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SOLVING THE CIVIL WAR IN LIBYA

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. O'HANLON: Well, good morning everyone, and welcome to Brookings. I'm Michael O'Hanlon with the Foreign Policy program and on behalf of my good friend and our President John Allen who wrote the preface to the book we're about to discuss this morning, welcome and we're delighted to have Federica from Italy, our good friend and a nonresident senior fellow, and Karim from the Atlantic Council down the street.

I think you can read about their bios and their many accomplishments in the handout. But I would like to just say a couple of words of personal reflection, because they're both very good friends, and outstanding analysts on Libya's history as well, as Libya today. We're going to talk about both those topics sequentially, starting with Federica's book, which you can find in the back and it's for sale.

So, then "Vincere!" by Federica Saini Fasanotti. And it is a history of a part of the 20th century and Italy's role in North Africa, which sets a lot of the historical and intellectual backdrop for understanding Libya today.

Karim Mezran, from the Atlantic Council was part of our project here a couple of years ago in which we talked about a city space strategy for trying to work towards a more stable Libya, ideas that have been complicated by a number of things since including the various military maneuvers of General Haftar and the intervention of some more foreign forces complicating the security environment in Libya even further. But we'll get to that subsequently after talking first about the book.

So, I want to thank you all for coming. And I want to start in with some questions for Federica, but since she's come all the way across the ocean I thought maybe we could all join a round of applause for complimenting her on the book and welcoming her back to Brookings.

MS. FASANOTTI: Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: So, please tell us about the title of the book, and why you chose this time period, why it's important. You've got a distinguished career as a historian, you've written about other periods of Italy's role in North Africa before, but why this topic, why this period?

MS. FASANOTTI: Okay. The name of the book is "Vincere!" and "Vincere!" was a way

of telling of Mussolini during the fascism and means to win. And the second part of this motto was, and we will win. Of course, the fascist regime has been a military regime in many respects.

And I chose to talk about the operations that fascism, but not only fascism because we must know that the military operations in Libya start during the liberal regime, during the last part of Jalloud government. And so, it was not just Mussolini who wanted to conquer Africa. It was a question of -- a matter of geopolitical and international protagonist in many respects.

Italy didn't have African colonies. And in those times, having colonies was something of, you know, related to prestige. And so, they -- the Italians started to, first of all in the Horn of Africa, and then they went to Libya. And they started with the irregular war against the Turks. That was very quick, faster and not very much violent.

But then when the Turks went away, they realized that there were someone else in the country. And I'm talking about Libyans. And the rebellion against Italians was extremely motivated in Libya. Of course, Italians were the foreigner, they were not Muslim, they were Christians. So, many layers, social, historical, anthropologic, made the fact that Libyans did not want, rightly, Italians.

And so, from let's say 1922, Italy found itself without a real territory in Libya, because during the First World War, of course, the Italian Royal Army had to move in another chessboard, which was the Western and the Eastern chessboard in Europe.

And so, they lost every outpost of Libya because of the Libyan Mujahedeen starting to take every single place again. And so, in 1919 after the war, Italy had to decide, do we want to leave the country or not? And they decided to take it and to start what we call the re-conquest.

And that was, in reality, a real conquest from zero. And from that moment on Italy started to do military operations of counterinsurgency. And I chose, to answer your question, this period and another period, which is the military operations in Ethiopia from 1936 to 1940, because they are real counterinsurgency operations made in Africa.

And as far as we know, talking about Libya, they went in many respects in military space, they were a success, even though they cost a lot to the populations. We have to do -- to say also, this.

And in this regard, I want to say one thing, because I really studied these operations and

I want to ask Libyans, if they are here, to forgive Italy, because it's been really bad. So, I want to take this stage to ask to forgive, you know, what Italy did in those moments, terrible moments.

But in military terms it was a success. And so, Italians turned out to be much, much better in the irregular operations than in regular operations. The two wars and above all, World War II was really a failure for Italy.

MR. O'HANLON: so, let me ask about the military success and what you mean by that, because I'm intrigued, and I've read your work before. So, I have some sense of where you're going. But just for everyone else's benefit as well, and to hear it in your words today. We know that there are at least two major schools of how to do counterinsurgency. There's the school of thought personified in part by, I daresay John Allen and some of the other American military greats of the modern era. And from Iraq and Afghanistan it's been a tough couple of campaigns. But it's been a population centric protection of the population, try to build a political system that makes -- and obviously not just a military operation but a broader political and economic one. That tries to give people buy in and thereby hopefully reduce the degree to which they view the foreigner as occupier versus state builder, and temporary presence.

That's sort of the American NATO way today. But there's also, the Russian way, the President Assad way, and a way that historically, perhaps the United States used you could say in some ways, against the Native Americans, although maybe that was not really thought of as counterinsurgency.

In any event, much more of a tough iron fist. There were obviously a lot of iron fist elements of the NATO efforts and the US efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. But there was an effort to try to get the population to support as much as possible. Whereas many times in the colonial period, we know the European powers did not do that.

So, can you situate the Italian approach along that spectrum and explain to us, I know that the approach I think was better than let's say the Belgians and my former Peace Corps country of Congo. But I really don't have a good -- I'd like to hear you explain in your words, you know, give us a good understanding of how you would define that Italian military approach.

MS. FASANOTTI: Well, it was absolutely ruthless. I mean in many respects Italians; we have to think that the idea of the one Italiano doing nothing bad but just trying to improve the lives of

indigenous people. It's, you know, something that doesn't exist.

MR. MEZRAN: Yeah it goes the myth of Mandolina pizza.

MS. FASANOTTI: Yes, so, it was just a fake news. And in reality the Italians operations were really tough and ruthless. And the Libyans and Ethiopians, by the way, had to pay a huge price for those operations, civilians. Because you must think that we are talking about insurgencies.

And so, we have no regular armies here, but just men that maybe are, you know, taking care of the animals or the soil, lands and so, on. At a certain point they get a rifle and they go and fight against the colonizers.

So, in those times, we're talking about 1922 until 1940. Of course, conventions, human rights, and all these kinds of things did not exist at all. And even though there was something against gas, for example, a convention, but no one to care of these. Absolutely.

And so, I'd say that the model was much more similar to the Russian way of, you know, behaving in those terms. Although we have to say that some officers were really enlightenment, and they -- I read their they report to the leadership, the military Italian leadership there.

And they told, we must take care of the people. That's the real thing we have to do. We cannot leave them alone. Because in those territories you must know that the problem was of internal, another problem was of internal conflicts. So, if you disarm, and this is a problem that we can touch today, if you disarm a group of people, of civilians, they will be without any, any, you know, security against marauders or against brigands or whatever. And so, that was a real point for the Italian colonization in those times.

MR. O'HANLON: Two more quick questions then I want to go to Karim for a Libyan perspective on this. And again, you've been very generous in your approach, recognizing the mistakes that your country has made. So, I know that Karim is probably going to feel comfortable expressing his views as a Libyan.

But I wanted to make sure we understood the end of that time period. So, in 1940 -- the end of the time period is essentially the beginning of World War II, is that what then requires Italy to pull out?

MS. FASANOTTI: Yeah.

MR. O'HANLON: And that was the main reason, it wasn't a separate decision?

MS. FASANOTTI: No, because Africa became a chess board of World War II. And so, we had operations, both in the Horn of Africa and in the North Africa. And at that point operations were regulars. And conventional let's say war. And Italy went really bad. And so, in 1940, the counterinsurgency operations are completely forgotten and comes, you know, the moment of the fight against the British, and so, on.

MR. O'HANLON: And then just one last question, which is to not quite bring us all the way up to the present, we'll do that in the second round of discussion when we talk about Libya today. But to bring us up to Gadhafi. So, from 1940 until Gadhafi takes power in the late 1960's, how would you describe Libya in that next 30 years? What was basically going on. I know there was some degree of effort at Central Rule. But how did that evolve over those 30 years?

MS. FASANOTTI: Yeah so, immediately after World War II, there was a kind of protectorate managed by the allies who won. So, French and British. And then, which is a very important period by the way, in order to understand still the maintainers of the three regions. And then there was the kingdom of Idris that was another particular moment for Libya with many problems also there during Idris. Idris was a Cyrenaican leader, and it was in many respects, I don't want to say the -- it was so, interested in governing the country, he was an intellectual. So, it was not the right person let's say in that moment.

MR. O'HANLON: And to remind people, Cyrenaica is which part of Libya today?

MS. FASANOTTI: East. East and then there was the Tripolitania, and then there is the big part of desert, which is Fezzan.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah, very good. Thank you. And again, fantastic book which she is going to sign for anybody who would like to have her sign their copy after we're done with this discussion at 12:00 p.m. Karim, thank you for being here.

MR. MEZRAN: Thank you for inviting me.

MR. O'HANLON: And I would just love your thoughts on the book first, and then we'll

come back to a second round and talk about solving Libya's Civil War as advertised in the event.

MR. MEZRAN: I want to know who choose the title?

MR. O'HANLON: I think it was Federica.

MR. MEZRAN: No different than mine.

MR. O'HANLON: But so, let's start with an easier topic. Singing the praises of Federica's great book.

MS. FASANOTTI: Be good.

MR. O'HANLON: And more generally, how do you look back on that period? Of course, you're a young man, you weren't alive then. But nonetheless, you probably have some family that talk to you about that period. How do you see it? How do Libyans see the period that she's writing about?

MR. MEZRAN: I'm very attached to that period, emotionally. Because it was my first time I encountered the realities of politics. As a seven-year old, I went to my mom, and after mom and asked her, "Mom who is Oman Mukhtar?" I was doing that in school, in elementary. And she said, oh -- My father immediately jumped in and said he was the leader of the independency, or the liberal nationalists, of the patriots. My mother looked at him and said, "Oman Mukhtar wasn't he the leader of the bandits?"

So, that was a -- that's my answer to the politics is you're always a freedom fighter for someone and a terrorists for someone else. And that guided me throughout my life. You know, in always looking closely to what is the evolution on the ground. It brought me back to a period, not from a political point of view, but from a military, it was something I have never done.

I've always thought of colonialism as the brutal invasion and repression, and then I -- and what came after was really where my interests laid the eight years between 1940, 1948, 1949, 1950 were the Libyan entity was being built from the -- it was attempts from the bottom to build a Libyan nation, or a Libyan identity, or a Libyan structure. And those I think are the fundamental years to understand Libya. Because it's a passage from a dominated country into an independent country. How it was structured.

One thing that people tend to forget is that Italian colonialism yes, officially, with all its wars and battles and clashes ends in 1940. But a lot of Italians were in Libya.

MS. FASANOTTI: Yeah.

MR. MEZRAN: It was a huge community. Up to the point that when Adrian Pelt came to the guy was appointed by the United Nations Security Council, to go to Libya and see if Libya could become an independent country. When he formed a committee of 10, he included a representative for the Italian community. Five were foreigners and four were the representative of Libya.

One was to signify how important it was especially to Tripolitania where the Italians stayed much deeper than they did in Cyrenaica. While they were still fighting in Cyrenaica they were beginning to build the penetration into the Tripolitania. So, that is a pivotal moment.

If you don't get all these passages, what's happening today seems something foreign, something external. But Libyans have always fought to maintain, especially under Gaddafi, the idea of over unity, of a state that could signify something more than the agglomeration of three regions.

MR. O'HANLON: How old do you think of Libya as being as a country, in terms of a meaningful unification of the three regions?

MR. MEZRAN: The next 40 years, there was a lot of debate. Are we going to have a monarchy or we're going to have a republic? The division -- the decision to have a federal country, was as much base as the differences between the various regions physical, but also, in the wish.

We should not underestimate whenever I say Libya was always divided. In the 40's, the battle was not whether you were a Benghazi or you're a Tripoli or you were -- it was do you want a monarchy with this Cenozi, or do you want a republic?

My grandfather who was a representative of League of Tripolitania in the commission of 10 was not of the idea that you are from Tripoli, I'm from Tripoli, you are from Benghazi are separate. The idea was we want a republic, we want the country that is based on a national vision, we want a country that is based on parliamentarism, or a country based on constitutionalism. Against other peoples in the East, that want to start club and others who want this a new seeking as the king of the whole -- of the country. If not only of these, which in '49 with the help of the leadership and the declaration of the (inaudible) was a viable option.

That forced the Tripolitania to accept the idea of a king and they push for the federal



monarchy. It's not only the objective differences in mentality, in culture within the region. So, much that as their vision for the future ended. And I believe that in those were the foundational years. And those are -- and I'm really at pain when I saw that the new elite came after 2012, did not pay much attention to that period. Because that is the period where the Libyans really fought. There were foreign influences undoubtedly. But the common vision of Italy to say we will be independent -- we'll be one and independent is what forced the external part to, again, to give it up and accept the (inaudible) event.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. So, let's have a round of discussion now about Libya today. And I want to thank Fred Weary for being here as well, whose book, *The Burning Shores*, is one of my other great favorites, and explains what's been going on this decade. We're now almost 10 years into the post Gadhafi period. It'll be nine pretty soon with the Arab Spring and then the subsequent period of conflict and Gadhafi's overthrow and death in the fall of 2011.

And since that time, we've seen essentially in some ways anarchy, but it's also, been, as Fred and Karim and Fedi have explained to me, it's a kind of anarchy that still allowed some degree of normal functioning society and infrastructure to continue. There's -- if you go to Libya today, I'm told, or at least for much of this last 10 years, there is not a sense of complete lawlessness as in, let's say, Somalia or Afghanistan in the 1990's or certain periods where we just think of complete mayhem.

There is a militia-based system of security. That's sometimes pretty capricious, and arbitrary, and sometimes pretty ruthless. And the country as a whole doesn't glue together very well. But there's still been some degree of preservation of a functioning state for much of that time, partly because Libya has oil, and it's therefore, had revenue to share. And there's never been a system of distribution that's been widely accepted for long, but there has been at least some revenue to share across different parts of the country.

I'm going to let these two correct me in a second by the way, with describing where I think we stand in Libya today. But just to set the table, then ask each of them to correct me or add a couple of additional details or factual reference points. And then we'll discuss where the international community should go from here.

But as I think many of you know, since April of last year, General Haftar from the East,

sort of a self-appointed strong man, who stylized himself as a person bringing order to an otherwise lawless country, but also, in many people's eyes is greedy for power and seeking to control as much of the country as he can himself.

He has swept westward. He's taken much of the oil producing area in the center of the country. But meanwhile, Libya's oil production has gone way down as a result. And he's also, attempted to take Tripoli, but he's found that he actually can't do that, at least not yet. However, he's invited Russian help. And we now have a complex dynamic with foreign actors, including Turkey and the United Arab Emirates being even more present on the ground in military support for one side or another than before. All in violation of the UN arms embargo and potentially bringing more chaos to the country, and certainly more risk to Tripoli as a city than had been previously the case.

So, that's how I see it. But I'd like to ask the real experts to correct me, round out the picture. And then we're going to talk about policy options before we get to your questions. So, how would you describe the situation today relative to what I just said?

MS. FASANOTTI: Well, no you were precise, and the situation is very bad. Haftar started the siege against Tripoli the 4th of April last. And of course, it's still going on in spite of all the help that he can have from Russia, from the Emirates and from Egypt.

Egypt has always been without city, has always been interested in spreading its influence on Libya. And this is very natural, I mean during -- just to go back and forth during the Italian colonization age, it was one of the biggest point of problem for the Italians. Because with the border, so, you know, so, easy to pass through, and the ports, the rebels or the Mujahedeen came back and forth continuously and had all the support they needed from Egypt.

And today it's pretty similar. Azizi is helping, in spite of all, you know, the way the United Nations resolutions, is helping that part of Libya in order to conquer the other part. And that's of course, no deal from Tripolitania, but there are many differences if we analyze the two chessboards, because in these 10 years what we can see something, let's say its you're an icon much more regional in many respects, with the figure of Haftar as a military and political leader. Although they should have in House of Representatives an alternative form of political govern.

And on the other side we have a more local way of governing the region in Tripoli Italia. So, more local let's say, with many different militias a complete oligarchy, I should call it. That tries to maintain the situation of anarchy in many respects, because it's very useful for them.

And by my point of view, probably, you know, the militias in Tripoli will never accept the conquest of Haftar. Never. Haftar and Karema can correct me or add something, it has, you know, has been seen as a criminal in many respects and as an invader.

And so, I think that the situation will be like this for the next few months and more.

MR. O'HANLON: Before I ask Karim for his thoughts, I was intrigued. You've twice used the term Mujahedeen to talk about the resistance fighters in the colonial period that you focus on in your book. Were they Islamic in the modern day sense, or were they more anti-colonialist? How would you --

MS. FASANOTTI: Anti-colonialists for sure, but they were fighters. And so, it is my way to give them respect. And I don't -- as I told you, I don't like to call them rebels at all, because studying every single operation of, you know, in 10 years of history, of Libyan history, every single operation. I can tell you that they were extremely valuable fighters and they fought for their country, and we didn't have to forget this.

And they were really motivated and very good. And almost every commander, Italian commander, had to write this. We are fighting against real fighters. So, they really had the respect of Italians in many ways.

MR. O'HANLON: Just a quick footnote. I might note that in Mujahedeen terms in Afghanistan of course, this term is also, a very positive one. At least from my point of view. I think at this time, we have big debates about Afghanistan, and we see a peace process perhaps start up a little bit.

We have to remember that they really helped us win the Cold War. The Mujahedeen really, not only fought for their country, they did enormous benefit for the broader Western cause against the Soviet threat during the Cold War. And that was really the beginning of the end of the Soviet Empire. Karim, how do you see things in Libya today?

MR. MEZRAN: The term Mujahedeen, tied to Islamic religion. And fighters in Libya were members of the oldest Cyrenaica or the Sofitaritta (phonetic). Their common vision, yes they were

fighting for independence or taking the foreigners away. But deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition of this Cyrenaica and the Sofitaritta.

MS. FASANOTTI: Yes.

MR. MEZRAN: That was the common thing, up to the point that somebody says that seeing in the Sanoosee fighters, the fighters for Libya is could be a stretch. You know, they were really fighting for keeping the foreigner, the infidels out of the area that they were living in and they were fighting for.

It's debatable. You can -- there's enough arguments to support theory and one to support the other. But that's why (inaudible). What your question?

MR. O'HANLON: Well, how do you -- apart from what we've already said, what else should we understand about Libya today to create a good factual foundation for the policy conversation? What's the most important additional fact that you would either add to the, you know, what we put on the table or that you would challenge me in the way I described things?

MR. MEZRAN: Yeah here is when I begin to make enemies. I really think that the most important thing today to look at is not to believe that the two traditional narratives, or the individual narrative that sees as General Haftar, self-proclaimed general or legitimately done so, all that.

The House of Representatives being the only legitimate one, and all the serving -- as being the representative of the grievances and the instances of the people of the East, against the peoples of the West, who are now in this moment prey of Islamic radicalism. But traditionally controlled the resources.

There is also, the word centralized. So, having this vision of the general, a professional military, who is secularist, who fights terrorists, who is prone to democracy, and that it just he wants to impose all that for a few minutes and then he will open up to the counter -- and deal the counter in a Western sense. The sense that you should like.

Against those who are in the West who are militias, Islamist, part of the big Islamic conspiracy that some of our writers here like to represent that all they want is isolate the country and plunge it into the Middle Ages.

My colleagues here we've talked a lot about this, and we all know the fallacy of this narrative. Haftar is not the representative of the East. Nobody comes from Cyrenaica, but only he is being created by foreign power in particular. Maybe to impose the resources to the large majority of the people in the East where he installed a military regime.

And we have seen that since the beginning when he was substituting every major regularly elected with a military commander -- military governor. And by military, we just mean they were wearing a uniform, because there is no Libyan army, professionally trained, independent and the nationalist in itself.

The creation of Haftar, and of this situation in the east is -- and the strength of this narrative that has been spread at the international level with incredible success. Because we are -- anytime I go to people away from those who know about Libya, and they go to the average citizen to the non-Muslims, that's the narrative that is there.

And we can fight against it. We can undermine as much as we can, we can right it and we can say we can bring proof. We can demonstrate and it's there. And then for some reason this is what has penetrated is the good and the bad idea. And that I think is the most dangerous one. Because it is creating Eastern-Western difference that between the population that is -- that I don't think is there.

There are differences but there are differences in every counter in the world between the regions if you want to dig them -- if you want to find them out. And any European country you can say the north from the south, there is no way that the two of them can compare.

It's the political narrative that is going to create a division. When I'm pessimist, which is most of the times, I really see that it has been created, the division within the Libyans, it will be extremely difficult to recuperate. It will take ages and a lot of work and a lot of goodwill to create a narrative that keeps the two populations united after all these divisions and the fights and the civil war that has happened. Fighting this to narrative and creating a real one is the struggle that we all have to undertake as much as possible.

MR. O'HANLON: so, thank you. I want to ask you each just the same question about what to do from here, without asking you to solve the whole Libyan Civil War. We'll expect some help

from the audience on that front once we get started up here in the remainder of our time.

But a couple of years ago, with Fred Weary and John Allen and a few others from around town, we wrote a report in which we talked about trying to incentivize some of the local actors and militias and cities to try to improve their game, so, to speak, in terms of governance and security, and try to create a system of distribution of resources, keep the central government relatively weak, but of course try to strengthen it over time. And that was sort of our vision.

That was before the events of the last of the 12 months or last 10 months. Is there anything left to be said on behalf of that vision? What should an alternative vision be if that one is now defunct? What's the path forward in Libya? And again, I don't expect a perfect answer, but sort of what's the most important next thing? Or what's the most important big idea that we should have in mind in terms of what we're trying to achieve over time?

MS. FASANOTTI: Well, let's say that Karim started telling something very true and important. I mean, we have to work on media coverage, in my opinion, and on a different narrative that now is absolutely disruptive. Because in the end people -- even though at the beginning, they don't think that things are like this, in the end they start to believe that there is effectively this huge difference absolutely not, that you cannot solve. So, this is one point.

Secondly, of course, the situation has really worsened in the last year. When we were writing the paper on Libya and on localism (inaudible) civilizations and so, on, many things were different. I'm pretty sure that many militias in the majority of the people in Tripoli will find very difficult to start a real conversation with Haftar, in this point.

On the other side, you have Haftar that bet on many things, starting this kind of military operation towards Tripoli. And now my belief is that he will -- he must win Tripoli. I think that he cannot go back to Benghazi without any result after all these months, after all the dead they had.

I think, for example, that at the beginning of the operation many, many young boys with no experience, we've seen them in videos and so, on, were killed during the operation, and they were from Cyrenaica. And maybe they are now in guardian (phonetic) and parents cannot go and take them, you know, the bodies.

And so, after all this, I think that for him will be very difficult to go back without a result. Plus, the situation in Benghazi is not so, calm as, you know, the narratives say. And plus in Benghazi also, it's full of extremist groups. So, I think that at the moment the situation will be -- will remain like this. And Berlin, the conference in Berlin, was nothing -- was completely useless.

MR. O'HANLON: That was in January or December?

MS. FASANOTTI: When it was, the conference in January. January.

MR. O'HANLON: Karim --

MS. FASANOTTI: It was denied.

MS. FASANOTTI: Yeah at the beginning yeah.

MR. O'HANLON: Over to you Karim. Do you see any next step that we can at least, you know, even if we can't see the finish line, we can at least see what the next step should be? You sounded pretty pessimistic a minute ago but is there any basis for --

MR. MEZRAN: I'm Scorpion, I'm an Arab, I cannot be anything more than -- It's a culture clash. The problem that I've seen doing analysis in following Libya in especially in the last four or five years, is that anytime you study the situation on the ground, you see how it is evolving --

MS. FASANOTTI: It changes.

MR. MEZRAN: Yeah, exactly. You write down and then do you agree with your colleagues on the possible solution? To propose 15 days later it's --

MS. FASANOTTI: Done.

MR. MEZRAN: Over it's done. So, what would the function two years ago and could the function had everybody put their heads into doing that? What we wrote in the in the Brookings report, it doesn't mean anything anymore. What I'm really afraid is that this -- the longer the civil war is lasting, the more is breaking the good social fabric of the Libyan population.

Until before this invasion, you could be surprised by how much within anarchy, within disorder, the population could lead a legal life. You are a militia man; you walk around with a (inaudible). I've seen them entering a store, buying something, paying and getting out. These -- Libya has been without a real police force for years now.

Now, try to imagine any Western society, any city in the West, where you say, guys there's no police for 24 hours. You can do whatever you want. And you will see the reaction. Libyans have been in a similar condition and they've kept a social modus vivendi with each other that allowed society almost without a superior structure to leave and gone. And that has been the treasure of the Libyans.

I always thought until that is there, there is hope that a state can be built, that we can build the structure to develop and begin the war to the pluralistic, democratic, whatever that is. This, I am afraid that is being broken. And it's been broken by the violent attack against Tripoli, more than by the repression, the destruction of Benghazi. What's happening there now and all the other stuff?

Because it is a symbol of total disdain by a part supported by a very strong narrative towards another part. When you unleash bombardments against a civil city that is supposed to be the capital of the state that you want to conquer, the state that you want to liberate, that sends a terrible message. And that message is undermined completely all we have fought to maintain. And that is the root of my pessimism.

That is offset by the optimist -- as my grandpa used to say, yes, pessimism of reason of the United States, there's no way it will be solved. It's offset by the optimism of the will. Which is the continued struggle for the mediation, the continued hope that somehow the international community can find the common -- a common vision, a common intent to put pressure on the local factions, to stop fighting and to begin to a reconsider or vice versa. That there is an agreement, it's tied in is within the population that pushes out before a proxy and find whether through localism, whether through to give any form, found a way to restart the process.

And that is, as it is now, I share Federica's opinion on the idea that international conferences are users, they don't mean anything. I have more trust in the bilateral pressure that the States can do. I'm just making a fantasy.

But an Algerian, Egyptian intent on how on solving the problem, can do, in my opinion, much more than Berlin Conference where everybody comes up and says, yes we are in favor. And then a second later continues the arming and the pushing of its own faction and the end destruction and so,



on. You can design any possible outcome. At least desired one, it could be a Russian Turkish agreement to a more desirable one that could be one under an international -- United Nation's supervision and every degree in the middle. But that is the only way to work.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Well, let's take some questions from the audience. Please, if you could wait for a microphone and give us your name before asking your questions. We'll start with the gentleman here in the fourth row on the side, please. I'll take a few and then come back to you.

MR. WHITE: Thatcher White. Could you talk a little bit about the interests of the various foreign interlopers in this dispute?

MR. O'HANLON: so, various foreign actors. Then we've Scott about 10 rows back, curly red hair. Unmistakable.

MR. MORGAN: Good morning, my name is Scott Morgan I'm a freelance security analyst covering West African issues. I would like you to comment on how the Haftar offensive is actually leading to the deteriorating security climate and how specifically Niger, Burkina and Mali, as we're finding that some of the unintended benefits of his offensive is he's driven some of the foreign fighters out of Libya.

MR. O'HANLON: And then there's a gentlemen over here on the other side of the aisle, yes please.

BOB: Good morning. My name is Bob from the Embassy of the Gambia. Actually I have two quick -- the first one being what would be the likely outcome between Haftar, and international recognized government based in Tripoli? And the second one is so, we blame the West for the present day chaos in Libya?

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. So, why don't we come back, a number of questions on the table, don't feel like you have to address each one, both of you. But why don't we start with you, Federica?

MS. FASANOTTI: Well, the situation with the international actors is pretty clear. There are two -- let's say two --

MR. MEZRAN: Sides.

MS. FASANOTTI: Yes, two sides. And they are more and more stronger. On one side of the Syrian (inaudible) side, we have the support of the Emirates of Russia and of Egypt, as we said. And plus, sometimes also, you know, the hand of Saudi Arabia. And on the other side, we have Qatar and Turks -- and Turkey.

Each of these countries have different interest in Libya. And they are economics, politics and in many respects also, connected to the international prestige. So, I don't -- I think that they have really spoiled the chance in the possibility for Libya to have a real path for peace in this very moment. They are the real spoilers in many respects, even though Libyans have many, you know, did many mistakes in this process.

The other question was on Haftar and the war, how is it going, did I understood? I think that Haftar destroyed every possibility to solve the question in Libya, and then in the next years, let's say not months and not weeks, of course. And this kind of action, military action, also, disrupted as you said, the situation in the Sahel (phonetic).

So, the less you have control in the deserted part of Libya, in the (inaudible), which has no borders as we know, the most you will have problems with weapons, with terrorism and so, on. So, again, I think that the military operation of Haftar has been really a curse in many respects. Karim, do you want to add anything?

MR. MEZRAN: This situation, it looks clear. I really believe it's extremely complex, because every one of the actors, each one of them having multiple allegiances and various behaviors. We all have to be talking about the Egyptian changing their minds on Haftar, but the America pushing them in. The Russians are taking the place of the Russia.

There has been a lot of talk a lot of action, a lot of destruction. Italy has been on the side of Sirage (phonetic) but then it looked like it was endorsing Haftar, then went back. There all of the French, there all the European Union. The big weight of the financial community has been really unbelievable.

And the consequences for the international system has not been understood yet. I was

at a seminar in July and an eminent colleague of mine. We were on the taxi going back. He told me, Karim, what do you think? Do you think that 20 years from now we will -- the historians will look back at the day and say the 4th of April, the day Haftar attack against Tripoli when the Secretary General of the UN was there sanction at the beginning of the end, of the United Nations as a meaningful, powerful entity of the international community?

And I thought a lot about it, and I think yeah we will -- the way the international community has behaved regarding Libya has consequence, it will have consequences much far beyond the mere events in Tripoli and Libya. It will affect the international institutions, which have poorly performed. It will affect the region organizations. It will affect neighboring country. It will affect political institutions and states in Africa. And it is affecting what's going on in Europe.

It is extremely complex. If you want -- if you really want to have a deep understanding of what is going on and trying to draw some conclusion out of it.

MS. FASANOTTI: Yeah, I completely agree. Absolutely.

MR. O'HANLON: I'm just going to add two points myself. And then we'll see if there's another round. In a month, on March 23rd, we're going to have another event with the Africa Security Initiative here with Professor Elise Howard from Georgetown, who's written about the success of UN Peace Operations in Africa and elsewhere. And that'll be a happier story.

But there is, of course, no UN peace observation or peacekeeping force inside of Libya today. That was one of the points we debated in our group, whether to recommend one. But we're a long ways from having any kind of a peace to monitor or keep in any event.

So, I take your point about the UN taking a hit here. The UN has a lot of partial successes and sometimes big successes in other places. It's, you know, these missions don't have the muscle of a NATO operation, but they have had a better than 50/50 track record. But of course, they're not really being attempted now in Libya. So, just one observation.

One more observation and it speaks also, to the gentleman's question at the end. I once heard it said about 10 years ago by a very eminent Middle East expert, and this might have been true when he said it. But I'm sure it's not true anymore. And actually I don't even think it was true when he

said it.

That what happens in Libya stays in Libya. And I think it's almost exactly the opposite. Because as the questions underscored, we've seen foreign fighters from Libya, many of whom were further radicalized and who improved their tactic, so, to speak, during the broader wars of the Middle East, in Iraq and elsewhere in the 2000's. Then go southward, and they're contributing to much of the instability in the broader Sahel region.

And we also, know that Libya is such a sparsely populated and open terrain country, that the flows can go in the other direction too. To the extent that Libya is not able to take care of its own borders we have the potential for large exodus from much of Africa into Europe.

And of course, this is going to only be exacerbated by growing populations in Africa and many of the changes with climate that are underway as well. So, I think Libya is essentially a wide open two-directional swinging door with the movements of foreign fighters and refugees. And this is generally speaking of no real benefit to anyone, it can't be healthy for the security of any of the region. I think it's a dynamic we've seen quite a bit in the last 10 years only getting worse.

So, let's see if we have time for one last round of questions before we come back to the panelists for their final words. We'll start in the back. Yes, please.

MS. AMEESHA: Hi, ooh, that's loud. Okay. Hi. This is Anwar Aleesha, I'm from the Libyan American Alliance. I have two quick questions. I think the first one is you rightly mentioned that Libya is very sparsely populated. The population itself is very small. I'm curious about how the migration that has occurred since 2014, particularly from the east and the south to the west, how that's shaping internal dynamics and particularly narratives there. That's the first question.

And then the second question is to something Mr. Mezran said about the UN. And I'm curious if you could talk briefly about the relationship between the UN's failure on Syria and the UN's failure on Libya, and how those two things might together or differently, herald the end of whatever international order that we have?

MR. O'HANLON: We've got three questions up front we're going to end with John Allen's. So, we'll go here first, and we'll come back to you guys for that.

MR. MEZRAN: You are always meeting our memory.

MS. FASANOTTI: Yeah.

MR. O'HANLON: You want notes?

MR. GULLIVAN: Hi, Carl Gullivan. One Libya question on one Italy question. Under Gadhafi, Libya was one of the few countries that did not have a western style that based privately controlled central bank system, Gadhafi even held conferences about risk to the gold dinar coin circulating for oil transactions as money of North Africa. So, my question is, what is the current status of the system of money and banking in Libya?

And concerning Italy, what's become public that we can learn about NATO from what's been revealed about Operation Gladio in Italy?

MR. MEZRAN: What was that?

MS. FASANOTTI: Gladio.

MR. MEZRAN: Okay you can talk to the one mentioning Italy. I didn't get it.

MR. GULLIVAN: I didn't understand you I'm sorry.

MR. MEZRAN: The second part of your question one regarding Italy.

MR. GULLIVAN: Really for the young lady about Italy. There have been public hearings about what NATO was involved in, in terms of those protecting against terrorism actually providing the terrorism in Italy. So, I was going to ask if you could please explain what has been revealed about NATO's role in Operation Gladio in Italy, not in Libya, but in Italy.

MR. O'HANLON: And then over here, please and then finally John after that.

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible) Christianni Jygemafela (phonetic) the German Marshall Fund. I have a question linking what's going on now with the history. Gadhafi was very keen in using instrumental Omar Mukhtar, like in his relationship -- in his relations with Italy. Like we all remember that every time he was visiting Berlusconi, he used to have the picture of Omar Mukhtar on his clothes.

So, my question is, is there, from both sides in Libya at the moment, the same attempt to use history to justify what they have been -- what they are doing there? I've seen some attempts from the Haftar side to justify their actions against the GNA, as the GNA being the client of the Italian colonialist

power first and now of the Ottomans, like colonial like, patterns, etc.

So, I want to ask, from your point of view, whether this kind of attempt has been to a certain extent like structured, or it's a couple of tweets every now and then from specific actors? Thank you.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. And then finally, President Allen.

MR. ALLEN: I'm John Allen, I work here. Two quick things. If -- Mike on the back of that book, some folks have shown some interest in it. It might be interesting to reflect some of that. The second thing is, and this is for anyone in the audience who would know, what the current state of US policy is with regard to Libya?

Well, that's my question. You know, we have what I think would be the punitive U.S. support for the GNA, yet we have tweets going out on a regular basis, extolling the virtues of Haftar. So, I leave that for the panel or someone perhaps from the State Department who would like to confess to being part of the State Department, to offer us some help on what the policy is.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent. So, Karim, you want to start then we'll give the last word to Federica and then I will -- I'll actually have the last word because I'm going to read Jim Madison's and John Allen's endorsements of this book in closing. But please --

MR. MEZRAN: Yes, the first question regarding the appropriation movement. I think it is massive, but still too early for us to assess the exact consequences. This is going to bring the us the political structure and the economic structure. There are a lot of internally displaced people that once pieces are certain can go back. But there is a lot of migrants who moved in who cannot leave and then they're sitting there.

I have a friend who came from Mubari (phonetic) and he's an old guy. And he told me already a year ago, that what was happening in the south was incredible demographic change. He said, I don't recognize most of the people in my city, most of the people in my neighborhood. And this is -- there is not enough information to really understand the depth of the change. How many migrants really came from -- hundreds of various reasons came from different counties in the south instead of settled down there. And how many are moving up north?

I really believe that this will be one of the major issues that once, God willing, the war is finished and the states start to do rebuilding there -- the gigantic issue would be to reorganize the population, redraw the borders, redraw the limits of city -- of civic engagement.

And also, and something I will never be tired to saying this, the real winner of all of this are the (inaudible) organizations which are becoming extremely powerful in Libya. And it went beyond any comparison I could make with the possible second world war situation in Calabria, or in Italy or in Sicily, where the mafia was destroyed by fascism started -- it was rebuilt by the complacency of the Americans not to be utilized to subdue the population. And they dominated the island and took the power for themselves.

Italy is 10 times more than that. They really control it. They have cash. They have weapons they have a structure, an organization that will be extremely difficult, much more difficult to defeat this criminal network or criminal organization than defeating terrorism, ISIS or al Qaeda or wherever taking its place.

Your question whether it is history invoked today? That's an interesting question, which I really haven't talked --

MS. FASANOTTI: Well, I think that it's, you know, a tool as Gadhafi -- sometimes Haftar, but of course, it's not interesting in this moment moving anything against Italians. But yes, when Haftar has to give his comments on Italy, it is always that we were the colonizers and that we, you know, the GNA is our slave, and so, on.

But it's just a kind of offense. I don't think at the moment, as far as I know, that there is a real structured propaganda in this. We must always, sorry Karim, be attentive in, you know, the relationship with Libya, of course, because we have a huge and strong and rooted past in this.

And so, it's very easy to fall down.

MR. MEZRAN: Italy?

MS. FASANOTTI: Yeah. And do you remember, for example, the event with the former ambassador, the Italian Ambassador Roni, when there was this scandal about the, you know, race, the car race and the picture about that. You know, it's very easy to manipulate that.

MR. MEZRAN: But I don't know whether you are asking that, because there is always a manipulation of history for political propaganda.

MS. FASANOTTI: Yeah.

MR. MEZRAN: And that -- they -- but there is an interpretation of history that is to be -- not to be discussed. And that is, for example, all of that happened in the East against the Turks, or the (inaudible) to the Turks, the Arabs. That interpretation of history is the real dangerous one. The one that builds a total different understanding of the national identity. A total different understanding of how you can rebuild the national identity through an interpretation of a selected history that hides certain parts and then lights certain others.

And that is not yet well, developed. It -- my fear is if that if this state of affairs continues to happen for another year or two, and you will begin to have a de facto partition of the country, which is different from federalism, dysentery, just the fact that parties, Haftar or whoever is going to hold this authority over certain part of the country, and the other one is -- another part of the country, then you will see the slow development by the few intellectuals from each side to develop an understanding of history. The imagined communities' idea. How you rebuild the national -- in order to strengthen your consensus, in order to develop your hegemony power in the international community, so, you have recognition and so, on.

And that is not been there yet. But I see the embryo of this potential creation over the narrative, historically based that could define the distinction within the country.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, Karim. Federica over to you for the last words.

MS. FASANOTTI: Yeah. Well, to answer to our president about the United States, I think that there -- we are in front of a kind of evolution of, you know, the United States diplomats and, you know, government about Libya. So, at the beginning of the service of General Mattis, as Secretary of Defense, that was for sure the interest at least, you know, from some leadership -- American leadership, about solving the question in Libya.

Because Libya has and is something much more than just Libya. But it has a huge strategic importance. So, Mattis is so, exactly this and he said I want to do something in order to solve



and help to solve the problems in Libya.

Nowadays, it's pretty disappointing, I'd say and there are many coal from Libyans, to -- for the United States to act. Many in the last few days also. But the United States in this moment seems to be mission, you know, missing in action in many respects.

And plus, I would say something about the American Ambassador, can I?

MR. MEZRAN: Of course.

MS. FASANOTTI: When, you know, he goes and he meets first of all, as we know, last day General Haftar, in this way United States are giving importance to these men. And which is I don't think a very good thing. I know that I cannot go to sit in Cyrenaica anymore at this point, but it's okay.

MR. MEZRAN: Can I just say one thing regarding American policy. I really believe that to try to understand what -- if there is a policy and what is the policy, we have to put United States into its bigger role. Libya is -- I always thought that Libya -- the United States could tell the Iraqi -- the Emirati and the Egyptians, back off. It has the leverage to it.

But if you inserted it within the wider geopolitical and strategy of the interstate, I'm afraid that Libya is not worth a fight with the Egyptians or struggle with the Emirati, or any other actor for that. Libya is seen as a lesser important country by the American administration at this point. Not worth that kind of struggle, that kind of entanglements.

MR. O'HANLON: Unfortunately, it is that swinging screen door in and out of Europe and the (inaudible). What currency is used in Libya today? What most commonly?

MS. FASANOTTI: The dinar.

MR. O'HANLON: And as opposed to the dollar or other international currencies, in practical terms?

MR. MEZRAN: The Lyra.

MR. O'HANLON: Right. Let me just conclude by again thanking you all for being here and also, honoring Federica with a couple of quick blurbs, one from Jim Mattis. Packed with timeless lessons, no other account rivals this skillful dissection of Italian counterinsurgency and Africa. Dr. Fasanotti's rigorously researched gem is now the standard, revealing as it does the human factors and

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So, please consider purchasing and getting signed your copy today. And thank you again for coming. Please join me in thanking these two. (Applause)

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