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**Analysis and background of the “Arab Spring” in Libya**

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**ABSTRACT.** The “Arab Spring” which first broke out in Tunisia and disseminated to many countries in the Arab world has become one of the most actual topics of the international political agenda in the recent years. The protests that began against the Gaddafi regime after the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt led the opponents to unite under a single umbrella in a short time and form the main opposition in the country. The opponents which first came to the fore with civilian protest movements then continued their struggle against the government with armed attacks. In this article we are going to analyse the “Arab Spring” in Libya which broke out in February 2011 leaving its mark that year and investigate the positive and negative effects.

**Keywords:** Libyan civil war; Libyan revolution; Libyan Arab Spring; Gaddafi; National Transitional Council; Al-Qaeda.

**INTRODUCTION.**

Libya was known to be one of the poorest and very underdeveloped countries of the world when granted independence by the United Nations on December 24, 1951. Its population was no more than 1.5 million that time with more than 90 % of the population illiterate and there was no tradition of political knowledge and experience. There were no universities but only a limited number of high schools established before the independence.

The Italians had captured the country from the Ottomans and England, France had become the new masters of the country with Italy losing the war in 1943. The country had been condemned to poverty during the rule of the Italian colonial government and all productive lands were captured by the colonial governors. England and France also continued the repression for a period of eight years but the country finally gained independence through the resolution of the United Nations. Idris al-Senussi grabbed the power and proclaimed himself as the king. England sent its officials to the king to help him rule the country. English officials “wanted” to help the country and they started oil exploration activities in April, 1955. The first oil fields were found in 1959 in Libya and the first oil export began in 1963. The national economy began to revive when the revenues began to increase. However the wealth of the country was totally under the ownership of a small minority and the Libyan people could not benefit from the oil drilled from the soil of their own country.

Idris al-Senussi came to Turkey for treatment in September 1969 but a group of Libyan young military officials used this as an opportunity to make a coup d’etat. Chief of the General Staff and Security Chief were arrested. The perpetrators of the coup d’etat proclaimed a new regime under the name of Libyan Arab Republic which was presided by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.

Gaddafi scored great successes after coming to power. After years, two British journalists, Andrew Lycett and David Blundy would describe Libya as following in their books published in 1987:

“Young generation is well dressed, well nourished and have a good education. Libyans have a higher per capita income than the English people. The inequality between the annual incomes of people is much less than in many countries. The wealth of Libya has been distributed quite fairly among different classes of the society. All Libyans generally benefit from perfect education and

health services, free of charge. All Libyans have a home or a flat and a car. Most of them have also televisions, video-recorders and telephones. The economic situation of the Libyan people is really good in comparison to the people of most of the third world countries.”

According to the World Factbook collection in which CIA presents actual information about all the countries, per capita income in Libya was 14 000 USD in 2010. This was a figure that was too close to the highest per capita income in Africa. In the same year it ranked the 53<sup>th</sup> in the human development index of the United Nations, which was considered as a high level of development. World Health Organization stated that all the Libyan citizens benefited from health services free of charge and consequently a high level of success has been achieved in the field of healthcare services. WHO further stated that while 160 out of 1000 children died before the age of 5 in 1970, that figure had dropped to 20 in 2000. The average life expectancy in Libya was 77. According to the data of UNESCO for 2009, the rate of literacy among the adults rised to 80 % and 97 % of male and female children went to school. The state gave an interest-free credit at the amount of 50 thousand Libyan Dinar (approximately 50 000 US Dollar) to newly married couples.

Despite being an oil-rich country Libya had difficulties in having clean water and met its need for clean water from the European countries. Gaddafi government launched a new project in 1984 in order to supply clean water for Libya and 70 % of the Libyan population had the possibility to have Access to drinking water thanks to this project which was at the value of 33 billion USD.

Gaddafi made many attempts to decrease dependency of the African continent. In 90's, 45 African governments came together to approve a project to launch a common satellite. The project named RASCOM would significantly decrease telecommunication expenses of the African countries. At the time when the project was launched, the African states were paying 500 million dollars per annum in total to European monopolies like Intelsat for telecommunication services, whereas the project would cost 400 million dollars for annual services. Gaddafi paid 300 million dollars for this project, rejecting the credit demands of IMF and other western financial institutions for continuous project. In the end, the satellite was launched in 2007.

The USA bound up the military existence it desired to set up in the continent of Africa to a headquarters named AFRICOM in 2008. However, as no country in Africa consented to host this headquarters, the center of AFRICOM was established in Stuttgart, Germany. Gaddafi objected to setting up of such a center in Africa, and made efforts against this. As a result of these efforts, the African Union officially rejected AFRICOM in 2008.

In October 2010, Chevron and Occidental Petroleum terminated their contracts in Libya, and in respond to this, the German oil monopoly R.W. DIA signed an exploration and production sharing agreement with the Libya National Oil Company. The Washington Post, in its 10 June 2011 dated news, quoted Gaddafi in 2006 as saying “Oil companies are controlled by foreigners who have made millions from them. Now, Libyans must take their place to profit from this money”.

Despite the fact that the basic economic needs of the Libyan people were met, the political situation was far from being stable. Gaddafi wanted to create economic welfare but also maintain its traditional political-cultural structure that has been entrenched throughout the centuries. For example the “citizens” whose basic economic rights were granted were deprived of the most of the rights of citizenship because they couldn't get rid of the repression of the feudal power and become a real individual citizen. Gaddafi ruled the country as the dictator on top of an alliance of tribes. There were about 2000 tribes in the country . 140 of them were the main tribes . The biggest 50 out of those 140 tribes played a big role in and dominated the socioeconomic and political structure of the country. During the Gaddafi period, the influence of the tribes was not removed but just on the contrary, their field of dominance was always respected and in deed to such an extent that the law of the tribe had priority over the national law in some regions. Everybody paid a tax to the head of the tribe proportionate to the size of his tribe. Libyan people have in fact caught up with the standards of the age in terms of economic wealth but were left alone in coping with the political and cultural darkness of the middle age. Maybe this was why the world called him “the mad man”. Gaddafi followed a political style that belonged to the past ages and was trying to articulate the role of the “wise despot” which he believed himself to be worth of being called to the dirty world of politics of the modern world which was still reminiscent of the sidesteps of the middle age when one had a deeper look at it.

A group of people launched an uprising against Gaddafi government beginning from the month of January – February of 2011. Protest movements which began in Benghazi began

spreading to all cities of Libya. Protest wave was also supported by some of the tribe leaders. Libyan opposition united on February 27, 2011 and set up the Libyan National Council. Mustafa Abdul Jalil, the former Justice Minister of Libya, became the head of the council. Some countries like France, Italy and Spain supported the opposition in Libya and officially recognized the Libyan National Council. The group which came to the fore the most among the opposition movement was Libyan Islamic War Group. This organization was active inside Al-Qaeda since a long time and was an arm of the Islamic Maghreb Al-Qaeda which was active in Algeria. Libyan Islamic War Group was included in the list of "terrorist organizations" of the Security Council of the United Nations and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of USA. According to the American Ministry of Treasury Libyan Islamic War Group constituted a threat against the global security and stability by using violence and making alliance with Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

Opponent groups of the Gaddafi government concentrated on armed actions rather than civilian opposition activities. New York Times dated February 24, 2011 stated that the opposition movement in Libya got the arms from the Egyptian border in the first days of its activities. Besides, in a news that appeared in The Wall Street Journal dated March 17, 2011, it was stated that the arms which were delivered to the Libyan opposition movement through the Egyptian border were supplied by the Egyptian army with the implicit approval of USA. It was indeed contrary to the resolution of the United Nations to let arms into Libya. According to the news in Figaro dated June 10, 2011 French aircraft flung down packages full of rocket launchers and machine guns to the opponents in Libya. According to another news that appeared in the English newspaper "The Independent" dated July 20, weapons and ammunition kept in a store disappeared in the Italian island of Sardinia and there were evidences that they might be sent to the Libyan opposition movement but Berlusconi government has hidden the truth. It was even claimed that so many weapons were delivered to the opponents that some of the opponents have passed some of those weapons through the border and sold them to other groups.

There appeared a lot of news in the media about the massacres of the civilian population committed by the Libyan opponents using the weapons delivered to them in the way described above. It was claimed that these massacres were especially made in such regions of the country as Tawergha, Gusi and Al-Kavalis. Ruth Sherlock, a journalist of The Telegraph, stated in her news dated 20<sup>th</sup> July 2011 to have explored a mass grave in a water tank near the village of Kavalis. The opponents forbade the journalists to enter the area accommodating the torn bodies of soldiers in Libya uniforms, and diminished all the traces, immediately rolling over the entire area with a bulldozer. In the news bulletin of BBC News on December 12, 2012 it was announced that 30.000 people were expelled from their city by force in Tawergha. In the article published by the Wall Street Journal dated 21<sup>st</sup> June 2011, Ibrahim el Hablus, the commander of the opponent powers in the city of Tawergha, said as follows: "Tawergha no longer exists, only Misrata."

Even the western human rights organizations were compelled to mention the massacres of the opponents. Human Rights Watch Organization (HRW) reported that the opponents plundered homes, shops and even hospitals in Libya. A report issued by HRW was published in the newspaper The Guardian on July 13, 2011. According to that report, a general from the opposition movement who spoke to HRW said, with a brazen face, that he is informed of these events, that it is not their policy to behave that way and the degree of violence would be much more awesome if they haven't commanded their followers not to act in that way. According to the news, the people escaped from the attacks of the opponents to Tripoli in masses. Libyan government has allocated the hostels, which were evacuated by the Chinese workers following the outbreak of armed conflicts, for the accommodation of these people.

Following the insurrection of the opponents some news began to appear in the media organizations that claimed Gaddafi made massacres on the civilian people. However a closer investigation of the real state of affairs showed that these claims were far from reflecting the reality. Jon Williams, Editor of BBC World News complained that they had no correspondents in Libya and their only source of information was people living in that country. Their contact people were the opponent militants. On February, only one day after Jon Williams said that they couldn't obtain reliable information, a news appeared in the newspaper The Telegraph that stated that Gaddafi bombed Benghazi. However, a journalist asked the following question during the joint press conference held by the American Minister of Defense Robert Gates and American Chief of General Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen:

Question: Do you see any evidence that he actually has fired on his own people from the air? There were reports of it, but do you have independent confirmation? If so, to what extent?

Gates: We've seen the press reports, but we have no confirmation of that.

Mullen: That's correct. We've seen no confirmation whatsoever.

These statements may be found in the web site of the US Ministry of Defense. The Russian newspaper "Russian Today" dated March 1 refuted claims that Gaddafi bombed the civilian people and stated that no air attacks took place in Libya. After 5 days following the bombardment of Libya by NATO airplanes, Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, who was the commander of the operation launched against Libya and called "Journey at dawn" said that the air forces of Gaddafi were not strong and its tactical capacity consisted only of a few tens of helicopters. Likewise, news that appeared in the web site of the Ministry of Defense refuted the claims that the Gaddafi government bombed the civilian population with airplanes. On the other hand, according to a news that appeared in Al Jazeera channel in Qatar Gaddafi was distributing Viagra to his soldiers and then they raped their victims. This news appeared in the headlines in many media organizations. Even the English tabloids carried that news to the headlines. Susan Rice, ambassador of USA at the United Nations repeated that claim put forward by Al Jazeera after one month but did not show any evidence supporting their claim. However on the day following April 29, on which that claim was put forward, American military and intelligence officials in a statement to NBC said that they had no evidence testifying the truth of those claims. In the news of the Liberation journal dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2011, Donatella Rovera of the Amnesty International states that upon their researches in Libya, they have seen neither any rape victim nor anybody to have witnessed a rape victim.

George Schultz, Foreign Affairs and Policy Consultant, who took place in the election campaign of George W. Bush, said "Frankly, I don't have any problems with a little psychological warfare against Gaddafi," in a statement he gave on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2001 to the TIME magazine of the US about the disinformation campaign executed against Gaddafi.

The Security Council of the United Nations accepted the resolution, dated March 17, 2011 which authorized an international force to be deployed and the enforcement of different sanctions on Libya for introducing a ban on flight in a definite region against the Gaddafi government for the purpose of the protection of the civilian people in Libya. England, France, USA and Lebanon were among the countries which introduced the draft resolution. However the report published by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations on January 2011, i.e. one and a half month before the outbreak of the events in Libya contained the following statements: "The delegation has noticed that all rights and liberties existed in an integrated, sound and legal framework. Legal guarantees formed the basis of the protection of the fundamental rights of people. Potential abuse of these rights and liberties were dealt with by the judicial organs and the perpetrators were brought to justice. Protection of human rights including political as well as economic, social and cultural rights, are guaranteed in the Libyan Arab Republic". Security Council of the same institution, i.e. United Nations decided to make a "human intervention" in Libya only two and a half months after the publishing of the laudatory statements above.

NATO troops launched air operations against the Libyan government on March 19 based on the resolution no. 1973. State officials of countries like Bolivia, Bulgaria, South African Republic, Russia, Turkey, Uganda, Venezuela stated that this intervention of NATO was wrong. Gaddafi government was very corroded by the armed attacks of the opponents on one side and the air operations of NATO on the other. Opponents were advancing every day with the support of NATO and capturing many Libyan cities from Gaddafi forces. Gaddafi frequently changed his place to be protected from air operations and his defeat was coming closer with every passing day. Opponents scored a big success by capturing Tripoli in August. An interesting news appeared in the English newspaper "Daily Telegraph" on August 24. According to that news Tripoli was captured not by the opponents but by the English SAS troops who fought side by side by the opponents in the same uniforms and weapons. After the victory in Tripoli opponent troops proceeded towards Sirte, where Gaddafi was deployed, in order to eliminate the government forces completely. The opponent forces launched attacks against Gaddafi forces in Sirte together with NATO forces beginning from September 15 and these attacks continued until October 20, 2011. Gaddafi was wounded as a result of the air attack of NATO on October 20, 2011 and caught by the opponents who then lynched him. His body was exhibited to the public in a cold storehouse in a shopping center called the "African Market in Misrata. His body was buried on October 25, 2011 at a place known to nobody. Many

Libyans had to leave their country and emigrate to other countries as a result of all the foregoing events. According to the report of EU commission, the number of people who emigrated from the country only in May, 2011 was 750.000. These emigrants generally migrated to neighboring countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Niger and Algeria. Associated Press stated that 30.000 people have died and 50.000 wounded in the civil war in Libya.

According to 25 August 2011 The New York Times information, with the decision of economic sanction taken before the air attacks to Libya, Libya's properties in the West were suspended, and it was decided to transmit this source in the amount of billions of dollars to the National Transition Council, which came to power later.

Libyan National Transition Council officially recognized by more than 100 countries left its duties over to the newly founded parliament named "General National Congress". 21 Parties participated in the Parliament elections and the party named Alliances of National Forces, led by Mahmoud Jibril had won the elections. Ali Zeidan was elected as the new Libyan Prime Minister while Mohamed Yousef el-Magariaf as the President of the General National Congress.

### CONCLUSIONS.

Consequently, the course of facts in Libya being evaluated in general, the Gaddafi government had undersigned many renovations as of 1970 for the development of Libya, and the country's economy started to improve. The country's economy being improved to the maximum level among the countries in Africa and provision of social welfare to Libyan people in many fields allowed gradual development of the country. But unfortunately, political status was not as developed as the economic status, and clan groups could intervene with the socio-economic and political government of the country. Perhaps, this was the weakest and most problematic point of the Gaddafi government. Hence, this problem was the biggest obstacle on country's way to democratization. The opponent powers who wanted to overthrow Gaddafi started an armed struggle against the government, mostly being based on this evidence. But although the opponents defined themselves as the opponents, they took few followers behind them, and chose to fight against the government with arms, rather than civil protests. NATO also supported the opponent powers that fought with the Gaddafi government, also supported by the external powers, and carried out armed operations against the Libyan government. As a consequence, because of the war in the country, thousands of people lost their lives from both the opponents, government powers, and civil people, along with Gaddafi himself, and hundreds of thousands of people had to migrate to neighboring countries. The country's economy suffered a loss of billions of dollars due to this war. After the war, now is the process of establishing the new government and writing the new constitution in Libya.

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## Анализ и предпосылки «Арабской весны» в Ливии

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**Аннотация.** «Арабская весна», которая началась в Тунисе и распространилась на многие страны в Арабском мире, стала одним из наиболее актуальных вопросов международной политической программы в последние годы. Протесты, которые начались в отношении режима Каддафи после революций в Тунисе и Египте заставили противников объединиться и сформировать основную оппозицию в стране. Противники, которые впервые выступили с гражданскими акциями протеста, затем продолжили сражаться с правительством с помощью вооруженных атак. В данной статье мы проведем анализ «Арабской весны» в Ливии, которая разразилась в феврале 2011 г., оставив свой след в истории и изучим позитивные и негативные последствия.

**Ключевые слова:** Ливийская гражданская война; Ливийская революция; Ливийская арабская весна; Каддафи; Национальный переходный совет; ал-Каида.