

Berlin Conference Has Not Brought Peace to Libya

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The Berlin Conference on Libya held on Sunday will not end the conflict in the North African country, especially as the leaders of the two opposing Libyan factions refused to face each other. In fact, Fayeze al-Sarraj of the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated government in Tripoli and Field Marshal Khalifa Belqasim Haftar of the opposing Libyan National Army (LNA) could not even tolerate each other so much so that they could not be in the same room during the conference.

Many commentators who denounce U.S. intervention across the world were surprisingly disappointed by the so-called void left by Washington in certain regions of the globe, particularly in Libya where a division of pro-Haftar and pro-Sarraj factions have emerged. The U.S. has been unusually quiet about the situation in Libya, suggesting it is not willing to get involved despite the critical role it played in destroying the country in 2011. The torture, sodomy and murder of long-time Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi by NATO-backed jihadists, divided the country into differing competing factions, with the latest flareup killing 2,000 people and leaving a further 160,000 displaced, according to the UN.

The fact that Haftar and Sarraj refused to even be in the same room gives an indication of the little progress the Berlin conference made towards a peaceful settlement in Libya, despite the organization of the conference by German leader Angela Merkel after her contacts in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin. This was even despite the participation of all five members of the UN Security Council (U.S., UK, France, China and Russia), as well as Germany, Italy, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria and the Republic of Congo. Tunisia were invited at the last minute, in which they rejected in protest to the disrespect, [and Greece](#), who has had a key role and position in the latest destabilization in Libya, was not even invited by Merkel to much confusion by many analysts.

Although discussions went on all day with a point of the final draft of the conference's resolution calling for a "permanent ceasefire," fighting broke out between Sarraj and Haftar forces within hours of the end of the conference. The resolutions also called for an end of air warfare using drones. This is unlikely to occur with militias belonging to Sarraj receiving Turkish-made drones and the LNA using UAE supplied drones. Despite a supposed arms embargo, there is little secret that both sides are receiving significant war material from their backers. Haftar mostly receives his equipment over the Egyptian border while Sarraj gets it via sea, which can then become very complicated for his militias if a sea blockade is imposed by Greece, Egypt or an international coalition.

Being a key reason for the flareup in violence in Libya, French president Emmanuel Macron did not hold back on his criticisms of Turkey for sending mercenaries from Syria, that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [described as "extremists,"](#) to Libya. It has to be

remembered that [The Guardian revealed](#) that each extremist fighting in Libya from Syria gets paid \$2,000, has healthcare guarantees and receives Turkish nationality.

With Turkey adamant in continuing to support the Tripoli government, they have also pulled Greece into Libyan affairs because of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Sarraj to [steal Greek maritime space](#) that is rich in oil and gas. Because Greece was dragged into this complex situation in Libya, Haftar before the Berlin Conference made a visit to Greece where he met top officials in the country, including the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and top intelligence figures to seek diplomatic and political support against Turkish actions. With Turkey having adversarial relations with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, alliances are forming to counter Erdoğan's hegemonic attempts in the region, with Greece strengthening relations with both Arab countries, as well as Egypt, Cyprus, Israel and Haftar. Ankara has failed to find any external support in the region and has [made itself isolated](#). Erdoğan left the Berlin conference early, with reports speculating that he was dismayed with the provision that the Turkish-backed militias in Libya had to be disarmed.

Libya is an oil rich country and strategically located in the middle of the Mediterranean. It is also the gateway between Europe and terrorist organizations based in the Sahel. Because of these reasons, there are far too many conflicting interests from international players for the conflict to conclude with negotiated agreements, let alone in one day without the participation of other key players, Greece and Saudi Arabia.

Erdoğan days ago, said that the Mediterranean will be the center of focus for Turkey's foreign policy in 2020, meaning that the situation in Libya is unlikely to be resolved so long as the Eurasian country continues to back jihadist forces operating in the North African country. With Turkey failing to remove Syrian President Bashar al-Assad from power since it became a key organizer in anti-government efforts in 2011, the LNA advancing on Tripoli which will mean the removal of Sarraj from power, and finding no international support to steal Greek maritime space, Erdoğan has failed in his attempts for Eastern Mediterranean hegemony, which will increasingly make him irrational in decision-making. For these reasons, the Berlin Conference was nothing but a failure to achieve peace in Libya so-long as Turkey searches for regional dominance and backs radical forces.

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