Africa Programme – Middle East & North Africa Programme
Workshop Summary

The Political Economy of the Central Mediterranean Route: Exploring Policy Options to Stem Smuggling & Trafficking in North and West Africa

5 July 2017
Introduction

The following is a summary of discussions that took place during a workshop held at Chatham House on 5 July 2017. The workshop brought together experts from governments, multilateral organizations, policy institutes, non-governmental organizations and academia to discuss the evolving political economy of the trade and smuggling routes from the Sahel to North Africa. It focussed, in particular, on the so-called ‘Central Mediterranean’ route from Niger to Libya, which has become the primary route for migrants seeking to reach Europe and a major smuggling route for other illicit goods. The objective of the workshop was to address policy interests of international actors through the lens of local dynamics.

The meeting aimed to:

- support a better understanding of the movement of people and goods between Niger and Libya;
- explore and assess the effectiveness of current policies of international actors (in particular European countries) to support the disruption of illicit flows (human trafficking and smuggling, arms, narcotics) through the so-called ‘Central Mediterranean’ route; and
- assess the options for the development of alternative livelihoods along the Central Mediterranean route.

The meeting was held on the record. The views expressed in this summary are those of the participants and the document is intended to serve as an aide-memoire for those who took part and to provide a general summary of discussions for those who did not.

Summary

- A transnational approach is key to understanding illicit flows of people and goods from West Africa to North Africa as ancient trade routes, now used for smuggling of goods and people. At the same time, the local context in which illicit trafficking takes place is of central importance to understanding the root causes and drivers of smuggling.
- Participants pointed out that trade and movement of people between Niger and Libya has always been informal in the traditional sense, but due to international pressure has now evolved into criminal trade.
- In the Libyan context, the illicit economy may be seen as one of the few things holding the state together, as it houses vital infrastructure and creates hubs of political activity. In northern Niger the illicit economy provides income and employment for the majority of the population. In this sense, participants agreed that in certain contexts, illicit activities can be seen as forces of stability.
- Security-centred approaches to tackling migration and smuggling were questioned and it was broadly agreed that such responses only tackle symptoms rather than root causes such as socio-economic pressures, environmental degradation, local conflict and ethnic tensions.
- As a result, there is a need to move beyond security-based approaches to adopt more realistic and innovative solutions. Key to this is the development of support for alternative livelihoods and policies that will tackle the root causes and drivers of migration and illicit activity. There are clear policy options available (such as agricultural development or ‘formalizing the informal’).
- However, there is no tap that European or African states can turn off to stop migrant flows. Migration is a fact of life with which Europe must contend, despite strong opposition from European electorates. Instead of establishing migrant flows as a negotiating tool,
European states could consider developing legal corridors for migration so that migrants have alternatives to dangerous clandestine routes.
West and North Africa relations in context

The first session traced the historical development of trading routes between North Africa and West Africa through a political-economy lens. Speakers provided an overview of how, due to local, national and international influences, traditional routes have shifted and evolved into criminalized passageways for the illegal smuggling and trafficking of goods and people. Discussions also focused on the impact of the Libyan revolution on the development of Libya’s burgeoning criminal economy, and the rapid growth of human trafficking and illegal migration.

Historical trade relations between Niger and Libya

Emmanuel Grégoire presented an overview of trade relations between North Africa and the Sahel, where goods have traversed the Sahara along historical caravan routes for centuries. Indeed, the cities south of the Sahara developed as gateways to the ports and were central to trade relationships across the Sahara and West Africa. Grégoire argued that trading relations were subject to significant changes during the colonial period as the French, Italian and British colonial powers sought to restrict trade with the colonies of their rivals. This resulted in a depressed relationship between Niger and Libya until Muammar Gaddafi seized power in 1969. From that point on, relations between the two countries fluctuated: under the Gaddafi regime Libya–Niger relations were initially good, but broke off in 1981. Trade was further damaged when the Nigerien army began monitoring trade along border routes, which potentially reduced it. In 1987 there was a thaw in their relationship.

Since this time, the nature of their trade has evolved from a ‘traditional trade’ that was based on a complementarity of moving products, to a system based on smuggling, and finally to a system of criminal trafficking. Geopolitical factors underpin this transition, and the 1990’s would form a critical period of transition. Trade was disrupted between 1991 and 1995 by the Tuareg rebellions in Niger and Mali, and suffered further following the April 1992 embargo between Libya and the international community in the fallout of the Lockerbie bombing.

Trans-Saharan trade towards the north historically had several components, in particular in livestock and manufactured products from Nigeria. Traffic in the other direction focussed on goods that were subsidized in Algeria and, to a lesser extent, Libya. These goods included semolina, wheat flour and fuel. While formalized trade was depressed in the 1990’s as a result of the geopolitical factors mentioned earlier, a huge contraband trade in cigarettes developed, in which senior figures in the Nigériens and Algerian governments were involved. And, by the end of the decade, it had become clear that trucks carrying contraband tobacco were also carrying small quantities of drugs. By the mid-2000’s, a criminal economy had developed, taking advantage of the poor nature of frontiers and the weakness of institutions in the relevant countries. With this development of drug trafficking, there was also a growth in arms and ammunition traffic, which was accelerated by the outbreak of civil war in Libya in 2011.

The impact of the Libyan revolution on trade between Niger and Libya

The outbreak of the Libyan civil war and subsequent overthrow of Gaddafi had a significant impact on trade. At first Niger benefitted, as it was able to cheaply import trucks, equipment, food and manufactured goods. On the export side, however, trade was depressed. There was a drop in the flow of livestock and the cigarette business was badly squeezed.

Drug traffic has continued but at a reduced level, due to operations of the French and Nigérien armies controlling the Salvador Pass, a key route. Since 2014, the city of Agadez has been exporting gold to Libya as well. In the past three years, the Sahara has been experiencing a gold rush in artisanal gold-digging. Large Libyan business interests are involved both in the production and trade of gold.
Patterns of illicit economic activities and organized crime in Libya

Fiona Mangan discussed the deep impact that the civil war and subsequent overthrow of Gaddafi had on the development of Libya’s shadow economy. Under the Gaddafi regime, the system of illicit trade was in fact tightly controlled. Operation of such routes was a concession provided to favoured families, tribes and groups, and could be turned on or off, as part of Gaddafi’s system of divide and rule.

The fall of the regime therefore led to a shift from ‘state-endorsed’ illicit activities to open competition over smuggling routes and resources. In 2013 and 2014, there was a proliferation of new actors who had loosened the grip of Gaddafi loyalists on certain routes and commodities. Some described this as a democratization of smuggling, and the process was involved in the narrative of the pro- and anti-Gaddafi conflicts, but in some cases, these activities were more about the control of resources.

This competition has contributed to the continuation of the conflict, undercutting the state-building process by incentivizing certain groups to keep the Libyan state weak in order to protect their interests. The increasingly competitive market for protection is a key inhibitor of state consolidation. Yet, on the other hand, the criminal economy is one of few things knitting the state together, through two interconnected criminal economies: the urban markets and staging points; and the struggle for control over smuggling and trafficking routes on the periphery.

Mangan presented the findings of a study conducted in Libya between 2012 and 2014. Research pointed to a developing hierarchy of smuggled goods:

- **Commodities:** The illicit trade in commodities, encouraged by the collapse of state subsidies, is a common income-supplementing activity for many, especially those living in the border regions. There are also active markets for second-hand vehicles, fuel and alcohol together with significant abuse of prescription medications, as well as expired and counterfeit medications, conducted with the collusion of pharmacists in Libya.

- **Migrants:** In Libya, the two push factors of migration are lack of economic opportunity and political instability. The smuggling of migrants is highly organized, with smugglers profiting greatly and migrants vulnerable to extortion and abuse. Importantly, people trafficking and smuggling, and trafficking of illicit goods intersect in some ways, for example, in cases where migrants may pay for their transit by smuggling drugs.

- **Drugs:** Unlike commodity smuggling or migrant smuggling, the trade in illicit drugs was much more tightly controlled by specific armed groups. The region is a transit point for hashish, heroin and cocaine, with a small market for local consumption and highly sophisticated trafficking operations. After the 2011 revolution, there has been a diversification into methamphetamines. There have been some cocaine seizures, with occasional larger amounts seized, however, there is a very low level of drug identification skills among authorities.

- **Weapons:** Following the revolution, the trade in weapons has boomed and expanded with identifications of Libyan weapons from Gaddafi stockpiles deep into sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to 2011, Libyan traffickers were not armed, and they had a close relationship with the state, in contrast, at present the weapons market is proliferating together with the now developed protection economy.

Migration and the proliferation of human trafficking

The movement of people in West and North Africa is not a new development. In the 1980s, the existing flow of trade expanded to become a flow of migrants seeking labour. Libya became a major destination for migrant labour and remittances from there were a significant source of income for families of migrants in their home countries. In 2011, 260,000 Nigeriens returned from Libya, according to Peter Tinti, which means that this flow of remittances has been reduced and that there is a need to find employment for
returnees. Emmanuel Grégoire asserted that it was only in the 2000s that some of these migrants began to think of Europe as their final objective.

Othman Belbeisi, the country representative for Libya at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), presented data on the development of the so-called Central Mediterranean route, which has become the principal route of transit for illegal migration to the EU. In 2016, 181,459 illegal crossings into the EU were recorded, an increase of 18 per cent since 2015. It 2012, the reported figure was 15,151. The Central Mediterranean route is deadly, with 2,150 reported deaths between Libya and Italy in 2017, and 10,034 migrants being rescued off the coast of Libya. In 2017, 10,034 migrants had been rescued off the coast of Libya and, there had been 85,183 arrivals in Italy as of 3 July 2017.

The IOM has identified 351,382 migrants within Libya, of which 90 per cent are adults. There has been an increase in unaccompanied minors, as well as an increase in the number of female migrants who transit through the country (13 per cent of adult migrants in Libya). The main nationalities of migrants include Nigerien, Egyptian and Chadian. Recently there has been an increase in the numbers arriving from Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Morocco and Bangladesh, and a decrease in the number of Somali arrivals.

When discussing migration, there is often a focus on the experiences of migrants en route, rather than the motivations or driving factors. The IOM found that 93 per cent had left their home countries for economic reasons, with 5 per cent having left because of war, conflict, insecurity or political reasons. Of those questioned, 70 per cent had been unemployed prior to their departure. IOM’s research also showed that 23 per cent considered returning to their countries of origin, 35 per cent expressed a desire to stay longer than 12 months and 32 per cent did not consider staying longer than six months.

Migrant smuggling routes cross different countries and 27.3 per cent of migrants spend six months to one year in transit. During this period they are vulnerable to multiple dangers and risks including poor health and nutrition, physical abuse, criminality (e.g. road bandits on the Agadez–Dirkou road), minefields (present in Libya), and the threat of torture and abuse. Belbeisi said that many migrants have reported suffering more than one type of exploitation, including: being held against their will (76 per cent); forced labour (36 per cent); being forced to work without payment (49 per cent); forced marriage (4 per cent); physical violence (72 per cent); sexual violence (26 per cent); cash for body parts (1.75 per cent) and the removal of body parts (1.5 per cent).

An approach restricted to border control is ineffective, as smugglers simply shift their routes. For example, the increased French presence at Madama may have led to a decrease in the flows from Niger to Libya, and increasing numbers travelling through Algeria. Belbeisi concluded by emphasizing the urgent need for initiatives that address the root causes of migration and smuggling. Those involved in the smuggling of migrants are members of communities that need alternative options for economic activity, he said. This is discussed in more detail later in this summary.
The cases of Agadez and Sebha

Following a discussion of developments in the political economy of Sahel–North Africa relations in the opening session, the second and third sessions focused on case studies of Agadez and Sebha, in northern Niger and southern Libya, respectively, which form key transit hubs of the Central Mediterranean route. This section of the summary restructures the discussion to present a comparative analysis of the challenges faced in Agadez and Sebha. The second and third sessions sought to explore the local dynamics that underpin economic activity in these areas. The discussion illustrated the commonalities between the two areas: both are cities with weak ties to central governments that are unable to exert full control over them; and, both local economies are driven by illicit activity and offer few alternative forms of livelihoods to citizens. On the other hand, there are clear differences in the respective security situations, the capacities of the state and the scale of the economic and environmental challenges.

Governance challenges

Paul Melly observed that West Africa’s significant political and development progress since independence will be challenged by unparalleled development and security challenges. These challenges are exemplified in Agadez, where regional security issues stemming from the mobility of militant groups and terrorist organizations, high pressures of climate change impacts and population growth converge. There was agreement that these challenges are more widely representative of the root causes of migration and involvement in illicit activities, and are long-term concerns that require attention from national policy makers and the international community. In the 1980s and 1990s, noted Peter Tinti, the government of Mali was struggling to cope with the issue of smuggling and rebellions in the north of the country. The solution was to make a deal with local elites, which meant that various rebel leaders were appointed to official positions in order to decentralize power. This approach engendered patronage networks instead of achieving decentralization. The March 2012 coup in Mali and ensuing capture of key northern cities by rebels and, subsequently, Islamists, proved the inefficacy of this solution and brings us to an understanding of how fragile Niger is.

Libya meanwhile remains mired in conflict. Two competing governments are struggling to exert authority and a vast array of actors is fighting for control over territory. Claudia Gazzini noted that Libya’s south, known as the Fezzan, has a depressed local economy. While Libya has the resources to stimulate the economy of Fezzan, the national economic and financial institutions that could do so are largely paralysed. A political agreement to restore central authority to the country appears some distance away, with significant barriers to creating a unified security sector.

Illicit trade and human trafficking

Participants discussed the trade in illicit goods and the trafficking of migrants for which Agadez and Sebha have become central hubs. Migrant smuggling, in particular, has boomed in recent years with prices for passage to different parts of Libya (from northern Niger) varying between $100–500 per person. Fuel smuggling remains a prominent and lucrative activity with Algeria, Chad and Niger being among the destination countries for Libyan fuel. In addition, drugs, stolen equipment, weapons, alcohol and, more recently, methamphetamine produced in West Africa pass through Agadez on their way to markets in North Africa and Europe.

As already noted, the movement of people in the region is not a new development, yet one of the key developments of recent years is that migrants who previously entered Libya to work no longer have the same employment opportunities, while the devaluation of the Libyan dinar also means it is a less lucrative option. Many now look towards Europe for such opportunities in greater numbers.
For many migrants, Agadez is where their journey with smugglers begins. As most migrants are nationals of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) this means that they can travel to Niger without a visa. Smugglers facilitate their journey to the south of Libya, and then on to the Libyan coastal cities. It is only when they cross the Libyan border that there is a visa requirement.

Peter Tinti emphasized that in Agadez the local population does not see a clear separation between the formal and informal economies. The smuggling of migrants is a type of trade that happens openly because it was not illegal prior to the anti-smuggling law introduced in Niger in 2015; the people being smuggled are nationals of ECOWAS member states and are therefore free to travel within ECOWAS. Locals thus complain that the anti-smuggling law suddenly made normal activities a crime, which is viewed as a result of external influence rather than in the interests of the Nigerien state or population. While this has had a negative effect on the economic life of the region, it has not been effective in terms of limiting trafficking, because smuggling networks simply adapt their routes and methods in a more clandestine way.

Human trafficking and smuggling via Sebha has intensified, particularly since 2013. The fall of the Gaddafi regime saw the decentralization of human trafficking and smuggling, which prior to 2011 was controlled (to some extent) by the government. From 2012, the militias that had access to assets such as airports and political power became more nervous and started competing with each other and arming themselves, which became a driver for militant groups to traffic more heavily. Despite this, the experience of migrants smuggled through Libya has not changed significantly since the revolution. Changes started to take place only after the international community – the European Union in particular – started focusing on disrupting smuggling in the Western coastal cities. The growth in scale of trafficking in Libya has been aided by logistical advantages: tarmac roads can be used (unlike during Gaddafi regime) in daylight and migrant warehouses (makhzens) have now been situated close to urban areas, whereas they were previously hidden. Numbers of migrants didn’t jump from 60,000 in 2013 to 170,000 in 2014 because the Italian government launched protection at sea, rather, it was because of civil war and the transformations referenced above taking place. There was broad agreement that it is difficult to stem the flow of trafficking and tackle issues affecting Sebha and southern Libya without first addressing economic concerns and the problem of stabilizing the central government.

Security

Local conflicts in Sebha

Conflict in Sebha and the broader south west of Libya’s Fezzan area is inextricably linked to competition for resources and control of trading routes. Claudia Gazzini of International Crisis Group described three main axes of local conflict between differing factions: Tebu versus Awlad Suleiman; Qadhadfa versus Awlad Suleiman; and, Tebu versus Tuareg. None of these conflicts is currently active, but peace remains precarious. Speakers emphasized that it is important to take into consideration the splits within different groups and to understand their complexity. Considering them as homogenous is an oversimplification and there have been numerous examples of community splits over stances in both local and national conflicts.

Rebecca Murray explored the development of tribal conflict following the revolution, particularly between the Tebu and Tuareg, whose historic ‘midi-midi’ agreement collapsed as the Tebu sought to expand their territory to control smuggling routes. Murray detailed the propaganda of the tribes. The Tebu denounced the Tuareg as being terrorists from Mali, and alleged al-Qaeda links. The Tuareg presented the Tebu as foreigners. A peace deal brokered by Qatar continues to hold, but is contentious. Money promised to both sides by the Gulf state has not materialized.
In Sebha, local elders brokered a solution to the fighting. Yet, the settlement has been undermined by the lack of support from the security forces. The Misratan Third Force, despatched to oversee the peace, was criticized for taking sides in local battles. Its ouster in 2017 by forces aligned to the so-called Libyan National Army of General Khalifa Haftar has shifted the military balance in the south. Gazzini said that her local interviews indicated that around 60 per cent of those she interviewed were supportive of Haftar, but that the issue continues to divide the local populations. In the area stability remains fragile and there continues to be a significant risk of a further round of violence and confrontation.

Salafist movements in Niger

Jihadist groups moving in the Agadez region are currently keeping a lower profile because of French and Nigerien military efforts, which have become more intense in recent years. In the Agadez session, Aoife McCullough of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) presented findings of a research project aimed at understanding trajectories of radicalization (defined as beliefs that defy mainstream political views) in Niger. Her findings indicated that Agadez’s sense of alienation and disenfranchisement with the central government are important drivers of support for Sharia law and Tuareg independence. Sharia was seen as a utopian system that would overcome the corruption and foreign influence that undermines the Niamey government. Indeed, attempts by the Niger government to clamp down on Agadez’s illicit economy were seen as discriminatory acts against the local population and met with derision.

Environment and demography

Niger and Libya are both affected by the expansion of the Sahara, yet the environmental challenges faced by Niger are particularly acute. Paul Melly noted that Niger is one of the countries most impacted by the effects of climate change. In addition, Niger has a high population growth rate, of some 4 per cent per year, with an average of 6.7 children per mother. Contrary to popular perceptions, the Sahel is often very densely populated, said Melly, who noted that the agricultural tools being used are not keeping up with population growth.

Livelihoods

There was broad agreement that the lack of economic opportunities, particularly among the youth, is a key motivating factor for locals’ involvement in illicit activities. The illicit economy plays a critical role in providing livelihoods for locals in Sebha and Agadez. Both areas suffer from a dearth of access to legitimate employment. In Niger, the introduction of laws that criminalize smuggling, a result of international pressure to curb smuggling and migration, has reduced income-generating opportunities for locals even further. Smugglers are aggrieved by the loss of livelihood, which they see as taken by the state and foreign bodies. There is a fear that young, unemployed men in the city might be drawn to Jihadist groups in search of livelihoods.

In Sebha, many Tebu and Tuareg youths who had been studying at university in Sebha or Tripoli, were forced to abandon their education after conflicts in Libya intensified. In the meantime, the job market deteriorated and young people turned to smuggling because there is little left in terms of employment in the formal economy and personal development. This path is very attractive because of the large financial rewards involved.

In the discussion over Agadez, there was broad agreement that smuggling has reshaped not only the economy of the city but that of the entire region, as it provides income for locals when job opportunities offered by the formal sector are scarce. Efforts to disrupt this informal economy may cause instability. An economic boom followed by an economic slowdown (as a result of government regulations and
international pressure to limit smuggling) would be likely to have significant foreseen and unforeseen negative effects, particularly in the case of interventions by a foreign body.

In addition, Belbeisi presented findings from an IOM labour market survey of the Libyan cities of Sebha and Al-Qatrun. Both cities are perceived to suffer from a decline in work opportunities, with most fields of work seen as saturated and difficult to access. There is a widespread state of ‘underemployment’ or unstable employment, especially among young people. The majority of women work in the public sector (especially in education or the health sector), although this sector is not considered to offer productive or long-term employment in the current context. Murray noted that, in Ubari, after a failed computer lab project in 2013, there is little to engage young people. Belbeisi argued that a key challenge is to draw young people away from informal economic activities and to attract young people and women to ‘dynamic’ sectors (business, skilled trades and agriculture), where many positions are currently filled by foreign labour due to the perceived lack of interest among Libyans.

The discovery of artisanal gold in Agadez in 2014 has, however, boosted the regional economy. Grégoire said that between 80,000 and 100,000 people are currently working in gold mining. This new wave of economic activity has not only generated employment but has produced urbanization in desert areas. This has also, to some extent, filled the gaps left by the decrease in opportunities for work in southern Libya. However, as Aoife McCullough warned, caution must be applied when arguing that mining jobs might distract people from migration and involvement with extremist movements. Gold mining provides unregulated low-quality employment, the income from which cannot compare to sums earned through illicit activities.
Appraising the international response

The international community’s emphasis on reducing illegal migration is well known. Yet, it has the effect of producing an emergency-driven response to the migration crisis in the Mediterranean, as though there is a tap that can be turned off to reduce the flow of people, argued Mattia Toaldo. The final session of the workshop sought to appraise international policy towards illegal migration along the Central Mediterranean route, and identify options that need to be examined and weighed as potentially more effective and sustainable policy interventions.

Critical to this discussion is the conundrum of reconciling short-term emergency-based responses with sustainable long-term strategies. The challenge lies in identifying short-term policies that can benefit, rather than hinder longer-term, more sustainable policies. The following points offer a summary of the points raised:

**Beyond a security-based approach**

To date, the international response has focused on security-centred policies of border management. Yet, there was strong agreement among participants that this is ineffective and in many cases counterproductive, as it has served only to make the passage of the migrants more perilous and increase the margins of the smugglers.

The response of the Trump administration has broadly been along the lines of investing more in tackling terrorism instead of focusing resources on development initiatives. Participants questioned this approach and pointed out that development and anti-terrorism are deeply related as most issues stem from underdevelopment, poor governance and grievance. There was strong agreement that migration policy has too much emphasis on the near-term reduction of migration, rather than addressing the root causes of migration and people’s involvement in illicit activities. It was accepted that a political solution, combined with security sector reform is a necessary condition for a sustainable solution to the problems associated with illicit trade in Libya. However, it was also recognized that as Libya is not a source country, policies that tackle the root causes of migration in a context-sensitive way must be directed elsewhere.

**The danger of establishing migration as a negotiating tool**

Tinti and Toaldo both spoke of the dangers of establishing migration policy as a negotiating tool, either through punitive measures such as withholding aid, or incentives such as increased financial support. They argued that such an approach encourages countries such as Niger and Libya to allow flows to increase or decrease as a bargaining chip, as Gaddafi had done previously.

The European approach is transparent. Many Libyans perceive Western countries as simply seeking to make Libya a dumping ground for migrants. Italy’s offer to the southern tribes to give up people smuggling, a critical source of income, in return for the building of cultural centres funded by the Italian government, shows the level of disconnect. Indeed, Italy’s much criticized agreement with the Government of National Accord would see Libya still only able to deal with 30 per cent of migrants, if Libya are able to reach the highest capacity agreed, said Toaldo. Claudia Gazzini highlighted, that until now there has been little support from the international community in tackling local conflicts in Sebha because they do not see the immediate benefit.

**The low-hanging fruit of delivering on economic assistance**

To date, European governments – in France and Germany in particular – have exerted significant pressure on Niger to alter its migration policy. However, as some participants pointed out, little attention has been dedicated to the damaging effect the change is producing in terms of further limiting income-
generating activities for the local population. Indeed, three years ago, many people were concerned because there was no work in Agadez, other than artisanal farming and migrant labour. The fear was that young, unemployed men in Agadez might be drawn to Jihadist groups who could provide a livelihood. Now that an alternative form of informal employment has been found through involvement in human smuggling citizens are being told that they shouldn’t take part, noted Grégoire.

Participants pointed out that there are some clear policy options available to international actors that need to be examined, which could be beneficial to the development of alternative livelihoods, with the caveat that they are unlikely to offer comparable incomes. Gazzini noted that despite the conduct of feasibility studies for the development of mining and agricultural projects in the south of Libya, little actual progress has been made.

Another suggestion is to reassess the international approach towards informal trade. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently produced a report looking at the idea of ‘formalising the informal’ – rather than suppressing black markets, they would be formalized. The idea is to distinguish between illicit and licit goods, and to crack down on the former while supporting the trade in lawful goods, said Toaldo. A Chatham House report on the Drivers and Consequences of Nigeria’s Unrecorded Trade made recommendations for reforms to foster greater participation in formal channels.

Legal corridors of migration

Nonetheless, Toaldo noted that development aid, will not in itself offer the answer, certainly in the short term. Existing studies of development aid indicate that improvements in education and development can in fact increase migration. Migration is a fact of life that Europe must contend with, despite the hostility of European electorates. In the near term, however, domestic politics in Europe present considerable challenges to a longer-term policy approach.

Toaldo pointed out that people were forced into clandestine actions because of restrictive visa policies of European and other Western countries. Mattia Toaldo suggested that the establishment of legal corridors of migration should be pursued. Recently, there was an attempt to create such corridors for Malian migrants for seasonal jobs in France and Spain, and, although the experiment didn't progress very far, it helped recreate the old tradition of moving to Europe for a few months or years with the option of going back, said Paul Melly. In response, Toaldo noted that the EU can only formulate policy for highly skilled migrants as individual member states hold the powers to decide their own low-skilled migrant policy. Thus, it is the member states that would have to lead on this.

The protection of migrants

Over the course of the day, many noted the human rights violations inflicted on migrants and on communities situated on smuggling routes. Although not the focus of this workshop, this is an issue that the participants argued requires greater focus in security and migration policy.
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