A Multi-Track Roadmap for Relaunching the Libyan Political Process

[Revised proposal]

Peace Makers Libya

March 2023

This initiative presents a proposal for a roadmap to address the current political deadlock and relaunch the political process. The general approach of the initiative focuses on providing guarantees to the parties to the conflict by agreeing on a consensual framework for organizing elections and renewing the legitimacy of institutions. It also aims at paving the way for building more consensus on controversial issues that have affected the conflict during the past decade, thus building a basis for national reconciliation.

The initiative and its development

The Peace Makers team initiated a series of activities aiming at "breaking the political deadlock" that resulted from the breakdown of the 24 December 2021 electoral process. The main goal of these activities was to evaluate the causes of past political initiatives failures, and leverage their strengths to design an initiative that would tackle the drivers of the conflict and address the fears and aspirations of the Libyans.

The Peace Makers team started the process of drafting a roadmap proposal by collecting and analyzing several past initiatives. The team then selected a group of experts and political leaders, whose role they saw as central to think collectively and articulate a consensual vision of a new political roadmap that could end the deadlock and set the country on track towards electoral democracy and peace.

The individuals who participated in this collective thinking were selected based on three main criteria:

- Their level of political representation and leverage within the various political currents and social components that are currently influential on the Libyan scene.

- Their active role in the Peace Makers' network over the past years, through their contribution, analysis and experience in some important political and technical issues (elections, economic reforms, constitution, security).

- Their experience and active participation in the initiatives and political dialogues, including those facilitated by the United Nations.

The strategy of building consensus on a five-track "full package"

The motives of the current conflict and resulting polarization can be circumscribed to a few main issues: local governance, management and distribution of resources, security and military institutions, elections, the constitution and foreign interferences. These issues are intertwined with all aspects of the Libyan crisis, and most of the previous initiatives that aimed at resolving this crisis have dealt with at least part of them. However, it appears that the proposed solutions and their implementation mechanisms have not adequately addressed these issues in terms of their interconnection and synchronization (see figure 1).

In contrast, one fundamental feature of our initiative is its focus on the links between these issues, and on the necessity to address them all as indispensable components of the same solution. This is what we call the 'full-package' solution, or five-track initiative.
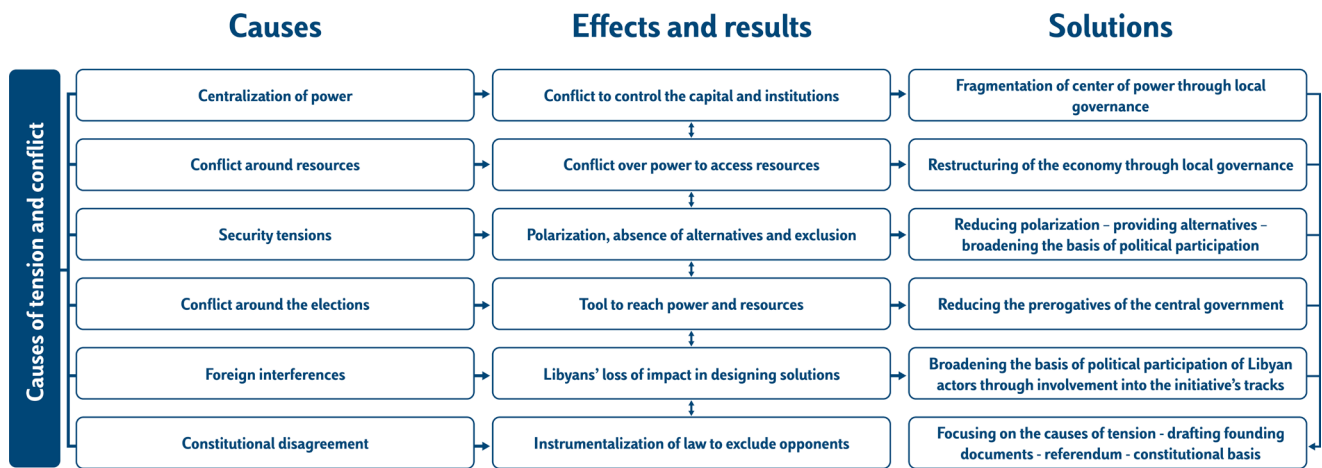
Causes	Effects and results	Solutions
Causes of tension and conflict		
Centralization of power	Conflict to control the capital and institutions	Fragmentation of center of power through local governance
Conflict around resources	Conflict over power to access resources	Restructuring of the economy through local governance
Security tensions	Polarization, absence of alternatives and exclusion	Reducing polarization – providing alternatives – broadening the basis of political participation
Conflict around the elections	Tool to reach power and resources	Reducing the prerogatives of the central government
Foreign interferences	Libyans' loss of impact in designing solutions	Broadening the basis of political participation of Libyan actors through involvement into the initiative's tracks
Constitutional disagreement	Instrumentalization of law to exclude opponents	Focusing on the causes of tension - drafting founding documents - referendum - constitutional basis

Figure 1: Causes of tension, effects and appropriate solutions

An important question may arise here: Why is this 'full package' essential? Because it is the only way to address the main demands and fears of the parties to the conflict and of their respective constituencies. Only by reaching consensus on some basic principles that are central to these core issues can the parties feel that their demands are being taken into account, and that they can engage in the future political process.

The Political Dialogue Committee: a Libyan Constituent Committee

How can consensus be reached on some of the basic principles of these issues? Who will play the role of mediator, and how?

The second essential feature of the proposal is the central role to be played by a new type of political dialogue committee, conceived as a constituent committee. This committee will be tied by a strictly time-bound mandate; it will take on new tasks that touch on the roots of the crisis and reduce political and military polarization; and it will be composed of influential components that can create a sort of societal pressure to implement the committee's outputs.

The Political Dialogue Committee: Role and nature of its work

The role of the Committee will unfold within a predetermined timeframe and focus on building consensus around a constitutional basis that reflects a political agreement on the following issues:

1. Establishing regulations for local governance that dismantle the struggle over central authority and initiate the process of decentralization.

2. Agreeing on a suitable mechanism for managing and distributing resources in accordance with the rules of local governance.

3. Establishing regulations for rebuilding the security and military institutions under civilian authority and international communication to secure the borders.

4. Supervising elections at different levels (local, parliamentary, and presidential)

5. Laying out the broad outlines and founding documents for establishing a permanent constitution for the country.

The Political Dialogue Committee: Composition and balance strategy

Drawing from previous experiences of political dialogue and lessons learned, the composition of the Political Dialogue Committee should prioritize the participation of political and civil institutions. This approach will help counterbalance the influence of the parties to the conflict that benefit from the status quo.

As Figure (2) shows, the approach to forming the Committee does not mainly depend on political, tribal and regional affiliation, but rather relies at 75% on political and civil institutions (parties, syndicates and civil society), while the remaining 25% represent the main and most influential parties to the conflict.
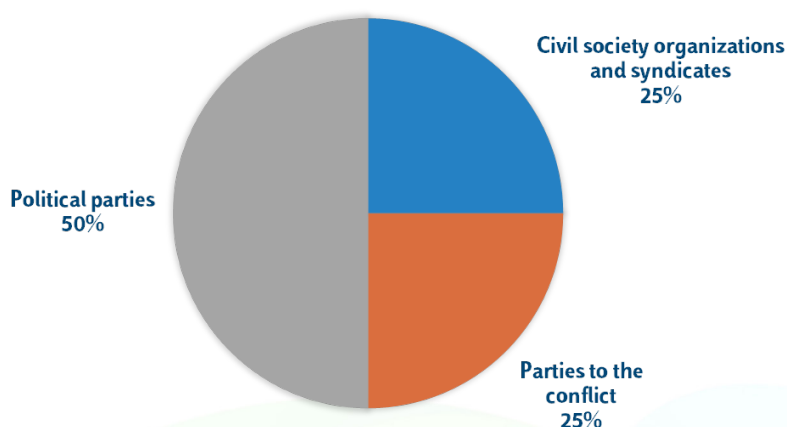
Figure 2: Share of the components of the proposed Political Dialogue Committee

The initiative allocates 50% of the Committee to political parties. Parties today include all currents and can pressure for the implementation of agreed upon measures. Moreover, their inclusion would help restructure and consolidate political life around a correct democratic understanding that recognizes political institutions as the natural place for political action.

Civil society organizations and syndicates are allocated a 25% share in the Committee. In the Libyan context, these institutions are considered to be the most significant space for the involvement of youth, women, professionals, the disabled and other vulnerable groups. Therefore, this share would ensure their real participation and integration in political life.

Parties to the conflict will have a 25% share in the Committee. Despite their actual influence on the ground, their presence in the Committee is not a reward for causing the current crisis. It is rather a strategy to dismantle their coalition from within and prevent them from uniting to obstruct the implementation of the roadmap. This is especially important as they could use the geographical, regional and tribal affiliations of the groups that represent them in the Political Dialogue Committee (the High State Council and the House of Representatives for example).

The Political Dialogue Committee: Legal legitimacy

The legitimacy of the proposed committee is derived from several sources, including the Security Council resolutions, and in particular resolution No. 2259-2015 adopting the Political Agreement of 17 December 2015, and from article 64 of this agreement. Additionally, previous agreements reached by Libyan parties confirmed their support for an inclusive Libyan-led political process, facilitated by the United Nations and supported by the international community, including the resumption of intra-Libyan consultations to create the conditions for holding elections on a constitutional basis.
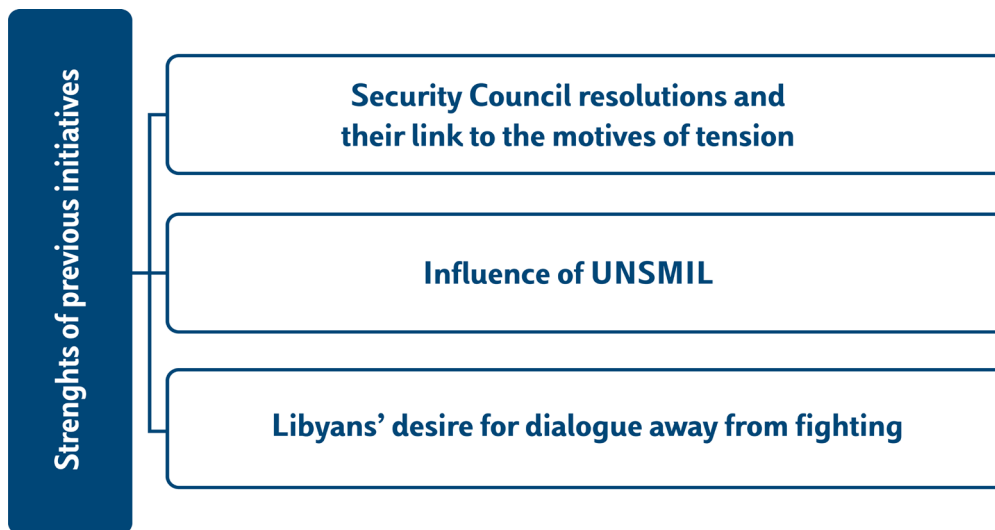
Figure 3: Strengths of the previous initiatives

Tasks and responsibilities of the Political Dialogue Committee

The Committee has the responsibility to address the issues that are causing the current tension according to priorities, in order to pave the way for the conduct of elections and create a conducive environment for any elected authorities. The initiative has consolidated these issues into one comprehensive package, in the form of interrelated tracks that fall under the umbrella of the constitutional basis.

The first priority for the Committee is to tackle the issue of local governance in Libya, which is one of the significant drivers of societal tension. Despite the existence of Law 59 on municipalities, centralization and conflict still persist. The capital remains a strategic target for the parties to the conflict, as controlling it means controlling the state's resources and decision-making centers. Therefore, any solution must address the distribution of resources as well as the decision-making centers.

The initiative proposes the use of the law on electoral constituencies, which divides Libya into 13 governorates. This will not create disputes over borders, but rather expand the basis of political participation, and thus address the issue of the centralization of decision and resources – a point that can be detailed in the path related to the restructuring of the economy.

The path of the economic restructuring cannot be separated from local governance. This path will deal with the resource management mechanisms, the allocation of resources to each governorate defined by the Committee within the local governance framework, as well as their respective rights and obligations towards the central government. These two tracks are crucial among the Committee's top priorities, as they are deeply linked to the root causes of the conflict. Therefore, reaching a consensus on them in the short term would significantly reduce the tension and polarization.

It is expected that some parties may attempt to obstruct the efforts to reach a consensus on local governance and economic restructuring. Addressing these issues will eliminate some tension triggers and lead to the withdrawal of some of their supporters. Therefore, the security track will be important here, as it will establish a suitable mechanism to secure the resources and take them out of the circle of conflict. It is also essential to address several important issues, most notably securing borders and regulating illegal migration, as well to develop a vision for rebuilding a unified military institution under the control of an elected civilian authority whose loyalty lies with the constitution.

To address the current crisis of legitimacy, the Committee must consider the wishes of 2.8 million Libyan voters. Accordingly, another task of the Committee will be to set the criteria and conditions for electoral candidates running for all three levels of power (local, presidential, and parliamentary). In particular, the Committee should ensure that competition for positions at the central level is between political parties rather than individuals, in order to avoid repeating previous mistakes and creating new parties to the conflict that could be coopted by the existing forces on the scene. This comes in addition to the necessity of having an international monitoring of these elections and the readiness to impose sanctions on those who obstruct them.

Clearly, the Committee's endorsement of the four previous tracks alone is insufficient to provide adequate guarantees, as this agreement does not carry constitutional weight. Therefore, the final track of this proposal is the constitutional track. The Committee will have to incorporate all the agreed upon points into a constitutional draft that will serve as a provisional constitution for the state and as its guiding framework towards a new phase overseen by elected authorities.
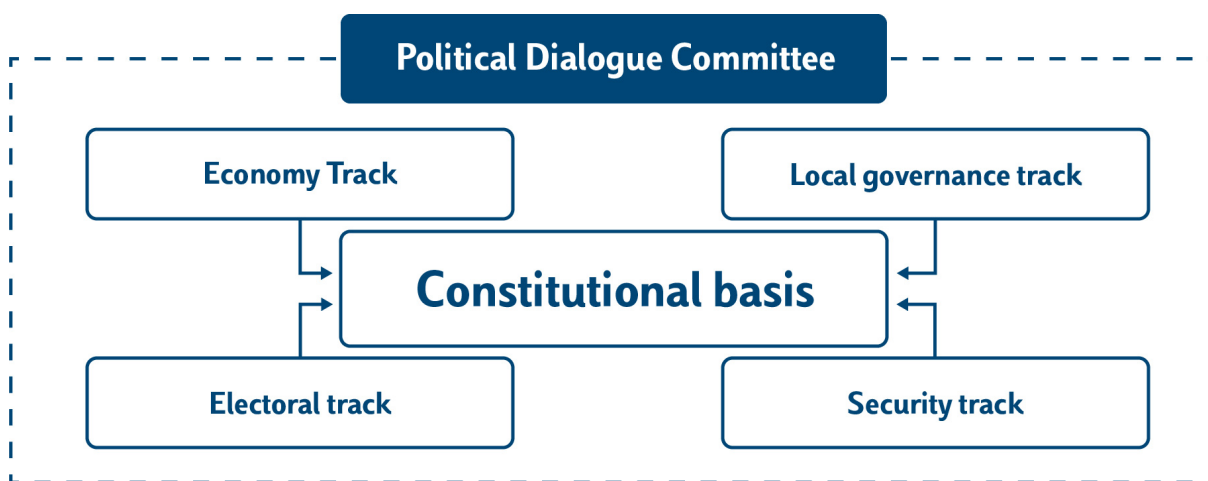

Figure 4: Tasks and responsibilities of the Political Dialogue Committee under the umbrella of the constitutional basis

A process structured around three main stages

The main mistakes of the previous initiatives were a timetable for task implementation that was not designed in an objective and scientific manner away from symbolism; the compartmentalization of the different paths; and the absence of a long-term strategy to sustain progress and build upon the results to move forward. This has caused a new political deadlock.

To address this, the initiative will be structured around three main stages:

1. Developing a comprehensive constitutional framework that includes: an appropriate conception of a local governance framework, the economic restructuring, security, and an electoral basis for the implementation of local, presidential and parliamentary elections.

2. Choosing a transitional government whose mission will be limited to holding elections at different levels and approving essential founding documents that can be presented in a referendum (electronically or in-person according to the situation at this stage), as this will provide them with popular legitimacy.

3. Building on the founding documents (agreements and the constitutional basis) and what has been achieved to establish a permanent constitution for the country and achieve national reconciliation. These goals will be the priorities of the newly-elected authorities, who will be able to work in more stable conditions as a result of the Committee's achievements in addressing the causes of tension and conflict.

Notes and references

[1] The Libyan Political Agreement in Skhirat / December 2015

[2] Security Council Resolution No. 2259 adopting the Libyan Political Agreement / December 2015

[3] Archive of the Peace Makers team's dialogues / 2016-2022

[4] Final draft of the Constitution Drafting Assembly, plenary session No. 74 - 29 / July 2017

[5] Draft of the Libyan Social Contract / August 2018

[6] Libyan Political Agreement, Geneva / October 2020

[7] Outcomes of the dialogue session entitled "Reconciliation and Stability in the City of Sirte: Challenges and Future Prospects" / December 2021

[8] Peace and Prosperity Party's project on local governance / October 2021

[9] Initiative for Political Settlement by Elections / Thinking group / 2022

[10] National Forces Alliance Party's Initiative / 2022

[11] Security Council Resolution No. 2656 endorsing the resumption of intra-Libyan consultations to create the conditions for holding elections on a constitutional basis / 2022

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