PROLIFERATION OF ARMED MILITIAS AND COMPLICITY OF EUROPEAN STATES IN THE MIGRATION CRISIS IN LIBYA, 2011-2017

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Proliferation of Armed Militias and Complicity of European States in the Migration Crisis in Libya, 2011 - 2017

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Abstract

This study examined how the emergent militia groups in post-Gadhafi Libya shaped the contours of migration in the state. The following two questions were examined: How did proliferation of armed militia groups contribute to the migration crisis experienced in post-Gadhafi Libya?', and 'Did the prioritization of counter smuggling of migrants over rescue operations by European countries bolster the migrant-trading activities of militia groups in Libya?' The study was anchored on the gate-keeper state theory. Documentary method of data collection was employed, while qualitative analysis of data was adopted. The study found that: the fall of Gadhafi regime in 2011 created interstices exploited by local armed militia groups to commoditise migrants in Libya. Again, the armed militia groups served as agents of the three warring governments in Libya for securing their regime/territories, and as agents of European countries, particularly Italy, to thwart flow of irregular migrants to Europe. The commoditization of migrants by militia groups coalesced with the anti-migration strategies adopted by some European countries to create migration crisis in which an avalanche of irregular migrants became trapped in Libya and were subjected to exploitation and slavery. The study recommends strengthening of the subregional security architectures in Africa to enhance surveillance/control of porous borders.

Keywords: Migration; Libya; Militia; Gadhafi; Gate-keeper State

Introduction/Problematique

The Libyan state emerged from a merger of three former provinces of the Ottoman Empire – Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan, and achieved independence in 1951 from the United Nations (UN) trusteeship (Institute for Peace and Security Studies, 2018). The overthrow of King Idris by Colonel Muammar Gadhafi in 1969 changed the history of Libya as Gadhafi transformed the state into a radical state with leftist ideology. Since then, its relations with the West has oscillated from belligerence to rapproachment, depending on the swing in the ideology adopted at any given time by the Libyan state. Libya has gained notoriety as a transit state for migrants seeking to irregularly migrate to Europe particularly Italy through the Mediterranean Sea. Hence, over the years, the business of smuggling has flourished in Libya especially in coastal towns that provide access to the Mediterranean.

Since the late 1990s European countries especially Italy, have pursued various strategies including deepening bilateral cooperation with Libya in the field of migration in order to address the flow of irregular migrants to Europe through Libya (Paoletti & Pastore, 2010). For instance, in 2007 the Treaty of Friendship was established between Italy and Libya in which Italy committed to provide 5 billion US dollars to Libya for basic infrastructure (Ronzitti, 2009). Essentially, the Treaty served as a "pushback" strategy which enabled the transfer of irregular migrants intercepted at the Mediterranean Sea back to Libya such that between May and November 2009 alone, about 834 irregular migrants who had departed from Libya were returned to Libya (Amnesty International, 2017; Paoletti & Pastore, 2010).

The collapse of Gadhafi regime in 2011 changed the tide of irregular migration taking place through Libya and the associated migrant smuggling business in the country. Generally, the post-Gadhafi Libyan state is remarkable in three ways with regard to the problem of irregular migration in Africa. First, the collapse of state security agencies created interstices exploited by militia groups to profit from smuggling and extortion of migrants. Secondly, European states renewed efforts to reverse the surge in the number of irregular migrants flowing to Europe following the fall of Gadhafi.

Thirdly, post-Gadhafi Libya saw eruption of migration crisis characterized by commoditisation, extortion/abuse of migrants by militia groups in connivance with members of the weakened state security agencies. Thus, by September 2017, the number of migrants trapped in Libya was estimated to stand at over 416,556 (Amnesty International, 2017). Some of the trapped migrants were extorted and sold as slaves by the local militia groups in connivance with some officials of the state security apparatus.

Recent studies contend that the collapse of the Gadhafi regime has created a number of domestic, regional, and international problems including creating a power vacuum, widespread violence, human rights abuses, refugee crises, exacerbated racism and tribalism, economic instability, and the collapse of social welfare systems in Libya (Siebens & Case, 2012). There is also a consensus among writers that post-Gadhafi Libya is characterized by proliferation of militia groups numbering about 1,600 across the country (Amnesty International, 2017; Kamouni-Janssen & Bruijne, 2017). The implication of these analyses is that the collapse of Gadhafi regime, the proliferation of armed militia groups, and the migration crisis in Libya, are treated *sui generis* in extant literature without establishing the organic relationship between these phenomena. There is therefore need to examine the connection between the activities of militia groups and the eruption of the widely reported migration crisis in post-Gadhafi Libya. Hence, this study intervenes by examining this linkage within the context of the following two questions:

- How did proliferation of armed militia groups contribute to the migration crisis experienced in post-Gadhafi Libya?

- Did the prioritization of counter smuggling of migrants over rescue operations by European countries bolster the migrant-trading activities of militia groups in Libya?

Across Libya, some major cities (Zuwara, Sabratha and Zawiya) have gained infamy for flourishing in the business of migrant smuggling and extortion. Of these three cities, Zawiya presents an interesting case study that can be used to underpin the migration crisis in the wider Libyan state since the collapse of Gadhafi's regime. The case of Zawiya is interesting because it presents a context for

understanding how the established state security apparatus and oil refinery in the coastal city were appropriated by the dominant local militia group to perpetrate their illicit business of migrant smuggling and extortion. Drawing largely from experience in Zawiya in post-Gadhafi Libya, this study pursues the thesis that the emergent armed militia groups serve as agents of local political elites to wrestle and maintain state power and also serve as agents of European countries to trap irregular migrants in Libya, thereby creating migration crisis from which the militia groups further profits. Hence, the post-Gadhafi Libyan state is problematized as a 'gate'[1] maintained by two groups - the political elites (state actors) and armed militia (non-state actors) - who filled the power vacuum created in post-Gadhafi Libya but serve as agents of European countries on migration issues. The gate-keeper role played by these state and non-state actors underpins the recurring crisis of the post-Gadhafi Libyan state including the current migration crisis in which hundreds of thousands of irregular migrants were trapped, exploited, abused, and (re)sold as slaves in Libya.

Data and Methods

This study employed case study design. The case study research design enables the researcher to carry out in-depth study of a small number of cases in their real-life context and understand how the isolated cases influence and/or are influenced by the contexts in which they exist (Yin, 2009). Thus, we isolated and focused our analysis on migration crisis as experienced in the city of Zawiya between 2011 and 2017 because of the notoriety Zawiya has in the migrant smuggling business and its geostrategic significance in the political economy of Libya.

Documentary method was adopted for data collection. In line with this, the study relied on secondary data drawn largely from published articles contained in journals and textbooks, reports of

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[1] Cooper (2002) coined the concept of 'gate' in his gate-keeper state theory to explain that post-colonial African states are gates manned by political elites for accumulation of capital. This study appropriates the concept of 'gate' to problematise the post-Gadhafi Libyan state.

United Nations panel of experts on Libya, periodicals, newspapers and articles published by reputable organisations like Amnesty International, which provide insight into the collapse of the Gadhafi regime in 2011, the emergence of militia groups, and the migration crisis that erupted in Libya.

Theoretical Framework

This study explained the post-Gadhafi migration crisis in Libya from the perspective of the gate-keeper state theory. Hence, the study problematizes Libya as a gatekeeper state by appropriating the basic propositions of the gatekeeper state theory to explain the migration crisis that engulfed post-Gadhafi Libya. The concept of 'gatekeeper state' was coined and expounded by an African historian Frederick Cooper in his seminal work titled *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*. Cooper (2002) attempted to explain the character of African states which depend on recognition, direction, and support from external agents to be able to extend their powers internally and command the respect of the people. In this regard, after the collapse of Gadhafi in 2011, various centres of power emerged in Libya, all depending on various external supports to remain in power. Currently, there are three rival governments in Libya competing for power, namely General National Congress (GNC), House of Representatives (HoR), and Government of National Accord (GNA) (Institute for Peace and Security Studies, 2018). The GNA, which emerged from an attempt by the United Nations to form a government of national unity in 2015, is recognised by the international community as the legitimate government in Libya but not recognised by other local competing factions (Arraf, 2017). Legitimized by the international community, the GNA have continued to depend largely on external support and legitimacy while being unable to provide basic needs including security for the people of Libya.

Cooper (2002) traced the gatekeeper character of contemporary African states to their colonial history and experiences. The theory contends that the legitimacy of the colonial state was undermined owing to its emphasis on extraction of resources from the colonial territories without attempt to lay foundations/ structures for sustainable development. As a gatekeeper state, a post-

colonial state is concerned mainly with collection of revenue from taxes on imports and exports and deciding who could engage in what business and how (Cooper, 2002). Being a postcolonial state, Libya remains a mosaic made up of rival groups struggling to profit from material resources including appropriation of coastal borders in order to facilitate and profit from various illicit businesses including smuggling and extortion of irregular migrants.

Hence, the struggle and capture of various lucrative centers of smuggling, and the insertion of militia groups into state security agencies [such as the General Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), and the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG)] by political elites, for selfish interests, as exemplified in the Zawiya city of Libya, reflect the gate-keeper character of the post-Gadhafi Libyan state, which supports the contention of Metsola, (2015, p.59) that:

> Many, perhaps most, postcolonial African states have relied on continuous external recognition and its associated benefits, such as juridical sovereignty, resource rents and strategic rents that can be (sufficiently) transformed into local dominance through patronage and co-option. Their elites have acted as gatekeepers in a longstanding pattern of extraversion that has enabled them to forge local networks of centralization based on patronage instead of bureaucratic unification.

In the light of the above, Cooper (2002) held that the states of Africa are not deemed to be states based on their ability to provide the services that a state should provide, nor based on their capacity to extract power within their territory, but rather based on international recognition. As noted by Metsola (2015), African rulers found themselves in charge of 'gatekeeper' states, with legitimacy mainly emanating from external recognition of their custodianship of the 'gate'. Faced with developmental crisis, these leaders searched for ideologies to help them govern their unstable societies, thereby becoming receptive to those agents that provide recognition and support to enable them keep the 'gate'. Thus, the gate-keeper state is characterized by recurring crisis of volatile gatekeeper politics based on political patronage which produces a weak state vulnerable to political upheavals (Anderson & Beresford, 2016). This quest for legitimacy and custodianship of the Libyan state by various state and non-state actors is implicated in the migration crisis that erupted in post-Gadhafi Libya.

Sunset at Libya: The rise and fall of Gadhafi regime

Muammar Gadhafi assumed power in Libya in 1969 following a military coup in which King Mohammed Idris was deposed. Gaddafi was celebrated as leftist who would build a new and better life for all Libyans. Gaddafi and his co-revolutionaries, who formed the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), set about modernizing and reforming the country during the 1970s in line with their leftist ideology (Blundy, David & Andrew, 1987).

The oil industry in Libya was nationalised in 1973, and this brought about rapid increase in the country's GDP from $3.8 billion in 1969 to $13.7 billion by 1974 and $24.5 billion in 1979 (Blundy, David & Andrew, 1987). According to the Totman & Hardy (2015), despite the progressive and revolutionary ideologies, by the end of the 1970s, Gadhafi's rule became increasingly autocratic, and he established structures that made it difficult for any individual to challenge the regime. The 12-member RCC was disbanded in 1977, with five of its members then forming the General Secretariat of the new General People's Congress. This latter body was formed by delegates elected by hundreds of municipal Basic People's Committees, as well as members of the Arab Socialist Union, the sole legal political party in Libya. Regional and ethnic identities were also exacerbated by Gadhafi to deepen distrust amongst the citizenry and thwart any form of unity that would threaten the regime (Totman & Hardy, 2015). Ethnic/regional division contributed to the emergence of tribal and regional militia groups contesting for power in post-Gadhafi Libya.

The autocratic leadership style and the reforms anchored on the leftist ideology of Gadhafi set the stage for the collapse of the regime. For instance, private establishments and several hundred companies were seized and transformed into cooperatives. In 1978, housing was socialised with the aim of ensuring that every Libyan lived in his own home and was not at the mercy of a landlord. To this end, families were banned from owning more than the house they lived in. All rental properties were seized and sold to their current tenants at heavily-subsidised prices. While this made many Libyans instant homeowners, it greatly made the nation's middle class angry (Totman & Hardy, 2015). In line with the regime's ideological leaning, Gadhafi provided support for liberation

movements and terrorist organisations. This led to military action from the United States and further sanctions which lasted for 16 years and cost the country an estimated $900 million in financial losses from the curtailed oil trade. The sanctions paralyzed the oil and transportation sectors of Libya's economy and isolated the state economically, diplomatically, and physically from the international community. Previous achievements in the areas such as the country's health system were undermined as the government was unable to maintain the previous high-level of spending on technology and equipment (Totman & Hardy, 2015). Such regression in the standard of living, coupled with a consistent crackdown on dissents, meant that Libyans were ripe for a regime change.

According to Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism [INSCT] (2012), armed conflict in Libya began in Benghazi in February 2011, when a series of nationwide peaceful protests in support of reform movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere, known as the "Arab Awakening," were met by the Libyan government with force. As the Libyan government escalated its response to regional riots in Benghazi, Baida, and Derna, with the use of indiscriminate force, resulting in the death of dozens of rioters, popular rebellion increased throughout northern Libya. These events brought about rebellion throughout northern Libya; and by February 2011, an organized political body known as the Transitional National Council (TNC) was formed in Benghazi. The purpose of the TNC was to act as the political face of the revolution and to serve as the legitimate body representing the people of Libya and the Libya state (INSCT, 2012). A full-scale civil war broke out in February 2011, and the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1973 on 17th March, 2011 authorizing the North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO) to intervene in Libya. After months of evading capture, Gadhafi was captured and killed while hiding in a drain in his hometown of Sirte.

Proliferation of armed militia groups and migration crisis in post-Gadhafi Libya

After the collapse of Gadhafi's regime in 2011, various groups which participated in the protests leading to the ouster of Gadhafi and the Libyan civil war of 2014 congealed into armed militia groups. Most of these militia groups sought to gain control of strategic locations on land,

airports, and sea, so as profit to from the business of smuggling of persons, drugs, fuel, and other illicit businesses (Amnesty International, 2017).

To achieve their objectives, the militia groups also aligned with various political groups and power blocs that emerged in post-Gadhafi Libya where they served as armed groups. For instance, the Justice and Construction Party, which controlled the General National Congress (GNC) that came to power after the July 2012 general election, was supported by the Tripoli-based Islamist militias, the Misrata-based militias, the Berber armed militias, and the Knights of Janzour militia, all of which combined to form a military coalition known as the Libya Dawn. The House of Representatives (HoR), which is another major power bloc in post-Gadhafi Libya, had an alliance with the Zintani brigades militia group (Institute for Peace and Security Studies, 2018). The conflict between these political power blocs resulted in violent clashes between various armed militia groups providing support for them.

Due to the political affiliations of these militia groups, they were integrated as coherent groups into various state security agencies, with military power allocated to them. This not only bolstered their strength, but also translated to legitimisation of the militia groups (Arraf, 2017). For example, the Libya Shield Force (LSF), which was established in 2012, came to be comprised of various Islamist militia groups based in Benghazi, Khums, and Misrata and others from other parts of Libya. More so, power was shared within the LSF to the various intact militia units within the Force. Similarly, armed groups were integrated into the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG), which has the mandate of countering trafficking and smuggling, including carrying out surveillance in Libya's territorial and international waters. The General Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), tasked with detention and deportation of illegal migrants, was not spared from this organized militia infiltration. Having been inserted into state security agencies, the militia groups legitimised the illicit smuggling businesses including smuggling/extortion of irregular migrants, from which they profited to sustain their operations while serving as agents of the political elites they support.

As a result of the weakened security network, the gains associated with smuggling/extortion of migrants snowballed. As at 2016, revenue from human smuggling was estimated to be around $978 million, which is about 3.4 per cent of Libya's 2015 GDP of $29.1 billion. The estimate consists of: (a) fees generated from overland travel – $726.3 million; and (b) fees generated from crossings of the Mediterranean – estimated at $251.4 million (Eaton, 2018). Another estimate puts the profit of smuggling organisations at around 253 millions euros per year in Libya (Bertolotti, 2017).

Militia groups and commoditisation of irregular migrants in Zawiya

The city of Zawiya exemplifies the migration crisis which erupted in post-Gadhafi Libya especially as it concerns the role of militia groups, and the complicity of the compromised state security agencies. Zawiya is one of the most geostrategic towns in Libya. It is located in northwestern part of the country with a shoreline bordering the Mediterranean Sea, and borders Tripoli in the east (see Figure 1). The town also controls the vital route between the national capital Tripoli and the Tunisian border making it strategic in the migration and smuggling business in Libya.

Figure 1: Map of Libya showing the town of Zawiya

Source: https://www.google.com.ng/search?q=zawia+libya+map&biw accessed 30 May, 2018

This geostrategic position of Zawiya makes it significant in the political economy of Libya because, in addition to its proximity to the Mediterranean, the town is a home to one of the two most important oil refineries in Libya which makes it economically important. The economic and geostrategic significance of Zawiya makes it strategic in the business of migration, smuggling, and other illicit trades in Libya. For instance, the city is notorious as one of the primary points of departure for migrants from Libya to Europe, and the first major smuggling city that reaches from the capital (Amnesty International, 2017; Eaton, 2018). This underscores the contest for Zawiya, and why Zawiya was the scene of some of the fiercest fights in the anti-Gadhafi civil war as different state and non-state actors struggled to control the town.

The weakened security architecture in post-Gadhafi Libya is also reflected in the security structure in Zawiya. Two important state security formations central to management of migration in Libya are also situated in Zawiya due to its political economy and geostrategic significance. These state security formations are the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) and the Libyan Coast Guard (LCG). Established in 2012, under the Ministry of Interior, the DCIM is saddled with the task of managing illegal migration flows into Libya by acting as quasi-law enforcement body, organising the deportation of irregular migrants, and managing the detention centres where illegal immigrants were held. The LCG operates under the Ministry of Defence in co-ordination with the General Administration for Coastal Security with the mandate of counter-trafficking, counter-smuggling, and surveillance of Libyan territorial waters including international waters. The LCG station in Zawiya is in charge of patrolling the entire western coast of Libya which covers the areas notorious for migrant smuggling, namely, Zawiya, Sabratha, and Zuwara (Amnesty International, 2017).

The militia groups that emerged in Zawiya after the fall of Gadhafi combined the business smuggling in oil, arms, and drugs, with migrant smuggling/extortion. Given the power vacuum in Libya immediately after the fall of Gadhafi, the struggle for control of these businesses deepened along tribal lines and exacerbated the historic tribal divisions between the two major tribes in the

town - *Awlad Bu Hmeira* and *Awlad Saqr* - leading to fierce contests for control of Zawiya by these tribes and their allied militia group (United Nations, 2017). This further led to the emergence of two major blocs of tribal armed militia groups in Zawiya. Hence, the al-Nasr Brigade armed militia emerged from the *Awlad Bu Hmeira* tribe under the command of the notorious Mohammad Koshlaf and took control of the Zawiya refinery. Koshlaf also became the head of the Zawiya Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG), the arm of the NOC charged with securing assets (Eaton, 2018). On the other hand, the Othman al-Lahab and al-Khadrawi armed groups allied with the *Awlad Saqr tribe* (United Nations, 2017).

It is pertinent to note that the al-Nasr Brigade of Zawiya participated actively in the 2014 Operation Dawn which supported the GNC and dislodged the HoR from Tripoli in August 2014 (Institute for Peace and Security Studies, 2018). This alliance and support for the GNC may have paved the way for the Nasr Brigade to gain upper hand in Zawiya through appointment of its members to sensitive security and other government positions. This political connection of al-Nasr Brigade militia gave it superiority in Zawiya over other rival militia groups and paved way for Nasr Brigade members to control government security agencies especially the DCIM centre and the LCG in the city. For instance, the DCIM detention centre in Zawiya was opened and managed in the refinery controlled by Kohleaf – the leader of Nasr Brigade militia group. Again, the Zawiya LCG station Zawiya is headed by Abd al-Rahman Milad (alias Bija) a tribesman of Kohleaf, the influential head of the notorious al-Nassr militia group in Zawiya city involved in migrant smuggling.

The al-Nassr militia group also runs a humanitarian organization, the al-Nassr International Organization for Development and Relief, which was founded on 14 December 2015 and is headed by Fathi al-Far, an army colonel notorious for smuggling and selling of migrants (Amnesty International, 2017; United Nations Panel of Experts Report on Libya, 2017). The strong connection of the militia groups with security agencies enabled the former to intercept migrants on Libyan coasts and make profits from them through extortion and sale to other smuggling networks. For instance, in 2015, The Zawiya coast guard's patrol boat operated by Abd al-Rahman Milad (alias al-Bija) was

reported to be involved in intercepting migrants and transferring them to the al-Nasr detention centre operated by his crony Koshlaf, the leader of Nasr Brigade (United Nations Panel of Experts Report on Libya, 2017).

The control over government security apparatus and the refinery in Zawiya facilitated the illicit business from which the Nasr Brigade militia group profited. For instance, by controlling the refinery, the group was able to smuggle fuel and supply to ships smuggling irregular migrants. By controlling the LCG, the group was able to intercept migrants at the sea and return them to the Zawiya DCIM detention centre. Through its control over the DCIM detention centre, the group was able to extort, sale, and smuggle irregular migrants intercepted and detained in Zawiya. What emerged in Zawiya after the fall of Gadhafi was a complex web of alliance among militia groups, security agencies, and smugglers.

Post-Gadhafi anti-migration strategies of Europe, and migration crisis in Libya

Post-Gadhafi Libya saw renewed collaboration between European, countries especially Italy, and Libyan government, in the area of controlling irregular migration. First, in 2012, the Tripoli Declaration was signed between the Italian government and the Libyan government. The declaration simply reaffirmed the need for collaboration between the two countries in the area of curtailing migration to Europe as already agreed by both parties in the widely criticized Treaty of Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation signed in Bengazi on August 30th 2008. Following the astronomical increase in migrants flowing to Italy since the Libyan civil war of 2014, in February 2017, the Italian government and the Libyan Presidential Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on co-operation in the fields of development, the fight against illegal immigration, human trafficking, and fuel smuggling, and on reinforcing the security of borders. Based on the MoU, the Europeans were committed to providing the LCG with training, equipment, and technical and other assistance.

Article 1B & C of the 2017 MoU holds that Italy will provide funding and technical support to the Libyan institutions in charge of the fight against illegal immigration to build their capacity to

reduce flow of migrants through Libya to Italy. Hence, through the 2017 MoU which also strengthened other existing agreements between Italy and Libya in the area of managing irregular immigration, Italy was able to build the capacity of the LCG and DCIM in trapping and detaining migrants in Libya. For instance, under the 2017 MoU and previous other agreements, hundreds of the Libya coast guards received training from Italy on coast patrol. Similarly, Italy has provided the LCG with patrolling equipment such as patrol boats. In 2017, a 2.5 million Euro grant was set aside for the maintenance of Libyan boats and the training of Libyan crews from the 200 million Euro "Africa fund" created in the 2017 (Amnesty International, 2017). In July 2017, a 46.3 million Euro programme was approved by the EU Trust Fund for Africa for increasing the operational capacity of the LCG through the provision of training, equipment, repair, and maintenance of existing fleet; the setting up of operational rooms to enable the agency co-ordinate operations aimed at trapping migrants (Amnesty International, 2017).

Arising from the assistance and support from Europe, between 2016 and 2017, the Libyan state security agencies, influenced by militia groups especially the LCG, heavily increased their capacity to operate at sea. The result was that the number of migrants arriving in Italy fell by 67% between July and November 2017, compared with the same period in the previous year when 102,786 arrived Italy (Amnesty International, 2017). Similarly, about 19,452 migrants were intercepted by LCG and taken back to DCIM centres in Zawiya or handed over to smugglers in Libya (Amnesty International, 2017).

The implication of this is that the assistance received from European countries under the 2017 MoU enabled the LCG to intercept irregular migrants at sea, and return or/and detain them in Libya. Secondly, by acting as agents of European countries in reducing the number of migrants flowing into Europe, the LCG and DCIM, themselves controlled by militia groups, increased the number of irregular migrants trapped under the custody of the Libyan militia groups who profit by extorting these irregular migrants and selling them into slavery. As a result, by the end of September 2017, the estimated number of migrants trapped in Libya was in excess of 416,556 with most of them scattered

across various detention centres operated by the security agencies and militia groups (Amnesty International, 2017).

It is within this context that we can understand the eruption of the migration crisis in Libya and how most migrants became trapped, abused, injured, and lost in Libya. Figure 2 illustrates the complex web of coordination of various state agencies controlled by the militia groups and with supports from Europe.

Figure 2: Complex Web of Coordination of Militia Controlled State Agencies

Source: Authors' Design
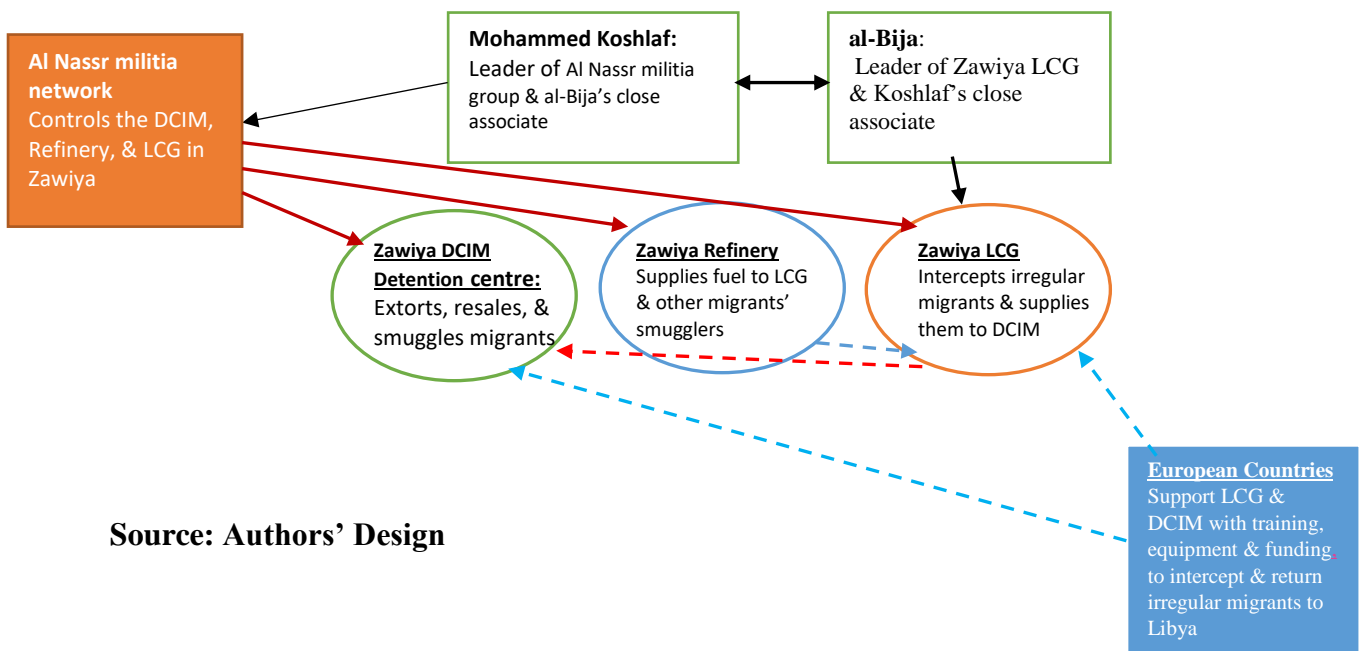
Conclusion

The post-Gadhafi Libya is a 'gate' largely manned by two groups - the political elites (state actors) and armed militia (non-state actors) - who filled the power vacuum created in Libya after the ousting of Gadhafi, but serve as agents of Europeans countries on migration issues. The political alliance and agency role of militia groups in the city of Zawiya facilitated their insertion into state security agencies under which they carried out their smuggling business 'legitimately' and through which they acquired capacity (through support from European countries) to function in the business

of migrant smuggling and extortion. The activities of militia groups in Zawiya and the migration crisis in the city exemplifies the place of militia groups in shaping power relations and reconfiguring the dynamics of migration in the wider Libyan society following the collapse of Gadhafi's regime.

The findings of the study, based on evidence from Zawiya, demonstrate that the factors that jointly created the migration crisis in which irregular migrants were trapped and commoditised in Libya include: (i) 'legitimization' of militia groups through their politicization, (ii) the compromise of state security apparatus arising from insertion of militia groups in those apparatus, (iii) support provided to the compromised state security agencies by European countries. .

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forward:

For the Libyan State:

- There is need to overhaul the state security agencies in Libya especially the DCIM and LCG involved in the management of irregular migrants by carrying out a background check on key officers and ensuring their periodic transfer from one duty/location to another. This will ensure that officers found to be members/connected to militia groups or migrants' smuggling networks are removed from security agencies, and properly sanctioned.

For the International Community:

- European and African countries should deepen collaboration in surveillance of the vast porous borders of African countries by strengthening capacity of African security agencies in border control. This can be achieved through strengthening existing sub-regional security architecture such as Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) for effective joint regional border surveillance and control.

- Early warning system must be established within the security frameworks of the sub-regions to ensure that violent conflicts and instability brewing in member countries are adequately managed to avert complete breakdown of law and order, and large scale displacement as happened in Libya in 2011.

- Intelligence capacity of national security agencies of African countries should be built to enhance apprehension of local human traffickers and migrants' smuggling networks in African countries.

- The challenges of unemployment and poverty, which are major push-factors for irregular migration, must be addressed through strong collaboration between the global North and South. This can be achieved through adequate utilisation of the 200 million Euro 'Africa

Fund' set up in 2017 and other similar funds to support local industries and organise skill acquisition programmes for the poor youth.

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