

Eastern Libya Rises as a Strategic Force in Regional Security

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Eastern Libya is rapidly positioning itself as a vital player in the region's security architecture, navigating beyond internal fragmentation and toward broader geopolitical relevance. The Eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS) and the Libyan National Army (LNA), under the leadership of figures like Saddam Haftar, are stepping onto the international stage not through lofty rhetoric, but by quietly building dependable, security-centered relationships with key global powers.

While the internationally recognized Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU) remains mired in factionalism and militia influence, the GNS has cultivated a more stable and coordinated political structure. This reliability has attracted serious attention from major actors such as Egypt, France, Italy, and the United States. These diplomatic overtures, marked by high-level military and governmental engagements, point to a growing consensus: Eastern Libya is no longer a periphery power, but a necessary partner.

A cornerstone of the GNS's strategic value lies in its control over Libya's eastern borders with Egypt, Sudan, and Chad. These borders encompass vital oil facilities, key migration routes, and maritime infrastructure, including ports like Susah. In contrast to Tripoli's disorganized militia network, the centralized GNS-LNA apparatus offers predictability and a serious approach to both border management and national defense, precisely the traits that international partners value in today's unstable geopolitical climate.

On June 24, Saddam Haftar met with Egyptian Army Chief of Staff Osama Askar, reaffirming long-standing military cooperation and shared interests in regional stability. Their talks focused on tightening joint efforts in border control and counterterrorism, issues that directly impact Egypt's national security. The enduring relationship between Cairo and the GNS reflects strategic alignment based not on ideology, but on mutual necessity.

Western capitals are also taking notice. In recent talks with Italian Interior and Defense Ministers, the Eastern delegation underscored its commitment to tackling illegal migration and cross-border threats. Given Libya's role as a major transit route for migrants heading to Europe, such cooperation is crucial. Rome's willingness to engage signals that pragmatism is overtaking bureaucracy when it comes to partnerships in North Africa.

France, too, is recalibrating its diplomatic posture. In a notable move, General Pierre Schill, Chief of Staff of the French Army, invited Saddam Haftar to participate in the Mediterranean Military Summit, a gesture that signifies France's recognition of Eastern Libya's practical value in securing the region. Despite the ongoing political split in Libya, Paris and Rome are adapting their diplomacy to fit the reality on the ground, prioritizing results over symbolic allegiance.

Across the Atlantic, the United States is adopting a similarly measured approach. Saddam Haftar's April 28 visit to the U.S. State Department in Washington underscored the growing strategic alignment between the GNS and American policymakers. These discussions were not simply ceremonial; they addressed real concerns about maritime security,

counterterrorism, and the future of energy exports. The docking of the USS *Mount Whitney* in Benghazi shortly before these meetings was more than symbolic; it signaled a tangible shift in the U.S.-Libyan military engagement.

Such consistent and purposeful diplomacy is elevating the GNS's profile globally. Rather than demanding immediate legitimacy, Eastern Libya is building a case for recognition based on competence. Its steady performance in security cooperation and border enforcement is gaining favor in Western and regional capitals alike.

The broader implication is clear: Eastern Libya, through the GNS and LNA, is not merely surviving the chaos of post-revolution Libya; it is shaping a future grounded in stability, self-reliance, and strategic partnerships. As the West and its regional allies reassess their priorities, especially in an increasingly volatile Mediterranean, the GNS is emerging not as a secondary actor but as a central pillar in the region's security architecture.

For a region that has suffered from broken promises and unfulfilled peace plans, Eastern Libya's practical, security-first diplomacy is a welcome contrast. The current UK government may remain fixated on conventional diplomatic norms and legitimacy structures, but leading players like the U.S., Italy, Egypt, and France are moving in a different direction, one where actions and outcomes matter more than formal labels.

If this trend continues, Eastern Libya's slow and steady diplomatic rise may soon translate into a decisive role in reunifying the country, not through force, but through relevance.