

# Reforming the Rogue: Lessons from the U.S.-Libya Rapprochement

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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In August 2009, Scottish authorities released Abdel Basset al-Megrahi -- the Libyan terrorist responsible for the deaths of 270 passengers in the 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland. Libya's acceptance of responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing and agreement to pay compensation to the families of victims had been key requirements of the 2003 resumption of U.S.-Libya relations in the wake of that country's dramatic, voluntary surrender of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Although Libya moved quickly to dismantle its nuclear weapons program, leader Muammar Qadhafi has yet to dispose of the country's chemical weapons cache, and he later retracted the initial acceptance of responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing -- instead providing al-Megrahi with a hero's welcome home last August.

The 2003 bilateral agreement underscored Washington's willingness to engage with "rogue" states once they forsake terrorism and WMD. But given Qadhafi's backtracking on key provisions of the arrangement and the persistence of Libyan foreign policy behavior in direct opposition to U.S. interests, many are asking how much fundamental change has occurred in Tripoli. In this Policy Focus, Middle East expert Dana Moss examines the nearly seven-year-old U.S.-Libya rapprochement in detail. Evaluating whether the two sides have each achieved what they sought in the context of renewed ties, she also explores what strategic lessons U.S. policymakers might draw from Libya in dealing with other difficult regional actors such as Syria and Iran.

Regrettably, Moss concludes, the notion that the dramatic reset of U.S.-Libya relations established a successful model for persuading other hardline states to change course falls short. Instead, today's Libya may serve to demonstrate the problems America will face as it pursues diplomatic engagement with rogue regimes.

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