



INFO PACK

Berlin Peace Conference on Libya: Expectations, Challenges and Realities

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Introduction

Libyan Warlord Khalifa Haftar and his self-declared 'Libyan National' Army (LNA) announced recently that a "[decisive battle](#)" has been launched to capture the capital Tripoli from the internationally recognised government, namely the Government of National Accord (GNA). This latest offensive comes nine months after he launched an earlier military attack to seize the capital.

Countries, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt and France have long supported Haftar financially, politically, and militarily. In addition, Russia's recent covert involvement in the Libya represents an important development that could have been the tipping point. However, Turkey's diplomatic intervention altered the course of events and precipitated what appears to be a growing effort to find a political solution in Libya.

In light of the increasing aggressiveness demonstrated by Haftar since April 2019, Turkey stepped up its support for the UN-recognised Government in Tripoli. On January 2, 2020, the Turkish parliament approved a bill that would allow the deployment of troops to Libya. Three days later, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that the first Turkish military units had begun moving to Libya, Libya. Erdogan stated that Turkish soldiers would not be fighting, but instead serving in training and coordination roles.

Working in coordination, Turkey and Russia encouraged the GNA and Haftar's LNA to discuss the terms of a comprehensive ceasefire. Accordingly, both sides travelled to Moscow for talks, a day after the fragile truce came into effect.

The hours-long negotiations in Moscow aimed at agreeing on an unconditional and open-ended ceasefire in Libya failed to achieve a breakthrough on January 13, 2020. While GNA leader, Fayeze al-Sarraj signed the draft ceasefire agreement, Haftar - under the pretext of needing more time - left Moscow without signing the document.

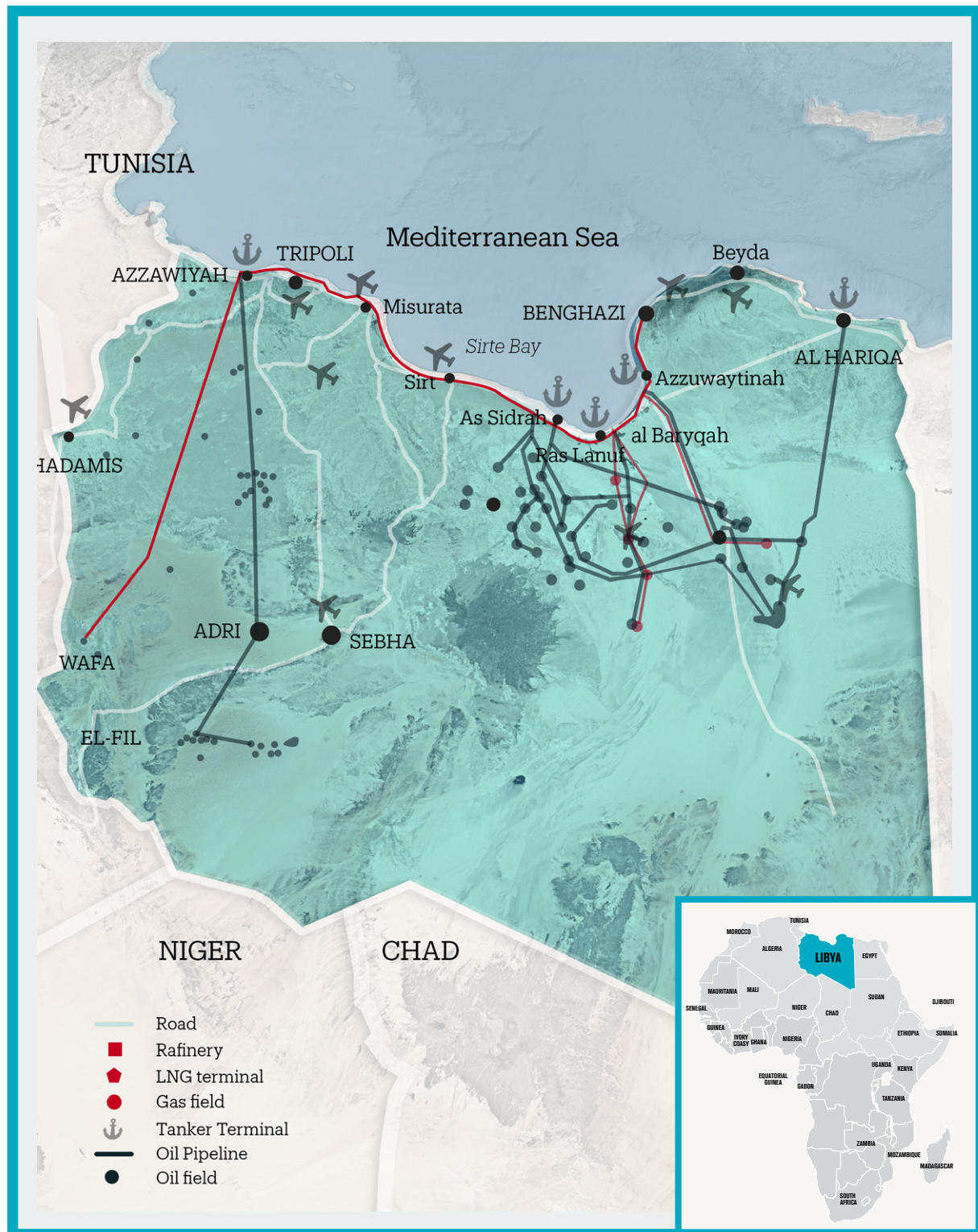
In the meantime, the ongoing war has shown no signs of abating, with diplomatic efforts seemingly divorced from realities on the ground. The current balance of forces excludes any possibility for a return to a

political process, and the renewed violence has all but undermined the confidence required to launch any fruitful dialogue. LNA spokesman General Ahmed al-Mesmari stated that "when the guns speak, diplomacy goes silent. The time of going back to dialogue is over [...] the military solution is the best solution to spread security and re-impose the law."

Led by Germany, countries including Turkey, Russia, Tunisia, Qatar, Algeria and Italy have been trying to build the harmony required for a ceasefire ahead of a summit that is expected to be organised in Berlin on January 19, 2020.

The UN-sponsored Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), also known as the Skhirat Agreement, was signed in December 2015. A wide range of Libyan representatives, including members of the House of Representatives (HoR) and the General National Congress (GNC), as well as prominent public figures from Libyan political parties and civil society, attended the signing. The resulting political agreement led to the establishment of a single Government of National Accord (GNA), led by Fayeze al-Sarraj. The plan was that Libyans would vote on a constitution via referendum. Such a process would eventually result in an elected parliament as well as President.

Initially, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has thrown its support behind the agreement and reiterated its call for parties to work in a spirit of compromise and engage in an inclusive political process. However, in practical terms, the UNSC has been plagued by divisions and, has not been able to agree on any resolution calling for a ceasefire in Libya. In the interim, many international players have been fuelling the conflict by sending arms to Haftar's forces despite an official arms embargo by the UN. Moreover, a bloc led by the UAE, Egypt and France has been playing a disruptive role, reportedly pushing Haftar to reject any existing peace platform and equipping him with considerable supplies of weapons.



Libya Map

Source: TRT World Research Centre

Conflict Dynamics in Libya

Libya has been mired in chaos following the ouster of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Since then, hopes of democracy, stability and growth have been elusive. In many respects, Libya can be considered to be a failed state, which is unable to exercise nationwide authority over the use of force.

Haftar and his LNA are the main obstacle to reconciliation in Libya, as they continue to seek to impose their diktat on the country. However, any military solution to the conflict is an illusion, as genuine and long-lasting stability can only be actualized by way of consensus on governance and security arrangements among leading political factions. Haftar continues to enjoy political and logistical support from Egypt, the UAE, France, Russia, and others.

Haftar's offensive on Tripoli in April 2019 prevented the UN-planned 'national conference', intended to be held less

than two weeks later, from negotiating a framework for the transition out of Libya's crisis. Hitherto, Haftar has failed in his objective of capturing Tripoli.

Due to Haftar's offensive on Tripoli, a national dialogue to reconcile Libya's factions has been [postponed](#) indefinitely. Moreover, elections that were supposed to follow the National Conference now look like an even more distant prospect. The renewed violence has undermined any trust among the belligerents and dented the chances of generating a peaceful resolution. The timing of the attack on Tripoli - while United Nations Secretary-General Gutierrez was there visiting - is an indication of Haftar's defiance of international institutions.



Hazem Turkia - AA

Internal Political Competition

Libya continues to suffer from interlinked political and economic crises which weakens state institutions by damaging its economy. As a result rival militia groups particularly in the East of Libya, continue to compete for power. The weak surroundings of the state allowed these armed groups to sustain their activities through illegal sales of oil.

Smuggling seems to be a great issue in Libya. Since Gaddafi was toppled in 2011, has brought an open

competition to the control of smuggling routes which contributed to the outbreak of localised conflict across the country. For instance, [Trans-Saharan](#) smuggling routes have evolved from passage ways for the informal trade of licit goods to conduits for the smuggling of weapons, drugs, fuel, counterfeit cigarettes and even people. The criminal activities and corruption associated with trafficking undermine domestic stability in Libya.



A Libyan Oil Refinery

Hamit Hüseyin - AA

Weak State Institutions

Since Gaddafi's fall, Libya has been held hostage by various groups competing for power and resources. As a result, the UN-backed government has been consistently undermined in its efforts to impose authority across the country.

According to UNSC [resolutions](#), oil facilities, production and exports are under the exclusive control of the Tripoli-based National Oil Corporation (NOC). The UNSC has affirmed that NOC is the only legitimate institution which can sell oil and gas on the international market. This has not prevented Haftar from selling oil and gas through other channels. For example, UAE [officials](#) have engaged in secret talks with Haftar seeking to export Libya's oil outside of United Nations approved channels.

Moreover, last year, two 2000 cubic-foot containers full of Libyan currency [printed by the Russian](#) state printer Goznak were delivered to Haftar's LNA. This provided another boost to Haftar's forces.

In the east of Libya in particular, Increasingly sophisticated revenue-generating schemes are capitalizing on the weakness of state authorities across the country.

Libya requires broad economic reform when a permanent ceasefire across the country is reached. The ensuing steps must include the reform of the economic institutions, removing the quasi-parallel institutions in the east of Libya, and transparency in terms of the distribution of oil wealth.

Foreign Actors

The interference of some international powers and regional actors has been a significant factor in the deepening political fragmentation and polarisation of Libya. Interventions designed to serve the foreign states' political or regional interests are a constant feature in the country's post-revolutionary conflict and involves states such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, France, Jordan and Russia. While these aforementioned countries have been supporting Haftar; Turkey, Italy, Algeria, and Qatar have been siding with the UN-backed GNA.

The involvement of these countries is increasing, including from a military standpoint, to the degree that

the ongoing conflict now has elements of a proxy war between regional and international actors. The motivations behind this regional and international support are manifold, and include geopolitical ambitions and economic interest.

Some foreign powers in Libya prefer armed conflict to political processes, as conflict provides them with more considerable influence on the ground to protect their long-term interests. Thus, an international conference organised with the particular purpose to reach an agreement that satisfies most of the external actors' interests could help move the country toward a process of stabilisation and peace.



Hazem Turkia - AA

Russia

Under Gaddafi, Tripoli and Moscow enjoyed strong relations and significant economic and political cooperation, including arms deals and licensing agreements for Russian oil and gas companies. Since 2015, Russia has been ramping up its engagement in Libya where sees a great opportunity and a chance to expand its influence in Africa via Libya.

Haftar has [promised](#) lucrative oil exports to Russia in the event he takes control of the Sharara and El Fil

oil fields. Russia has recently intensified its support to Haftar by providing weapons, printing a parallel currency and supplying technicians to support his offensive to capture Tripoli. According to [reports](#), Russia's Wagner Group has deployed mercenaries to the front lines of Tripoli, furthering already strong Russian support for Haftar.

Turkey

Turkey has long supported the UN-backed GNA diplomatically, economically and with its security. There are very few international actors that have given the same level of assistance to the UN-backed government. Recently Turkey and the GNA [ratified](#) an agreement which paves the way for additional military and logistical support to be provided to Tripoli, as it seeks to keep Haftar at bay. [The deal](#) will allow Ankara to provide military personnel, equipment, and training to GNA forces.

A coalition of countries, including Egypt, Greece and others, has been trying hard to prevent Turkey and Libya from enjoying their legitimate rights in accessing their share of the Eastern Mediterranean's energy wealth. In response, Turkey and Libya's GNA [recently an agreement on maritime](#) boundaries. The agreement enables both Turkey and Libya to preserve their rights and interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Anti-Turkey forces have already been supplying Haftar's LNA with military equipment as well as diplomatic support. Driven in large part by developments in the Eastern Mediterranean related to the Turkey-Libya agreement, the Greek Foreign Minister met with Haftar in Libya to discuss the ongoing conflict. On January 17th, Haftar was received in Athens for talks with the Greek Foreign Minister ahead of the Berlin Conference. According to the GNA the visit violates the decisions of international institutions which consider the GNA as Libya's only legitimate government.

On January 8, Presidents Putin and Erdogan met and called on all warring parties to declare a ceasefire. Russia and Turkey may use the new dynamic between them to assert themselves as power brokers in Libya.



An old man holds flags of Turkey and Libya during a demonstration against Khalifa Haftar at Martyrs' Square in Tripoli on January 10, 2020. Hazem Turkia - AA

Egypt

Egypt's policies towards Libya are based on a combination of security concerns, economic interests and regional political considerations. President Abdel Fattah El Sisi has provided funding and arms to Haftar's forces to continue their offensive against the GNA. Sisi's view of Haftar as a bulwark against democracy is at least partially responsible for his ongoing support.

Since Turkey's parliament passed a bill on January 2 to deploy troops to Libya in support of the GNA, Egypt has been trying to mobilize the Arab and international

community against the Turkish intervention in support of the GNA.

Cairo provides Haftar's forces with significant logistical support and Egyptian forces have reportedly carried out airstrikes in Libya on behalf of Haftar. Egypt will likely continue to support Haftar through arms shipments and airstrikes in an effort to enable Haftar to take control of Tripoli.

Algeria and Tunisia

Libya's neighbours have suffered a great deal in the aftermath of Gaddafi's overthrow. Therefore Tunisia and Algeria are crucial for a political solution to the Libyan crisis. For instance, Algeria's current Libyan policy consists of working with various groups in order to help stabilise the country. Thus, Algiers has supported UN-backed inclusive initiatives, including the GNA, as a solution to the conflict.

Recently, Libyan Prime Minister Sarraj met with [Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune](#) Algerian president to discuss the conflict in Libya. During the

meeting, Tebboune called Tripoli "a red line no one should cross". Algeria has adopted the principle of finding a political solution to protect the unity of the Libyan people and territorial integrity of the country.

Algeria has been invited by Germany to participate in the upcoming Berlin Conference in hopes of finding a political solution to the Libya crisis. In the upcoming Berlin Conference in hopes of finding. This has been seen as a positive development as all relevant actors should be on the negotiation table to contribute to reaching a permanent agreement.

The United States

The United States, along with the other Western powers, also publicly supports the Tripoli government and a United Nations-sponsored peace process. However, they did little to support Libya's internationally recognised government. Trump has long seen the Libyan conflict as a European problem of little strategic significance for American interests. This has arguably given Russia more room to maneuver, resulting in increased numbers of Russian mercenaries arriving to support Haftar. It is also important to note that since 2015, Russia has been gradually ramping up

its engagement in Libya where it sees economic opportunities and a chance to expand its influence at the expense of Western powers.

Many experts believe that the US should step up and invest more in diplomacy in Libya. By fully backing the GNA, it would send a positive signal to the region that Washington is putting its words into action.

The UAE

Many experts believe that the UAE's ongoing support for Haftar is multi-layered. It is rooted in Abu Dhabi's abhorrence for democracy combined with its aversion for political Islam in the region.

Additionally, Libya has several potentially competitive advantages over the UAE, including its strategic location adjacent to Europe and its possession of the largest oil reserves in Africa. As a result, Libya has the potential to become the new regional energy hub and financial centre, and could potentially attract international investment and businesses, thus becoming an alternative to the UAE on the long run.

The fallen dictator Gaddafi is believed to have had around [\\$168 billion](#) in assets abroad, most of which

has been frozen since 2011. According to some [reports](#), Gaddafi and his family members did have billions of dollars hidden in secret bank accounts in the UAE, much of it likely to have come from Libya's oil revenues. However, it is believed that large amount of money have been disappeared from Libyan frozen assets in the UAE bank accounts.

The UAE has been playing a pivotal role since Haftar began his offensive in April, providing significant military support such as arm shipments of arms and supplies and a series of UAE-linked drone strike on Tripoli. Recently a [drone strikes](#) on the southern Libyan town of Murzuq killed at least 43 people and the UAE was accused of strike this attack.



UAE F-16 Fighter Jet

Qatar

Qatar has aligned itself with Turkey, Algeria and Italy to support the UN-backed government. Qatar has subsequently played a significant role in supporting the GNA, seeking to enhance stability and achieve the consensus needed to preserve Libya's unity and

sovereignty. Qatar's Emir last month [vowed](#) to support the GNA in security and economic fields.

The European Union (EU)

The EU claims to be the strongest supporter of the UN-led peace process. However, in practical terms, only a few countries provide tangible assistance to the internationally recognised government. There is a great division among two member states (France and Italy) over Libya. The main rift is between France, which claims to support the GNA, but has been linked

to military and financial support to Haftar; and Italy, which aligns with the United Nations in backing Serraj. The clash between Italy and France over Libya has contributed to the failure of international efforts to develop a political solution for the ongoing conflict.



EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, President of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou, President of Chad Idriss Deby Itno, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni and Libyan Prime Minister Fayed al-Sarraj, Mustafa Yalçın - AA

Previous Peace Conferences

Over the past four years, efforts to find a political resolution to Libya's ongoing conflict have failed at various conferences in Palermo, Paris, and Abu Dhabi. However, an upcoming German-organised conference will once again seek to end Libya's civil war.

Germany seems to have a comparatively more neutral position than both Italy and France. Italy and France have both organised two conferences, in France in May 2017 and Italy in November 2018, respectively. Those two con-

ferences were mostly attempts by both countries to take the lead in this stabilisation process.

The GNA has affirmed its commitment to efforts being undertaken by various countries to find a peaceful resolution to the eight-year-long conflict. It seems to be [important](#) to include all states concerned with the Libyan situation be enabled to participate in internal conferences and meetings to search for a political solution to the Libyan crisis, like at the forthcoming Berlin Conference.

Abu Dhabi Meeting

Since 2014, the UAE has been vital to Haftar's military capabilities as well as his political support base in Libya and abroad. Recently, [UN experts accused](#) the UAE of violating the UN Security Council's arms embargo to provide Haftar with a variety of significant military equipment, including armoured personnel carriers and even [aircraft](#). Alongside military support, the UAE [hosted a meeting](#) in 2017 between Haftar and UN-backed Prime Minister Fayez al Sarraj – according to many experts, a meeting aimed at legitimising Haftar as Libya's most powerful leader at the expense of the internationally recognised government.

Fayez al-Sarraj, again met with Haftar in the UAE in 2019. In the second meeting, [Sarraj and Haftar were brought together](#) by the United Arab Emirates and the United Nations special envoy to Libya for fresh negotiations aimed at finalising a political deal. During their meeting, Sarraj and Haftar [agreed](#) on the need "to end the transitional stages in Libya through holding general elections." Furthermore, the two parties also agreed on unifying the institutions of the country. Despite the meeting, Haftar still left Abu Dhabi without anything solid, suggesting that negotiations were predictably stalled in an attempt to buy time.

Paris Peace Conference

In May 2018, the French President hosted the Libyan rivals in Paris for a summit. France also [invited](#) many countries involved in Libya's conflict, including the other four permanent members of the UN Security Council, as well as Italy, Germany, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and all of Libya's six neighbours. During the summit, they crucially agreed to hold elections in December 2018. However, this window of opportunity lapsed with no election taking place. The efforts of France were poorly coordinated with the UN and seemed to contradict – at times – the efforts of the UN envoy Ghassan Salame, who wanted the Libyans to hold a national conference and draft a new constitution before holding elections.

The expected purpose of the conference was to bring together rival groups and promote a political solution. However, it has been discussed on the news that France's main intention seemed to be legitimising Haftar within Libya and abroad. Supporting Haftar to occupy

Tripoli could consequently undermine Al Sarraj's role as prime minister and his credibility, as well as his negotiating leverage during the potential conference that could take place in the near future.

France is, once again, adopting contradictory positions. On the one hand, Paris says that it is committed to supporting the UN's effort to resolve the Libyan crisis and supports the internationally recognised government. On the other hand, the French government is heavily backing Haftar, [providing](#) him with weaponry, training, intelligence, and special forces.

French support for Haftar's offensive in the capital visibly damages European interests; Italy has addressed this issue numerous times. For instance, Matteo Salvini, former Deputy Prime Minister of Italy, [says](#) France "has no interest in stabilising the situation [in Libya], probably because it has oil interests that are opposed to those of Italy."

France's admission that it owned the US Javelin anti-tank missiles [uncovered when government](#) forces retook Gharyan from Haftar in late June poses significant questions about France's role in Libya. Germany should pressure the French government to explicate its position in order to have a unified European approach towards Haftar and his supporters. Up until now, France's [position](#) towards the two main factions within Libya has been one of extreme ambiguity. While giving lip service to the UN-backed government, over the past few years, the French government has closely [collaborated](#) with Haftar and the military authorities in Tobruk.



French President Emmanuel Macron (R) welcomes Leader of Libya's UN-recognized government, Fayeze Al-Sarraj, Mustafa Yalçın - AA

Palermo Peace Conference

The International Conference on Libya took place in Palermo, Italy, from November 11 to November 12, 2018. The Italian government organised the conference as an attempt to counter the Paris Summit organised by France in May 2018. Italy, for its part, sought to use the Palermo conference to reassert its role as the leading EU player in Libya. However, like most peace conferences, Palermo did not prove to be a watershed event for the stabilisation of Libya.

According to many experts that France and Italy are divided over the policy towards Libya despite the official position of the EU, according to [European Parliament President Antonio Tajani](#), who has urged EU countries to

speak with a single voice on the renewed crisis. The Italian-French rivalry over Libya is on the economic front, with the French energy company Total expanding its shares in the Libyan energy market which thus far had been dominated by the Italian energy company ENI.

France has supported Haftar as a primary actor in Libya because he controls the areas in which French interests lie: the oil fields in the east of Libya. France views Libyan oil as inexpensive to extract and easy to export to Europe. However, Italy, its long-time rival for influence in the country, has been supporting the UN-backed government and the forces attempting to push back against Haftar's assault.



Prime Minister of Italy, Giuseppe Conte, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of Malta Joseph Muscat and other heads of State, Palermo, Italy, 2018 Mustafa Kamacı - AA

What is driving the German initiative?

The conference organised by Germany is set to be the first significant diplomatic push to stop the hostilities that began when the LNA, began its offensive on the capital Tripoli in April 2019. Germany's main concern in Libya seems to revolve around the issue of migrants, a major political and electoral issue in the country. In 2018, Christian Buck, a previous German ambassador to Libya, [said 80% to 90% of illegal migrants](#) arriving in Italy from Libya ended up in Germany.

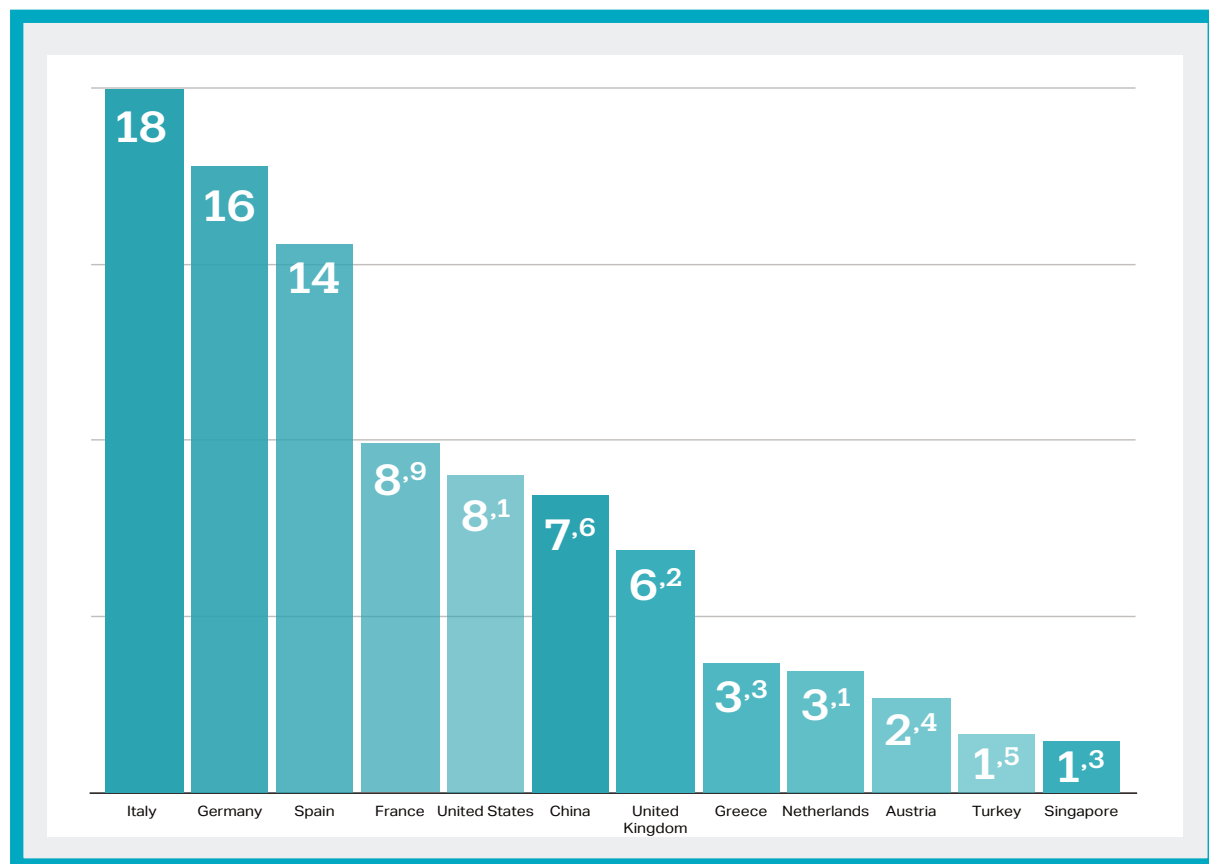
Germany has been forging ahead on Berlin Libya Conference. Recently, German Chancellor Merkel invited Turkish President and other leaders talks in Berlin. President Erdogan suggested that Algeria, Tunisia and Qatar should participate in the anticipated Berlin conference.

Germany wants to be involved in any potential peace process in Libya, as Berlin is deeply concerned that the continued deterioration of the situation in the country will lead to

a greater influx of migrants and refugees to Europe. Berlin may also be concerned about France's approach in favour of Haftar in Libya, which has contributed to the worsening of the already alarming security and humanitarian situation.

Berlin believes if the violence escalates further and spreads beyond Tripoli and its environs, the consequences would not affect only Libya but also its neighbours in Africa and Europe. Recently, German Chancellor Angela Merkel [told](#) Parliament the situation in the North African country risked destabilising the whole of Africa.

Economic indicators suggest that Libya is a significant oil supplier for Germany. Libya is Germany's [second most important supplier](#) of crude oil and provides approximately 16% of its total demand. As a purchaser of Libyan crude oil, Germany takes second place only to Italy.



Libya Oil Export Total: \$161 billion

Source: TRT World Reserach Centre

Conclusion

Germany has a considerable influence in the European Union and beyond, thus, has the political capital to persuade key players to support an effective political process in Libya. Germany's clout includes the chairmanship of the UN Security Council, which Germany can use to support UN efforts for peace as much as possible. Berlin [objected](#) to the NATO military intervention in Libya in 2011. In hindsight, though, Germany's involvement in the operation might have increased the country's influence within the NATO operation and in the post-conflict environment.

Germany has so far remained neutral by refraining from playing a direct role in the conflict, instead of proceeding with the EU's common policy towards Libya. The German government recognises the GNA, like many other countries, as the only legitimate government of Libya but has not directly offered its support to any of its protagonists.

Recently, Berlin hosted a meeting on Libya which was attended by the five permanent members (P5) of the UN Security Council, as well as Turkey, Germany, Italy, Egypt, the UAE, the Arab League, in addition to Ghassan Salame, the UN special representative for Libya. During the meeting, [Turkey was represented](#) by Ibrahim Kalin, a special advisor to the President of Turkey and the presidential spokesperson, who highlighted that "Turkey supports the UN-facilitated political process. A political solution is possible and necessary with the participation of all relevant actors in Libya".

Currently, some of Haftar's backers seem more interested in using the German-led peace conference to stall for time. They hope that the heavy reinforcements will create enough pressure to fracture the alliance between his opponents, and thereby allow warlord Haftar to gain more territories around Tripoli to facilitate the taking control of the capital. Therefore, Haftar and his main foreign backers will regard any conference as a great opportunity to divide the UN-backed government's support. Their main goal would be to make it easier to continue their offensive until they take control of Tripoli, which is very unlikely.

Neither the European Union nor other international actors have adopted a clear-cut position against Haftar, who has ignored all political decisions issued by political bodies linked to the LPA.

The European Union's lack of coherent policy led to countries like Egypt, France, the UAE and Russia finding it easier to introduce themselves in the conflict.

The EU should ergo pressure France and Haftar's regional allies to come to terms with the legitimate LPA. As long as Germany can unify the European Union, there could be a great opportunity to create a meaningful ceasefire and provide Europeans with greater control over whatever new political process comes to pass.

The common position between Germany and Italy on this issue could represent the start of a European coalition, which could encompass other partners to use that collective power to direct proceedings.

Therefore, Germany should play a constructive, visible role in Libya to allow the creation of a new, uniform European position on the need for a ceasefire and eventual stability in Libya. The expected German peace conference should seek to rally key external players to halt increasingly flagrant violations of a UN arms embargo and pressure allies in Libya to commit to a ceasefire and support the LPA to bring permanent stability. Berlin could be able to break this impasse and present itself as a credible mediator, especially if the conference ultimately facilitates the conditions that would allow Libyans to meet afterwards for political talks.

Nevertheless, the Germans have a huge task ahead of them. Will Germany's initiative on the ongoing Libyan conflict lead to a significant breakthrough? It would be challenging, but it is a constructive step towards, and a useful contribution to, a settlement effort that should be sweepingly and persistently pursued.

