues that Haftar will play an important role in building Libya's future (NTV, 2019). Türkiye's position on this issue is important. Türkiye hasn't adopted Haftar and his policies in any way. Türkiye, which continued to be on the side of the General National Congress government in the subsequent process, continued to establish close relations with the GNC during Haftar's failed coup attempt in 2014. Also, Ankara supported the National Salvation Government (NSG) government established in 2016 (Uzunöner & Çıkırıkçı, 2023: 30).

Naturally, the following question can be asked here why Türkiye did not support Haftar? First of all, when conducting an analysis, it is necessary not to pass without saying that, after the 2014 elections, Libya was politically divided in two. One of them is the House of Representatives located in Tobruk in the east of the country, also the other is

³¹ Short information about Khalifa Haftar: „Khalifa Haftar was a former general and commander of Colonel Gaddafi's military forces.⁸⁴ He played a prominent role in the 1969 military coup, and he was a member of the RCC. However, the Libyan-Chadian war became a milestone for his long-time friendship with Gaddafi because Haftar was captured by Chadian forces in March 1987, and Colonel Gaddafi disavowed him by claiming he was not part of the Libyan army. That forced General Haftar into an exile in the United States in the early 1990s, and he stayed there until the February 2011 uprisings” (Sarihan, 2023: 158).

the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord, a United Nations (UN)-led initiative. The Government of National Accord, headquartered in Tripoli, is considered legitimate and supported by Türkiye, especially by the UN. As stated above, the House of Representatives, which is controlled by the Tobruk-based Haftar forces, receives support from the United States, the United Arab Emirates, France, Russia, Egypt also Saudi Arabia. President Erdoğan had stated that „Türkiye’s support *“creates a balance”* on the ground in the Tripoli government’s fight against Haftar, which is supported by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt” (BBC Türkçe, 2019). The consequence of this is, the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of National Accord-State of Libya signed (on 27 November 2019), a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to delimit their continental shelves and the exclusive economic zones in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The Memorandum of Understanding establishes an 18.6 nautical mile maritime boundary between Türkiye and Libya, creating a maritime corridor between both countries (García-Carriazo, 2021: 10). Hence, Türkiye has taken an important step in the struggle for hydrocarbon sharing in the region. In addition, with this agreement, Türkiye responded to the formation of the Eastern Mediterranean Natural Gas Forum, which was developed by Greece, Egypt, Republic of Cyprus, also Israel with the support of the US. Regarding this, Mona Sukkarieh has two key analyses, the first is „ The Forum’s establishment therefore has an undeniable geopolitical dimension fueled in particular by poor or troubled relations between Türkiye and its neighbors, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece and Israel” and secondly, „ From their perspective, each of these countries has found itself at the receiving end of a more assertive Turkish foreign policy over the past decade, which has prompted a realignment in the region to balance against perceived Turkish threats” (Sukkarieh, 2021: 5).

Türkiye-Libya (GNA) maritime deal (2019) and Turkish intervention in Libya (2020-present)

On 27 November 2019, between Türkiye-Libya *“Memorandum of Understanding on Delimitation of the Maritime Jurisdiction Areas in the Mediterranean”* was done in Istanbul. Have agreed as follows: The boundaries of the Continental Shelf and the Exclusive Economic Zone in the Mediterranean between the Republic of Türkiye and the Government of National Accord-State of Libya begins at “Point A” (34° 16’ 13.720”N – 26° 19’ 11.640”E) and ends at the Point B (34° 09’ 07.9”N – 26° 39’ 06.3”E) (See: Memorandum of Understanding, 2019). The policies of the Eastern Mediterranean countries to keep Türkiye out in the energy field have not yielded results and Ankara has become one of the effective actors of Libya as of 2019 (Sürmelioglu Parlar, 2022: 98).

In doing so, with this agreement, other problems were arise. The anti-Türkiye countries in the region were also demonstrating their own moves. And at this point, interests began to talk. Filippos Proedrou claimed that „the Turkish-Libya agreement effectively squeezes Cypriot, Egyptian and Greek EEZs and denies islands’ rights to EEZ, this way clashing with Greece’s cornerstone standpoint in regards to maritime delimitation zones”. (Proedrou, 2021: 685). Egypt, which is another important actor in its subject, is not standing idly by and ultimately, the Turkish-Libyan MoU directly challenged Egypt’s sovereignty. So, within this period, two triple alliances have been formed, one between Greece, Cyprus, and Israel also the other between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt. As a result,

while these alliances and rapprochements have negatively affected Egyptian-Turkish relations, they have improved Egyptian-Israeli relations (Şener, 2023: 117-118). In other words, Egypt's move goals to consolidate a favorable energy landscape where Egypt, Israel and Cyprus cooperate in the energy realm leaving Türkiye out of the picture (Proedrou, 2021:688). If the country that is another addressee of the subject is Italy, sides with Türkiye on Libya, it exceedingly supports the EastMed pipeline, while being under intense pressure by its European counterparts, foremost France, to harden its stance vis-a-vis Turkish maneuvering in the Eastern Mediterranean (Proedrou, 2021: 688).

As is seen, after the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011, on the one hand, a vacuum of balanced power appeared in the region, on the other hand, gas fields discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean. They have caused a new rivalry involving both non-regional and regional players, among which, in addition to traditional actors, new ones have appeared, including Russia. Federation of Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict on the side of Bashar al-Assad in 2015 made Moscow one of the main actors in regional politics - first in Syria, and then, indirectly, in Libya (Агазаде & Павлова & Николова, 2021: 119). As noted by the publication Lenta ru, „In Libya, Russia is primarily interested in maintaining control over local oil fields, and not in the coming to power of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army (LNA), which it supports” (Lenta ru, 2024).

Meantime, relating to the above, on November 27 during a meeting between president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Fayez al-Sarraj³² in Istanbul, Türkiye and the GNA signed except a memorandum of understanding on the 'delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas' in the Mediterranean Sea, plus signed a memorandum of understanding on security also military cooperation (Bakir, 2019). MoU covers increased cooperation in the fields of terrorism, intelligence, migration as well the defense industry. In line with the results of the agreements Türkiye, on January 2, 2020, the Turkish parliament approved an official intervention in Libya. Aron Lund noted that, „The intervention quickly reversed the balance of the war, but Türkiye and the pro-GNA militias stopped pushing eastward in June 2020, respecting red lines laid down by Russia and Egypt. A ceasefire was formalized on 23 October 2020” (Lund, 2022: 37). Thus, on January 12, 2020, negotiations were to take place in Moscow between NTC leader Fayez al-Sarraj and LNA commander Haftar, at which it was planned to discuss a peaceful settlement of the situation in Libya. Neverthelater, the parties refused to negotiate directly. The formally concluded truce lasted only a few hours, after which it was violated also hostilities resumed (Ганиев & Карякин, 2020: 18).

Engin Yüksel pointed out that „Since the signing of a military agreement, high-ranking Turkish military personnel have assumed command of the operations in Tripoli. Thanks to the formation of a joint command centre, the Turkish Army has directed the GNA aligned factions to repel the LNA (Haftar's Libyan National Army) offensive and defend Tripoli at any cost” (Yüksel, 2020: 145-146). Consequently, the MoU of military has authorized Türkiye to utilize the Government of National Accord aligned forces as local proxies. Even so, Turkish technical assistance and arms encourage couldn't make up for the GNA's manpower deficiency (Yüksel, 2020: 146). On that note, the U.S. military said that Türkiye sent more than 3,500 Syrian fighters to Libya during the first three months of 2020 to help the North African country's internationally recognized government in its civil

³² The Chairman of the Presidential Council of Libya and Head of Government of the Government of National Accord from 2016-2021.

war against a rebel commander (RFE/RL, 2024). On February 21, 2020, in a statement to reporters, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that “Syrian teams” from the SNA (Syrian National Army) were carrying out missions in Libya. On February 22, 2020, in a speech in the Turkish city of Izmir Erdoğan once again confirmed the presence of SNA personnel in Libya. (Cohen Yanarocak, H. E. & Spyer, J., 2021). Concordantly, on October, 2020, Mücahit Aydemir highlighted that „A Russian cargo plane carrying Syrian fighters landed in Libya’s Sirte province, controlled by warlord Khalifa Haftar, the Libyan army said” (Aydemir, 2020). Nevertheless, report³³ of United States Department of Defense in support of this issue said, „ In Libya, fighting in the year-long civil war intensified following a significant increase of foreign mercenary forces. As many as 2,500 fighters associated with the Wagner Group, a Russian paramilitary company, and as many as 3,800 Syrian fighters were in Libya during the quarter” (See on: U.S. DoD Report, 2020). On the other side, the Turkish drones played a central role in recent time in shifting Libya’s civil war. In May, 2020, a critical moment came when Turkish drones, in coordination with Turkish warships, attacked the strategic al-Watiya air base, about 80 miles south of Tripoli, allowing government forces to capture the base and ending the LNA’s Tripoli offensive (Fahim, 2020).

It should also be mentioned here that, in addition to being used in Ukraine and Azerbaijan, TB2s have been deployed by the governments of Qatar, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Morocco as well Poland. And, according to Stephen Witt, “In the Libyan civil war, Türkiye and Russia backed opposing factions, and the TB2 faced off against Russia’s Pantsir-S1, an anti-aircraft system that shoots missiles at planes and can be mounted on a vehicle. At least nine Pantsirs were destroyed; so were at least twelve drones” (Witt, 2022). Eventually, Libyan National Army’s aim of capture Tripoli suddenly finished subsequently Türkiye’s interference with its supply of armed TB2s drones (Gatopoulos, 2020). Turkish drones and air defense systems have helped the UN-backed Government of National Accord regain control of almost the entire west of Libya, recapturing it from Haftar’s army. Herewith, President Erdoğan, who has international law and the regular army on his side – Türkiye has won. What next for Russia in Libya? Today, together with Russia, Türkiye has become an influential player in Libya. Both countries may eventually receive billions of dollars in oil, gas and construction contracts, as well as access to military bases that will help them spread their influence over a significant part of Africa. For interest, maybe Russia is worth stopping support Haftar, so as not to unnecessarily worsen relations with each other. Furthermore, we can’t help saying that, having gained a foothold in Libya, Türkiye took control of the management of all major flows of migrants from Africa and the Middle East to the territory of the European Union, due to which it received a serious tool of political pressure.

Conclusions

As noted in this study, since 2011, many countries in the North Africa, in particular Tunisia, Egypt also Libya, have been gripped by a wave of popular discontent, which resulted in mass riots as well protests against the regimes operating in these states. This situation has created an authoritarian vacuum in the region and at the same time has whet the appetite of other powerful states. For Ankara, Africa is significant not only as a sphere

³³ This report covers the period from January 1, 2020, through to March 31, 2020.

of application of its capital. However, the fact is that Republic of Türkiye claims to be a powerful global economic power and to play a more active role in international politics, in particular, in the UN also other international organizations.

Another important change in the current situation in the region in 2020 was, of course, the previously mentioned deeper involvement of Türkiye in Libyan affairs. The main reason for the growing weight of the Eastern Mediterranean in Türkiye's security policy is related to the geostrategic and geopolitical importance of this region. It should also be noted that Türkiye has historical ties with this region, since it was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for centuries, which creates a special relationship between Türkiye and Libya. Consequently, if Türkiye is currently pursuing an active foreign policy towards Libya, then it is necessary to look for the reason for such a policy, to a large extent, in these historical ties. In view of this, based on the above theses, it can be concluded that, taking into account regional and global dimensions in the coming years, Ankara's influence in the Eastern Mediterranean will continue to strengthen.

References

- Afşar E. (2023) "Arşiv Belgeleri Üzerinden Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye-Libya İlişkileri 1920-1974". E. Afşar (ed.), İç dinamikleri ve Türkiye ile ilişkileri bağlamında Libya: Tarih, siyaset, toplum, ekonomi, dış politika, güvenlik, enerji, uluslararası hukuk. İstanbul: Hiper Yayın.
- Aljazeera (2011). "Turkey PM hails 'sacrifice' of Libyan people", 16 September, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2011/9/16/turkey-pm-hails-sacrifice-of-libyan-people> [last accessed on 01.03.2024].
- Aydemir, M. (2020). "Libya: Russian plane brings Syrian fighters to Sirte", 3 October, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/libya-russian-plane-brings-syrian-fighters-to-sirte/1994770> [last accessed on 05.03.2024].
- Bağcı, H. & Erduramaz, S. (2017) "Libya and Turkey's expansion policy in Africa", JANUS.NET, e-journal of International Relations: Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 38-52.
- Bakir, A. (2019). "Turkish-Libyan alliance in eastern Mediterranean: A game changer?", 10 December, <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/turkish-libyan-alliance-eastern-mediterranean-game-changer> [access on 05.01.2024].
- Bassiouni, M. C. (2013) Libya: From Repression to Revolution : A Record of Armed Conflict and International Law Violations, 2011-2013. Leiden, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.
- BBC Türkçe (2019). "Libya - Hafter güçlerince alıkonulup serbest bırakılan 6 Türk gemici İstanbul'a döndü: 'Biz itaracakmış gibi sıraya dizdiler'", 9 June, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/48917131#:~:text=Erdo%C4%9Fan%2C%20gazetecilere%20a%C3%A7%C4%B1klamas%C4%B1nda%20T%C3%BCrkiye'nin,%22denge%20olu%C5%9Fturdu%C4%9Funu%22%20ifade%20etmi%C5%9Fti.> [last accessed on 14.01.2024].

- BBC (2013). "Profile: Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan Published", 10 October, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24472356> [last accessed on 03.02.2024].
- Burak, A. (2021) *Relacje między Polską a Turcją w latach 1989-2014: Trudna przyjaźń*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.
- Canlı, E. (2019). "Türkiye'ye sataşan Hafter güçleri için Libya'da rüzgâr tersine döndü", 3 June, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/turkiyeye-satasan-hafter-gucleri-icin-libyada-ruzgar-tersine-dondu-/1522024> [last accessed on 17.01.2024].
- Ceviz, N. (2011) "Libya Tarihine Kısa Bir Bakış", *OrtadoguAnaliz: Cilt 3, No. 27*, ss. 80–90.
- Clark, C. (2020) "Storms of history: The turmoil in Libya is reawakening memories of conflicts between the Ottoman empire and Arab nationalists", *New Statesman: Vol. 149 No. 5535*, pp. 36–39.
- Cohen Yanarocak, H. E. & Spyer, J. (2021). "Turkish Militias and Proxies", 27 January, <https://jiss.org.il/en/yanarocak-spyer-turkish-militias-and-proxies/> [last accessed on 03.03.2024].
- Çüngen, S. N. (2023) "2011 Libya Krizi'nin Türkiye'ye Etkileri ve Türkiye'nin Libya'da Denge Değiştirici Rolü", *Erzincan Binali Yıldırım Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi: Vol. 5, No. 2*, ss. 1–12.
- Eljarh, M. (2017) "Between a civil war and Western intervention". A. Alkebsi, & N. J Brown & C. Sparre (ed.), *Reconstructing the Middle East Political and Economic Policy*. London: Routledge.
- Fahim, K. (2020). "Turkey's military campaign beyond its borders is powered by homemade armed drones", 29 November, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/turkey-drones-libya-nagorno-karabakh/2020/11/29/d8c98b96-29de-11eb-9c21-3cc501d0981f_story.html [last accessed on 06.02.2024].
- Fraihat, I. (2016) *Unfinished Revolutions: Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia After the Arab Spring*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- France 24, (2011) "Erdogan visits Libya as NTC and pro-Gaddafi forces clash", 16 September, <https://www.france24.com/en/20110916-libya-turkey-erdogan-visit-ntc-forces-clash-pro-gaddafi-resistance-sirte-bani-walid> [last accessed on 04.03.2024].
- García-Carriazo, Á. J. (2021) "The Maritime Delimitation between Turkey and the Libya's Government of National Accord: another Concern for the European Union?", *Peace & Security – Paix et Sécurité Internationales: No. 9*, pp. 1–24.

- Gatopoulos, A. (2020). "Largest drone war in the world': How airpower saved Tripoli", 28 May, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/5/28/largest-drone-war-in-the-world-how-airpower-saved-tripoli> [last accessed on 08.02.2024].
- Gürdeniz C. (2021) *Anavatandan Mavi Vatan'a*. İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi.
- Gürdeniz C. (2023) *Jeopolitik Fırtına*. İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi.
- Gürdeniz C. (2015) *Mavi Uygarlık Türkiye Denizcileşmelidir*. İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi.
- Hallams, E. & Schreer, B. (2012) "Towards a 'post-American' alliance? NATO burden-sharing after Libya", *International Affairs*: Vol. 88, No. 2, pp. 313-327.
- Holst, F. A. & Fink M. D. (2013) "A legal view on NATO's campaign in Libya". K. Kjell Engelbrekt & M. Mohlin & C. Wagnsson (ed.), *The NATO Intervention in Libya: Lessons learned from the campaign*. London: Routledge.
- Lakomy, M. (2013) "Międzynarodowe kontrowersje wokół interwencji NATO w Libii". K. Miroszewski & M. Stolarczyk (ed.), *Śląsk - Polska - Europa - świat : pamięci Profesora Jana Przewłockiego*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ.
- Lobban Jr. R. A. & Dalton C. H. (2014) *Libya: History and Revolution*. California: Praeger.
- Lenta ru, (2015). "В полушаге от Ливийской ССР Почему после Второй мировой войны союзники не отдали Сталину Триполитанию", 22 February, <https://lenta.ru/articles/2015/02/22/libiastalin/> [last accessed on 12.02.2024].
- Lenta ru, (2024). "Раскрыты истинные интересы России в Ливии", 4 August, https://lenta.ru/news/2020/08/04/russian_investment/ [last accessed on 12.03.2024].
- Lund, A. (2022) *The Turkish Intervention in Libya*. Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency.
- Maalim, S. A. (2023) "Implications of Realist Defensive Foreign Policy: Towards a Turkish Intervention in Libya During the First and Second Libyan Crises", *Journal of International Relations and Political Science Studies*: No. 8, pp. 27-50.
- Majid, A. (2015) "Is There a Center to Hold? The Problem of Transition in Post-Qaddafi Libya". E. Moosa et al. (ed.), *The African Renaissance and the Afro-Arab Spring: A Season of Rebirth?*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.
- Makovsky, A., (1997) "How to Deal with Erbakan", *Middle East Quarterly*: March, <https://www.meforum.org/335/how-to-deal-with-erbakan> [last accessed on 20.12.2023].
- McCaffrey, P. (2012) *Reference Shelf: The Arab Spring*. Massachusetts: Hw Wilson Co.

- MEED (1996) "TURKEY: Erbakan's Libyan trip causes uproar at home", 18 October, <https://www.meed.com/turkey-erbakans-libyan-trip-causes-uproar-at-home/> [last accessed on 19.12.2023].
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of National Accord-State of Libya on delimitation of the maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean. Istanbul, 27 November 2019.
- Mühlberger, W. (2012) "Libya After Qadhafi: Reshaping the Political and Security Systems", *Connections*: Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 1-20.
- NTV, (2019) "Türkiye karşıtı General "Halife" Hafter kimdir?" 1 June, <https://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/turkiye-karsiti-general-halife-hafter-kimdir,UEDMpWdv6E-KTITEJ37YSw#> [last accessed on 17.01.2024].
- O'Sullivan, S. (2017) *Military Intervention in the Middle East and North Africa: The Case of NATO in Libya*. London: Routledge.
- Önder, N. K. (2021) "Kaddafi Dönemi Libya İç ve Dış Siyaseti: Libya Arap Baharında Türkiye Politikası", *Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*: Vol. 5, No. 1, ss. 136-148.
- Öztürk, Ş. (2023) "Mağrip'te Bir Ülke: Libya (Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Dönemi)". E. Afşar (ed.) *İç dinamikleri ve Türkiye ile ilişkileri bağlamında Libya: Tarih, siyaset, toplum, ekonomi, dış politika, güvenlik, enerji, uluslararası hukuk*. İstanbul: Hiper Yayın.
- Pargeter, A. (2012) *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*. New Heaven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Prashad, V. (2012) *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter*. Oakland-Baltimore-Edinburgh: AK Press.
- Proedrou, F. (2021) "A geopolitical account of the Eastern Mediterranean conundrum: sovereignty, balance of power and energy security considerations", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*: Vol. 36, No. 5, pp. 679-696.
- Pushin, O. (2020). "Фельдмаршал Халифа Хафтар объявил о захвате Эль-Азизии – стратегического плацдарма (20км. от центра столицы Ливии)", 3 March, <https://dzen.ru/a/XI3Q6n514Ak3I6Nj> [last accessed on 23.02.2024].
- Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011). "No: 69, Press Release Regarding the Turkey-UAE Joint Humanitarian Assistance Operation for Libya", 12 March, https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-69_-12-march-2011_-press-release-regarding-the-turkey-uae-joint-humanitarian-assistance-operation-to-libya.en.mfa [last accessed on 03.03.2024].

- RFE/RL (2024). "Pentagon Says Turkey Sent 3,500 Syrian Fighters To Back Libyan Government", 18 July, <https://www.rferl.org/a/pentagon-turkey-3-500-syrian-fighters-libya-russia/30734486.html> [last accessed on 03.03.2024].
- Sabah Gazetesi (2009). "Libya'ya tarihi ziyaret", 24 November, https://www.sabah.com.tr/siyaset/2009/11/24/erdoganel_mahmudi_gorusmesi_basladi [last accessed on 25.02.2024].
- Sarihan, A. (2023) *The Role of the Military in the Arab Uprisings*. Abingdon, England: Routledge.
- Smith, V. L. (2016) "Drawing Borders in the Middle East after the Great War: Political Geography and 'Subject Peoples'", *First World War studies*: Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 5-21.
- St. John, R. B. (2015) *Libya: continuity and change*. London: Routledge.
- Sukkarieh, M. (2021) "The East Mediterranean Gas Forum: Regional Cooperation Amid Conflicting Interests", *Middle East Strategic Perspectives: Briefing*.
- Sürmelioglu Parlar, D. (2022) "Doğu Akdeniz Enerji Rekabetinde Libya", *Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*: No. 23, ss. 87-111.
- Süsler, B., "Turkey's Involvement in the Libyan Conflict, the Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean and Drone Warfare", *LSE IDEAS Strategic Update: August 2022*, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/updates/2022-SU-SuslerTurkeyLibya-01a.pdf> [last accessed on 10.03.2024].
- Şarku'l Avsat (2020) "Kaddafi'den Serrac'a Türkiye-Libya ilişkileri", 24 January, <https://turkish.aawsat.com/home/article/2097856/kaddafiden-serrac-t%C3%BCrkiye-libya-ili%C5%9Fkileri> [last accessed on 12.01.2024].
- Şener, M. B. (2023) "Turkish-Egyptian Relations after 2011: Political Dynamics of Geopolitical Turbulence", *Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies*: Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 109-127.
- The Irish Times (1996). "Opposition challenges Erbakan after controversial Libyan visit", 10 October, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/opposition-challenges-erbakan-after-controversial-libyan-visit-1.94275> [last accessed on 22.12.2023].
- The Office of the Historian. "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Libya", <https://history.state.gov/countries/libya#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20recognized%20the,Britain%20following%20World%20War%20II.> [last accessed on 17.03.2024].
- U.S. DoD Report (2020). "Lead Inspector General for East Africa And North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operations: Quarterly Report to the United States Congress: January 1, 2020 - March 31, 2020", <https://www.dodig.mil/>

reports.html/Article/2275915/lead-inspector-general-for-east-africa-and-north-andwest-africa-counterterrori/ [last accessed on 07.03.2024].

- Uzunöner, M. E. & Çıkrıkçı, T., (2023) "Türkiye, ABD ve Rusya'nın Libya İç Savaşına Yönelik Politikalarının Karşılaştırmalı Analizi", *Düşünce Dünyasında Türkiz*: No. 64, ss. 11–56.
- Üstün, A. (2020): *Türkiye Libya ilişkileri (1951.2011)* [Masters thesis]. Uludağ Üniversitesi.
- Witt, S. (2022) "The Turkish Drone That Changed the Nature of Warfare", 9 May, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/05/16/the-turkish-drone-that-changed-the-nature-of-warfare> [last accessed on 07.02.2024].
- Yaycı C. (2020) *Doğu Akdeniz'in Paylaşım Mücadelesi ve Türkiye*. İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi.
- Yaycı C. (2020) *Libya Türkiye'nin Denizden Komşusudur*. İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi.
- Yüksel, E. (2020) "Turkey's approach to proxy war in the Middle East and North Africa", *Security and Defence Quarterly*: Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 137–152.
- Агазаде, М. М. & Павлова, П. М. & Николова, Г. А. (2021) "Большое Средиземноморье как комплекс безопасности", *Вестник Омского университета*. Серия: Исторические науки: Т. 8, № 3, С. 117–122.
- Ганиев, Т. А. & Карякин В. В. (2020) "Гражданская война в Ливии: ход боевых действий и интересы сторон", *Электронный научный журнал "Архонт"*: Выпуск № 3 (18), С. 14–41.
- Коротаев, А. & Исаев, Л. & Шишкина А. (2021), "Вторая волна ливийской гражданской войны: факторы и акторы", *Мировая экономика и международные отношения*: Т. 65. № 3, С. 111–119.