



Ressort: Politik

The Berlin Conference on Libya seen from Rome

Rome, 20.01.2020 [ENA]

The Berlin Conference on Libya's latest civil war, which is in its sixth month now, ended yesterday with the signature of a 55-point document. The document has five chapters: ceasefire; arms embargo; start of a political process; reform of the country's economic and financial institutions; human rights and humanitarian situation.

The level of the participants has been high-level and the stakes important.

On the one hand, Berlin Conference saved the reputation of the United Nations, of the UN Security Council resolutions on Libya flagrantly violated and of the UN- sponsored government of national unity chaired by Fayed al-Serraj under siege for months. On the other, the Meeting prevented the conflict between the two opposing souls of Libya from deflagrating into a regional war, risking to detonate in the eastern Mediterranean among Turkey, Egypt, Greece and Cyprus. So far, Libya's war has left more than 1,100 dead and over 100,000 displaced.

The absences of neighboring Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are striking.

General Khalifa Haftar and al-Serraj have not even met and it's important to highlight that they are not the only ones but are the two main Libyan actors of the conflict. So they were invited with the strange role of observers. They did not discuss or work on the text of the document, but met separately with representatives of the German government, which paid attention that the two delegations did not meet or end up in the same room.

Nevertheless, this asymmetric diplomacy obtained an important and useful element for the transformation of the truce into a ceasefire: during the Conference Libyan Prime Minister Fayed al-Sarraj and his rival, General Khalifa Haftar, named the members of a "5+5" military commission to monitor the

ceasefire according to the UNSMIL action plan.

The Libya summit without Libyans does not represent a failure of the Berlin Conference. It is rather the result of the Berlin process, which started in August 2019 after the failure of the Paris (May 2018) and Palermo (November 2018) summits and after the start of the Haftar campaign to conquer Tripoli (April 2019). A more limited objective was set: the involvement of the so-called external actors, those who politically support one or the other party or who even fuel the conflict by sending weapons and armed forces.

The German approach to the Libyan crisis was therefore a substantially regional approach, aimed at

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weakening the Libyan conflict.

This approach re-established the low intensity level that characterized this conflict in previous years and prevented it from altering the relations between the powers beyond a certain limit in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The great result of this summit was, outside the Libyan theater, that of lining up the positions of Germany, Russia and Turkey on the possibility of reducing the Libyan conflict, of which the three countries have clearly understood the destabilizing power of the delicate regional balances .

Starting from the results from last week's Moscow summit, Berlin attempted to foster the conditions for the truce achieved under the auspices of Russia and Turkey in order to get a progressive ceasefire.

Germany is not as interested in the political process as it is in the balance it has in the eastern Mediterranean, Balkan and Black Sea regions. Germany wants to be involved in any potential peace process in Libya at this time because Berlin is worried by the continued deterioration of the situation in the country and that this situation will lead to a larger flood of migrants and refugees to Europe.

For this reason, Berlin is not looking for the solution to the probably unsolvable Libyan rebus, but rather for a sustainable de-escalation to enforce the United Nations embargo, to stop the support of third countries for the two warring sides and to detach the Libyan conflict from other Mediterranean instabilities. The agreement reached among the main external lenders, sponsors and brokers of the conflict represents a result that - although mutable - is a significant step forward. German intervention strategy responds well to its regional and global ambitions and seems to leave very little room for the European Union both at the political and military levels.

Twenty-five years after its birth, on the ashes of the Yugoslav conflict, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was absent yesterday in Berlin. Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte, speaking in Berlin on Sunday together with Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio following the four-hour Berlin Conference on Libya, declared he was "satisfied because we have made progress".

"Italy is ready to take the lead on a commitment to responsibility, including on peacekeeping," Conte said, adding that "obviously we will have to pass it through the UN Security Council".

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