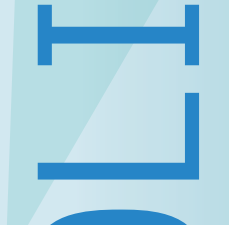European University Institute

ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

Middle East Directions

POLICY BRIEF

Local Specificities of Migration in Libya: Challenges and Solutions

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Executive Summary

Current policies aimed at curbing illegal migration to Europe through Libya, such as the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Italian government and Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) signed early 2017, are unlikely to be sustainable in the mid- to long-term. The GNA has limited control beyond Tripoli, which reduces its ability to impose policies in areas that are key to smuggling operations, in particular in southern Libya. One major reason for the expected ineffectiveness or adverse effects of these policies is that they do not take into account the interests and concerns of the local actors.

1. Abdulrahman al-Arabi was born in Tripoli. He is a civil society activist with a particular interest in migration, and Libyan and international law related to migration.
This paper was written in March 2018 as part of Middle East Directions' Libya Initiative, which includes a scheme to mentor young Libyan analysts.

A field-based analysis of migrant smuggling networks at the local level indicates that there are clear differences in the nature and organisation of migrant smuggling networks between Libya's southern, central and coastal regions. As such, similiar policies in all regions will not produce effective results and may even prove counter-productive. It is important therefore that policy responses are designed to address the specific challenges of each region in terms of the actors involved in migrant smuggling and their connections to wider society.

Southern Region

The southern region is key to migrant smuggling as it is the entry point of flows heading towards the Mediterranean from sub-Saharan Africa and remains largely out of the GNA's security control. Combatting smuggling in the South is also extremely complex as the issue has become politicised as a result of the struggle for influence between the various local tribes and non-Arab minorities, and unresolved political issues relating to rights to Libyan citizenship and nationality.

Therefore, a relevant policy response in southern Libya ought to engage and include all of the different groups competing for influence in the region so as not to further affect the local power balance (or be perceived as doing so). Although security will be part of the response, policy makers both inside and outside Libya should be wary of relying on supporting select armed groups that appear most capable of curbing migration flows.

The impact of smuggling on the local economy is also very important in the South. Smugglers in this area often re-invest their profits locally, and have come to constitute an alternative to the failing banking system and the lack of basic services. This has made smugglers particularly influential in some areas. An effective policy to combat smuggling would therefore seek to disconnect smugglers from local communities by providing day-to-day services, incentivising legitimate trade and promoting economic development.

Central Region

The sociology of the smuggling networks in the central region differs from that in the south and the coastal region, reflecting the highly cohesive and homogenous social fabric of the area: generally, the inhabitants of each town or area belong to a single tribe. W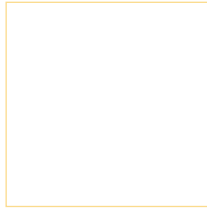hile this has so far provided 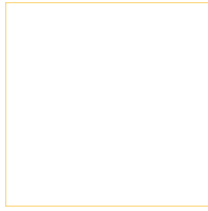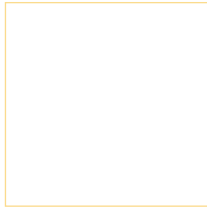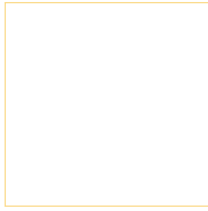smugglers from the region with a significant level of social protection – as tribal leaders have tended to turn a blind eye to their activities in order to prevent conflict – it could also provide an entry point for successful policies to combat illegal migration.

Local social and municipal councils generally have a significant level of influence and control over their communities. If they were convinced that smuggling is doing more harm than good to their people, they could become efficient partners for both the Libyan government and its international partners. The relatively weak influence of smugglers on the local economy in this region would be an asset. One key challenge, however, will be the continuing isolation of communities from the central region after 2011, as well as their refusal to recognise the central political and security authorities.

Coastal Region

The local armed groups that have increasingly seized control over migrant smuggling operations in the coastal region since 2014 focus on maximising profit and have only limited impact on the local economy. Security campaigns conducted by local police forces and the coast guard have a track record of success in certain areas, especially when they could take advantage of the local community's rejection of smuggling activities and competition between smuggling networks.

Further efforts to reinforce the capacity of security structures and incentivise police forces and the coast guard to combat migrant smuggling can bring about positive results. For such efforts not to further empower local security structures to the detriment of the central government, however, particular attention will have to be given to designing mechanisms for encouraging coordination and cooperation between local and national level authorities. In general, policies aimed at curbing migrant smuggling will gain in efficiency if they capitalise on the increasing rejection of smuggling by local communities and the growing interest of local political and security actors to demonstrate their anti-smuggling commitment. Particular attention will need to be paid to avoid that offers of cooperation are presented to some groups to the detriment of others, triggering competition between networks and further instability.

Introduction

Controlling illegal migration flows to and from Libya has become a policy priority for Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA)[2] over the past year. This is largely due to the intense pressure it faces from destination countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, Italy in particular. However, migration has now also become an issue of public interest in Libya, especially since CNN's November 2017 documentary on 'slave markets' of sub-Saharan African migrants transiting through the country[3]. Over the course of the past months, illegal migration and migrant smuggling have started to be considered by Libyans as a problem and a possible threat to the country's stability, something which is relatively new.

The fall in the number of migrants attempting to launch across the Mediterranean from Libya's shores in mid 2017,[4] indicated that the February 2017 MoU signed between the GNA and the Italian government may be starting to bear fruit. However, questions are being raised with regard to its limitations and already noticeable adverse effects,[5] as well as its sustainability.

The strategy behind the MoU relies heavily on the GNA and the security structures affiliated to it at the local level. Yet the GNA remains unable to exercise control over much territory, and even the security structures and armed groups that are officially part of the government are often loyal to it in name only – when they are not directly involved in the estimated €500-million-a-year[6] migrant smuggling trade.

The fact that migrant smuggling has essentially become a major sector of the economy and the principal source of income for many young people and families in some regions is largely unaddressed in the current policy responses. It is also still unclear whether the reduction in Mediterranean crossings is mirrored by a reduction in migrants entering Libya from sub-Saharan Africa, meaning that Libyan concerns over the permanent settlement of migrants in the country have not been addressed.

A new strategy is therefore required, one which takes into account the concerns of both Libyan and European policymakers. In an attempt to contribute to such a strategy, this paper looks at migrant smuggling networks at the local level, the actors involved in them and their connections to wider society. The clear differences between the southern region, central region and coastal region mean that a single policy implemented in the same way across all three regions will not produce effective results. Rather, while being framed as supporting and reinforcing the capacities of the central state authorities, responses should be designed to address the specific challenges of each area.

This paper is based on field research and interviews in each of the three aforementioned regions between June 2017 and February 2018, as well as the author's long experience in the field in another capacity. It only addresses migrant smuggling networks in the west of Libya, because smuggling operations there account for most of the illegal migration flows from Libya towards the northern shore of the Mediterranean. It also pays particular attention to southern Libya, which constitutes a key link in migrant smuggling networks to and through Libya.

The Southern Region: A Struggle for Influence Amid Fragile Security Conditions and Economic Marginalisation

Libya's southern region, extending from Kufra[7] in the east to Ghat[8] in the west, and Brak al-Shati in the north, is home to a number of different tribes and non-Arab minorities. These groups have taken different political stances since 2011 and have been competing for power

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2. The Government of National Accord (GNA) is headed by Fayez Al-Serraj, and was formed following signing of the Libya Political Agreement in December 2015 in Skhirat, Morocco. The agreement was with the participation and support of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

3. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42038451.

4. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/11/number-of-migrants-arriving-in-italy-from-libya-falls-by-half-in-july

5. https://issafrica.org/research/north-africa-report/the-anti-human-smuggling-business-and-libyas-political-end-game

6. For more information, see [Arabic]: http://al-ahd.net/2017/08/15/, page 2.

7. Kufra is the largest city in the south east, 1,050 km from Benghazi. It is located in the triangle formed by Libya's borders with Egypt, Sudan and Chad, and is considered the main smuggling route from Sudan and other countries of the Horn of Africa.

8. Ghat is located in the far west of Libya, 550 km southwest of Sebha, on Libya's borders with Niger and Algeria. It is one of the smuggling routes from Mali and Niger.

and influence, including for the control of resources (oil fields, border crossings, smuggling routes).

The principal challenge to tackling illegal migration in the Libyan south comes from the intersection of several key trends, which are increasingly intertwined: weak or no central control over local security; political competition between a variety of local groups; demographic transformations; and, a weak and deteriorating local economy. The combination of these factors in the Libyan south has allowed the smuggling networks to expand and increase their influence at the local level.

Since 2011, migrant smugglers have been able to work faster and more easily as a result of the limited capacity of official security bodies (essentially the border guard[9] and the Anti-Illegal Immigration Agency, AIIA[10]). According to one Ministry of Interior official[11], the role of these bodies has been undermined because of their dependence on weak and divided governments, and because smugglers'

military capacities put them under severe pressure. As most smugglers are backed by local armed groups that protect them and secure their trade, the border guard and AIIA have tended not to engage actively with them, in order to avoid direct armed confrontation. There is no military force assigned to protect members of the border guard and AIIA, and more than once their patrols have been fired upon, particularly after 2014[12]. The two agencies have also faced thefts of equipment including SUVs and communications equipment. In addition to this, the AIIA and border guard workers' low salaries have made some willing to cooperate with smugglers in exchange for bribes, or even to engage directly in smuggling activities.[13]

In cities and areas characterised by diverse and complex social fabrics, the increasing politicisation and militarisation of society after 2014 have further contributed to the development and expansion of
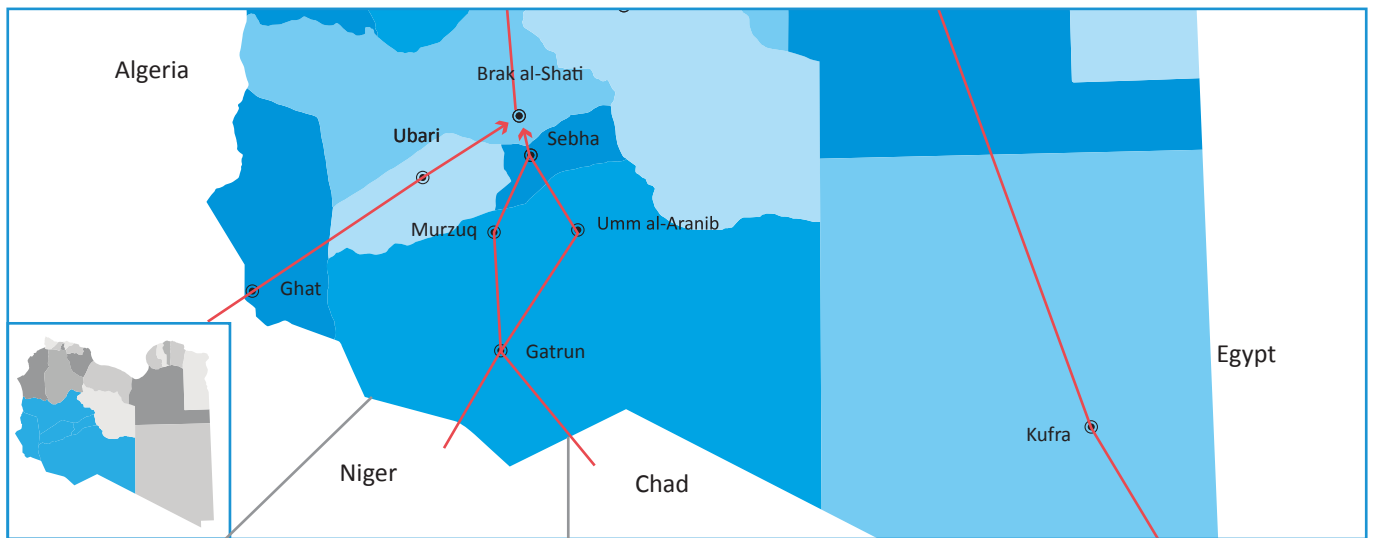
The main smuggling routes in the southern region go from the southern border towns such as Gatrun to Murzuq to Sebha, from Ghat to Ubari to Brak al-Shati, and from Kufra directly to Ajdabiya.

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9. The border guard is affiliated with the Ministry of Defense and is mainly tasked with monitoring and securing Libya's borders. It was established by Decree No. 392 of 2000. For more information, see: http://security-legislation.ly/ar/node/33856.

10. The Anti-Illegal Immigration Agency (AIIA) is affiliated to the Ministry of Interior and was established by Decree No. 386 of 2014. It is mainly tasked with preparing and implementing security plans to combat human smuggling crimes. For more information, see: http://security-legislation.ly/ar/node/34978.

11. Interview with a senior official in the AIIA who was dismissed in December 2016, after working with many successive governments (2009-2016).

12. A border guard patrol was shot at by a group of smugglers to the south of Sebha in September 2014, forcing them to hand over the migrants they had caught.

13. This was true even before 2011. The official strategy then was for border guard staff – especially in remote areas – to work with migrant smugglers to combat arms and drug smuggling.

migrant smuggling. Sebha[14], the capital of the south, is a key example of this. Sebha's inhabitants are a complex mixture of people originating from most southern towns and tribes, and there is a large number of armed groups present, each with different ideologies and political orientations. No single group has been able to impose its authority on the others and control the whole city.

Competition and conflicts between multiple groups have had a negative impact on Sebha's municipal council and local security directorate. Almost four years after its election in 2014, the municipal council remains riven by internal disputes that have significantly reduced its influence and actual capacity to address security and governance issues in what has become the most dangerous city in the south.[15]

Armed factions in Sebha have largely turned a blind eye towards smuggling – when they are not participating in it or relying at least partially on the proceeds – as they are unwilling to provoke conflict with other groups. Overall, their shared objective has been to safeguard their respective positions in the city, and not to enter into open conflict unless sure that the outcome will be in their favour.

In this context, relying on or providing support to one specific group within the city to combat smuggling and illegal migration could prove extremely uncertain. The fact that most of the armed groups present are either tribal or affiliated to a particular political faction at the national level means such a policy might affect the political and military balance between them and trigger new conflicts. They would likely compete over any available support – and the legitimacy that comes with it – in an attempt to extend their influence and control. Moreover, the other factions in the city would be unlikely to accept a single tribe or politically-affiliated group controlling Sebha.

Elsewhere in the southern region, the implementation of efficient policies to reduce migrant smuggling has been further complicated by recent demographic changes. Over the last three years, demographic change has become one of the most sensitive issues in the South, particularly in

relation to the Tebu[16] and Tuareg[17] communities. These communities have a number of individuals who moved to Libya in the 1990s, but have not received Libyan citizenship. However, over the last three years there has been a new influx[18] of Tebu coming from Chad and Niger into the regions of Umm Al-Aranib (130 km south of Sebha), Gatrun (300 km south of Sebha) and Murzuq[19]. Similarly, members of the Tuareg community coming from Algeria, Niger and Mali have been settling in the areas of Ghat and Ubari. Although no accurate figures are available, it is estimated that these communities have almost quadrupled in size since 2011 (based on the author's observation in these areas). This influx has also resulted in a quiet exodus of people of Arab origins from these regions to elsewhere in Libya, as they were harassed by some members of the newly-settled Tebu community.

Elements from the newly-settled Tebu and Tuareg communities have been playing a major role in the increased smuggling activities – both of migrants and products – from neighbouring countries into Libya. These communities' control over borders and smuggling dates back to the Gaddafi era; however, this was previously part of the regime's policy of using these communities for particular services, whereas now no one is supervising this role. These communities control the borders from Kufra to Ghat, and are divided in terms of their political loyalties: some are loyal to the GNA, and others to the rival Interim Government in Bayda.

As a result, non-Arab minorities dominate smuggling in much of the south, which has had an impact on the local authorities' response to it. When smugglers and local authorities' members originate from the same community, they have tended not to address the issue. For example, in Gatrun, Murzuq and Umm al-Aranib, which are Tebu-majority areas, while some smugglers come from local Arab tribes such as the Megarha and the Gadhadhfa, the majority of smugglers are from the Tebu community.

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14. The city of Sebha is located 770 km south of Tripoli and 550 km from the Libyan-Nigerien border. It is the largest city in the south and one of the most dangerous, and it is a major hub for human smuggling.

15. Based on the security directorate's statistics on murder, theft and kidnapping.

16. The Tebu are one of Libya's non-Arab minorities. They live primarily in southern Libya, and have their own language and customs.

17. The Tuareg are one of Libya's non-Arab minorities. They live primarily in southern Libya, and have their own language and traditions.

18. Author's field observations, in Gatrun, Murzuq and al-Sharqiyya.

19. The Murzuq area is located 150 km south of Sebha, and is on the most significant migrant smuggling route. It is the link between Sebha and southern border. Its major smuggling transit cities are Murzuq, Umm Al-Aranib and Gatrun, as illustrated in the map.

Official bodies such as municipal councils and security directorates, local AIIA and border guard branches often controlled by members of the Tebu[20] community have therefore often chosen to ignore their activities for social reasons or because of the difficult economic conditions.[21] Instead, they have focused primarily on the positives of migration and smuggling, including the availability of cheap labour throughout the year in remote areas (where it is difficult to secure migrant labourers through official channels[22] because of the deteriorating economic conditions). Although migrant smugglers are arrested from time to time, this has had no real results.[23]

There is less significant smuggling in the Tuareg-majority areas of Ghat and Ubari. Yet the challenge here is the link between migrant smuggling and the smuggling of drugs from west Africa via Libya to Egypt and the Middle East. The strong collusion of shared personal interests (material and social) between smugglers, members of the border guard and local armed groups has reduced the capacity of the municipal and social councils to act against smuggling networks.

Unresolved political issues related to the status of Libya's non-Arab ethnic minorities have also had an impact on illegal migration and the way it has been addressed by local authorities. Non-Arab ethnic minorities have specific political demands, such as the establishment of a quota for representation in the legislative, executive and judicial bodies. Some minority factions are also pushing for a new division of provinces and municipalities which would ensure their control over local government bodies in their areas of influence and at the national level.[24] They have also been calling for a number of non-Libyan members of their communities, who have identity papers but do not have Libyan nationality, to be granted citizenship.[25] The presence of more radical secessionist voices among these non-Arab minorities is increasingly a matter of concern for the Arab communities of the region.

Therefore, because of the very political nature of demographics in the south, any material or technical support provided to 'governmental' bodies such as the border guards or the AIIA in different areas of the southern region could affect the balance of power and provoke further instability. Capacity-building measures could be perceived as indirect support for specific groups and their expansionist policies, their pressuring of the national governments in the north to meet their demands, or even support for secessionist policies. Similarly, international support aimed at curbing illegal migration and migrant smuggling could end up reinforcing GNA's opponents in the southern region (such as the tribal groups supporting Operation Dignity or those supporting a return of a Gaddafi-inspired rule). For this reason, policies seeking to combat illegal migration in the Libyan south need to support multiple factions in order to preserve balances of power and avoid triggering further instability or unexpected political developments.

The economic dimension of smuggling, and how it intersects with local politics and society, is also a key element to take into account in southern Libya. The economic situation in the region has been particularly dire since 2014 due to the large discrepancy between people's incomes and the cost of living. Prices of basic necessities in the South have doubled due to a number of factors, most importantly the depreciation of the Libyan dinar and the severe shortage of liquidity in the banks. Migrant smuggling has therefore become a source of income for an increasing number of young people who have to cope with economic collapse and high unemployment. Many of them have engaged in migrant smuggling as an alternative to working in the civil service or to continuing education, as it guarantees them a regular income much higher than the civil service or the private sector. It is also low-risk and provides quick returns in the form of cash. This is unlike government salaries, which are paid into bank accounts; their recipients have to first wait for the money to be paid, which is often delayed, and then for

20. Most municipal councils and security directorates in the region are controlled by members of the Tebu. Even when this is not the case, the military force at their disposal make them key actors in the region.

21. According to an official from Gatrun.

22. Work in the area is not attractive to foreign workers coming legally into Libya, notably from Egypt and Bangladesh, given the deteriorating security conditions, the high cost of living and the decline of the Libyan dinar.

23. Based on author's observations and interviews: there have been no surveys since 2011.

24. A good example of this has been the call by some members of the Tebu community for the division of Sebha municipality. The creation of two municipalities – West Sebha and East Sebha – would enable the community to control one of these, and use this to put pressure on national-level authorities based in the north to accept their demands.

25. In this claim, they refer to the fact that a number of families of Arab origin was given Libyan nationality during the Gaddafi era.

the banks to have sufficient cash to be able to withdraw their salaries.

Migrant smuggling has now become a normalised source of livelihood for a large number of southern families and young men, especially in the areas of Murzuq, Sebha and Brak al-Shati. Furthermore, smuggling has become the only source of income for a number of Tebu military personnel from Chadian and Nigerien origins[26] who do not yet hold Libyan citizenship, despite having come to Libya during the Gaddafi era to join the security brigades the regime established to ensure its protection. Many have been suspended from work since 2011 because they did not hold Libyan citizenship and therefore could not receive salaries. They have considerable experience in navigating the desert routes and forging the relationships that facilitate smuggling work.

Given this reality, job creation and regional development alone will not be sufficient to deter people from engaging in smuggling, though it ought to be part of the strategy the GNA or any future government implements in the medium- and long-term. It is also important that emphasis be placed on improving extremely poor service provision, especially healthcare and education[27]. The lack of daily services is among the main factors pushing people in the southern region to seek to secure their needs outside of the failing public sector.

The lack of basic services has allowed smugglers to tie themselves to local communities in the Libyan south and to make themselves indispensable even to those not directly involved in smuggling activities. Migrant smugglers in southern Libya have invested in local economic activities, which has resulted in certain services and legitimate economic activities being tightly connected with – and reliant on – the income generated from smuggling. Most notably, the proceeds from smuggling provide more than 50 per cent of the available cash in some areas such as in Brak al-Shati[28] and account for about 70 per cent of local revenue in areas like Gatrun. In Murzuk, Brak al-Shati and Umm al-Aranib, the majority of smugglers

invest their profits locally, such as through building shops or establishing construction and training companies. In addition to this, they contribute to local development and service provision, particularly in the healthcare sector,[29] and are involved in building and selling houses and other forms of trade that provide local job opportunities. Although not all smugglers do this, such behaviour appears to be widespread in the southern region, with 68 per cent of smugglers from Sebha[30] investing their revenues in different types of trade. As a result of these dynamics, local residents cannot avoid dealing with smugglers on a daily basis. This has changed perceptions of the latter, as many have become prominent merchants in their local areas[31].

However, the investment of smuggling revenues in other sectors and other forms of trade has not resulted in a reduction of smuggling activities. The sums earned through migrant smuggling far exceed those made through other forms of trade and investment. In the absence of strong security or an implementable legal deterrent, migrant smugglers are therefore unlikely to halt their activities. This would require efforts to make the judiciary more effective and to implement sanctions.

Given the complex interconnections between migrant smuggling and local politics, security, society, and economy, an effective policy to counter smuggling in the south will likely have to work on all of these levels, and across all communities. A successful policy would likely aim to incentivise legitimate trade and providing services, and should focus on breaking the links between smugglers and local communities.

Although security will be part of the response, policy makers both inside and outside Libya should be wary of relying on supporting and engaging in capacity-building with the armed groups that appear most capable of curbing migration flows, such as the recently formed Murzuq-based Tebu unit the Desert Hawks (*Suqour al-Sahra'*)[32], whose success was based in part on the

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26. Interview with a smuggler of Nigerien origins in Gatrun. He had worked in the 32nd Brigade of Gaddafi's armed forces and was dismissed in 2011.

27. Service provision in southern Libya is extremely poor. There is no higher education in most cities, and advanced health services are almost non-existent. Most patients have (when they can) to travel to coastal cities (for example Tripoli) for treatment.

28. Interview with a researcher and civil society activist in Brak on the phenomenon of migration, July 2017.

29. Some smugglers invested part of their revenues in the health sector: for instance, one of them has established a pharmacy and another one a veterinary clinic; one is an associate in a clinic.

30. Authors' interviews with smugglers from Sebha, February-May 2017.

31. Information about the above-mentioned cities was collected from more than one source (civil society, government agencies, security services), then cross-checked and verified.

32. Desert Hawks is a Tebu tribal force formed in late August 2017 to combat smuggling in the border region with Chad and Niger.

activities of Kufra-based Ways of Peace (*Subul al-Salam*)[33] brigade of the eastern Libyan National Army (LNA). It is difficult for the GNA and its allies to work with these groups, which do not recognise them as Libya's legitimate executive authority. Even if these armed groups were to be incorporated under the GNA's Ministries of Interior and Defense, there are no mechanisms to guarantee their continuing to work to combat illegal migration.

However, the example of the Desert Hawks unit also indicates that social leaders can play a positive role in combating migration. The Desert Hawks unit was formed with the blessing of the notables, elders and chiefs of the Tebu tribes because smuggling across the borders with Chad and Niger was causing prices of food and fuel to rise, and increasing numbers of young people from the region were using and trading drugs.[34] Social leaders could therefore play a role, along with other actors, in a strategy to combat migration in southern Libyan if they deemed policies to be in the interest of their communities.

Central Libya: Tribal and Security Trade-Offs

The central region links southern cities to the cities on the northern coast and is primarily a transit station. The most significant areas involved in migrant smuggling are Shwayrif, Bani Walid and Gharyan. The involvement of the central region in migrant smuggling networks is a direct consequence of its geographical position, with migrants being transferred to the region from the town of Dirj to the west, and Sebha and Brak al-Shati to the south, before being taken onwards to the coast.

The sociology of the smuggling networks in this area differs from that in the South and the coastal region, reflecting the highly cohesive and homogenous social fabric of the central region's towns: generally the inhabitants of each town or area belong to a single tribe. While this has so far provided smugglers with a significant level of social protection, as tribal leaders have tended to turn a blind eye to their activities in order to prevent conflict within the tribe, it could also provide an entry point for successful policies to combat migrant smuggling.
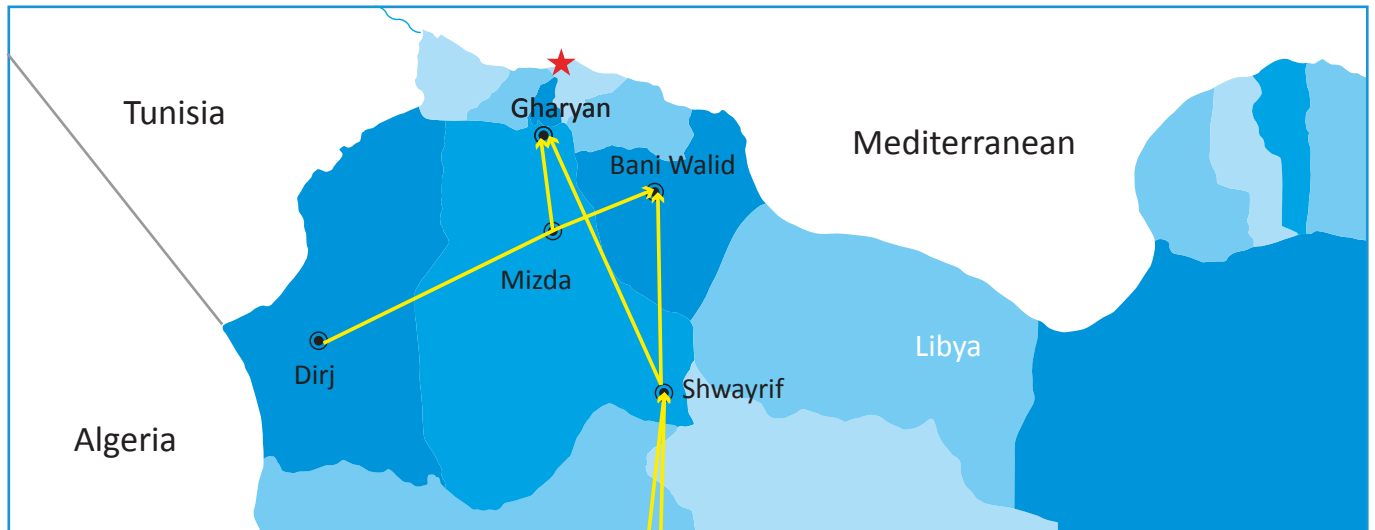
The central region is the link between the cities of the South (Sebha, Brak) and the coast (Sabratha, Garabulli). Shwayrif is the most central city to be engaged in smuggling. It is located between Gharyan and Bani Walid to its north and Sebha and Brak to its south, 300 km south of the latter and 360 km north of the former. Gharyan is located about 90 km south of Tripoli, Bani Walid 180 km south of Tripoli, and Dirj 550 km south-west of Tripoli. Mizdah is the link between Dirj in the far west and Gharyan and Bani Walid; it is 90 km south of Gharyan and 160 km southwest of Bani Walid.

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33. Ways of Peace is a military force formed in October 2015 in Kufra to counter migrant and drug smuggling, and to protect the borders of Kufra.

34. Interview with a Tebu activist from the city of Murzuk on 29 October 2017. He stressed that the statement remains vague.

Unlike the southern region, the link between smuggling and the wider local economy is relatively weak. However, the fragile position of any government bodies or government-affiliated security actors in parts of this region presents a particular challenge to policymakers.

The town of Bani Walid[35] has since 2012 become one of the largest assembly points for illegal migrants transiting through Libya.[36] It provides an example of the positive and negative roles that tribes can play in relation to illegal migration. The town is home to the Warfalla tribe, which has not recognised any of Libya's post-2011 legislative or government bodies. The Social Council of Warfalla Tribes (SCWT) and the security actors are not linked to any of the post-2011 governments, which have not interacted in any real way with the influential local actors in the town.

Smuggling networks in the area are organised along tribal and family lines, as well as along political divides, which means that they operate in isolation from one another and are not on good terms. While this hostility is primarily based on competition over smuggling routes, it is also divided on the basis of political orientation: some smugglers were in favour of the February 2011 uprising, while others hope for a return to Gaddafi rule. This hostility has on occasion resulted in direct clashes, as occurred between two groups in February 2016.[37] While the SCWT in Bani Walid has managed to limit confrontation to a large degree in recent months, divisions occurring between smugglers belonging to the same tribe (the Warfalla) mean that tribal leaders must make complex calculations and trade-offs. As a result,

both the SCWT and the residents of the region have largely overlooked migrant smuggling operations.

Smugglers have taken advantage of the cautious 'social cover' provided by the tribe – whereby the SCWT and tribal leaders protect members of their own tribe against outside interference and are at the same time unwilling to tackle the issue of migrant smuggling themselves – to conduct their activities relatively freely. They have also persuaded a number of African migrants to work with them in their smuggling operations.

The most notorious migrant smugglers in Bani Walid have also exploited the absence of security control in the area to purchase weapons and form armed groups. This adds to the risks community leaders would face if they attempted to confront them. Even if the SCWT's Security Unit[38] carries out security patrols from time to time in key areas such the Great Man Made River road linking Bani Walid and Shwayrif (the principal smuggling route), smugglers generally manage to avoid them by using different routes. However, in rare circumstances, the security unit does apprehend smugglers, for example as occurred in April 2016 when it captured a car carrying 14 illegal migrants[39].

The Security Unit is loyal to the SCWT and is not linked in any way to any of the governments' Ministries of Interior and Defence. It is made up of young volunteers, some of whom are unemployed, government workers and soldiers. They do not receive salaries from the unit, and the funding comes from SCWT and some local businessmen. Their main aim is to protect the entrances and borders of Bani Walid. It is the most significant security power in the area and is in very limited contact with the local security directorate and police force in relation to some issues. The unit has a very limited role in countering illegal migration, because many smugglers have relatives in the unit. As such, the 'social cover' provides them protection.[40]

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35. The Bani Walid area has the largest concentration of migrants in the central region, which makes it a unique case. The majority of its inhabitants do not recognise any of the post-2011 governments, making the area difficult to deal with from a policy perspective.

36. It is extremely difficult to collect information on the topic in Bani Walid itself, but it is possible to trace back the migrants' movements when they reach the coastal region. Based on field observations and interviews with migrants in the coastal region, more than 60 % of those reaching the coast moved north through the region of Bani Walid.

37. The incident in 5 February 2016 that led to the killing of Muhammad Dhiyab al-Nuqrat, one of the main smuggling chiefs in the Bani Walid area. He was affiliated with the pro-revolution May 28 Battalion, and was killed on the river road that links Bani Walid and Shwayrif, along with two others, by Muhammad Makhzoum al-Subai'e (from Bani Walid) who opposed the February revolution and another smuggler from the Megarha tribe (from Brak) after a disagreement over influence.

38. The Security Unit was formed by SCWT at the end of 2014 to combat crime and protect the borders of the town. For more information, see: http://www.akhbarlibya.net/libya-news/793101.html

39. In April 2016, 14 Egyptian migrants and a Syrian national killed three smugglers from Bani Walid (Hamza al-Fayturi, al-Tawergi, and Muhammad al-Zulbi), south of Bani Walid for unknown reasons. The Security Unit captured them and imprisoned them in Bani Walid Police Station, before they were all shot inside the station by Mohammed al-Zulbi's cousin in revenge.

40. In 2017, a new force was created in Bani Walid with the support

In comparison with the South, smugglers in the Bani Walid area invest a lower share of their profits in the local area,[41] and when they do so, they essentially benefit the smugglers themselves and their family circles. Bani Walid's smugglers also do not have large trading enterprises in the city like the smugglers of Dirj and Gatrun, for instance. Migrant smuggling therefore does not have a significant impact on the economic situation in the city. Most of the financial benefits of smuggling and of their secondary investments go directly to smugglers and their close relatives, creating a weaker link between smugglers and society than in the southern region.

Like in the case of Bani Walid, migrant smuggling networks in the Shwayrif area operate in a tribal environment, dominated by the Megarha tribes[42]. They were generally pro-Gaddafi and have therefore not engaged with the post-2011 political and institutional process. They have established their own armed groups autonomous from the central government to ensure the protection of the community after 2011. These are more powerful than the local security directorate, and made up largely of groups of young men that also control the smuggling trade in the area, some of whom work in smuggling, and others who are only involved in the armed groups protecting the area. Out of fear of being overpowered, 'official' security bodies rarely engage with smugglers from the area directly.

Every smuggling group from Shwayrif has its own geographical area and ways of operating. This is for several reasons, the most important of which is the exchange of material benefits. They are generally capable of solving problems within the Shwayrif area through social means or bribery. Like in the case of Bani Walid's SCWT, the capacity of influence of the local social council in Shwayrif – along with the municipal council – on smugglers has been most visible through their efforts to reduce conflict between rival groups. In Shwayrif, however, problems tend to occur between smugglers from the area and those from elsewhere, rather than internally.

Migrant smugglers struggle to deal with armed groups or security bodies from outside their designated areas without using force. For example, in February 2016, three smugglers were killed in clashes between rival groups from Shwayrif and Bani Walid after one group entered the others' territory. Because of its geographic position, smugglers from different areas cannot avoid dealing with those from Shwayrif, as it represents the most important link between Sebha and the edge of the Megarha tribe's main area of influence at Brak al-Shati to the south, and Bani Walid and Gharyan to the north. In the event of problems between smugglers such as killings or fraud, they are usually solved either by the smugglers themselves or by social means through the intervention of the municipal and social councils. Issues between smugglers are not dealt with by any national-level official body such as the Ministries of Interior and Defence or the AIIA. These bodies only follow events and release official statements, for instance if a smugglers' convoy is intercepted. For example, in 2016 armed groups stopped an AIIA convoy on the road between Sebha and Shwayrif and forced them to hand over the migrants in the convoy, and in early 2017, 400 migrants were expelled from the al-Hamra reception centre in Gharyan without the central AIIA's knowledge.

The mountainous city of Gharyan is located 80 km south of Tripoli and is the most important city of the Nafusa Mountains. It is essentially a transit area, connecting the coastal region to Shwayrif in the south. Migrants do not usually stay in the city for long periods of time,[43] and it has a strong security and military presence[44], which

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of the GNA called the Central Support Force, though it does not so far have much social support as it is seen as representing a specific tribe in the city.

41. Some have invested their profits in Bani Walid. For example, one smuggler has built a mall in the city, and others own petrol stations, car showrooms or have invested in agriculture. These investments are estimated to be worth millions.

42. The Megarha tribe constitutes a majority in Shwayrif and Brak. It is considered one of the largest and most socially cohesive tribes in Libya. For more information [Arabic]: http://afrigatenews.net/node/67945

43. Except for those in the city's reception centre, who stay there for six months or more in very difficult living conditions.

44. There are many different security actors and armed groups in the city, the most important of which is the Shield Force (under the GNA's Ministry of Defence). It has significant financial and military power. The largest group is the Confrontation Unit under the GNA's Ministry of Interior. However, both are considered tribal forces and there is no social influence on them. They do not play any role in preventing illegal migration or the widespread drugs trade in the city. The forces are not socially accepted. Another group is the Information Unit, which is part of the General Intelligence and works with the Rada Special Deterrence Force in Tripoli (evidence of this is the arrest of Saber ben Eisa, one of the major drug traders in Gharyan, in Tripoli in January 2018). Salafists following the teachings of Saudi cleric Rabie al-Madkhali have also emerged as a key force in the city, through their control of mosques and distributing their proselytising material. Their coordination with others in the security sphere in the city became clear towards the end of 2017 when their information led to the defusing of a car bomb.

would likely be capable of combatting smuggling. Yet there are a number of active smugglers there. Although the city is considered one of the safer towns in the Nafusa Mountains, the assassination of Colonel Abdul Razzaq al-Sadiq Amish, the head of Gharyan's security directorate[45], in July 2017 has impacted the local security directorate and the conditions in the city. The appointment of Ali Shagroun, who is accused of killing and kidnapping in Tripoli, as the head of the security directorate in Gharyan has also affected the work of the divided municipal council. Moreover, the voices that have lately been raised in support of Operation Dignity in the city, a political position which other local groups forcibly reject, has raised questions around the various political positions of the different forces in the city. All of these conflicts and divisions within the city have signaled that, should a decision be made to combat smuggling in the city by force, Gharyan's population might be dragged into an armed conflict. While this is a possibility which no one wants to discuss in the current circumstances, it seems that arresting smugglers secretly and moving them to prisons outside the city has been the solution privileged by Gharyan's security forces so far.

In the Dirj area, at the borders between Libya, Algeria and Tunisia, the situation is in some ways closer to the southern region than elsewhere in the central region. Smugglers operate in a context of tribal apathy and security services' fear of provoking clashes (several border guard patrols have been directly shot at by smuggling groups in this area). Some smugglers in Dirj have contributed to improving the deteriorating local economy through the investment of their profits locally and the provision of cash. A large number of young people have also worked with smugglers in order to improve their personal economic circumstances. However, unlike in the south, this resembles seasonal work rather than being their principal occupation.

In terms of possible policy responses to combat migration in the central region, in most areas it would be crucial to involve social and municipal councils. They could play a pivotal role in combating migrant smuggling in the region. Because of both the tribal nature of governance in these areas and their lack of recognition of the post-2011 central political authorities, social and municipal councils in the central region have rarely been engaged in the implementation of policies. Yet these bodies often have a good track record in finding solutions to the conflicts that occur from time to time among the smugglers in their areas. Overall, they have also displayed good results in terms of security and military stabilisation in the region over the last few years. Working with municipal and social councils in areas where people are linked by strong social bonds is very important, as it is necessary to involve actors with social influence. Involving key social figures from the social and municipal councils would help design policies adapted to the specificities of the context and mitigate possible negative effects of these policies when they are implemented, especially during security and military operations and arrest campaigns. This is in opposition to the southern region, where social and municipal councils would be unable to play such an important role, as the social fabric is more fragile and diverse.

It is also important to recognise that so far the international community – including international organisations – have had no significant role in the central region, which is also largely deprived of resources. People in the central region even struggle to bury the bodies of those migrants who die on the road or to transfer migrants to shelters in coastal cities. In addition, no significant support has been set aside to implement programmes aimed at raising awareness about the dangers of migrant smuggling[46], nor to implement investment projects for young people or for service provision. This is in a context where Italy's Foreign Minister, Angelino Alfano[47], stated that Italy has allocated €10m to the Trust Fund for Africa to strengthen Libya's southern border, as well as the €18 million given

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Their military power may well increase, as it has in Sabratha and Zuwara.

45. The assassination of Colonel Abdul Razzaq al-Sadiq Amish on Sunday, 9 July 2017, in front of his house by unknown persons has cast serious doubts on the ability of security services to combat smugglers.

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46. For example, awareness-raising programmes in schools to reduce the number of young people being attracted to the trade; programmes to raise awareness of the consequences of migrant smuggling, including legal penalties and exposure to dangers such as theft and violence; and, raising awareness of migrants in reception centres around the security conditions in Libya and their possible exposure to trafficking, theft and extortion from smuggling gangs. Some programmes like this do exist, though very few, for example in Sebha and Sabratha.

47. Statements by Italy's Foreign Minister on 7 July 2017 on the need to help Libya and to stop migrants before their arrival in Libya   http://www.masrawy.com/news/News_PublicAffairs/details/2017/7/7/1116430.

by Italy to the International Organization for Migration to support the voluntary return of migrants.

## The Coastal Region: Cautiousness and High-Cost Benefits

The coastal region in which migrant smugglers are active extends from the city of Misrata, 220 km east of Tripoli, to the city of Zuwara in the far west, 120 km from Tripoli. The major smuggling stations on the Libyan coast are Misrata, Zliten, Khoms and Garabulli (Castelverde) to the east of Tripoli, and Zawiya, Sorman, Sabratha and Zuwara to the west, as well as Tripoli itself. Migrants are primarily transferred to these areas from Bani Walid and Gharyan.

Smuggling in the coastal region is enabled by fragile security conditions created by competition between armed groups in the context of the ongoing post-2014 political struggle and influence of political parties. Smugglers have used this to acquire material benefits and influence on the ground. The central government also has weak control in most areas for reasons linked to politics and regionalism.[48] The majority of the armed groups in the coastal area were receiving financial support from the Ministries of Interior and Defence of the Salvation Government and Interim Government[49], though this has

recently stopped as resources have dried up. While the economic situation in the coastal areas is slightly better than in the South, it has however pushed some militiamen to engage in smuggling and some to form armed groups to provide protection to smugglers in exchange for money, as has occurred in Sabratha and Sorman. On an individual level, people's motivations for getting involved in migrant smuggling differ from those that push people to smuggling in southern and central Libya. The main pull-factor in the coastal region is accumulating wealth in as little time as possible.

Security campaigns in the coastal region have had some success in limiting smuggling in specific cities where such campaigns are supported by a certain level of public opinion, although there are no mechanisms to hold the forces that have ousted smugglers accountable. Over the last few years, migrant smuggling operations in the coastal region had largely been limited to the cities of Sabratha (80 km east of Tripoli) and Garabulli (65 km east of Tripoli), with more than 70 per cent passing through Sabratha.

Ahmad Dabbashi (known as Al-'Ammu) and his armed group (the most powerful in the city) were the main actors involved in smuggling activities in Sabratha. Yet the agreement signed between Dabbashi, the Italian
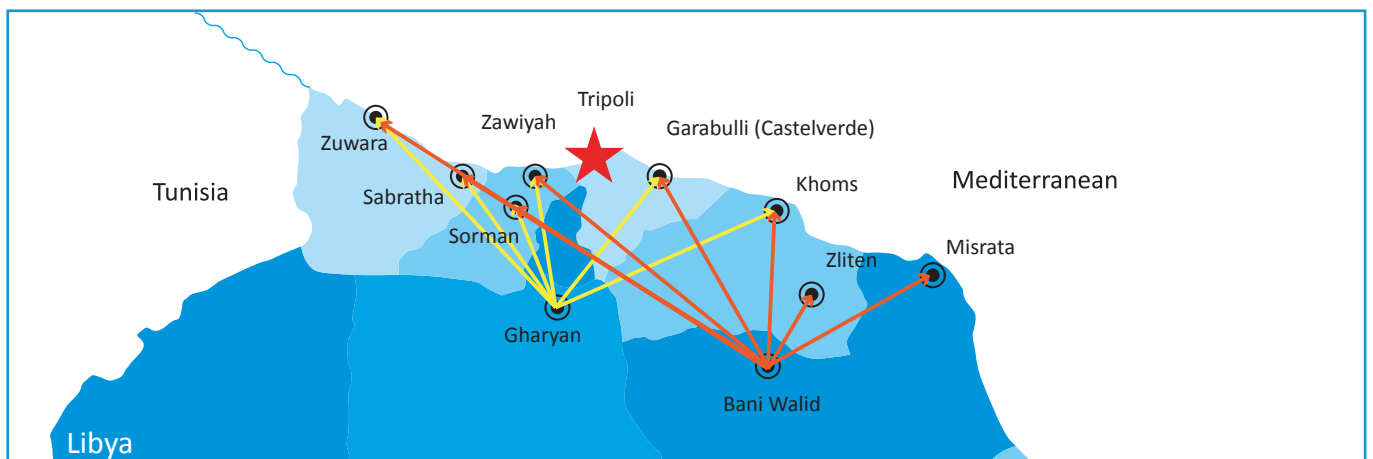
48. The 2014 Airport War (as it has come to be known) was fought between Libya Dawn forces, linked to the General National Congress, and Operation Dignity's forces, linked to the House of Representatives, at Tripoli International Airport. The fighting reached Al- Watia, south of Zuwara, and involved most of the armed factions in the coastal cities from Misrata in the east, to Zuwara in the west.

49. The two rival governments prior to the formation of the GNA. The Interim Government continues to work in the east, while the Salvation government has largely ceded its place to the GNA.

government and the GNA to work together to combat smuggling in August 2017[50] was met with a high level of opposition from the people of Sabratha, as well as from some local officials, although they did not take a public stance. This cost Dabbashi the support of three important fellow smugglers who opposed his concluding an agreement with the GNA without their knowledge, leading to direct confrontation between them in September 2017. Ahmad Dabbashi and his men were forced out of the city as his own (former) partners took up arms against him.

The fact that the force opposing Dabbashi was led by former smugglers casts doubts on the real motivations of such ostensible "anti-smuggling" campaign: the operation may have been more akin to a leadership change (a move against Dabbashi) than an anti-smuggling operation. Those who opposed Dabbashi may well restart operations in Sabratha or move them to other cities such as Zawiya (30 km east of Sabratha), Garabulli or Khoms.

A similar pattern occurred earlier in the city of Zuwara, where hostile public opinion played a key role in anti-smuggling mobilisation. The drowning of a large number of migrants, whose bodies washed up on the city's shores[51], led to a major media campaign and a social movement condemning migrant smuggling in the city in October 2015. Since that time, smuggling activities have reduced somewhat, owing to a security campaign by the Special Intervention Squad, known as "the Masked Ones"[52]. As a result, some of Zuwara's smugglers moved to work with their counterparts in nearby Sabratha, with whom they had good relations, taking advantage of the unstable security situation there.[53]

Similarly, in August 2017, the citizens of Zuwara cooperated with their local security services in the arrest of Fahmi Salim bin Khalifa,[54] a Maltese national known as the "King of Smuggling" who had previously been given a fifteen-year prison sentence under the Gaddafi regime for drug trading. His extensive smuggling activities at Zuwara port led to it being referred to locally as "Fahmi's port". After his arrest, Bin Khalifa was transferred to a prison in Tripoli, showing the extent of the citizens' opposition to smuggling operations in their city.

The examples of Sabratha and Zuwara indicate that the security environment is the key factor which enables smuggling in the coastal region, rather than the social protection offered by tribes. They also tend to indicate that fragmentation and competition between smuggling groups and networks could be exploited to weaken these networks, particularly in an environment characterised by weak social and security control. Similarly, the recent developments in the two cities have shown that public opinion opposition and mobilisation at the local level do have an impact on the smuggling networks' capacities to operate and could therefore be taken into account in designing anti-migrant smuggling policies. In this regard, the situation in the coastal cities appears significantly different from that of the southern and central regions, where smuggling networks have so far been relying at least on social apathy.

In both Zuwara and Sabratha, it is also important to point out that young Salafists (known in Libya as Madhkhalis) were involved in the security campaigns against smugglers. This phenomenon will require further research, as will the relationships between figures like Ahmad Dabbashi and Fahmi bin Khalifa with smuggling groups based on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, or the links between migrant smuggling and fuel smuggling across the Mediterranean.

Only limited migrant smuggling operations take place in the other cities to the west of Tripoli, such as Zawiya and Sorman,[55] which has generally been the case because the security environment has been less favourable. One of the key conditions that enables smuggling is the weakness of local security forces, such as in Sabratha. However, in

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50. For more information [Arabic]: https://almarsad.co/2017/10/03.

51. Zuwara is a coastal city located 120 km west of Tripoli and 40 km west of Sabratha. It was the most important human-smuggling port and until 2015 it was the place from which the largest number of "death boats" sailed towards Europe.

52. The Special Intervention Squad was formed in 2013 with the blessing of Zuwara's local council and was officially included under the Criminal Investigation Department of the Ministry of Interior. It was joined by a number of Salafist youth who oppose smuggling.

53. Evidence of this is the fact that smuggling through Sabrahta increased by 800 per cent after operations reduced from Zuwara towards the end of 2015.

54. Fahmi's name was not unknown to the international community. It was mentioned in a report on Libya by the United Nations Panel of Experts that was submitted in August 2016 to the UN Security Council, where he was described as "the chief responsible for smuggling activities".

55. Zawiya is located 50 km west of Tripoli, and Sorman 70 km west of Tripoli. Smugglers work in both cities, though less frequently than in Sabratha and Garabulli.

some cities there are powerful groups that have different political positions and are outside of central government control. The possibility of clashes makes it more difficult for smugglers to carry out their operations in these cities. In Zawiya, for example, many disparate armed groups engage in occasional armed clashes, making conditions less favourable to smugglers than elsewhere in the coastal region.[56]

The local coast guard branch has also been active in carrying out rescue operations, which has made migrants lose trust in the Zawiya-based smugglers. Smugglers from other localities have also lost trust in those from Zawiya and stopped working with them as their main interest is in attracting as many migrants as possible. The recent events in Sabratha, however, could shift some smuggling activity back to Zawiya, or to other areas further west (Al-Harsha, Al-Matrad).

In Sorman, because of the previous balance of power between its military and security factions, smuggling operations have been limited. This balance was between two main forces: the generally socially accepted Criminal Investigation Force that was trying to combat smuggling, corruption and kidnapping in the city, and, the al-Aqabi group, which used to control most of the city. Some members of the latter group, which controls the city's reception centre, have engaged in smuggling activities. Armed clashes have previously taken place between these two groups. Consequently, smugglers from elsewhere in Libya preferred to work with Sabratha's Ahmed Dabbashi. However, since his ousting, smugglers have started to work with groups from Sorman, the most important of which is the al-Aqabi group. This makes the general movement of smuggling activities to Sorman in the future highly unlikely.

Smuggling activities have also been significantly affected by changes in the security context in the towns and cities to the east of Tripoli. Garabulli[57] has a long history of organised migrant smuggling. The city's main smuggling

figures were arrested in 2009 but returned to their activities after the 2011 uprising[58]. Some operations still take place, but in recent years smugglers had moved their activities to Sabratha, because of its proximity to Zuwara – then considered the main smuggling area in Libya – and because of the changes in the security situation in Garabulli, especially after June 2016[59]. At that time, the armed group from Misrata that had controlled Garabulli's migrant reception centre, as well as securing the main road between Tripoli and Khoms, was expelled from the city. This group did not do anything to combat smuggling, and indeed some members had been involved in smuggling and releasing migrants from the centre without official approval to be sold to smugglers or as labourers. Furthermore, the coastline near Garabulli is within the area patrolled by the coast guard branch based in Tripoli's eastern suburb of Tajoura and which operates in the area from Tripoli to Khoms. This is one of the most active coast guard divisions, which has made migrant smugglers more cautious.

Small-scale smuggling operations also occasionally take place from Khoms, Zliten and Misrata[60]. Changing conditions in cities lying further westward could lead to increased activity in this region, especially in Khoms, which is closest to Garabulli and Bani Walid. Despite this, it would be possible to stop most of such activities by working with security forces present in the cities to the east of Tripoli. Smugglers have occasionally tried to launch boats from Tripoli as well, though this has not occurred during 2017 as a result of improvements in local security. While previously there were many disorganised groups who did not confront smugglers – if indeed they were not engaging in smuggling activities themselves. The security situation markedly improved in 2017, and
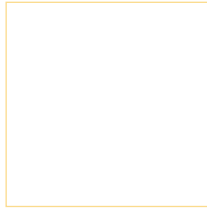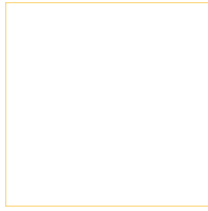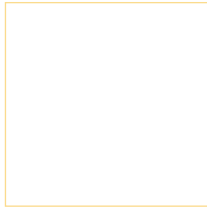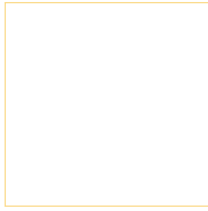
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56. The most recent example of this was in 2017, when armed clashes took place between the Ahnish group and al-Khadrawi group. Clashes generally last several days and cause the town centre to be cordoned off. This affects services in the city such as the hospital and the university. Most smugglers do not work in areas where there are periodically security issues, for example smugglers stopped working in Kufra, Sirte and Benghazi because of the deteriorating security environment.

57. Garabulli, located 65 km east of Tripoli, was one of the most important concentration points for smuggling people across the coast of Libya.

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58. The most prominent smuggler in the area of Garabulli is Abu Abdullah, who was arrested in 2009 and released in 2011, where he returned to smuggling activities immediately after the end of the conflict.

59. In June 2016, Garabulli witnessed armed clashes between its youth and some militiamen from Misrata who were controlling the coastal road and the women's shelter center in the area. The Misratans were expelled after bloody confrontations that lasted for two days and in which 26 young men from Garabullli were killed.

60. Khoms is located 120 km east of Tripoli, Zliten 160 km, and Misrata, 210 km from the capital. They are coastal cities and frequent points of smuggling and gathering of migrants. They all have AIIA migrant shelter centres.

migrant smuggling operations, theft and kidnappings have reduced compared to the two previous years.

In general, smugglers in coastal cities operate with a high level of caution and vigilance with regard to the security situation, both in terms of their operations and what they do with their proceeds. Some transfer their profits outside Libya, such as smugglers from Zuwara and Sabratha. Others invest their profits in Libya, but far from their area of operations. Yet more use their profits to protect their trade through forms of bribery, protection money or salaries to armed groups. Fahmi bin Khalifa, for example, used to pay for the medical treatment of some wounded members of armed groups from Zuwara, while Dabbashi invested in arms and ammunition over a period of three years to build up his own security force to control Sabratha.

As well as differences in the environment in which they operate and the circumstances that make their activities' development more or less favourable, smuggling networks in the coastal area also distinguish themselves by their members' profile. Contrary to Libya's southern and central regions, young people who work with migrant smugglers in Garabulli tend to do so only for short periods of time. Fearing arrests, they settle for making some money in a short amount of time, and then stop.

As such, policies that seek to reduce illegal migration in Libya's coastal areas should be primarily security-focused. While this will not completely eliminate smuggling, it has already proved effective in reducing smuggling operations in Sabratha, Zuwara and Tripoli. Even if in some cases smugglers have simply moved elsewhere, their new activities have tended not to be at the same speed or volume. The reduction in migrants reaching Europe's shores is also a positive indicator. It is also important to cooperate with municipal councils in the coastal region, as they have the decision-making authority to appoint heads of local security forces, security directorates and the local branches of the coast guard and the AIIA. Municipal councils in the coastal region tend to have social influence and work in coordination with local security actors, and with the central government in Tripoli. It would be possible to directly oversee their work by putting specific mechanisms in place when advancing support. Implementation will prove challenging and will likely have to start at the local level as the national-level authorities in Tripoli are unable to control security structures even in areas closest to the capital. This lack of control and coherence within the bodies that relate to countering migration is in part due to a lack of administrative stability since 2011[61].

Conclusion

Illegal migration and migrant smuggling pose many challenges to Libya's GNA, which is coming under increasing pressure from both European countries and, more recently, the Libyan public to reduce migrant flows. While the current policies to combat migrant smuggling increasingly combine security responses with development support and humanitarian assistance, the GNA's limited influence outside Tripoli, the unstable security situation and deteriorating economic conditions have reduced the effectiveness of such multi-layered, yet standard policy responses.

The economy and security environments are not the same in all regions of Libya. This, along with the varying social composition of the population in each region, has led to differences in terms of the way migrant smuggling networks operate at the local level. Libya's southern, central and coastal regions present significant differences with regard to the links between smugglers and local society, the potential for local government to influence smugglers, and the level of competition between security actors. Working on different, interconnected responses for each region would likely prove the most efficient strategy for curbing migrant smuggling in Libya.

However, while it is important to understand the local contexts and which actors could be most effectively mobilised in each region, it is equally important for long-term stability and the sustainability of managing migrant flows that any policy responses be implemented within Libya's current legal and government frameworks. They should also be designed to improve the relationship between central government and the local governance and security actors, rather than empowering local actors to the detriment of central authorities. In this context, it would be important to amend those articles of Law No. 19 of 2010 for combating illegal migration that are not appropriate in the current context. Particular attention should be given to the articles on human trafficking, as well as fines and prison sentences attached to the offence.

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61. This was evidenced in 2016, for instance, when the Ministry of Interior released a decree to open a migration reception centre in one of Libya's coastal cities, which was rejected by the AIIA.

The southern region is key to migrant smuggling as it is the entry point of flows heading towards the Mediterranean from sub-Saharan Africa. It is especially difficult to deal with, however, as it remains largely out of the GNA's security control and is home to a number of tribes and non-Arab minorities, the competition between which has been exacerbated by demographic changes after 2011.

Care should therefore be taken to avoid that security responses based on providing support to local armed groups are used to put pressure on the national government or to increase the influence of a specific faction to the detriment of the others, thereby triggering further instability.

Although social and municipal councils in the southern region do not have very much influence over those engaged in smuggling, it would be important to include them in discussions on policy design. Security support to official bodies such as the border guard and security directorates operating under the auspices of social and municipal councils could form part of a successful policy response, but this should be implemented cautiously as part of a wider strategy.

Policy responses would need to work on several fronts, from providing day-to-day services to citizens to agreeing on and implementing a constitutional framework which would clarify the issue of rights to Libyan nationality and citizenship. This would help to discourage people from engaging in smuggling and to break the links between migrant smugglers and local communities. It is also very important that a wider strategy for the South includes local economic development and job opportunities for young people, based on thorough analysis of the specific context and opportunities offered by the different areas of southern Libya.
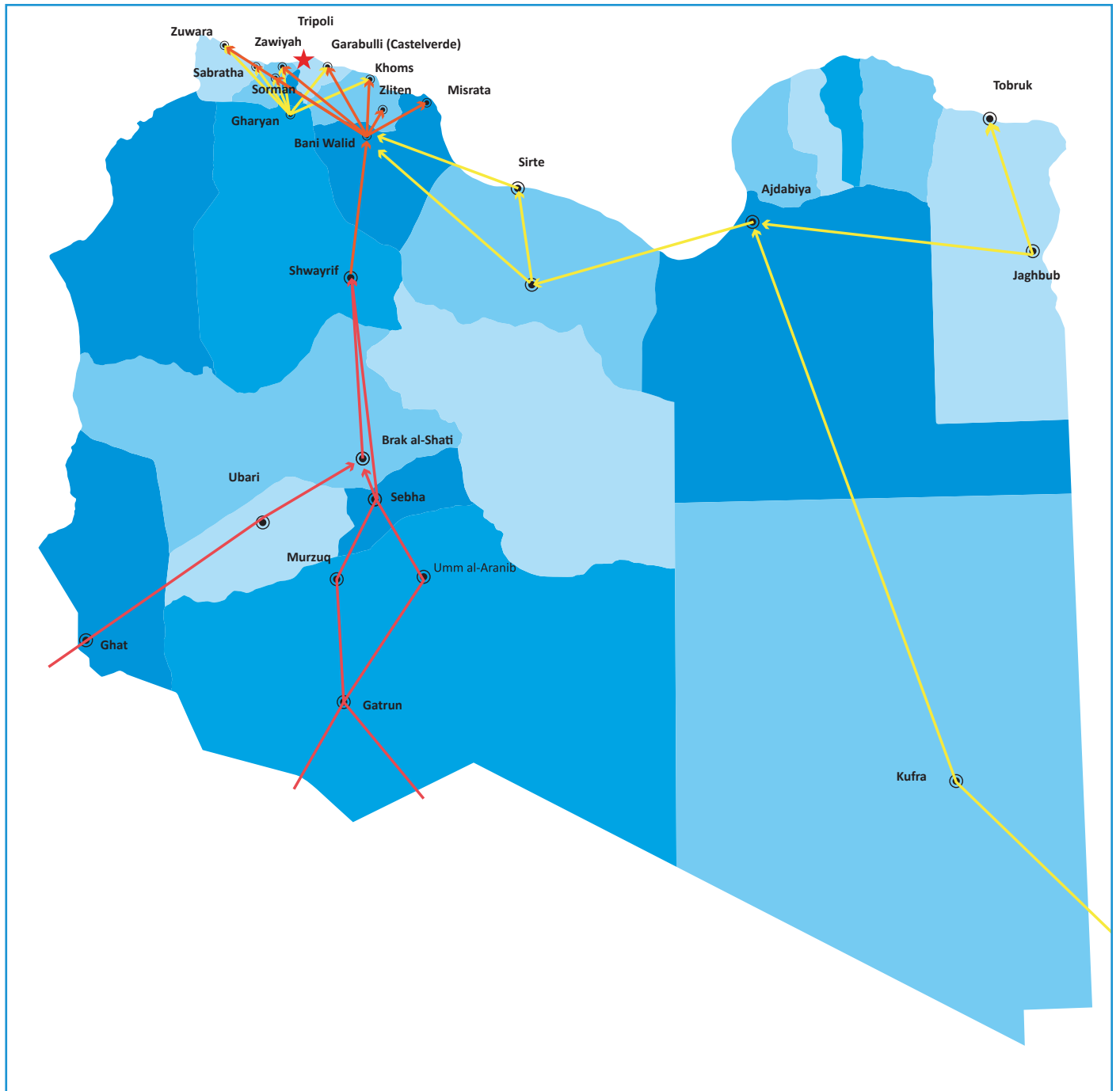
Taking all these elements into account, it is likely that an effective and sustainable strategy for the southern region would need to be phased, and would need a large amount of investment. It would be important to think broadly about the types of actors that could finance and implement such measures, including the private sector and foreign companies with interests in the region.

The central region requires a different approach, and first and foremost more inclusive policies combatting migrant smuggling that would help to break the relative political isolation the region has lived in since 2011. It would be important to work directly with municipal and social councils as they have influence on the ground and would

therefore be capable partners in implementing policies. The homogeneity of the central region's towns' social fabric – where inhabitants tend to belong to a single tribe – enable these councils to be more influential than their counterparts in the southern region. However, as many do not recognise the authority of the GNA, it is important that work on amending the Libyan Political Agreement continues in order to facilitate the coordination between the GNA and local governance bodies in the central region. International organisations could also play a bigger role in this region, particularly in providing humanitarian assistance to migrants and raising awareness among local communities on the adverse effects of the migrant smuggling trade on the local society and economy.

In contrast, the nature of the coastal region and the structure of migrant smuggling networks there mean that greater focus should be placed on security responses. These would need to include mechanisms and incentives for better coordination and cooperation between the GNA's Ministries of Interior and Defense and municipal councils, local security directorates and the AIIA. Smugglers in the coastal region generally exploit fragmentation in the security sphere to operate, which means it is important to ensure that capacity-reinforcement measures do not trigger competition between rival local groups and provoke further instability. Recent developments show that security campaigns have been successful in cities of the coastal region where they have received popular support. Growing community rejection of migrant smuggling could therefore become an asset for the implementation of anti-migrant smuggling policies: it could be acknowledged and further encouraged.

Civil society organisations across Libya could be supported to implement awareness-raising programmes, particularly among children and young people, to dissuade them from entering the smuggling trade. The local media should also be engaged and encouraged to play a positive role in combating and addressing the challenges of illegal migration and migrant smuggling, something which it has not done so far.

Zuwara
Tripoli
Zawiyah
Garabulli (Castelverde)
Sabratha
Khoms
Sorman
Zliten
Misrata
Gharyan
Bani Walid
Tobruk
Shwayrif
Sirte
Ajdabiya
Jaghbub
Brak al-Shati
Ubari
Sebha
Murzuq
Umm al-Aranib
Ghat
Kufra
Gatrun

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS), created in 1992 and directed by Professor Brigid Laffan, aims to develop inter-disciplinary and comparative research on the major issues facing the process of European integration, European societies and Europe's place in 21st century global politics. The Centre is home to a large post-doctoral programme and hosts major research programmes, projects and data sets, in addition to a range of working groups and ad hoc initiatives. The research agenda is organised around a set of core themes and is continuously evolving, reflecting the changing agenda of European integration, the expanding membership of the European Union, developments in Europe's neighbourhood and the wider world.

Middle East Directions

The MIDDLE EAST DIRECTIONS Programme, created in 2016, is part of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS). It has the ambition to become an international reference point for research on the Middle East and North Africa Region, studying socio-political, economic and religious trends and transformations. The programme produces academic outputs such as working papers and e-books. It also liaises with policy makers with a wide range of policy briefs, policy report and analysis.