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The Arab Spring, evolution and consequences. Case study: Libya

ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Introduction

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains tense, even fourteen years after the onset of the Arab Spring. New conflicts in Sudan and the Gaza Strip, alongside the division within Iraq (where the Kurds are split into two factions), are issues that both the affected nations and the region as a whole must confront. These regional problems can also impact other countries worldwide by fueling migration, terrorism, and organized crime.

It is crucial to recognize the dangers posed by the emergence of failed states following popular protests; such uprisings do not always lead to democracy, progress, and economic prosperity, but can instead trigger internal conflicts that result in state failure. Libya is one such example, ranking among the top 20 failed states on the Fragile States Index¹. The hypothesis underpinning this research is that the Arab Spring, by disrupting the internal order of the MENA region, led to the failure of democratization and the emergence of a failed state in Libya.

Although the consequences of the Arab Spring in the MENA region currently receive less attention in international discourse, the topic remains relevant as it sheds light on the region's ongoing instability. Over time, shifting international dynamics tend to push certain cases out of the public eye, relegating them to the background. Libya is one such case; following the ceasefire agreement, the definitive resolution of its internal issues has taken a back seat. Subsequent international crises have monopolized public and international attention, effectively marginalizing the problems facing the Libyan state. Examining the consequences of the Arab Spring in Libya and the country's subsequent transformations is both necessary and timely; each state in the region possessed unique characteristics that must be studied to understand how a resource-rich nation became a failed state.

Libya is the only North African state to have faced a protracted civil war following the Arab Spring. Fourteen years later, the situation remains unstable. Two power centers control the country—one in the west and the other in the east—each with its own government and military. The first center governs western Libya, is based in the capital, Tripoli, and controls approximately one-third of the country's territory.

¹ Fragile States Index, "Country Dashboard – Libya," accessed March 20, 2025, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/>.

The Government of National Unity (GNU), formed on March 10, 2021, operates from this center; it is an interim government backed by Islamist militias from western Libya. The second center of power is controlled by the Government of National Stability (GNS), based in Benghazi; formed on March 3, 2022, it is supported by the parliament elected in 2014 (the House of Representatives, based in Tobruk) and the Libyan National Army, led by Khalifa Haftar. This eastern-based government controls approximately two-thirds of Libyan territory.

Despite the existence of a ceasefire agreement (signed on October 23, 2020) and ongoing negotiations between the parties to hold free national elections, the situation in Libya is not moving toward rapid national reconciliation.

Chapter 1. Theoretical and methodological frameworks for the scientific study

To ensure the coherence of the paper, the theoretical perspective from which the topic is approached must also be discussed. Broadly speaking, this study adopts a classical realism perspective. A prominent representative of classical realism is Henry Kissinger.

In the first chapter, I present the main international relations theories concerning the MENA region, as well as the conceptual frameworks for the Arab Spring and failed states. A significant role is played by the presentation of the classical realist perspective on the issues facing failed states in the MENA region. This first chapter comprises the following subsections: 1) International relations theories and the approach to the Libyan case, 2) The Arab Spring – conceptual frameworks, 3) Failed states – conceptual frameworks, 4) Methodology.

The first subsection (International relations theories and the approach to the Libyan case) outlines the perspectives of major international relations theories and how they relate to the issues of failed states. Classical realism holds that failed states do not constitute significant actors within the international system. Classical realists view the USA and China as the major actors, engaged in constant competition², and conflicts in failed states are the result of internal power struggles and the involvement of great powers and regional powers driven by geopolitical, economic, and social interests. Neorealism posits that the struggle for power within an anarchic system is the result of the policies fostered by that system. According to neorealists, the structure of the international system is influenced by the number of great powers resulting from the hierarchy of states³. Mearsheimer, a proponent of offensive realism,

² “Henry Kissinger Explains How to Avoid World War Three,” *The Economist*, accessed June 18, 2024, <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2023/05/17/henry-kissinger-explains-how-to-avoid-world-war-three>.

³ Brian C. Schmidt, “Realist International Theory and the Military,” in *Handbook of Military Sciences*, ed. Anders McD Sookermany (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 12, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02866-4_103-1.

argues that a state cannot become a global hegemon, and for this reason, the world is condemned to great-power competition⁴. Mearsheimer holds the US and Western countries responsible for the outbreak of conflicts in Libya and Syria⁵. Unlike realism, liberalism maintains that peace can be maintained through cooperation among nations. This subsection also presents the Copenhagen School's approach regarding states in the MENA region. This school proposes broadening the scope of analysis to include economic, social, and environmental factors alongside political and military ones.⁶

The second subsection (The Arab Spring – conceptual frameworks) defines the nature and significance of the Arab Spring. Furthermore, it outlines the events that unfolded in the MENA region between 2010 and 2011—events that appeared to offer hope for a transition from totalitarianism and autocracy to democracy and modernity. These protests spread rapidly from Tunisia to other countries in the MENA region, manifesting with varying degrees of intensity depending on the specific country. The subject of the Arab Spring is approached from various perspectives; while most interpretations favor the view that the uprisings were pro-democracy, there is also an interpretation suggesting that the revolts aimed solely at the fall of secular governments⁷. The causes of these revolts were economic, social, and political in nature⁸.

The third subsection (Failed States – Conceptual Frameworks) outlines how the concept of a failed state is defined within the extensive literature and official strategies, as well as what characterizes such a state. According to Edward Newman, these authors fall into the first category—those who maintain that a state can be defined as failed if specific indicators align with that status, and who acknowledge both the existence and the need to study the concept of the failed state⁹. The indices used to classify failed states vary depending on the organization (World Bank, OECD, The Fund for Peace, and Brookings Institution).

Libya appears on the failed states map produced by The Fund for Peace. It is among the top 20 failed states; it ranked 17th on the Fragile States Index in 2023 and 16th in 2024.

⁴ Brian C. Schmidt, "Realist International Theory and the Military," 13.

⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security* 43, no. 4 (April 2019), https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00342.

⁶ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Securitatea: un nou cadru de analiză*, (trad.) George Jigla (Cluj-Napoca: Editura CA Publishing, 2011).

⁷ Ben Cole, *The Syrian Information and Propaganda War: The Role of Cognitive Bias* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93282-4>.

⁸ Hafez Ghanem, "Roots of the Arab Spring," in *The Arab Spring Five Years Later: Toward Greater Inclusiveness* (Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 39-46, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1657tv8.6>.

⁹ Edward Newman, "Failed States and International Order: Constructing a Post-Westphalian World," *Contemporary Security Policy* 30, no. 3 (December 2009): 424-425, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260903326479>.

The fourth subsection (Methodology) outlines the study's methodology. Regarding the research design, I explain that this paper employs a qualitative approach aimed at testing the following hypothesis: by disrupting the internal order of the MENA region, the Arab Spring led to the failure of democratization and the emergence of a failed state in Libya. In addition to the hypothesis, the research objectives, research questions, and chosen method are presented. The paper's central question is: What are the consequences of the Arab Spring for Libya? The secondary questions are: 1) What role did the historical evolution of the Libyan state play in the unfolding of events following the Arab Spring?; 2) Why was Libya unable to establish a democratic regime after the Arab Spring?; 3) Is the failure of the Libyan state attributable to internal or external causes?; 4) What is the current situation in Libya?

The case study method is described below, along with the rationale for its selection. This method facilitates an empirical demonstration to establish the validity of the proposed hypothesis. Subsequently, the typology and elements of the case study are outlined. Regarding typology, the case study focuses on a single state: Libya. Furthermore, it is an explanatory case study—as it accounts for events in Libya following the Arab Spring—and a longitudinal one, examining the country over time from 2011 to 2025. Case study elements: The study comprises the following stages: 1) establishing the historical context (first subsection: Libya – a unitary or divided state), 2) describing the uprising (second subsection: Libya and the Arab Spring), 3) identifying timeframes and analyzing external factors contributing to state failure (third subsection: Interests of major powers and regional powers in Libya), and 4) synthesizing the case study (fourth subsection: The Arab Spring – a driver of state failure).

The final part of this subsection outlines the primary data sources. Data were collected predominantly from secondary sources. The main sources used in the research include: academic literature (covering and defining concepts such as classical realism, the Arab Spring, and failed states), official documents and reports, global think tanks, media archives, and online media and publications. The analysis covers the period from 2011 to 2025.

Chapter 2. The Arab Spring – a historical phenomenon characterized by the failure of democratization

The Arab Spring represents the wave of revolt that swept across the entire MENA region, altering the regional order. Following the onset of these movements, each state attempted to rebuild its authority in its own way. Initially, it appeared that these social movements could oust dictators and resolve the acute problems facing the people and their

countries by following a democratic path; however, in Libya, Syria, and Yemen, the outcome was a failure.

This chapter comprises three sub-chapters: 1) The consequences of the Arab Spring; 2) Failed states resulting from the Arab Spring; and 3) The positions of the EU and the USA, along with development support programs for the MENA region.

Powers with interests in the MENA region articulated their stances through their representatives. Each international actor sought to influence events through various means—ranging from peaceful actions (such as press statements, conferences, and diplomatic negotiations) to the use of force (military intervention). One example of intervention involving the use of force is the NATO operation to protect civilians in Libya, which led to the ousting of dictator Muammar Gaddafi. Following the dictator's death, civil war hindered the path toward democracy and stability.

The first subsection outlines the primary regional and state-level consequences resulting from the Arab Spring. These consequences stemmed from instability across the MENA region and the transformations undergone by individual states. Regional consequences—whether immediate or long-lasting—included political shifts (the rise of Islamist political power and increased involvement of religious organizations in state structures); social impacts (diminished public rights and freedoms, the oppression of minorities, internal displacement, and migration); security issues (rising terrorism); and economic effects. Based on post-Arab Spring developments, the region's states can be categorized as follows: states that experienced temporary success (Tunisia); states that failed immediately (Libya); states with short-lived representative regimes (Egypt); and states plunged into civil war from the outset, facing an uncertain future even today (Syria). At the state level, Tunisia underwent peaceful changes moving toward democracy until 2021; however, since 2021, the president has assumed significant powers previously held by the government and parliament, steering the country toward autocracy. In Egypt, following the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood between 2011 and 2013, the military reclaimed power and remains in control to this day. In Syria, Bashar al-Assad could not be ousted; he was the only dictator to remain in power until 2024, when the group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) seized control of the country. In Libya, following the failure of free elections, two rival factions emerged, each claiming the right to rule the entire country.

The second subsection provides a brief historical overview showing that the MENA states formed after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire were governable and free from protracted internal conflicts. Following the Arab Spring, civil wars erupted in Libya, Syria, and

Yemen, destabilizing these nations. These long-lasting civil wars rendered the countries difficult to govern—effectively turning them into failed states.

The third subsection outlines the relationships the US and the EU maintain with MENA countries, as well as the value of the aid provided for the region's development. As US aid to the region declined, EU aid increased. Both the EU and the US pursued their respective interests in the area: the Europeans operated through military and civilian missions, whereas the Americans relied more on diplomacy than on military action. Marc Lynch (a specialist in political science and international affairs at George Washington University) argues that Obama's objective regarding the MENA region was to keep the US out of the conflicts taking place there¹⁰.

Chapter 3. Consequences of the Arab Spring—primarily the emergence of failed states—and the international security environment

In the MENA region, following the Arab Spring, three states became zones of protracted conflict. Libya, Syria, and Yemen failed to achieve a peaceful societal transformation and instead descended into a spiral of violence. Prior to the 2011 protests, these states were governed by dictatorial and autocratic regimes; their leaders had entrenched themselves in power over decades, creating repressive and insular systems. Any attempt at opening up was suppressed, and the systems continued to operate as before.

This rigidity on the part of the authoritarian regimes governing these states led to a buildup of public discontent. Once protests erupted and turned violent, the situation escalated into civil war. The leaders' determination to cling to power further exacerbated the crisis. Struggles between the ruling powers and the newly formed opposition resulted in widespread civilian access to arms and ammunition. Over time, this access led to the collapse of central authority and deepened societal divisions.

This chapter examines the implications of failed states for the current security landscape. The role of failed states within the security environment is highlighted in extensive literature, as well as in the US National Security Strategy and the strategies of the EU and NATO. It is evident that specialized literature places increasing emphasis on the issue of failed states in the context of the consequences of the Arab Spring. This fourth chapter of the thesis comprises the following subsections: 1) The rapid transition from the Arab Spring to the Arab

¹⁰ Marc Lynch, "Obama and the Middle East: Rightsizing the U.S. Role," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, accessed June 30, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2015/10/obama-and-the-middle-east-rightsizing-the-us-role?lang=en>.

Winter driven by domestic and international contradictions; 2) The implications of failed states for the current security landscape; and 3) A consequence of the Arab Spring: the desire to redraw the map of the MENA region.

The first subsection (The rapid transition from the Arab Spring to the Arab Winter due to domestic and international contradictions) outlines—for each country—how and where the protests began, as well as the swift escalation from protests to civil war. The outbreak of civil wars in the three states discussed confirmed the notion that the Arab Spring was transforming, metaphorically speaking, into an Arab Winter. The speed at which the Arab Winter set in varied from state to state, depending on the internal divisions that emerged along the way. Once civil wars engulfed certain states, a series of consequences ensued: a weakening of each state's security apparatus, the seizure of political power by military factions, and a reshaping of power relations among key actors—developments identified by Virginie Collombier and her colleagues.

The second subsection (The Implications of Failed States for the Current Security Configuration) describes the position of failed states in relation to stable states. Failed states face multidimensional challenges; there is an internal interdependence among the political, economic, and security spheres. Furthermore, specific characteristics defining failed states in the MENA region are outlined: geographical proximity to regional powers, state-level military build-up, rivalry between Islamist and secular parties, high-casualty conflicts, and state fragmentation. Stable, powerful states view failed states as a threat to the international community. The 2022 US National Security Strategy (under the Biden administration) identifies two challenges requiring a response from the world's most powerful nation. These responses must be addressed at a systemic level—covering both geopolitical developments and transnational issues affecting the global population. Key challenges include climate change, food insecurity, communicable diseases, terrorism, energy shortages, and inflation. Regarding failed states in the MENA region, the US engages at all levels and through various methods to combat terrorism, migration, and food insecurity. The US also takes an interest in other issues facing these states, such as development, governance, and social policies. NATO and the EU share the same stance as the US regarding the issues surrounding failed states in the MENA region.

The third subsection (A Consequence of the Arab Spring: The Desire to Create a New Map in the MENA Region) examines the role of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) in the evolution of Middle Eastern states following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In the wake of the Arab Spring, the Islamic State emerged in the MENA region, seeking to alter the borders

of the region's modern states. This attempt to create new states and redraw the map of the MENA region represents another consequence of the Arab Spring.

Chapter 4. The Evolution of MENA Region States After the Arab Spring

The first subsection (States that underwent the Arab Spring and avoided becoming failed states – Egypt and Tunisia) examines Egypt and Tunisia, both of which managed to avoid state failure despite experiencing the Arab Spring. Failure was averted in Egypt because the country maintained a special relationship with the US, while domestically, the military assumed power following Mubarak's resignation. In Tunisia's case, failure was avoided because the military did not intervene to suppress demonstrators; the army's passivity forced Ben Ali to resign.

The second subsection (Syria after the Arab Spring – a state facing numerous challenges) outlines how Syria became a failed state. Following the civil conflict, the country suffered a significant economic decline and faced international isolation. After the fall of the Assad regime, the new leadership in Damascus has sought to consolidate domestic authority and pursue a balanced foreign policy. The Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group, which seized power on December 8, has succeeded in gaining international recognition, including from certain European powers. It is a moderate Islamist group aiming to govern Syria until future free elections can be held. However, the new Damascus leadership is already facing opposition movements from the west. The Alawites of western Syria were allies of the old regime and are viewed as a challenge by the new leadership; a minor Alawite rebellion was suppressed by security forces from Damascus.

The third subsection (Multilateral political-diplomatic negotiations regarding the conflict in Libya) describes four formats in which negotiations were conducted. Peace negotiations concerning the Libyan conflict took place in Palermo, Moscow, Berlin, and Paris. Through the Palermo conference, held in November 2018, Italy sought to promote a peace that was equitable for all parties to the conflict; however, the negotiations did not yield the expected results. Through the negotiations held in Moscow, the Russian Federation aimed for a rapid resolution to the conflict and more limited international involvement. Only the two conflicting parties, along with the Russian Federation and Turkey, participated in these peace talks. The outcome fell short of expectations; no peace agreement was signed, and the representative of one of the parties, Khalifa Haftar, walked out of the negotiations. The two peace conferences held in Berlin in 2020 and 2021 reinforced the ceasefire agreement between the conflicting

parties. France organized two peace conferences in Paris—in 2018 and 2021—aimed at resolving the Libyan conflict.

Chapter 5. Case Study: Libya

This case study analyzes Libya, a state that descended into civil war following the Arab Spring (March–October 2011) and subsequently underwent a transitional period leading up to the elections in the summer of 2012. Instability persisted after the 2012 elections, and the country plunged into civil war once again following the 2014 elections—which included a vote on a new constitution and parliamentary elections held that summer. A ceasefire was established in 2020, accompanied by several rounds of peace negotiations, yet these efforts failed to result in the formation of a unified government.

The first subsection (Libya – a unitary or divided state) outlines Libya’s historical evolution over several millennia up to the present day. This analysis reveals that, for the most part, Libyan territory was divided into three regions and remained under foreign rule. A flourishing civilization existed on Libyan soil, dating back to the eighth millennium BC. The Berbers appeared in the territory starting in the second millennium BC; this population remained a constant presence, regardless of the various peoples who conquered the land. The most significant influence on the Berber tribes came from the Arabs, whose caliphates—beginning in 642 AD—succeeded in Islamizing and Arabizing a large proportion of these tribes. Only a few Berber tribes remained un-Arabized (e.g., the Amazigh). Libya became an independent state in 1951 under King Idris I, who, in 1963, transformed the country from a federal state (comprising the three historical regions of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan) into a unitary state.

The second subsection (Libya and the Arab Spring) outlines the evolution of the uprisings and the dynamics of the ensuing conflicts following the Arab Spring. Demonstrations against the authorities began in the city of Benghazi on February 15, 2011, following the arrest of lawyer Fathi Terbil. From February 16, 2011, the protests turned violent, and several state institutions in Benghazi came under attack. Among the demonstrators were young people whose relatives had been imprisoned at Abu Salim, the site of a 1996 massacre of inmates. Security forces began using live ammunition on February 17, 2011. Fighting continued in eastern Libya, and by February 22, protesters had succeeded in gaining control of Cyrenaica. Security forces launched a new operation to retake the east and, within approximately a month, reached the outskirts of Benghazi (March 19, 2011). Had France not intervened, Benghazi would have been captured and the opposition defeated. NATO's intervention to protect the

civilian population weakened the capabilities of forces loyal to Gaddafi, ultimately leading to their defeat and Gaddafi's death.

The third subsection (The interests of major powers and regional powers in Libya) outlines the role of each international actor with interests in the country. The US became directly involved through Operation Odyssey Dawn and subsequently within NATO to protect civilians. Following the 2011 intervention, American policy focused on promoting a democratic path for Libya and a stable political climate in the region. From 2016 onwards, the US began to move away from its previous policy, allowing the actions of the army led by Haftar. After peace negotiations held under UN auspices in 2020 and 2021, the US reverted to its earlier stance of non-involvement, refraining from directly supporting either side of the conflict. The return of the Trump administration to the White House could alter the current situation. The Russian Federation sought to gain influence in North Africa following the Arab Spring by establishing military bases. To secure access to such bases in Libya, Russia began supporting Khalifa Haftar in 2017 through the Wagner Group. Currently, Russia continues its cooperation with Khalifa Haftar via the Africa Corps. Egypt monitors developments in Libya and supports the eastern faction. Egypt pursues three types of interests regarding Libya: ensuring its own security (by preventing the conflict from spilling over into its territory), securing economic benefits, and maintaining its influence against competing powers. The bilateral relationship between the EU and Libya follows a predictable trajectory. EU aid to Libya's internationally recognized authorities has increased significantly. In 2023, the EU was Libya's most important trading partner. Trade accounted for 56.4% of Libya's total trade in goods and amounted to approximately €30 billion.

The fourth subsection (The Arab Spring – a driver of state failure) highlights the role of the Arab Spring in precipitating state failure in Libya. The fragmentation of the army into competing militias gradually eroded state authority and fostered a climate of insecurity and disorder. Post-Arab Spring instability also impacted the country's political landscape. Following free elections, political institutions emerged that lacked strong legitimacy. Societal fragmentation and regional rivalries led to the outbreak of civil war after the 2014 elections. The civil war exacerbated Libya's economic and social woes. Currently, a report presented to the Security Council by Rosemary DiCarlo, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, outlines the efforts of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to bring stakeholders to the negotiating table with the aim of holding free elections. Following the weakening of the Government of National Unity (GNU)—led by Abdul Hamid Dbeibah—in the wake of the assassination of Tripoli militia leader Abdel Ghani al-Kikli, the

Haftar faction launched a diplomatic offensive to exploit the situation in Libya to its own advantage.

Conclusions

Proceeding from the hypothesis that the Arab Spring—by disrupting the internal order of the MENA region—led to the failure of democratization and the emergence of a failed state in Libya, this research sought to test the validity of this claim regarding the Libyan state. Through an empirical case study of this MENA country covering the 2011–2025 period, I demonstrated that the hypothesis holds true (i.e., it is valid). In the wake of the Arab Spring, Libya experienced a failure of democracy and a transformation into a failed state.

According to the relevant literature, the Arab Spring represents a historical phenomenon characterized by the failure of democratization across MENA states. Although some hopes remain for Tunisia and Egypt, the other states in the region—particularly Libya, Syria, and Yemen—are far removed from democracy. MENA states have exhibited, and continue to exhibit, a low level of democracy.

Regarding the central question: What are the consequences of the Arab Spring for Libya?, the answer is that, after fourteen years of power-sharing, there is little chance of achieving a unified leadership through democratic means that could rectify Libya's current situation by resolving internal issues. The overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime during the Arab Spring was followed by the disintegration of the Libyan state. Between 2011 and 2025, efforts have been made to overcome the country's internal divisions and reach a consensus on a unified leadership. Events during this period demonstrate that the Arab Spring led to political instability and civil war, confirming its role as a catalyst for state failure.

Regarding the question: Why Libya failed to establish a democratic regime after the Arab Spring, the answer is that although free elections were held in 2012, the legitimacy of the winning forces was challenged by Islamist parties. Following the 2014 elections, disagreements between the Islamist and secularist factions led to civil war. No transfer of power took place between secularist and Islamist parties because secularist forces won again in 2014.

In the MENA region, the new parties that emerged after the Arab Spring were predominantly Islamist, with a smaller number being secular. Only in Tunisia, during the second round of elections, did the Islamist party Ennahda cede power to secularists and collaborate with them, a process accompanied by the party's democratization. Thanks to this cooperation between Islamists and secularists, neither military intervention nor internal conflict proved necessary.

The answer to the question: What role did the historical evolution of the Libyan state play in the unfolding of events following the Arab Spring?, is that Libya's historical evolution strongly influenced post-Arab Spring events; prior to the Arab Spring, the Libyan state was deeply divided, and the only internal force controlling it was the authoritarian regime's security apparatus.

The answer to the question: Is the failure of the Libyan state due to internal or external causes?, lies in the dynamics of the conflict; thus, both factors are involved. The failure of the Libyan state stems from both the internal conflict, which led to economic decline, and the involvement of external forces in that conflict. The presence of armed militias in various regions of the country maintained a state of disorder. Militias formed during the eight months of conflict (February 2011 – October 2011) remained armed and operated locally within Libya. The national government was unable to disarm these militias, a failure that led to the outbreak of the second civil war (2014–2020). Since 2020, efforts have been underway to uphold the ceasefire agreement and create the conditions necessary for holding free national elections. The ultimate goal is to establish a unified leadership capable of effectively managing Libya's challenges.

The answer to the question: What is the current situation in Libya?, is that, at present, efforts are being made—under the coordination of the UN mission in Libya—to maintain a dialogue between the two power centers (East and West) in order to reach a consensus on holding free elections. However, diplomatic negotiations involving the Haftar faction during 2025 suggest that power in Libya is shifting toward this group. This trend is also occurring against the backdrop of a weakening Tripoli government, caused by infighting among Islamist militias.

Presentation of research limitations

The research is limited by the fact that the information used in the analysis is derived solely from open sources. Concrete information from within the conflicting factions, as well as from Libya's power centers (East and West), is difficult to obtain. Such information could prove highly valuable for analyzing the balance of power between these centers and their respective leaders.

Charting New Research Directions

Failed states undoubtedly pose a challenge to international security; consequently, examining their implications for the global order is both necessary and timely. This issue can be analyzed from various perspectives. In this regard, several research avenues within political

science can be identified that aim to deepen the understanding of the Arab Spring and the role of failed states in shaping the current and future security landscape. Valuable research could be conducted on topics such as: developing recovery plans for failed states in the MENA region; conducting quantitative studies on this subject; and formulating solutions to break the deadlock facing fragile states that are on the verge of failure.