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Libya

A never-ending crisis in Libya

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Since the French intervention in Libya, the country has been plagued by violence. Supported by foreign powers, two main forces are fighting each other and are joined by a multitude of militias, turning the country into a succession of political enclaves.

There is intense diplomatic activity around organizing elections in Libya, which are then constantly postponed for lack of consensus. The 36th session of the African Union sent Sassou-Nguesso, the dictator of Congo-Brazzaville, to organise a national reconciliation conference. As for the United Nations, its special envoy Abdoulaye Bathily is trying to set up a panel of key figures to define the rules governing future elections.

A divided country

There are two opposing poles of authority. On the one hand, the Government of National Unity (GNU) in Tripoli led by Abdel Hamid Dbeibah and recognised by the United Nations, and on the other hand, the one in Sirte, led by Fathi Bachagha and defended by Marshal Khalifa Haftar at the head of his Libyan National Army. The two sides are supported by different rival militias with their own agenda. Both governments benefit from foreign support. Turkey and Qatar support the GNU, while Field Marshal Haftar can count on the Russians who have dispatched mercenaries from the Wagner company, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The war has become more deadly through the massive use of heavy weapons including aviation and the use of new technologies with the appearance of drones.

This regional conflict attracts many Sudanese, Chadian and Syrian fighters. Although it is difficult to count the exact number of mercenaries, most experts estimate that there are around 20,000, half of whom are Syrians.

Neither war nor peace

At the beginning of April 2019, Haftar tried to seize Tripoli by force. He was counting on some militias to rally or at least refuse to fight. He believed that the superiority of his weaponry would allow him to defeat the GNU. Considered a poor strategist, Haftar will not deviate from his reputation. Not only will all the militias defend the Libyan capital but the Turkish government of Recep Erdogan will send armed drones that will be decisive in this battle.

There is now a consensus that it is impossible for one side to win militarily. But, in the absence of political will to make peace, the country has been in a state of low-intensity civil war for two years. This situation has led to the perpetuation of militias that are becoming increasingly fragmented. They tend to cultivate their power, control territories and engage in a whole range of lucrative activities, most of which are illegal. Civilian populations, primarily migrants, are victims of this latent conflict where the rule of law disappears in favour of force.

The diplomatic "at the same time"

France officially supports the GNU and all peace initiatives that emanate from the United Nations or the African

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Union. But the Macronian concept of “at the same time” applies since Paris supports Marshal Haftar. Diplomacy is caught between several requirements: to comply, on the one hand, with the decisions of the international community, which leads to supporting the government in Tripoli, but also, on the other hand, to maintaining its relations with the UAE - considered strategic in the region.

Indeed, since 2009, French troops are stationed in this country. About 650 soldiers of the three branches are present there. Another element: the government of Chad, another strategic country for France in the Sahel, maintains very close ties with Haftar. Finally, the Quai d'Orsay, in line with its African policy, unofficially sees in Haftar the strong man capable of bringing order and stability to the country. This remains the main objective for Paris, as it would allow border control to avoid infiltration of jihadist fighters on the continent and to effectively prevent immigration.

The French intervention in Libya in 2011 destabilized the Sahel. It also made Libya a strategic issue. Thus, the numerous foreign interferences have put any prospect of peace at risk, despite the will of the majority of Libyans.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).*

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