



Roundtable & Interactive Dialogue
The EU in Libya: Shifting Incentives for Political Cooperation
European Parliament – December 2017

With violence intensifying throughout the country, and east-based representatives pulling out of the second round of talks, the UN-led renegotiation of the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement was indefinitely postponed on 21 October.ⁱ In recent weeks, militias aligned with General Haftar's east-based Libyan National Army (LNA) have also advanced in the west, and as political divisions deepen, the rapid disintegration of peace talks shines a new spotlight on the EU's shortsighted regional priorities, and calls for a new approach that will shift all stakeholders' incentives towards cooperation.

After years of unsuccessful attempts to reduce inflows from Africa, the EU has increasingly turned to desperate and dangerous measures to prevent new arrivals.ⁱⁱ In July, the EU allocated EUR 46 million euros to thwart irregular migration by directly financing the UN-backed Government of National Accord,ⁱⁱⁱ and indirectly funding local authorities and militias.^{iv} Discourse surrounding the deal has rightly focused on the morally reprehensible decision to overlook Libyan authorities' records of abuse. However, besides egregiously violating human rights standards, the EU is also making a strategic error by allowing actors to profit off instability and crisis, thereby diminishing the political will to establish durable peace.

Financing armed groups for cooperation is not only unsustainable, it also undermines political cohesion and reinforces impunity.^v By effectively bribing local actors, the EU and GNA send a clear signal that the state can be extorted, reducing incentives to respect rule of law and encouraging allegiance to the highest bidder. Research suggests that without a broader plan to integrate militias into a reformed security structure aligned along a shared national vision, local competition and oil rents will exacerbate fragmentation.^{vi}

As the EU moves to reopen its embassy in Tripoli by the end of the year,^{vii} it will have a key opportunity to reprioritize long-term solutions that will support the Libyan peace process. This roundtable discussion will bring together a small group of experts, EU officials, and civil society to develop pragmatic, value-based strategies to fully leverage the EU's diplomatic power in Tripoli. Having proven itself capable of using its political weight to sway local actors, it is now more important than ever that the EU leverage its influence for long-term solutions and political cooperation.

Draft Discussion Questions:

- What are the long-term political implications of the EU's migration management financing to the GNA, and how does this affect the UN-led peace process?
- How can all actors renew the Libyan political process and shift shareholders incentives towards cooperation when violence is often more profitable?
- How can the EU leverage its political dialogue in Tripoli to prioritize long-term stability and political cohesion?
- How can the EU work to provide legal alternatives to illicit activities, and how can the EU North Africa Trust Fund work to better support education, health, and marginalized communities?

ⁱ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/october-2017#libya>

ⁱⁱ Since 2014, the influx of migrants and refugees have strained European cohesion, with individual EU Institutions disagreeing widely on how to address external challenges. The European Commission and Council have endorsed neorealist, real-politic solutions to bolster state resilience and respond to immediate security concerns. Conversely, the European Parliament has largely pushed for approaches that first and foremost respect human rights, development principles and European values.

ⁱⁱⁱ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-2187_en.htm

^{iv} <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/libyan-militia-chief-admits-deal-with-tripoli-to-stem-migrant-flow-ahmed-dabbashi-brigade-migrant-crisis-italy-538lwtgf5>,

^v <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/libya/quick-fixes-wont-block-libyas-people-smugglers-long>

^{vi} <http://www.bic-rhr.com/oil-in-libya-a-two-faced-inheritance/>

^{vii} <http://www.africanews.com/2017/10/12/eu-plans-to-reopen-embassy-in-libya/>