



EGIC
Euro-Gulf
Information
Centre

Euro-Gulf Information Center Event Report

ITALY'S FOREIGN POLICY AND THE RISING CHALLENGES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

On the 13th of September 2017, the Euro-Gulf Information Centre (EGIC) organised its 11th Rome Dialogue, this time on **Italy's Foreign Policy and the Rising Challenges in the Middle East**. Approximately 40 people attended the event, including journalists, analysts, academics, military officials, representatives from diplomatic corps, students and members of the interested public.

The speakers of the event were **Prof. Mitchell Belfer (president of EGIC), Amb. Guido Lenzi (former Ambassador and Professor at the University of Bologna) and Dr. Umberto Profazio (Analyst at the NATO Defence College Foundation)**.

Amb. Lenzi, opened the session talked about Italy's role in the Middle East post-ISIS. **Amb. Lenzi** stated that 'pan Arabism never developed' and that the Arab countries should construct a federalised institutional framework similar to that in Europe. **Amb. Lenzi** continued by stating that different countries were created after the WW I, which had not existed before and, according to **Amb. Lenzi**, the problem was that since the Sykes-Picot agreement and the post-war arrangements, the Arab states in the Middle East have had to grapple with the problem of establishing full-functioning states. **Amb. Lenzi** concluded by saying that recreating state structures in the Middle East is essential and that the reconstruction of an international, pan-Arab cooperation is very important for the region.

Prof. Belfer, the second speaker, stated that many of the foreign policy additives that Italy has been pursuing over the past years reflect European interests. Italy and Europe together face challenges and those challenges have not been made any easier by the many crises coming from the Middle East. **Prof. Belfer** called the Middle East one of the most vulnerable regions in the world, a region that is still going through its 'growing pain' of learning who it is in terms of identity, ideology and the very bases of the state itself. Italy is a very important European actor and, according to **Prof. Belfer**, is representing the frontline of some of the challenges that Europe faces, with immigration as an example. The latest crisis hitting the region, is that involving directly the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The current crisis in the GCC is not the first in the region, but it has had the largest impact on the region and Europe. **Prof. Belfer** refers to the crisis not as the 'Qatar crisis' but as a crisis of the whole Gulf region that affect all the Gulf countries.

As the last speaker of the event, **Dr. Profazio** spoke primarily on Libya, stating that Italy's foreign policy in Libya has not changed much in recent years. According to **Dr. Profazio**, there are two important trends inside the country that could be possible game changers for Libya in the future. One is the perceived convergences between the Prime Minister of the GNA (Government of National Accord), al-Sarraj, and General Khalifa Haftar of the LNA (Libyan National Army). The second factor is the progress of the LNA on the ground in Libya. **Dr. Profazio** also stated that the difficult transition of powers in Italy and the USA weakened the two main supporters of the GNA which led to a more complex environment. As a conclusion, **Dr. Profazio** stated that Libyan factions should negotiate amongst themselves and reject any foreign intervention or military solution.

After the speeches, the event moved on to the interactive part in which the audience could ask questions. The speakers provided detailed and broad answers to the multitude of questions to give an even more in-depth view of the subjects.

The EGIC extends its many thanks to the engaging audience and looks forward to seeing you at our future events and activities.

For more information about this, or any of our other events and activities, please follow us at:

Twitter: [@EGIC](#)

Facebook: [EU-Gulf Information Centre](#)

Instagram: [egic_info](#)

Web: [www.egic.info](#)

email: [info@egic.info](#)