NON-MILITARY PERSPECTIVES ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LIBYA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Popular protests against the authoritarian rule of Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi in Libya in February 2011 resulted in violent armed conflict between Gaddafi’s forces and rebel fighters. In March 2011, NATO implemented a no-fly zone to enforce UN Resolution 1973, which condemned the ‘systematic violation of human rights’ by the Libyan authorities under Gaddafi and authorized member states to ‘take all necessary measures’ to protect civilians and civilian populated areas. By October the same year, Libya’s interim authorities declared the country’s official liberation from Gaddafi’s rule. General elections took place in July 2012, and Libya experienced a period of relative stability and growth. However, throughout 2013 and 2014, tensions grew between different political and militia factions. This resulted in the emergence of two distinct blocs. One bloc, comprised mainly of Islamist factions, sought the removal of Gaddafi-era officials from positions of power. The other bloc opposed Islamist groups and believed former regime figures could continue to play a role in Libya. A second general election took place in June 2014; however, the Islamist political factions fared poorly. In response to the political defeat, Islamist-aligned militias took control of Tripoli by force, reinstated the previous government, and declared the 2014 elections unconstitutional. The newly-elected parliament fled to eastern Libya where they continued to meet. The result was two separate sets of governing institutions – one in eastern Libya and the Islamist-backed government in Tripoli – covering different parts of the country and with competing claims to legitimacy.

This fragmentation of Libya’s social and political fabric led to instability, violence and confusion, particularly in the capital of Tripoli. As conflict escalated in 2014, many foreign embassies and international organisations relocated across the border to Tunisia. International support also shifted from high-level, governance-related programming to peace building assistance and humanitarian aid. Throughout 2015, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) attempted to bring rival factions together to agree on a unity government. On 17 December 2015, partly as a result of UNSMIL’s efforts, Libyan representatives signed the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) in Morocco, creating the Government of National Accord (GNA) that took power in Tripoli in March 2016.

However, conflict has continued to flare up across the country while daily living standards have dropped due to instability, damaged infrastructure and economic decline. The GNA has faced major difficulties in exerting control outside of Tripoli, while institutional reunification and political reconciliation efforts have been slow to gain traction. To date, Libya remains a deeply divided country where militias wield more power than politicians, and smugglers, people traffickers and jihadist groups are able to exploit the population.

Approach of Multilateral Organisations

- **UNSMIL**: The most important and influential multilateral entity or mission currently in Libya is UNSMIL. The UN Security Council established UNSMIL in September 2011 at the request of the Libyan authorities with a mandate to support the country’s transitional authorities in their post-conflict efforts. Since the fragmentation of Libya’s central authorities in 2014, UNSMIL has focused on
facilitating peace talks and political negotiations through a political dialogue committee consisting of delegations from rival Libyan political factions.

- **UNDP**: Since the outbreak of conflict in 2014, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has established projects that aim to support Libya’s transition towards stabilisation, resilience, and an inclusive political agreement. UNDP’s main sustainable development project is the Stabilization Facility for Libya that aims to ‘bridge the critical period of transition from humanitarian relief to sustainable development and democratic governance’.

- **Search and Rescue Missions**: Entities such as the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) operate Search and Rescue missions to save, treat, and in some cases repatriate people fleeing by boat to Europe. In 2016 alone, more than 5,000 people drowned while making the Central Mediterranean crossing. However, most people making this dangerous crossing are not Libyan, but rather use Libya as a gateway from Africa to Europe.

**Approach of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Think Tanks**

- Since 2014, most international NGOs engaging with Libya focus on addressing humanitarian aspects of conflict within Libya, and migration through Libya and across the Mediterranean. NGOs involved in humanitarian assistance in Libya include the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

- Some international advocacy organisations accuse political factions and militias of violating international law and committing human rights abuses, including attacks on civilians, unlawful detention without trial and prisoner torture.

- Think tanks and research institutes have focused on the stalled political dialogue process and the economic, legislative, and social implications of the fragmentation of Libya’s institutions. Other organizations such as the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) and Eye on ISIS in Libya have delved into the expansion of the influence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other jihadist groups in the country.

- Hundreds of Libyan NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) formed after the 2011 uprisings, focussing on a range of issues. Although many Libyan organisations suspended operations or relocated to Tunis in 2014 due to security concerns, some remain active. They often work in partnership with international organisations to provide important humanitarian support and advocacy for local communities on the ground.

**Results on the Ground**

A relatively small number of non-military programs being implemented in Libya appear to have had a significant impact. It is important to understand these programs not only because of their perceived or demonstrated effectiveness, but also because these programs help show how non-military actors understand the situation in Libya.
Since its launch in May 2016, the Stabilization Facility for Libya (SFL), an initiative of Libya’s Government of National Accord (GNA) supported by UNDP and the international community, has approved US$10 million for rehabilitation and re-equipment for key locations across the country. One of the SFL’s key aims is to help the GNA provide tangible ‘quick-wins’ at the local level. In order to achieve this goal, the SFL has overseen the transfer of 22 ambulances, 5 garbage trucks, a fire engine, computers for schools, solar panels for hospitals, generators for hospitals and municipal internet service. Although the SFL provides valuable and much-needed infrastructural support in an inclusive manner, the ‘quick-win’ nature of the projects mean this approach is unlikely to result in long-term, larger-scale stabilisation or reconstruction.

A UNDP-facilitated dialogue resulted in the signing of a roadmap in August 2016. This roadmap addressed voluntary return of displaced Tawerghans to Misrata, and compensation for those affected. After five years of hostilities between these two communities, and the continued displacement of Tawerghans in camps across Libya, this agreement represented a significant breakthrough.

The UN-brokered political dialogue process was crucial in establishing the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA). However, analysts have highlighted that a broader collection of stakeholders, including members of armed groups, could have been involved in the process in order to bolster its chances of success.

Challenges

A number of challenges face international, non-military stakeholders engaging in Libya. Most international organisations do not have a forward presence on the ground, which severely limits their ability to implement or support projects. Without a field presence, it is difficult to conduct needs assessments, which help to reach the most marginalised and vulnerable communities, and ensure that the solutions to Libya’s challenges are Libyan-led. Furthermore, engagement through Libya’s central authorities is much more complex due to the fragmentation of government, financial institutions and armed groups. Since the GNA has very little power or control outside of Tripoli, non-military stakeholders at times struggle to determine which governing institutions or factions they should liaise with on different elements of their work. Lastly, conflict and economic decline means the prioritisation of short-term relief over long-term stabilisation and reconciliation, both in terms of donor funding and implementation. As a result, the trust and momentum built through sustained engagement with local communities on conflict resolution, transitional justice, and reconciliation mechanisms has largely been lost since fighting broke out in 2014.

Implications for NATO

International actors should move past a ‘containment’ approach, instead focussing on the root causes rather than the symptoms of Libya’s problems. Such a message was particularly evident in the statement of UN Envoy to Libya Martin Kobler to the UN Security Council in April 2017. In that statement he said, “It is my wish that the international community moves beyond containment. The focus on the fight against terrorism and migration alone is not enough. Migration and terrorism are symptoms not the root causes.”
Although the potential insecurity and destabilisation posed by terrorism and irregular migration from Libya are likely to be the most pressing concerns for NATO, these challenges will only be solved by addressing the violence, lack of governance, and institutional fragmentation, which have created the power vacuum that facilitates both human trafficking and extremist groups. Hence, the analysis presented above, and much more fully in the main text, point to a number of strategic implications for NATO.

- **Address the cause of the problem, not the symptom:** As Libya’s difficulties have multiplied, and an increasing number of people have suffered as a result, the reaction has been to solve the proximate symptom (e.g., deaths at sea or the rise of ISIL) rather than the underlying cause. Unless insecurity, economic decline, and other structural problems are addressed through an effective combination of political and economic/developmental engagement, extremism and migrant trafficking will persist.

- **Look beyond the formation of a unity government:** A unity government is a means to an end – one that will create the political conditions where Libyans can inclusively discuss and decide the future of their country. However, the existence of unified institutions is only the first step. The international community must provide support and direction to these institutions – through incentives and disincentives – to operate in a manner that will foster continued peace and stability.

- **Enable reconciliation at all levels:** The grievances and hostilities created through conflict are intrinsically personal. As a result, it will be integral for international actors to enable a process of reconciliation at the national level – while also supporting community-level conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts, which are too often overlooked in conflict-affected countries like Libya.

In pursuing these high-level implications, NATO and other international actors might consider more specific, tactical recommendations detailed below.

- **Work with local partners:** Libya’s difficult and often dangerous operating environment means that it is important to build strong partnerships with local NGOs and CSOs on the ground in order to better understand local needs, increase capacity to implement projects, and create trust between international and Libyan organisations.

- **Engage with local authorities:** The frailty of the central state, and the decentralized nature of Libya's power structures and mediation networks, suggests it is important to engage with authorities at a local level in order to build their capacity to provide governance, conflict mediation, and basic services.

- **Map local tensions and priorities:** Libya is a vast country where different communities often live hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles apart. Although many Libyans will have similar concerns and grievances, the impact on different communities will vary. Therefore, it is important to understand local priorities as well as high-level political priorities, which often do not align.

The suggestions above are among the many options that NATO may wish to consider and share with military and non-military partners. The list above is not exhaustive, but intended to serve as a point for future discussions within NATO and between NATO and other stakeholders.
INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the perspectives and approaches of non-military actors working in or matters relating to Libya. The research considers the period beginning mid-2014 and especially focuses on the approximately year and a half since the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) in late 2015. Before turning to the perspectives and activities of non-military actors, it is important to review the recent history of the Libyan uprising and the subsequent political security developments that provide the context for civilian interventions.

2011 Uprisings against Gaddafi

In early 2011, popular protests against Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi in Libya quickly escalated into armed conflict after Gaddafi’s forces opened fire on protestors and threatened to hunt them down. However, Libyan rebel movements quickly formed and fought back. By the end of February, these rebels groups had taken control of Benghazi, Libya’s second city in the eastern part of the country.

Due to the worsening violence, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 1970 on 26 February 2011 and imposed an arms embargo. However, the situation continued to deteriorate as the Gaddafi regime employed increasingly brutal tactics against protestors. On 17 March 2011, the UNSC issued Resolution 1973 which banned all flights in Libyan airspace in an effort to ‘protect civilians’. The resolution authorized member states to use ‘all necessary measures’ to protect Libyan civilians and civilian populated areas by enforcing the no fly zone. In an effort to enforce Resolution 1973, NATO launched Operation Unified Protector (OUP) in March 2011. OUP concluded in October 2011 following Gaddafi’s death and official liberation from his rule by the National Transitional Council (NTC) – Libya’s unelected interim authority.

In the months that followed, the NTC introduced institutional foundations for the country’s first democratic elections and worked to bring the myriad militias formed during and after the uprisings under the state’s control. However, although most militias became part of the NTC’s umbrella security organisations and received state salaries, many militias retained their own command structures and political agendas. Many foreign embassies and international organisations established offices in the country, and Libyans formed non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs) as well as political parties.

Conflict Ignites in 2014

On 7 July 2012, elections took place for the General National Congress (GNC), a transitional parliament based in Tripoli, and the country experienced a period of relative stability and growth. However, throughout 2013 and 2014, tensions grew between different political and militia factions. This resulted in the emergence of two distinct blocs. One bloc opposed Islamist groups and believed former regime figures could continue to play a role in Libya. This bloc united around Khalifa Haftar, a former general under Gaddafi. Haftar launched a military operation called Operation Dignity in May 2014 that aimed to eliminate what he termed to be ‘terrorist’ Islamist groups in Libya.
The other bloc comprised mainly Islamist factions that sought the removal of Gaddafi-era officials from positions of power. This bloc fared poorly in elections for a new parliament, the House of Representatives (HoR), in June 2014. As a result, and with an alliance of militias from key cities in western Libya, this bloc took control of Tripoli by force in July 2014 and reinstated the GNC. This forced the newly elected HoR to flee to eastern Libya where its members continued to operate. This marked not only the start of escalated conflict and civil war between various militias across Libya but also the division of Libya’s political, economic and military institutions into two or more competing entities. For a more detailed timeline of events, see Annex A.

This fracturing of Libya’s social and political fabric led to instability, conflict and confusion, particularly in Tripoli, which served as the base for most international organisations in the country. As a result, there was an exodus of foreign support from Libya in mid-2014. Many embassies and organisations relocated completely to Tunis. Others maintained only a skeleton team on the ground. As conflict escalated and institutions became more fractured, international and governmental assistance shifted away from governance and development support towards peace building efforts and humanitarian aid.

Figure 1
Libyan Institutions under the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA)

Source: Based on information and figures from the European Council on Foreign Relations.
Search for a Unity Government

Throughout 2015, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) attempted to bring rival factions together to agree on a unity government. On 17 December 2015, with UNSMIL support, the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) was signed in Skhirat, Morocco. It established a Presidential Council to function as the head of state and a consultative body called the High Council of State (HCS). The Presidential Council is responsible for appointing a Government of National Accord (GNA). The House of Representatives (HoR) remained as the legitimate parliament. The structure of these governing institutions is presented in Figure 1 (above). For more details on the different political entities, see Annex B.

The presidential Council took up office in Tripoli in March 2016, with the support of some powerful Tripoli militias. It appointed GNA ministers but the HoR has not approved them. In eastern Libya, Haftar’s power has grown since 2014, and he has pledged to obstruct peace and security efforts in the country unless he is appointed Commander of the Libyan Armed Forces. The GNA has faced major difficulties in exerting control outside of Tripoli, while institutional reunification and political reconciliation efforts have been slow to gain traction. As a result of divisions within the country, people traffickers, and jihadist groups are able to exploit the population.

At present, conflict continues to flare up across the country while daily living standards have dropped due to instability, damaged infrastructure and general economic decline.

Methods and Sources

This report draws on strategy and research documents, project reports and press releases from a wide range of international actors and organisations involved with Libya. It also builds upon the author’s several years of experience in Libya and upon research from other think tanks. This report will outline a variety of approaches and interventions, before looking at some of the impacts on the ground and drawing lessons from the successes and challenges experienced by different approaches.

NON-NATO APPROACHES TO LIBYA

When Libya splintered into competing governments and factions in August 2014, the international community found itself in a difficult position. It was not clear how international stakeholders could or should engage with the wide variety of governing institutions that had emerged. Furthermore, most organisations evacuated their in-country staff due to the deteriorating security conditions, making project implementation difficult. Throughout late 2014 and 2015, international actors largely suspended any post conflict, governance-type projects in Libya and increasingly focused on humanitarian relief.

In September 2014, the United Nations launched a Libya Humanitarian Appeal for the first time. However, despite this appeal, funding for humanitarian assistance in Libya dropped significantly in 2015 because of insecurity and political instability. The resources which donors were willing to provide focused primarily on immediate humanitarian needs while providing more limited financing to sectors associated with
reconstruction and long-term development like early recovery and education (see Table 1, next page). It was during this period that the numbers of mainly sub-Saharan refugees and migrants making the dangerous crossing across the Central Mediterranean from Libya to Europe increased significantly. The self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) also established territorial control over Sirte, a coastal city in central Libya, around this time.

This shift towards humanitarian assistance reflected the worsening conditions on the ground in Libya and did not necessarily mean that UN agencies and other organisations revised their understanding of the underlying structural and institutional challenges Libya was facing. Rather, UN agencies and other stakeholders recognized that insecurity and political divisions in Libya made it near impossible to implement activities that required strong governmental involvement and long-term engagement. The strategic objectives of the 2015-2016 appeal included improving the ‘resilience’ of affected communities through reconstruction and development activities. Meanwhile some other organisations have continued to support a small number of governance-oriented projects beyond the scope of the humanitarian appeal.

Table 1
Funding per Sector, UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Syria, 2015-2016
Ordered from most fully-funded to least-funded sectors/clusters (in % terms)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector/Cluster</th>
<th>Requested amount (USD, current values)</th>
<th>Funding received (US$, current values)</th>
<th>Funding received (% of requested amount)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shelter and NFIs</td>
<td>10,043,082</td>
<td>5,937,351</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>18,253,743</td>
<td>8,249,071</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination and support services</td>
<td>774,000</td>
<td>327,869</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>41,831,050</td>
<td>16,694,436</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
<td>2,576,200</td>
<td>999,994</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee and migrant response</td>
<td>43,693,133</td>
<td>14,535,698</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food security</td>
<td>40,483,596</td>
<td>13,005,076</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4,634,000</td>
<td>713,489</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Recovery</td>
<td>10,178,000</td>
<td>1,000,001</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>172,466,804</td>
<td>67,637,594</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UN Financial Tracking Service, accessed 10 May 2017

Overall, funding for recovery and reconstruction in Libya has remained limited. There are hopes, however, that the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) will eventually pave the way for a return to governance programming and longer-term reconstruction and development initiatives.
Multilateral Organisations

A wide variety of multilateral organisations are engaging with Libya, including the United Nations, the International Organisation for Migration, the World Bank, and many others. This section presents some information concerning a selection of multilateral entities that have published materials related to their work in Libya.

UNSMIL: Since 2011, one of the most important and influential multilateral entities in Libya has been the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). The UN Security Council established UNSMIL in September 2011 at the request of the post-Gaddafi Libyan authorities. It has a mandate to support the country's transitional authorities, and since December 2016, it has been tasked with supporting the LPA. Before the stability situation worsened in 2014, UNSMIL’s activities in Libya covered a range of post-conflict areas, including political affairs, human rights, transitional justice, mine action, the demobilisation of armed groups, social and economic development, women’s empowerment, and more. However, since the fragmentation of Libya’s central authorities, UNSMIL has focused on facilitating peace talks and political negotiations between rival factions. The UN Security Council’s desire for a swift resolution to the political instability in Libya has driven this approach. The UNSC has imposed new sanctions on individuals and entities obstructing or undermining the successful completion of the political transition and tightened the arms embargo against Libya.

UN Special Envoy to Libya Bernardino Leon, who served in that role from August 2014 to November 2015, attempted to facilitate talks to end the fighting, restore political unity and revive the economy. He established a political dialogue committee made up of delegations from rival political factions. After nearly a year of negotiations, a proposed power-sharing deal had the support of most of the dialogue participants, but had been rejected by key political leaders and powerful military factions.

The priority of the international community and the UNSC at that point was to establish a Libyan government that could legitimately represent Libya in high-level, inter-governmental discussions on two key issues: the rise of ISIL and the growth of migration flows emanating from Libya. As a result, Leon and other international stakeholders put pressure on the Libyan delegations to accept a deal, and the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) was signed in December 2015. However, because the LPA lacked the support of key power brokers on the ground, the agreement has not been implemented in full. The international community, including NATO, recognizes the Government of National Accord (GNA), yet key militia factions and politicians actively oppose the GNA’s authority and continue to reject the LPA. Furthermore, conflict continues to flare between rival factions, creating a situation where the international community has begun to see the implementation of the LPA as an objective in its own right, rather than a means to an end. That is, rather than using the LPA as a jumping off point for strengthening governance and the economy, much non-military effort is focused on bolstering that agreement in order to prevent it from collapsing.
**UNDP**: Since the outbreak of conflict in 2014, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has established projects that aim to support Libya's transition towards an inclusive political agreement, stabilisation and resilience. UNDP’s ‘Democratic Governance and Peacebuilding’ initiatives provide support for Libyan authorities and civil society actors in their efforts to promote national reconciliation, support transitional justice and build the capacity of the GNA. UNDP’s main sustainable development project is the GNA’s Stabilization Facility for Libya (SFL). It aims to ‘bridge the critical period of transition from humanitarian relief to sustainable development and democratic governance’ by rehabilitating critical infrastructure and enhancing the capacity of local authorities to address the needs of the population.

**Box 1: Migration and Smuggling in Libya**

Smuggling has long played an important role in Libya, with well-established trade routes allowing goods and people to be transported from central Africa up through the Sahara Desert and across the Mediterranean, as well as in the opposite direction. Libya’s porous borders and sparsely populated interior meant that even under Muammar Gaddafi’s regime, smuggling networks were well embedded in certain parts of Libya and provided much needed income sources for remote communities. The smuggling of people along these routes is not a new phenomenon. Under Gaddafi, many sub-Saharan Africans travelled to Libya illegally to find work, but only a minority then paid smugglers to take them across the Mediterranean to Malta or Italy.

However, with the outbreak of the 2011 uprisings, many migrants and refugees already living in Libya fled north across the Mediterranean. Following the fall of Gaddafi, the situation stabilised for a period but, as the situation grew increasingly chaotic, militias with connections to the smuggling trade were able to conduct their activities with increasing impunity. When the Libyan state fractured into multiple warring factions in 2014, the number of migrants and refugees reaching European shores via Libya reached record levels. The people smugglers took advantage of the insecurity to dispatch as many boatloads of people as they could, as migrants already in Libya rushed to escape the violence. Libya became known as the gateway to Europe for refugees fleeing violence and conflict in their countries of origin, and migrants seeking a better life despite the dangers.

In 2016 alone, over 5000 people died while making the Central Mediterranean crossing. The majority of deaths are from drowning after the inflatable dinghies or wooden fishing vessels capsize or sink. Conditions on land in Libya are not much better. IOM reports that migrants presently experience extreme insecurity in Libya, including arbitrary arrest by non-state actors, detention for indefinite periods of time, bonded labor, harassment, and general exploitation. According to IOM, the total population of migrants in Libya currently is estimated to be around 700,000 – 1 million people, mainly coming from Egypt, Niger, Sudan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Syria, and Mali.

**UNHCR**: The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) provides support to refugees and asylum seekers as well as to internally displaced people (IDPs). UNHCR continues to maintain a presence in Libya but it has limited humanitarian access as a result of insecurity. It relies heavily on local partners to carry out its
activities. UNHCR’s priorities for Libya in 2017 are to assist the 38,000 UNHCR-registered asylum-seekers in Libya (out of an estimated 100,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the country) among others.

IOM: UNHCR in Libya works closely with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which is the UN agency focused on migration. Although IOM evacuated its entire international staff from Libya in 2014, IOM Libya states it remains fully operational. IOM has facilitated the humanitarian repatriation of 3,045 migrants from 27 different countries to their countries of origin since August 2014. IOM also supports Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) for Libya, a data source that provides accurate and timely information on the locations and movements of IDPs, returnees and migrants in Libya (see Box 1) in order to coordinate assistance and advocacy.

The organisation is working with the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG), the Libyan Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), the Italian Coast Guard and other relevant actors, to establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to provide assistance to migrants rescued at sea. In 2016 alone, Frontex, which is part of the European Union, recorded 181,126 irregular border crossings on the Central Mediterranean route (see Figure 2). IOM is not attempting to prevent migration but rather offers legal protection and humanitarian aid to vulnerable people who face severe medical issues, or who are being targeted by traffickers and so on.

World Bank and IMF: The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have had little active involvement with Libya since 2014. However, in late 2016, officials from the World Bank and IMF attended a series of economic dialogue meetings between representatives of Libya’s key financial institutions. The aim was for rival Libyan factions to agree on actions to halt the country’s economic decline. The World Bank’s April 2017 outlook warned that the Libyan economy continued to suffer from recession in 2016. Libya lost half of its pre-revolution gross domestic product (GDP) while budget revenues and exports
proceeds reached the lowest amounts on record because of low oil production and relatively low world market prices. As shown in Figure 3, the country’s GDP was $81.91bn in 2012, falling to $29.15bn in 2015.

The international community often overlooks the economic aspect of Libya’s current crisis, focusing instead on resolving political rifts. Yet the political and economic challenges are closely linked. Arguably, many of Libya’s current divisions have their roots in the lack of trust between different parties over how Libya’s wealth should be divided. Furthermore, helping to create jobs and revive the Libyan economy is important for building popular support behind the LPA and any current or future unity governments.

![Figure 3](GDP Decline in Libya (US$, billions, current value), 2010-2015)

**Source:** World Bank, World Development Indicators, accessed 5 May 2017

**International NGOs**

Most international NGOs engaging with Libya since 2014 have focused on the humanitarian response to the migrant crisis. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), for instance, initiated search and rescue operations in international waters off Libya in early 2015 using three vessels to conduct rescues at sea. MSF also provided post-rescue medical care as well as food, water, clothing and information to those pulled from the sea. Other international search and rescue NGOs including the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), Sea-Watch and Pro-Activ, conduct similar operations.

Since July, MSF has also been running mobile clinics in migrant detention centres in Tripoli and its surroundings under the administration of Libya’s Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is active in Libya although since 2014, it has relied heavily on the Libyan Red Crescent and other local partners to conduct its activities, providing thousands of displaced people with essential household items, food, and medical supplies in 2016.
International advocacy organisations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International document human rights abuses in Libya where possible. They accuse government forces and militias of committing serious violations of international law and human rights abuses. These violations and abuses include indiscriminate attacks on populated areas, direct attacks on civilians, detaining people without trial and torturing prisoners. A joint letter from ten international and Libyan human rights organisations addressed to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in February 2017 called for the HRC to establish a mandate of an Independent Expert on Libya to monitor and report on the human rights situation.
Since conflict escalated in 2014, coverage of Libya in the international media and policy sphere has been limited relative to crises such as Syria or Yemen. Think tanks and research institutes that have produced research, analysis and policy recommendations on Libya have tended to focus on the stalled political dialogue process, the economic, legislative and social implications of the fragmentation of the country’s institutions and, lastly, the expansion of the influence of ISIL and other jihadist groups in the country (see Box 2).

Publications on Libya from Chatham House, the Brookings Institution and the Atlantic Council highlight the need for the de-escalation of conflict, a political solution (rather than a military one), and the notion that the emergence of ISIL in Libya is a symptom of the chaos and lack of governance in the country, rather than the cause of it. The European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) has covered similar themes. It published a report in January 2017 that called for European stakeholders to help broaden Libyan and international support for the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA). ECFR’s analysis suggested that economic support and programmes would be particularly important in order to solidify military gains made against ISIL. Eye on ISIS in Libya, a think tank exclusively monitoring and analysing the activities of ISIL and other jihadist actors in Libya, has emerged to address this issue and to document the various strategies that Libyan and international actors are adopting to counter ISIL.

In November 2016, the International Crisis Group published a report calling for international actors involved in the diplomatic process to converge on common goals, push for a renegotiation of the LPA, and use their influence to restrain ‘spoilers’ (i.e., those groups which are trying to undermine the agreement). The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has focused on more development-related issues such as the

**Box 2: ISIL in Libya**

The existence of violent jihadist groups in Libya is not a new phenomenon. However, the instability and lack of governance in certain parts of Libya following the 2011 uprisings, particularly in the East, allowed such groups to recruit, expand and seize territory. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) capitalized on this instability and in late 2014 established a satellite branch in Libya. By mid-2015, ISIL had conducted several terrorist attacks across the country, taken full control of the central coastal city of Sirte and had also established a presence in other cities. In May 2016, militias aligned with the Government of National Accord (GNA) launched an offensive to retake Sirte from ISIL, requesting air support from the US in July 2016. The US launched Operation Odyssey Lightening in August 2016, formally concluding it in December 2016 after ISIL had been driven out of the city. However, the group is far from defeated and ISIL fighters are reported to be regrouping in the vast deserts and remote communities of southern Libya. Although the GNA was able to establish a military coalition to fight against ISIS, there is currently no unified, anti-ISIL political coalition; local efforts have focused almost exclusively on defeating ISIL and other jihadists militarily rather than ideologically.
security and justice sectors in Libya as well as peace building efforts. In 2016, USIP published a report analysing the impact of cross-border transactions on peacebuilding efforts in Libya. It argued that local and regional actors working toward a unified vision for Libya must factor in cross-border, civil society exchanges and the tensions that affect them.

Figure 5
Areas under the Control of Various Factions in Libya, January 2017

Local NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

Gaddafi banned the formation of Libyan NGOs and CSOs under his rule, but following the 2011 uprisings, Libyans established hundreds of local organisations focusing on a range of issues. Although many Libyan organisations suspended operations or relocated to Tunis in 2014 due to security concerns, some remain active. These organisations often work in partnership with international organisations to provide
important humanitarian support and advocacy for local communities on the ground. In terms of advocacy, there are organisations which aim to monitor and document human rights abuses in Libya, some that advocate specifically for women’s rights and a stronger voice for women with the ongoing political dialogue process, and others that campaign for more rights and protection for non-Arab minorities in Libya. Organisations such as the Libyan Red Crescent provide humanitarian assistance to those in need.

**IMPACT ON THE GROUND**

The examples noted in Section 2 suggest that since 2014 much of the international community – along with many Libyan stakeholders – has focused on conflict resolution, peace building and humanitarian aid. Despite concerted efforts by many multilateral and non-governmental organisations to resolve the ongoing hostilities and chaos in the country, Libya remains unstable and divided. Nevertheless, some interventions have had tangible, positive impacts on the ground in Libya. It is thus important to consider the following examples and potential implications for future strategies and activities in Libya.

**Examples of Concrete Results**

**Stabilization Facility for Libya:** Since its launch in May 2016, the Stabilization Facility for Libya (SFL) has approved US$10 million for rehabilitation and re-equipment for Benghazi, Kikla, Obari, Sebha and Sirte. The SFL is an initiative of the Government of National Accord (GNA), supported by UNDP and the international community. One of the SFL’s key aims is to help the GNA provide very visible and tangible ‘quick-wins’ at a local level. To achieve this it has overseen the transfer of 22 ambulances, 5 garbage trucks, a fire engine, computers for schools, solar panels, and generators for hospitals, and municipal internet service. The SFL has successfully raised donations from a range of international partners, and the GNA has pledged to match their contributions. UNDP has succeeded in providing basic services to areas affected by conflict for a number of reasons. Firstly, the initiative has both funding and public support from the GNA and a wide range of international actors. Secondly, the SFL board has ensured that the locations targeted for support cover eastern, western and southern Libya to avoid accusations of bias or neglect of certain communities. Thirdly, the GNA, local authorities, civil society and the affected population have jointly agreed the priorities for each location to ensure appropriate support is provided. Finally, UNDP’s ability to implement these projects has been strengthened through partnership with remaining local and international organisations on the ground.

While the SFL is providing valuable and much-needed infrastructural support in an inclusive manner, its success must be seen within the framework of its mandate to provide ‘quick-win’ projects. The very reason SFL is attractive to international donors, Libyan authorities, and affected communities alike is that its results are clear-cut and tangible. The SFL targets symptoms of Libya’s conflict, particularly the destruction and deterioration of infrastructure, rather than tackling the root causes. This does not take away its value and importance, but neither can this be a model for all engagement in Libya.
Search and Rescue Missions: Search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean save lives and provide valuable assistance to vulnerable people. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) rescued 1,480 migrants off the Libya coast in the month of March alone, while 1,139 stranded migrants were able to return home to their countries of origin. The Libyan authorities do not currently have the operational capacity or the political will to prevent smugglers’ boats from leaving Libyan shores. Consequently, IOM, UNHCR and other similar organisations provide an important lifeline to vulnerable migrants and refugees. However, these interventions do not address the drivers of migration and do little to improve the conditions for migrants in Libya.

The provision of training and equipment to the severely underequipped and understaffed Libyan coastguard would increase their capacity to deny smugglers access, thereby preventing more deaths in Libyan waters. However, migrants extracted from Libyan waters are returned to Libya where they often face dire conditions in migrant detention facilities, including bonded labour, torture and rape. To be humane and effective, efforts to strengthen the Libyan coastguard must focus on improving detention facilities and expanding access to legal protection. IOM recently started a pilot human rights training program for staff at migrant detention facilities in Libya in an attempt to help improve conditions. Ultimately, however, migrants and refugees will be best served by strengthening peace, stability and the rule of law in Libya.

UNDP’s Transitional Justice Initiative: UNDP’s Transitional Justice initiative is an example of a project with a less quantifiable focus that has nevertheless had some concrete success in facilitating dialogue between communities from the towns of Misrata and Tawergha. Misratans accuse Tawerghans of committing murder and other crimes against them during the 2011 uprisings. In retaliation, militias from Misrata forced Tawergha’s 30,000 residents to leave the town. The UNDP-facilitated dialogue resulted in the signing of a roadmap in August 2016 addressing the voluntary return of displaced Tawerghans to Misrata, and compensation for those affected.

After five years of hostilities between these communities, this agreement represented a significant breakthrough. It highlights the importance of sustained, bottom up approaches to conflict resolution and transitional justice in a country where power, authority, and trust are built locally, not centrally. The point of a grand political bargain like the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) is to provide a framework within which the country can function. It should not be, nor can it ever, a substitute for local governance and locally led solutions.

UN-Facilitated Dialogue Process: Finally, the UN-brokered political dialogue process is an important example of an international approach to Libya that resulted in a concrete result—the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA). To achieve this, UN Envoy to Libya Bernardino Leon spent several months negotiating with different political factions who often refused to meet in person. The dialogue process also had the support of the international community. The UN, the EU, and other individual countries imposed sanctions and travel bans against individuals who sought to derail the negotiations, and they pressured Libyan actors to reach an agreement.
However, the eventual signing of the LPA was driven more by the international community’s need for an internationally-recognised government than by the willingness of different Libyan factions to compromise and unify. Most of Libya’s powerful militias – the main power brokers on the ground – have actively opposed the LPA and the Government of National Accord (GNA) since its creation. The existence of the LPA on paper demonstrates the power of the international community to create incentives and disincentive for peace and unity. However, the difficulties of implementing the LPA in practice highlight the importance of supporting bottom-up peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives that can respond to local needs and priorities rather than international ones.

**Challenges of Creating Concrete Results**

As the examples mentioned above have demonstrated, there are many challenges facing any organisation operating in Libya. Many approaches have not produced any concrete results on the ground, while some interventions have prioritized tangible short-term results at the expense of less tangible, but potentially more sustainable, long-term benefits.

**Lack of presence on the ground:** Firstly, most international organisations no longer have a presence on the ground in Libya, thereby limiting their ability to directly implement or support projects. Many have relocated to Tunis and conduct programs for Libyans in Tunisia or other countries. However, the impact of projects delivered overseas is often limited. Without staff in country, it is very difficult to conduct accurate needs assessments, reach the most marginalised communities, and build mutual trust between international organisations, Libyan partners and beneficiaries.

Although many international organisations have worked with local partners to implement their projects in Libya, many areas remain inaccessible for locals due to ongoing conflict and instability. As a result, the areas most in need of humanitarian support or post-conflict development activities are often the ones least likely to receive it. Southern Libya is a key example of this phenomenon. It is a vast, remote, and sparsely populated area that has long been neglected by Libyan authorities, foreign embassies, and international organisations alike. The region continues to suffer from conflict, lack of basic infrastructure, and a weak economy.

**Fragmentation of Libyan institutions and state:** Secondly, the fragmentation of Libya’s government, financial institutions, and militias has meant that engaging with Libya’s central authorities has become complex. Although the Government of National Accord (GNA) is internationally recognised, very little power or control reside outside of Tripoli. As a result, organisations implementing projects outside the GNA controlled areas are often unclear with whom they can legitimately collaborate. This particularly applies to projects focused on governance, democratic institutions, or economic reform, which would usually seek to engage with central state actors. However, these sorts of activities as a result are typically suspended throughout much of the country. One way to avoid this would be to work with local government actors, using a model similar to the Stabilization Facility for Libya. Libya’s sparse population

2 Although as of late, there have been positive signs. For example, following the 22 May 2017 Manchester bombing, the UK coordinated with the Tripoli RADA Special Deterrence Forces and within two days had apprehended the father and brother of the suicide bomber responsible for the attack.
density means that the traditional, centralized approach to international aid and development may not be the most effective way to create positive change within the country.

**Need for short-term humanitarian aid:** Thirdly, conflict and economic decline mean short-term humanitarian programming has been prioritised over longer-term stabilisation, reconstruction, and reconciliation activities. Donors are far more willing to fund these basic relief activities, and international organisations are currently better positioned to focus on the short-term given the political and security situations. As a result, the momentum built on conflict resolution, transitional justice, and reconciliation mechanisms are mostly lost since fighting broke out in 2014. Local communities that were closely involved in these activities have expressed a degree of disappointment about the international community’s retreat from these issues and from their communities – thus eroding the trust earlier built.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR NATO**

International actors should move past a ‘containment’ approach, instead focusing on the root causes rather than the symptoms of Libya’s problems. Such a message was particularly evident in the statement of UN Envoy to Libya Martin Kobler to the UN Security Council in April 2017. He stated: “It is my wish that the international community moves beyond containment. The focus on the fight against terrorism and migration alone is not enough. Migration and terrorism are symptoms not the root causes.”

Although NATO is likely to focus primarily on terrorism within Libya, and irregular migration from Libya, these challenges will only be solved by also addressing Libya’s violence, lack of governance and institutional fragmentation. These three core components, which have been widely recognized by non-military actors, have created a power vacuum that allows human trafficking and extremist groups to grow and spread.

*Hence, the analysis presented thus far, points to a number of strategic implications for NATO in the sections below.*

- **Address the cause of the problem, not the symptom:** As Libya’s difficulties have multiplied, and an increasing number of people have suffered as a result, the reaction has been to solve the proximate symptom (e.g., deaths at sea or the rise of ISIL) rather than the underlying causes. Unless insecurity, economic decline, and other structural problems are addressed through an effective combination of political and economic/developmental engagement, extremism and migrant trafficking will persist.

- **Look beyond the formation of a unity government:** A unity government is a means to an end – one that will create the political conditions where Libyans can inclusively discuss and decide the future of their country. However, the existence of unified institutions is only the first step. The international community must provide support and direction to these institutions – through incentives and disincentives – to operate in a manner that will foster continued peace and stability.

- **Enable reconciliation at all levels:** The grievances and hostilities created through conflict are intrinsically personal. As a result, it will be essential for international actors to enable a process of
reconciliation at the national level – while also supporting community-level conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts, which are too often overlooked in conflict-affected countries like Libya.

In pursuing these high-level implications, NATO and other international actors might consider more specific, tactical recommendations detailed below.

- **Work with local partners:** Libya’s difficult and often dangerous operating environment means that it is important to build strong partnerships with local NGOs and CSOs on the ground in order to better understand local needs, increase capacity to implement projects, and create trust between international and Libyan organisations.

- **Engage with local authorities:** The frailty of the central state, and the decentralized nature of Libya’s power structures and mediation networks, means it is important to engage with authorities at a local level in order to build their capacity to provide governance, conflict mediation, and basic services.

- **Map local tensions and priorities:** Libya is a vast country where different communities often live hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles apart. Although many Libyans will have similar concerns and grievances, the impact on different communities will vary. Therefore, it is important to understand local priorities as well as high-level political priorities, which often do not align.

The suggestions above are among the many options that NATO may wish to consider and share with military and non-military partners. The list above is not exhaustive, but intends to serve as a point for future discussions within NATO, and between NATO and other stakeholders.
REFERENCES

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https://unsmil.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=miXuYkQAQg%3D&tabid=3559&mid=6187&language=fr


ANNEX A: Timeline of Key Events and Developments in Libya (2011 – 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Political Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15 February</td>
<td>Protests outside Benghazi courthouse</td>
<td>Fighting between Gaddafi forces and rebel militias across the</td>
<td>Gaddafi</td>
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<td>17 February</td>
<td>Planned protests take place across Libya</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 March</td>
<td>UNSC adopts Resolution 1973 authorizing a no fly zone in Libya</td>
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<td>22 March</td>
<td>NATO launches Operation Unified Protector (OUP)</td>
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<td>3 August</td>
<td>Temporary Constitutional Declaration is adopted by the National</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transitional Council (NTC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 October</td>
<td>Gaddafi is killed in Sirte</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 October</td>
<td>NTC declares Libya’s official liberation from Gaddafi’s rule</td>
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<td>NTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 October</td>
<td>OUP concludes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 July</td>
<td>Elections are held for Libya’s new parliament, the General National</td>
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<td>GNC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Congress (GNC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Political Isolation Law is issued, banning anyone who had held a key</td>
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<td>official post between 1969 and 2011 from political office</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 February</td>
<td>Elections are held for the Constitutional Drafting Assembly</td>
<td></td>
<td>HoR/ GNC</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Former general Khalifa Haftar officially launches Operation</td>
<td>Fighting between Haftar’s broadly anti-Islamist Operation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dignity in Benghazi, a military operation to eliminate Islamist</td>
<td>Dignity militants, and more Islamist-aligned Operation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>factions in the city</td>
<td>Libya Dawn militias</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 June</td>
<td>Elections are held for the House of Representatives (HoR), a new</td>
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<td></td>
<td>parliament to replace the GNC</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Islamist-aligned militias and political blocs in Tripoli launch</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Operation Libya Dawn to counter Haftar’s anti-Islamist Operation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dignity and fight to take control of Tripoli International Airport</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and other key sites in the capital.</td>
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<td>August</td>
<td>The newly-elected HoR moves to Tobruk to begin operations, while the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GNC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 November 2017</td>
<td>Tripoli Supreme Court rules that the HoR elections were invalid</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>ISIL establishes an ‘emirate’ in Derna</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015 January - May</td>
<td>ISIL conducts terrorist attacks in Libya, takes control of Sirte</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 December 2015</td>
<td>The Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), outlining a new unity government structure, is signed in Skhirat, Morocco.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016 March 2016</td>
<td>The Government of National Accord (GNA) establishes headquarters in Tripoli but faces challenges exerting its control and getting approval from HoR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2017 January to present</td>
<td>International efforts underway to amend LPA and resolve power vacuum</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Conflict between**
GNA-aligned forces, and Haftar-aligned forces

**GNA**
HoR, GNC and GNA continue to fight for power
ANNEX B: Key Actors and Acronyms

Armed groups

Libyan National Army (LNA)

_The umbrella of militias commanded by Haftar. The LNA is not the Libyan Army as it does not have power outside eastern Libya, nor does it have civilian oversight._

Operation Dignity

_Military operation launched in May 2014 by Khalifa Haftar in eastern Libya with the aim of defeating a broadly defined group of “terrorists” in Benghazi. It had the support of Zintani militias in western Libya._

Operation Libya Dawn

_Military operation launched in July 2014 to counter Operation Dignity. It mainly comprised religiously conservative and Islamist militias from Misrata and western Libya._

Misrata

_A wealthy port city in western Libya that played a key role in defeating Gaddafi’s forces during the 2011 uprisings. Misratan militias are one of the most powerful armed factions in Libya and tend to be religiously conservative. The military campaign against ISIL in Sirte was led by Misratan militias._

Zintan

_A small town in the mountains south of Tripoli that played a key role in defeating Gaddafi’s forces during the 2011 uprisings. They were driven out of Tripoli by Libya Dawn in 2014 but retain some influence._

Political Entities

Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA)

_A body elected in February 2014 with the mandate to draft a new constitution for Libya._

General National Congress (GNC)

_Libya’s first interim parliament elected in July 2012, with headquarters in Tripoli. It was meant to be replaced by the HoR in June 2014 but some GNC members refused to hand over power._

Government of National Accord (GNA)

_The LPA-brokered unity government appointed by the PC, and in theory approved by the HoR._

High Council of State (HCS)

_A LPA-brokered consultative body mainly comprising former GNC members, with a say over some high level appointments._
House of Representatives (HoR)
Libya’s second interim parliament elected in June 2014. The HoR took up residence in Tobruq in eastern Libya after Libya Dawn and the GNA drove it out of Tripoli. The HoR remains Libya’s internationally recognised parliament under the Libyan Political Agreement.

Libyan Political Agreement (LPA)
A UN-brokered political unity deal signed in December 2015 which established new executive and consultative bodies to rule Libya.

National Transitional Council (NTC)
Libya’s interim authority formed during the early days of the 2011 uprisings.

Presidential Council (PC)
A nine member, LPA-brokered body that functions as the head of state, headed by the prime minister.

Individuals

Bernardino Leon
UN Special Envoy to Libya Aug 2014 – Nov 2015.

Khalifa Haftar
A former general under Gaddafi who defected in the 1980s and now leads the Dignity/LNA faction in eastern Libya.

Martin Kobler
UN Special Envoy to Libya Nov 2015 – present.

Muammar al-Gaddafi