

MEDITERRANEAN GEOPOLITICS AND LIBYA

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ABSTRACT:

Regional multipolarity has complicated geopolitical goals while also affecting international ties. Geopolitics is a method for not only evaluating the current status of the political environment, but also for projecting an actor's desired geo-economic end state. In the Mediterranean region, newly emerging non-Western international actors take a far more pragmatic approach to securing perceived national interests. The energy issue that influences the military-political situation in the Eastern Mediterranean region is examined in this article, with a focus on Turkey and Russia's collaboration and competition at times. The decision by Greece, Cyprus, and Israel to begin construction of the East Med gas pipeline has been studied. One of the main causes of the escalation in Libya was this decision. The Mediterranean Sea is a body of water. The Mediterranean Sea is home to some of the world's most heavily militarised seas. It is so because of its location, which connects the oil-rich Persian Gulf to major energy consumers, the fact that it is home to the three monotheistic religions, and the recent finding of hydrocarbon deposits in the Oriental basin. By examining two conflict theatres in the Mediterranean, Libyan and other countries, the author employs a neoclassical geopolitical method to analyse the Mediterranean as an echo of the changing world order. The author began by discussing the Mediterranean Sea's importance to the global economy and politics, as well as the political and geographical characteristics that are crucial to understanding the wars in these countries. Finally, strategic dangers associated with Turkey's military build-up in Libya have been recognised. These considerations provide the foundation for the regional repercussions of a hypothetical conflict escalation.

Keywords: *Mediterranean region, Libya, Turkish interventions, Conflicts, Geopolitics, MENA.*

1. HYPOTHESIS:

This research on Mediterranean geopolitics and Libya, as well as geopolitics with Russia, Turkey, and other nations, aims to categorise the areas of dominant knowledge regarding Mediterranean geopolitics. The article examines current political and economic events, as well as the future implications and threats that they, as well as other nations throughout the world, may face.

2. INTRODUCTION:

For decades, maritime border conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean were confined to sovereignty claims and counterclaims among Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey. However, the Eastern Mediterranean's offshore natural gas resources have transformed the region into a crucial strategic theatre through which bigger geopolitical fault lines involving the EU and the MENA region have converged in the last five years. Italy and France have played significant roles in bringing about this shift, which has exacerbated the EU's already tense relationship with Turkey.

The purpose of this essay is to investigate the role of energy in the military-political situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the complicated and volatile modern context of the MENA region, it is the purpose of this article to provide different non-Western perspectives in international relations and geopolitics. As a result of the relative decrease of US power and influence, there are newly emerging geopolitical actors who place pragmatism ahead of ideology in pursuing their goals. Turkey and Russia are one of the rapidly emerging non-Western actors in the MENA area, following their own autonomous interests and aims.

The article is organised as it begins with a theoretical part on the function of geopolitics in affecting the behaviour of international actors in an emerging global order.

2.1: What happened to make the Eastern Mediterranean the centre of a geopolitical storm?

The large Zohr natural gas deposit in Egyptian maritime territory was discovered in August 2015 by the Italian energy giant Eni, which changed the game. Zohr's discovery, the largest gas finds in the Eastern Mediterranean to date, meant that the region's natural gas supply was instantly viable. Eni, which is also the primary operator in Cyprus' natural gas development, has begun promoting a plan to pool Cypriot, Egyptian, and Israeli gas and use Egypt's liquefaction plants to ship the region's gas to Europe as liquefied natural gas at a lower cost (LNG). One of Egypt's two LNG plants is also owned by the Italian business.

The Egypt-based LNG marketing model had a strategic flaw: it left no role for Turkey and its pipeline infrastructure to Europe, thereby killing Ankara's plans to become a regional energy powerhouse. In 2018, Total, the EU's third-largest corporation by revenue, struck another blow to Turkey by teaming with Eni on all of the Italian company's gas development operations in Cyprus, putting France in the centre of the eastern Mediterranean energy quagmire. Cyprus also agreed to supply Egypt's LNG plants for export at the same time. After Cyprus signed the agreement, Israel, which had been considering constructing an undersea gas pipeline between Israel and Turkey, followed suit and agreed to sell its gas to Egypt as well.

Turkey underlined its discontent with these developments by conducting a series of calculated gunboat diplomacy exercises in Cypriot seas, each accompanied by a naval escort. Ankara claims that Cyprus' maritime boundaries were drawn unlawfully at Turkey's expense, and the government continues to refuse to acknowledge them. It claims to be defending the rights of Turkish Cypriots in the island's northern half, who, despite being legal co-owners of Cyprus' natural resources, have been excluded from the development of the island's offshore natural gas deposits.

2.2: How did Libya become entangled in the Eastern Mediterranean quagmire?

Turkey signed its own maritime demarcation agreement with the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli in November 2019 in an attempt to break out of its regional isolation. The agreement was an attempt to gain more legal clout in order to challenge Greece's maritime borders with Cyprus and Egypt, which are critical to their intentions to exploit natural gas in the eastern Mediterranean. The Ankara-Tripoli maritime border agreement was supplemented by a military cooperation arrangement that guaranteed the GNA's security against General Khalifa Haftar's forces' efforts to destabilise the Tripoli-based government, which are backed by France and Egypt. In December, the GNA formally activated its military accord with Ankara, tying the already tense naval standoff in the Eastern Mediterranean to Libya's civil conflict.

The Libyan civil war was turned around by Ankara's overt engagement in the first half of 2020. Turkey's substantial military presence in Libya now gives Ankara with a platform from which to attack Cyprus, Egypt, and Greece over the Eastern Mediterranean's maritime borders, having succeeded in preserving the GNA. Turkey attempted to pursue its claims against Greece by deploying its Oruç Reis seismic survey ship to the disputed waters near Kastellorizo, escorted by a group of five navy warships.

2.3: In the Eastern Mediterranean, what's Turkey strength?

De facto maritime limits in the Eastern Mediterranean deny Turkey part of its proper maritime area, according to Turkey. As a result, the region's offshore natural gas production agreements, which are based on these de facto limits, are also unlawful. Turkey, on the other hand, sees its actions as protecting international law. The division may be traced back to the so-called Seville map, which serves as the basis for the region's widely accepted marine boundaries. This European Union-commissioned map study, completed in the early 2000s by the University of Seville, decided to determine maximum limits for Greece and Cyprus at the expense of Turkey by starting with the coast of every inhabited Greek island, no matter how small or close to Turkey's beaches. Turkey makes a valid point concerning the inequity of the demarcations. Turkey's Mediterranean coastline is longer than the border between the United States and Mexico. Turkey is likely entitled to a bigger maritime zone than it has obtained due to its extensive coastline under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) concept of equity and the international case law based on it. Turkey, on the other hand, refuses to sign the UNCLOS, therefore sealing off its legal options.

Turkey, on the other hand, found a partner with whom it could create its own map. The map of the Turkey-Libya maritime boundary agreement, in a mirror-image move to the Seville Map, sets a maximum maritime zone for Turkey by denying any of Greece's islands a

continental shelf or an exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which grants sovereign rights over offshore energy resources. The agreement sets an 18.6 nautical mile border between Turkey and Libya, and the Ankara-Tripoli map solely divides the entire maritime zone between Turkey and Libya, reaching from Turkey's southwestern corner to the opposite coast in eastern Libya, projecting out from that line. The islands of Greece are practically neglected.

The process used by Turkey to generate the Ankara-Tripoli map is fictitious. Most egregiously, the chart misses Crete, a 3,219-square-mile island located between these two shores. Article 121 of the UNCLOS, which deals with the legal status of islands, states that island coasts produce continental shelves and EEZs in the same way that any other coastal land formation, with the exception of those that "cannot sustain human habitation or economic life on their own." With a population of almost 650,000 people (roughly the same as Athens), Crete would undoubtedly create an EEZ.

2.4. Shipping and trade in the Mediterranean are being jeopardised by geopolitical upheavals in the region: France and Turkey are at odds over Libya:

Libya is one of the latter's states, whereas France is one of the formers. Then there's Turkey, a country on the eastern Mediterranean coast that isn't a member of the European Union but is a member of NATO. Early on after the Gaddafi dictatorship fell, Paris' determination to establish itself as a powerful foreign policy player in Libya became clear. Former President Nicolas Sarkozy's motivation for backing Libya's revolt in 2011 was to reassert France's military dominance in Europe. In Libya, France is following a single-minded strategy to eliminate its competitors and establish itself as the major power broker.

Following Libya's plunge into chaos, France pursued its own economic and security goals. It began courting Haftar, seeing him as an essential partner in ensuring "stability" against radicalism and, in turn, securing France's economic interests, including Total's oil exploration and production businesses.

During the Paris conference in 2018 aimed at establishing a political solution, France sought to undermine UN efforts and skew peace talks in its favour. Paris was attempting to pick and choose which actors it wanted to see while barring others. French missiles were spotted among Haftar's forces even during his Tripoli battle, which began in April 2019. Regardless of France's gamble, it was evident that Haftar's onslaught would fail, resulting in a protracted standoff.

Turkey's influence in the country is expanding, with the country's National Accord Government as its backbone (GNA). Since the beginning of 2020, Turkey's action to support the besieged GNA has shattered Paris' Libyan vision. Ankara and the GNA also agreed to a pact that allows Turkey to explore Libya's coast for oil, putting France's interests in the Eastern Mediterranean in jeopardy. In Libya, Turkey has surpassed France as the most powerful external actor, causing France's policy to be blown apart. France was dissatisfied with Turkey's efforts, and tensions between the two countries arose. Emmanuel Macron, the French president, has slammed Ankara on several occasions. Macron called Turkey's behaviour "dangerous" and "very aggressive." France is now attempting to delegitimize Turkey's position, ostensibly in order to confront and demonise it.

The French navy, for example, stopped a Turkish vessel transporting armaments to the GNA, while the French embassy in Greece declared the GNA-Turkey arrangement "illegal."

France has withdrawn from NATO's Eastern Mediterranean naval mission, underscoring its open hostility toward Turkey for effectively blocking its regional geopolitical goals. Tensions between the two NATO members, France and Turkey, have also risen following a standoff in the Mediterranean between Turkish warships and a French naval vessel on June 10, 2020. In terms of NATO's rules of engagement, France chastised Turkish frigates for allegedly causing a nuisance to a French ship. NATO is investigating the incident, despite Ankara's denial.

France also accuses Turkey of violating a UN arms embargo on Libya, but it hasn't addressed the UAE's or Egypt's illegal assistance for Haftar's offensive, demonstrating a double standard. Because of their shared support for Haftar and as a counterbalance to Turkey, France has refrained from condemning Russia's actions. All of this has rendered the EU powerless in Libya. The United States is largely absent and uninterested in Libya's political crisis.

In the end, the issue of Libya has shifted Mediterranean geopolitics. With all of the political and military cards on the table, the key concern is whether the tense exchanges will evolve into rivalry, disrupting the fragile balance. There are many countries participating, and new alliances may arise. Shipping and trade for all Mediterranean countries are at jeopardy if tensions escalate.

3. STUDY OBJECTIVES:

The research on Mediterranean geopolitics and Libya detects and analyses the power politics that major international countries exercise on one another. We focused on how Mediterranean geopolitics over the problem of Libya and all the political and military cards on the table in this article. The key question is whether such heated exchanges would escalate to rivalry, disrupting the already fragile balance. It also assesses how other European countries are engaging in the quest for economic dominance.

4 RELATED WORKS:

4.1. Baltrop, 2019 [1]

The energy worth of the State of Libya is bigger due to its enormous area, more than three million km² of which is just 5% urbanised, and low population, 6 million residents looking for new towns for housing, work, and development. And reality has fulfilled all of these prerequisites. While Libya is a productive energy country, particularly in traditional energy sources (oil and gas), demand is growing by the day, and, more importantly, Libya exports crude oil without refining and imports the majority of its derivatives because Libyan investment and services demand huge financial returns. As a result, energy has become a Libyan concern, along with a slew of obstacles and problems.

4.2. Constantini, 2017 [2]

The discovery of energy resources has transformed the Eastern Mediterranean into a battleground, not just for control of Mediterranean trade routes but also for energy. The energy issue altered the Eastern Mediterranean's geopolitical significance, piquing the interest of not only riparians but also international actors and businesses. The issue in the Eastern Mediterranean becomes increasingly complicated as the number of entities seeking to exert

influence over the region grows. As a result, the Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus's energy connection has become a topic that has a bearing on energy security and international law.

4.3. Østhagen, 2019 [3]

On November 27, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Libyan Presidential Council Chairman Fayeze al Sarraj signed the Turkish-Libyan Maritime Border Delimitation Agreement. The Libya accord, which has a historic influence on the Eastern Mediterranean oil geopolitics, was a game-changing initiative for Turkey. The notion that Turkey couldn't strike an agreement with another country in the region is also wrong, as the Libyan accord has opened the way to new agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, and Israel.

4.4. Boustros, 2018 [4]

Egypt, on the other hand, rejected the agreement and kept the Skhirat agreement, which was not the case in Egypt's case, but the statement Egypt made did not lead to terms of an agreement that stipulated in its preamble that the government and people should be covered, and that these values should be the goal of the February 17 revolution. The ruler who violated Egypt's sovereignty on several occasions also attacked and interfered in Libya's internal affairs, supported one party at the expense of another, broke the arms embargo law, sent Egyptian military personnel to Libya, and embraced all who wanted to conspire against Libya's supporters of the old regime.

4.5. TRT World News, 2019 [5]

Similar accords with Egypt and Israel will be possible in the future for Turkey (not Greece). Libya's eastern cities, such as Derna, are completely identical, just as locations like Fethiye and its environs are riparian states with Turkey. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982 allows countries like Turkey and Libya to sign agreements like the one that Libya and Turkey inked in November of 2019. It contains a memorandum of protection and maritime agreement that permits Turkey to demarcate its maritime borders and prohibits Egypt and Greece from monopolising the Eastern Mediterranean region.

5. METHODOLOGY DESIGN:

This research on Mediterranean geopolitics and Libya is based on a survey of the literature as well as factual research that has been made available to the general public around the world. We have gathered connected relevant material that supports or contradicts the criteria indicated in the Introduction Section of this research and then made our analysis based on the background investigation. Our investigation incorporates the following fact observations:

- Libya: A failed state in the middle of the Mediterranean
- Turkey's interventions in Libya.
- Geopolitics in the MENA region.
- Shipping and trade in the Mediterranean are being jeopardised by geopolitical upheavals in the region: France and Turkey are at odds over Libya.

Our conclusions are based on these analytical observations in the aforementioned domains, which allow for future extensions/predictions based on the implications or requirements related to the subject of our research.

6. STUDY AREA & DATA COLLECTION:

As a result, data and information are gathered from verified official portals, research/survey/journal references in this field, opinion polls, and review reports formally released by related agencies/institutions/functioning bodies/research organisations. Data is gathered from secondary sources in order to track the major international powers' geopolitical shifts and advancements. The credibility of these data/information is certified by the credentials and methods stated in those information sources, and they are thoroughly checked to ensure that they do not contain any conflicting or deceptive facts that could undermine social, political, economic, or other platforms.

7. OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS:

7.1. In the MENA region, there is geopolitical struggle and conflict for power

7.1.1. The situation in Libya is deteriorating:

Following a request from the Government of National Accord (GNA), which is represented in Tripoli by Fayeze al-Sarraj, Turkey began moving its military to Libya around the end of 2019. GNA is actively supported by Turkey, Qatar, and a number of other nations. The Libyan National Army (LNA) is led by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, who is opposed to the GNA. Egypt, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the United Arab Emirates (UAE), France, Russia, and several more countries all support him. According to Turkey's President, contractors in Libya have sided with the LNA. Wagner is said to be one of the contractors, according to representatives of the Russian private military organisation (PMC). In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a combustible mix of different interests and aspirations coexist. The Turkish parliament adopted draft legislation on Libya on January 2, 2020, and the measure was signed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The draft legislation allows for the deployment of Turkish military soldiers in Libya. The draft law received 325 votes in favour and 184 votes against it in parliament. Since the end of 2019, rumours have been circulating about Turkey's intention to send a military presence to Libya. Recep Erdogan, too, has made such claims. Turkey had already been detected with increased arms supply and military gear. Following a discussion between Erdogan and his protégé, Sarraj, the surge in supply began. Following the commencement of the offensive operation (April 2019), the LNA activated the relocation of military equipment and hardware to the forces that support GNA. Regardless of the Turkish leadership's specific goals in the Libyan or Syrian theatres of operations, this relocation was carried out. Turkish military experts, as well as MIT (Turkey's national intelligence agency) and PMC SADAT, were responsible for coordination and logistics, according to Turkish media reports.



7.1.2. Military actions in Libya as they develop via the lens of Turkish involvement:

The overall intricacy of the military situation for the GNA has prompted Turkey's participation in military operations in Libya at various levels. The Libyan National Army, which has received direct military help from a number of nations and has large local population and oil resources, retains an operational lead in critical areas of the conflict's evolution and strives to resolve the conflict solely by military methods. Despite the fact that Haftar's primary strategic goal (the seizure of Tripoli) has yet to be realised, he has made significant progress. Sirte, a strategically vital city, was seized under his direction, and he was also able to move along the coast towards Misrata.

Turkey was compelled to relinquish its indirect assistance for Libya's GNA as a result of increasing pressure on Tripoli, and to enter the fight directly. As a result, the Tobruk

government in eastern Libya classified Turkey as a direct foe in the Libyan war, accusing it of backing international terrorism in Tripoli. In addition to supplying armaments by sea and air, Turkey began to send additional military advisers and instructors to Tripoli (who support the actions of various groups of Syrian rebels), to openly defy the arms embargo, and to aggressively utilise attack and reconnaissance UAVs for the Libyan GNA's benefit. The Turks strike the LNA's forces and infrastructure directly with these weapons, employing high-precision guided ammunition. Turkey also provides the Government of National Accord with information gathered through agents and technical intelligence services, as well as electronic warfare support. Furthermore, Turkish state propaganda carries out major media attacks aimed at discrediting Haftar, the LNA, and the Government of Eastern Libya in Tobruk, while also bolstering the legitimacy of the GNA in Libya. Intergovernmental agreements between Tripoli and Ankara were used to formally justify these acts.

7.1.3. The escalation of the gas factor in the Eastern Mediterranean:

Libya, or more precisely the Libyan National Army (GNA), claims the right to Greek offshore exploration to the south of the island of Crete. This lays the groundwork for a potential war between Tripoli and Athens. The second point is that, in such an EEZ structure, Turkey and Libya/GNA would have jurisdiction over a large amount of maritime territory for the development of fields in the same area. Their EEZ also divides the Eastern Mediterranean into two regions. This is significant in light of the agreement reached in Athens on the building of the Eastern Mediterranean pipeline (East-Med) on January 2, 2020 by and between Cyprus, Greece, and Israel. If built, the 1900-kilometer pipeline will connect newly discovered and opened gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean with European markets via Cyprus, Greece, and Italy. IGI Poseidon SA35, a joint venture between the Greek government-owned supplier Depa SA36 and the Italian Edison SpA, is working on the project. Italy, on the other hand, plans to sign the pact later. The project was authorised by the European Commission in 2015. It has a capacity of 10 billion cubic metres of gas per year. The project is expected to be completed in 2025. If the project is completed, it will bring an alternate source of gas and a new energy supply route to Europe. Turkey finds this to be completely unacceptable.

7.1.4. The domestic political situation in Turkey, as well as the Russian element:

Russia's support for Haftar in the Libyan conflict could be contingent on Moscow receiving a concession for the development of oil and gas fields in Libya and its EEZ if he wins and captures Tripoli, Misrata, and other territory controlled by the GNA's forces. The recovered hydrocarbons are being eyed by Europe as a possible buyer. As a result, if the LNA gains control of the entire Libyan coast through oil and gas production and subsequent sale, Russia's share of the European market might grow. Moscow may offset some of the potential costs incurred as a result of US sanctions imposed on the Nord Stream-2 pipeline and the countries engaged in its construction by doing so.

The primary issue is that Russia backs Haftar in Libya, which is an adversary of the GNA, which is backed by Turkey. The situation in Syria's war zone is compounded by Turkey's failure to follow through on its duties under the September 2018 Sochi agreements. The parties then stated their intention to "create a 15–20-kilometre-deep demilitarised zone

along the line of contact between the armed opposition and government troops by 15 October 2018 with the withdrawal of radical militants, and to withdraw heavy weapons, in particular all tanks, MLRSs, and artillery of all opposition groups from this zone by October 10." In reality, this did not occur, and for about a year and a half, extreme militants backed by Turkey have been bombing the Russian air base Khmeimim. As a result, pro-Syrian government troops, including Russian military forces, launched an operation in Idlib province in December 2019. As a result, in order to reduce the risk of a direct armed conflict, Moscow and Ankara worked together to coordinate their actions and de-escalate the situation at Putin and Erdogan's meeting in Moscow on March 5, 2020, which does not rule out the possibility of the situation spiralling out of control. The commissioning of Turkish Stream, which is under Ankara's jurisdiction, adds to the complication.

8. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION:

Energy is important in the context of the Libyan crisis between opposing groups, as well as the regional and global geo energy climates. Libya, which has four basins, the most important of which being the Sirte Basin, works with a number of multinational businesses from Italy, Germany, France, Spain, and the Gulf countries.

Turkey is negotiating a sea-littoral deal with Libya's National Reconciliation Government. Turkey and the Libyan National Reconciliation Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding Concerning the Restriction of Marine Jurisdiction between the Greek Cypriot Administration (GCA) and Greece, By establishing tripartite cooperation mechanisms with countries like Jordan or the "East Mediterranean Gas Forum," Turkey was a response to the formation of the exclusion and left-alone policy in the Mediterranean. The accord, which was eventually backed up by military cooperation with the National Consensus Government, also established the Eastern Mediterranean's new continental shelf, as well as the exclusive economic zone limits.

Turkey's expansion of its central Mediterranean range into Libya is causing geopolitical shifts in the region. Since two agreements were struck between Turkey and Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord, the situation in Libya and conflicts over the eastern Mediterranean's oil resources have been at the top of the international agenda (GNA).

Following this, the Tripoli administration urged Turkey to send troops to Libya to assist the GNA in defending the capital against an offensive conducted by East Libya-based commander Khalifa Haftar under the military cooperation agreement.

"We'll go to places where we've been invited, and we won't go to places where we haven't been invited," he stated. "For the time being, we shall accept this invitation because it has been extended to us."

This chain of events, which can be described as Turkey expanding its range to the central Mediterranean toward Libya on the assumption that Ankara will not be able to defend its foreign policy interests by focusing just on the eastern Mediterranean, is causing geopolitical shifts in the region.

8.1. Crisis dynamics in the Mediterranean:

With the recent establishment of geostrategic alliances and relationships between countries in the region, the Mediterranean issue has risen to the top of regional and global stakeholders' agendas, owing to rising prospects for collaboration as well as increasing conflict risks.

Since ancient times, the Mediterranean, which lies at the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and Africa, has served as a focal point for rivalry and strife. Because of the presence of the United States and NATO during the Cold War, the Mediterranean was a priority region in world affairs. However, after the end of the Cold War, the Mediterranean was acknowledged as a safe zone in NATO and US foreign policy, competition and conflicts in the region were characterised as regional issues.

Recent geopolitical shifts, on the other hand, have heightened rivalry in the Mediterranean, pushing the region into unavoidable confrontations.

The power vacuum that occurred in parts of the area following the Arab Spring, as well as the competition that resulted, can be seen as catalysts for these changes, with the Syrian and Libyan civil wars serving as the arena for this regional rivalry.

With Russia and Iran in the eastern Mediterranean, as well as global powers striving to influence Syria's future, the Syrian crisis exacerbates the dangerous situation.

Iran's policies for gaining access to the eastern Mediterranean, in particular, have made the Mediterranean a key foreign policy theatre for Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Furthermore, due to the Libyan conflict, the refugee crisis, and the ever-increasing operations of terrorist organisations in the region, the situation in the eastern Mediterranean has become a national security issue for European countries, particularly France and Italy.

While the Western Pacific is receiving more attention at the moment, Russia and Iran's outreach to the eastern Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Syrian civil war has prompted the region to jump in the US foreign policy rankings.

The reinterpretation of 'great-power rivalry' in the United States' national security and defence strategies in the direction of the Russian, Iranian, and Chinese axis is another element pushing these changes.

Because of the power vacuum left by the lessened US presence, Russia and China, particularly the Russian Federation's air defence and navy capabilities, the eastern Mediterranean became a key zone for the West's security for the first time after a lengthy period in history.

Another variable in the region's geopolitical upheavals is the discovery of natural gas resources, which prompted regional entities to compete with one another and resulted in the region's redefinition in the context of European energy security.

Greece, Israel, Egypt, and the Greek Cypriot administration, who had developed practical partnerships over energy resources in the eastern Mediterranean, pushed the reconciliation a step further by aiming to isolate Turkey from the region.

Furthermore, after adopting foreign policies that demonstrate their readiness to invest in their connections with NATO and the United States, Greece has begun devoting more cash for the defence industry.

8.2. Geopolitical rivalry, Mediterranean security, and the Libyan conflict:

After the military intervention in Libya in 2011, no political stability was achieved in the eight years that followed. The intervention, which began on March 18, 2011, damaged the countries already debilitated central structure, resulting in political disintegration.

Following the country's division following elections in 2014, groupings formed around two key blocks: Tobruk in the east and Tripoli in the west. These groups began to create alliances with regional powers as time went on.

Following the June 2014 elections, a multi-governmental system was established.

Egypt and the United Arab Emirates took the lead in the Libyan crisis after that, arming and financing Haftar's forces, supplying air support during the Battle of Benghazi, and attempting to establish international legitimacy for the Tobruk (HoR) government.

For the UAE, Libya serves as a space where it can operate independently and defend its foreign policy objectives as it strives to become a regional economic and military force.

The Emirates began to play a significant role in shaping regional geopolitics, adding their armed forces to the equation on top of their foreign policy and influencing places outside the Gulf.

Since the international military involvement in Libya in 2011, Egypt has played a crucial role as a neighbouring state in the region. Libya, on the other hand, became a far more interesting topic following the 2013 coup, owing to the economic resources that the newly constituted authoritarian state required.

On the other hand, the political dialogue period that began in the summer of 2014, was led by the UN, and was outlined in 2015 with the Libyan Political Agreement in Skhirat, Morocco, came to a halt as a result of France and Italy revising their foreign policies in favour of military leader Khalifa Haftar, particularly after the Paris Summit in May 2018 and the Palermo Summit in November 2018.

Due to the presence of terrorist organisations in the region and the refugee crisis, the political split in Libya began to be regarded as a source of instability and a national security concern in a period when security is becoming a prominent subject in the Mediterranean for both countries.

With policy shifts in France and Italy beginning in 2018, the Gulf-Egypt-Russia axis began to take the lead.

The failure of international organisations, particularly the United Nations, to show a decisive and holistic will for a solution to the Libya crisis, as well as the 2011 military intervention involving actors such as the United States, France, and Italy, are among the main reasons for these geopolitical transformations.

8.3. International actors lack a "decisive will."

Haftar is increasingly being considered a solution for Libya's stability, as he has the military support of Egypt and the Gulf States and has made great headway on the ground.

After Haftar's army began retreating from major battlefronts in August 2019, when certain local clans ordered the militia's soldiers to flee, Russia dispatched military units to the Libyan battlefield. This allowed Russia to expand its influence from the eastern to the western Mediterranean.

While the direction of the civil war in Libya is unknown, it is clear that the situation in Libya is critical to Turkey's Mediterranean interests and can thus be defined as one of the focal points of Turkish foreign policy, and that Libya is seen as a source of conflict for regional rivals who compete in other areas as well.

On the other hand, it's important to remember that these geopolitical shifts were triggered by the United States', France's, and Italy's inability to show a decisive and holistic will for a solution to the Libya crisis during the 2011 military intervention, and that's how the Mediterranean resurfaced in international politics as a key region for many actors.

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