

# ARAB DISPATCH

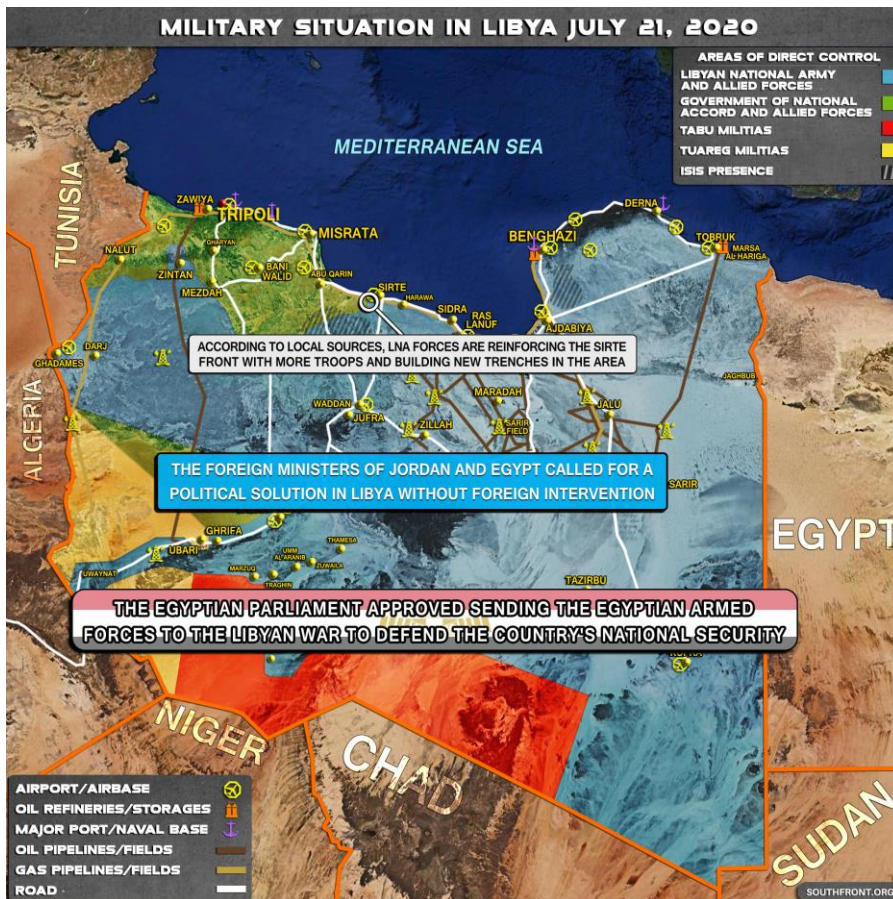
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## North Africa

**#Egypt** – Abdel Fattah al-Sisi will deploy troops on the Libyan soil



Source: [Southfront.org](https://southfront.org).

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, the Egyptian parliament has agreed on a troop deployment in Libya to defend the Egyptian national security.

The approval from the Egyptian parliament, to intervene in Libyan conflict, came after a meeting held in Cairo by President al-Sisi with Aguila Saleh, chairman of the Parliament in Tobruk, and the Libyan tribal representatives, who called on the Egyptian Armed Forces to intervene in order protect Libyan sovereignty from foreign militias and terrorist cells. The Parliament discussed with the President the use of military forces to protect Egypt's national security in Libya but also in Ethiopia, where the situation is quickly deteriorating since the decision of the Ethiopian President to start filling the controversial Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile.

Egypt on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June had threatened Turkey to intervene, strongly condemning Turkey's interference in Arab affairs to embezzle the rich Libyan soil, yet it was hesitating over a direct military action in Libya, fearing a regional conflict with external backing forces. Clashes in the Mediterranean between Egypt and Turkey may be the inevitable result.

The country, already dealing with a significant economic crisis and with the recent Ethiopia's decision to fill the Renaissance Dam, is facing pressure from many sides to intervene in the Libyan conflict. France, Greece and the United Arab Emirates, are pushing Egypt military forces to intervene.

The UAE, with an anti-Turkish narrative referring to Egypt as the mother of the Arab nationalism is strongly supporting a military intervention, even though the Egyptian armed forces might encounter serious difficulties. Turkey maintains the legitimacy of its intervention in favour of the UN-recognised government.

The army has been carrying out large scale military exercises for almost a month, and is ready to cross the border and intervene in Haftar's favour. Given the critical internal situation, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi cannot afford to alienate the army, but must realistically assess its logistics to avoid military setbacks with ominous political consequences.

The High Representative of the European Union, Josep Borrell encourages a diplomatic solution with Turkey, fearing that escalating tensions between Brussel and Ankara could impact current matters, for instance the refugee crisis and the current Turkish drilling operations in the Mediterranean Sea.

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## Levant

### #Jordan – The court's ruling dissolves the Muslim Brotherhood



Source: Middle East Monitor

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, the Jordan Court of Cassation has dissolved the Muslim Brotherhood local branch. The Muslim Brotherhood, a trans-national pan-Islamic movement, founded in 1928 by the Egyptian school teacher and Imam, Sheikh Hassan al-Banna, has been largely tolerated by Jordanian authorities. The balance between the Kingdom and the Muslim Brotherhood started to deteriorate in January 2013, when the Secretary-General of the Muslim Brotherhood Group in Jordan, Hammam Saeed, stated that Jordan would become an Islamic state inside the future Caliphate. In 2015, the Jordanian branch, splintered between two factions: the Muslim Brotherhood Society, more reformist, and the Muslim Brotherhood Group.

Their internal conflicts, escalated in violent episodes between the group and the Jordanian authorities, strained the relationship with the state.

In 2015, Jordan did not recognise the Muslim Brotherhood Group, however, unlike Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, accepted and legalised its political arm, the Islamic Action Front party and other splinter organizations, like the Zamzam Initiative.

In 2016 the MBG's Islamic Action Front party, won 10 out of 130 parliamentary seats while, the Zamzam Initiative, obtained a political party license in 2016. Later on, the Jordanian Security Services closed the Brotherhood headquarter transferring their ownership to the MBS.

Given the MBG's strong ties with Jordanians with Palestinians origin and with the Iran and Turkey-backed HAMAS movement, Jordan fears interference in its internal affairs. The internal fragmentation and competition of the Muslim Brotherhood for local trust, might lead the movement to new narratives, new missions and strategies or even new targets, such as the Peace Plan announced in January by the United States.

Here comes the decision from the Jordanian Government to dissolve the Group citing the party's failure in rectifying its legal status in accordance with the 2014 party's law. Among this decision with potential strategic consequences, the Kingdom, in a severe need of financial aid to manage its deep economic crisis, continues to forge a stronger political alliance with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while shifting away from other constellations.

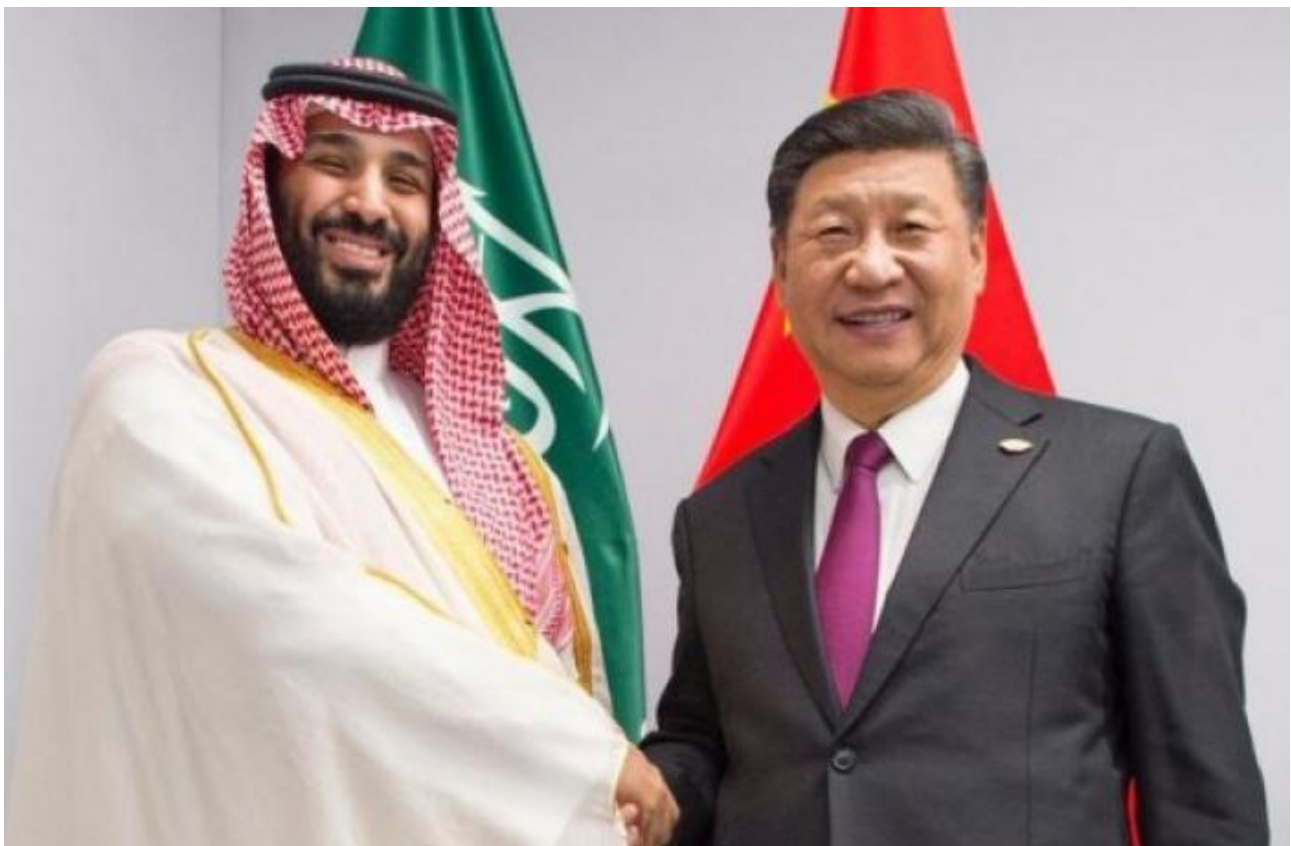


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## Gulf

**#Persian Gulf** – China’s role and partnerships in the area



*Source: Asia News*

The pandemic has clearly reversed the diplomatic relations on an international scale. China has engaged a humanitarian diplomacy that had re-designed its diplomatic relations, repositioning itself from “the authoritarian incubator of a pandemic to a leader country in dealing with the global crisis”.

The Gulf states, that at the very early stage of the Pandemic were offering medical aid to China, became, later on, recipients and are now taking this emergency as an opportunity to reinforce their diplomatic ties, by creating new partnerships.

In the Middle of the Pandemic, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates, had a phone meeting with his Chinese counterpart, urging the need to strengthen their strategic partnership, achieved by the two countries in 2018. Together with the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait had largely supported China with medical supplies, support that soon flew on the other direction when the virus severely affected the GCC countries.

The Gulf states, except for Bahrein, had partnership agreements with China, that went on hold during the crisis. However, with China's soft power in dealing with the pandemic, the economic and diplomatic relations with Gulf countries became even stronger.

With the United States are finding a new role, China is re-designing its partnerships with Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Iran by supporting them in fighting the pandemic in order to preserve its energy interests in the Gulf region.

As rightly mentioned in an article published last June by the London School of Economics, “COVID-19 is bridging China and the Persian Gulf through the Health Silk Road”.

According to the Center for Strategic & International Studies, China is slowly strengthening his partnerships in the Gulf for economic reasons but also to compete with the United States, hoping to eventually undermine the US political and energy access and secure instead its imports. China is the largest oil importer; out of the 70% of its oil imports, the 40% is provided by the Gulf. Evidently China has recently invested around \$10,7 billion in the Special Economic Zone Authority of Duqm located in Oman, \$300 million dollars in a new terminal at Kalifa in Abu Dhabi, and an unspecified amount on the Hamad Port in Qatar and on Madinat al-Hareer in Kuwait.

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## #ArabInsight

By Maria Bagnara

### #Syria – Opposition not surprised by cosmetic elections



*Source: Reuters*

On Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup> of July the electoral commission has announced the unsurprising victory of the Baath Party, notably the regime's party, at the Syrian Parliamentary elections. Out of 250 seats in the parliament, 177 have been taken by Bashar al-Assad's party.

The elections, repeatedly postponed due to the pandemic, have been held with many concerns from the oppositions, almost unrepresented in the elections. Among the many lists, the only opposition groups represented are the ones legalised by the regime that like in previous elections has boycotted the vote in order to open the way to the only possible winner: the Baath Party. The opposition has depicted the



entire election process as an already seen farce, confirming the illegality and the illegitimacy of the electoral process.

According to the [Syrian Arab News Agency](#), the national news agency, about the 33,17% of the voting population voted during the parliamentary elections clarifying that a number of citizens was refraining from exercising their right to vote due to the pandemic and the high risk of being infected, in addition to the Syrians living abroad that could not travel back to their country for travel restrictions.

The Syrian National Coalition, an opposition bloc founded in Qatar in 2012 now based in Turkey, has strongly condemned the election process.

As reported from [Al-Jazeera](#), Naser al-Hariri, Secretary-General of the National Coalition for the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, had strongly condemned the elections as the Assad regime has lost its legitimacy since the beginning of the protests in 2011. Among the 2.100 candidates the majority included businessmen and individuals closed to Assad's regime and recently sanctioned by the United States. He added that the elections have been held in areas under the control of the regime without including areas that are subject to the Syrian Democratic Forces, like Idlib, the countryside of Aleppo and other regions in northern Syria.

He told also that the voting booths in cities controlled by the regime were strictly monitored by the army and the Syrian Mukhabarat (Intelligence Service), highlighting that in this way the elections will not reflect the Syrian people's desire for change.

The Prime Minister of the Syrian Interim Government in exile in Turkey formed by the opposition groups, Abdulrahman Mustafa had commented to Al-Jazeera that Syrians will not be fooled by this theatrical elections and that they are waiting for free elections based on a new constitution.

Many Syrian activists have stated to [Al-Jazeera](#) that the Syrian parliamentary elections "are only a formality" as the results are well known in advance from both the regime and the opposition. During the previous elections, held in 2016, the regime's party won 200 seats with no surprise by the Syrian people. Since Hafez al-Assad, father of the incumbent president, the ruling Baath Party has always won the parliamentary elections.

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