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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Brookings. I'm Mike O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy Program and the Africa Security Initiative, and also a former member of a task force on Libya that included many of the people up here today, which was called "Empowered Decentralization: A City-Based Strategy for Rebuilding Libya." And we're going to try and discuss the current events in Libya as they've been unfolding in recent months, and then how that sets the stage for reevaluation of Western policy options and international policy options more generally in this troubled country.

You know, there's a nice chill in the air this morning. It's sort of starting to feel like a familiar September in Washington. The Redskins are 0 and 2. The Nationals are fading. You know, the leaves are changing color and also Libya is still a mess. And so that last part is tragic, but still true and it's, unfortunately, been true most seasons.

There was a hopefulness perhaps a year ago, after some serious fighting or some serious skirmishing at least in the summer of 2018. It led to some more intense efforts at mediation, some ideas that were being pushed a little harder. We put together our Brookings task force which involved the distinguished folks up here, most of them, and people from around town. And I'll introduce the panelists in just a second.

There was perhaps a moment when it felt like there was a path forward that could build on some of the ideas of empowered decentralization, trying to work more formally with some of the cities and ultimately stitch together from the ground up a little bit more of a fabric of a functioning Libya. I'm not so clear as to whether that's still a realistic strategy today and that's what we're here to discuss.

We're going to begin with sort of a round one of discussion on just bringing you up to speed on where Libya is today. And I'm assuming a lot of you know pretty well, but some of you may know less well, personally I will benefit from hearing this panel answer that question.

And that will set a little bit of an empirical foundation for our second round of questions that I'll pose to everybody, which is basically where do we go from here? What's the

strategy going forward that makes sense? And in regard to our Brookings proposal, does empowered decentralization still make any sense? Does any other strategy out there hold more appeal? And then we'll bring you in.

We intend to only keep you a little more than an hour. It'd be a generous hour rather than the full 90 minutes that some of our advertisements have suggested. But we'll see how the Q&A session goes and stay as long as there's good energy and time for the panel.

Fred Wehrey is just to my left. He wrote the single best book on Libya I've ever read, *The Burning Shores*, which really brings you up to date with a capsule history of Libya's longstanding past, but also understanding the last decade, going back especially to the Arab Spring, the 2011 period, the overthrow of Gadhafi, all the different events that have unfolded since. And I guess it was published about 2017, but so pretty current and very, very helpful. Fred's at Carnegie next door, travels frequently to Libya, and remains just one of the go-to people in the entire world on the subject.

Karim Mezran is here at the Atlantic Council, also a distinguished scholar, also very accomplished. A Libyan himself, a professor at SAIS, as well as a scholar at the Atlantic Council, and a very good hands-on feel for what's happening in his home country, but also with the understanding of the Washington policy environment and what's realistic in terms of where this country may be willing to offer or not offer a hand, as the case may be, and as we've witnessed now over eight years of post-Gadhafi rule or attempted rule inside of Libya.

Jeff Feltman is my colleague here at Brookings, longstanding U.S. Government official. Was assistant secretary of state for the broader Middle East region in the first Obama term, then went to New York, where he was the undersecretary general for political and peacekeeping related matters. And so Libya was certainly one of his preoccupations in that job throughout many of the difficult years that followed and has continued to be a very astute observer of that country. Also a lot of perspective and experience on international peacekeeping more broadly. And so his comments will be invaluable.

Giovanna De Maio is a visiting fellow here at Brookings with the Center on the

United States and Europe. She's Italian. She might be the most accomplished of anybody on this panel, at least in my eyes, because she actually got a Ph.D. while living in Naples, Italy. And if I was living in Naples, Italy, I would not be finishing my Ph.D. I know I would not be capable of that feat.

But she's been here now with us on and off for a couple years at Brookings and has a very good feel for the debates about Libya and North Africa in her own country, but also France and also other European states that may have some leverage and sometimes, frankly, compete with each other a little bit and with the United States and other outside actors in terms of how to address the Libya challenge.

So, again, thank you for being here and let me now begin working down the row, starting with Fred, with that first broad question, which is if you could just help bring us up to date on the important developments in Libya in the last few months, please.

MR. WEHREY: Sure. Thank you, Mike, and thanks to Brookings for this event and for shepherding some great Libya work.

I'll try to bring us up to date on this conflict since April 4th, drawing from a trip I made to the Tripoli front lines in June. I think there's sort of two ways to look at this conflict.

In one sense, it's a highly localized conflict in the sense that the two sides really, very roughly speaking sides, they're the constellations of sort of interest groups, towns, armed groups. They're fighting over very local grievances. Some of them are highly opportunistic. They've signed on to this broader struggle with very local parochial interests in mind. And so the theory about resolving this conflict is, you know, how do you address those local interests? Could you flip one armed group, take it out of the equation, and that would bring us closer to resolution?

Similarly, there's a sort of tactical quality to this conflict in the sense that might there be a tactical breakthrough in terms of the battlefield, in terms of the weaponry that could bring us closer to resolution?

The second dimension is the regional one in the sense that this war is being empowered by disarray in the global system really, in the sense that the U.N. Security Council has

been gridlocked. There hasn't been a real forceful showing from the Security Council.

And then, of course, the regional proxy war that we're all familiar with in the sense that one side is being backed by Emirates and Egypt, the other by Turkey. Added to this is rivalry within the European community.

And so the sense is five months into the conflict are we any closer to changing that equilibrium on the local battlefield or at the regional level? And the unfortunate answer, to my view, is no, we're not, unfortunately.

The combatants that I saw, especially on the GNA side under the internationally recognized government in Tripoli were galvanized, many of them previously before this war were opposed to one another. What this attack did by Khalifa Haftar on the capital, what it did was it unified them. There are, of course, multiple fissures and divisions where we could talk about that. But what I saw was a high level of moral. They're not in any mood for compromise.

Similarly, on the other side of the equation we thought perhaps that there might be some fatigue going on, and there is, but it's not enough to tip the scales. Right? And so the loss of Gharyan, the strategic town that was Haftar's forward base in Tripoli, that didn't really change things.

Tarhuna, we can talk about that, another town in the west that's fighting for Haftar. There was a killing of some key commanders there. Hasn't really changed the equation yet. So this notion that we're going to see some fundamental change in the local dynamics hasn't happened yet.

Similarly, in terms of tactics, this is Western Front, World War I style combat. The front lines have not really moved significantly since April 4th with the exception of Gharyan. We're talking about static artillery duels, mortars, plus drones.

And that brings me to the last point, which is the regional proxy war. This U.N. arms embargo in Libya has been violated with successive impunity by regional states. There's been no attempt to enforce it, to highlight it, to call it out. And what you're seeing is these regional states throwing in equipment, not simply giving it to the local actors on the ground, but piloting

these drones by themselves, on their own, right. And so this is truly a regional proxy war.

I think the drones are having a qualitative effect on the battlefield, especially our morale on the GNA side. We're seeing it also against Haftar's side in the sense that the GNA is able to reach into Haftar's rear areas with Jufra. Added to this is very sophisticated anti-tank missiles, Hornets, again the arms are flowing through.

And so let me close with is there any movement on the regional front on the sort of global front? You've got the Germans now that have announced a conference coming up. We'll see if they're going to be able to really break this impasse and present themselves as credible mediators. There's sort of this notion that Germany has been untainted by the rivalries within Europe between Italy and France that have so far stymied progress. But the Germans have a huge task ahead of them.

And, of course, there's a huge role for the United States to play, which, unfortunately, thus far has been ambivalent and taken a backseat. And I'll close right there.

MR. O'HANLON: One quick follow-up before we go to Karim. So, again, in the land of misplaced acronyms and, you know, oxymoronic names, the Libyan National Army fighting against the Government of National Accord, neither one of which can really lay claim to the names. At least the GNA has some international imprimatur that gives it some standing except that it doesn't really consist of a strongly unified group as you're describing.

MR. WEHREY: Absolutely.

MR. O'HANLON: But Haftar is still certainly in the West, even if he's lost some of his initial holdings and his ambitions of taking over Tripoli have not been realized. He's still very much present in the West.

What's the intensity of the fighting like? You likened it to World War II in terms of the lack of movement on the front lines. My sense is the intensity is sort of low to moderate. Is it more than that?

MR. WEHREY: It's low to moderate. No, we're not talking, I mean, you know, the Somme or we're not talking Yemen level. I mean, it's intense for the combatants, especially towns

like Misrata, this town within the GNA coalition. They've lost a lot of young men.

We're seeing now, unfortunately, in anticipation of these talks, an intensification of airstrikes on the only functioning airport within Tripoli, this dual-use airport, are in Misrata. So, again, when you're there and you're caught in these artillery salvos at night, it certainly feels intense. But, again, it has a sort of episodic quality. There are days when nothing's happening, the front is static. So I think you're right to characterize it like that.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Karim, over to you for anything you'd like to add.

MR. MEZRAN: Yeah, it definitely is like that, although the fact there's air attacks and the drones that closes the airport, creates problems for the hospital to get medicine. They close some of the way for people to get in and out. It is a siege de facto which carries, even though it's low intensity, carries a lot of problems for the population, a lot of problems with the electricity. It's really uncomfortable for the inhabitants of Tripoli, which by now amount to almost half of the population of the entire Libya.

My major point, I think we are in a Catch-22 situation. Correct me if I'm wrong. Only a change on the ground could force a change in the international support of proxies or another group, but only if there is a change. Within this group you can have a change on the ground. So it's a bizarre situation.

It's the first World War because they're stuck there. Arms are flooding in, so (inaudible) there's no hurting statements. Neither of the parties say, oh, god, I cannot stand the situation, I have to reach an agreement. They can stay where they are for the moment.

The same thing on the international level. There is no push for the Egyptians and Emiratis or the (inaudible) to say we really have to rethink this. We really have -- we are sick and tired of supporting this war, withdraw, after withdrawals or Sarraj give it up. There is no movement in that position. Therefore, we are in this Catch-22 situation that has to be broken somehow.

Now, I don't know why the German attempt has more chances than what you see in Rome in 2014, (inaudible), Palermo, and all the other cities, conferences where everybody goes there. There is no military solution to Libya. We have heard this as a mantra. That's been going

on for years.

Everybody says there is only a political solution, but nobody really works for that. So why would an international conference held in Germany under these conditions would be "have a chance to resolve" the situation?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Jeff, anything you'd like to add by way of the basic factual and empirical backdrop before we get into a policy discussion?

MR. FELTMAN: I mean, it seems to me that right now there are two options, picking up on what Fred and Karim said. Either this is going to remain a low-intensity conflict for the foreseeable future and the civilian casualties, while bad, haven't been terrible; 120,000 people displaced from their homes. And you can see this continuing; it's continued for five and a half months. Or you see a great escalation because of the increase of the sophistication and the amount of weaponry that's flowing into the country. And both of those situations are things that policymakers should try to stop.

But unless there's unity of the outside actors that it's time for this stop, I don't see any incentive on the ground for the locals to cease this, despite whatever fatigue the population may have. I mean, I find the hypocrisy of the international community somewhat remarkable. Haftar's advance on Tripoli started on April 4th. In June, the Security Council did act on Libya with unanimity to renew the arms embargo. Resolution 2473 passed the Security Council unanimously in June, and yet there's been not a single member of the Security Council that has called for any type of indictment, any type of interdiction of weaponry.

And then the same thing on the Government of National Accord, which, again, isn't really a government of national accord except by name. But yet, the Security Council passes resolutions renewing the U.N. mission to Libya, talking about the support for the Government of National Accord while security members themselves, council members themselves do nothing to support that government. In fact, displayed the ambiguity that Fred mentioned.

If I wanted to be optimistic I'd say, okay, next week the U.N. General Assembly, there will be a ministerial meeting on Libya that's been called for and co-chaired by France and

Italy. France and Italy haven't always been working together on Libya. Does this indicate that the international community tired of this war is starting to come together if France and Italy can co-sponsor a ministerial in New York rather than compete to have a Paris meeting one week and then a Palermo meeting a week later?

How about the Emirates? We saw the Emirates change their policy on Yemen. And right now I think the Emirates probably are looking to their East with more concern than what's happening to their West. So might the Emirates change policy?

How about Egypt? You know, for Egypt, Libya is a domestic security issue. You've got Egyptian guest workers traditionally have sent money back to Egypt. It's an important source of remittances for Egyptian families and for Egypt more generally. There's a security issue for Egypt. It's a legitimate domestic issue.

But if the Egyptian policymakers have put their faith in Haftar, Haftar said he could take -- that Tripoli would fall quickly and it hasn't, five and a half months. Well, the Egyptians now say, well, you know, maybe we need to be looking at other options. So I could see a scenario by which the external actors start to question it, and I hope that's the case. I don't know it is, though.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, thank you. And that's a perfect segue now to Giovanna to talk about the European dimension, the perspective from Italy, but more generally from Europe.

MS. DE MAIO: Yeah. So the European Union has been watching this crisis consuming at its doorsteps. And besides the meetings on the ground, the other important humanitarian crisis that has been consuming is the refugee crisis. That directly interested security in the European Union.

And so I find this ambiguous because, on the one hand, the European Union has supported the U.N. plan for Libya. But, on the other hand, investing on the ground for development, supporting civil society, supporting small and medium enterprises and local communities has carried on operations, you know, in order to free people from detention centers in Libya.

On the other hand, though, the European Union has helped train the Libyan Coast Guard in order to stop people from leaving Libyan shores. And then those people were brought

back to the detention centers from where the European Union efforts were the ones trying to free them from there.

From the Italian and French perspective, Italy and France are competitors in the Mediterranean in general for, like, in France and Italy right now, like, energy or economic interests. And overall, they are both concerned with the refugee crisis. So it's in both countries' interest, the one of trying to stop it and stabilize the country. They just have very different views on how to get there.

Both Italy and France have been quite ambiguous. Italy was more open and like outspoken the support for the Sarraj government. France has been backing the U.N. plan and Sarraj. But on like a practical level has also provided a lot of support to Haftar in light of a specific view of stabilization that goes through an enforcement on the ground and, of course, the fight to the Islamic State that Haftar sold himself to be doing.

And so the Germans in this case have a more neutral position compared to Italy and France. Italy and France both organized two conferences: one France started in 2017, Italy in November 2018. Those conferences brought together the parts and the two centers of power, even though it's like pretty simplistic to reduce Libya to two centers of power. But inviting Haftar to Paris in 2017 kind of legitimized his role as an actor in the Libyan crisis. And those two conferences were mostly (inaudible) for both Italy and France to take the lead on this stabilization process.

The Germans, I personally hope this is not going to be just a (inaudible) for German power in the Mediterranean. At the same time, I'm pretty skeptical on how those parts can get together due to the mutual distrust they have for one another.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. Do the French, by the way, still favor near-term elections or is that an idea that's come and gone?

MS. DE MAIO: It was their position initially and like this was a point where they clashed with Italians because Italians wanted stabilization first and then elections, where the French were like more supporting short-term elections. I don't think it's more the case, though, due to the current situation.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you very much. So now I just want to have one round going down the panel again before we come to your questions on sort of where we stand with policy options. And obviously, we're not going to collectively solve Libya today, so I'm not looking for each and every detail, but sort of the big idea that each person would recommend.

It strikes me having co-authored with the larger group this "Empowered Decentralization" study where we were trying to look at how to work things from the cities up, that in a way our idea almost became irrelevant as soon as it was published in one sense because now we've got the battle for Tripoli, the battle for the country in a more classic military sense.

On the other hand, maybe there really is no place else to go except try to persuade Haftar to back away a bit, deploy some kind of an observation mission, and then try to incentivize different parts of the country to develop their own cities and then work together gradually with time and provide some financial incentives for that to happen. Because maybe there really isn't any other realistic path forward besides that, even though it looks like events since April have made this even harder.

So that's sort of my dilemma, my question for all of you. And I wonder does some kind of strategy still, you know, look more appealing to you than others, you know, whether it is whatever you would describe the U.N. strategy today to be, our strategy here of empowered decentralization, or something else?

MR. WEHREY: I think the decentralization is important in the sense that this offensive, Haftar's offensive, exploited a number of local grievances that were related to decentralization in the sense that his movement across Southern Libya before this attack on Tripoli, he was exploiting the fact that the South wasn't getting their share. Right? So there was an issue of distribution of political power, of the oil wealth.

And so, similarly, I mean, if you look in the East, the main grievances, people in the East, and I talked to them going back to 2015, 2017, they were leery of Haftar. Right? I mean, he's not somebody that they're holding up, but they have their own grievances related to marginalization; that they're not getting their fair share of what they see as the oil wealth that's

being centralized by Tripoli.

So, again, decentralization as a means to address some of those grievances that are fueling the conflict I think is still on the table. And I think it should be part of a package of broader reforms that the U.N., that the international community supports once there's a ceasefire. And that package of reforms, you know, we've been trying to work on it for quite some time to include reform of the economic institutions, greater transparency and audit, removing the sort of parallel institutions, transparency in terms of distribution of oil wealth.

There's a theory that much of this conflict is about the distribution of wealth. I think it's partially true. There's a lot of other grievances related to identity, to local grievances that are fueling it. But it is partly about access to the spoils, right, access to that central pot of money.

The second part of this is stopping the regional interference, the regional arms coming in. How do we do that? I think naming and shaming. There are mechanisms, you know, short of getting these states to dial back where we can name and shame them through venues such as the U.S. Congress. And there are some bills underway in Congress to do just that.

I share Karim's skepticism about the German conference, but perhaps there can be some movement in the sense that the Germans can sort of rein in the French and the Emirates. Perhaps there's a quid pro quo. Perhaps there's some back-room deal-making that can occur and perhaps greater U.S. engagement, dialogue with the Emirates about their role in Libya. You know, they have been backing this particular individual for so long. Is he really delivering for them? Same thing with the Egyptians. So having those sorts of high-level conversations.

But we've been having them already. And so it's sort of opaque to me what will change the Emirates' calculus right now.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Karim?

MR. MEZRAN: Absolutely, I agree. That's the key issue, which we cannot name it. It's Haftar as a single, as an individual.

There is no -- I don't see any possibility for any person of any responsibility in Western Tripoli, in Tripoli, that persuade (inaudible) in Western Libya to sit at the table with Haftar.

It's not going to happen for a physical integrity situation. Any commander that goes there and talks to Haftar cannot go back to Tripoli or to his city in the West. Therefore, yes, I hope that there are talks behind the curtains, talks where the Europeans and the Americans are convincing the Emiratis and the Egyptians to really reflect on what they have done and how to, saving face, withdraw some for their support for Haftar, so to create on the ground the conditions of withdrawal of Haftar forces. So that then with other people, people in the (inaudible) could sit down and talk.

There are many, in Tripoli, especially (inaudible), there are many plans that are being prepared. There are people who are working for a roadmap that would allow a solution to the crisis. I am more optimistic that the first step done, that is getting rid of Haftar and begin to sit down, that at that point, with other figures from the East, other figures from the West, you can get a negotiation that can lead to the application of one of these roadmaps.

So the real problem is the first step. And that's while the situation is locked. How do you get rid of Haftar as a commander, who, by the way, never once said that he represents (inaudible) grievances? He's always said I am fighting terrorists. I'm going to go to Tripoli. I free the country (inaudible).

So, therefore, the people who say, well, he's the bearer of the grievances from the East, where? There has not been -- that is not the issue for him at all. He has monolithically intended to have power, to get rid of all the Islamists. And the Islamists, he concludes, everybody doesn't like him, so.

MR. O'HANLON: Jeff.

MR. FELTMAN: Hey, Mike, the report on which we all labored a year ago talking about empowered decentralization, I think derived from the reality that there is decentralization in Libya; that the lack of the extension of state control over the entire country has led to municipalities taking on certain roles, some better and some worse than others. And so I think that the fact that the report was based on the reality means that there's still some validity there because the reality is still there.

And the other thing that we talked about I think is also still valid, which is that one of

the elements, as Fred said not the only element, but one of the elements behind these fights is the battle over who decides how the pie will be cut. And if by having negotiations among Libyans where the Libyans can come up with a path forward of how the revenues will be shared between the central government, the regions, and the municipalities, you've taken off one of the primary factors, not the only one, one of the primary factors behind the fighting. It makes it easier, in theory, to resolve the fight if you've already decided how once the fight is over resources will be distributed. Meaning it's not such a -- it matters less who's in charge if there's already been an agreement.

So I think that these things are still valid. But I don't think that the war is going to stop until the external factors, until the patrons have decided that the war should stop. And so if I were advising U.S. policymakers right now, I'd say show some leadership on this issue because no one else -- it's going to be very hard for others to do it.

I'm not optimistic. You look at South Korea and Japan, two of our closest allies, regarding DPRK. They're fighting with each other. Their relationship is going into a tailspin. And we're not -- we're seemingly not doing much to try to reverse it. So would we take on the differences between the Emirates and Turkey, between Egypt and Qatar? I'm not sure.

MR. O'HANLON: Giovanna.

MS. DE MAIO: I agree with Karim's point of like having -- Haftar is not really bringing anything on the table. And as the Brookings report was mentioning, like all the actors involved in the crisis do have interests in the Libyan conflict, but they're not fundamental interests. So there might be some diplomatic leeway to actually engage in a positive de-escalation. And I think a good way to do it would be really implementing, like enforcing the arms embargo.

And there are some interested -- there were some instruments in place that no longer are working. For example, the Operation Sophia of the European Union was a naval operation that now has run out of ships, so only has aerial forces, that was supposed to conduct anti-smuggling operations, but also to implement the arms embargo. And there were some small results, but there are -- I mean, what I'm saying is that there are some instruments in place that can be implemented.

And only by eliminating the support for Haftar that comes from the outside, you can actually weaken his power on the ground. And cutting his supplies might make the war for him more expensive. And so, also, as he is not really grounded in an identity factor, as Fred was mentioning or as Karim was mentioning, like he's not representing the grievances of Cyrenaica. His power can be depotentiated by just eliminating support.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. Well, we've got a lot on the table and I look forward now to your thoughts and questions. I think we'll take about three at a time. Please wait for a microphone. We'll start here with the gentleman in the second row and then we'll just come back to the panel after we've got a few questions. And then we'll got to my friend Ed Joseph in the back and then to the gentleman here in the second row. That'll be round one. Please.

SPEAKER: I'd like to pick up on that last point and ask a question to Jeff Feltman, which is about the arms embargo. We all know, those that follow Libya, there was a weakening of the investigations when Moncef Kartas got arrested in Tunis and held for several months for having tracking devices which could have helped the U.N. track. And now, obviously, he will have been replaced and the U.N. would have put the right mechanisms back in place to monitor.

But you were at the U.N. What's sort of the next level? Is it just individual members have to convince each other to take individual actions at the U.N. level? Is it just private messaging, which you all mentioned? Is it a public naming and shaming in addition to interdictions at sea? What are the constellations of actions that can be taken to get the international community to behave better?

MR. O'HANLON: Good question. Thank you. Ed?

MR. JOSEPH: Mike, thank you very much. Ed Joseph from SAIS. And perfect that Bill Lawrence mentioned the arms embargo because I'd like to focus on the other two potential ports of entry that your esteemed co-panelists, Mike, mentioned, and one was by Fred and the other by Jeff. And it seems that that's the focus and the challenge, as it should, is everyone is struggling to break the Catch-22, looking for a port of entry.

Fred, you mentioned possible reform, transparency, and that the fight over

resources is a big part at least of the driver of conflict in the country. What about that? There is a functional national corporation. There is a functioning central bank. Why not, as people have proposed, really make an effort? It seems that the outside actors, certainly France and Italy, could agree on something like that. It is inherently divisive. So is there real potential to make some of these contracts, letters of credit, disbursements, including to militias, to make some of this stuff transparent and, in so doing, address one of the drivers of conflict?

Jeff, great point about the pie. There's been a longstanding discussion about the fundamental power relationship. Karim is skeptical about whether Haftar represents the East, but there are those who believe that Cyrenaica and Tripoli have longstanding grievances, and a constitution could be an element. Is it possible to talk about a fundamental power shrink, for example, to revive the original Libyan constitution potentially as a way to address, again, another driver of the conflict? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: And finally, my friend here in the second row.

MR. SHINO: Hamid Shino, Voice of America. If Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates are supporting the Libyan National Army while Qatar and Turkey are supporting the Government of National Accord, what should the United States do to stop its allies from fueling the protracted fighting in Libya?

MR. O'HANLON: Great. So, Jeff, you want to start this round since you got a couple of the questions? And then we'll just work down towards me.

MR. FELTMAN: Sure. Bill, I just want to note that I left the U.N., I retired from the U.N. in April last year, so it's been about a year and a half since I sat in the Security Council or had the Panel of Experts who reported up through me to the Security Council. It's been that long since I've had direct access to the Panel of Experts.

But what I can say is that it was clear to me when I was undersecretary general for political affairs, not peacekeeping, by the way.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, sorry.

MR. FELTMAN: The Peacekeeping College would be quite upset to hear me

described as associated with peacekeeping.

MR. O'HANLON: I have big ambitions for you. (Laughter)

MR. FELTMAN: Yeah. But it was clear to me when I would sit in the Security Council consultation room which sanctions regimes the Security Council really cared about: North Korea. The North Korea sanctions were something on which not just the United States, but particularly the United States, was intently focused on, and you saw things. You saw that the U.S. would release information when they believed that a country was trying to evade the sanctions on North Korea.

The U.S. took leadership in some cases in stopping things. None of that's happening with Libya. So I have to assume, even though I haven't been in the meetings for 18 months, that the Security Council members are getting the Panel of Experts' reports and laying them aside, not paying any attention to them, because there is no follow-up.

There should be leadership in the Council. They passed the renewal in June that would call for interdiction, that would have individual Security Council members releasing to the public the information, the naming and the shaming. None of that's happening.

So I can only assume, as I said earlier, that the Security Council is completely hypocritical in passing that resolution with no intention of really following through.

In terms of the question about fundamental power sharing in the original living constitution, I mean, I -- yes, I think there has to be an understanding on power sharing. What the right formula is has to be something that the Libyans themselves come up with. The question is how do you facilitate the type of conversation between the Libyans that's constructive in this matter? And that's something I think that the U.N. and others have been struggling to do.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Karim?

MR. MEZRAN: The U.S. role in Libya, it is clear that the leadership of the United States, if applied from two years ago, could have delivered something important; could have put pressure on some of these regional actors that meddle into this. Libya could have done a lot of things. What are the chances that it does it now? Again, I'm very skeptical that this administration

has any interest, a real interest, in Libya, an interest in putting a task together and appoint an envoy and begin seriously to address its friends and rivals in the international community so as to arrive to a plan that would allow for a solution one day.

I don't think that's going to happen, which leads us to the question that Ed said, which is the international community, can they -- are they the key? Again, once again, they could change this, they could resolve if they really got together honestly and sincerely and decide to resolve the Libyan situation without arming one of the sides, but collaborating, enforcing their proxies, their allies into getting to the table. Then there are plenty of Libyan proposals for a new reform, for a new government, for a new -- appoint a new president, and then reform the LTA. I see daily at least one proposal comes.

The key is how do you create that moment of change so that these countries do (inaudible). And, in my opinion, unfortunately, it can only happen with unlocking (inaudible) on the ground. How, I have no idea. But if one of the two sides prevails over the other, then you might have a rethinking of the process on how to proceed.

MR. FELTMAN: Can I add something?

THE WITNESS: Please.

MR. FELTMAN: The one thing we haven't talked about, although we mentioned it in the report, is the credibility that the United States seems to have inside Libya. The United States does have the potential to play the type of role that we're talking about because of the perception that the U.S., unlike Egypt or the Emirates or Turkey or France or Italy, is more objective, is more impartial.

The credibility stems in part from a perception of U.S. disengagement. I think it's probably the perception is greater than the actual disengagement. I look at Peter Bodde, who's sitting here, who was head of the U.S. Embassy to the Libyans for a period. So there is, A, credibility as we understand it for the United States among the Libyans; and, B, the United States has shown some success, including under the Trump administration, in terms of the resources and the hydrocarbons.

When there were attempts by Haftar and others to control or sell illegally oil, the United States was able to intervene quite effectively to stop it. So the U.S. has credibility and has a track record. The question is how to persuade Washington policymakers that it's worth investing the time and the effort in Libya right now. And one thing is the oil. If we're having trouble in the Gulf, we don't want to add trouble in North Africa with another oil-exporting country.

MR. O'HANLON: Very good. Thank you. Fred?

MR. WEHREY: Well, to address Ed's point, I mean, absolutely, you know, fixing the disbursement of payments to militias, you know, highlighting the transparency of the distribution is essential, and I think it should be ongoing.

I mean, the great tragedy of this is there was progress being made in terms of squeezing the militias' access to funding before April 4th in terms of cutting off their scams in terms of catering, I mean, siphoning off the letters of credit. But now my understanding is that's gone by the wayside. Right? You've got this new sort of sense of militia entitlement. The extortion of the bank for letters of credit is still ongoing. You've got massive payments to the armed groups that are defending Tripoli.

When I talked to them there's this sense of, you know, what's in it for us? We're going to get something out of this afterwards: jobs, payment. And so this is I think the great tragedy of this.

On the other side of the equation, in the East there's always been this murkiness of parallel institutions. I mean, the bonds, there's the LNAs or Libyan Arab Armed Forces is the correct name for that entity. Their involvement in the economy on the lines of the Egyptian model I think is very worrisome.

So the question is, yes, I mean, those efforts at economic reform highlighting the distribution issue should be ongoing, but the problem is you've got this political issue. You've got, I think, this actor in the East who is obstructing that, who is trying to basically corral power and economic resources around a very tight inner circle.

And let me just speak to Karim's point. I agree that he does not speak for

Cyrenaica or for Barca. The major tribes in the East -- Barasa, Obeidat, Awagir -- are holding back. They're not in this 100 percent. The Awagir, I think, in the East are trying to extract -- basically leverage from Haftar because of this Tripoli war, expand their power. He's trying to throw some goodies to them.

So, again, I think there's mounting frustration. There is an opening to address some of those grievances, including through economic reform.

MR. O'HANLON: I would just quickly add, Ed, knowing some of your work in the area, also you and I wrote a paper 12 years ago about whether there should be more autonomy in three different parts of Bosnia and three different parts of Iraq. But my impression looking at this problem was that Libya doesn't break down quite that neatly. Even though historically it's had the three regions, a lot of the challenges are within each region and competition for power within.

So going towards a greater concept for autonomy would, at best, solve one of many problems and probably not even that. So that was sort of, I think, why the group didn't ultimately espouse, you know, regionalism or federalism, if you will, for Libya.

Giovanna, do you want to comment on any of these questions?

MS. DE MAIO: I would agree with the idea of the Libyans who come up with the solution themselves. There are many models that have been suggested. One was the Iraqi-Kurdistan model in which like the -- Kurdistan would be engaged in extracting the oil and actually some of the revenues would be staying in the region without like just giving everything to the central government.

And I would say the U.S. engagement, it's true that the Libyans do have like very much support for the impartial role of the U.S. that can actually be engaged also not only with the oil, but also with the issue of the oil, but also the fight against terrorism. And due to Trump's new attitude of switching from maximum pressure to deal-making in his international might be a good way for him to be involved in, okay, I solved the Libya crisis, as well, and being at the forefront of the fight against terrorism.

But I do think that the European Union should be the one who also steps up more

in this case because it's a crisis at its doorstep and has more interest at stake of like it can be involved on a more important level.

MR. O'HANLON: By the way, I take your point about how there could be an appeal to the Trump administration here because they could also help, frankly, the Saudis rehabilitate their image a bit if the Saudis can contribute to the solution of this problem rather than exacerbating the current dilemma. And also, if the Sunni nations can work together, then it isolates Iran more as the main culprit for regional troubles, which would also have a broader messaging appeal, if it's doable. But I guess that's the big question.

Let's see if we have time for one more round of -- Jason and then the gentleman over here in the next to the last row and my friend here, and perhaps that'll be it. Is there a fourth question? And then if maybe we'll just take that all in one round and wrap up.

Well, anyway, we'll start with Jason and see.

SPEAKER: Thanks, everyone. My question is related to what happens after Haftar, right? So there are a lot of focus on events since April 4th, and I think that's warranted. It's Libya's biggest challenge at the moment, but we're only a year from the emergency in Tripoli that required some back-channel intervention by the U.S. to get the militias on the same sheet.

There was some dissolving of those agreements in the earlier part of this year, so what happens after Haftar? Do we still see some issues of trying to get the Tripoli militias to act in a unified manner?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. The gentleman here in the next to the last row in the plaid shirt.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Hi. So we've talked a little bit about --

MR. O'HANLON: What's your name, please?

MR. HERNANDEZ: Matthew Hernandez. I'm from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. We talked a little bit about the UAE and Egypt sort of supporting one side and Turkey supporting the other. I was wondering if you guys could elaborate on more so what their agendas are. I know with Egypt you mentioned it was more of a security concern, but more

specifically what are Turkey and the UAE doing there and what do they want from it?

MR. O'HANLON: Great, thank you. And then here in the third row.

MR. BODDE: Hi. My name's Peter Bodde. I'm the former U.S. ambassador to Libya. I retired from the position in May of this year. Just may be a comment, no questions.

First, I'm encouraged by the German proposal. I'm not overly optimistic that it'll lead to something. I'm not naïve, but my experience with Libya is anytime you get the parties together talking in any shape, the regional partners, everybody involved, the EU, it's a good thing.

I personally think the only way forward is under U.N. auspices along the (inaudible) we've continued to work on over the last few years. The United States has been engaged in many different levels and many different ways. You all are very aware of the war on counterterrorism, our successful efforts in Surt, that was done with the Libyans.

We've been very engaged on the economic side. We've helped with the economic reforms. It was actually U.S., under our leadership, the economic dialogue where the two -- not the two last, I guess two previous budgets were done and some of the economic reforms were started.

But I want to just to say I think it's a little bit perhaps of an oversimplification some of the issues here. My experience as a diplomat of 40 years is everyone always overestimates the ease at which American influence can be used. We have a lot of influence in Libya, but our ability was to bring people to the table. They have to work out the solution. We can be an honest broker. We can bring them to the table, but we can't just tell partners, we can't tell people in the region if you would just do this, it'll happen. And it's just not that simple.

I also think with issues like economic reforms, who gets the fair share, everyone's absolutely right. This has to be solved. But first, there has to be a political solution. And I see that happening under international arrangements, whether it's the Germans or a continued dialogue. At some point there's going to be a tipping point. Something will happen in the equation. But right now, there will be no solution that does not involve Haftar, does not involved the GNA, and does not take into account all of these different things going on.

We were close. We were close as early as April of last year, and then Haftar made

his move. I think what that has done is everybody -- he told everyone, he told me, oh, I'll have this done in five weeks. He clearly doesn't have the wherewithal to do it without a lot of foreign support. And even what it's showing as with a lot of support he hasn't done it.

But I think the key is that everybody keeps speaking. And I think the point you raised about the new dialogue between -- or not new dialogue, but renewed positive dialogue between France and Italy is a good thing.

But I want to just give my very candid assessment. This is going to take some very, very hard work. It's not going to be anytime soon. But it's going to be something on the (inaudible) that tips it and then it'll leap forward.

MR. O'HANLON: Great, thank you. And was there a final question or shall we just finish up on these? Anybody else? Going once, going twice.

Okay, last question, and then we'll come back to the panel starting with Fred and work down.

SPEAKER: My name is Max from Middle East Institute. My question was about the U.S.'s role as an impartial actor in the region. And I think there was another question related to the U.S. allies and holding them accountable before, also. But I'm wondering if the U.S. undermines its position as an impartial actor and continues to do so by supporting militarily other countries who are directly supporting Haftar.

MR. O'HANLON: Great, thank you. Okay, so a number of questions on the table and some good comments, as well.

Fred, would you like to offer any answers and/or concluding remarks?

MR. WEHREY: Sure. On the motivations of Turkey and the UAE, I'll start with the UAE. The UAE was a player in Libya obviously ever since the revolution. I think part of this was motivated by the proxy rivalry with Qatar. The uptick in Emirati intervention in 2014 was ostensibly to prevent political Islamists, the Brotherhood, from gaining a foothold in Libya. You've seen that anti-Islamist discourse, counterterrorism discourse continue to the present. But I want to emphasize this is completely outmoded.

And we haven't really talked about this, but the sort of Islamist dimension or radical dimension within the Tripoli forces is completely over-exaggerated. Right? The sort of Islamist moment in Libya peaked around 2016, 2017. Many of these hardline groups that Haftar and the Emirates purport to be countering in Tripoli and the West were already diminished. They were killed, marginalized, exiled. They were gone.

So this notion that the Emirates is leading some sort of campaign against Islamists is completely, I think, a façade for pure, naked, I think, power politics. I think there's an economic dimension in terms of gas contracts. We didn't talk about that. But again, I think that motive has sort of outlived its validity.

The Turks, again, were a player in 2014 during the first sort of round of this civil war backing the so-called Dawn Islamist faction. Their support really tapered off after 2015, but now, of course, we're seeing an uptick. What's the motive there? I think, okay, they want to be a player, they see the Emirates and Egypt coming in, but there is an economic dimension, according to many analysts, in terms of offshore gas within the Mediterranean, having a pliable sort of partner in Tripoli that protects their gas interests in the Mediterranean.

But as so often is the case in these proxy wars, they acquire their own momentum, right? Who's going to be the first one to step back because it gives the advantage to your rival.

After Haftar, are you talking about the potential for conflict within the East if he goes? Or what's the --

SPEAKER: The West.

MR. WEHREY: The West.

SPEAKER: The fratricide of the militias, things like that.

MR. WEHREY: In Tripoli?

SPEAKER: In Tripoli, yeah.

MR. WEHREY: Well, again, yeah. I mean, there are serious fault lines among these militias. Everyone's talking about a contest for the spoils. You've got the town of Misrata that's bearing a disproportionate amount of the casualties. There are fears that Misrata is trying to

collect the bill after this.

Again, access in Tripoli to strategic sites, like the airport, ministries, that gives you political power. And so you've got these sort of big three militias: Nawasi, Ghnewa, RADA. The TRB has sort of been dissipated. You've got the Misratans. So the potential for a power struggle is very real.

What I saw on the front lines, though, is actually very good tactical coordination among certain armed groups in terms of coordinating their fires. They have operations rooms. They're maneuvering. And so what I've said is how do we harness this tactical coordination and think forward and say let's come up with a new security roadmap, a security architecture where we if not mitigate those rivalries, prevent them from erupting into a big struggle. Because the armed groups will tell you. They actually said one good thing about this war is that it's unified us against this potential -- this threat at our doorstep.

MR. O'HANLON: In our report we suggested that groups that are sort of, you know, trying to improve the situation could receive American advisors, maybe a little security assistance. Are those the kind of methods that you're talking about or more just cajoling and --

MR. WEHREY: I think through -- no, I don't know if the incentivizing is going to -- I think it's, you know, having that dialogue among armed groups, and those are ongoing. I mean, groups like Dialogue Advisory Group, the U.N. is still talking to the armed groups about, you know, what do they want, about the new security structure.

There is, surprisingly, police reform is still ongoing under the Minister of Interior in terms of shaping the security landscape. Of course it's hard to do because you've got a war. But I think the U.S. role is important. There are still counterterrorism contacts and assistance ongoing with the partners that we had with the Surt campaign. So, again, harnessing that, saying, look, there is this potential counterterrorism threat -- terrorism threat that affects you all. And how do we utilize that to focus their energies?

MR. O'HANLON: Great. Thank you. Karim?

MR. MEZRAN: Yes, thank you very much. I'd like to address Ambassador

Bodde's remarks. In theory, it's true, it's correct, meet people, bring people around the table. My point is we have done that. We have seen that many times. International community meets, big table, swear to God we are for peace and love, swear to God we are going to work hard for the solution of (inaudible). Nothing is done.

On the other hand, something has happened that should have changed the whole dynamics: the attack of Haftar on the 4th of April. That should be considered a red line. That should have been considered by the international community (inaudible), that's it, there is no more talking. Now we take a side.

And this idea of diplomacy at any cost, this idea of (inaudible), we talk to everybody, no, you don't talk to everybody. You don't talk to criminals.

When you are attacked in a city, the moment that city -- the United Nations Secretary-General is there. And civilians are hit and hospitals are hit and so on. To me, that's the end of this international conference and all this talking. It's the point to name names, call a spade a spade, and devise a strategy that could prevent (inaudible) goes to these actors to continue to take place. That's partly how I see it.

And I'm afraid that by continually saying, oh, we will meet in Paris, then we'll meet in Berlin, while, at the same time, you have an actor that is bombing a city, it's being an accomplice to this crime.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you.

MS. DE MAIO: On that point --

MR. O'HANLON: Okay. Yeah, you go ahead and then Jeff can finish.

MS. DE MAIO: Okay, yeah. Oh, no, I just wanted to say that one of Haftar's attack in Tripoli, he did a detention center that caused the death of 40 people that were migrants that had been taken to this detention center. And what is striking me is that neither the United Nations Security Council nor the European Union has issued a declaration openly condemning Haftar. They were just calling on the two sides for truce, which is like basically not taking any side and not condemning the attack.

MR. O'HANLON: Anything else you want to offer by way of final responses or concluding remarks?

MS. DE MAIO: I mean, it's true, the ambassador was mentioning that it's going to take a long time and like European countries should set aside their differences. It's true, but besides I think their differences aside, they need to have one line because everybody is being like really playing with both sides, and this has not helped.

But I do believe in the political power of the conferences in general, but there should be a participation from the local community that can be engaged, has been engaged with Salamé's plan. And also, using digital media that also has brought people close to -- has caused a revolution before the Arab Spring, before and can actually probably be used in a good way to engage citizens more.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And Jeff, final word to you, please, my friend.

MR. FELTMAN: Maybe I'll try to address the U.S. credibility and, Ambassador Bodde, Peter's comments about the U.N. sort of together.

I don't want to play too much into this about U.S. credibility in Libya compared to others, but it seems for what we've seen from opinion polls the U.N. has done a pretty good I think of surveying the country, that the U.S. is seen as being more impartial, seen as being more credible than closer neighbors. Maybe the U.S. isn't actually more impartial, but it's seen that way.

Now, I as a former U.S. diplomat myself, I don't think that that would last if the U.S. started to get heavily engaged because whoever didn't like what the U.S. was doing would suddenly say, well, the U.S. isn't credible. The U.S. is not impartial. So right now it's an asset that I think the U.S. could use, but carefully, because it won't last once the U.S. becomes engaged.

And the U.N. faces some of the same problems. The U.N. is, of course, seen as very closely associated with the Government of National Accord, with the creation of the Libyan Political Agreement from Skhirat from December 2015. So the U.N. itself has a credibility issue that Ghassan Salamé, the special representative, always has to look to overcome. I think he's done a pretty good job of reaching out across Libya, of keeping his office open in Benghazi despite the fact

that three of his staff members were killed in Benghazi in an attack in August.

So the U.N. has to always be thinking about the perception of impartiality that would allow it to play the type of role that Peter described in facilitating discussions. But the U.N.'s role is stronger when the international community is united behind it. And that's what has concerned me particularly since April, when the U.N. Security Council has been unable to condemn the attack on Tripoli and unable to call for a cessation of hostilities or a ceasefire and a return to political dialogue. The Security Council has been unable to give Ghassan Salamé the type of support that he should be able to point to in his discussions.

MR. O'HANLON: Jeff, before we finish and on that last point, one country that we really haven't talked about today, but we did in the report, was Russia. And I wonder when you talk about the U.N. Security Council not being decisive, do you have any particular nation states in mind? And is Russia part of the problem with their -- I realize this is not an anti-Russia comment because a lot of countries are playing one side or the other, but Russia's a relatively newer participant in this conflict and it has a veto. So is that part of the problem?

MR. FELTMAN: Again, I'm no longer privy to the discussions that take place behind closed doors. And even if I were, I wasn't supposed to talk about them as a U.N. professional having the privilege of sitting in the Security Council consultation room. But we've seen the media reports. I don't think that the lack of condemnation of a Tajoura detention facility attack was a Russian problem. I think it was much closer to where we're sitting right now.

SPEAKER: The other ceasefire.

MR. FELTMAN: Yeah, exactly. It's the same thing Bill, you're right.

MR. O'HANLON: Well, listen, thank you all. Thank you for being here. Please join me in giving a round of applause for the panelists. (Applause)

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