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Egyptian National Security and the Perils of Egyptian–Libyan Border Management

Military Strength versus International Assistance

ABSTRACT In this post-9/11 age, marked by international terrorism, militant non-state actors have created a world of insecurity, challenging international borders by constructing numerous national security issues. These international demarcation lines have been upheld by international conventions and treaties that have been established over the past decades. However, the fluid movement of people and goods, specifically jihadi militants and weapons, through borders in recent years has created both national and transnational security concerns. Nowhere is this problem more relevant than in the Middle East, and more so at the Libyan–Egyptian border. This research paper assesses the current security and policy problems of the Egyptian–Libyan border from Egypt's national security perspective and the movement of ISIS militants across this border, which inevitably impacts Egypt's Eastern border in the Sinai Peninsula. The present actions of international assistance of the United Nations and European Union member states are discussed regarding their negotiation initiatives in Libya. Egypt's alternative approach is discussed, whereby it is taking charge, whether multi- or unilaterally, of the security predicament by effectively policing this porous border. In effect, this paper analyzes Egypt's insistence on implementing its traditional notions of security, thereby ensuring it remains in a position of power. KEYWORDS Libya, Egypt, national security, multilateralism, terrorism, border management, Arab Spring

INTRODUCTION

The term "borders" has been discussed countless times over the past few years on media outlets, mainly due to borders' inability to contain the movement of peoples and their associated history and political insecurity. Many of those who have been crossing borders have been characterized as refugees, terrorists, human trafficking victims, etc. In this age of technology, physical borders have

Contemporary Arab Affairs, Vol. 13, Number 1, pp. 23–45. ISSN: 1755-0912, Electronic ISSN: 1755-0920
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/caa.2020.13.1.23

had to share national security concerns with that of more permeable threats, such as drones, which transcend both physical land border security checkpoints and airport security. Presently, the topic of borders is being discussed in academic circles as a more complex issue which is not only defined by road signs, official checkpoints, even barbed-wire fences and fortified walls. Borders have become a strong representation of the institutions that erect and employ them. More specifically, they represent mutual recognition of each other's state sovereignty. Furthermore, owing to the fluidity and porous nature of some borders, especially in a time of conflict and the refugee crisis which arise from those conflicts, borders have transformed into conflict zones that are being contested within national and regional politics. It could be said that in the Middle East region, borders have acted more as frontiers, since government institutions consider their boundaries a fact, whereas dynamics that exist and thrive alongside and across them do not act in this way. As a result, both physical and ideological borders are continually being challenged and, in some cases, seized.

Historians (Andelman 1997; MacMillan 2003; Neiberg 2017) have traced the current security situation to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Sykes–Picot Agreement (1916) after World War I, which divided up the spoils of war in the Near East according to the preferences of the victorious, and not taking into account the intricate histories and cultures of the numerous ethnicities, relations, and sects of the Middle Eastern peoples. In effect, challenges of nation-building and the framework of what constitutes a nation-state in the Middle East still exist amidst other challenges of globalization and the fluidity of ideas and peoples in relation to diversity and the inclusion/exclusion of ethnic/religious identities which have existed since the carving up of the Middle East and the emergence of the nation-state. A series of events that followed the Arab Spring created the present situation in the Middle East, with civil conflicts, failed states, and unstable borders. These borders have been overwhelmed with the outpouring of victims of war, mass migration, and domestic challenges. In effect, these events have shed a light on the problem of maintaining these borders, as they have become critical zones that exist at the limits of state control and governing institutions.

This research effort deliberates two countries (Egypt and Libya) that share a vital border; countries that were fortunate enough not to undergo the contentious carving up of the Near Eastern region post-World War I.[1] As

1. It bares mentioning that this border has also undergone periods of remapping and renegotiation amongst several countries. According to Ellis (2018), this specific border was established

this paper delves into the present situation of the political relationship of both nations, the realist practices of their rulers (both past and recent) and their self-serving perception of anarchy in the international system will be discussed (Morgenthau 1948; Williams and McDonald 2018).

The Egyptian–Libyan border has garnered a great deal of attention in the past eight years owing to the Arab Spring and the political transitions it created, thereby affecting the stability and/or structure of both countries' security apparatuses. This paper will ascertain whether Egypt's long practiced course of action of relying on its military and, on occasion, on the help of its allies, would more likely continue; or if the United Nation's (UN) negotiation approach in Libya, along with international coordination efforts, will better serve Egypt's security concerns in policing and monitoring the porous border. This paper's methodology highlights the reason behind alliance-forming in today's international system, as well as the constant struggle to achieve some semblance of balance of power in the face of security challenges. An assessment of Gideon Rose's neoclassical realism will be applied as it has proven to be reliable in instances where nation-states must consider internal problems such as poverty, injustice, conflicts, and/or multiple ethnic composition (Rose 1998). Moreover, the concept of borders will be discussed to provide a theoretical understanding of the complexities of conceptualizing borders. This will be followed by a brief historical background of Egyptian and Libyan political relations, followed by their experience (security-wise) along the border. Next, this research effort will highlight the reasons and characteristics behind Libya becoming a failed state and the challenges it faces internally with the existence of several factions competing for power, to impose their own regime and rule. Egypt's challenge regarding securing its border with Libya, and the ramifications of that on Sinai security, will also be assessed. The final last section will discuss the collaborative efforts launched by both the UN and the European Union (EU) to assist in securing Libya's Eastern border, that is, the border it shares with Egypt, as part of its broader mandate for Libya.

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through several phases, starting in 1841 with the governor of Egypt, Mohamed Ali Pasha, who was given a map by the Ottoman Empire that clarified what land belonged to Egypt. This map was an integral part of the settlement that Mohamed Ali reached with the Ottoman government in 1840, as the empire tried to restrict Mohamed Ali's "ruling authority." Following that was the Treaty of Jaghbub, signed in 1925, between Egypt and Italy, which had colonized Libya after World War I, to determine the alignment of that same border (Ellis 2018).

TRADITIONAL NOTIONS OF SECURITY IN THE FACE OF CONTEMPORARY THREATS TO EGYPT'S BORDER MANAGEMENT

This paper's main challenge is to address the concept of security, which, it could be argued, is a political argument, alongside the ideas of what constitutes a border, in the political, physical, and sociological sense of the word. Security studies have long practiced the application of the ideologies of realism and neorealism due to the pivotal role of the nation-state. These "isms" have time and again proven to be the most resonant viewpoints for students and teachers of international security and international theory, in defining the causes of conflict and war and analyzing modern conflicts, starting with the Cold War, up until the Arab Spring, and the wars that ensued. Realism and neorealism may seem one and the same at first, but they differ vastly in the role of people's nature and the role that fear and greed play in governmental decisions about security, whether internal or external, in addition to the influence of international forces. Realism tends to depend heavily on the impact of human nature when explaining conflicts, whereas neorealism paints anarchy, especially in the international community, as the structural "reality" of international relations, thereby guiding the behavior and relationships of sovereign actors (Carr 1939/2001; Morgenthau 1948; Waltz 1979). However, in the case of the Egyptian–Libyan border, and with the presence of an authoritarian government that has very close ties with its security apparatus, it may seem that a convergence of neorealist and realist outlooks would explain the behavior of the states and their leaders in the face of their perceived threats. In particular, the ideas that make up neoclassical realism serve as a strain of both the realist perspective and a revised neorealist outlook, as Rose (1998) frames it as a theory of foreign policy at its core, and tries to rationalize the behavior of the nation-state through its foreign policy, which also sheds a light on its national power and position in the international system, as well as the domestic variables that affect its foreign policy. The injection of domestic factors brings foreign policy issues to the forefront of understanding why some nation-states act the way they do in the presence of security threats (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 1–2). Additionally, Zakaria (1998, 42) asserts that leaders are the "principal actors and that their perceptions are crucial" in determining the direction of a nation's foreign policy. The permeability of the Egyptian–Libyan border has cost Egypt domestic instability, with security threats emanating from Islamic militants making their way across the border to target Egypt from within. At the same time, these domestic threats alongside El-Sisi's desire to assert his dominance as Egypt's new leader

post-revolution have resulted in Egypt forming alliances with other nations that seek to fulfil their own agendas within Libya via proxy wars in order to assert their own foreign policies, and, in effect, affirm Egypt's new direction in its foreign policy.

Theorizing along the many strands of realism, anarchy is always present. Alliances and alliance-forming usually occur in the presence of anarchy and the possibility of war. From this perspective, the ailments of the Libyan–Egyptian border have two solutions: either international cooperation, where several member states play a role in securitizing and managing the border and the many complexities that surround it, irrespective of geographical and/or ideological similarities; or the adoption of the "balance of power" practice, involving one or both of the states affected and nation-states that already have established trade and military alliances with either Libya or Egypt. However, the idea of "balancing" requires at least two sovereign states, which Libya currently is not, owing to its failing/failed state nature. For an established nation-state such as Egypt that has witnessed an elevation in its state of insecurity, a "balance of threat" seems to be the most stable of solutions. According to Walt (1987), in balance-of-threat theory, states form alliances to protect themselves in the constant state of anarchy present in the international system. Furthermore, Walt clarifies that nation-states assess perceived threats from other states and entities by calculating their "relative power, proximity and intentions and the offence–defense balance" (Walt 2000, 200–01). When discussing the Libyan–Egyptian border, modern tools need to be used in order to combat these modern problems, that is, a dependency on international cooperation, rather than band-wagoning, to form strategic alliances in times of crises.

In order to provide a theoretical framework in which to encompass and explain the challenges associated with Egyptian–Libyan border management, a definition of security is needed, alongside how to conceptualize borders. Stephen Walt describes the essence of security as the "threat, use, and control of military force [and] the specific policies that states adopt in order to prepare for, prevent, or engage in war" (Walt 1991, 212–13). Similarly, he reiterates that in the study of security, military power represents "the central focus of the field" (212). However, more recent theorists of security studies such as by Buzan (1991) have attempted to broaden the framework to include other elements such as the movement of people, disease, and environmental factors which play prominent roles in the study of borders. In fact, Buzan explains that due to different discourses in different parts of the world,

theorists are pushed towards accommodating different views on security, and to expand the long-held frameworks of realism and neorealism (10).

Theorizing and conceptualizing nations' borders poses the same question as that of security studies: What facets should be included when assessing the functionality and importance of borders? The discussion of borders has been transformed into an interdisciplinary project as geographers, historians, political scientists, and other social scientists have weighed in on this topic. Moreover, the idea of "re-bordering" came about with the occurrence of four phenomena. First, with the formation of the EU and the new definition of political spatiality, as there was no clear definition between domestic and international within the EU, resulting in what could be described as entire nations becoming borderlands (Balibar 1998; Beck 2004). Once a country becomes admitted into the EU, their spatial existence changes as they absorb their new EU status and their long-known borders reduce in functionality as boundaries between them and other existing EU member states.

Second, with the 9/11 attacks in 2001, security measurements exponentially increased in North America and eventually throughout the rest of the world, where border-related issues were to be dealt with in a series of cross-border agreements, for the purpose of monitoring the movement of people in and out of the countries, as they became viewed as one and the same as those who instigate terrorist attacks such as 9/11 (Inda 2011). This new age of international terrorism has resulted in the loss of confidence in the traditional idea of borders that served as a protective structure from forces outside those hard lines, owing to its failure at keeping out terrorists, as well as the illegal movement of people and drug traffickers. Rumford (2006, 157) described this present time in history as one that is witnessing "a world where borders wax and wane, as it were, and the important borders in our lives do not remain fixed."

Third, with the outbreak of conflict and war in the Middle East region and neighboring areas, many peoples have succeeded in fleeing and crossing national borders to seek a more stable existence. Moreover, many of those, who have escaped war and its destruction, have been people of a certain race or ethnicity, such as the Yazidis, Chechens, and Kurds, to name but a few, and have had to seek neutral ground away from sectarian violence exhibited by the oppressive regimes in which they once lived (Donnan and Wilson 1999).

In effect, the study of borders has become a bigger issue than that of physical boundaries and security functionalities, which have now become

crucial in understanding contemporary social and political change. As such, nation-states have been partaking in processes of re-bordering, to control more efficiently the movement of migrant workers, refugees, and terrorists. The last phenomenon of borderland communities is also related to, and sometimes a product of, the preceding phenomenon of refugees and casualties of war. As international recognized borders have divided stateless nations, borderland communities are still unified by their ethnicity, language, and religion, that is, their unique social and political identity. In some cases, these communities are also bound to their own independent local political institutions. The existence of such communities has, time and again, questioned the unifying power of nationalist ideologies (Brunet-Jailly 2005, 638). This seems to be the case when analyzing the Egyptian–Libyan border. Hüsken (2019, 900) describes this borderland as being shaped by "particular forms of social, political, cultural and economic connectivity based on a study of tribal organization" of the Awlad Ali tribes. Specifically, the *watan* (territory) of the Awlad Ali tribes in Egypt includes 500 kilometers of the Mediterranean coast from al-Hamam to Salloum. The port city of Egypt's Marsa Matrouh has an eighty percent Bedouin population, where 500,000–1 million of that population belong to the Awlad Ali tribes. Moreover, around 15,000 Awlad Ali tribespeople reside in Libya, with a nucleus located in Tobruk, in addition to a population of almost 100,000 people in east Cyrenaica (900). This borderland community has had positional impact on border management, as they operate irrespective of hard borders and boundaries and have a minuscule sense of duty or loyalty to the established nation-states of Libya and Egypt (irrespective of their failed or legitimate status), thereby providing a mechanism for terrorists, migrants, and traffickers to bypass border management apparatuses.

Owing to the broad concepts that surround the topic of border management and security studies, this paper will primarily focus on the path Egypt will most likely take when it comes down to its "balancing act" in securing its border with Libya from continual security threats and terrorist attacks.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LIBYAN-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS

Both nation-states underwent monarchial rule that ended with a coup charged with socialist ideals and staged by military personnel. Both countries have had rulers that espoused strong sentiments and ideologies of Arabism and supported the call to unite all Arab countries under the pan-Arab cause

of liberating Palestine, and eventually the Arab world, from Israel and outside forces meddling in the region. However, Egyptian–Libyan relations hit a significant problem when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat started to negotiate a peace agreement with Israel after the 1973 war. At the time, President Mu'ammar Qaddafi was in opposition to Sadat's peace policy, and he made his stance known when unification talks between the two governments disintegrated (*Military Watch Magazine* 2017). Relations remained tense and as a result Egypt started to take precautions by allocating more troops along the Libyan border in 1976. The situation took a turn for the worse when Qaddafi sent thousands of protesters on a "March to Cairo" to protest a proposed peace treaty with Israel in July 1977 (Bakrania 2014, 23). As they reached the border, they were turned back by Egypt's military, so Libyan forces raided the coastal town of Sallum. Expectedly, the Egyptian forces retaliated and attacked the Libyan forces as they crossed back into Libyan territory. This short-lived conflict was significant enough to disrupt momentarily the long-held border trade and trafficking activities of the Bedouins and the people who inhabited the areas along the Libyan–Egyptian border (Hüsken 2019, 47). During the following decades, relations between Libya and Egypt remained cool, until Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak came to an arrangement with Qaddafi, in 1997, on several trade agreements that benefited both sides in the form of Libyan oil flowing into Egypt (Maxwell 2013). This was the start of closer economic relations and of security cooperation between the two nations up until the Arab Spring.

THE ARAB SPRING AND INTERNAL STABILITY CONSIDERATIONS OF BOTH STATES

With the dismantling of the leaders who represented the old authoritarian regimes, the calls for democratic elections resulted in the election of Islamist political parties.

Egypt

Since the 1952 coup d'état carried out by the Free Officers, the Egyptian presidency, starting with President Nasser, has been occupied by men who have had a strong allegiance to Egypt's armed forces. Furthermore, most senior government posts have been occupied by individuals who have either a direct or an indirect affiliation with the armed forces. As a result, when a Muslim Brotherhood (MB) member, Mohamed Morsy, won the

presidential elections in 2012, his sole focus was to transform completely the make-up of the existing Egyptian political system, including its constitution, during his first 100 days in office, which he mostly failed to do. This was due to the existing political and patrimonial system under military tutelage that had been set up through intricate interpersonal relations over generations. This, in turn, resulted in an overall sense of dissatisfaction and disappointment from the Egyptian people towards the new democratically elected government. What ensued next is still debated in political circles within and beyond Egypt: whether it was a military coup or a new popular uprising? Nevertheless, President Morsy and his government were overthrown in June 2013,[2] and Field Marshal Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi was declared interim president. Presently, the political climate in Egypt greatly resembles, if not mimics, that of the old Mubarak regime. The one striking difference is the growth of radical Islamist organizations, and their strong resentment towards the El-Sisi regime, both as a result of the military coup/uprising that took place in June 2013, coupled with the emergence of ISIS and its regional offshoots.[3] Presently, the size and strength of these militant Islamist organizations, which have been labeled as terrorist organizations[4] by Egypt and the international community, are the biggest security concern along Egypt's borders.

Libya

Libya's revolution spanned most of 2011, as it took the rebellion a considerable amount of time and required substantial external support to topple Qaddafi. From February to October 2011, an interim political body was formed: the

2. Millions of protestors filled the streets on June 30, 2013, calling for the ousting of Morsy, as they cited their fear and concerns of the political dominance of his Islamist backers in the MB. The next day, the head of the Egyptian military, Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, gave Morsy and his cohorts forty-eight hours to respond to the popular protests that demanded his resignation. A failure to address these issues would result in El-Sisi devising a road map for the future that would be implemented by the armed forces. Soon after this declaration, thousands of Morsy supporters formed a sit-in at Al-Raba'a square in protest at El-Sisi's undemocratic actions of attempting to depose a freely elected president. As the deadline passed and Morsy stood his ground, the military assumed power and soldiers arrested him and took him into custody.

3. Before the revolution, President Mubarak had come to terms with the partially banned MB, as well as with a host of jihadis, active throughout the territory, including in Sinai. The difference between the old regime and the new one is that El-Sisi lost territorial control in parts of Sinai, as well as the assigning the designation of terrorist organization to the MB itself.

4. Such organizations included Ansar al-Sharia, IS in the Sinai, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and elements of ISIS displaced from Iraq and Syria.

National Transitional Council (NTC). At the same time, a vast and diverse set of non-state actors took up arms in 2011 and formed militias. These actors included soldiers who had defected from Libya's armed forces or joined the rebellion soon after the disintegration of the national army. Unlike the close intertwining of the Egyptian political leaders and the armed forces, Libya's Qaddafi did not attempt to maintain a strong and stable relationship with the army, or to co-opt its generals during his reign. When Qaddafi established the *jamahiriya* political system, it was intended to reflect the supposed will of the people to rule through his implementation of a "for the people" ideology after his coup succeeded in overthrowing the Sanussi monarchy.

However, in practice, Qaddafi decided to make everyone subordinate to his rule and power. In effect, he ensured that no other coup or upheaval would occur to remove him from power. This was made possible by placing his sons and allies in key posts within the various branches of the armed forces (Gaub 2013, 5). However, it also resulted in instilling a seed of doubt, within the ranks of the army, in Qaddafi's capabilities to rule effectively. This proved to be lethal to Qaddafi's position during Libya's revolution in 2011. With his security apparatus disintegrating, as military units switched sides, more Libyans had access to weapons to weaken Qaddafi's position further. As a result, those who opposed him succeeded in forming a sizable armed rebellion (McQuinn 2013, 71).

With Egypt concluding its revolutionary phase mid-2011, its new government under the helm of the MB chose to show its support for Libya's uprising by sending arms through its shared border to revolutionary forces, in addition to almost a hundred special forces and logistical support (Levinson and Rosenberg 2011). With the killing of Qaddafi and the flight or capture of his sons, including Sayf al-Islam, several political factions set out to build a new Libya with a more inclusive government. In July 2012, the first elections were held, where the country's Islamist factions, its MB and Salafist organizations, did very well, in comparison with the preceding election years. Soon after, they attempted to form an alliance with certain independents, who had won a sizable number of seats. However, this bloc began to push for harsher laws regarding the banning of Qaddafi-era officials from participating in politics for ten years (Glenn 2017). The Islamist alliance eventually started to lose most of its support, as indicated by their weak performance in the 2014 elections, which they attributed it to the new parliament being dominated by supporters of Qaddafi (Alkaff 2015, 113). Soon after, they formed their own separate governing body known as the

New General National Congress (GNC).[5] The decision to retain the previously elected entity signaled the beginning of insurmountable tensions amongst the post-Qaddafi political actors. This ideological rivalry eventually resulted in the creation of two separate governments, with each body naming a different Libyan city as its capital.

BACKGROUND OF LIBYA'S FAILED STATE STATUS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LEGITIMATE RULE

Presently, Libya is considered a failing or failed state in the international community. A failed state is described as a political entity that cannot deliver a wider range of goods to its citizens. With two belligerent governments, where each is validated and/or supported by a different group of nation-states in the international community, these governments are nowhere near actualizing their citizens' needs. Libya reached this status quo due to two disadvantages, one internal, the other external. The internal problem in Libya's attempt at state-building is that Qaddafi's strategic political set-up, which was built and entrenched over the past forty years, was not so easily erased. The existence of two conflicting governments is largely indebted to the "*jamahiriya* political culture [that] was ingrained in the new leaders" psyche [. . . and as a result] the new interim government suffered the same problems of weak parties, committees of the masses and lack of hierarchy in decision making" (Gaub 2014, 102). After the 2014 elections, Libya housed the second officially recognized government, known as the House of Representatives (HoR), backed by General Khalifa Haftar and his "Libyan National Army," as it carried out its jurisdiction from the eastern city of Tobruk. The Islamist-dominated government, the New GNC, was in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Omar al Hassi, and was militarily supported by Islamist militias coming from Misrata, the Amazigh, and the Tuareg (Fasanotti 2017, 98). Their support stemmed from the Islamist coalition known as Libya Dawn in addition to other Islamist militias (Miller and Mezran 2018). However, the GNC no longer exists at present and what remains is an ideological cleavage that places the Tobruk HoR and the new Tripoli GNA at odds.

5. The 2014 elections resulted primarily in the establishment of the HoR. Owing to legal differences, including the Supreme Court's ruling, the legality of the HoR was challenged by several parliamentarians from the former GNC.

The year 2016 saw the nomination of a third governmental entity called the Presidency Council, backed by the UN and headed by Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj, with a thirty-two-member Cabinet, known as the Government of National Accord (GNA). Adding to all this confusion is other radical and militant players in the form of armed Islamist organizations and jihadists such as ISIS, attempting to regain some land and authority that were lost in Syria and Iraq over the past several years (Fitzgerald et al. n.d.). It has been an easy task for them, seeing that Libya has been characterized by its political and ideological fragmentation, its relatively uncontrolled land borders, and the lack of functioning and legitimate state institutions (United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 2019).

The external challenges can be grouped into two categories: regional players (i.e., within the Middle East) and international players. With Qatar being shunned by its regional allies, due to its amicable relationship towards transnational Islamist groups such as the MB, both sides have been scrambling to assert their political superiority via proxy wars. In the case of Libya, each side of this ideological war supports either the HoR or the GNA. Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia have time and again publicly supported Haftar, the remnants of the Libyan National Army under his aegis, and the HoR, while Qatar, Turkey, and Sudan have chosen to support the Islamists and the GNA. As for the international players, those coming to the aid of a fragmented Libya are those who have been exposed to the downsides of a failing state via illegal migration, the smuggling of weapons, security threats, and human trafficking. Europe, France, and Italy have been leading in efforts to guide Libya towards a more stable path to establish a one true legitimate government. They hosted meditation meetings that included the UN and The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the EU and the European Union Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM),[6] which fostered many attempts at establishing a roadmap towards a solution for Libya. However, most Italian and French efforts lacked political consensus and heavily involved their own separate interests (England and Saleh 2019; Mezran and Pusztai 2019). To make matters more complicated, both regional and international allies are also grouped regarding their support for one of the two Libyan governments, as there are those who support the Presidency Council: the United States, the UK, Italy, Algeria,

6. See the section "The Libyan Political Agreement: The Efforts of Multilateralism headed by the European Union and the United Nations."

Turkey, and Qatar; and those who support Haftar: Egypt, Russia, the UAE, and, to an extent, France (International Crisis Group (ICG), Middle East & North Africa 2016).

EGYPT'S CHALLENGES WITH ITS WESTERN BORDER

Egypt's Western Desert, which lies west of the Nile Valley, covers about 700,000 km² and makes up about two-thirds of Egypt's land area (Metz 1990). The desert also expands north towards the shores of the Mediterranean and south to Egypt's border with Sudan. The Egyptian–Libyan border is known for its great length of 1115 km and the challenging existence the tribes that have lived along and across these borders for generations have. There are treacherous sandpits and quicksand that have made large areas along that border both dangerous and uninhabitable (Hüsken 2019, 899–903). As a result, it would be impossible to manage Egypt's security predicament by just simply building a preposterously long wall.[7] This has driven Egypt to implement a series of security tactics to maximize its control along the border.

Egypt's decision to side with Haftar's authority was based on both ideological and tactical considerations. Haftar has been described as an extreme anti-Islamist (BBC News 2015), a characteristic in which the Egyptian authorities are highly invested. Moreover, Haftar and the HoR are in Tobruk, located in Libya's eastern region of Cyrenaica. It is the closest area to Egypt, as well as the most valuable given its vast oil resources and economic benefit for Egypt (Mezran and Varvelli 2017). Soon after the Libyan revolution, Egypt signed a military cooperation agreement with Libya in 2013 for the purpose of conducting joint military training and to deal competently with issues of illegal immigration, illegal fishing operations, and drug trafficking (Gulhane 2013).

Coupled with the existing threat of militant Islamists and global jihadists having found a safe haven in Libya, it comes as no surprise that Libya's neighboring countries, Algeria and Tunisia, have executed their own plans to sequester themselves from Libya's uncertain political and security status. Not being able to secure the Egyptian–Libyan border has resulted in several security predicaments for Egypt, namely: the movement of jihadists across its borders in the west, the movement of smuggled weapons that aid terrorist activities on Egypt's soil and beyond, as well as the loss of Egyptian lives, both

7. For a detailed history of the border's physical, tribal, and ethnic make-up, see Ellis (2018) and Hüsken (2019).

civilian and military. There have been multiple reports regarding a large amount of unaccounted-for military equipment from Qaddafi's arsenal (Donati and Shennib 2013). These weapons have found their way into the hands of radical Islamists through a shipment route for arms trafficking that was established across North Africa and along the north coast of Egypt, and have included missiles and man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS), both powerful enough to shoot down aircraft (Kuperman 2015, 73–74). These missiles were also found in the Gaza Strip, indicating that they made their way through Sinai. Moreover, one of these missiles was used by militant Islamists in Egypt in 2014 to shoot down a military helicopter (Kirkpatrick 2014).

Haftar's military campaign, Operation Dignity, against armed Islamists in 2014 unfortunately resulted in an increase in terrorist attacks in Egypt,[8] due to Egypt's assisting role in rebuilding Libya's old intelligence personnel and preventing weapons smuggling and jihadist activities within Libya's eastern province (Fitzgerald et al. n.d.). In January 2014, the Egyptian authorities reported an increase in the number of foreign fighters entering Egypt to join the radical groups in the Sinai Peninsula, who were armed by weapons smuggled across three of Egypt's land borders (Chenesseau and Azzam 2015, 93). In response, Egypt increased its military presence along the Libyan border and added vehicle X-ray scanning devices at that border to inspect all traffic in and out of Egypt (US Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism 2016). In effect, Egypt has bolstered its efforts to secure its border and to curtail the physical presence and ideological impact of jihadists on its land by relying on its already existing ad-hoc cooperative relations with Russia, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. These partners have a vested interest in destroying the influence of strong Islamist organizations such as the MB, as they threaten their regime-survival strategy. Egypt has not shied away from proving to Islamist militants on Libyan soil and along the border that the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF) will not hesitate to use force (Tolba and Bayoumy 2015; Aboulenein and Elgood 2017). Owing to Russia's long amicable history with both Egypt and Libya, it has also involved itself in defending the Egyptian–Libyan border and providing support to Haftar in the face of jihadist aggression.

8. These attacks by various militant organizations, namely ISIS, targeted Egyptian Coptic Christians, in both Egypt and Libya, in addition to Egyptian military personnel and police officers along the Libyan borders.

Eight years after the Arab Spring, the situation in Libya has not settled. El-Sisi used many old and new ties with regional and international actors, but avoided multilateral efforts such as that of the UN, preferring to be the principal actor in any agreement, for the purpose of safeguarding Egyptian national interest and security preferences regarding its border security. The international community's interest in diplomacy, by placing the Presidency Council under the leadership of Prime Minister Sarraj, has not dampened official Egyptian support for Haftar. At the same time, El-Sisi did attempt to bring both parties to Cairo in February 2017. Yet, Haftar refused to meet publicly with Sarraj, despite Egypt's claims that they did in fact meet (Mezran and Varvelli 2017, 28). Nevertheless, the alleged meeting never resulted in an agreement.[9] It did, however, prompt Egypt to voice its intention for a diplomatic solution to negotiate amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) that should then lead to presidential and parliamentary elections (28).

THE LIBYAN POLITICAL AGREEMENT: THE EFFORTS OF MULTILATERALISM HEADED BY THE UNITED NATIONS

As Libya fell into a pit of turmoil following the toppling of the Qaddafi regime, many international actors, both states and international organizations, stepped in in an attempt to curtail the damage that may occur as a result of the absence of a viable Libyan government. Various actors have tried to mediate amongst the many sides that claim to represent the legitimate government in Libya. As such, the LPA was signed in late 2015, with the assistance of the UN and its UNSMIL. The LPA confirmed the appointment of Prime Minister Sarraj and of the GNA as the internationally recognized government. Four years later, the LPA has yet to be fully implemented, as there were several propositions put forth by both Libyan political actors as well as international actors to apply amendments to the document, which hindered the actualization of the LPA. More specifically, the LPA did not wholly accommodate Egypt's interests and its alliance with Haftar and supported the UN-appointed Sarraj and his GNA (Mahmoud 2018). As a result, Haftar refused to ratify the agreement, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the GNA and further cementing Libya's political

9. Egypt, along with the UAE, successfully executed another meeting between the two Libyan leaders in July 2017, when French President Emmanuel Macron invited all parties to Paris for talks (Pearson 2018).

stalemate. As the path towards applying the LPA faltered, UNSMIL stepped in to try to guide it back to establishing political dialogue to actualize a united government.[10] Nevertheless, it was the unwillingness of all parties, especially regional stakeholders, to commit to the roadmap of the LPA and the UN process that resulted in the halting of Libya's path towards stability. In the case of Egypt, El-Sisi requested amendments to the LPA that directly affected Egypt's interests and its supposedly vested interests in Libya, such as giving civilian oversight of the military to the HoR with Haftar as commander-in-chief. Moreover, Egypt pushed for the UN arms embargo against Libya to be lifted in order to give Haftar the necessary leverage to protect and support Egypt's military on the border and to curtail terrorist threats (Mezran and Varvelli 2017, 25). Nevertheless, Egypt, amongst other countries, still supplied Hafter and his army with armored vehicles and spare parts for the air force (Becker and Schmitt 2018). The UN supports the government of Prime Minister Sarraj in Tripoli and currently focuses on Salame's "Action Plan,"[11] but has no mandate to determine or discuss border management. The most recent resolution, UNSC Resolution 2434 (UNSMIL 2018), makes no mention of borders. In effect, the UN lacks an action plan solely focused on border management and its numerous challenges, thereby risking the issue being put on the back burner in the face of new emerging and urgent issues, such as humanitarian needs, de-escalating the fighting, and resuming the political process, as well as protecting civilians and humanitarian workers (UNSMIL 2019).

At the same time, Egypt is also rhetorically committed to supporting UN and EU efforts in Libya. With Egypt's main challenges focused on security and counterterrorism efforts, Egypt hosted the EU–Egypt Stability Cluster in 2018 to investigate the possibility of interactions between the EU's Naval Operation Sophia (EU NAVFOR MED) and the Egyptian authorities and

10. The involvement of the UNSMIL worsened the situation, as the UN lost credibility in November 2015 owing to the questionable legitimacy of the UN process as a result of a scandal involving UNSMIL's Head of Mission's alleged ties with the UAE, an ally of Haftar (Miller and Mezran 2018). This incident resulted in irrevocable damage to the UN's position as an impartial actor.

11. Salame's action plan was comprised of three parts: (1) a truce amongst warring parties in addition to the exchange of prisoners and the release of those arbitrarily detained or abducted; (2) following that truce, a high-level meeting to convene to end all hostilities and to work together to implement a strict arms embargo to prevent the further flow of weapons into Libya; and to promote a strict adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law by the Libyan parties; and (3) a Libyan meeting of leading and influential personalities from all over the country to agree on comprehensive elements for the way forward (Miller 2018).

other possible areas of cooperation (European Union External Action 2018). The EU also launched a civilian mission known as Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission to Libya (EUBAM) in 2013 to assist in matters of border security and counterterrorism. EUBAM continues to work towards its mission of providing advice and capacity-building regarding border management, and it contributes to the efforts of UNSMIL by liaising with the Libyan authorities and other relevant security actors (Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine 2018). However, due to the deterioration of Libya's internal security, the mission was downsized in 2014 and relocated to Tunis. EUBAM then returned in a smaller capacity to Tripoli in December 2017. Following that, EUBAM's mandate was extended from January 2019 to June 2020 to support the Libyan authorities in interrupting organized criminal networks actively involved in migrant smuggling, human trafficking, and terrorist activities (Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine 2018). The matter remains that the relevant foreign actors that have supported and approved of Salame's action plan, which includes an all-out embargo of arms and weapons crossing Libya's borders, are the same actors ignoring the arms embargo and still sticking to their own plan of action to safeguard their interests on the sidelines of the UN's efforts (O'Hanlon 2019).

CONCLUSION

Egypt can be described as both a good and a bad neighbor to Libya. It plays out its beneficial role to Libya through its verbal commitment to the international community in maintaining stability in Libya and supporting implementation of the LPA and UN negotiation efforts. At the same time, Egypt has been behaving as a bad neighbor, as it has been sending out conflicting statements in its pursuit of Libya's stability by holding steadfast in its backing of Haftar and his military presence in the eastern part of Libya. It could be said that El-Sisi is a major roadblock towards finding a multilateral solution for Libya's failed state status. When it comes to security threats as complex as terrorist cells crossing international borders, the application of neoclassical realist practices that consider domestic instability, defensive foreign policies, and a leader's personal agenda of control of a state after a revolution, seem appropriate.

This research effort highlighted Egypt's security strategy and its reliance on its own security apparatus first and foremost, to maintain its national interest by forging several bilateral alliances with actors that share the same

ideologies and priorities. It can be argued that Egypt, much like the UAE and Russia, share common convictions with Haftar, that is, that the military route is more efficient and effective in conflict settlement than political negotiation and attempting to converge both tracks would undermine the role of the military. In other words, because the Egyptian military is depicted as the bulwark of stability and national identity, Egypt considers that Haftar is its only savior in the face of a growing jihadist insurgency such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIS finding safe pockets in Libya. Both organizations, in addition to their regional offshoots and militias, have been using Libya's contested ground to regain strength and strike back in other regions in the Middle East, with Sinai being a vital battleground. Moreover, Haftar and his allies share broader anti-Islamist sentiments, and are not willing to negotiate with any Libyan actor that has cordial relationships with Islamist organizations. However, due to Saudi Arabia's financial involvement, Haftar is cooperating with the Madkhali, Salafi–jihadi brigades which are supposedly the least troublesome. The Madkalhi's ideology centers on their rejection of non-violent political Islamists such as the MB and violent jihadist groups much like ISIS, thereby acting as the antidote to counteract and eradicate these Islamist currents in Libya. This splitting of hairs over the different strands of Islamist factions within Libya's borders, and where their loyalties lie, especially since all of them are anti-democracy and prefer a more autocratic government, has added a lot more complexity to the alliances forming within and beyond Libya's borders (ICG, Middle East & North Africa 2019).

Even though Egypt is looked upon as a relatively influential actor, especially regarding the situation in Libya, it only possesses the political clout to push Hafter's side to the negotiating table. That fact is that only multilateral efforts have succeeded in putting Sarraj and Haftar in the same room, usually involving Egypt, the UAE, and Russia. However, it is in Egypt's interest to pursue its own security agenda, which is to focus on stabilizing the Eastern region of Libya and securing the Egyptian–Libyan border. Additionally, both Algeria and Tunisia have held meetings with Egypt to resolve the political deadlock in Libya, for their own self-interest. As a result, they agreed on the safeguarding of Libyan territory and sovereignty by pushing back on any foreign military or political intervention in Libyan affairs, even if it meant the further stalling of internal stability in Libya and the holding of new elections to establish a legitimate government (Miller and Mezran 2018).

Traditional concepts of international security and national security have been on a collision course with efforts of redefining borders and their functionalities, in the face of modern threats of terrorism and the fluid movement of people and smuggled goods across those borders. Terrorist organizations and militant jihadist groups have time and again benefited from the crumbling internal situation of failed states in both the Middle East and Africa. International organizations, such as the UN, cannot carry out any missions to rebuild Libya without the help of neighboring governments. However, if the UN decides to take on a more direct approach, it would probably need to look for alternative sources of assistance so as not to discredit or undermine its efforts, especially if the regional players continue only to pay lip service and adamantly follow their own agendas. As it stands, the UNSC resolutions on Libya are increasingly being pushed down and Libya's internal chaos is spreading beyond its borders in other forms, such as migrants fleeing to EU nations and being rejected at the border, or dying on route (Hayden 2019). Nevertheless, the UN could continue to work with the more accommodating EU member states to try to curb Libyan migrant fatalities and human rights violations that are occurring on their borders. As for the security implications of Libya's borders, the UN may end up adopting its peripheral role as in the past, during some of the most sensitive situations such as in Cuba, Vietnam, or with Sino-Soviet relations. The only authority the UN can exercise is for its UNSC to request a call to arms, much like in 1950 with the Korean War (Holsti 2006, 202). In times of crisis and threats of transnational terrorism, governments, such as Egypt, will continue to approach conflicts unilaterally by creating military aid to a conflicted country on a project-by-project basis, while always keeping in mind its self-interest and self-preservation via the old-fashioned way: hard power and militia dependency. ■

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