

The UAE in Libya: Continuity and Change

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(Hazem Turkia - Anadolu Agency)

This policy outlook explores some of the key elements driving the UAE's policy in Libya as well as the Gulf country's approach towards the upcoming elections in the North African country. Over the last ten years, regional and international powers have tried to fill the vacuum created in Libya. In this regard, Abu Dhabi has for years intervened in the Libyan conflict. Its policy towards Libya is driven by diverse interests, ranging from economic considerations to ideological objectives and the fight against political Islam.



Libyan Prime Minister-designate Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh speaks as Libya's House of Representatives (parliament) resumed its session in the coastal city of Sirte, Libya to debate giving confidence to the new government of Dbeibeh, on March 9, 2021. (Government of National Accord - Anadolu Agency)

Introduction

The Libyan people have reacted with a mix of hope and scepticism to the signing of a nationwide ceasefire deal in October 2020, designed to pave the way towards a political solution to the country's ongoing conflict since Gaddafi was toppled in 2011. The deal came four months after Haftar's Egyptian, Emirati, French and Russian-backed forces failed in their year-long attempt to seize the capital Tripoli. The ceasefire agreement created a basis for the political talks that began on October 26th 2020, intended to create a new interim government with the primary task of preparing the country for elections scheduled for December 24th, 2021.

In March 2021, a new provisional government was formed in Libya. The Government of National Unity (GNU), selected through a United Nations-supported process, replaced the previous GNA administration and the parallel cabinet based in the country's east.

Over the last ten years, regional powers have tried to fill the vacuum created in Libya. Egypt, the UAE, Russia, and France have supported Haftar and his so-called 'Libyan National Army' (LNA) in pursuit of their own commercial and geostrategic interests. The UAE has taken an active role in enabling Haftar and facilitating his control over eastern Libya, providing critical support for his April 2019 assault against the Tripoli-based GNA. Abu Dhabi has for years [intervened](#) in the country. Its policy towards Libya is driven by diverse interests, ranging from economic considerations to ideological objectives and the fight against political Islam.

What drives the UAE's policies in Libya?

After Gaddafi was toppled in 2011, Libya was plunged into years of turmoil, opening the door to the rise of radical groups in the country, and creating the opportunity for opportunistic states to shape the country's future in their favour.

For the UAE, the conflict in Libya [offered](#) it the opportunity to play on the same field as much larger international players. In March 2011, the UAE participated in Operation Unified Protector with 16 other countries, promoting its military and diplomatic capabilities. Participating in the NATO operation also provided an opportunity to [buy influence](#) not just with Western countries but more importantly with militias on the ground.

Matthew Hedges, an academic focusing on authoritarian regimes [commented](#) that:

"The UAE's engagement in Libya seemed to have started in good faith, it was merely exploiting NATO's platform of internationally sanctioned legitimacy and influence to construct its own long-term project for a future Libya; one which it could control, not just influence. The UAE watched the revolution unfold in Tunisia, but by the time protests had reached Egypt in January 2011, and were endorsed by the US, Abu Dhabi became alarmed at the unfolding events and their potential to reshape the wider regional order. As a result, the Arab Spring's third theatre in Libya rapidly grew in importance and developed into the frontline of Abu Dhabi's new counterrevolutionary engagement. The

infectious revolutions were perceived by elites in Abu Dhabi as an existential threat to regime security, and the UAE's foreign policy towards Libya offered an opportunity to not only shape its outcome but inoculate itself in the process".

The UAE's interference in Libya has multiple dimensions. However, it is a widely held view that Abu Dhabi's counter-revolutionary orientation in the region is driving the approach of Emirati decision-makers. The UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, engaged in a campaign against the forces emanating from the Arab Spring, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).

The leadership in Abu Dhabi is convinced that the transnational structure of the Islamist group represents a threat and that if the MB gained power in countries like Egypt it would try to mobilise its followers in the Gulf States and especially in the UAE against their respective governments. Hence Emirati support for Egypt's Sisi regime and Haftar's military forces in Libya.¹

The UAE came to regard the Arab Spring's promise of representative government and the prospect that the usually Islamist-leaning parties could one day come to power to be an existential threat to their survival. Since 2011, the UAE has taken a position at the forefront of a regional battle against the Arab uprisings and political Islamist groups, particularly the MB. The UAE views Libya as a key arena in this struggle.²

Andreas Krieg, Associate Professor at Kings College London, told TRT World Research Centre that:

"The UAE's policy in Libya is driven by an ideological and an interest-based component. Ideologically, the UAE has invested in a counterrevolutionary strategy to roll back the achievements of the Arab Spring. The UAE is on a crusade against political Islam and other civil-societal organisations. The fear of Libya turning into a diverse democracy with all parties represented, including those subscribing to political Islam, is a nightmare for Abu Dhabi. In terms of interests, the UAE is building a neo-mercantilist empire along the crossroads between the West and China. It wants to position itself as the go-to interlocutor in Africa and the Middle East providing access to China, Russia and Western partners. The Eastern Libyan corridor is strategically important for the UAE as it is a gateway to the Mediterranean that leads to the Horn of Africa and sub-Saharan Africa where the UAE want to appear as a key broker".

Giorgio Cafiero, CEO of Gulf State Analytics, told TRT World Research Centre that "Since Libya's 2011 revolution, the leadership in Abu Dhabi has had major concerns about Islamists consolidating power in post-Qaddafi Libya. Emirati officialdom does not want to see Libya become a

state where Islamists and secularists share power in a democratic system that could become a popular model for other Arab states. Geopolitically, the UAE has feared Qatari and Turkish clout in the North African country while seeking to counter Doha and Ankara's influence in the Maghreb. The odds are good that Libya will remain an area in North Africa where the UAE competes with the Qatari-Turkish alliance."

Giuseppe Dentice, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Desk at the Italian think tank Centro Studi Internazionali (CeSI), told TRT World Research Centre that: "Over the last decade, Abu Dhabi has developed a multi-layered foreign policy in which each country of the MENA region responds to different tactics and goals. Regarding Libya, Abu Dhabi showed no confidence towards multilateralism or diplomatic initiatives launched by Western countries (i.e. Berlin Process). In fact, the UAE considers its involvement in Libya as a major chapter in the quest for regional hegemony in which it is opposed to Turkey. Abu Dhabi perceives Ankara as a player willing to exploit the upheavals triggered by the Arab Springs to expand its influence in the region".

In addition, for Dentice, "At the same time, the UAE intertwines its strategic targets with their geopolitical and ideological goals. To reach this goal, Abu Dhabi uses different tactics. On the one hand, embracing strong allies with a traditional footprint in the area of interest (like Egypt in Libya), on the other spreading the presence of capable proxy militias on the ground. Therefore, the choice to mobilize weapons and equipment in Libya is partly due to the strong geopolitical alignment that the UAE has pursued with other partners involved in the country (in particular Egypt and Russia). It is clear that the Emirati moves follow peculiar strategic and geopolitical goals: in fact, these initiatives in Libya respond to specific needs of the UAE's power protection between Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East and Eastern Africa, where Abu Dhabi aims to consolidate its political and military presence obviously supporting and recruiting foreign mercenaries, in particular from Sudan and Chad".

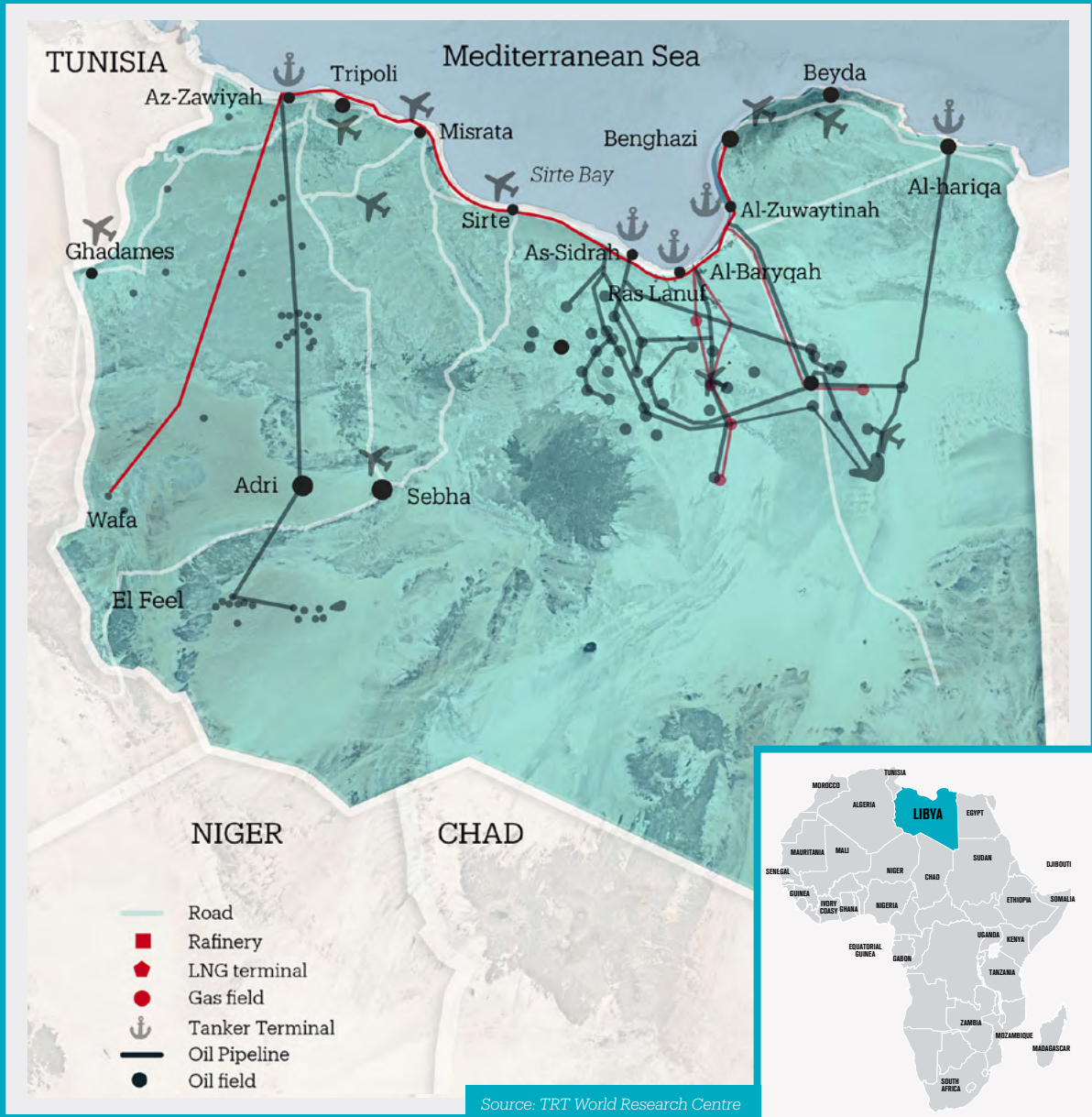
Economic Interests

Libya ranks as the [largest oil economy](#) by proven oil reserves in Africa and one of the world's wealthiest economies by the proportion of oil reserves to population. The majority of the country's oilfields are in the [Sirte basin](#), which accounts for about two-thirds of Libya's oil output. Prior to the civil war, annual oil revenues [amounted](#) to \$32 billion in 2010. However, the civil war brought major disruptions to the oil and gas sector. Libya's revenue from hydrocarbons has fallen significantly over the last decade. According to the central bank in Tripoli, [oil revenue](#) for 2020 was only \$6 billion.

¹ Guido Steinberg (2020). Regional Power United Arab Emirates. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP).

² Tarek Megeresi (2019). Libya's global civil war, from <https://ecfr.eu/wp>

Libya's major oil/gas fields and related infrastructure



For Dentice, “The construction of military infrastructure and ports in neighbouring Egypt (as demonstrated by the bases in Berenice on the Red Sea and Gargoub near the Libyan border) has allowed to the UAE to indirectly control land and maritime traffic to and from Libya in the wide sea area that extends between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea, with the aim of discouraging and at the same time preventing geopolitical initiatives of adversaries with similar objectives (like for example Turkey). In other words, the Libyan case is the perfect scenario in which the UAE are testing their ambition to elevate their status as a middle power in the Greater Middle East”.

The country's location is also a [valuable asset](#). Geographic proximity to the European market, particularly to southern

European ports, has been an enormous advantage for Libyan oil vis-à-vis Middle Eastern oil producers, as a closer location to relevant ports has meant cheaper transportation costs.

This could explain why such a high number of countries (the UAE, Egypt, Russia, France, Italy, Turkey, Qatar, to a lesser extent Jordan and Saudi Arabia) were involved in the Libyan conflict, each driven by various and sometimes divergent motivations. Recently, Libya's State Minister for Economic Affairs, Salama Al-Ghwel [stated that](#) the value of the financing required for reconstruction would reach about 500 billion dinars (equivalent to \$111 billion) over the next ten years.

The UAE has been [investing](#) heavily in African ports and aims to gain a strategic foothold in Africa through ports. Controlling these offers both commercial and military advantages. Libya's geographical location at the heart of the Mediterranean and the Maghreb as well as its geostrategic importance makes it significant to Abu Dhabi's commercial plan to have a controlling stake in [shipping lanes](#) that flow into the Mediterranean. In Libya, Tobruk and Benghazi could provide the space for the UAE to become one of the main regional actors in maritime trade. In 2010, the economic ties between the UAE and Libya were strengthened after Tripoli and Abu Dhabi [signed](#) an \$11 billion investment deal to overtake infrastructure projects including the construction of roads, airports, seaports railways, schools and hospitals but failed to materialise because of the uprising. Since Gaddafi's ouster, the contracts have been frozen and there are no clear signs that projects related to this deal will restart anytime in the near future.

In November 2020, Ali Bakir, Assistant Professor at the Ibn Khaldon Center for Humanities and Social Sciences at Qatar University [wrote](#) that: "Libya would offer strategic political, economic, and military depth to the small Gulf country in Africa, a foothold where it can robustly operate militarily and economically via military bases installed in Libya and the country's ports on the Mediterranean. A Haftar-controlled Libya could be used as a Launchpad for the UAE's economic and military activities in the region".

According to numerous [reports](#), the UAE has become a hub for money laundering. Transparency International, an anti-corruption group, [stated](#) that "Dubai has developed into an active international hub for money laundering where the corrupt and other criminals can go to buy an expensive property with no restrictions." According to [African Traders](#), gold can be imported to Dubai with little documentation. [Reportedly](#), billions of dollars worth of gold are being smuggled out of Africa every year via the UAE, which represents a gateway to markets in Europe, the United States, and beyond.

In recent years, 55 tonnes of Libyan gold has [reportedly](#) been smuggled into the UAE. Many experts believe Libya's wealth has reportedly been used to fuel the country's civil, most often through illegal sales of its resources and gold reserves. Moreover, as [reported](#) by the Wall Street Journal, in 2018, Emirati officials held secret talks with Haftar to sell Libya's oil outside of the UN approved channels.

The Gaddafi family's private wealth is the [subject of UN](#) investigations. Analysts estimate that the Gaddafi regime discretely hid away more than [\\$100 billion](#) in banks across the world, with an estimated \$50 billion of this money in the UAE alone.³

The UAE's ties with Haftar

Abu Dhabi has aimed to prevent any democratic movement from taking power in Tripoli and has favoured a strategy that advances an authoritarian model of governance for the country. The UAE found its partner in Khalifa Haftar, who from 2014 onwards sought to expand his control from Eastern Libya throughout the country. Since then, the UAE has been one of the most active foreign players supporting Haftar. Haftar has been vital to Emirati attempts to secure access to Libyan resources, including oil, gas, and gold. It is important to note that the UAE has been accused of using Libya's frozen assets in its banks to provide financial resources for Haftar's military campaigns, as a senior Libyan official [revealed](#) in 2018.

On May 15th 2014, Haftar [announced the establishment](#) of the Libyan National Army (LNA) and launched 'Operation Dignity' in Benghazi, a counter-terrorism campaign heavily backed by Abu Dhabi and Cairo through airstrikes and [French Special Forces](#) who fought alongside Haftar's LNA. Haftar's LNA has long been politically and financially supported by the UAE and Egypt. According to [a UN report](#), the UAE and Egypt have given high levels of support to Haftar since 2014. Egypt and the UAE have transferred drones, armoured personnel carriers, and sophisticated missile systems into Libya. Even the UAE [built an airbase in Al-Kadhimi](#), near the north-eastern Libyan city of Marj. Reportedly, through this airbase, the UAE provided air support including fighter jets and armed drones, to Haftar's forces between 2016 and 2020. As discussed above, Haftar has had support from the UAE and Egypt since 2014, and according to a [report](#) issued last year by Pentagon, the UAE has been bankrolling the Russian paramilitary Wagner Group's intervention in Libya.

With an eye on benefitting from Libya's wealth, Egypt, Russia and the UAE bet on Haftar, supplying him with sophisticated weapons systems and the mercenaries to operate them. The UAE has [reportedly](#) made over 150 flights to regions controlled by Haftar, mostly in eastern Libya, between January and April in 2020 to deliver military equipment to Haftar's forces. The arrival of Russian mercenaries and air support from the UAE have exacerbated the conflict. However, [Turkey's open intervention](#) changed the dynamics in the country and transformed the course of the battle. It proved effective at stopping Haftar's LNA from taking Tripoli and also helped to push back LNA forces and mercenaries to the edges of the strategic city of Sirte.

Despite Haftar's loss of both internal and external support since the above-mentioned military defeats, it is expected that he will remain an important player in the military realm. For Krieg, "Haftar remains a key strategic surrogate of the UAE who can rally tribes and militias around to

³ Bel Trew, 'Gaddafi's freed son Saif 'has access to \$30bn', 20 June 2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/gadaffis-freed-son-has-access-to-30bn-n8znm36md>

put pressure on the political process. Together with political surrogates such as Aref Nayed, Haftar will play an instrumental role in holding Libya for ransom during and after the elections”.

In Dentice’s opinion, “The defeats and losses by Haftar militias in the battles near Tripoli, as well as the inglorious retreat back to Cyrenaica, means he has fallen out of favour with sponsors like Egypt and Russia. This attitude seems to be less evident in the eyes of the UAE. In Abu Dhabi’s perspective, Haftar is a bargaining chip or an expendable pawn on a broader geopolitical chessboard. I think that UAE will continue to support Haftar until he will be strategically useful to achieve some goals”.

According to Giorgio Cafiero, “At the start of Biden’s presidency, the UAE signalled its determination to support Libya’s UN-backed unity government despite the high levels of support that Abu Dhabi spent years giving Haftar. If UN efforts to bring peace, stability and unity to Libya prove futile, it is very possible that Haftar will resume his ambitions to usurp control of the country, or at least consolidate the strongman’s power in eastern Libya, following months of him laying low. Under such circumstances, it remains to be seen what Haftar’s external backers, such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and France, would do to either support him militarily or to rein in the eastern commander”.

Cafiero further observed that: “Haftar recently stating that his force the Libyan National Army (LNA) is not to be under the authority of Libya’s administration, which came to power via a dialogue process under UN auspices, tells us that he is not viewing the unity government as legitimate. He is making a mockery out of the unity government, and he may take bold actions to further obstruct efforts to advance democratization in the war-torn country. If the UN process falls apart, Haftar might be ready to return to battle. Under such circumstances, the leadership in Abu Dhabi will need to make important decisions about how to deal with Haftar”.

What are Abu Dhabi’s intentions?

Since the Democrats came to power in Washington on January 2021, the UAE has engaged in a series of political manoeuvres and public relations campaigns, aiming to send a message to Washington that Abu Dhabi is making a foreign policy U-turn and retreating from its more bellicose policies. For example, in an article published by the Washington Post, David Ignatius had some very praiseworthy words for this change of trajectory. He [wrote](#): “with a raw pragmatism that would make Machiavelli blush, the UAE has recently changed course from urging confrontation against Iran and Islamist parties to advocating dialogue. Over the past year, it has moved to settle quarrels with Iran, Turkey, Qatar, Libya and other

former foes.”

However, other [experts](#) view this alleged volte-face with scepticism, in light of the continuing destabilising practices by Abu Dhabi (e.g. [Tunisia](#)), and that its policies, not its words, should be put to the test. In any case, the UAE’s continued support for Haftar implies that Abu Dhabi is maintaining its spoiler role in Libya. [Abu Dhabi appears keen](#) to maintain Haftar at the helm of the eastern-based military coalition until a suitable alternative candidate appears.

According to Giuseppe Dentice, “Abu Dhabi has revised a large part of their foreign policy commitment, revising spending costs, cutting (mega-)projects deemed no longer useful and downsizing some ambitious investments (including infrastructures) in light of the very high costs. An example of this there has been in Eritrea with the closure of the Assab base, two years after its inauguration because it is no longer functional to the Emirati strategic objectives (in particular in the conflict in Yemen where Abu Dhabi is looking for a safe way out). In this sense, the economic impacts caused by Covid-19 have been significant for all Middle Eastern players, including even great powers such as Russia and China. The feeling is that the Libyan case will continue to be central in Abu Dhabi’s maritime strategy and geopolitical game between the Mediterranean and the Middle East”.

In Cafiero’s opinion, “The UAE’s interests and objectives in Libya have not changed, but Emirati tactics for achieving Abu Dhabi’s goals have evolved. Put simply, the Emiratis are concerned about their image in Washington and have taken actions to change the optics albeit without necessarily abandoning any of the UAE’s aims in Libya”.

For Krieg, “The UAE have an extensive influence network in Libya consisting of warlord Haftar and other militia leaders, as well as political pawns that are competing in the elections. At the same time, the UAE controls much of the media space in the country able to spin narratives and (dis)information to mobilize or (de)mobilize public opinion for or against candidates. We will see extensive interference by the UAE’s influence network in the upcoming elections”.

A shift in relations between Ankara and Abu Dhabi?

During the past few years, relations between Ankara and Abu Dhabi have been characterized by rivalry and tension, especially on regional issues like in Libya. However, it seems that there is a sign of increased mutual efforts to repair broken diplomatic and economic relations. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently [held a phone call](#) with the UAE’s de facto ruler, MBZ. It comes after a [surprise meeting between](#) President Erdogan and UAE National Security Adviser Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan in the Turkish capital. Reportedly, both leaders discussed bilateral ties and regional developments.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (R) meets UAE's national security adviser Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed al Nahyan (L) at Presidential Complex in Ankara, Turkey on August 18, 2021. (Mustafa Kamaci - Anadolu Agency)

After the phone call, UAE presidential diplomatic adviser Anwar Gargash [said](#) on Twitter that, “the contact between the two leaders was meant to open a new phase in relations as the UAE seeks to build bridges, maximize commonalities and work together with friends and brothers to ensure future decades of regional stability and prosperity for all peoples and countries of the region”.

Over the last few years, Abu Dhabi has taken a confrontational approach towards regional issues. As a result, Turkey and the UAE have seen their ties negatively impacted by regional tensions, including the conflict in Libya, where the UAE and Turkey have backed opposing sides in recent years. Seeking to stabilise and improve the relationship between the two countries has the potential to calm tensions that have fuelled conflicts including Libya's war.

According to [a Reuters report](#), recently, a senior Turkish official described Erdogan's call with Sheikh Mohammed as a significant move towards overcoming disputes which have plagued their relations, saying the two countries could work together in the region.

Planned Elections and Potential Challenges

Preparations for these elections are the most pressing task that the GNU will implement, considering the profound complications of the last few years of division and conflict. The preparation of [the elections has not been easy over the last 10 years](#). Libyan parties are divided over what constitutional basis to use for the elections. Thus, it is significant to have a confirmed, explicit legitimate and constitutional structure for the presidential and parliamentary polls.

For Dentice, “This is everyone's hope, but it is obvious that without a clear organisation, electoral law and legal device necessary to define the steps to create a stable environment for elections, this feeling becomes more and more feeble with each passing day. Currently, there aren't the conditions for a regular and transparent vote, but it is equally true that the prospect for a non-vote does not make this scenario less worrying. Today we are in a fluid state of limbo. Few certainties and many doubts on the horizon make the Libyan electoral process a highly controversial chimaera. Once again the reasons are linked to the interests of all the actors (local and international) involved in Libya and to the difficulty of bringing out a preponderant power that can define (for better or for worse) a clear victory able to create a turning point. Today we are in a very dangerous condition of limbo similar to that experience of the 2012 Libyan elections. We have known the results of that vote and above all the political impacts so much that we still have to pay the effects today”.

Despite the progress that has been made in recent months, there are a few dynamics that could still spoil the political progress, undermining the prospects for a more sustainable political settlement in the country: the presence of foreign fighters and mercenaries, Haftar's role, international and regional players potential interference, drafting a new constitution, and the imperative to hold elections by the end of the year.

According to Andreas Krieg, “Even if elections are held freely and fairly, there are a lot of vulnerabilities to information operations. The UAE has understood how to ripen public grievances in Tunisia, in Egypt and also in Libya to steer public opinion for or against candidates. It is to be expected that the UAE will try to do so the same to support their candidate and undermine the adversary candidates”.



A Libyan woman arrives to cast her vote to elect Tripoli Municipal Council in Tripoli, Libya on February 06, 2021. (Hazem Turkia - Anadolu Agency)

Haftar will likely continue to [challenge the political process](#) until his demands are considered. Reportedly, Haftar intends to run in the planned presidential election in December. After his failure to seize the capital by force, he may seek to achieve politically what he could not militarily.

In Cafiero's opinion, "Experts have grave concerns about whether Libya will be able to hold elections in December. The question about Haftar's role in a future Libya is controversial as his opponents believe that he must be held accountable for his forces' alleged war crimes in past years and that he must never hold power in the country. Libyans will also need to agree on the rules for the December 24 vote. If they fail to do so, this election might be postponed. That scenario is one which Haftar could take advantage of to strengthen his position".

Presence of foreign fighters and mercenaries

The GNU has also to address the presence of thousands of mercenaries and foreign fighters deployed by various countries who are involved in the Libyan conflict. For the past six years, some external players have used mercenaries, along with local armed groups to pursue their agendas. A United Nations [estimate](#) in December 2020 stated that more than 20,000 Syrians, Russians, Sudanese, and Chadians were operating in the country. Haftar still holds sway in the east and reportedly continues to enjoy the support of Abu Dhabi and Moscow.

In Dentice's view, "Currently, it is highly unlikely that the UAE or any other power involved in the Libyan scenario will want to recall their mercenaries and foreign fighters. These actors represent a form of influence and interference useful for generating pressure on local actors, competitors, but also on their partners who are not always faithful to follow the "team orders". Honestly, I am wary of an improvement in this regard without a clear and declared willingness of foreign powers to take concrete steps in this direction".

For Krieg, "It is unrealistic for both Turkey and Russia to remove their mercenaries from Libya at this point. Even if Turkey took the first step it is unlikely that Russia would follow suit. More than that, the UAE is backing Russia's mercenary approach as they are a key force multiplier on the ground that is important to augment the capability of the LNA".



Large numbers of Sudanese Militia, paid by the UAE, are fighting in Libya for Khalifa Haftar. (Mahmoud Hjjaj - Anadolu Agency)

Conclusion

In the current political environment, organising elections will be very challenging. Rival parties still have not approved the draft constitution that clearly defines who would be eligible to run in presidential elections. Besides, the GNU's proposed budget has not yet been approved by the House of Representatives(HoR). Given that elections are scheduled for December, it is increasingly unlikely that these requirements will be met on time.

Therefore, it's vital to make speedy progress to prepare the country for elections, unifying state institutions completing the draft constitution, imposing law and order, and most importantly preventing any room for either internal or external spoilers from undermining the ongoing political process. Otherwise, Libya risks becoming a hub of instability in the region and beyond.

Over the past few years, the Emirati leadership has played a significant role in shaping the Libyan conflict with military supplies, foreign fighters, and diplomatic and financial support provided to Haftar's LNA. In addition, the UAE has established a broad international alliance in Libya, most notably with Egypt and France.

In this sense, without the support of key foreign states that sponsor Libyan actors, no political process will be able to succeed in bringing stability. Despite the UAE's declarations of support for the current political peace process, Abu Dhabi has reportedly continued to help Haftar in various ways. [Allegedly](#), the UAE has maintained

support to some powerful militia groups under the command of Haftar's LNA such as [Battalion 106](#), headed by Haftar's sons (Saddam and Khaled Haftar) as well as Sudanese fighters. The UAE [reportedly](#) has direct control of two important militia groups under Haftar's LNA, the Sudanese-heavy 128th Brigade and the Tariq bin Ziyad Battalion.

The UAE appears to have calculated that its interests are still best served by supporting Haftar and his LNA. Thus, it is likely to see an increased interference by the UAE through media campaigns to influence public opinion to support Haftar in the elections planned for December. Haftar has shown intent to run in a presidential election in December and the UAE has allegedly been engaged in seeking to polish Haftar's image ahead of the elections through media campaigns.

At the same time, Abu Dhabi will likely maintain its military presence in the country. Although the UAE does not have its own forces on the ground, it has provided crucial support to Haftar's LNA and has allegedly funded Wagner's presence in the country according to a UN [report](#). Moreover, Abu Dhabi has brought hundreds of fighters from Sudan's Darfur region to support Haftar's forces. Given the UAE's demonstrated desire to ensure it has a stake in Libya's future, it will likely continue to rely on the relationships it has developed with mercenaries considering the weaknesses of the political and military coalitions it supports. Thus, any withdrawal of these proxy forces from the country would entail a loss of influence for Abu Dhabi.



(Firat Yurdakul - Anadolu Agency)