



ANDREAS SOLARO/AFP/Getty Images

Europe's Shady Migrant Deal With Libya

Bribing the gatekeeper has worked before, but this latest Libyan incarnation has dangerous implications.

- Brent Nagtegaal
- [16-10-2017](#)

JERUSALEM - At the height of the migrant crisis in 2015, over 100,000 people per month traveled through Turkey en route to Europe. In order to quell the stream of mostly young African and Middle Eastern men, European nations experimented with numerous ideas. From increased border checks to the construction of border fences to bolstering the border police, each of Europe's solutions were largely ineffectual.

It was only when German Chancellor Angela Merkel approached Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan with a proposition that the solution to the crisis presented itself. As the gatekeeper to Europe, if Turkey could be convinced to keep the migrants within its territory, the problem would be largely solved.

And so Angela Merkel, with the backing of the other European nations, did what she had to—with somewhere between €3 billion and €6 billion (us\$3.6 billion and \$7.2 billion) she incentivized Erdoğan to stop the migrants. While there were other parts to the deal, it was clearly money that motivated Erdoğan. The Turkish strongman agreed, and effectively closed the tap on the migrants into Europe. And so, since March 2016, when the deal was implemented, there has been a 97 percent reduction in the migrant flow from Turkey to Greece.

But this wasn't the first case of "bribe the gatekeeper" in order to stop migrants coming into Europe. A similar event took place eight years earlier.

In August 2008, with Europe experiencing a surge of migrants coming across the Mediterranean from Libya, then Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi signed a "friendship agreement" with none other than longtime Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi. The deal was simple: Under the guise of compensation for Italy's colonial crimes against Libya, Berlusconi pledged to pay \$5 billion to Qadhafi if he was able to stem the flow of illegal migrants. As with Erdoğan after him, Qadhafi held his end of the bargain and successfully reduced migrant flows from 40,000 in 2008 to 5,000 two years later.

Fast forward to 2016 and 2017, and the migrant flows from Libya returned with increasing numbers. From January 2016 through July 2016, some 78,000 migrants arrived in Italy, most of which left from Libya. The same period in 2017 saw that number increase to 86,000.

But then something drastic happened at the end of July this year, because August saw an 87 percent drop in new arrivals into Italy.

What happened?

As Al-Monitor reported on September 12, [monitors and researchers were baffled by the drop in numbers](#) in August. What could account for the huge drop in numbers?

Was the EU mission in the Mediterranean charged with stopping the migrants finally becoming successful? Hardly.

Or was it a drastic change in the weather patterns that kept the migrants on shore? Not so much.

It turns out that Italy has been working behind the scenes for a couple of months on behalf of the European Union to financially induce Libya to keep the migrants—another attempt at bribe the gatekeeper.

However, this incarnation is different from what took place with Erdoğan and Qadhafi.

The difference is that Libya today doesn't have one strongman for Europe to bribe. Instead, given Libya's fractious state without a central authority, Italy has been forced to pay off a whole host of mini-dictators and militias, all of the gatekeepers, to different degrees, of the migrant routes from southern Libya to the northern coast.

The point man on this strategy is Italian Interior Minister Marco Minniti. He told the *Guardian* on September 7, "The crucial point for me had been to go to Libya to find a solution. In Turkey, with its migrant crisis, there was a strong leader with which to work—perhaps too strong. [In Libya, it was the opposite](#)."

Minniti has personally traveled to Libya throughout the last couple of months to individually deal with groups holding power in key cities along the migrant routes. While most of this money is handed out to the internationally backed Government of National Accord (GNA), some are flowing directly from the EU to Italy and into the hands of local leaders.

"We discussed a pact," Minniti told the *Guardian*. "It was quite simple: Engage yourself against the trafficking of human beings and we will help you build an alternative economy."

Put another way, this means Italy has begun to pay off the very groups responsible for smuggling people through Libya and onto boats in the first place.

This, it turns out, is the way Europe has chosen to deal with the Libyan migrant crisis and was the cause of August's drastic reduction of migrants making it to Italy.

To be fair, Europe has tried to reduce the flow of migrants in a myriad of ways from Libya before this shady deal—especially through Operation Sophia. The original intent of the mission was to stop the flow of migrants by disrupting the business model of the people smugglers, by picking up and capturing the smugglers as well as destroying their boats. This could only take place outside Libya's territorial waters. This was successful until the smugglers used cheaper, unseaworthy vessels that couldn't make it into international waters. In order to save the migrants from drowning, numerous nongovernmental organizations sailed into Libyan territorial waters, picked up the migrants—sometimes in cahoots with the smugglers themselves, and then sent them to Europe for processing. This only made it easier for the smugglers to get them to Europe and harder for the European government to stop the trafficking.

And so Europe has now resorted to completely changing the business model of the smugglers—in some cases, just by directly paying them off to stop their trade.

While this policy seems to be working, there are worrying signs that the strategy will destabilize Libya further.

For two years, Europe has tried desperately to unite Libya under one government, which it could then work with to stop the migrants from heading north. Its efforts culminated in the establishment of the United Nations-backed gna, led by Fayeze al-Sarraj two years ago. However, Sarraj still lacks the political or military power within Libya to bring the nation together. Clearly, handing out cash to individual tribal and militia leaders will only increase intertribal fighting.

Furthermore, this policy will increase the number of migrants who will be stranded inside Libya. As Guma al-Gamaty, head of the Libyan Taghyeer Party, wrote this week, "This strategy would practically transform [Libya into a buffer zone 'protecting' Europe](#) from sub-Saharan migrants. ... The permanent resettlement of millions of sub-Saharan migrants in Libya would cause dramatic demographic changes in the country and eventually lead to major social and economic upheaval."

There is also the question of the treatment of migrants by the outsourced nongovernmental groups that have been known for their horrific treatment of migrants in the past. "The list of violations and abuses faced by migrants in Libya is as long as it is horrific," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said last December.

[

However, all those important points aside, there is another fundamental danger in this European policy that the *Trumpet* is watching closely: By directly infusing Libyan militias and tribal leaders with European cash, *Libya's sovereignty can be increasingly undermined by Europe*.

Where the local tribal leaders used to gain income from the smugglers, now their business model will be conditional upon the continued flow of European cash—and, in a sense, will become beholden to European wishes.

Already, there is a lack of trust in Libya toward the gna for giving away its sovereignty. In early August, Serraj invited Italian warships into Libyan territorial waters without consulting others in Libya. This resulted in widespread criticism in Libya, with his critics saying the move was a "violation of Libyan sovereignty." It's likely that this current move to pay off local leaders with European money will be viewed by many Libyans in the same way.

Whether or not this policy works at stemming the migrants, it is this point of this loss of Libyan sovereignty to Europe that has resonating historic associations as well as powerful prophetic implications (both of these are discussed in *Trumpet*

editor in chief Gerald Flurry's article "[Mediterranean Battle Escalating Into World War III!](#)").

Since 2011, Mr. Flurry has pointed to Libya as a flashpoint between radical Islam led by Iran and Christian Europe. This is based on the prophecy in Daniel 11:40-43, which clearly states that Europe, faced with a growing Islamic push northward, will respond with a takeover of Libya (his free booklet [The King of the South](#) explains this).

While the Iranian influence in Libya is hard to discern right now, Europe is clearly getting more involved. It's likely that the ever increasing destabilization in Libya that has resulted in its current migrant policy could actually mobilize an Islamic counteroffensive. Already, there are several powerful Islamic leaders inside Libya who view Europe's actions as imperialistic.

Continue to watch Libya as Europe will become more involved in Libyan affairs. In lieu of a dictator to deal with directly, Europe will have to increase its presence in an increasingly destabilized and sectarian Libya. Biblical prophecy reveals that there will be increasing pushback from many Libyans over such a policy. For more about Europe's long-standing strategy in Libya, please read "[Mediterranean Battle Escalating Into World War III!](#)" ■

No NI

