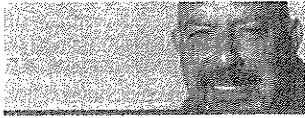


Comment & Letters

Libya's last chance



Richard Galustian

Richard Galustian is a security analyst.

Revelations that the UN's Libya envoy, Bernardino Leon, lined up a job with the United Arab Emirates, key backer of one of the country's two governments, has driven the final nail into that coffin that is the international peace process.

The UAE along with Egypt are the key backers of the internationally recognised, elected government; no crime in itself, but damning for the man who claimed to be an 'honest broker' between that government and its Islamist-led rival in Tripoli.

Even before this revelation, Leon's talks had collapsed last month when both governments refused to sign the plan the envoy put in front of them.

On cue, a vicious new round of fighting broke out, with Islamist militias fighting each other in Tripoli and a helicopter crashing in the sea near the city, killing two of their top commanders.

In Benghazi, army forces continued hammering Islamist militants while the air force bombed militia supply boats bringing weapons from Misrata - and buzzed what they said were Italian warships taking too close an interest in the battle.

Without even the semblance of a peace process, the UN and EU are left staring at two catastrophes growing ever worse - the rise of ISIS and the shipping of hundreds of thousands of Muslim migrants from Libya to European shores without anyone asking why Arab states don't agree to take any.

The UN and the EU continue to insist that a likeable but low key politician, Faiez Al-Serraj, must be the prime minister in a unity government that both sides have rejected.

But Libyans need a prime minister who speaks for them, not one plucked by the UN. Leon is guilty of the mistake many people - Libyans as much as outsiders - make, which is pinning their hopes on a White Knight riding over the hills to save the nation.

Some are even calling for a return for the monarchy, abolished when Muammar Gaddafi seized power four decades ago. But the truth is - it ain't going to happen.

Libyans are fighting precisely because there is no leader all can agree on.

Last week, testifying to the British parliament, former ambassador Dominic Asquith put his finger on it, saying: "There remains a very strong desire from the Libyan people for a political agreement. They want a government. They want a political settlement. There is huge frustration at their own political leadership, but also at the UN."

A senior Libyan official put it more bluntly, telling me last week: "Everyone is focussed on the 'who', but the solution is the 'what'."

The "what" he, and I believe Asquith, have in mind is a government people support because the people chose it. It is called democracy. Such a government was elected in June last year, in elections the

UN itself supervised. But when the Islamists took steep losses in those elections, they rebelled, their Libya Dawn militias seized Tripoli, and the country remains at war.

Since then, the UN has focussed not on elected politicians but on pushing those who were elected to make a deal with those who were not - the militia chiefs of Libya Dawn.

Sharing power with the militias is not what this parliament was elected to do. Especially because in recent months the key power brokers in Tripoli have become the Libya Islamic Fighting Group, a former guerrilla organisation affiliated to Al Qaida, some of them once having been interned in Guantanamo Bay.

The one sliver of hope is Libya's constitutional commission, which is nearly ready to announce a proposed constitution. That constitution should be grabbed with both hands. It offers Libyans the chance to reconnect with representative government - but only if Libyans are given the chance to vote.

One solution may be a federal structure, with power devolved down to regional assemblies better able to meet their people's needs. Such a system has been the bedrock of Switzerland's success for centuries.

Whatever that constitution stipulates, the UN should get behind it. Leon's successor, German diplomat Martin Kohler, must scrap his search for a White Knight and end the UN's fraternising with the warlords.

As my Libyan friend told me, the only thing that will bring peace, before it is too late, is a system that all Libyans are invested in, certainly not one imposed by foreigners and particularly by a now thoroughly discredited UN and EU.

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Open access and academic research



Ryan Scicluna

Ryan Scicluna is library assistant at the University of Malta.

Should information be free? This is the current hot topic in the world of academia. There is an increasing demand for research to be accessible by everyone. Funding bodies are being requested to make research easily accessible and available on institutional repositories (IRs).

The Open Access (OA) movement has been gaining momentum ever since the European Scientific Council mandated that the European Union, fully or partially funded research, should be available in OA whether by publishing in OA journals or uploading the research on institutional repositories that cater for OA.

Several countries took it a step further by implementing national OA policies, which imply that research funded by national institutions should also be in OA. Countries like the UK and the Netherlands have seen an

impressive increase in universities and institutions adopting OA policies within their own repositories. In practical terms, what does OA mean?

OA is defined as the free, immediate availability of research articles on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, distribute, print, search or link to the full texts of these articles, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself.

The only constraint on use, reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.

OA has the power to transform the way research and scientific inquiry is conducted. It has direct and widespread implications for both the academia and industry, and for society as a whole.

OA has the potential to maximise research investments, increase the exposure and use of published research, facilitate the ability to conduct research across available literature and enhance the overall advancement of scholarship.

At its core, OA creates a cycle of information that can only grow by time. A researcher who publishes

research in OA will be contributing to the scholarly and scientific community in general.

The researcher will also provide other scholars with areas and topics for further research either directly or indirectly, thus research creates more research. This will be of benefit to the researcher, the institution, the academic community, and the wider world.

The University of Malta launched OAR@UoM, its institutional repository, in September 2014. Participating in pan-European projects, such as OpenAIRE2020 and PASTEUR4OA, the university library is also playing an active role in promoting OA. The library also acts as the national point of reference for OA within the EU.

OAR@UoM provides a platform for academics to put their research in OA. The ultimate goal is to have a system in place where research created by the University is preserved and also showcased online in Open Access. OAR@UoM is a powerful tool that researchers need to use to increase the visibility of their research and also that of the institution supporting the research.

To date, there are over 4,000 authors who have items deposited on OAR@UoM with over 8,000 different subject headings used to classify the increasing volume of items being submitted. There

are over 1,100 articles, 226 recordings, 30 books and over 1,500 dissertations.

This platform also gives the opportunity to local journal publishers to upload their issues thus increasing visibility and accessibility whilst supporting preservation. Since OAR@UoM is the only institutional repository in Malta, it is also serving as a national repository; in fact there is already a growing number of external research being uploaded on OAR@UoM.

Through OAR@UoM, the university library's goal is to bring together the Maltese research community by enhancing their awareness on OA; however, in order to guarantee that researchers submit material, the University has to issue a mandate that clearly outlines the responsibly involved with such an obligation.

This will also provide researchers with an understanding of the very real benefits of OA and encourage them to become willingly involved in the necessary workflows involved in uploading material in OA.

Research uploaded on OAR@UoM is also accessible through Google and Google Scholar. This may further impact the country as a whole due to the fact that research produced will be internationally visible and can result in foreign entities investing in local research.

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