

Is There a Third Way in Libya? What can Break the Deadlock in Libya's Civil War?

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What can break the deadlock in Libya's civil war?

Ghassan Salame, the UN's point man for Libya began his analysis and brief to the Security Council last week by emphasising that the armed conflict in Libya "shows no signs of abating". He added

"The war around Tripoli has already left nearly 1100 dead, including 106 civilians. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled their homes in the capital and neighbouring districts as a result of the fighting, tens of thousands crossing the border to Tunisia seeking safety for their families."

Salame detailed that more than 100,000 men, women and children have been immediately exposed to what amounts to 'war frontlines', and over 400,000 more in areas are directly impacted by clashes. Saying further that the civil war has worsened humanitarian conditions and hindered access to food, health and other life-saving services.

Both sides have ignored calls for de-escalation and have intensified air drone campaigns, with precision airstrikes. Supplying both sides in almost equal numbers of weapons is, on one side, Turkey supporting the essentially Muslim Brotherhood backed Serraj Tripoli Government while a combination of the UAE, Egypt and France appears to support (and supply defence equipment to) Field Marshall Khalifa Haftar's LNA Army from East Libya.

The West is actually maintaining military parity for both sides which seems a deliberate policy that simply prolongs the conflict. Why one may ask? Another issue.

The geographical scope of the violence has spread. On the 26 July, Serraj's Government of National Accord forces launched an air attack on the main rear base of Haftar's LNA in the Jufra region. In retaliation on 27 July, Haftar's forces launched airstrikes at a Government of National Accord airbase in Misrata.

And so it goes on.

There is increased recruitment by both sides using foreign mercenaries, alongside the use of heavy weapons and ground attacks. Forces on both sides have failed to observe their obligations under international humanitarian law.

A most tragic example of indiscriminate attacks was the airstrike that hit a migrant detention centre in Tajoura on 2 July, killing 53 and injuring at least 87, including children. What is even more appalling is that the precise coordinates of the Tajoura detention centre,

and other such centres, were shared by the UN with the parties following a previous incident in May. While the vast majority of the fatalities were due to the airstrike, several victims were cruelly shot down fleeing the scene by those GNA militias guarding the centre. To make matters even worse, following UN supported efforts to move the migrants to more secure locations, authorities have in recent days deposited more than 200 migrants back into the same bombed facility.

Salame explained

“The tragedy of up to 150 migrant deaths at sea on 25 July again underlines the urgent need to address the root causes of the migrant issue and their immediate suffering.”

Haftar’s LNA maintains that they will not stop their attack until Tripoli is conquered while Serraj’s GNA forces insist they can push Haftar’s forces back to eastern Libya.

Libya’s present and future need not be taken hostage by the warring parties.

Libya has become a country of the West’s experimentation of new military technologies and recycling of old weapons. Itself a crime against humanity. Armed drones, armoured vehicles and pick-up trucks fitted with heavy armaments machine guns, recoilless rifles, mortar and rocket launchers have been recently transferred to Libya by unscrupulous foreign countries with their own selfish interests being their uppermost consideration.

Without the full cooperation of all UN Member States regarding the implementation of the measures related to the arms embargo in accordance with Security Council resolution 2473, the flow of weapons to Libya will continue to fuel this needless conflict.

The security vacuum created by the conflict in and around Tripoli continues to be exploited by Da’esh in remote areas in the country’s southern and central regions.

Even more worrisome are the indications that the arsenal of weapons being delivered by foreign supporters to one side or the other is either falling into the hands of terrorist groups or being sold to them. Some extremist elements have sought to legitimize themselves by joining the battle. This is nothing short of a recipe for disaster, not only for the safety and security of Libyans themselves, but to Libya’s neighbors and international peace and security.

That there are two parallel oil companies, one in the East and the original one in the West both called National Oil Corporations that both continue efforts to sell oil confuses the issues surrounding the sale of oil greatly. There is a serious danger of ‘the weaponization of oil’ in this conflict, the consequences of which would be disastrous to the overall Libyan economy.

There has been an unacceptable spike in enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions since the outset of hostilities. On 17 July, elected House of Representatives member Ms. Siham Sergewa was violently abducted from her home in Benghazi by an unknown group with sympathies towards Haftar. A big PR mistake if nothing else for Haftar personally. Ms. Sergewa must be immediately released and those responsible for her abduction must be held accountable by Haftar first to avoid any possible perception that Haftar approved of the kidnapping.

According to Salami, the UN bears a particular responsibility to ensure that Libya does not fracture into weak and unstable pieces but remains the Libya that was united in 1951.

Salame and the U.N. continue to make the same erroneous conclusions about the Libyan situation.

Put simply their countless solutions over 8 years to end the civil war have not and will never work. When will they learn?

What is needed is a pragmatic realisation of the true situation in Libya not platitudes nor 'diplomatic speak'; all amounting to meaningless and useless words from the UN.

Simply put the two sides, for reasons explained, are at an impasse which cannot be broken unless a third way is found.

To search for a consensus Libyan candidate that would be acceptable to both Haftar and Serraj.

Rumours abound in Libya that such an acceptable third 'candidate' to all sides in the conflict is known. Such third way is being spoken of in both Tripoli and Tobruk as well as London, Washington and Moscow.

Diplomatic etiquette and norms must be pushed to one side and all effort must be initiated to back such a man or woman if indeed he or she exists should there be support amongst the Libyan people for such an alternative ...and there then will be an end to the war and peace may finally come to the Libyan people.

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