Today’s Libya symbolizes the complexity of the transformations which have been modifying and reshaping the southern shore of the Mediterranean since 2011. The current Libyan transition, which is characterized by institutional fragility and has its own historical, political, and economic specificities is, however, part of major and wider dynamics of change that are related to more than a single Arabic country. The Conference therefore aims to discuss the process of Libyan transition from comparative perspectives.

The structural instability that endangers Libya is the result of power struggles between pre- and post-revolutionary elites, the contrast between which has led the country to an institutional dualism and has caused a growing wave of violence. Therefore the pivotal issue for the current transition is the renewal of the elites and how they can drive the political change. The renewal of the elites may destabilize the situation further, because the marginalization of old elites could drive to armed opposition.

Political instability has facilitated the establishment of jihadist groups within the country. Often their actions are too simplistically related to other cases in the Middle East, but in Libya jihadists have
been favored by ambiguous connections with Islamists. Libyan Islamists have to face a less repressive context in comparison with Tunisia or Egypt and are quite connected with jihadist groups, although they are not very rooted in civil society. This connection hampers stability and raises questions about the capacity of the Islamist movements in orienting the transition to democratic practice. Thus, the Libyan case highlights the nexus between political Islam and the transition to democracy.

The Libyan crisis is further complicated by the predominance of local actors and their territorial fragmentation that highlights the difficulty in reshaping a new national framework. The consequence is a revival or the new emergence of ethnic and sectarian identities that promote centrifugal agendas. This is another pivotal point not only for the Libyan case: the social and political forces which have emerged since the 2011 uprisings have not all been contained through a process of institutional change, but on the contrary very often against the State.

Overlapping the issue of internal dynamics, the international dimension is playing a preeminent role in the Libyan crisis. Since the very beginning, the Libyan uprising distinguished itself not just by the violent evolution of the transition, but also by the military intervention of the international community. Regional powers are financially, militarily, and politically supporting the various factions, contributing both to the further internationalization of the crisis and the galvanization of internal conflicts. The worsening of the conflict is now limiting the maneuvering room of international diplomacy to the advantage of the hypothesis for a new international military intervention.

Another unavoidable issue in order to study the Libyan crisis is that of international migration, involving migrants either crossing Libya or being directed to the country looking for work. International migration is closely linked to the logics and dynamics of the Libyan Rentier state and Libyan foreign politics. Migration has often been used as a lever by Libya in their negotiations with States located along the Mediterranean migration routes, such as Italy, Malta, and the European Union at large. The war has not dried up the flow. Instead, it has fostered an increasing process of the informalization and criminalization of the different migratory trajectories.
The Conference addresses the Social Sciences as a whole. Special consideration will be given to submissions resulting from field research concerning the Libyan transition’s recent evolutions. Topics may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- elites’ dynamics of change
- reforms and institutional reconfiguration
- local elites and their relations with central politics
- ethnic and cultural minorities and regional identities
- factionalism and subnational belongings
- international actors and dynamics
- migrations to and through Libya, and Libyan diaspora

The deadline for paper submission is April 7th, 2015. Proposals of a maximum 1,000 characters and a short bio should be sent to

Ali Bensaad bensaadali@wanadoo.fr
and
Antonio Morone antmorone@hotmail.com

Scientific Committee

Ali Bensaad (Université de Université d’Aix-Marseille), Anna Baldinetti (Università degli studi di Perugia), Antonio M. Morone (Università degli studi di Pavia), François Dumasy (Ecole Française de Rome), and Olivier Roy (European University Institute).