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THE ROLE OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN THE INTENSIFICATION OF ARMED
CONFLICT: THE RELATIONS BETWEEN PATRONS AND PROXIES DURING THE
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

MA Thesis

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Tartu, 2022

Declaration of Authorship

I (the author of the paper: Vazha Shanava, Personal Code: 39609080074) confirm that I wrote the paper independently. There is no plagiarism in the paper and every external source and idea used in this paper is properly referenced.

The volume of the paper is 80 pages, including the title page, table of contents, abstract, main part of the paper, and references. The word count of the main part of the paper is 23,554 words.

Vazha Shanava 16.05.2022

Abstract

The role of infectious diseases (IDs) and their effects on interstate and intrastate conflicts is one of the subjects of academic discussion (see CSIS & CBACI, 2000; Peterson, 2002; Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The existing studies about infectious diseases and armed conflicts propose several explanations for how the former causes the latter (see CSIS & CBACI, 2000; Peterson, 2002; Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). However, most of the academic pieces miss the analysis of the possible intervening and controlling variables in the causal mechanism between disease and conflicts (see CSIS & CBACI, 2000; Peterson, 2002; Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The paper aims to identify the intervening and controlling variables that play a key role in intensifying the modern conflicts during infectious disease pandemics. For this purpose, the paper will compare four conflicts at the time of the Coronavirus pandemic: the Libya civil war, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Colombian civil war, and the civil war of the Philippines. The study will do a chronological analysis of the events and data of each of the abovementioned conflicts. By analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data, the paper will propose a comprehensive understanding of the reasons for conflict intensifications before and during the pandemic. The research results reveal that the political revisionism of some patrons and proxies has a decisive role in intensifying the conflicts during the pandemic. The paper finds that those conflicts which contain patrons and proxies with revisionist aspirations are more likely to be intensified during the pandemic than those that do not contain patrons and proxies at all. The analysis of the role of infectious disease pandemics on armed conflicts may contribute to understanding the role of other global crises like the Coronavirus in escalating the wars.

Keywords: Infectious Disease, Pandemic, Armed Conflicts, Revisionism, Proxy War, Power Imbalance

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Abbreviations

ACLED	The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
CBACI	The Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute
CPP	The Communist Party of the Philippines
CSIS	The Centre for Strategic and International Studies
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ELN	National Liberation Army of Colombia
GNA	Government of National Accord of Libya
HoR	House of Representatives of Libya
ID	Infectious Disease
IGO	Inter-Governmental Organization
LNA	Libyan National Army
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
US	The United States
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

Infectious diseases (IDs) have been one of the serious challenges in the history of humanity. Recently, the Coronavirus pandemic demonstrated how bad effects can an infectious disease have on the world. However, it also illustrated how instant the world's reaction can be to the pandemic. After its outbreak, the Coronavirus resulted in active worldwide mobilization: the head of World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Ghebreyesus declared a pandemic situation on March 11, 2020, roughly two months after the discovery of the Coronavirus by Chinese officials (World Health Organization, 2022)¹. Shortly after this announcement, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the states to terminate the conflicts and to move the attention on dealing with the new virus with collective efforts (Guterres, 2020). After one year of the Coronavirus outbreak, President Biden (2021, January 21) considered the readiness for the pandemic as a matter of “*national security*” (Biden, 2021, January 21). These are the facts that reflect the unprecedented responsiveness of the Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and governments to the pandemic. Nevertheless, some of the international efforts were not as productive as they were expected to be. One of the problems was the lack of collective mobilization against the pandemic between the states and organizations (see Busby, 2020; Johnson, 2020): the countries tended to follow their interest and the IGOs seemed to be inefficient (see Busby, 2020; Johnson, 2020). Another problem was continuing conflicts during the pandemic (Ide, 2020; Rustad et al, 2020): The urge of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (Guterres, 2020) to terminate the armed conflicts seemed to be inefficient because some of the conflict actors largely neglected it (see Ide, 2020; Rustad et al, 2020).

The Coronavirus pandemic had a dual effect on the conflicts in the world. For some conflict actors, pandemic-driven alerts created grounds for the ceasefire (see Ide, 2020): for example, in Colombia, the anti-government group National Liberation Army (ELN)

¹ Unlike the Coronavirus, HIV/AIDS virus was rarely regarded as a “*pandemic*” in the official documents and announcements, but instead, it was often labeled as an “*epidemic*” by the Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations (UNAIDS, 2021) and WHO (see World Health Organization, 1997; World Health Organization, 2016; UNAIDS, 2021). Moreover, the actual steps by WHO against the spread of HIV/AIDS came decades after its discovery (see World Health Organization, 1997; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Minority HIV/AIDS Fund, 2022). In the United States, HIV/AIDS was officially considered as a matter of security in 2000 (Al Gore, 2000, January 10) - 19 years after the first positive case (See Al Gore, 2000, January 10; also Gellman, 2000; Peterson, 2002; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Minority HIV/AIDS Fund, 2022). All these facts indicate that compared to the responses to the Coronavirus pandemic, the global reaction to the HIV/AIDS outbreak was relatively delayed (see also, World Health Organization, 2022)

promulgated the ceasefire shortly after the first Coronavirus positive case was detected in the country (Ide, 2020: p. 4; Mustasilta, 2020: p. 7). Furthermore, in Afghanistan, the Taliban announced that it would consider the ceasefire if the virus would spread in the regions they ruled over (Rustad et al, 2020, para. 4). However, unlike in Colombia and Afghanistan, Coronavirus had a contrary effect in some conflict cases, such as in Nagorno-Karabakh (Aljazeera, 2020a) and in Yemen (Mustasilta, 2020: p. 3): In 2020, there were battles between Armenian and Azerbaijan armed forces, which lasted for a few months and ended up with the great casualties (Aljazeera, 2020a). In Yemen, instead of trying to mitigate the situation, the anti-government Houthi movement made provocative decisions by giving ultimatum to the Yemen government (Mustasilta, 2020: p. 3). These examples indicate that the pandemic had two different effects on the ongoing interstate and intrastate conflicts: The virus could perform either the role of the de-escalator or the intensifier of the war (see also Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020; Rustad et al, 2020). Such heterogeneity of the effects of Coronavirus may lead the research to the following question: **Why the pandemic has a different effect on the different armed conflicts?**

The objective of the paper is to find out what were the intervening and controlling factors between the Coronavirus pandemic and wars that were responsible for the conflict intensification. Identifying these factors will give the answer to the question about why the Coronavirus had different consequences on different wars. The conflicts which intensified during the pandemic must have similar factors or features which led the situation towards more active and frequent clashes than there were before. To identify those similar factors, the paper will examine the different conflicts which intensified during the Coronavirus pandemic. The analysis will start with the conflicts of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh which are very different from each other. The only similarity between the Libyan and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts is the fact that the opposing actors in each of them did not comply with the “*global a ceasefire*” (Guterres, 2020) of the UN (Guterres, 2020) during the Coronavirus pandemic (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020; Aljazeera, 2020a; Guterres, 2020). Otherwise, there are significant differences between these conflicts. At first, the Libyan case is the intrastate conflict, whereas the Nagorno-Karabakh case is the interstate conflict. Secondly, each of these conflicts had different backgrounds and developments. Such a difference between the cases is beneficial for the study purposes though. As mentioned above, the paper aims to find out why the Coronavirus pandemic led to the different consequences in different armed conflicts, without distinguishing those conflicts by their nature. The study of the conflicts

with few similarities would lead the research toward the theory which will be more generalizable to any other conflict cases than the study which explored similar conflicts by their nature.

The validity of the intervening and controlling factors found in the study of the Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts will be tested by the comparative analysis. In addition to the analysis of the conflicts which intensified during the Coronavirus pandemic, the research will also review the cases in which the pandemic had contrary effects. After identifying the common intervening and controlling factors between Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh, the study will briefly review the cases of Colombia and the Philippines where either one of the opposing sides announced the ceasefire during the first months of the Coronavirus pandemic (Ide, 2020). The presence of a ceasefire is what differentiates Colombia and the Philippines from the conflicts of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. The purpose of analyzing the cases of Colombia and the Philippines is to test the validity of the identified intervening and controlling factors that were common between the Libyan and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts. The study will illustrate whether these factors were present in the cases of Colombia and the Philippines as well. If the research will demonstrate that the same intervening and controlling factors were not present in the cases of Colombia and the Philippines, then those factors can be considered as valid indicators for the conflict intensifications during infectious disease pandemics. As mentioned above, the cases of Colombia and the Philippines will have testing purposes. Consequently, the paper will not do an extensive study of them. Instead, the primary focus of the study will be on the cases of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh which were featured by the continuing conflicts even after the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

The paper uses a comparative methodology. The empirical chapter will compare the conflicts of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh on the one hand and the conflicts of Colombia and the Philippines on the other. This comparison will help the study identify and illustrate the features which make some samples similar and others different. The samples are chosen based on the “*Most Different Systems Design*” (Mills et al, 2010; Mill, 1949 [1843]). Each of the conflicts are different by their nature and each of them happens in a different part of the world. To some extent, such a difference between the samples can make the result of the study more reliable: if some intervening and controlling factors are common between such different conflicts, it is likely that they will be even more common between more similar conflicts. Consequently, the more different the conflicts are in the research, the more reliable intervening and controlling factors it will find. Furthermore, as mentioned before, the study

of completely different conflicts will result in a more generalizable theory, which could fit other conflict cases as well.

The research will use the mixed method for the analysis: it will present both qualitative (i.e. peace deals, arms transfers, agreements between the leaders, etc.) and quantitative data (i.e. number of battles, explosions, Coronavirus active case statistics, etc). The combination of qualitative and quantitative data will answer the following questions: (1) how the conflicts developed before the pandemic? (2) what was the immutable factor which existed before the pandemic, and which exacerbated the conflict after the outbreak of the Coronavirus? For the purpose of the comprehensive analysis, the paper will also analyze the nature of the conflict actors as well. The similarity between the actors by certain features might explain the same consequences of different conflicts. Consequently, the paper will study the features and the types of actors in conflicts extensively. The actors' ambitions and motivations in the conflicts will be assessed by the qualitative data, such as the past events, agreements, and the actions. The consequences of the conflicts during the pandemic will be illustrated by the quantitative data, such as the number of battles and Coronavirus active cases statistics. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be acquired from the online sources. Because the research samples are different, some data might not be equally available though. For example, the countrywide Coronavirus new case statistics of opposing states such as Armenia and Azerbaijan can be found on the internet (see Worldometer, 2022). However, the regionwide statistics cannot be found to assess the epidemiological situation of opposing sides of Libya's House of Representatives (HoR) and the Government of National Accord (GNA). Consequently, the potential problem that the research might encounter is the lack of data in some cases. The research will try to solve this problem by finding alternative data which will be as reliable as the previous one.

The relevance of the study can be explained by the nature of the Coronavirus pandemic as a global challenge. At first, Coronavirus is a new challenge that is still being investigated in different contexts. Therefore, any findings on its political consequences might bring new knowledge to the academic field. Secondly, the effects of infectious diseases on international relations are not widely researched. Despite the abundance of literature about infectious diseases and their political consequences (i.e. Pirages, 1999; Price-Smith, 2001; Singer, 2002; Peterson, 2002), the effects of the disease on war have not been studied comprehensively. Consequently, the study of the effects of IDs, in general, can result in new findings as well. Thirdly, the theory proposed by this paper can be generalized in the context

of some other global challenges. The 21st century has been full of new global challenges, such as the H1N1 virus, the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008, Islamic Terrorism, etc. If the paper will prove the assumption that the Coronavirus may cause the intensification of the conflict, then the other global challenges similar to the Coronavirus can lead the conflict intensification as well. However, the advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of the research is its longevity: the long duration of the Coronavirus pandemic might be “*beneficial*” for a better understanding of the effects of infectious diseases in general upon the conflicts. Most of the global challenges like the ones mentioned above did not last as long as the Coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, the study of the Covid-19 pandemic might bring more precise and reliable results than the study of H1N1 or the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008.

The paper is divided into six chapters. The first chapter will review existing theories about infectious diseases and their political consequences. More specifically, this chapter will present the causal mechanisms between IDs and wars that were proposed by literature before the Coronavirus pandemic. The past theories will be introduced chronologically, starting from the earlier ones to the most recent ones about the Coronavirus. The analysis of the past causal mechanisms will illustrate whether they are valid in the context of Coronavirus or not. Furthermore, the review of the causal mechanisms can help the study identify and correct the gaps in the knowledge about the relation between infectious diseases and conflicts. The second chapter will review literature about the types and the nature of conflict actors with a high propensity toward war. The chapter will introduce the thoughts about what kinds of actors are inclined towards the war and what kind of behavior indicates their inclinations. The third chapter will conclude the findings in the literature and propose the hypothesis of the study based on the literature review. The fourth chapter will introduce the research design and data which is used in the study. The fifth chapter will be dedicated to the empirical analysis of the conflicts of Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Colombia, and the Philippines. The sixth chapter will summarize the findings and present conclusive remarks.

1. Political Consequences of Infectious Disease: Three Waves of Analyses

Before analyzing the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the current armed conflicts, it is important to understand the past theories about infectious diseases and their effects on war. This chapter will review the existing literature about IDs and conflicts chronologically. The chapter will start with a review of the earliest thoughts about the matter which date back to the end of the 20th century (i.e. Pirages, 1999; Price-Smith, 2001; Singer, 2002; Peterson, 2002) and proceed with more recent discussions (i.e. Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The review of the past causal mechanisms is necessary to illustrate what theories were there and how accurately they described the relationship between infectious disease and conflict. This will help the paper demonstrate whether it is necessary to create a new theory or to adapt the old theory and adjust it to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and the conflicts. The early literature was largely oriented on the study of HIV/AIDS and its potential consequences on the war (see Pirages, 1999; Price-Smith, 2001; Singer, 2002; Peterson, 2002). HIV/AIDS has been present in the world for long enough to produce a variety of the theories about infectious diseases causing the conflict (see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Minority HIV/AIDS Fund, 2022). Therefore, this chapter will mostly review the academic pieces on HIV/AIDS (i.e. Pirages, 1999; Price-Smith, 2001; Singer, 2002; Peterson, 2002) and its consequences on conflicts. After the review of the articles and reports about HIV/AIDS, the chapter will analyze the recent literature about the Coronavirus pandemic and ongoing wars (i.e. Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The analysis will demonstrate which causal mechanisms are applied by the authors in the discussions about the Coronavirus pandemic and conflicts.

1.1 The first wave of analysis: the relationship between HIV/AIDS and conflicts

The topic about infectious diseases and their consequences has long time been one of the important issues in the academic field. At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the literature about health issues claimed that infectious diseases needed to be treated as a matter of security (See Pirages, 1999; Price-Smith, 2001: p. 165; Singer, 2002: p. 145, p. 155; Peterson, 2002). Some authors demanded to expand the matters of security beyond the

conventional military and strategic threats and include the infectious diseases in the group of security threats (Pirages, 1999: p. 285; Price-Smith, 2001: p. 165; Singer, 2002: p. 155). For example, Dennis Pirages (1999: p. 285) was one of the first authors who called for considering non-military threats as the matter of security (Pirages, 1999: p. 285). Eventually, such initiatives achieved success by bringing the matter of infectious diseases on the high political agenda (Singer, 2002: p. 145; Al Gore, 2020, January 10; Peterson, 2002: p. 43). Nevertheless, despite its success in practical aspects, the first academic analyses of infectious diseases and their effects remained incomplete.

The first wave analyses of the impact of infectious diseases had several problems. At first, they lacked the study of the causal relationship between IDs and the challenges like armed conflict or humanitarian crises. As a The Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) & The Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute (CBACI) report (2000, p. 13) noted, there were not many attempts for examining the health issues as the cause of other conventional challenges (CSIS & CBACI, 2000, p. 13): *“The reverse relationship between health and security – health as a factor promoting instability and conflict – is less appreciated, however”* (CSIS & CBACI, 2000: p. 13). The main idea of this expression was that the armed conflicts were not treated as the results of the epidemics (CSIS & CBACI, 2000: p. 13). Instead, they were considered as *“disease amplifiers”* (Price-Smith, 2001: p. 169), or the causes of the disease spread (Morse, 1993: p. xvii; National Intelligence Estimate, 2000: p. 20, p. 24, p. 27; Price-Smith, 2001: p. 169). Secondly, in the beginning, the literature analyzed the number of challenges in combination, without studying them separately in relation to epidemics (see Morse, 1993: p. xvii; National Intelligence Estimate, 2000: p. 20, p. 24, p. 27; Price-Smith, 2001: p. 169). For example, the role of armed conflict during the epidemics was not studied separately (see Morse, 1993: p. xvii; National Intelligence Estimate, 2000: p. 20, p. 24, p. 27; Price-Smith, 2001: p. 169). Rather, it was studied together with many other factors such as *“malnutrition”*, *“bad health care”*, *“climate change”*, *“famine”*, etc. (Morse, 1993: p. xvii; National Intelligence Estimate, 2000: p. 20, p. 24, p. 27; Price-Smith, 2001: p. 169). Such superficial analysis resulted in the general statements and resolutions (See Pirages, 1999; Price Smith, 2001). To summarize, even though there was a huge demand from the academic field to treat infectious diseases as a conventional security problem, the relation between the pandemics and other challenges was not analyzed comprehensively (See Pirages, 1999; Price-Smith, 2001; Singer, 2002; Peterson, 2002).

The first causal mechanisms of infectious diseases and the strategic challenges were introduced at the beginning of the 21st century (see CSIS & CBACI Report, 2000; National Intelligence Estimate, 2000; Price-Smith, 2001). In their report, The Centre for Strategic and International Studies & The Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute (CBACI) (2000) presented a full-scale study of infectious disease and its effects on security (CSIS & CBACI, 2000). The report introduced the causal mechanism which claimed that the disease damaged the state's defending capabilities by infecting its soldiers (CSIS & CBACI, 2000: p. 15): "*The presence of infectious diseases in military populations jeopardizes military readiness and reduces force strength through death and debilitation of military personnel*" (CSIS & CBACI, 2000: p. 15). As the report illustrates (CSIS & CBACI, 2000: p. 15) the disease would cause the degradation of the army in two major ways: (1) by weakening the health of army soldiers (CSIS & CBACI, 2000: p. 15) and (2) by putting the pressure on the military expenditures (CSIS & CBACI, 2000: p. 15). This would eventually make a state vulnerable to any potential attacks from outside (CSIS & CBACI, 2000: p. 15).

At the beginning of the 21st century, the claim about the viruses exhausting the state's defensive capabilities was vigorously taken up and expanded by forthcoming literature about the HIV/AIDS pandemic (See Price-Smith 2001: p. 172; Singer, 2002: p. 149; Elbe, 2002: pp. 167-168; Ostergard, 2002: pp. 342-344; Peterson, 2002). In fact, this theory became so dominant in academic discussions that it left no room for other causal mechanisms. Very occasionally, some discussions contained brief statements about viruses causing xenophobic sentiments in the society and eventually resulting in unreasonable state behavior or social destabilization (Price-Smith, 2001: p. 173; Letendre, et al 2010). Nevertheless, neither the claim about viruses damaging the military capacities nor the idea about diseases causing xenophobic narrative was backed by the full-scale study of the actual cases of conflicts (see (Price-Smith, 2001; Letendre, et al 2010). Even though there were actual examples of some HIV/AIDS damaged states, which have experienced armed conflicts, there were very few attempts of proving the abovementioned causal mechanisms by analyzing actual events (CSIS & CBACI, 2000)². Consequently, because of the lack of comprehensive study of the individual cases, the question of how exactly the epidemics led the situation to the conflict in the real-life had remained largely unanswered for years.

² the exception is the short remarks about the regional conflict in central Africa, Zaire due to the HIV/AIDS crisis (CSIS & CBACI, 2000)

1.2 The Second Wave of Analysis: Realist Theory Perspectives in the Causal Mechanism of Infectious Diseases and Conflicts

As time passed, the old causal mechanisms were gradually supplemented by the new ones. Susan Peterson (2002) introduced the logic based on which the viruses might cause the war by making the capacities of the opposing sides disproportionate (Peterson, 2002: p. 45; pp. 55). Peterson's (2002) assumption represented the first attempt to synthesize the issues of health with the realist perspectives in the whole literature about IDs and conflicts. The "*balance of power*" argument is deeply embedded into the realist literature (see, Gilpin 1981, Van Evera, 1999). In his discussion about the causes of the war, Stephen Van Evera (1999: p. 73) illustrated the main idea of "*balance of power*" by the following statement (Van Evera, 1999: p. 73): "*War is more likely when the relative power of states fluctuates sharply*" (Van Evera, 1999: p. 73). The changes in relative power, or the "*windows*" (Van Evera, 1999), as realists call them, can be caused by the factors such as the death of the political leader, improvement of the enemy's military capacities, international deals between the enemy and the third parties, etc. (Van Evera, 1999: pp. 74-78). Susan Peterson (2002) added the consequences of infectious diseases to this list (Peterson, 2002). She assumed that viruses can make the capacities of confronted actors disproportionate (Peterson, 2002: p. 45, p. 55).

Being synthesized with the realist understandings of the war and its possible developments, the claim about IDs causing the war escalations through the disproportionate capacities (Peterson, 2002: p. 45, p. 55) was much more explanative than the theories presented before (See Price-Smith 2001; Singer, 2002; Elbe, 2002; Ostergard, 2002). The "*Balance of Power*" element in the causal mechanism between ID and war (Peterson, 2002) could illustrate the motivations of the opposing actors for the attack. Van Evera (1999) explained these motivations by introducing the logics of "*Impending Shift*" and "*First-Move Advantage*" (Van Evera, 1999: 73). According to the former, the actor whose capacities have been lowered by any cause would have more reasons to take the action first against its enemy to get rid of bigger risks in the future (Van Evera, 1999: 73). The second argument - "*First-Move Advantage*" (Van Evera, 1999: 73) supports the idea that the conflict is beneficial for those who take the action first against its enemy (Van Evera, 1999: 35, 73). To summarize, the attempt of Peterson (2002) of merging two theories resulted in a more rich and explanative theory about IDs causing the war (Peterson, 2002). The arguments of Van Evera

(1999) could help the study illustrate the motivations of the opposing actors of conflict during the presence of HIV/AIDS epidemics. Nevertheless, Peterson (2002) did not finalize her study by researching the actual conflict cases which would prove the validity of her assumption (see Peterson, 2002).

The causal mechanism of IDs and wars with the intervening variable of disproportionate capacities (Peterson, 2002) was largely neglected: as explained by Peterson (2002), HIV/AIDS epidemics could not support the idea of IDs causing the conflict by disproportioning the capacities between the opposite actors (Peterson, 2002: pp. 55-56). The incompatibility of HIV/AIDS as a sample could be explained by its nature (Peterson, 2002). Because HIV/AIDS is damaging ultimately for everyone without creating “*immunity*” in the human beings, Peterson (2002: pp. 55-56) doubted that HIV/AIDS would cause the grounds for the conflict (Peterson 2002: pp. 55-56). According to Peterson (2002: p. 56), due to the universal vulnerability toward HIV/AIDS, the virus would not make the capacities of opposing actors disproportionate (Peterson, 2002: p. 56). Consequently, it was less likely that HIV/AIDS would escalate the conflict between the opposing actors (Peterson, 2002: pp. 55-56). This was not the case during the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic though. The Coronavirus pandemic had a different effect on the different countries (see Worldometer, 2022), meaning that it would create an imbalance of capacities between conflicting sides without any doubt. In a contrary to the claim of Peterson (2002), this study will present the case of the Coronavirus pandemic and its effect on the disproportionate capacities of the opposing actors. Besides of the vulnerability toward the certain ID (Peterson, 2002), there can be other important factors around virus which may create the grounds or for the conflicts or on the contrary, de-escalate the situation. Several features of IDs were missed in the analysis of Peterson (2002) that could potentially influence the conflict outcomes.

The question of whether the virus can intensify the conflict depends on several factors, including the knowledge about the virus and the epidemics in certain region. As claimed by Peterson (2002) HIV/AIDS would not cause the ground for disproportioning the capacities between the confronting sides (Peterson, 2002: p. 56). Consequently, it would not create the “*window*” (Van Evera, 1999) for the conflict between the opposing sides (Peterson, 2002). Peterson (2002) largely misses the comprehensive analysis of the reasons why exactly HIV/AIDS would not cause the disproportionate capacities (Peterson, 2002). Here the study proposes the further explanations on why the HIV/AIDS would not cause the disproportionate capacities but why would the Coronavirus pandemic would cause it instead.

There are three major explanations for that. The first one is related to the global status of HIV/AIDS. Even though some articles and official reports refer to the global challenge of HIV/AIDS as the “*pandemic*” (Elbe, 2002; Ostergard, 2002, UNAIDS, 2021) it was never declared a “*pandemic*” by the WHO (see World Health Organization, 1997; World Health Organization, 2016). This has caused significant changes in the consequences of HIV/AIDS prevalence (see UNAIDS, 2006: 282). The Coronavirus pandemic illustrated that promulgating the virus as “*pandemic*” by WHO can have significant results in terms of mobilization (see Jun et al, 2021): the quantitative study conducted by Seung-Pyo Jun, Hyoungh Sun Yoo, and Jae-Seong Lee (2021) concluded that besides the state-level mobilizations, the announcement of Coronavirus “*Pandemic*” by WHO led to the mobilization on an individual level as well (Jun et al. 2021). As the study resulted, the announcement of pandemics by WHO motivated individual human beings to trace for information about the virus and test themselves as well (Jun et al. 2021). As a result, the increased testing eventually created more accurate data about the infection rates (Jun et al. 2021). To summarize, according to the study by Jun et al (2021), the announcement of “*Pandemic*” by WHO can change the circumstances significantly in terms of knowledge on the virus prevalence (Jun et al, 2021).

Unlike in the case of Coronavirus, there had been a lack of information about the HIV/AIDS status in the individual human beings (see UNAIDS, 2006: 282). In 2006, it was believed that out of 35 million active cases, most of them did not know whether they were infected by HIV or not (UNAIDS, 2006: 282). Moreover, there was a serious problem in terms of self-testing (see World Health Organization, 2009; Demographic and Health Surveys, 2022; Shisana et al, 2009; Shisana & Simbayi, 2005; Shisana & Simbayi, 2002). In Africa, where the population is the most damaged by HIV/AIDS in the world, a large segment of societies was not tested (see World Health Organization, 2009; Demographic and Health Surveys, 2022; Shisana et al, 2009; Shisana & Simbayi, 2005; Shisana & Simbayi, 2002): based on the surveys conducted in 2007-2008, in the states like Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, more than 50% of the population had never tested on HIV/AIDS (World Health Organization, 2009; Demographic and Health Surveys, 2009; Shisana et al, 2009; Shisana & Simbayi, 2005; Shisana & Simbayi, 2002). In Kenya, specifically, 83.6% of the HIV-infected individuals did not know that they were carrying the virus (Cherutich, et al, 2012). Moreover, there had been serious “*stigma*” within the African populations (see Kalichman & Simbayi,

2003; Ryan, et al, 2020) - in South Africa, the negative sentiments against the infected individuals are detectable within the decades' gap (see Kalichman & Simbayi, 2003; Ryan, et al, 2020). These problems altogether represented a great hindrance to creating accurate data about the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world. Under such circumstances, the conflicting sides would never be able to assess their enemies' epidemiological situation and use it as their strategic advantage. This is one reason which implies that HIV/AIDS would not cause the conflict intensification because of the changes in the capacities between belligerents.

The second problem in that regard was the late measures against HIV/AIDS: the absence of the WHO declaration of HIV/AIDS as a pandemic led to the delayed responses, which eventually caused the high spread of the virus (see Al Gore, 2000, January 10; Gellman, 2000; Peterson, 2002; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Minority HIV/AIDS Fund, 2022; UNAIDS, 2006: 282). By the time when the WHO (World Health Organization, 1997) issued the first anti-HIV program in 1997 (World Health Organization, 1997), the number of deaths by AIDS was almost 12 million and the prevalence of HIV was over 30 million in the world (World Health Organization, 1997; World Health Organization, 1997b). This fact could explain the claim by Peterson (2002, p. 56) that due to its high prevalence, HIV/AIDS would not create disproportionate capacities between the conflicting sides (Peterson, 2002: pp. 55-56). Nevertheless, Peterson (2002) missed the factor of knowledge about the virus prevalence and its impact on war. In the absence of knowledge on its incidence and the delayed measures against it, HIV/AIDS would hardly become an instant alert for the belligerents for attacking each other promptly and advancing their positions due to each other's weaknesses. Even if some aggressive groups or states would have been willing to wait for the "*window*" (Van Evera, 1999) to instigate the war against their enemies, they would not be able to assess the power or damage of their rivalries due to the lack of information. The confronting actors would rather speculate with other reasoning to instigate the war.

Thirdly the endemic nature of the HIV/AIDS provides fewer research opportunities. According to the narrative of the literature about HIV/AIDS, the virus is almost associated with Sub-Saharan Africa (See Price-Smith 2001; Singer, 2002; Elbe, 2002; Ostergard, 2002; Peterson, 2002). The fact that the prevalence of the virus is high in one continent, gives the smaller number of cases of the war caused by disease than it would give if the virus was an equally problematic issue for every country. Consequently, there are few chances of proving the connection between infectious diseases and conflicts in the case of HIV/AIDS. Perhaps

that is why the connection between the HIV/AIDS and wars in Africa is not studied at all (if we do not consider the short remarks about the possible connections like one in the case of Zaire – CSIS & CBACI, 2000). Unlike HIV/AIDS, Coronavirus has become a global problem in the very short period after its appearance. It covered every habitable region of the earth. Again, here the matter is about the prevalence of the virus. Unlike the notion of “*epidemic*” which was often ascribed to HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 2021; World Health Organization, 1997; World Health Organization, 2016) the notion “*pandemic*” refers to some new danger (Morens, Folkers & Fauci, 2009: p. 1019): In its conceptualization, the term “*pandemic*” is ascribed to the virus which is a new and unknown danger for the human body (Morens, Folkers & Fauci, 2009: p. 1019). Therefore, because of being a new and highly spread threat to humanity, the Coronavirus pandemic could provide the chance for investigating more cases and regions where the war has been present before its outbreak.

HIV/AIDS is not compatible with the theory of IDs causing disproportionate capacities because of the lack of knowledge about its incidence and its prevalence in certain regions (see UNAIDS, 2006: 282). The absence of the knowledge about the virus prevalence across the countries (see UNAIDS, 2006: 282) would create hardships to opposing sides of the conflicts for assessing the capacities of their enemies. Consequently, it would be hard to determine the capacities by any opposing actor in a presence of HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the same causal mechanism, introduced by Peterson (2002) would not work in the context of other viruses. Instead of HIV/AIDS, the Coronavirus pandemic can possibly prove the hypothesis about the virus resulting disproportionate capacities between the confronted sides (Peterson, 2002). There are significant differences in terms of the nature and information about the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the Coronavirus (see UNAIDS, 2006: 282 and Worldometer, 2022). Therefore, the recent pandemic is worth analyzing in terms of whether it creates an imbalance of capacities between the actors or not. Before analyzing that, the following chapter will look through the existing thoughts about the Coronavirus pandemic causing the conflicts. This analysis will illustrate whether the Coronavirus-driven imbalance has ever created the escalations. Moreover, it will show which causal mechanisms were used by the authors in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic.

1.3 The Third wave of analysis: The Effects of Coronavirus on the Current Conflicts

The literature about the relationship between the Coronavirus pandemic and the conflicts is scarce. Considering fact that the Covid-19 is a new challenge for the world, there are just a few analyses published about its effects on the conflict (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020; Busby, 2020). The Coronavirus pandemic is an ongoing challenge and therefore, its consequence on politics is probably still being investigated. So far, the literature about the consequences of Covid-19 consists of short papers, which analyze conflict cases briefly and proposes a few possible ways of how the Coronavirus could lead to the conflicts (See Mustasilta, 2020; Ide, 2020; Rustad, et al, 2020). However, there is no full academic research that investigates the role of Covid-19 in the intensification of interstate or intrastate conflicts comprehensively. This can be a great gap in the academic field that needs to be filled by full-scale research.

Even though the literature on Coronavirus and its impacts on conflict escalations is not huge, the discussion about the Covid-19 brought the diversity of the causal mechanisms that could explain the relationship between infectious diseases and conflicts (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The modern discussions cover four major ways how the pandemic could possibly lead to the conflict (See Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). These ways are:

1. “*Grievance*” caused by the sense of injustice (Ide, 2020);
2. Enfeeble domestic institutions motivate aggressive domestic actors to push against status quo (Ide, 2020: 5);
3. Non-interference of the international community (Ide, 2020);
4. Domestic policies which are formally designed to tackle epidemics but actually are intended to coerce or oppress certain societal groups. (Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020).

Based on the modern literature, either one or more of these reasons are the causes of the conflict intensification (See Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The first argument, among the four ones presented above, is introduced by Tobias Ide (2020) in the context of Covid-19. The “*public grievance*” refers to the negative sentiments in the society which are caused by the feelings of dishonesty and injustice (Ide, 2020: p. 2). The argument about “*grievance*” occurred in the discussions even before the outbreak of Covid-19: in their analysis of the infectious diseases and their effects on the domestic conflicts, Letendre, Fincher, and

Thornhill (2010: p. 669) claimed the following: *“High intensity of infectious disease leads to the emergence of xenophobic and ethnocentric cultural norms”* (Letendre et al, 2010: p. 669). They believed that the grievance could occur in the *“collectivist societies”* (Letendre et al, 2010: p. 672) which featured strong interaction between individuals, families, and other sub-groups of society (Letendre et al, 2010). Despite the presence of *“grievance”* argument in the literature (see Ide, 2020; Letendre et al 2010), there is no common agreement about the ways how the grievance causes the conflict intensification and what are the intervening factors. Moreover, there is no clear statement that claims that Covid-19 caused the conflict intensification through the public grievance. After the analysis of the 9 ongoing conflicts, Tobias Ide (2020) concluded that the Covid-19 did not create the serious grounds for the *“grievance”* (Ide, 2020): *“Results suggest that COVID-19 provides little opportunities for health diplomacy and cooperation, but it also has not yet driven grievances to a level where they became relevant for armed conflicts”* (Ide, 2020: p. 1).

The second claim about the possible causal chain between Coronavirus and conflicts is related to the weak institutions (See Mustasilta, 2020; Ide, 2020). There are examples of conflicts in which the opposing sides *“used”* the limited capacities of the opposing actors in their favor (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020): for example, the Taliban against Pakistan and the *“Southern Transitional Council”* against the Yemenite regime took an opportunity from the decline of capacities of their opposing sides and moved their positions forward in conflicts (Ide, 2020: p. 5; Mustasilta, 2020: p. 3). However, these are just the assumptions (Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The literature does not include a full analysis of which sectors have been weakened and how bad the situation was on the vulnerable sides of the conflicts (see Ide 2020; Mustasilta, 2020).

The third argument about the relation between Covid-19 and local conflicts is the indifference of the international community (See Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). Based on this argument, the world did not recognize the local crises due to the pandemic (See Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). Starting from the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the negotiations on tackling the virus collectively have reached the deadlocks several times (Busby, 2020; Johnson, 2020). Great powers, such as Russia, China, and the US could not compromise on the solutions for avoiding the virus spread let alone their focus on the domestic wars in some states (Busby, 2020; Johnson, 2020). This could motivate intrastate actors such as governments or rebels to initiate the conflict and advance their positions in the war (Ide, 2020). In his analysis, Tobias Ide (2020: p. 5) emphasizes the case of Libya, where the

conflict parties took an opportunity from the indifference of the international community and continued the war despite the ceasefire (Ide, 2020: 5). The argument about the indifference of the international community is not expanded by Ide (2020) though.

The fourth and the last claim which is mentioned in the recent literature is about the argument of the policies which are formally designed to tackle epidemics but actually are initiated to oppress certain social groups (see Mustasilta, 2020). In Colombia, government-imposed restrictions have hindered the movement from one place to another and endangered unprotected individuals of the society (Mustasilta, 2020: p. 7). In Yemen, the restrictions of the rival authorities were used to gain an advantage over each other (Mustasilta, 2020: p. 3). The problem with this claim is that it is hard to check whether certain policies were directed to avoid the virus's spread or to weaken the enemy. This becomes especially hard for the individual researchers like Ide (2020) and Mustasilta (2020) who are not aware of the intentions of the political leaders or the leaders of the non-state actors.

As it seems, almost all the causal mechanisms of the Coronavirus pandemic and the conflict are incomplete (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). They are not claimed by the full-scale research (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The absence of a comprehensive analysis creates some gaps in the literature which need to be filled. Firstly, none of the academic pieces analyze the history of the conflicts before the outbreak Coronavirus pandemic (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The background of conflicting sides, the negotiations, agreements, and other official documents are largely missed in the analyses of the impact of Covid-19 on the ongoing conflicts (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). They include just the facts that happened shortly before or during the pandemic (See Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). Secondly, according to the literature, all the causes of the conflict are pandemic-driven ones (See Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). None of the articles introduce intervening or controlling factors that, along with the pandemic, would exacerbate the war situation (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). To summarize, background information about the conflicts is missed, and what is left is a narrow analysis based on the one problem – the pandemic (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). These problems led the authors to general and superficial remarks, which are more personal assumptions rather than empirically proven statements (See Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). Eventually, this puts the validity of the abovementioned causal mechanisms under the question. The paper will aim to expand the research by going beyond the virus and identifying other intervening factors and controlling as well. The next chapter will be

dedicated to the analysis of the intervening and controlling factors which are likely to hold a place within the causal mechanism between the pandemic and the conflicts.

2.0 The Role of the Proxies/Patrons in the Conflicts during the Pandemic

As stated in the introduction, the primary aim of the paper is to identify what are the controlling and intervening factors which make the conflicts intensify during the pandemic. The review of the literature about the relation between the Coronavirus and the conflicts revealed that most of the academic pieces do not clearly emphasize potential controlling factors which may be responsible for the war intensifications (i.e. see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). Nevertheless, by reading the academic pieces, one might identify the certain features which are shared between the different conflicts (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). For example, during the discussion about the conflicts in Yemen and Libya, Mustasilta (2020) emphasizes the role of the external actors in the local conflicts. She claims that the Covid-19 pandemic can mitigate the conflict because it may limit the abilities of powerful states to assist their local allies (Mustasilta, 2020: p. 4): *“Conversely, Covid-19 might over time facilitate conflict de-escalation if the key external powers on one or both sides become weakened by the pandemic to the extent that this impairs their capacity and will to continue investing in the conflict and incentivises them to support a political settlement”* (Mustasilta, 2020: p. 4). The facts of some conflicts suggest the opposite though: the increased arms import in Libya (Rogoway, 2020, May 26) and Azerbaijan (Toksabay, 2020) during the pandemic indicates the motivation of patron states to intensify the conflicts further. The role of the patron states in the conflict may be decisive in understanding the reasons for the conflict intensifications during the Coronavirus pandemic. This chapter will analyze how the Coronavirus may encourage the patron states to support their allies and escalate the war situation even more.

2.1 Revisionism in Patron-Proxy Relations

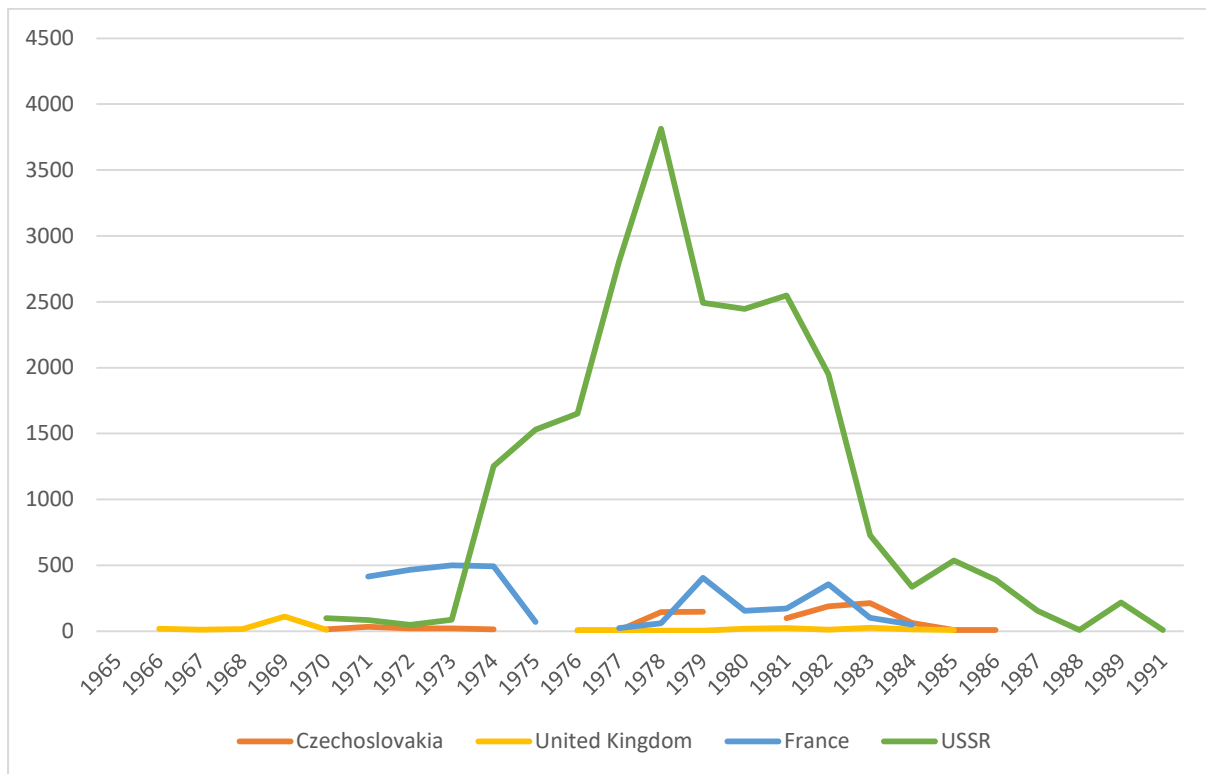
The engagement of the powerful states in the local conflicts is not a new phenomenon (Mumford, 2013; Brown, 2016): The great powers have used the local actors for their own strategic interests for a very long time (See, Mumford, 2013: pp. 11-12; Brown, 2016: pp. 244-245). Such partnerships are usually regarded as “*patron-client relationship*” (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984: p. 265; p. 269) or the relations between the “*activator*” and “*proxy*” (See, Bissell, 1978; Towle, 1981, Duner, 1981; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984: 269). An active discussion about patrons and proxies has emerged in the 20th century because the cold war has created the incentives to analyze the function of the local regional actors for the great powers (see, Bissell, 1978; Towle, 1981, Duner, 1981; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984). The literature claimed that the main reason why the great powers used local actors against their enemies was because of the “*nuclear weapons*” (see Towle, 1981: p. 21; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984: p. 263). It was believed that the certain states averted the clash to their rivals by use of local actors for strategic purposes (Towle, 1981, p. 21; Duner, 1981; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984: p. 263). This statement was largely derived from the nature of the global system – the bipolarity of the world, which determined the tendency of the great states to use local intrastate actors (see, Bissell, 1978; Towle, 1981, Duner, 1981; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984). The attempts of explaining the causes of the proxy wars by the systemic factors were so widespread that there was no discussion about other type of possible causes of the local conflicts (see, Bissell, 1978; Towle, 1981, Duner, 1981; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984). In fact, there was no room for the non-systemic, temporary factors in the discussions about the potential causes of the proxy wars (see, Bissell, 1978; Towle, 1981, Duner, 1981; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984). Global temporary challenges such as natural disasters, pandemics, or humanitarian crises were beyond the attention of scholars (see, Bissell, 1978; Towle, 1981, Duner, 1981; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984). This was a great gap in understanding the reasons for war.

The early literature about patron-proxy relations was focused on analyzing the nature of conflict actors (see Walt, 1987; Kinsella, 1994; Mead, 2014). There was the common assumption that the similarity between patrons and the proxies by some features could determine the consequences of the war (see Kinsella, 1994; Walt, 1987). These common features of the patrons and proxies could be different. For example, David Kinsella (1994) explained the reasons for proxy war by the common “*revisionist*” attitudes between the patrons and proxies. In international relations, “*revisionism*” is the actor’s tendency to change political, territorial, or other types of order (Kinsella, 1994; Mead, 2014). Kinsella (1994)

claimed that the conflicts serve the interests of those actors who want to change the current order (Kinsella, 1994: 559). Consequently, the “*revisionist*” actors would be inclined to create partnerships with each other (Walt, 1987; Kinsella 1994). The second explanation for patron-proxy relations was “*ideological compatibility*” (Walt, 1987; Kinsella, 1994). According to this claim, the shared ideology of the states would lead them to the partnership (Walt, 1987; Kinsella, 1994). Nevertheless, this claim could not explain all of the patron-proxy relations. For example, Cuba was an obvious example of a socialist regime that shared the ideology with the Soviet Union and often served Moscow as its proxy (see Bissell, 1978; Duner, 1981, Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984); However, the relations between the Soviet Union and Arab states were not determined by the ideological proximity: the Arab leaders were supporting neither capitalism nor socialism (Walt, 1987: p. 200; Lutterbeck, 2009: p. 507). Nevertheless, Moscow was working proactively to build a partnership with the Arabic regimes with “*nationalist*”, “*anti-imperialist*” and “*anti-Zionist*” sentiments (see, Kinsella 1994; Lutterbeck, 2009; Walt, 1987: pp. 200-201).

The actions of the revisionist patrons can be decisive for the consequences of the war (see Kinsella, 1994). David Kinsella (1994) argued that the involvement of the revisionist great power in the local war caused increased conflict but the involvement of non-revisionist great power in the same war did not (Kinsella, 1994). Based on his findings on the Middle East region, the arms provision by the Soviet Union to the Arab states increased the conflict, whereas the arms provision by the US to Israel did not (Kinsella, 1994). The Soviet partnership with the Arab states was determined by the strategic interests (see Kinsella, 1994; Lutterbeck, 2009). Moscow hoped that by supplying the anti-western regimes, it would deter the west (Lutterbeck, 2009: p. 511; Phillips: 1984). Russia’s strategy in the Arab world was to fill the gaps in the arms import by the western states (see Lutterbeck, 2009): For example, it was believed that Libya’s initial purpose was to diversify the import of the arms, but the west did not want to provide Libya with arms because of Gaddafi’s anti-western sentiments (Lutterbeck, 2009: p. 508). Instead, Soviet Union served as the primary “*provider*” of arms to Libya (see Lutterbeck, 2009; see Graph 1, SIPRI, 2022).

Graph 1. Arms import in Libya 1955-1991, According to the Importer States. (SIPRI, 2022)



The graph was built based on the information acquired from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2022

The revisionist attitudes of the patrons and proxies can be a good indicator for anticipating conflicts in the modern world. Based on the study of Soviet-Arab relations by Kinsella (1994), it can be concluded that revisionism can determine the patron-proxy partnerships and the imminence of the wars as well (Kinsella, 1994). Kinsella's (1994) study demonstrated the cause-effect relationship between the arms provision to the revisionist actors and the increased conflicts during the Cold War (Kinsella, 1994). The causal mechanism of David Kinsella (1994) can be relevant to the post-Cold War conflicts as well. The revisionist attitudes remains prevalent in the context of some countries even today (see Mead, 2014). The paper will follow the same logic as proposed by Kinsella (1994) and identify the revisionist partnerships during the Coronavirus pandemic. Based on the analysis of the revisionist partnerships and the decisions, the study will find out whether revisionism still causes the intensification of the war or not.

3.0 Conclusive Remarks about the Literature and Hypothesis.

The attempts of finding the correlation between infectious diseases and conflicts were largely incomplete in the past. The literature about HIV/AIDS virus and its consequences introduced a variety of the causal mechanisms of how the disease could possibly intensify the conflicts (See CSIS & CBACI, 2000; Price-Smith 2001; Singer, 2002; Elbe, 2002; Ostergard, 2002; Peterson, 2002; Letendre et al, 2010). However, most of those causal mechanisms were not backed by full-scale research. Some of the proposals were even disapproved by their authors without testing them (see Peterson, 2002): for example, Susan Peterson (2002) assumed that HIV/AIDS would make the capacities of the confronted actors disproportionate and cause the intensification of the war (Peterson, 2002: p. 45; p. 55). However, she did not even consider HIV/AIDS as compatible with her causal mechanism, let alone analyze the actual cases to prove it (Peterson, 2002). To summarize, Peterson (2002) disapproved HIV/AIDS as the potential cause of the imbalance between opposing actors right away (Peterson, 2002: p. 56). In fact, the discussion about HIV/AIDS proposed the causal mechanism but it did not offer a comprehensive analysis of why and how HIV/AIDS would cause the disproportionate capacities between the rivals and lead the situation to the conflict between them (Peterson, 2002). The absence of comprehensive research about ID in that regard can be the gap in the knowledge and can be filled by the new research. The fact that the causal mechanism between HIV/AIDS and disproportionate capacities was never proved by the case analyses does not mean that other infectious diseases cannot be compatible with the same causal mechanism. This paper will try to test the causal mechanism of Peterson (2002) about the disease resulting the disproportionate capacities between the opposing sides of conflict (Peterson, 2002), but instead of doing that in the context of HIV/AIDS epidemics, this study will analyze it in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The recent discussions about the Coronavirus pandemic and conflicts were incomplete just like it was in the case of HIV/AIDS (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The works by Mustasilta (2020) and Ide (2020) analyze the specific conflicts and discuss the possible intervening factors between the virus and wars. However, their analyses are not backed by the full-scale qualitative or quantitative research of the cases (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). The articles briefly presented the events of the conflict without studying why they happened

and what led the situation to the developments during the pandemic (see Mustasilta, 2020; Ide, 2020). The Coronavirus outbreak at a time when the strategy of proxy warfare was widely prevalent (see Harchaoui, 2021; Rogoway, 2020, May 26; Toksabai, 2020): before and during the pandemic, the states such as Libya and Azerbaijan received great support from the external actors (see Rogoway, 2020, May 26; Toksabai, 2020). The active support of the local powers suggested that there were some actors beyond the borders whose interests were the conflict to be continued. The literature about the Coronavirus and the conflicts missed the comprehensive analysis of the patrons' activities which could encourage the proxies to fight during the pandemic (Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020).

As the literature review illustrated, the revisionism of the patrons and proxies appears to be decisive in the war (see Kinsella, 1994). Based on the study by David Kinsella (1994), the involvement of the revisionist patrons in the war resulted in more conflict between the proxies (Kinsella, 1994). In international relations, it is a general statement that the states with revisionist aspirations tend to change the status quo by any means (Mead, 2014; Kinsella, 1994). Therefore, it is possible that the revisionist actors could attempt to change the status quo by promoting the conflicts during the Coronavirus pandemic as well. The information about the prevalence of the Coronavirus pandemic has been much more accessible than it was in the case of HIV/AIDS (see Worldometer, 2022; Our World In Data, 2022; see UNAIDS, 2006: 282)³. Consequently, the Coronavirus pandemic would provide more reliable information about the possible imbalances between the states in terms of their abilities to control domestic epidemics and handle the new challenges. Any shift in the relative capacities of confronted actors caused by the Coronavirus pandemic could possibly give an incentive to the revisionist actors to escalate the conflict. The recent literature claimed that Covid-19 would decrease the chances of the local conflict due to the pandemic-driven problems to the patron states (Mustasilta, 2020: p. 4). This paper will try to claim the opposite: the Coronavirus pandemic would give some revisionist patron states an incentive to engage in the local conflicts and advance their positions there. The domestic epidemics of Coronavirus would damage the opposing actors. This damage could result in the disproportionate capacities of the actors or the “*window*” as Van Evera (1999) referred to it. Once the revisionist patrons recognized the power imbalance between the proxies, they would either increase support for their proxies or engage themselves in the conflicts. This

³ The data about Coronavirus prevalence in the world can be found in following sources (Worldometer, 2022; Our World in Data, 2022)

would eventually intensify the conflict in certain regions. To summarize the primary statement of the paper: **The more is the pandemic-driven imbalance between the proxies, the more is the chance that revisionist actors intensify the proxy war** (see Figure 1).

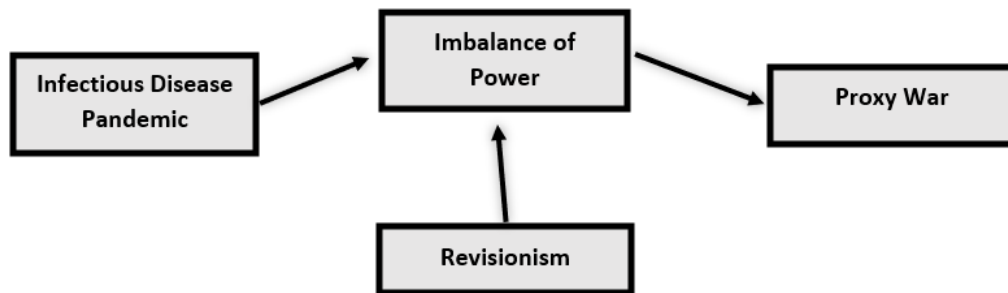


Figure 1. The Hypothesis of the Research. Source: Author of This Paper

4.0 Research Design, Data, and Methods

4.1 Research Design and Methodology

The methodology used by the research is largely comparative. As mentioned in the beginning of the paper, the primary object of the study is to identify the intervening and controlling factors between the Coronavirus pandemic and intensified armed conflicts. The rationale of doing comparative study is to prove whether the assumed intervening and controlling factors can be valid in different conflicts. The aim of the research is to create theory which will be applicable for any other conflicts, considering the properties of the theory itself. Based on the review of existing thoughts, the study introduced the hypothesis by which the infectious disease pandemics can intensify the proxy war in a presence of power imbalance between revisionist and non-revisionist actors. In order to prove the hypothesis of the research, the paper will compare several conflict cases with different settings and consequences. The comparison of the different samples will help the research result in valid answer about whether presence/absence of revisionist proxies and patrons makes a difference in the consequences of conflict during the Coronavirus pandemic. Moreover, the results of the comparison of different cases will be more reliable and generalizable than the results of comparison of similar cases would be.

The samples of the research will be chosen based on the “*Most Different Systems Design*” (Mills et al, 2010; Mill, 1949 [1843]). The study will compare four cases: the Libyan civil war, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Colombian civil war, and the civil war of the Philippines. So far, according to the literature about the Coronavirus and Conflicts (Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020), it can be concluded that there are five criteria, by which someone could distinguish the abovementioned cases from each other (Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020). These criteria are: interstate conflict, intrastate conflict, presence of patrons and proxies, presence of intensified conflicts during the Coronavirus pandemic, and presence of the ceasefire during the pandemic (Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020; see Table 1). Based on these criteria, the cases of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh on the one hand and the cases of Colombia and the Philippines on the other differ from each other (Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020; see Table 1). Table 1 displays the presence of these criteria in each of those conflicts. Due to such a difference between the chosen samples, the comparison of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts on the one hand and Colombia and The Philippines conflicts on the other will help the study to

test the validity of the intervening variable, which is the imbalance of power, and the controlling variable, which is the presence of revisionism amongst patrons and proxies.

Table 1. The samples and their commonalities/differences

	Interstate Conflict	Intrastate Conflict	Proxies/Patrons	Conflict Intensifications During the Pandemic	Ceasefire During the Pandemic
Libya		✓	✓	✓	
Nagorno Karabakh	✓		✓	✓	
Colombia		✓			✓
Philippines		✓			✓

The table was built based on the information provided by the literature about Covid-19 and conflicts. Source: Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020; Toksabai, 2020; Aljazeera, 2020a; Harchaoui, 2021

The purpose of comparing the cases of Libyan civil war and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts to each other will be to demonstrate how the revisionism of patrons and proxies can facilitate the conflict intensification during the pandemic. The primary focus of the empirical part of the paper will be on the comparison of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh case. The empirical analysis will show the different settings of those two conflicts and assess the role of revisionist actors in conflict intensifications in both of them. The aim of analyzing the cases of Colombia and the Philippines is to illustrate how the absence of revisionist patrons and proxies can let the conflict actors negotiate the peace. Furthermore, the analysis will try to demonstrate what are the other factors which can have contrary effect on the conflicts. Perhaps, there are some more features which facilitate the peace in Colombia and the Philippines. The paper will identify these features by the brief analysis of Colombia and the Philippines conflicts.

The study will do the historical analysis of the conflicts which intensified during the pandemic. The empirical part of the paper will review important events in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts chronologically. Such chronological analysis aims to illustrate how the conflict developed a few years before the Coronavirus pandemic and how the patron-proxy relationships developed before the outbreak of the virus. The chronological analysis of the events and data will help the research show whether revisionist actions of patrons and

proxies intensified conflicts by the same frequency as they did during the pandemic and whether the pandemic-driven power imbalance really is the cause of proxy war intensification. The empirical part will include the line charts which will merge two types of data: (1) the quantitative dynamics, such as the arms transfer, and the number of battles; (2) important events of patron-proxy relationships, such as agreements, decisions, and meetings. These charts will illustrate how certain events resulted in the increase and decrease of different dynamics. Such assessment will help the study demonstrate the cause-effect relationships between certain types of events and dynamics.

4.2 Data

The study will apply the mixed method: it will use both qualitative and quantitative data to illustrate the developments of each conflict. The qualitative data will help the research demonstrate the motivations and the aims of patrons and proxies during the conflict. The data will consist of the events around the conflicts, such as agreements, decisions, and announcements by the leaders. This information can be acquired from online sources, reports, and the news. The quantitative data will be used to illustrate the arms import, conflict frequencies, and the prevalence of Coronavirus cases in the conflict areas. The use of arms import in the research is based on David Kinsella's (1994) methodology. Kinsella (1994) measured the partnership between revisionist patrons and the proxies by the arms transfers between them (Kinsella, 1994). The paper will follow the same technique as used by Kinsella (1994). The arms transfer information will be displayed together with the events and amounts of battles during the conflicts in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. The arms transfer information will be acquired from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2022). The frequency of the conflicts between the opposing actors will be expressed by the number of „battles“ and „explosions“ which are accessible on *The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project* (ACLED, 2022). In the case of civil conflicts, the research will use the data on „violence against civilians“ and the „riots“ (ACLED, 2022). The Coronavirus statistics can be illustrated by the active case dynamics per 1 million population over the months (see Our World in Data, 2022). The data about Coronavirus is accessible on the website of Our World In Data (2022). The developments of conflicts during the Coronavirus pandemic will be displayed by merging the dynamics of „battles“ and „explosions“ together with the Coronavirus active case (per 1 million population) statistics (see ACLED, 2022; Our World

In Data, 2022) month by month in the linear chart. Such charts will demonstrate how the conflicts intensified as the epidemiological situation changed in the places of conflicts.

4.3 Operationalization of the Variables

4.3.1 Operationalization of Pandemic

The independent variable of the paper is the infectious disease pandemic. Since the study investigates the effects of Coronavirus, one way to measure the independent variable will be the number of new Coronavirus cases per 1 million population in the areas of the conflict (see Our World In Data, 2022; Worldometer, 2022). The data about the states' active cases are accessible through online sources (see Our World In Data, 2022; Worldometer, 2022). However, finding the quantitative data about the virus in the cases of intrastate conflict can be challenging. The purpose of measuring the pandemic is to express how bad was the epidemiological situation for the opposing parties of the conflict. Measuring the epidemiological situation of the intrastate actors and the regions that they control will be impossible by the quantitative data though. Unfortunately, the statistics of the Coronavirus cases cannot be found based on the separate regions of states. Consequently, assessing the epidemics by the numerical data in the case of intrastate conflicts would be impossible. The data available on the websites would most probably describe the epidemics in the areas which are controlled by the official governments rather than the areas which are controlled by rebel groups or opposition leaders (i.e. on Our World in Data, 2022; Worldometer, 2022). Because the official Coronavirus statistics do not describe the epidemiological situation of the unofficial governments of the states, the research will apply another method in cases of intrastate conflicts. The data will be acquired from the official reports of Inter-Governmental Organizations, such as Health Cluster (2020). These reports provide both qualitative and quantitative data about the general epidemiological situation in the states. To be more specific, the reports of Health Cluster (2020) present interactive maps, written assessments, and information about funding the health sector (Health Cluster, 2020). This data can help the research assess the epidemiological situation of both official and unofficial governments of the intrastate conflicts.

4.3.2 Operationalization of the Power Imbalance

The intervening variable of the hypothesis is a power imbalance. There means for measuring the power imbalance is abundant (see, Hart, 1976; Moul, 1989; Mearsheimer, 2001; Guzzini, 2009; Beckley, 2018). The most academic pieces and works are dedicated to the analysis of measuring the state power, rather than the power of the proxies (see, Hart, 1976; Moul, 1989; Mearsheimer, 2001; Guzzini, 2009; Beckley, 2018). Some indicators for measuring the power are different among the literature, but there are also certain means of measurement which remain immutable over time: for example, at early times, one of the most popular tools for measurement used to be the “*Gross National Product*” of the state (see, Moul 1989; Mearsheimer, 2001). However, more recently, it was replaced by the “*Gross Domestic Product*” and “*Gross Domestic Product Per Capita*” (Beckley, 2018). Some of the indicators remain unchangeable over time, such as the “*military power*” of the country (Moul, 1989; Mearsheimer, 2001; Beckley, 2018). In fact, the indicators are too many and too general. After becoming aware of the literature about power measurement, it becomes hard to decide which indicators are the best for measuring the power imbalance of the recent conflicts. In fact, as claimed by Guzzini (2009) there is a deficit in the universal means for measuring the power because of its “*multidimensional*” nature (Guzzini, 2009).

Despite the abundance of indicators for measuring power, most of them cannot be applied to the cases presented in this paper. Unfortunately, the literature does not propose measuring indicators of non-state proxies. Consequently, the research has limited options for the assessment. The study will apply the selective approach of measuring the abilities of proxies. To be more specific, the indicators such as GDP and GDP Per Capita will not be used for measuring the power of the non-state proxies. In fact, the indicators such as GDP and GDP per capita cannot be used to measure the power of rebels and opposing actors in the intrastate conflict. Instead, the paper will measure their capabilities by collecting the information about the arms they possess and receive from their patron states. The information about arms transfers is accessible on the website of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2022). Moreover, the study will acquire the information about the arms and personnel import by the online sources and news agencies. The indicators such as GDP and GDP Per capita can be used in the case of interstate conflicts. The data about GDP and GDP Per Capita of the states is available on the internet.

4.3.3 Operationalization of Proxy Wars

The dependent variable of the research is the proxy war. The presence of patron-proxy relations in the conflicts can be determined by certain agreements or the exchange of some goods between them. The empirical part of the research will review the historical developments of patron-proxy relations in the areas of conflict. Mostly, the partnership between the patrons and proxies will be illustrated by presenting the data about arms transfers, financial aid, and verbal agreements between patron states and proxies. The paper will present linear charts which will illustrate the dynamics of arms transfers or number of battles together with the important events of a partnership between patrons and proxies. The historical analysis of the events and quantitative data will help the study illustrate how the patron-proxy relations were constructed over time before the Coronavirus pandemic. Once the patron-proxy relationship is proved, then the only thing that is left to assess is the intensity of war. The conflict intensity can be measured by the number of attacks in the conflict area. This data is accessible on online sources such as *The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project*, ACLED (2022). The dynamics of attacks will be presented in a graph together with the Coronavirus new cases statistics.

5.0 The Reasons for Conflict Intensifications: Consequences of the Partnership with the Revisionist States

The review of the literature about patrons and proxies revealed that their revisionist attitudes can have a decisive role in the consequences of armed conflicts (see Kinsella, 1994). Nevertheless, the past discussions did a narrow analysis of the consequences of patron-proxy partnership: the authors claimed that the basis of the patron-proxy partnerships were the systemic factors such as the bipolar nature of the world and the possession of the “*nuclear weapons*” by both poles (see, Bissell, 1978; Towle, 1981, Duner, 1981; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984). The end of the cold war launched new understandings of the reasons for armed conflicts: David Kinsella (1994) introduced the theory, based on which the intensive arms delivery between revisionist patrons and proxies could explain the escalations of the conflicts. Nevertheless, Kinsella (1994) just like the authors of the Cold War period (Bissell, 1978; Towle, 1981, Duner, 1981; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1984) missed the analysis of the role of temporary global challenges, such as pandemics, economic crises, international crime, etc.

The purpose of this chapter is to do an empirical analysis of the modern patron-proxy relations and analyze the role of the Coronavirus pandemic in intensifying the conflict between revisionist and non-revisionist actors of the conflicts. At first, the chapter will review the revisionist tendencies of Russia. Russia is the country that has been engaged in both Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict militarily (see Rogoway, 2020, May 26; Batashvili, 2018, August 7). Therefore, it would be relevant to assess the revisionism of Russia and its role in conflicts. Secondly, the chapter will do an empirical analysis of the Libyan and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to prove the relationship between the Coronavirus pandemic and proxy war intensification through the presence of revisionist patrons and proxies. Thirdly, the chapter will briefly review the cases of the Colombian civil war and the Philippines civil war to test the findings of the Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh case in the absence of patrons and proxies.

5.1. Revisionism in Post-Cold War Era: Russia's Reappearance in World Politics

The revisionist tendencies of some big states remained immutable even in 21st century (see Mead, 2014). In 2007 Putin (2007, February 10) delivered a speech in Germany based on which it was obvious that post-Cold War arrangements were not acceptable for Russia, and without any doubt, Moscow would change these arrangements by all means (Putin, 2007, February 10; Mead, 2014). The consideration of Kosovo as an independent entity by the west was the turning point in Russia's revisionist turn (see Antonenko, 2007; Tuathail, 2008) - The candor blame of the west for considering Kosovo as an independent was the exposure of Russia's revisionist tendencies (Antonenko, 2007: p. 6; Tuathail, 2008: p. 683). The case of Kosovo has brought a "*ground*" for Putin to consider Abkhazia and South Ossetia as potential "*Kosovos*", which could be announced as independent entities (Tuathail, 2008; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2008, August 26). These aspirations of Moscow were eventually actualized in practice in 2008 when Russia intervened in Georgia (Tuathail, 2008). Another manifestation of Russia's post-Kosovo behavior was the intervention in Crimea in 2014 (Mead, 2014). In fact, the forceful occupation of the pro-western neighbors was one of Russia's notorious strategies for revising and confronting the western order (Mead, 2014).

Another manifestation of Russia's revisionist narrative was the attempts of Moscow to renew the Soviet-time alliances with the authoritarian rule-based Arab regimes (see Katz, 2008; Kreutz, 2010; Isaev, 2017). In the beginning of the 21st century, Russia started to

revive its bonds with the Arabic regimes by the series of new verbal or paper-based agreements with the leaders (see Katz, 2008; Kreutz, 2010; Isaaev, 2017). Russia's primary orient for the partnership was on the states with an authoritarian rule where the certain leaders had been in charge for decades (see Katz, 2008; Kreutz, 2010; Isaaev, 2017). Interestingly, Russia's desire for a partnership with the Arab states was not expressed just by the arms transfers. Instead, Moscow was seeking broader partnerships in the Middle East and North African region which was manifested in trade relationships, international support, and visits of Russian political and business figures to the capitals of Arab states (see Katz, 2008; Kreutz, 2010; Isaaev, 2017). For instance, the collaboration between Russia and Egypt at the beginning of the 21st century started with discussing the perspectives of trade, investments, scientific & medical development, and the future of other civilian areas (Isaaev, 2017). In the same way, the dialogues between Putin and Libya's leader Muammar Gaddafi covered the areas such as the collaboration in the energy/resources area and the Russian railroad project in Libya (Katz, 2008). Nevertheless, despite the long dialogues and frequent visits for the discussion of Russia-proposed civilian projects, most of the negotiations were followed by the arms deals between Russia and Arab states (Isaaev, 2017): In 2007 and 2008 Russia signed a contract with Egypt for providing it with Russian anti-aircraft missiles and helicopters (Isaaev, 2017: 16). By that time, Syria was already receiving large amounts of arms from Russia (Kreutz, 2010). In April 2008, Putin opened the dialogue over the perspectives of arms trade with Gaddafi as well (Katz, 2008). In fact, the non-military agreements and deals between Russia and Arab states were the first step for Moscow in reviving its relationship with its old partners. Nevertheless, most of the trade agreements and civilian projects were the ostentatious steps. In fact, Russia had never surpassed the EU in terms of trading with Egypt (Isaaev, 2017: pp. 12-13). Moreover, in the case of Libya, Moscow's benefit in the affairs of partnership with Libya was beyond any gains (see, Katz, 2008): Soviet-times loan of Libya was compromised by Putin in exchange for the active partnership in proposed areas (Katz, 2008). Based on these facts, it was obvious that Russia did not gain much from the partnership with Arab states (see Isaaev, 2017; Katz, 2008). Instead, the goal of Moscow was to attain strategic superiority in the Arab states over the West and local pro-western powers (see Katz, 2008; Kreutz, 2010; Isaaev, 2017). In 2008, Russian state-owned company Gazprom expressed the desire to purchase Libyan natural resource reserves (Katz, 2008). This had raised the worries that Moscow wanted to attain a monopoly on the resources and use it as its political weapon toward Europe (Katz, 2008, para. 2). These and other deals revealed Russia's true desires in the Middle East which were

inclined towards the strategic aims rather than the mere friendly and profit-based partnership with the Arab states.

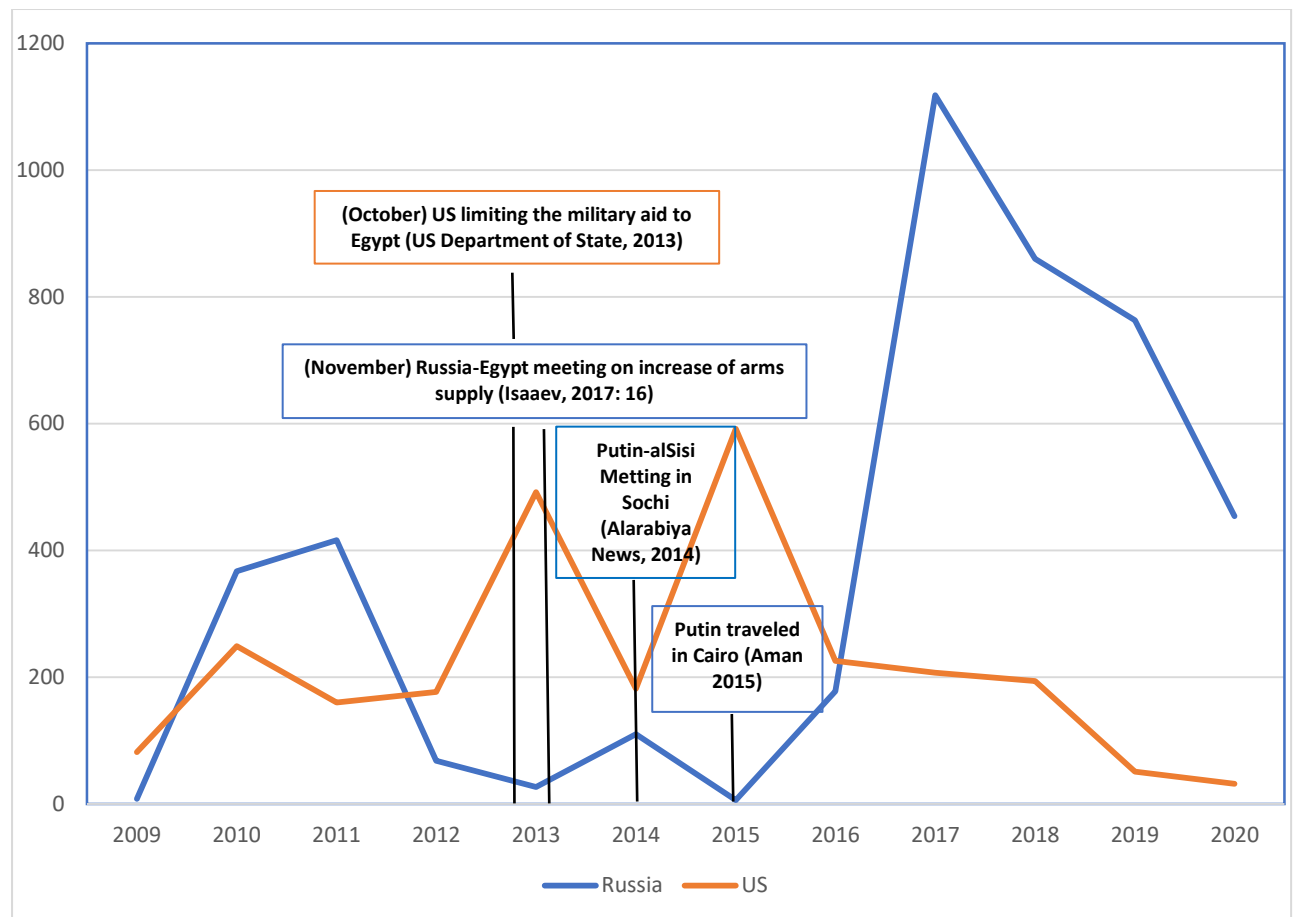
5.2. Russia's relation with Post-Revolutionary Arab Regimes

The “Arab Spring” brought significant changes in the relations between Russia and Arab states. At first, the revolutions and the deaths of some leaders resulted in great financial damage for Russia (see, Harchaoui, 2021; Kozhanov, 2017, May 30; Katz, 2008): for example, the death of Gaddafi ruined most of the financial deals that were made before between Libya and Russia (Harchaoui, 2021; Kozhanov, 2017, May 30; Katz, 2008). Secondly, the revolutions confused Moscow in terms of choosing the relevant partner for its strategic aims. The spectrum of the post-revolutionary forces in the Middle East was so diverse that Russia's foreign policy towards the newly elected governments was sometimes ambivalent (i.e. see Isaaev, 2017: p. 10). As an example, despite Moscow's partnership with kept its partnership with president Morsi, it still treated the Morsi's companion “*Muslim Brotherhood*” as illegal group (Isaaev, 2017: p. 10). Thirdly, the wide spectrum of previous partnerships was gradually narrowing down to the arms transfers. Initially, the dialogue between the leaders of post-revolutionary Arab states and Russia was about the civilian fields (Radio Free Europe, 2013): For instance, in April 2013, negotiations between Russia and the newly elected president of Egypt Mohamed Morsi covered the areas such as economics and tourism (Radio Free Europe, 2013). However, starting from 2013, Russia-Egypt negotiations were largely filled with the topics of military cooperation (Isaaev, 2017: p. 16). After the resignation of Mohamed Morsi, Russia continued the negotiations with the new regime of Egypt: again, the number of meetings held between Vladimir Putin and newly elected Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi in 2014-2015 covered the perspectives of cooperation in economic and military aspects (see al-Sisi's visit in Sochi, (Alarabiya News, 2014)); and Putin's visit in Egypt, (France24, 2015)). At this time, a large part of the negotiations was related to the increase of the arms supply by Russia (Alarabiya News, 2014; France24, 2015). Interestingly, these negotiations came right after the US government limited the military support to Egypt (US Department of State, 2013; Sharp, 2021; See Graph 2). In October 2013, the Obama administration limited the military aid to Egypt by putting off collective military dill named “*Bright Star*”, terminating the money transfers to the government, and halting the provision with the following military equipment: “*F-16s*”; “*M1A1 Tanks*”; “*Harpoon Missiles*”, and

“Apache Helicopters” (US Department of State, 2013; Sharp, 2021: 35). This was US official reaction to the deadly attacks on the *“Muslim Brotherhood”* in Cairo (Labott, 2013). It was believed that Russia’s initiative of increasing the arms import in Egypt was the response to the decrease in US arms imports (Alarabiya News, 2014; France24, 2015). Remarkably, the negotiations between Russia and Egypt in November 2013 were related to the provision with the analogous type of the weapons that the US stopped delivering to Egypt one month before (Isaaev, 2017: 16). The dialogue between ministers of defense and foreign affairs of two states was related to the purchase of *“Mig-29”* jets, *“Mi-35”/“ATGM”/“Mi-8”/“Mi-17”* helicopters, and *“K300P Bastion”* Missiles by Egypt (Isaaev, 2017: 16). In fact, the proposals about the supply with *“Mig-29”* and *“Mi-35”/“ATGM”/“Mi-8”/“Mi-17”* helicopters (Isaaev, 2017) were the attempts of substituting the import of *“F-16”* and *“Apache Helicopters”* (US Department of State, 2013; Sharp, 2021: 35) from the US respectively. Based on that information, the rationale for Russian negotiations with Egypt was simple: Putin wanted to fill up the gap of military armaments import created by the US towards Egypt (Alarabiya News, 2014, France24, 2015).

The facts about Russian arms import and Moscow’s selection preferences for different partners in the Middle East imply Russia’s strong strategic aspirations in the region. Putin’s methods have been the compensation of declined US military support and alignment with the anti-western radical movements (see Alarabiya News, 2014, France24, 2015; Isaaev, 2017). It seemed that the regime changes in the Arab states did not decrease the interest of Russia in the Middle East region (see Graph 2, SIPRI, 2022): despite revolutions, Russia kept providing Egypt with arms (see Graph 2, SIPRI, 2022). Moreover, a few years after the *“Arab Spring”*, Russia consolidated its ties with the newly emerged independent actors like Khalifa Haftar in Libya (Harchaoui, 2021). When it comes to Russia’s anti-western revisionist movements abroad, the proxy wars may illustrate Russia’s activities and ambitions quite well. Libya’s proxy war had lasted long enough to display Russia’s support to the revolutionary and anti-western powers. The next subchapter will discuss the case of Libya and Russia’s role in escalating conflicts before and during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Graph 2. Russian and US Arms import in Egypt 2009-2020



The graph was built based on the information acquired from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2022) and multiple other sources (US Department of State, 2013; Isaev, 2017; Alarabiya News, 2014, France24, 2015; Aman, 2015; SIPRI, 2022)

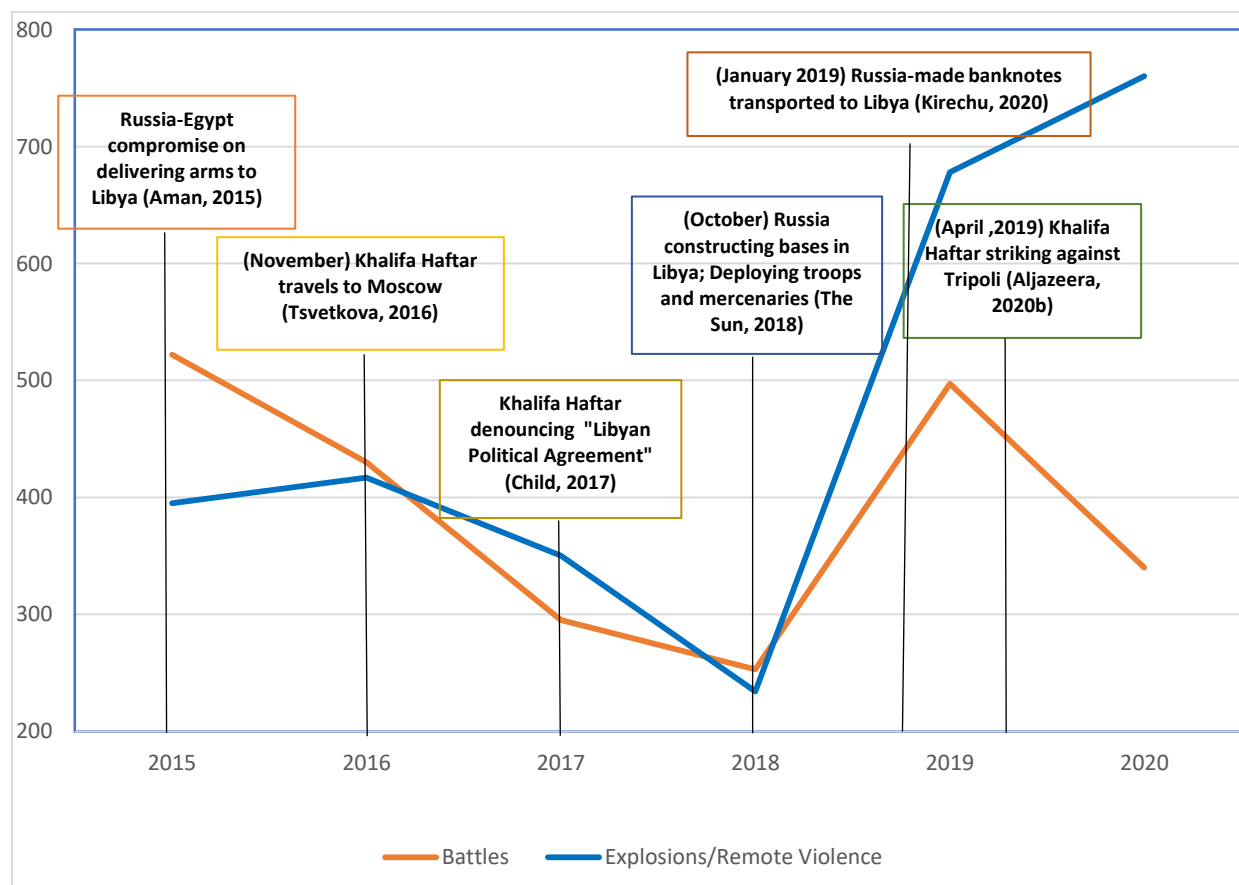
5.3. The Role of Russia in the Events of Post-Gaddafi Libya

Russia's role in the affairs of Libya after Gaddafi's death has been important. The state of Libya has been divided in two major parts and it has contained number of actors since the first civil war in 2011 (Harchaoui, 2021). The west of Libya has been governed by the UN-backed body of the *Government of National Accord* (GNA) in the capital of Libya

(Harchaoui, 2021). The east part of the country has been governed by the *House of Representatives* (HoR) together with the *Libyan National Army* (LNA) from the city of Tobruk (Harchaoui, 2021; BBC, 2019, April 8). The *House of Representatives* (HoR) has had a lack of legitimacy since the election of 2014 which ended with only an 18% turnout (Aljazeera, 2014, June 26). Nevertheless, despite its low legitimacy, the HoR and its support of the “*Libyan National Army*” (LNA) have been actively resisting the regime of Tripoli and the local extremist groups as well (BBC, 2019, April 8) - Libyan general Khalifa Haftar, who reappeared in the political arena by defeating the extremist groups in Benghazi in 2014, has been the most powerful supporter to HoR (BBC, 2019, April 8). In response to Haftar’s support, HoR declared him as the head of the LNA (BBC, 2019, April 8). HoR together with Haftar and his “*Libyan National Army*” has been actively trying to revise the western Libyan order which once was settled by the UN and western allies (UNSMIL, 2015; Child, 2017): Despite the UN’s attempts to achieve the peace by setting up the interim government in Tripoli and arranging the “*Libyan Political Agreement*”, Khalifa Haftar still continued to ruin the western efforts by describing the agreement as “*void*” (UNSMIL, 2015; Child, 2017). Eventually, such revisionist steps would make Khalifa Haftar as an object of support and interest of Russia: in November 2016, Haftar traveled to Moscow to attain the military aid from Russia in defeating the Libyan Islamist extremists (Tsvetkova, 2016, November 29). Since then, Russia has been actively supporting Haftar and HoR financially and militarily (See Graph 3; The Sun, 2018). It was in the interest of Moscow to involve the Libyan affairs even before the visit of Haftar to Moscow (see Aman, 2015): in 2015 Putin travelled to Cairo, where he negotiated with the Egypt government to provide Libya with the Russian arms for counter-terrorism purposes (Aman, 2015). Based on this decision, in 2015, Libya’s HoR received 37 units of military equipment, from which 21 units were delivered by Egypt, 14 units by Belarus, and 1 unit from the UAE (SIPRI, 2022). Among these 37 units, 36 units were Aircraft, and 1 unit was Armored Vehicle (SIPRI, 2022). Despite Russia’s acceptance to Egypt to support Libya with arms (Aman, 2015), Moscow did not engage in the Libyan civil war until it found the proper actor in Libya for the partnership. Considering the traditional foreign-policy strategy with the Arab states, Moscow’s preference has always been the alliance with anti-western Arab regimes (Kinsella 1994; Lutterbeck, 2009). Just like in the past (Kinsella, 1994; Lutterbeck, 2009) at this time as well, Russia made the “choice” of interstate actors based on the anti-western sentiments and revisionist behavior (see, Harchaoui, 2021). Khalifa Haftar was the one on whom Moscow could trust in Libya (Harchaoui, 2021).

Khalifa Haftar's activities would be the turning point in the formation of an alliance between Russia and Libya's eastern regime. Haftar's resistance to the UN-backed arrangements would be (Child, 2017), most probably, perceived as the revisionist moves against the west-backed government of Tripoli in Russia. This facilitated the build of a partnership between Moscow and Haftar over the time, which eventually manifested in huge military support from Russia to the Libyan National Army (see The Sun, 2018). Starting in 2018, Russia began the active support to the regime of eastern Libya - In October 2018 Russia launched the bases in Benghazi and Tobruk (The Sun, 2018). The bases contained the Russian private mercenaries – “*Wagner Group*”, troops of Russian Special Forces, and the military equipment such as “*Kalibr*” and “*S300*” missiles (The Sun, 2018). Furthermore, in January 2019, the Soviet-built airplane Ilyushin (IL-76) guided by the “*Sigma Airlines*” transported banknotes to Haftar's regime (Kirechu, 2020). It has been found that Russia had been issuing banknotes worth 28 million USD in 2016-2018 to fill the deficit of Haftar caused by its separation from Tripoli (Kirechu, 2020; Assad, 2018).

Graph 3. Battles and Explosions in Libya 2015-2020/Events



The graph was built based on the information acquired from multiple online sources (ACLED, 2022; Aman, 2015; Tsvetkova, 2016, November 29 ; Child, 2017; The Sun, 2018; Kirechu, 2020; Aljazeera, 2020b).

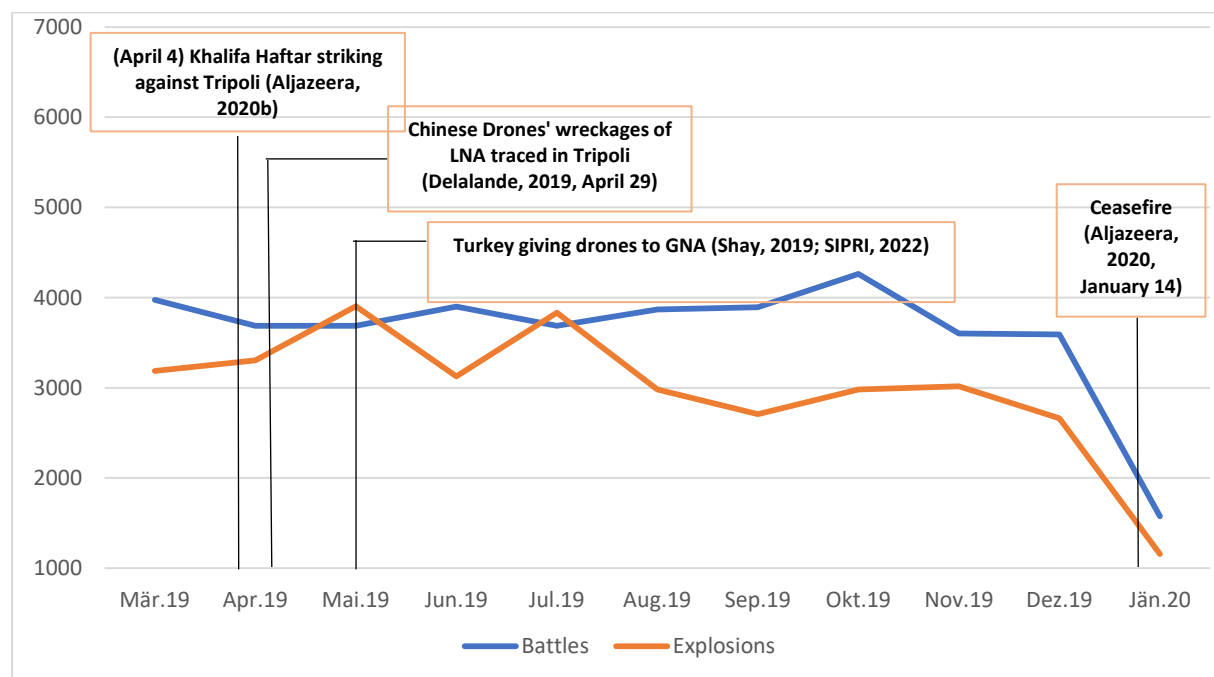
It is remarkable fact that Russia's support to Libya was usually followed by the intensification of the war: Graph 3 displays the amounts of battles and explosions that happened in Libya from 2015 to 2019 together with the important events (ACLED, 2022; Aman, 2015; Tsvetkova, 2016, November 29; Child, 2017; The Sun, 2018; Kirechu, 2020). Based on the Graph 3, it is obvious that Russia's deployment of troops and arms in October 2018 in Benghazi and Tobruk (The Sun, 2018) resulted in a rapid increase in explosions and moderate increases in battles (See Graph 3; ACLED, 2022). This was followed by the transportation of the banknotes issued by Russia to Haftar's regime (Kirechu, 2020). Altogether, these aids materialized into Haftar's attack against the regime of Tripoli in April 2019 (Aljazeera, 2020b). Following that information, one could conclude that the pattern illustrated by Kinsella (1994) remains valid in the context of the contemporary partnerships as well: the Russia-Libya partnership reaffirms the correlation between the arms transfers by the revisionist state and the increased incidence of the conflicts (Kinsella, 1994). The intensification of the conflicts came right after Russia's arms/troops transfers and financial aid to Haftar's regime (see Graph 3). However, the main issue which needs to be discussed is the balance of power between Haftar and its enemies together with the external factors affecting the conflict in Libya. Haftar's power has not been invincible, and this was revealed after the appearance of significant deterrent mechanisms from the opposite side.

5.4 Imbalance of Power Between the Libyan Rivalries and the role of the Covid-19 Pandemic in the Libyan Proxy War

Russia's involvement in the Libyan civil war has had a significant effect on the consequences of the conflict. Besides the increased battles and explosions (Graph 3; ACLED, 2022), the deployment of Russian troops and military equipment in Libya was followed by the involvement of Turkey in the conflict (see Shay, 2019). In 2019, Turkey expressed the wish to help Fayeza Sarraj – the leader of the Tripoli regime (Shay, 2019). This support was manifested in the transfers of “*Bayraktar TB2*” military drones in May 2019 to the *Government of National Accord* in Tripoli (Shay, 2019). Turkey's military aid to GNA in 2019 comprised 18 units of equipment out of which 15 units were aircraft and 3 units were

Armored vehicles (SIPRI, 2022). By that time, the eastern Libyan regime already possessed Chinese “Wing Loong” drones (Delalande, 2019, April 29): on April 2019, the wreckagees of the “Blue-Arrow 7” anti-tank Chinese missiles were traced in Tripoli (Delalande, 2019, April 29). This fact may indicate that the purpose of transferring Turkish “Bayraktar TB2” drones to GNA in May 2019 (Shay, 2019) was to fill up the relative inferiority of GNA’s drone arsenal. Consequently, it was not only Russia’s foreign policy to fill the arms deficits of some Arab states such as Egypt (see Alarabiya News, 2014, France24, 2015), but it was Turkey’s strategy as well to fill the arsenal of its allies as well (see Shay, 2019; SIPRI, 2022). A noticeable fact is that Turkey’s aid to GNA came after the attacks of Haftar on Tripoli (See Graph 4; Aljazeera, 2020b). Haftar’s offensive which was largely determined by Russia’s support resulted in Erdogan’s aid to Tripoli and consequently the proxy war between Russia and Turkey (see Graph 4).

Graph 4. Battles and Explosions in Libya March 2019 – January 2020 / Events

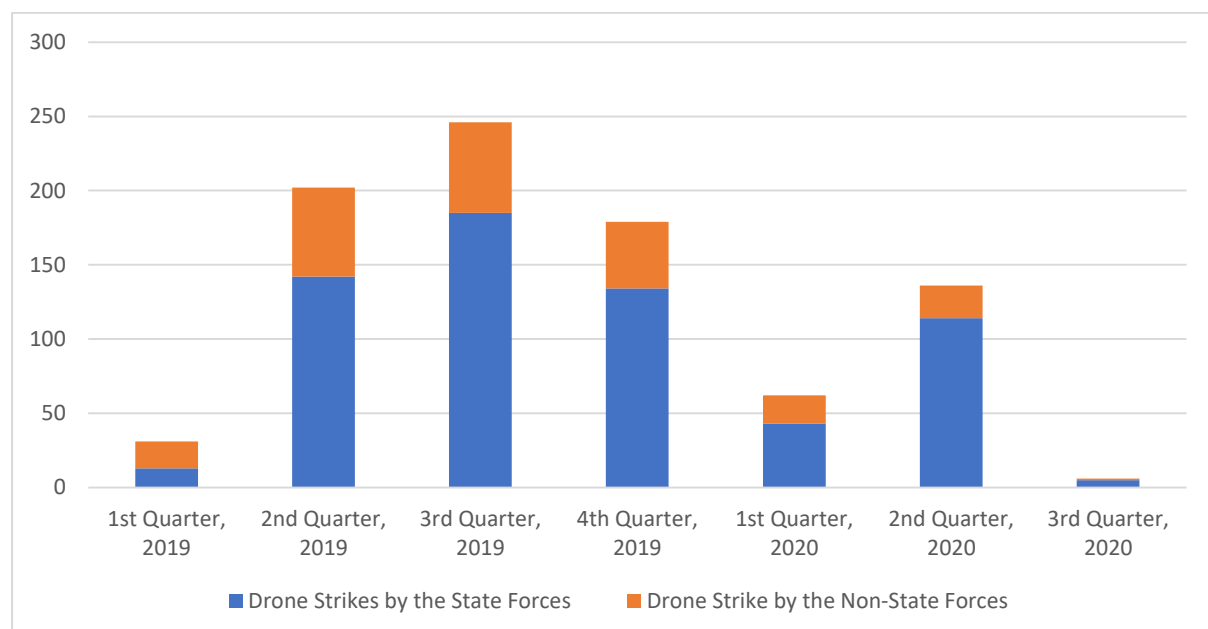


The graph was built based on the information acquired from multiple online sources (ACLED, 2022; Aljazeera, 2020b; SIPRI, 2022; Delalande, 2019, April 29; Shay, 2019; Aljazeera, 2020, January 14; SIPRI, 2022).

Turkey’s engagement in the Libyan war became the ground of power imbalance between LNA and GNA. Within one month after LNA lost its drones in April 2019, GNA gained the new “Bayraktar TB2s” from Turkey (Delalande, 2019, April 29; Shay, 2019; See

Graph 4). This was the first shift in the relative balance between LNA and GNA which favored the latter. In 2019-2020, the inequality of the power between LNA and GNA was vivid at least in terms of military drone possessions (Delalande, 2019, April 29; Shay, 2019; See Graph 5). As it appeared later in 2020, drones of LNA were either significantly decreased in numbers or were not operated by Haftar militias for some reason (ACLED, 2022; see Graph 5): out of the total drone strikes that happened between 2019 and 2020 most of them were performed by the GNA state forces (ACLED, 2022; See Graph 5). This implied the imbalance between the rivals which resulted in a long-lasting war: Starting from May 2019 until the beginning of 2020, the number of battles and explosions had barely decreased (ACLED, 2022; see Graph 4). The non-stop battles had exhausted the Haftar's militias which eventually resulted in the collapse of LNA's equipment (Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020): The efficiency of "Bayraktar TB2" drones against the LNA's old arsenal was manifested into the defeat of LNA forces and equipment in "Al-Watiya" (Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020). During the April-May period of 2020, GNA did more than 60 attacks through air by which it destroyed Russian "Pantsir air defense systems" on "Al-Watiya" (Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020).

Graph 5. The Share of Drone Strikes waged by the State and Non-State Forces in Libya



The graph was built based on the data acquired from ACLED (2022)

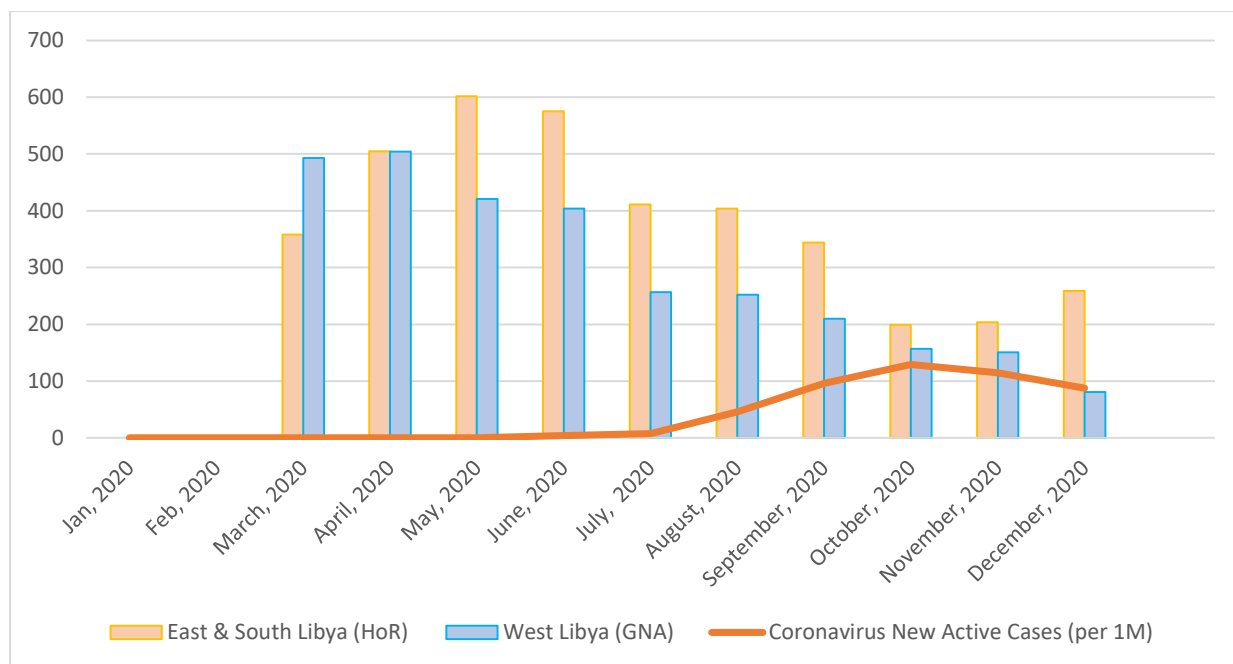
Instead of de-escalating the conflict, the inferiority of LNA had a contrary effect. Haftar was stubbornly continuing to be inclined toward the war even ten months after the beginning of the battle (Aljazeera, 2020, January 14): despite the compromise between Turkey and Russia on the ceasefire in January 2020, Khalifa Haftar refused to join it (Aljazeera, 2020, January 14). He declared that the ceasefire conditions were not acceptable to its *Libyan National Army* (Aljazeera, 2020, January 14). Haftar's attitude toward the ceasefire illustrated the position of the disadvantaged actor of the conflict who would have the single option - to think of the "*Impending Shift*" (Van Evera, 1999) due to its reduced capacities (Van Evera, 1999: p. 73). As explained by Van Evera (1999: p. 73), the disadvantaged sides of the conflict would be inclined to the offensive actions for avoiding the further risks (Van Evera, 1999: p. 73). This was the case of Haftar and his militias at the beginning of 2020, except for the fact that instead of the "*risks*", there was the matter of advancing positions in the war. Haftar was in the position of an aggressor revisionist power (see Aljazeera, 2020b). Consequently, he would wait for the opportunity to gain the advantage vis-à-vis GNA. One such opportunity for Haftar would be the domestic epidemics of Coronavirus.

During the first months of 2020, the conflict had moved to the next phase (see Graph 7). The first Coronavirus case in Libya was detected by the end of March 2020 (Worldometer, 2022). By that time the Libyan government's responses to the epidemics were expanding (see Our World in Data, 2022; Graph 7): as displayed in the Graph 7, the "*Covid-19: Stringency Index*" (Our World in Data, 2022), which illustrates the restrictions imposed by GNA, was already increased at the time when the first case was detected (Our World in Data, 2022; Graph 7). This illustrates that, by the time when the Haftar militias were attacking GNA, Tripoli was struggling to maintain control of the Covid-19 epidemics (see Our World in Data, 2022; Graph 7). The pressure on Tripoli was double, meaning that GNA needed to handle both the epidemics and the offensives of Haftar at the same time. However, GNA managed to control the epidemics and move its positions forward in battle as well (see Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020). Haftar's expectations for advancing the positions in 2020 were ruined by the drone strikes that GNA performed on the "*Al-Watiya*" airbase (Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020). These strikes led to the second shift of power imbalance after the import of Turkish drones in 2019. By taking control over the airbase, GNA took the main defense and attack equipment from LNA such as "*Pantsir air defense systems*" and fighter aircraft (Mada Masr, 2020). The offensive of the GNA on "*Al-Watiya*" revealed that some of

the LNA's fighter aircrafts such as "*Mirage F1*", "*Sukhoi Su-22*", "*Mi-24*", and "*Hind-A*" were not functional (Itamilradar, 2020, May 19). In fact, due to its dysfunctional aircraft, LNA's inferiority vis-à-vis GNA was even worse than it seemed during the import of Turkey's "*Bayraktar TB2s*" to Tripoli (Itamilradar, 2020, May 19; Shay, 2019). The amount of LNA's operable fighter jets had decreased in the quantity over the years: In 2018, the Libyan National Army possessed twenty-seven attacking aircraft (Delalande, 2018), which decreased to eight operable aircraft in 2019 (Imhof & Mansour, 2019). By the time when GNA forces took the "*Al-Watiya*" base, LNA lost at least four more aircraft (Itamilradar, 2020, May 19). Consequently, after GNA took control over the "*Al-Watiya*" airbase, LNA was left with very few operable fighter jets and drones (Itamilradar, 2020, May 19; Imhof & Mansour, 2019).

The developments of the first half of 2020 were against the positions of LNA and the eastern Libyan regime. Besides the power imbalances and the destroyed equipment of LNA (Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020), the eastern Libyan regime experienced a harder epidemiological situation than GNA (see Health Cluster, 2020). In 2020, Covid-19 epidemics in East and South of Libya were the worst in the country (see Health Cluster, 2020): according to the Health Cluster (2020) report, in terms of health situation, the HoR and LNA controlled regions such as Al Jufra, Sirt, Alkufra, Ejdabia, Murzuq, and Ghat, were described with labels "*Major Problem*" and "*Severe Problem*" whereas, in GNA-controlled territories such as Tripoli and its adjacent regions were described by label "*Moderate Problem*" (Health Cluster, 2020). Moreover, the financial and non-financial efforts of international organizations to mitigate epidemics in Libya, faced significant barriers in Southern and Eastern parts of the State (Health Cluster, 2020; OCHA, 2021, February; see Graph 6).

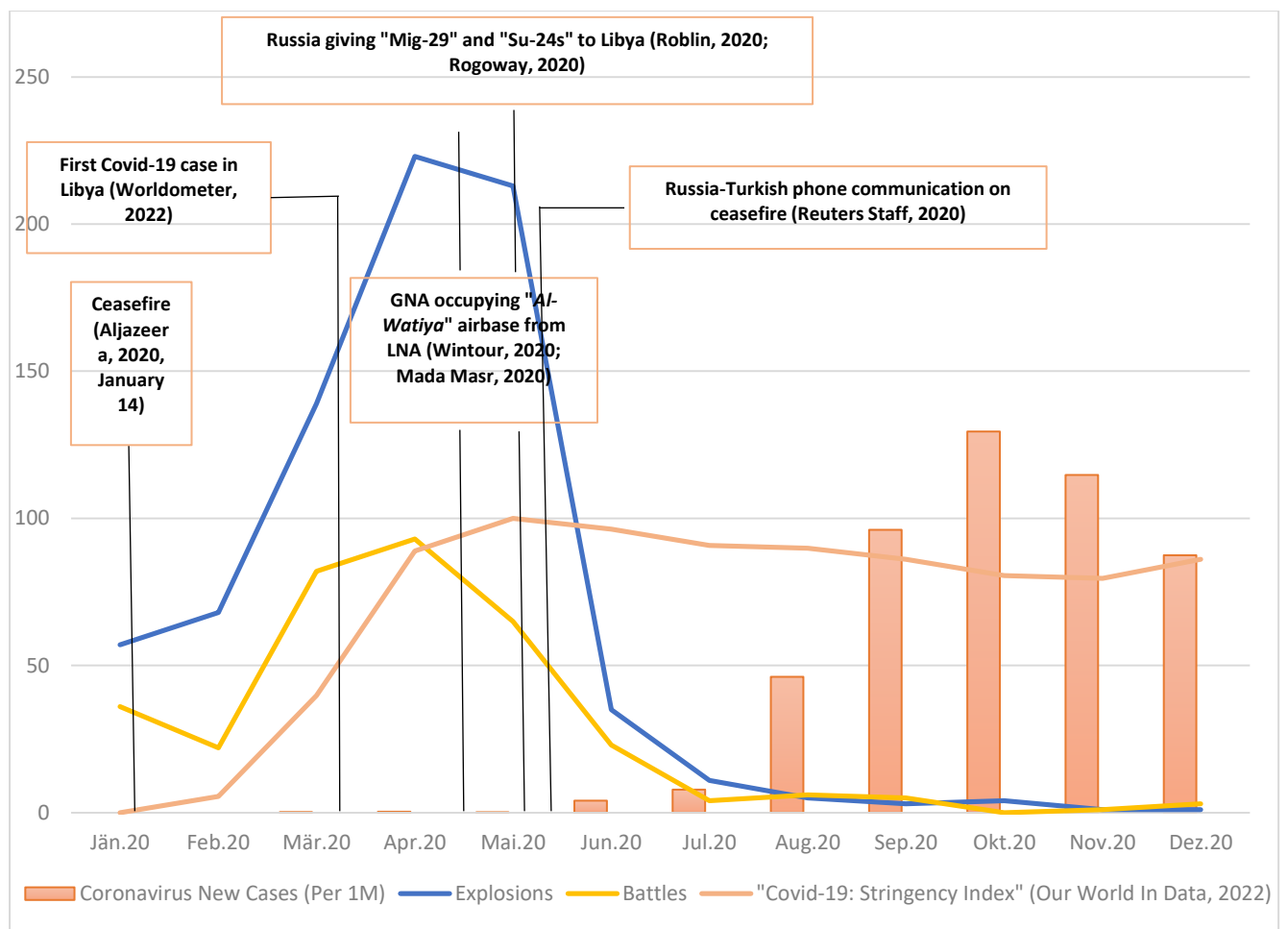
Graph 6. Barriers for reach of humanitarian assets in Libya & Coronavirus Active Cases Dynamics



Sources: OCHA (2021); Our World In Data (2022)

As a result, most “*medical procedures*”, were largely missed in the HoR-controlled regions (Health Cluster, 2020; OCHA 2021, February). Moreover, the certain barriers in these regions hindered the movement of humanitarian staff, goods, and health supplies (Health Cluster, 2020; OCHA 2021, February; Graph 6). This would create an imbalance of capabilities between east and west Libya to control the domestic epidemiological situation. Nevertheless, unlike the strategic and military imbalances, the health imbalances led to the de-escalation of the conflict in Libya (see Graph 7). Starting from the summer of 2020, the countrywide statistics of the Coronavirus cases (per 1M) began to increase (Graph 7, Our World in Data, 2022). The prevalence of Covid-19 was followed by the decreasing dynamics of the number of battles and explosions (ACLED, 2022; See Graph 7).

Graph 7. Libya Coronavirus New Cases (Per 1M) Dynamics & Battles/Explosions 2020



The Graph was built based on the multiple sources (ACLED, 2022; Our World In Data, 2022; Aljazeera, 2020, January 14; Winer, 2020; Roblin, 2020; Reuters Staff, 2020; Rogoway, 2020, May 26; Wintour, 2020; Worldometer, 2022; Mada Masr, 2020)

Before and during the Coronavirus pandemic, the primary role in creating power imbalance between the intrastate rivals of Libya was performed by the external actors: as an example, by importing “*Bayraktar TB2*” drones, Turkey advanced GNA positions vis-à-vis LNA (see Shay, 2019). In fact, the imparities between the rivals were present before the pandemic (see Shay, 2019). Being said that, the pandemic was a “*facilitator*” of the conflict. The emergence of Coronavirus appeared as an “*opportunity*” for the revisionist actors. Even though the increase in Covid-19 cases caused a decrease in battles (See Graph 7) the pandemic did not stop Haftar and Russia from implementing their revisionist aspirations (see Tol, 2020; Rogoway, 2020, May 26). By keeping the “*Wagner Group*” in Libya (Tol, 2020) and supplying Haftar’s forces (Rogoway, 2020, May 26), even more, Moscow was continuing to persuade LNA for further conflict. The movement of the military aid towards Haftar did not stop during the first months of the pandemic (see Rogoway, 2020, May 26): photos taken from space in May 2020 illustrated that Russia had transferred number of “*Mig-*

29” and “Su-24” to LNA (Rogoway, 2020, May 26). The delivery of the fighter jets by Russia to Libya was mainly determined by the GNA’s success in taking “Al-Watiya” airbase (Itamilradar, 2020, May 19) from LNA. This would have been Moscow’s attempt to “refuel” Haftar’s declining power and to prepare LNA for the revenge Airstrikes against GNA. The transfer of “MiG-29s” and “Su-24s” (Rogoway, 2020, May 26) implied that Russia’s presence in the January 2020 ceasefire process with Turkey was an ostentatious step. Russia’s further aid to Libya which came after the ceasefire (Tol, 2020; Rogoway, 2020, May 26) implied that Moscow did not want to compromise the advances of GNA and its ally Turkey in Libya.

In the case of Libya, Coronavirus was not the main cause of the imbalance of capacities. Instead, it was the “*supplementary*” cause of the conflict intensification between GNA and LNA. The fact that Haftar positions were easily defeated by GNA in 2020 (Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020), meant that during the outbreak of Covid-19 epidemics, LNA was already weakened (See Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020; Graph 4 and Graph 7). This was followed by epidemiological problems to LNA and HoR controlled regions (Health Cluster, 2020; OCHA 2021). As a result, the crisis of Coronavirus had a contrary effect: instead of changing the balance of capacities in favor of the revisionist actors, it had changed the situation in favor of pro-status quo actors. The opposite side – GNA, appeared in better position due to the possession of Turkish drones (Shay, 2019) and western financial support during the pandemic (Health Cluster, 2020). Nevertheless, this did not stop Moscow to provide Haftar with troops and aircraft even during the first months of Coronavirus epidemics (Tol, 2020; Rogoway, 2020, May 26; Graph 7).

Moscow’s efforts and support to LNA would not be productive. The main reason for Haftar’s failures in 2020 (see Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020) lies in the inefficiency of LNA. The “*Libyan National Army*” boasts to have large quantities of military troops exceeding 80,000 individuals (Pack, 2019). However, LNA is the collection of the non-state individual guerillas with the lack of traditional Chain-of-Command subordination (Pack, 2019). In fact, both the highest and the lowest levels of chains are abundant by the stakeholders: on the upper level there are business families, military elite, and HoR legislative commanding (Pack, 2019); On the other hand, the low level of the chain is featured with huge fragmentation of post-Gaddafi forces (Pack, 2019). This fragmentation creates organizational problems which make LNA an inefficient group of militias (Pack, 2019). The inefficiency of LNA was revealed during the years of the conflict with the Tripoli

regime (see Table 2). One of the indicators for illustrating that argument can be the number of arms in hands of LNA that were either destroyed, lost, or taken by the opposing forces (see Table 2). Table 2 indicates the data about the losses of Aircraft, Drones, and Missile Defense systems of LNA and GNA over the years. Following the information in the Table 2, it becomes obvious that LNA did not use the military technique efficiently (see Table 2). Over the years, LNA had lost a significant number of aircraft, drones, and defense systems (see Table 2). To summarize, despite the eagerness of Haftar and LNA to revise the order in Tripoli, their internal arrangement and the quality of their effectiveness hindered them to achieve their goal (Pack, 2019; Table 2). This has hampered Moscow's ambitions in Libya as well. With its support, Russia as an external power appeared to rely on the unorganized militia groups for years (see Pack, 2019).

Table 2. Losses of the Aircraft, Drones, and Missile Systems of HoR and GNA 2014-2020

	HoR	GNA
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MiG-21 (1 unit)</i> (Cenciotti, 2014) 	
2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MiG-25PU (1 unit)</i> (DefenceWeb, 2015)
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MiG-23 (3 units)</i> (Delalande, 2016, August 4) • <i>MiG 21 (2 Units)</i> (Delalande, 2016b, May 21) • <i>Mi24/35 (2 units)</i> (Delalande, 2016c, July, 21) • <i>Mi-17 (1 unit)</i> (Delalande, 2016c, July, 21) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mirage F1ED (1 unit)</i> (Delalande, 2016d, June 3) • <i>L-39 (1 unit)</i> (Delalande, 2016e, August 10)
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MiG-21 (2 Units)</i> Delalande, 2017d, July 29 • <i>Mi-35 (2 units)</i> (Delalande, 2017b, March 22) • <i>MiG 23ML (1 unit)</i> (Delalande, 2017c, January 15) • <i>MiG-21UM (1 unit)</i> (Delalande, 2017d, July 29) 	
2018		
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mig-21 MF (1 unit)</i> Imhof & Mansour, 2019) • <i>Wing Loong Drone (2 units)</i> (Drone Wars, 2022) • <i>Sukhoi (1 unit)</i> (LibyanExpress, 2019, June 19) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MiG-21 (1 unit)</i> (Demerly, 2019, April 16) • <i>L-39 Albatros (1 unit)</i> (The Defense Post, 2019, July 5) • <i>Bayraktar TB-2 (1 unit)</i> (Itamilradar, 2019, December

		14)
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirage F1 (2 Units) (Roblin, 2020) • Su-22 (3 Units) (Roblin, 2020) • Mi-24/Mi-35 (4 units) (Roblin, 2020) • Pantsir-S1 (2 units) (Roblin, 2020; Mada Masr, 2020) • Wing Loong Drone (8 Units) (Drone Wars, 2022) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bayraktar TB-2 (16 Units) (Cole & Cole, 2020, January 7)
Total	38 Units	22 Units

The table was built based on the multiple sources (Cenciotti, 2014; DefenceWeb, 2015; Delalande, 2016, August 4; Delalande, 2016b, May 21; Delalande, 2016c, July, 21; Delalande, 2016d, June 3; Delalande, 2016e, August 10; Delalande, 2017, April 17; Delalande, 2017b, March 22; Delalande, 2017c, January 15; Delalande, 2017d, July 29; Demerly, 2019, April 16; Drone Wars, 2022; The Defense Post, 2019, July 5; Imhof & Mansour, 2019; LibyanExpress, 2019, June 19; Itamilradar, 2019, December 14; Roblin, 2020; Cole & Cole, 2020, January 7; Mada Masr, 2020)

5.5 The Role of State-based Nationalist Motives in the Conflict: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh

In some cases of the modern conflicts, the prevalence of nationalist sentiments in the societies has determined the consequences of the war. The recent Libyan conflict obviously was not the result of nationalist movements, rather it represented the clash between the personalized interests of some microsocial segments (Pack, 2019): As an example, Khalifa Haftar and its highly fragmented LNA were acting on behalf of the sub-social groups such as certain families, political and military elites (Pack, 2019). Being said that, the whole eastern Libyan regime and its institutions were empty of nationalist motives. The “*House of Representatives*”, which was the main civilian institution of east Libya, would hardly manage to represent the countrywide nationalist demands due to its low legitimacy (Aljazeera, 2014, June 26): The HoR was elected by the 18% of total constituents, meaning that it represented the tiny minority of Libyan population (Aljazeera, 2014, June 26). Furthermore, Libya was never ruled by the state-based nationalism, rather its government has periodically expressed a more wide-scale type of nationalism (see Lutterbeck, 2009): for example, Muammar Gaddafi was one who actively expressed “*pan-Arab*” narrative during his reign (Lutterbeck, 2009; Braut-Hegghammer, 2008). There was a consensus about the idea that Gaddafi wanted to

attribute himself the role of savior and liberator of all Arabs (Lutterbeck, 2009; Braut-Hegghammer, 2008). Consequently, if nationalism had ever shaped Libyan politics, it had mostly gone beyond its borders and was barely oriented on the interest of only the Libyan state (see Lutterbeck, 2009).

Unlike Libya, there are some cases in modern times, in which state-based nationalism has shaped the foreign policy of the country and created the conditions for war. The case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a good example of state-based nationalism which has raised the motivations for war (Uzer, 2012): On either side of the conflict, the area of Nagorno-Karabakh is embedded into the minds of the society as their land (Uzer, 2012). The territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is identified as the historical land of their origin for both Armenians and Azerbaijanis, meaning that the land has had more symbolic rather than strategic functions for both sides (Uzer, 2012). According to the Armenian history, the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, or “*Artsakh*” as they refer to it, was controlled by Armenian noble family of “*Bagratuni*” in 9th-11th centuries (Stepan-Sarkissian, 2020, October 2). Throughout history, the land of “*Artsakh*” was mostly an autonomous region initially habited by ethnically Armenians in early medieval and later filled by the people of Turkish origin (Stepan-Sarkissian, 2020, October 2). Such perception of the history consolidated the land of “*Artsakh*” as the historical area of Armenia in the minds of the Armenian people (Uzer, 2012; Stepan-Sarkissian, 2020, October 2). Similarly, the presence of Turkish reign on the same territory in the past shaped the perceptions of modern Azerbaijani people that Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to Azerbaijan (Uzer, 2012).

The presence/absence of nationalism makes the Libyan and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict different from each other. Being constructed in the minds of both Armenian and Azerbaijan societies, the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is the object of dispute between people, not between the individual political leaders or governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan (Uzer, 2012). This is one feature that distinguishes the case of Nagorno-Karabakh from Libya. The nationalist sentiments in Armenia and Azerbaijan are state based, meaning that their societies speak and act on behalf of themselves: for example, even though Azerbaijani people have Turkish origins and identify themselves as Turks, their society does not describe the land of Nagorno-Karabakh as the land of Turks (Uzer, 2012). They perceive Nagorno-Karabakh as a historical land of the Azerbaijani people and the state of Azerbaijan (Uzer, 2012). In the matters of identifying the nation with the state and vice versa, Libya’s leadership has had different views. For example, unlike in Azerbaijan, at the time of

Gaddafi's reign, the Libyan state was described as "*Arab Jamahiriya*", meaning "*The State of the Masses*" of Arabs (Lubin, 2011, March 2; Wikipedia, 2022c). This term encompassed ethnically Arabs, rather than just Libyans (Lubin, 2011, March 2; Wikipedia, 2022c). Having said that, the phenomenon of a nation-state is stronger in the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan than in Libya.

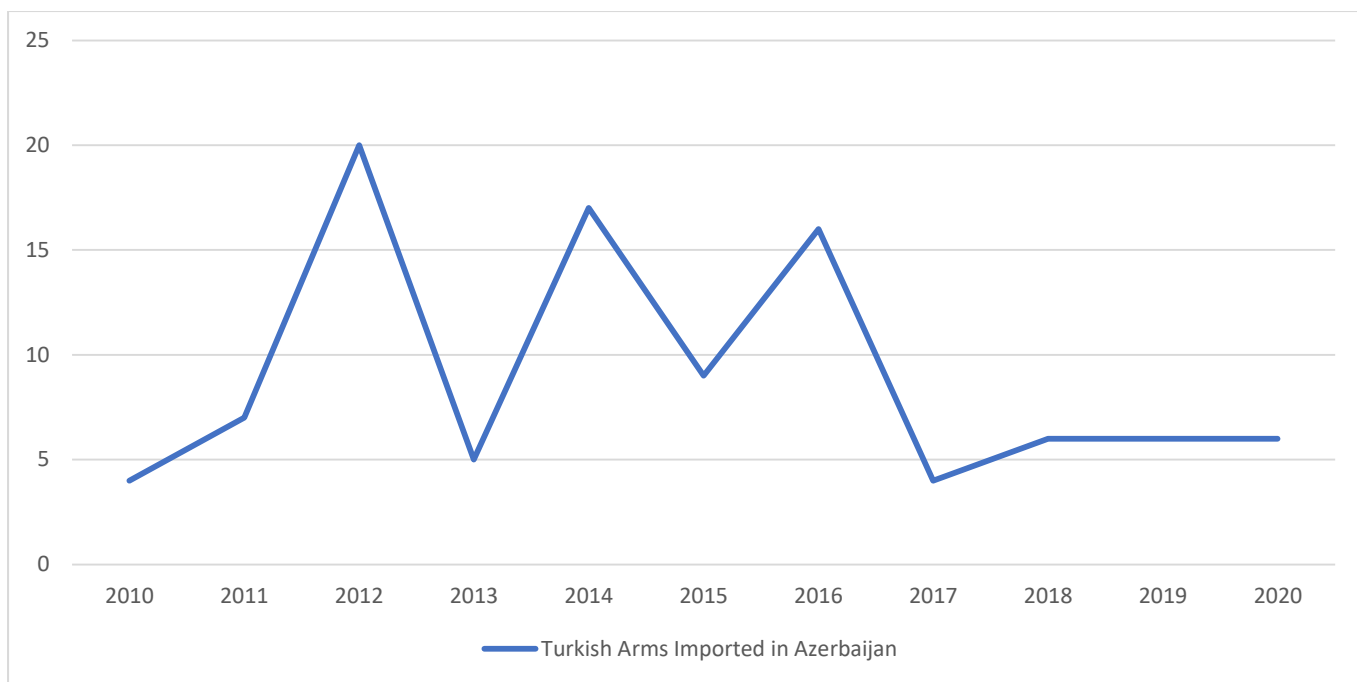
Besides the types of nationalism, there are a lot of differences between the war of Nagorno-Karabakh and the conflict of Libya. Unlike the case of Libya, the actors of the conflict in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh are the countries, not the non-state militias and self-declared governments. The legitimacy of the Armenian and Azerbaijani governments is based on the choice of the countrywide constituents. The statehood changes the conditions of war greatly. Firstly, the states are more organized and less fragmented in the war situations: Armenia and Azerbaijan contain the state-controlled national armies, not just the independent militia groups like Libya does (see Pack, 2019). Secondly, in the case of states, international relations are more transparent: the peace deals and the arms transfers are more public in the case of legitimate state governments than in the case of intrastate groups. The latter feature may make the research on states easier and the information more reliable. Furthermore, high organization and legitimation of state governments result in more direct and coherent action vis-à-vis their strategic enemy. These features may make them more reliable actors for the patron states.

As discussed above, there are a lot of differences between the cases of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Libyan conflicts. Nevertheless, what makes them similar is the patrons engaged in each of them. Both cases of the conflicts are the areas of indirect confrontation between Turkey and Russia (see Delalande, 2019, April 29; Shay, 2019; Tol, 2020; Rogoway, 2020, May 26; Batashvili, 2018, August 7; Jones, 2020). The nature of the patron-proxy relations in the Nagorno-Karabakh and the Libyan conflict is not the same though. The relations between the patrons and the proxies in Libya were determined by the strategic aims. Russia on the one hand was supporting Haftar's regime because of its revisionist tendencies. Moscow expected that it would change the pro-western order in Libya by supporting Haftar's regime (see Rogoway, 2020). Turkey, on the other hand, was pursuing strategic aims of deterring Russia in Libya by supplying the government of Tripoli (see Shay, 2019). In the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the matters of partnership are beyond mere strategic aims. Turkey's relations with Azerbaijan and Russia's relations with Armenia have been determined by either ethnic/religious proximities or by deep political history. Azerbaijan and

Turkey share the national ethnicity and the religion between each other. Azerbaijani consider themselves as ethnic Turks (Uzer, 2012). Their relations have been often described by the notion of “*One nation two states*” (Uzer, 2012: p. 249; Kuzio, 2021). Such proximity has gradually shaped the political relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan over time since the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the beginning, of the 2000s, Turkey and Azerbaijan launched grand Trans-Caucasian projects such as the “*Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan*” oil pipeline (BP, 2022) and South Caucasus “*Shah Deniz*” gas pipeline (BP, 2022b). Moreover, Azerbaijan and Turkey established military cooperation which was manifested in the Turkish arms transfer to Azerbaijan (See Graph 8, SIPRI, 2022). The active cooperation between the two countries indicates Turkey’s great interest in Azerbaijan as its strategic partner.

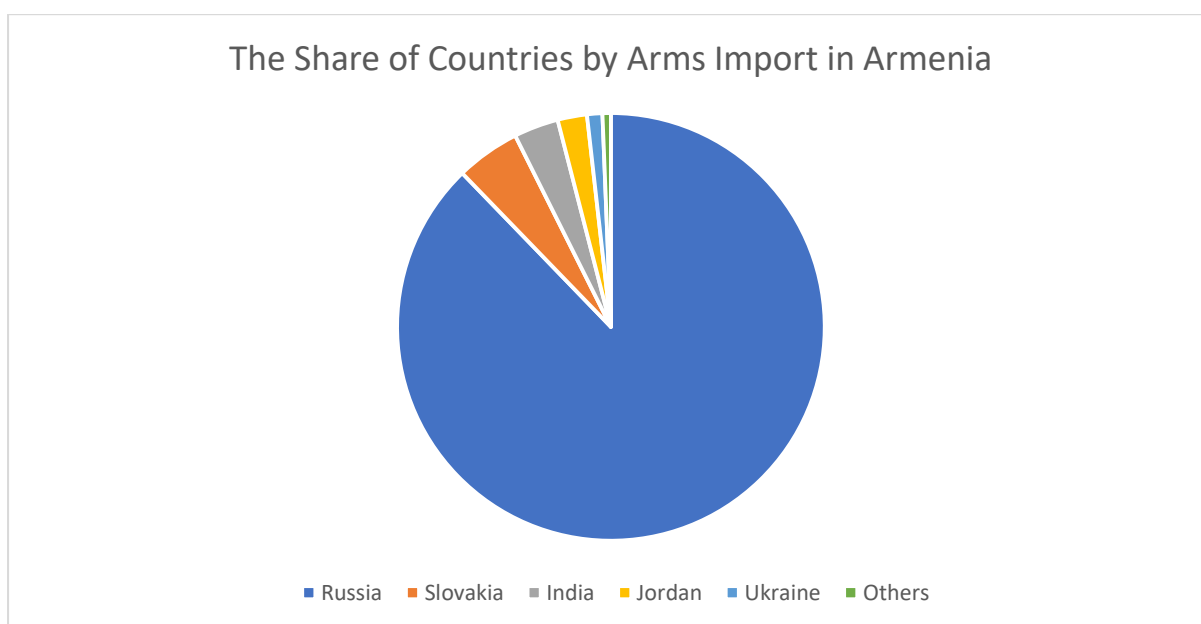
Unlike strong ethnic and religious ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia share nothing more than a religion. Nevertheless, the same political past and belonging to the same political block linked Moscow and Yerevan strongly to each other. The leadership of post-Soviet Union Armenia has been often featured in the pro-Russian narrative (see; Avetisyan, 2021;). Moreover, unlike Azerbaijan, Armenia is still a member of Moscow-led organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Being a member of CSTO, Armenia has been greatly dependent on Russia’s arms (SIPRI, 2022; see Pie Chart 1): Moreover, Russia’s 102nd military base in the northern part of Armenia is an illustration of Armenia’s strategic bond with its ally (see Batashvili, 2018, August 7). By comparison, Azerbaijan’s importer states have been much more diversified through the years (See Pie Chart 2, SIPRI, 2022).

Graph 8. Arms Import Dynamics from Turkey to Azerbaijan



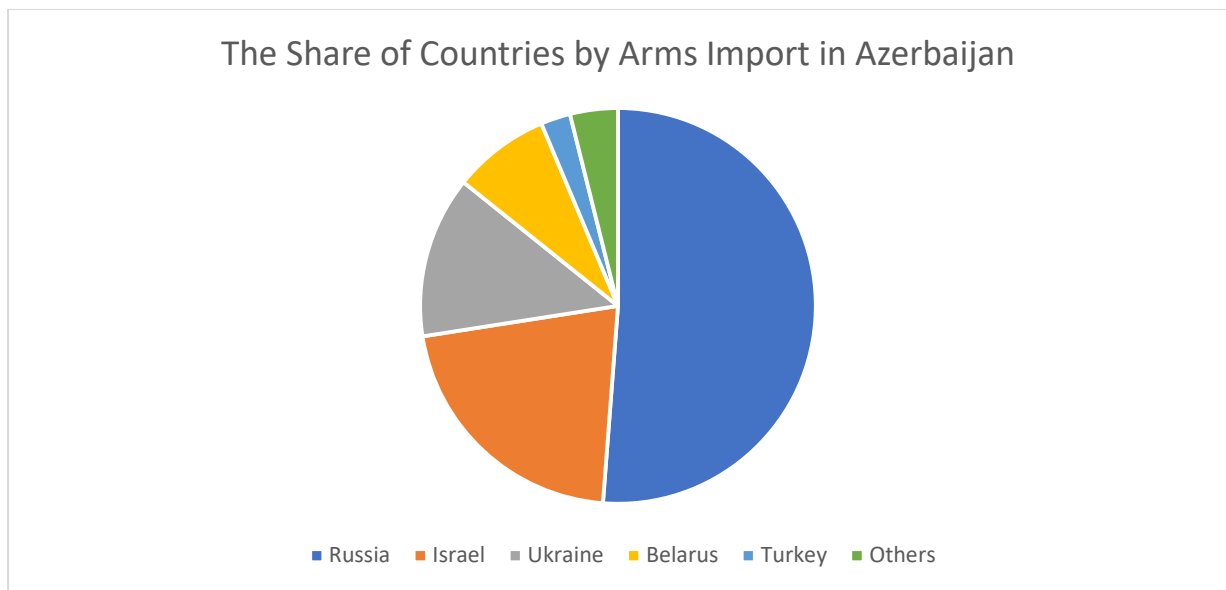
The graph is based on the information acquired from SIPRI, 2022.

Pie Chart 1. The Share of Countries by Arms Import in Armenia 1991-2022



The pie chart is based on the information acquired from SIPRI, 2022.

Pie Chart 2. The Share of Countries by Arms Import in Azerbaijan 1991-2022



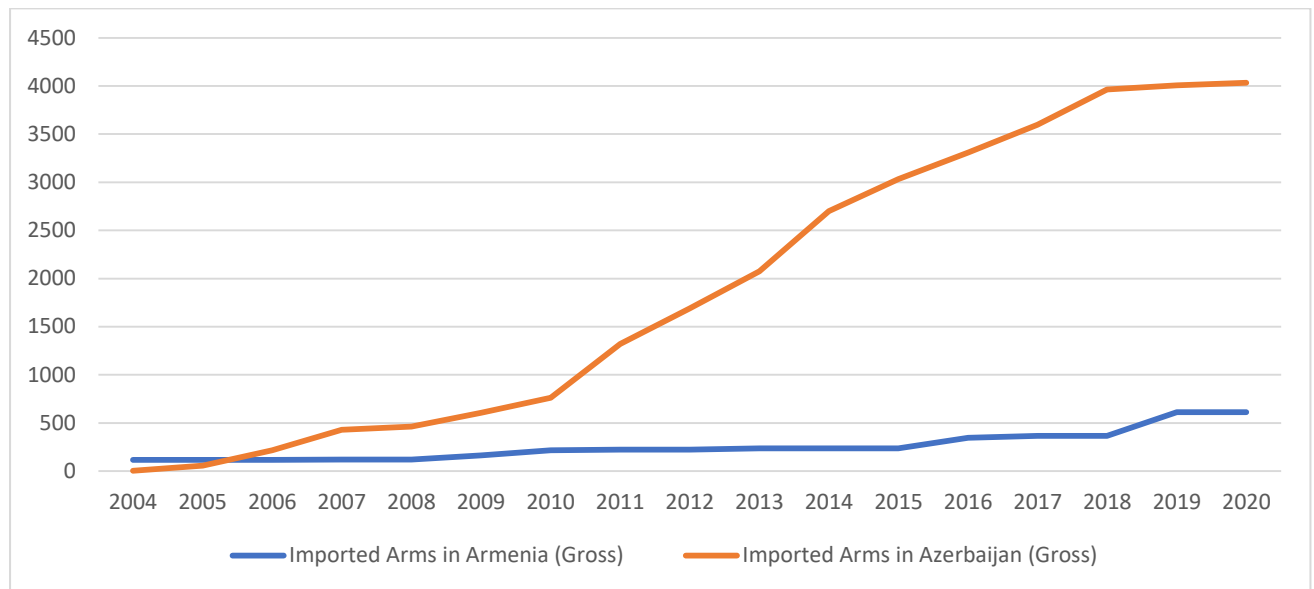
The pie chart is based on the information acquired from SIPRI, 2022.

5.6 Global Challenge and Local Conflict: The Role of Coronavirus in the Nagorno-Karabakh War

Starting from 1991, the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh has been the major problem between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The matters of peace have been the subject of Russia-led negotiation platforms, which often finished without any significant results (Abilov, 2018). The matters of resolving the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict had been long time discussed through the Minsk agreement, where the primary negotiator was Russia (OSCE, 2022). Nevertheless, the Minsk format has often been the object of critique by Ilham Aliyev (Abilov, 2018). Moreover, because the matter of Nagorno-Karabakh was a primary national issue for both Armenian and Azerbaijan societies (Uzer, 2012), any compromises from the political leadership of each country would lead the situation to the domestic discontent. Consequently, the Minsk agreement had remained as a nominal framework for the meetings (see Uzer, 2012; Abilov, 2018). Having realized that the negotiation framework could not help to resolve the question of Nagorno-Karabakh, Ilham Aliyev decided to pursue a different strategy. Since 2004, Aliyev started to build a strong military arsenal with a diversified

weapon system (SIPRI, 2022; see Graph 9 and Graph 10). Graph 9 indicates how Azerbaijan and Armenia increased their military arsenal over the year by import.

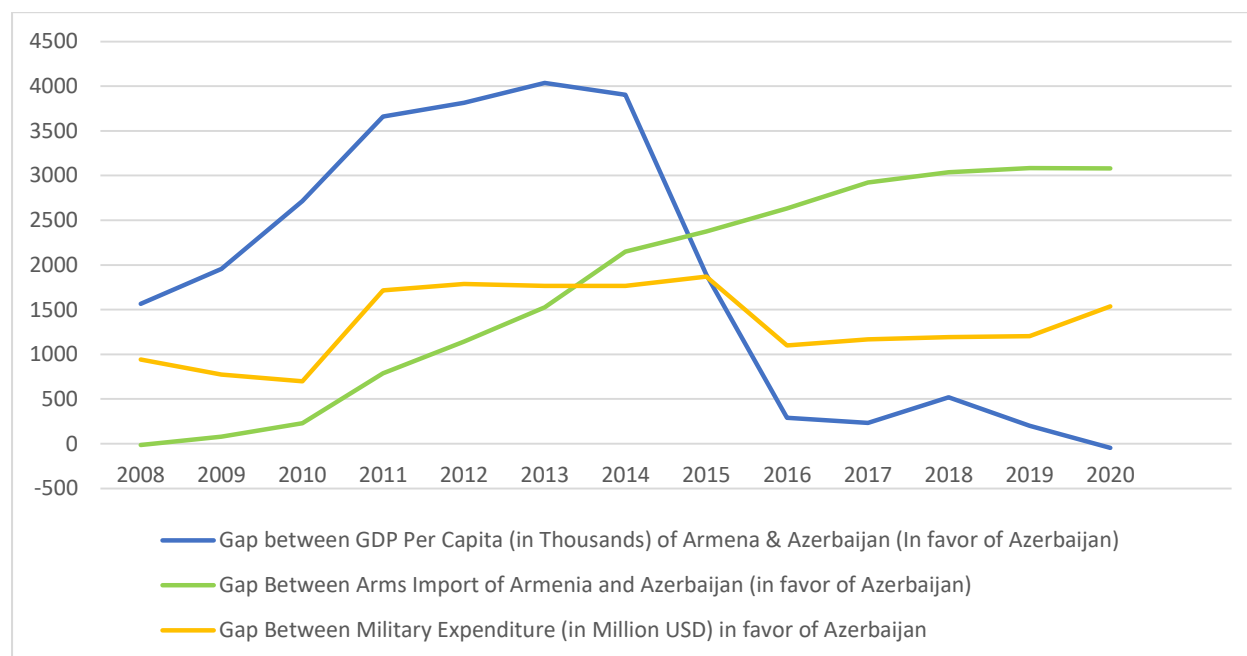
Graph 9. Increase of Arms by Import in Armenia and Azerbaijan 2004-2020.



The graph is based on the information acquired from SIPRI (2022).

It has been Azerbaijan's interest to change the status quo in the region by any means. Having said that, Azerbaijan has been in the position of a revisionist actor in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The active armament has been Azerbaijan's long-term strategy which has lasted for almost two decades (see Graph, 9; SIPRI, 2022). Remarkably, Azerbaijan has been actively modernizing its arsenal over the years: among the total arms purchased from Israel and Turkey from 2004 to 2021, Azerbaijan purchased modern UAVs such as "Heron", "Hermes 900", and "Bayraktar TB2" (SIPRI, 2022). The drone purchase gave Azerbaijan a military advantage over Armenia which has not received any drones from abroad before (SIPRI, 2022). The relative superiority of Azerbaijan's military arsenal had been developing until the proper time for the strategic action. The gap between the military capacities of Armenia and Azerbaijan had increased before 2020 (See Graph 10). Graph 10 illustrates the imbalance between Armenia and Azerbaijan in terms of military and economic dimensions. The growth of the lines on Graph 10, indicates more imbalance between Armenia and Azerbaijan in favor of the latter.

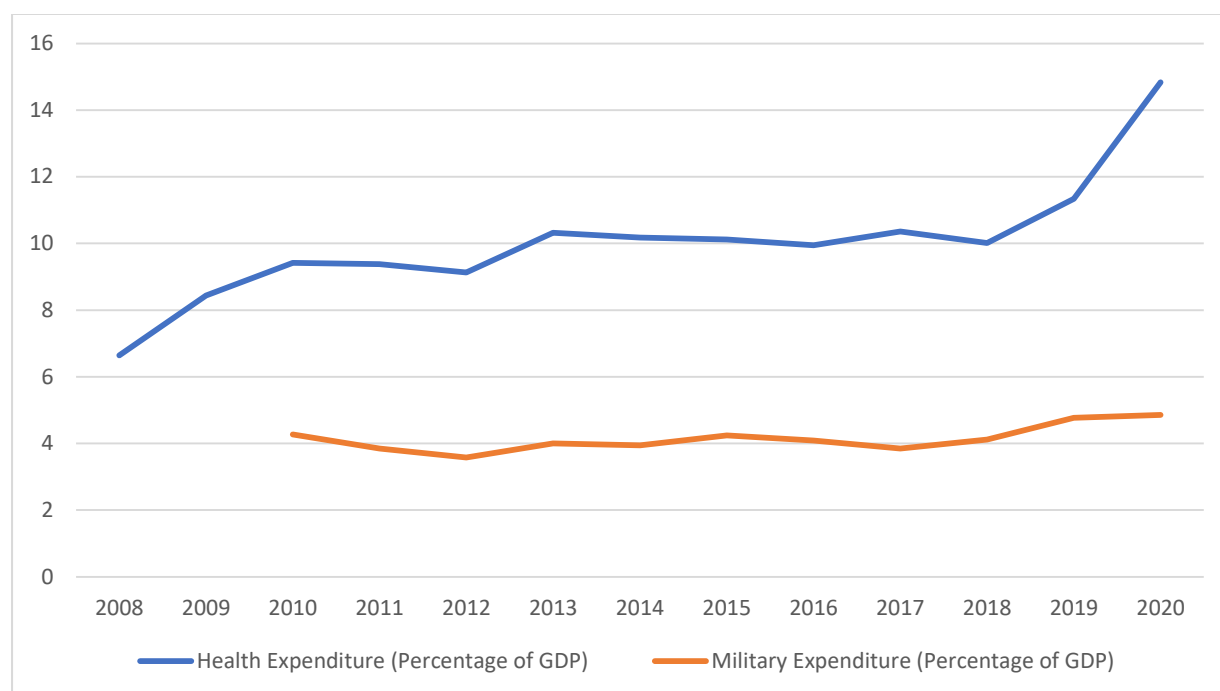
Graph 10. Imbalance (gap) between Armenia and Azerbaijan in economic and military dimensions



The graph was built based on the multiple sources (The World Bank 2022; The World Bank, 2022a; The World Bank, 2022b; The World Bank 2022c; SIPRI (2022))

The data presented in Graph 10 indicates that the highest imbalance between Armenia and Azerbaijan by 2020 was in the areas of arms import and military expenditure. This can be explained by the shift of the Armenian state budget from the military to the health sector. In 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic affected the health sector of Armenia: in the summer of 2020, Armenia fell into a deep epidemiological crisis (Giebel, 2020). The hospital beds were not enough for the Covid-19 and the people remained without isolation (Mejlumian, 2020). The harsh epidemiological situation forced the Armenian government to move focus on the health sector and extract more resources for it. As a result, in 2020, the health expenditure of Armenia raised, whereas the military expenditure remained flat (see Graph 11; Armenpress, 2019, October 1; The World Bank, 2022b; Knoema, 2019).

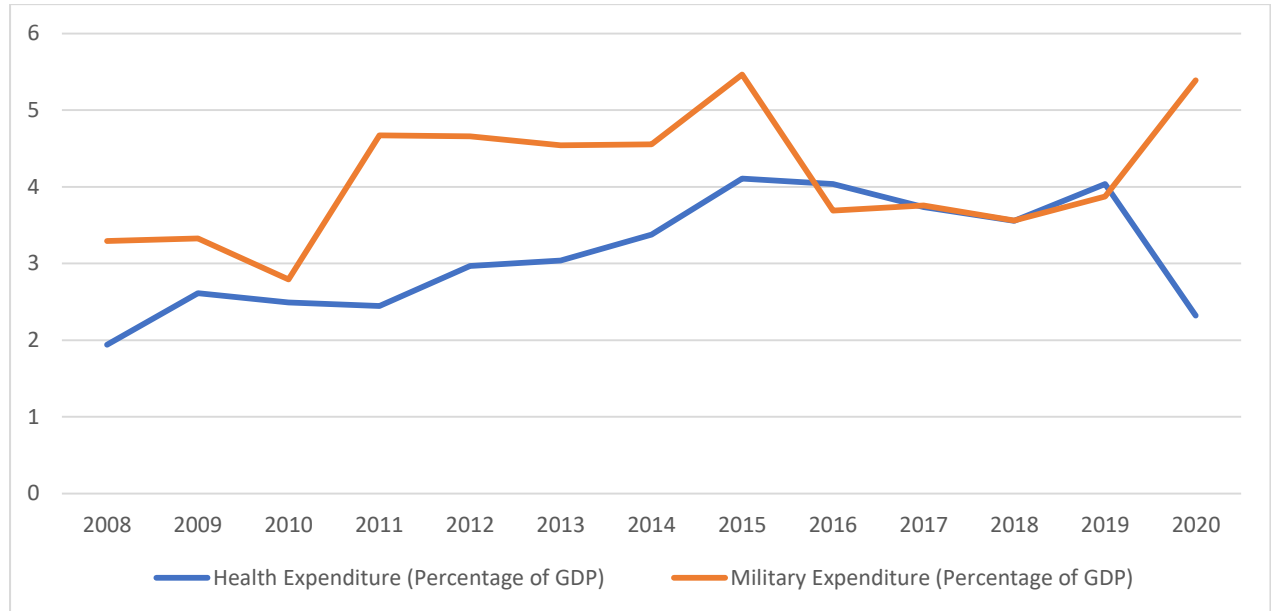
Graph 11. Armenia Health Expenditure & Military Expenditure 2008-2020



The graph is built based on multiple sources (Armenpress, 2019, October1; The World Bank, 2022b; Knoema, 2019)

For the comparison, Azerbaijan's military expenditure increased in 2020 at the expense of decreased health expenditure (see Graph 12). This means that in 2020 Azerbaijan relatively surpassed Armenia in terms of military expenditure (see Graph 11 and Graph 12). In 2020, Azerbaijan's military expenditure exceeded 5% of GDP, whereas Armenia's military expenditure by the same year remained below 5% of its GDP (See Graph 11 and Graph 12; Armenpress, 2019, October 1; The World Bank, 2022b; Knoema, 2019; The World Bank, 2022i; The World Bank, 2022j).

Graph 12. Azerbaijan Health Expenditure & Military Expenditure 2008-2020



The graph is built based on multiple sources (The World Bank, 2022i; The World Bank, 2022j)

Graph 11 indicates that the Coronavirus decreased the military mobilization of Armenia. The decreased military expenditure in Armenia and increased military expenditure in Azerbaijan created the gaps between them (see Graph 10). This would create the grounds for the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Pandemic-driven imbalance of the power between Armenia and Azerbaijan was followed by the clashes between the two states (see Graph 13; Graph 10; BBC, 2020a, July 15) . In July 2020, mass protests started in Azerbaijan with the demands to remove Coronavirus-related lockdown measures and attack Armenian forces due to the death of high Azerbaijan commanders in Nagorno-Karabakh (BBC, 2020a, July 15). This was the first emergence of collective grievance in Azerbaijan society during the Coronavirus pandemic (see (BBC, 2020a, July 15). Symbolically, the mass protests were initiated by the refugees of the Nagorno-Karabakh war (BBC, 2020b; July 13). The mass protests in Azerbaijan pushed the government to launch the first clashes in 2020 (BBC, 2020b, July 13). In midst of July 2020, there was first battle between Azerbaijan and Armenian forces during the year (BBC, 2020a, July 15). The attacks created double pressure on Armenia: it had to take care of the

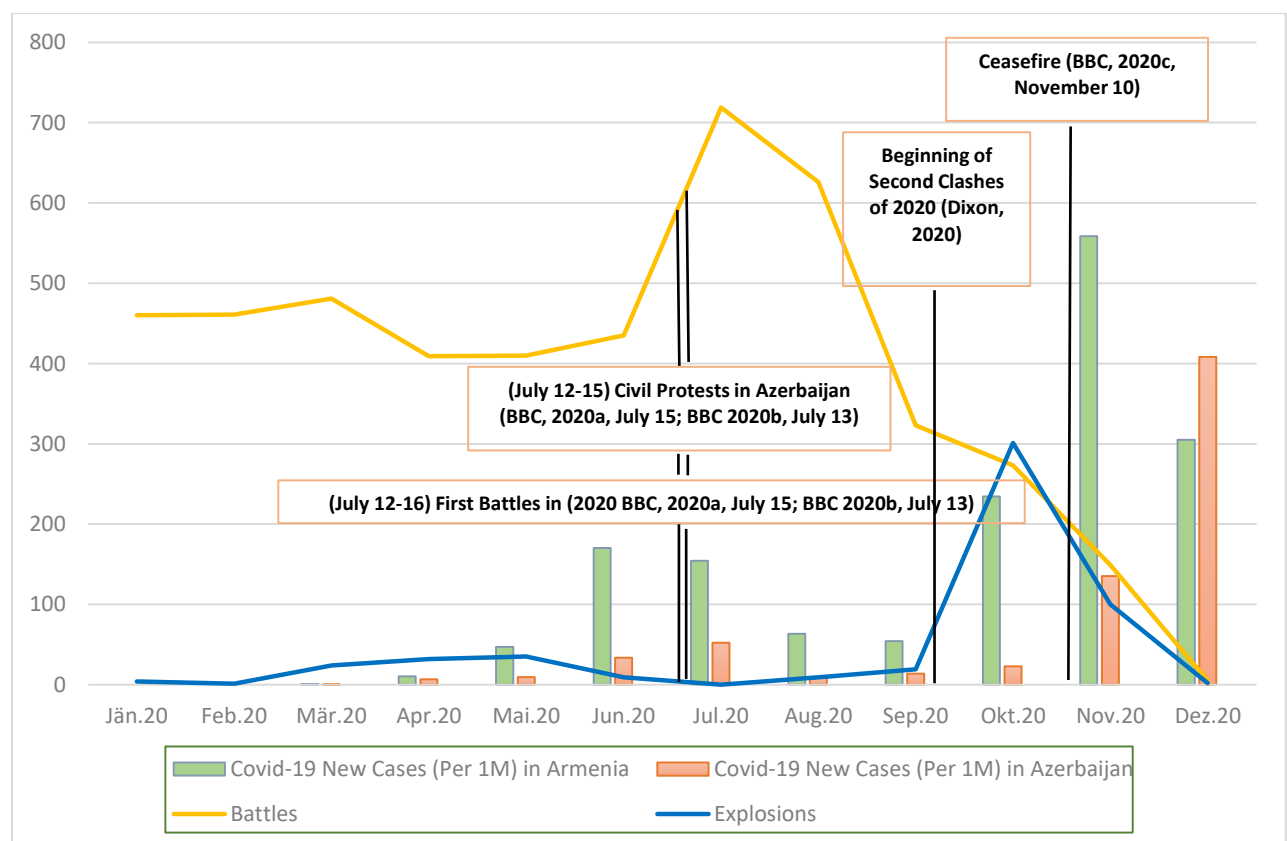
domestic epidemiological crisis and the external war with Azerbaijan forces as well. July clashes did not last for long. It was not a full-scale war. Rather, it was Azerbaijan's short-term response to the demand of its society (BBC, 2020a, July 15; BBC, 2020b, July 13)

The decisive factor in the full-scale conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was the role of the patron states. In September 2020, Turkey's government openly expressed its support for its ally Azerbaijan (Jones, 2020). Moreover, later, Russia had expressed neutral positions on the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Chawrylo, 2020): in one of his announcements, Putin declared that Russia had the same attitude to both Armenia and Azerbaijan (Chawrylo, 2020). Russia's indifference toward Armenia and Turkey's outspoken support for Azerbaijan put Armenia in a vulnerable position. This vulnerability was exacerbated by the imbalance of capacities vis-à-vis its rivalry – Azerbaijan, in terms of military power and domestic epidemiological situation (see Graph 10, Graph 11, and Graph 12). First, by the fall of 2020, Azerbaijan started to use the equipment for remote attack capacities (Dixon, 2020). As a result, the number of explosions started to increase from September 2020 (see Graph 13). Secondly, during the clashes between the two sides of the conflict, there was a huge gap in terms of Coronavirus prevalence between Armenia and Azerbaijan (see Graph 13). At this point, Armenia was encountering two major problems once again: it had to control the pandemic and defend itself from Azerbaijani attacks. Eventually, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was finished by the Russia-led ceasefire which largely favored Azerbaijan (BBC, 2020c, November 10): by the ceasefire of November 2020, Azerbaijan gained control over a large part of Nagorno-Karabakh territory including the town of Shusha (BBC, 2020c, November 10). This was the obvious benefit for Azerbaijan (see BBC, 2020c, November 10).

In 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic caused an imbalance between Armenia and Azerbaijan that created the grounds for the conflict between them (See Graph 10 and Graph 13): in the military and epidemiological aspects, Armenia appeared in an inferior position vis-à-vis its rivalry - Azerbaijan (See Graph 10 and Graph 13). Moreover, the neutrality of its partner Russia (Chawrylo, 2020), has decreased Armenia's position in the war even more. Armenia's military inferiority and its domestic epidemics together with the little support from Russia would give an incentive to Azerbaijan and its partner Turkey to launch the attacks. Considering Azerbaijan's massive equipping and arms import over the years (SIPRI, 2022), the war seemed to be immutable (see Figure 2). It was out of the question that Azerbaijan would once use its military arsenal to reclaim its territories. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan and its

leader Aliyev were waiting for the proper moment for the attack. Pandemic-driven circumstances created the opportunity for Azerbaijan to gain control over Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia was busy with competing with the rest of the world in the creation of the anti-Coronavirus vaccine (Rogoza & Wisniewska, 2020). Therefore, Moscow would rather show neutrality instead of active support to Armenia (Chawrylo, 2020). Meantime, the imbalance between Armenia and Azerbaijan in terms of military power was at its peak by 2020 (See Graph 10). Furthermore, despite its shift towards the health sector from the military one, Armenia appeared in a deep epidemiological crisis compared to Azerbaijan (see Graph 13; Our World in Data, 2022). These factors eventually created a proper moment for Azerbaijan to launch the full-scale war and reclaim the territories of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Graph 13. Armenia & Azerbaijan Coronavirus New Cases (Per 1M) Dynamics & Battles/Explosions 2020



The Graph was built based on the multiple sources (ACLED, 2022; Our World In Data, 2022; BBC, 2020a, July 15; BBC, 2020b, July 13; BBC, 2020c, November 10; Dixon, 2020)

5.7. The Cases of the Ceasefires during the Coronavirus Pandemic: Conflicts of Colombia and the Philippines

The conflicts of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh demonstrated that, in a presence of internal and external revisionist aspirations, the Coronavirus could exacerbate the conflict. In Libya, the imbalance of capacities, which was already in place, was worsened by the Coronavirus epidemics (see Graph 7). On the one hand, Covid-19 damaged the regions controlled by the HoR of Libya and increased the imbalance in terms of capabilities between HoR and GNA (see Health Cluster, 2020; OCHA 2021, February; Graph 6). On the other hand, this gave an advantage to GNA and Turkey to advance their positions in the war. The decreased powers of Haftar and LNA, which were partly caused by the Coronavirus, increased the involvement of Russia in the conflict (Rogoway, 2020, May 26; Graph 7). It was the first time in the recent history of Libya, when Russia provided LNA with that many fighter jets in May 2020 (Rogoway, 2020, May 26). The situation escalated in Nagorno-Karabakh as well. At the time of the pandemic, the gaps between the military expenditure and the arms were increased between Armenia and Azerbaijan in favor of the latter (see Graph 10). This gap eventually materialized into the active clashes between the sides of the conflict with the support of Turkey to Azerbaijan (Toksabay, 2020; see Graph 13). The presence of revisionist external actors with their ambitions did not let the local actors take into their account the urges of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for the ceasefire (Guterres, 2020). Nevertheless, this was not the case in some other conflicts.

Urges of the UN (Guterres, 2020) to follow the ceasefire during the first months of the Coronavirus pandemic were productive in some cases. In Colombia and the Philippines, the opposing sides stopped the war right after UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced the “*global ceasefire*” (Guterres, 2020; Ide, 2020). It was believed that the reasons for the ceasefire in Colombia and the Philippines were to avoid the further spread of the virus (Ide, 2020). In Colombia, the ceasefire by the opposition movement of the ELN was determined by humanitarian motivations (Ide, 2020). ELN’s decision for the ceasefire was openly welcomed both by the Colombian government and the civil organizations (ABColombia et al, 2020, April 3). The government appreciated the decision of ELN and described its leaders as “*peace promoters*” (WOLA, 2020). The civic organizations also welcomed ELN’s decision (ABColombia et al, 2020, April 3). In the Philippines, both the official government and the Communist movements followed the recommendation of

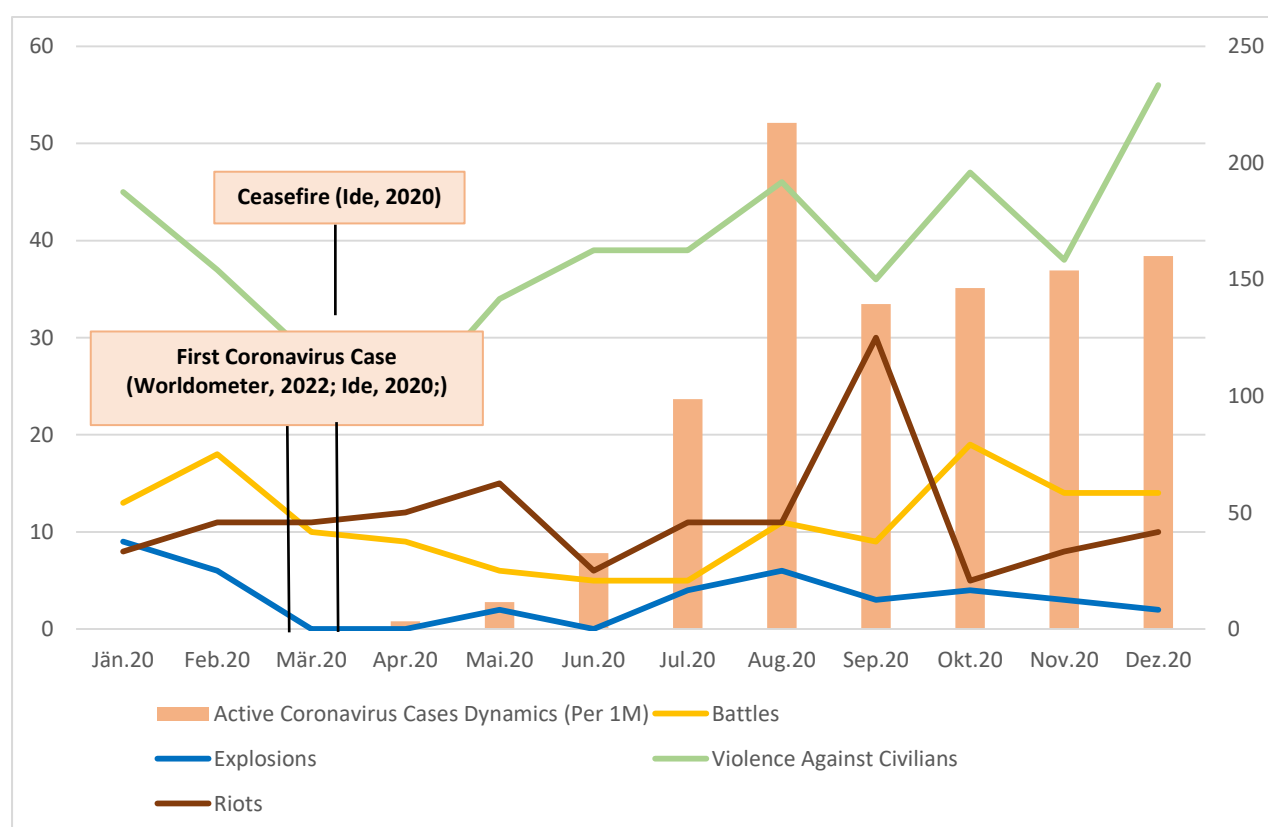
Antonio Guterres (Guterres, 2020) and stopped the conflict (Gomez, 2020). Just like in Colombia, the revolutionary opposition – “*The Communist Party of the Philippines*” (CPP) supported the ceasefire due to humanitarian purposes (Gotinga, 2020, March 25): the official declaration of CPP was mainly related to the civic areas and the wellbeing of the population during the pandemic (Gotinga, 2020, March March 25).

The reasons for the ceasefires in the conflicts during the pandemic lie in the activities of civic organizations. Before the conflict sides would initiate the ceasefire, the NGOs and IGOs performed an important role in both Colombia and the Philippines (see Sanchez-Garzoli, 2016; ABColombia et al, 2020, April 3). The civic organizations have long time been deeply embedded into the politics of Colombia (Sanchez-Garzoli, 2016). These organizations have performed a crucial role in ensuring peace in the country (Sanchez-Garzoli, 2016; ABColombia et al, 2020, April 3). The role of the NGOs, IGOs, and the society in Colombia was vivid during the period of the Coronavirus pandemic as well (ABColombia et al, 2020, April 3): dozens of non-profit organizations emerged during the first months of the pandemic to condemn violence and ensure the peace (ABColombia et al, 2020, April 3). Moreover, even the civilians of different origins called the military groups to stop violent activities during the pandemic in Colombia (WOLA, 2020). The whole specter of the domestic civic movements was busy with pushing Colombia’s internal aggressors to stop the conflict during the pandemic (UN Security Council, 2020: p. 2, para. 7)

The activities of the non-profit organizations during the pandemic were apparent in the case of the Philippines as well. Both international and local Filipino organizations operated freely and without any constraints (The Philippines Humanitarian Country Team, 2021): as the Coronavirus outbreak, the UN-backed organizations started to operate immediately for ensuring humanitarian security and wellbeing in the country (The Philippines Humanitarian Country Team, 2021). Moreover, there was a wish on the state level to cope with domestic epidemics by collaborating with NGOs and IGOs (The Philippines Humanitarian Country Team, 2021). Such behavior was not the case in Libya during the pandemic. The activities of the IGOs and NGOs were largely limited due to the battles between the opposing sides of the conflict (see Graph 6, OCHA, 2021). Unlike in the case of Colombia and the Philippines, the IGOs and NGOs hardly penetrated the processes of Libya enough to influence the actors and initiate the peace (see Graph 6, OCHA, 2021). Instead, the external revisionist powers were ones who could decide the matters of peace and war in Libya.

It is noticeable fact that there are no external actors or patrons involved in the civil wars of Colombia and the Philippines. Either the radical activities or peace process have been initiated and implemented solely by the local actors in both states (see Ide, 2020). Being said that, both Colombia and the Philippines are free from external revisionist encouragements and provocations. The absence of the revisionist partners has determined the consequences of the war in both states during the pandemic. At first, the ceasefire was declared and implemented without any disturbances from the revisionist states, as it was in Libya. In Colombia, the conflict decreased shortly after the declaration of a ceasefire (See Graph 14). The number of battles, explosions, and violence decreased after ELN's ceasefire, whereas the dynamics of explosions and riots slightly increased (see Graph 14). Almost the same trend was in the Philippines as well: after both sides of the conflict announced the ceasefire, the violence against civilians decreased, whereas the number of battles increased (See Graph 15).

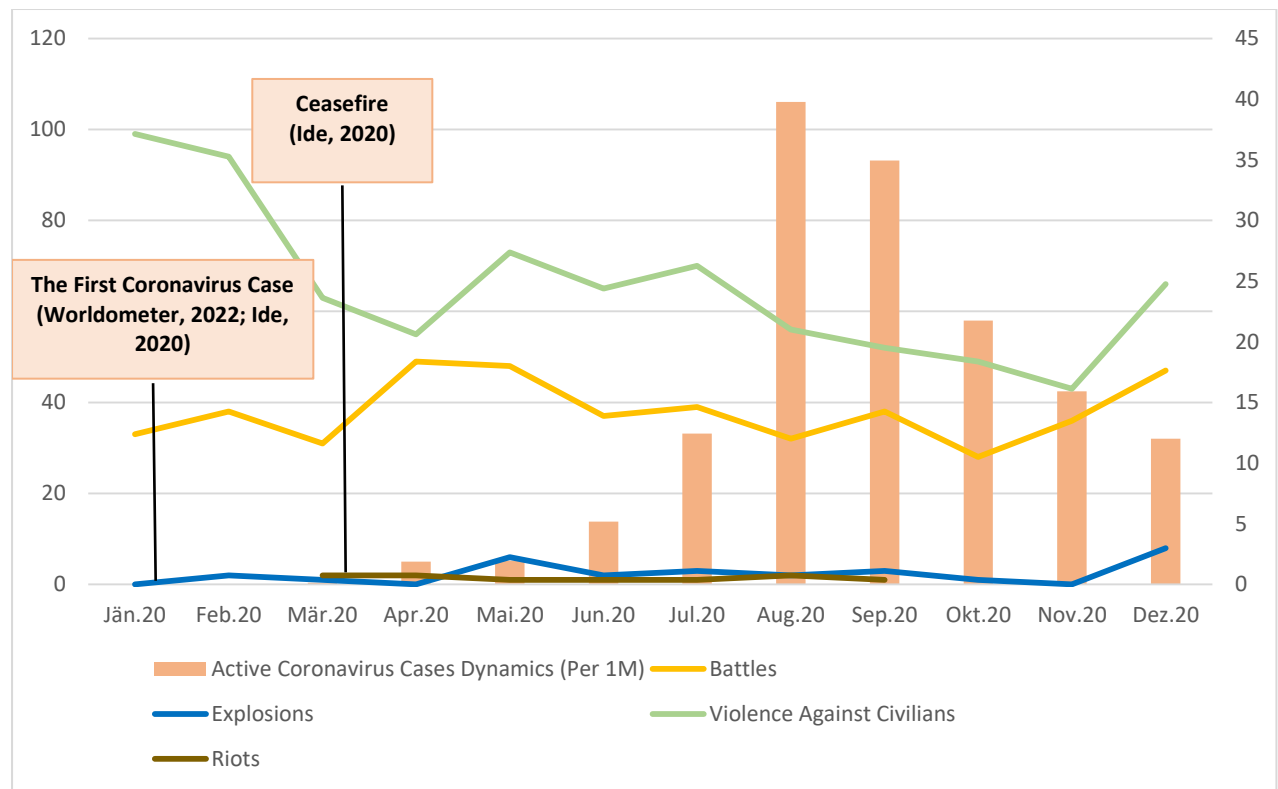
Graph 14. Colombia Active Coronavirus Case Dynamics; Battles & Explosions



Source: ACLED (2022); Our World in Data (2022); Ide (2020); Worldometer, (2022)

The key factor in the cases of Colombia and the Philippines were the presence of ceasefires. Even though the ceasefires did not last for long (See Graph 14 and Graph 15, Ide, 2020), they still demonstrated the motivations of the opposing actors to stop the conflict. Quantitative statistics may not describe the situation accurately: the dynamics of the conflict do not decrease drastically after the ceasefires were declared by the conflict parties (Graph 12; Graph 13). Nevertheless, the ceasefires suggest that the sides of the conflicts were willing to follow the international alerts and avoid humanitarian crises in the regions they controlled (see Ide, 2020). In the cases of the Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts, the ceasefires were just ostentatious and temporary agreements that would not be valid for a long time due to the presence of local and external revisionist actors. At first, Libya's ceasefire of January 2020 was instantly rejected by Khalifa Haftar (Aljazeera, 2020, January 14). Secondly, the same ceasefire which was initiated by Russia was later broken by Russia itself by supplying Haftar's LNA with more arms (Rogoway, 2020, May 26; Graph 7). There was a similar scenario in the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as well: the Minsk format for the agreements between Armenia and Azerbaijan was largely disapproved by President Aliyev and the government of Azerbaijan (Abilov, 2018). Interestingly, both Libyan and Armenia-Azerbaijan negotiations were guided by the primary revisionist power – Russia (OSCE, 2022). Consequently, due to the active involvement of the revisionist actors in both conflicts, the ceasefires in the cases of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh were nonsense.

Graph 15. The Philippines Active Coronavirus Case Dynamics; Battles & Explosions



Source: ACLED (2022); Our World in Data (2022); Ide, (2020); Worldometer, (2022)

6.0 Conclusion

The Coronavirus pandemic had different effects on the different conflicts in the world (see Ide, 2020; Mustasilta, 2020; Rustad et al, 2020). The objective of the paper was to identify the factors which made these effects different from each other. Based on the study of four conflict cases (Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Colombia, and the Philippines), it appeared that some parties followed the recommendation of the UN Secretary-General for the ceasefire (Guterres, 2020) and some of them did not (see also Ide, 2020; Rustad et al, 2020). This could have been explained by many different factors. However, as argued in the paper, the key factor responsible for continuing conflicts even after the outbreak of the Coronavirus was the presence of revisionist ambitions of the patron states and the local actors. The provision by revisionist great powers to the proxies with arms and supplies, together with the personal ambitions of the local leaders to change the status quo in the region lead the situation towards the conflict during the pandemic. The encouragement by the powerful revisionist states to their proxies was mostly expressed in form of the military support, decisions, and the narrative during and before the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

The paper adapted the hypothesis proposed by Susan Peterson (2002) who argued that the ID could cause the disproportionate capacities between the opposing actors (Peterson, 2002, p. 45; p. 55). The study by Peterson (2002) tried to adjust HIV/AIDS to the hypothesis, however, due to the nature of HIV/AIDS, it did not comply with the hypothesis (Peterson, 2002, p. 56). This paper considered the incompatibility between HIV/AIDS and the hypothesis of power imbalance as a gap in the literature about IDs causing the conflicts (see Peterson, 2002). Consequently, the study attempted to replace HIV/AIDS with the Coronavirus and consider it as a cause of disproportionate capacities between the confronted sides (see Peterson, 2002). In addition, the paper found that revisionism of the patrons and proxies is the controlling factor responsible for the intensification of the war during the pandemic.

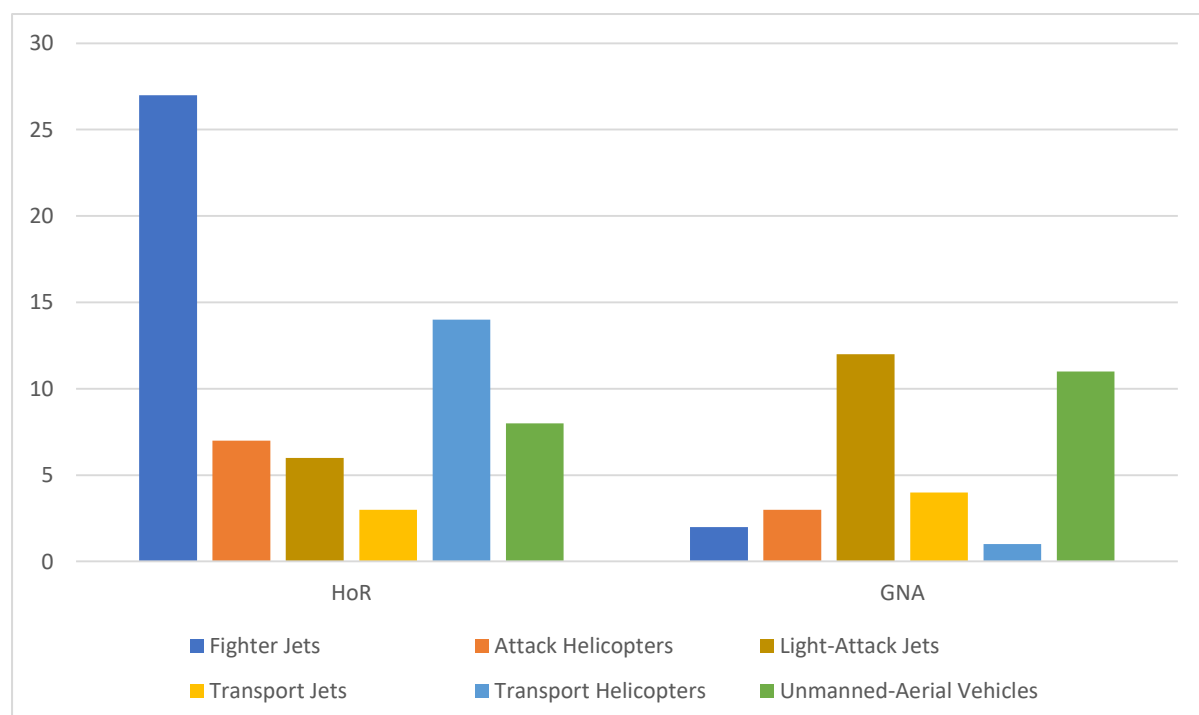
In order to prove the hypothesis, the study used a comparative methodology. It compared Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh on the one hand and Colombia and the Philippines on the other. Within the study, there were some obstacles. To be more specific, the data about the samples were not equally accessible and valid. For example, the countrywide statistics of Coronavirus new cases were accessible in the case of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict (see Worldometer, 2022; Our World in Data, 2022), but the regionwide statistics of Coronavirus

prevalence were not accessible in the case of Libya. Instead, the study displayed the domestic epidemiological situation of Libya by the qualitative information acquired from the Health Cluster (2020). In addition, the study illustrated the data of certain limitations in Libya (OCHA, 2021; see Graph 6). If the regional-level data about Coronavirus active cases were accessible in the case of Libya, it would help the research illustrate the epidemiological situation of GNA and HoR-controlled regions better. This would help the research assess the cause-effect relationship between the Coronavirus and power imbalance more accurately. Another obstacle to the study was that the power imbalance could not be assessed with the same data in both Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. Because Libya was interstate and Nagorno-Karabakh was an intrastate conflict, some economic means of measurement such as GDP, GDP Per Capita, and military expenditure could not be applicable to Libya's case. GDP and GDP Per Capita could not assess Libya's intrastate opposition actors' power. However, the same indicators could assess the power of Armenia and Azerbaijan (see Graph 10). Despite these obstacles, the study still managed to assess power imbalances in both Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh cases and present a general image of how they affected the conflict situation during the Coronavirus pandemic (see Graph 7, Graph 10 and Graph 13).

One of the findings of the paper was that the local crises caused by the Coronavirus exacerbated the imbalance of capacities between proxies in the cases of escalated conflicts. Before the Covid-19 would create the conflict, the power imbalance between the rivals, to some extent, was already in place (see Shay, 2019; Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020; Graph 4 and Graph 7; Table 2; Graph 10). In the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the intensive procurement of military equipment by Azerbaijan gave it a relative advantage over the years before the pandemic (see Graph 10, SIPRI, 2022). By 2020, Azerbaijan already was already superior to Armenia in terms of the imported arms (Graph 10). However, the Coronavirus also influenced the power imbalance between the proxies. In 2020, due to the harsh domestic epidemics, the relative military inferiority of Armenia increased by shifting the state resources from the military to the health sector (See Graph 11). This would increase Azerbaijan's relative power even more. A similar scenario was taking place in Libya. At the beginning of 2020, Libya's LNA had a relative advantage over GNA forces in terms of aircraft (see Graph 16). This advantage would be the primary motivator for Khalifa Haftar in refusing to join the ceasefire initiated by Russia and Turkey in January 2020 (Aljazeera, 2020). He hoped that he would advance his positions in the war against GNA. Nevertheless, the efficiency of GNA's Turkish drones (Shay, 2019; Mada Masr, 2020; Wintour, 2020) and

the Coronavirus crisis in LNA-controlled regions (Health Cluster, 2020) shifted the war in favor of GNA: as a result, in 2020 LNA forces lost a significant number of aircraft, drones, and defense systems (see Table 2). Moreover, the barriers for international organizations to pursue humanitarian activities brought HoR-controlled regions significant epidemiological challenges (Health Cluster, 2020; OCHA, 2021). To summarize, the Coronavirus pandemic did not cause the conflict itself but it exacerbated the imbalance between the proxies. The disproportionate capacities between the proxies empowered the perceptions of the revisionist actors that it would be a good opportunity for them to advance their positions through the war (just like it was anticipated by the theory of Van Evera, 1999, p. 73).

Graph 16. Amount of Aircraft and Drones Owned by LNA and GNA by January, 2020



The graph was built based on the multiple sources (Cenciotti, 2014; DefenceWeb, 2015; Delalande, 2016, August 4; Delalande, 2016b, May 21; Delalande, 2016c, July, 21; Delalande, 2016d, June 3; Delalande, 2017, April 17; Delalande, 2017b, March 22; Delalande, 2017c, January 15; Delalande, 2017d, July 29; Demerly, 2019, April 16; Drone Wars, 2022; The Defense Post, 2019, July 5; Imhof & Mansour, 2019; LibyanExpress, 2019, June 19; Itamilradar, 2019, December 14; Roblin, 2020; Cole & Cole, 2020, January 7; Mada Masr, 2020)

Based on the results shown in the study, the cases of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh complied with the assumption presented in the literature about HIV/AIDS and conflicts (see Peterson, 2002). HIV/AIDS did not comply with the hypothesis proposed by Peterson (2002) that the HIV/AIDS epidemics could result in disproportionate capacities of opposing actors

(Peterson, 2002, p. 45; pp. 55-56). Instead, the case of Coronavirus revealed that the pandemic of infectious disease can change the balance in capacities of opposing actors but in the presence of the revisionist patrons and the proxies. Here we encounter two theories and two differences: At first, Peterson (2002) considered epidemics as the potential cause of the disproportionate capacities, whereas this study was conducted about the pandemic. As explained by Morens, Folkers, and Fauci (2009), “*pandemic*” describes the prevalence of an infection that is unknown to humanity (Morens, Folkers & Fauci, 2009: p, 1019). Consequently, unlike “*epidemics*”, “*pandemic*” describes a relatively new infectious disease (Morens, Folkers, and Fauci, 2009). This semantic difference may result in different perceptions and reactions to the risks (Jun et al. 2021). Nevertheless, in essence, both HIV/AIDS and the Coronavirus are infections. Therefore, the Coronavirus could comply with Peterson’s (2002) hypothesis about infectious diseases causing the disproportionate capacities between the opposing actors (Peterson, 2002). Secondly, Peterson (2002) considered that the result of imbalance would be as a general phenomenon as “*military conflict*” (Peterson, 2002), without specifying what kind of conflict would it be and who would be the actors (Peterson, 2002). By in-depth analysis of the actors of modern conflicts, this study revealed that the revisionist patrons have a key role in intensifying proxy war during the ID pandemic. The identification of the controlling factor, which is revisionism, made the study relatively rich and more explanative than just the mere assumptions by Susan Peterson (2002).

The imbalance of capabilities created by the Coronavirus largely gave an incentive to the revisionist actors to intensify the conflict. The motivations behind the actors could be explained in different ways. As proposed by Van Evera (1999), the aggressive actions of the opposing states would be either determined by the “*Impending Shift*” or “*First-Move Advantage*” (Van Evera, 1999: p. 73). Basically, what he proposed was that the conflict party whose relative power would be inferior due to any reasons would have more propensity toward aggressive action (Van Evera, 1999: pp. 73-76). For some extent, this argument would be relevant in case of Libya, in which revisionist actor – Khalifa Haftar and its LNA was in declining situation firstly because of unfavorable Russia-Turkey-led ceasefire (see Aljazeera, 2020), secondly because of the huge loss of military equipment (see Table 2). On the contrary, the revisionist side of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict – Azerbaijan, was superior to its rival in terms of military power (see Graph 10). Nevertheless, just like Khalifa Haftar in Libya, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev had similarly negative attitudes toward Russia-led negotiations in Minsk (Abilov, 2018). These facts indicate that the “*Impending Shift*”

(Van Evera, 1999) in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh was partly caused by the imbalances in military capacities and largely caused by the decline of revisionist local actors in diplomatic negotiations. Before the pandemic, Russia-led ceasefires and negotiations put the local revisionist actors in an inferior position vis-à-vis their rivals. On top of that, the Coronavirus pandemic added the "*Impending Shift*" (Van Evera, 1999) in the aspects of military imbalance, which has resulted in the conflict intensification in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh (see Graph 10 and Graph 16).

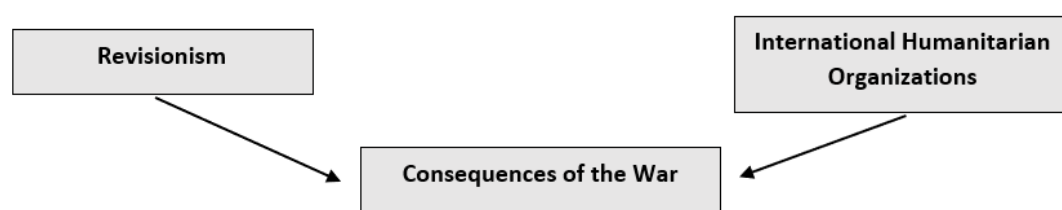
As an opposite of the revisionist patrons, international organizations had a contrary effect in some conflicts. Unlike in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts, in the civil wars of Colombia and the Philippines, there were no external revisionist states involved. As a result, the ceasefire process proceeded smoothly, without any external disturbances. Shortly after the UN Security Council promulgated the worldwide ceasefire (Guterres, 2020), the conflict actors in both Colombia and the Philippines terminated the conflict (see Ide, 2020). This decision illustrated the humanitarian propensities of governments and opposition leaders (Ide, 2020; Gotinga, 2020; Rustad et al, 2020). The responsiveness of the leaders was largely constructed by the long-time efforts and pushes of civic society in Colombia and the Philippines (Sanchez-Garzoli, 2016; The Philippines Humanitarian Country Team, 2021). Moreover, little constraints of NGOs and IGOs in both Colombia and the Philippines improved the situation (ABColombia et al, 2020, April 3; The Philippines Humanitarian Country Team, 2021). Political will for the ceasefire and the free activities of international organizations were the key features that differed the cases of Colombia and the Philippines from the cases of Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. In the latter two conflicts, there was no political desire to stop the conflict among the leaders and this was even added by the provocative encouragements and military aid by the external actors (see Toksabay, 2020; Rogoway, 2020, May 26). Moreover, the activities of the international organizations were hindered in most cases (see Graph 6; OCHA 2021): for example, in Libya, NGOs and IGOs could not reach the eastern and southern parts of the country due to the radical movements (see Graph 6; OCHA 2021).

The fact that can be concluded from the study is that the activities of the revisionist powers on the one hand and the activities of the international organizations on the other hand counterbalance each other. Figure 2 displays the relationship between revisionism and the activities of the international humanitarian organizations. The absence of one does not lead to the presence of another, but they have the contrary effect on the peace in any region. The

study reviewed the cases which are completely different from each other. The regions were chosen mainly based on one criterion: the presence/absence of the ceasefire between the conflicting parties. Considering the huge difference in the samples, it can be concluded reliably that revisionism increases the chances of the war, whereas the activities of the international organizations mitigate the situation under the crisis caused by the infectious disease.

The research about the impacts of temporary global crises such as the Coronavirus pandemic upon the armed conflicts can be done in the context of different regions. The empirical analysis of this study was largely based on the proxy wars in which two external actors – Russia and Turkey were engaged. In addition to the findings on intervening and controlling factors between the infectious disease pandemics and conflict intensifications, the study demonstrated Russia's and Turkey's revisionist foreign policy aspirations. The theory about revisionist patron-proxy ambitions causing the conflict intensification during the infectious disease pandemic can explain the activities of other revisionist patrons as well. Russia and Turkey might not be the exceptions. There are other states as well, such as Iran and China, which are believed to pursue revisionist foreign policy (Mead, 2014). Indeed, Iran in the Middle East and China in East Asia are considered as important geopolitical actors who try to revise the order in their respective regions (Mead, 2014). Consequently, their activities could also lead the conflict intensification in certain regions as the activities of Russia and Turkey did in Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh. To summarize, the theory proposed by this research has a perspective to be expanded on other cases besides Russia and Turkey as well. In this study, the theory about conflict intensifications during the Coronavirus pandemic was tested in the context of two completely different conflicts. The flexibility of the theory about conflict intensifications during the Coronavirus pandemic can create the grounds for studying other patrons and proxies in the presence of an infectious disease pandemic, or even another type of temporary global crisis.

Figure 2: The Counterbalance of Revisionism and the Activities of International Humanitarian Organizations



Source: The author of this paper

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