



# **BUSSOLA INSTITUTE WEBINAR SUMMARY "THE WAY FORWARD FOR LIBYA"**

14TH JULY 2020





On 14th July 2020, the Bussola Institute hosted a webinar entitled “The way forward for Libya.” The webinar examined the current situation in Libya and, in particular, the way ahead for this seemingly intractable civil conflict. The situation that has developed in Libya since the overthrow of President Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 is a direct security concern to: Europe, members of the Arab League, and global security more broadly. Libya is a close neighbour to Europe with an 1,800-kilometre coastline stretching along the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Libya also has long been an important exporter of oil and gas to many EU member states. This webinar examined opportunities for bringing an end to the current conflict and re-establish stability in Libya, including the contributions that the EU and Arab League/GCC can offer, in cooperation with the United Nations, for resolving the situation.



## THE EXPERTS FOR THE WEBINAR INCLUDED:



### **Dr. Abdullah K. Al-Saud**

Professor at the College of Strategic Sciences, Naif Arab University for Security Sciences in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, formerly the Director of Research and Head of Security Studies at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies.



### **Rosamaria Gilli**

Head of the Maghreb division at the European External Action Service (EEAS).



### **Dr. Abdel Aziz Abu Hamad Aluwaisheg**

Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs & Negotiation at the Gulf Cooperation Council



### **Angus Taverner**

Director of  
Communications, Bussola  
Institute

**The webinar was moderated by Angus Taverner, the Director of Engagement and Communication of the Bussola Institute.**

The discussion provided insight into the reality on the ground in Libya that has so far prevented the successful resolution of the conflict, and put forward essential perspectives from the EU and the GCC on the future of security and stability in Libya. All speakers agreed that a military solution is not possible and therefore argued that the focus of the international community must be on ensuring a process for a political settlement. It was further emphasised that a lasting resolution can only be achieved if the people of Libya themselves

determine the form of government to follow from the conflict. This should not be imposed by external actors. At the same time, the unstable and fractious situation in Libya has made political resolution more difficult as both internal and external actors are becoming more polarised. All the experts spoke of the need for collaboration with the UN and general agreement between external and internal actors in Libya to ensure a political resolution can be reached. The importance of the Berlin Summit in January 2020 and the Cairo Declaration of June 2020 were underscored as providing a viable framework for guiding external players and internal parties.

The webinar highlighted a number of specific points related to the following key policy issues:

## THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS IN LIBYA

- Russia's involvement in Libya is more focused on its economic and strategic interests, than on ideology. It was emphasised that Moscow would welcome increased access to warm water ports on the Mediterranean.
- Turkey has a dual nationalist and Islamist approach to Libya. On the one hand, it furthers its nationalist, arguably nativist Ottoman ideology, by aiming to gain a foothold in the eastern Mediterranean. On the other hand, it has adopted a policy of supporting Islamist movements including the Muslim Brotherhood. It was argued that such policies are dangerous for the region and not sustainable in the long run.
- International actors are responsible for fueling proxy conflicts adding to the instability and empowering disruptive non-state actors. Unfortunately, Libya has seen an increased number of violations of the arms embargo during six months since the Berlin meeting with widespread weaponisation prevailing.
- It was agreed that to reverse the current negative trajectory, international actors, including the UN, EU and Arab League/GCC have to actively support a political resolution to the situation.

## FUTURE OF THE BERLIN CONFERENCE

- Speakers agreed that the Berlin conference identified all the parameters necessary to rebuild Libya. Dr. Aluwaisheq argued that given the Arab League's endorsement of the Berlin decisions followed up by the Cairo Declaration, there now exists common ground between EU and Arab world on a way forward. This is the consensus needed to move forward with more substantive negotiations.
- Rosamaria Gili said that from the EU's perspective, the only way security and stability can be achieved in Libya is if the international community has a genuine commitment to advancing the Berlin Declaration and that a new UN Special Envoy for Libya needs to be appointed as speedily as possible. Other speakers agreed that the appointment of a new UN Special Representative of the Secretary General was seen as critical so as not to lose further ground in Libya. In situations such as those in Libya, the UN can simply not afford such a prolonged diplomatic vacuum. The alternative would be a protracted proxy war, something to be avoided at all costs.

## GOOD GOVERNANCE IN LIBYA

- A key aspect to be considered is what kind of governance should be promoted in a post-war Libya scenario. While a regional and international consensus is evident when it comes to broad resolution to the conflict, much more emphasis needs to be given to bringing about a national consensus to ensure that proposed solutions enjoy the support of the local population. Here again the UN was seen as important to help bring about such a national consensus.
- Dr Abdullah Al-Saud spoke in favour of a state control over the use of force. This would mean that all non-state actors would be disarmed and legitimacy would be given to the government through free and fair elections backed by the international community.
- Dr. Abdulaziz Aluwaisheg argued that the ultimate goal has to be to find a system of governance that works for the Libyan people. He made the point that some of the non-state actors are genuine actors and their input should be taken into consideration. He thus argued for a system that affords regions control over their territory under the auspices of a federal government. A key issue to be resolved would be the distribution of oil revenues.





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