

Dr Gerasimos Tsourapas (University of Glasgow)

The Libyan Migration State

This project on the “Libyan migration state” sought to engage with the emerging literature on migration states in the Global South (Adamson & Tsourapas 2020), in order to identify the political importance of immigration policymaking in the country. Although Libya historically constitutes one of the major states involved in labour migration and refugee movements in the Middle East, very little is known about the historical evolution of the Libyan migration state; work on Libyan politics rarely discusses issues of cross-border mobility.

The funding provided in the project allowed me to hire a Libyan PhD researcher at the University of Glasgow, who collected an impressive amount of qualitative material on Libyan migration and diaspora politics before and after 2011. At the same time, I was able to draw on BILNAS support in order to collect primary material in the Diplomatic and Historical Archives of the Hellenic Republic in terms of the evolution of Greek-Libyan relations and cross-border mobility from 1951 until the 1980s. I was also able to conduct semi-structured interviews with N=27 Libyans currently residing in Greece, which allowed me to triangulate the findings from the Greek archives and secondary material from Libyan sources.

I am currently working with the PhD student on a research article on the politics of the Libyan migration state, based on the material collected with this grant, which we intend to submit to the *Journal for Libyan Studies* by the end of 2023.

At the same time, I am happy to report that I was able to draw on this grant in order to put forth a more ambitious application for funding last year, which has been successful. I am a co-PI in a team, led by Dr Iosif Kovras (University of Cyprus), that administers an upcoming European Research Council Consolidator Grant “Disappearing Act: Reconstructing the Crime of Disappearances in Times of Political Violence [DISACT]” (2023–28), with a budget of 1.99 million euros. The project includes the recruitment of a post-doctoral research fellow to facilitate data collection on forced disappearances in North Africa (with a focus on Libya; I will be in touch with BILNAS about this in the near future).

I believe this ambitious ERC project will further facilitate the study of contemporary Libya within cutting-edge research on comparative and international migration politics and will allow a broader group of researchers to benefit from its rich migration history – which was one of this project’s key objectives.

I am thankful to BILNAS for enabling this, and I hope to continue and build on this fruitful collaboration.