



THE PROCESS FOR HUMAN & ENERGY SECURITY IN LIBYA

EMERGING DYNAMICS & THE WAY FORWARD



JULY 2020



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**"We need diplomacy more than anything
else."**

- PARTICIPANT, 22.07.2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 22 July 2020, IISA and the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) convened the first webinar of the process for human and energy security in Libya. The meeting was attended by participants from the General National Assembly (Tripoli-based), the House of Representatives (Tobruk-based), Turkey, UAE, Egypt, Italy, and regional experts. Participants acknowledged the importance of the meeting, the usefulness of open dialogue, and discussed both the current and emerging dynamics of the conflict.

Following an introduction on the current dynamics of the situation in and around Libya, participants deliberated on the current impasses to a political settlement and examined the legacy of Gaddafi's national policies (with focus on the security sector in particular) and how this legacy impacts the state of Libya today. The internationalisation of the conflict was also deeply reflected upon. Finally, participants agreed to form a steering group and to focus on the interrelation of human and energy security in the conflict. The next meeting was set to be held in September 2020.

INTRODUCTION

"Libya has reached a new tipping point". While the phrase has been repeated many times over the years, the conflict has once again protracted into a new dimension. The new trajectory of the conflict coming with the involvement of Turkey has shifted, not only the front lines, but may also impact the regional balance. This is further underlined by Egypt considering new measures related to the Libyan situation. Track 1 efforts, such as those in Moscow and Berlin, have had little effective results on the ground. Hence, a Track 1.5 process may be the key to enacting real change. The Institute for Islamic Strategic Affairs (IISA) believes that it is essential to bring all relevant actors (local, regional, and global) to the table to engage in dialogue.

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MEETING SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION BY REGIONAL EXPERT

In the introduction, a regional expert gave an overview of where Libya is today and the current impasses to a political solution. They explained that the support of the Turkish military to the Tripoli-based government, the General National Assembly (GNA), has shifted the previous balance of the conflict and has given the GNA enough impetus to believe that it can regain control over areas of the country it had lost to the Libyan National Army (LNA) forces. On the other side, the LNA forces, backed by the House of Representatives in Tobruk, as well as other actors (such as Egypt, UAE, Russia, and France) are demanding a political settlement with the GNA government based on negotiations. Previously, the GNA has aligned with the UN view that political negotiations must be held between both sides on more or less equal terms. However, the GNA has recently changed its view and no longer sees the other side as a legitimate negotiating partner.

Two issues have further exacerbated the situation, the regional expert explained. The first issue is the failure of both sides to agree on who controls the strategic sites of Sirte and Jufra. The second is due to the blockade on oil by Haftar, and therefore LNA-aligned forces. The UN proposed a

deal that would make concessions to Haftar's demands. In exchange, oil terminals would be reopened, which would then allow for oil revenues to continue. This proposal, the expert argued, had the ability to avoid further escalation and would have also allowed Haftar to save face. Despite this, the proposal was turned down by the Tobruk-based House of Representatives. Hence, it is expected that a new wave of fighting will ignite to claim control of oil in central Libya.

POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

There are numerous barriers to a political settlement, one of which includes the view that Haftar and his allies are no longer viable negotiating partners. One participant explained that this shift occurred in April 2019. They said that UNSMIL had planned a peace conference on the Libyan-Algerian border. Haftar and Sarraj had agreed to meet beforehand in a neutral location on 9 April 2019 to give the peace conference a chance of success. Yet, the participant said, Haftar reneged and on 4 April 2019 - five days before the scheduled meeting - he attacked Tripoli. Now that Haftar has been pushed back militarily, the participant exclaimed and

asked, "Why should we give power to a man who tried to coup d'etat? Why should we give him political power?"

Another participant traced the existing problematic back to 2014, with the holding of parliamentary elections. The participant explained that "everyone acknowledged that these were free elections, and whatever the outcome was - I'm not saying the election was with qualified people, we have just come out from 40 years of dictatorship - regardless of who was elected at that point, everyone should have accepted the results". Yet, they explained, not everyone accepted the election results and that there were assassinations of lawyers, judges, members of the elite, and journalists every day without protests by the elected parliament (the GNA). "They did not issue one press release denouncing these assassinations," it was explained, "these are factors that contributed to the Libyan National Army (LNA)". Furthermore, the participant linked the formation of the LNA to Gaddafi's legacy of anti-institutionalism.

GADDAFI'S LEGACY & STATE-BUILDING IN LIBYA

When Gaddafi took over power in Libya in 1969, he abolished state institutions. He dismantled and neglected the national army and the police force and instead relied on militias that were loyal only to him. One participant cited the cases of Egypt and Tunisia and linked their relative stability to the existence of a national army, "This is why the Libyan revolution turned into anarchy", it was said, "people want an army, they do not want militias".

Another participant noted that "the basic

definition of the state is that it has a legitimate monopoly of violence, without that you don't have a state. if you have militias working for the state, then you don't have a state. You need a state that monopolises violence".

Another participant said that rebuilding vital institutions starts with security, but that this requires political stability, national reconciliation, and Libyan stakeholders to come together to agree on their institutions. Libya needs to establish an army, police forces, have security sector reform with disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration as a top priority, it was said. The GNA has previously attempted to establish a police force as well as a Ministry of Interior. The draft constitution is also ready for referendum, "why haven't they done it" the participant asked hypothetically, and answered "because of Haftar".

A participant said that economic security is at the heart of the Libyan issue - that Libyans rely 100% on oil revenue for salaries, subsidies, medicines, and other essentials; therefore, to block oil export is to starve Libyans and damage their economic security. Another participant suggested that Libya may be better suited if power is devolved to the periphery rather than to the centre. A central power structure would then decide on things like oil and oil revenues. Participants agreed that it is up to the Libyan people to decide.

Everyone says we should have the Libyans talk to each other but no one is letting them do so."

- Participant

FOREIGN INTERVENTION

Since the Arab Spring, Libya's internal political sphere has been drenched with an influx of different types of foreign intervention. One participant noted with worry that this trend "can deteriorate to a situation similar to Syria, where foreign powers take over and the local people struggle". Yet, participants disagreed not only who is intervening and who has intervened, but also to what extent foreign intervention has taken place. One participant noted that the conflict has been internationalised and that "there is an attempt to draw in external forces into this internal conflict. If we look at this push/pull factor, there is more pull in this area".

"On the ground we have Turkish forces", one participant said, "We don't have Egyptian forces, we don't have UAE forces, we have Turkish forces... we have seen trucks, ships, and mine clearing personnel". Another disagreed and said that "Turkish forces are a misconception" but noted that "Turkey gives a lot of hardware support to the GNA". One participant said that "there are 90 Turkish officers over there [in Libya] to advise" but that "there are no Turkish soldiers who are fighting".

Another participant argued that Haftar has gained military support from 4-5 countries, including the UAE and stated that "to say that only Turkish forces exist on the ground is a misconception and misleading". Another participant said that suggesting that the UAE is determining what Haftar does "is oversimplification". The participant explained that "one hour before Haftar entered Tripoli, the UAE said we are against it - including Russia: they do not give Haftar orders. There is no international

interference in terms of telling people on the ground what to do".

One participant acknowledged that "the most important thing to change is to stop the intervention from Turkey and from the UAE, as well. The Libyans must decide the form and shape of what they see fit from their own country". Despite the previous fiery discussion, many participants seemed to agree that foreign intervention is not a positive development and to the extent it has happened it has not brought any positive outcomes to the Libyan crisis.

"Boots on the ground need to be out. Whether they came due to a certain parliament or not - but these are boots on the ground."

- Participant

HUMAN SECURITY & MOVING FORWARD

All participants agreed that human security should take priority. One participant suggested that "human security might be the gateway to stability in Libya" and if the actors on the ground can be persuaded to allow "humanitarian assistance and to allow aid into the country and get the basic needs - this may be the gateway to stability and reconciliation".

Finally, participants agreed to form a steering group. The steering group is set to focus on the interrelation of human and energy security in the Libya conflict. Participants agreed for the next meeting to be held in September 2020.

CONTACT



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