

Former Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan said in 2013: "The international community cannot tolerate a state in the middle of the Mediterranean that is a source of terrorism, violence and murder.

" Unfortunately, seven years later, the situation has only gotten worse and Libya has become one of the theaters of violence in which all the world powers wage war on a proxy basis. Each nation defends the camp it has chosen to support, but more direct involvement from a country like Turkey will only fuel chaos and violence.

Unsurprisingly, on January 2, the Turkish parliament voted for a one-year authorization to send troops to Libya to support the Fayez al-Sarraj Government of National Accord (GNA), writes Oli vier Guitta
. President Erdogan had not really waited for this vote since in the last few weeks 300 Syrian mercenaries have already been fighting in Libya alongside the GNA. In addition, 1,000 other Syrian mercenaries are undergoing training in Turkish camps before being sent to Libya. Turkey is already de facto the subcontractor of the GNA, carrying out military operations from Tripoli and Misrata. Also, Ankara had already sent -in 2019- military advisers, weapons and 20 drones, supplied directly by a company belonging to Erdogan's son-in-law. The GNA openly prides itself on receiving military equipment directly from Turkey. This is all the more ironic since GNA, which is the government set up and approved by the United Nations, is in full violation of UN resolutions banning the importation of weapons into Libya.

What are the main reasons for this massive involvement of Turkey in Libya?

First of all, there is a historical factor which is far from negligible and utterly symbolic. Indeed for Erdogan who sees himself as the new Caliph who will do everything to restore the Ottoman

Empire, Libya was not only part of the old Ottoman Empire but was even the last territory lost by the Turks. Another symbol is the fact that Mustafa Kemal AtatÃ¼rk fought there and was injured in Libya.

Then there is an "ethnic" factor: in fact, Misrata, where Islamist groups are based and which are part of the GNA, is mainly populated by Turkish ethnicities.

The ideological factor is also important because Erdogan is one of the most fervent supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and wants to help the Islamist group to be in control in Libya.

The energy factor is paramount: wanting to protect his TurkStream pipeline project, Erdogan signed a maritime agreement with the GNA that creates an exclusive economic zone which almost encompasses Crete and the islands of Rhodes. Above all, he is seeking by all means to sabotage the East Med gas pipeline project, 2,000 kilometers long, which should transport gas- discovered off the coast of Israel and Lebanon- through Cyprus and Greece and to the rest of Europe.

The economic factor is just as vital. Indeed, it is a question of defending the as the economic agreement inked with the GNA along with investments carried out under Gaddafi: Turkish companies had invested nearly 30 billion $ in Libya.

Finally the geopolitical and strategic factor is the icing on the cake: Erdogan is positioning himself in Libya to be part of the negotiation in the future. He is also at the same time countering his deadly enemies: Egypt, Greece, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and to a lesser extent France.

What will the international community do?

Europe cannot really get in the way of Turkey because of the blackmail of the refugees. Despite a good relationship with US President Trump, Erdogan has been warned not to intervene in Libya, but Trump has other cats to whip at the moment.

Only Russia, which supports Marshal Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) by sending weapons and mercenaries from the Wagner group â€“ between 500 and 1,500 men there â€“ could possibly rub against Erdogan. However, it is clear that Russia is hedging its bets itself because it is not only behind the LNA but also has a good diplomatic policy with the GNA and keeps Seif al Islam, the son of the late Gaddafi, on hand. However, it is very likely that we will arrive at a Modus Vivendi between the two countries as in Syria.

Since the vote in the Turkish parliament, the African Union, the United Nations and France have issued warnings of the risks of Turkish military intervention in Libya. Unfortunately a scenario similar to post-2016 Syria cannot be excluded ...

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