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Netherlands Institute of International Relations

Revolution and its discontents: state, factions and violence in the new Libya

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CRU Report

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Executive summary

The revolution that toppled the regime of Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi has generated in its wake a state of affairs in Libya that defies simple analysis and prescription. There were promising signs of a transition away from authoritarian rule towards democracy and broad political participation, epitomized by the elections of 2012 and the green shoots in civil society; the sense of optimism, however, has been darkened by the cloud cast by continuing violence and instability. Although rich in energy reserves and emerging political voices, **Libya has suffered a meltdown in its security apparatus, a spillover of conflict and arms into nearby countries, and a spate of attacks by Islamist extremists**. Far from acting with confidence, the new political establishment seems to be hobbled by the risks posed by new cleavages and recalcitrant spoilers.

As the international community watches with concern the extended and bloody aftermath of the Arab Spring, **Libya has come to exemplify the tortuous route out of dictatorship in North Africa**. Establishing how donors and multilateral agencies might best help in this process requires much more than a standard set of guidelines to political transition. Instead, this paper illustrates the need to base strategy on a deep, context-specific understanding of different political and armed groups, the interests that motivate them, and the ways in which they might differ or agree around efforts to strengthen the state and a coherent security system. Rooting the analysis in history and the new political economy of Libya, **the report points to the ways in which donor strategy may be devised so as to avoid the lure of quick solutions** that might estrange powerful groups and deepen the country's instability.

Three elements stand out as crucial to plotting a successful transition. **A brief history of the country's post-colonial rule underlines the difficulty of regarding Libya as anything like a conventional state**. Qadhafi's idiosyncratic experiments in mass participation, whereby the rhetoric of total democracy papered over an informal system of rule by a cabal of leaders, depended on oil-funded patronage and brutal repression to ensure public quiescence. The revolution dispensed with this system and its leadership, but at the cost of building from scratch the bases of statehood: a structure of unitary authority and an inclusive political settlement.

These challenges of state-building were in turn greatly complicated by the second landmark feature of the Libyan transition. **Out of Qadhafi's spurious rule of the masses, the revolution spawned a virulent fragmentation of distinct groups and interests**. These constituencies – of tribes, cities, regions and various Islamist tendencies – now form the raw matter of Libyan political life, brought together in a

General National Congress (GNC) that is preponderantly shaped by small parties and non-party politicians.

It is once again towards patronage that the new Libyan rulers have turned in order to ensure political stability, both by milking the oil and gas sector and through efforts to include all the main groups in ministerial appointments. **This political chess game, however, is not always responsive to the pent-up grievances** and ambitions of those who brought the old regime to heel. Efforts to exclude all left-overs from the Qadhafi era through the Political Isolation Law, approved in May 2013 under duress from armed groups, greatly complicate the efforts to build an inclusive system. **The hardline revolutionaries, aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood, now appear to have achieved a fragile and contested command over the Libyan state**. The recent oil stoppage suggests that estranged armed factions, such as brigades from Zintan and the federalist movement, may be looking to protection rackets as the only means to get what they want from the state.

In the new Libyan state's favour, however, it would appear that **many of these groups shift their shape and affiliations in response to the tide of events**. Many individuals, meanwhile, are loyal to a broad set of different affinities, whether of place, tribe, region or religious tendency; this may help reduce the risk of radical polarization across the Libyan political spectrum, if managed adeptly by the country's rulers.

But it is the third element of the transition that poses the most acute and immediate headaches for the government and the international community. Fragmentation in the wake of revolution did not just scatter the political spectrum. It also truncated the legitimacy and reach of the nation's security forces, which were substituted by the presence of hundreds of revolutionary armed groups and other militia. Over time, and in spite of endeavours to integrate these factions into a vertical security system, **the use of territorial power achieved through the barrel of a gun has become an essential part of Libya's political eco-system**.

The report argues that it is now possible to speak of not just of revolutionary brigades in places such as Misrata and Benghazi, but of armed pressure groups linked to political groupings. **Factional militia have sought control over smuggling routes, espoused Jihadist ideology, carried out brutal terrorist attacks, and gunned down civilian protesters.** Evidence points to growing connections with transnational Islamist extremism, largely in the form of links to Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its schisms – the feared groups that in 2012 seized control over northern Mali, and have since dispersed across the region.

By outlining the identities and motives of all the main protagonists in modern Libya, from the peaceful politicians of the GNC to the allies of the grizzled Jihadist warrior Mokhtar Belmokhtar, **this paper aims to provide an overview of an extremely variegated and turbulent polity**. But it also underlines the need to implement policies that respect the difficult balancing act required to achieve the consolidation of an inclusive and unitary state.

Yet the imperative of assuaging Libya's multiple interest and pressure groups means that patronage and co-option will remain crucial parts of the state-building process over the medium term. Current government strategies that seek to exclude certain groups and individuals from power could prove to be highly combustible policies. Moreover, **sudden policy lurches towards a united security or military force that do not respect the underlying grievances and demands of armed militia, or do not connect to more holistic approaches to economic and social development in affected regions, run the risk of alienating potential spoilers**. Such reforms might also trigger spikes in violence unless great care is taken to ensure that national security policy, whether involving border control or counter-terrorism, is not in fact manipulated by powerful militias so as to serve their own requirements. Factional infighting within what are supposed to be national security or military forces will not serve Libya any better than the current deadlock.

Introduction

The speed and success of Libya's revolution surprised many observers of the Arab revolts. But the long and troubled aftermath of the uprising that toppled General Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi after a short war has not caused anything like the same astonishment. Long isolated from the outside world as a result of the regime's revolutionary shocks of the 1970s, its anti-Western dogma in the 1980s, and the international sanctions that were consequently applied until the mid-2000s, the Libyan people had enjoyed extremely little experience of civil society, political debate or economic freedom at the time of their liberation. The list of resentments that were harboured against Qadhafi, his family and his clans was lengthy, and the punitive approach adopted by many communities against members of the old regime has been understandable. Yet the issue of how to go about recomposing a society that had never enjoyed a single free election nor anything approaching the rule of law has posed innumerable problems.

As a result, the condition of Libya at present defies simple analysis. A surface review of the syndromes of transition would find multiple sources of pessimism: terrorist attacks on diplomatic targets, weapons smuggling to war zones in Syria and Mali, armed groups corrupting oil pipelines, and a political system that appears increasingly vulnerable to factional takeover of the state-building process. More generous readings of events since 2011 might stress the quick post-revolution recovery of oil and gas production, essential to state revenues, as well as the peaceful process culminating in elections to the General National Congress in 2012, with a turnout of 62 per cent. But neither of these summary verdicts on Libya's post-revolutionary success or failure provides anything but a partial and refracted view of a far more complex reality. Neither account probes far into Libya's political history. Nor do these accounts seek to elucidate the real meanings and experiences of state, democracy and violence in a country that for decades has stood at one remove from the rest of world.

Understanding these complexities is essential, however, if the international community is to successfully focus its assistance on the much-anticipated democratic transition. Increasingly, multilateral agencies and bilateral donors are starting to (re-)engage with the transition process: the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the Border Assistance Mission of the European Union (EUBAM) are well-known markers of international engagement with the country, while bilateral support is exemplified by the more targeted assistance in the fields of security, rule of law and governance provided by countries including the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. It

behoves these various actors to be fully cognizant of the fact that their missions to help secure Libya's borders and build a uniform security sector, for example, or their programmes aimed at strengthening national dialogue and building government capacity, all intersect with the volatile political landscape that is now emerging in the country. As a consequence, there is the constant risk that neutral programme objectives will be captured to serve factional elite gain.

To enable an adequate assessment of these unintended spin-offs, this paper aims to place the challenges and threats to Libya's transition within the broader frame of political economy. In so doing, it seeks out the ways that political actors – understood in the widest term possible so as to include communities, parliamentarians, armed groups and Islamist extremists – define their interests and go about achieving their objectives. It draws on political history to find out how Libyans are accustomed to using power and taking decisions; studies the ways interest groups have coalesced in the revolutionary aftermath; and seeks to interpret violence and crime not merely as sociopathic expressions, but as part of the dynamics of political competition in an era of national turbulence.

State, politics and violence

At the heart of the analysis lies an exploration of three crucial dimensions of Libyan public life. In each case, Qadhafi's demise has marked a watershed, and brought an end to an uninterrupted post-colonial period of authoritarian rule; but this does not mean that the ways of the past are no longer relevant. What instead can be witnessed in contemporary Libya is a selective reordering of political and social traditions.

The first rupture is that of the state. Qadhafi's Libya in fact employed a peculiar schizophrenic approach towards authority. Real power operated on an informal basis through a cabal of revolutionaries and a number of tribal leaders. Public institutions, meanwhile, were weak and toothless. Yet at the same time, the state became omnipresent through its tactical deployment of oil-based wealth, providing jobs, regulating prices, imports and exports, building infrastructure and doling out public housing. A main objective of Libya's transitional roadmap was to lay the foundation for the sort of public authority that has never existed before in the country: a state that seeks to support policies in the public interest and makes a transparent and rational use of resources.

However, to truly do so it will need to reinvent a second staple feature of politics in Libya: patronage as a means to buy off possible sources of opposition, and consolidate a support base. Rather than shoring up a tyrannical government, patronage is now the glue to hold together coalitions of interest competing for influence over the state-building process. Government posts, tasks in the security sector and public subsidies have all been handed out since late 2011 with these objectives in mind. The result has been a brutal elite contest over the control of government institutions and rent profits. A significant risk is that the Libyan state is becoming nothing more than a clearing house for multiple interest groups and factions vying for resources and control over parts of the national territory or public administration.

Not all coalitions of interests, meanwhile, are open to an inclusive approach. It has become apparent since the start of this year that one coalition in particular – the hardline revolutionary opponents of Qadhafi in alliance with the long-oppressed Muslim Brotherhood – wishes to achieve outright control over the state by excluding all remnants of the previous regime, including the moderate revolutionary camp. The risks, therefore, of a breakdown in the efforts to achieve a certain national consensus around the new state are high. The co-optive approach of the moderate revolutionaries representing vested interests in government has been ousted by a more confrontational and exclusionary hardliner coalition, helped by their alliance with armed groups from revolutionary strongholds and of Islamist origin.

This brings us to the third dimension of analysis: the total fragmentation of security control over the country and its impact on coalition formation in Tripoli. Over a thousand militia units are estimated now to patrol parts of Libya, and efforts to build cohesive security forces under central command have proved to be extremely risky undertakings. Pragmatic deals and buy-outs between political actors and armed groups are consolidating, while this 'co-optive peace' can have serious drawbacks in terms of consolidating state control. Armed groups have become agents of their own interests or those of their political allies, and many are miles away from relinquishing the power and livelihood guaranteed by their weapons. As the dominant political coalition is consolidating its power, it may also prompt marginalized armed groups to link up with extremist factions inside Libya and abroad.

On the basis of these three dimensions, the paper concludes by tracing some of the ways in which Libya's state and society can be expected to evolve in the coming years. All judgements in this respect are transient and imperfect – all the more so for a country that is now exposed to currents of thought and conflict emerging from other Arab lands. But the trends identified still offer a useful guide to the likely trade-offs and risks of the future. And, crucially, they might also help to further guide the work of donors and multilateral agencies seeking to ground their programmes for state- and peace-building in Libya on an understanding of the real dangers of conflict and instability, rather than on prefabricated models of change and reform.

Structure of the paper

The paper starts in Chapter 2 by exploring the historical legacy of Libya's previous regimes; most importantly its colonial period of rule, its initial experience of monarchical government, and the ensuing regime of the 'masses' led by Qadhafi for 42 years until its remarkably fast and bloody unravelling. This overview provides an essential background to the analysis of today's political economy, which is addressed in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 explores the contours of the emerging Libyan state by identifying three post-revolution critical events – or 'shocks' – that have prompted coalition formation and shaped the current political landscape. The chapter analyses the workings of factionalized governance, and its consequences for Libya's newly created state institutions. Subsequently, Chapter 4 explores in-depth how violence and armed groups are increasingly used as part of the routines of political competition, and sheds light on the threats and challenges posed by the proliferation, co-option and exclusion of non-state

(or quasi-state) armed groups. Lastly, the concluding chapter points to a number of approaches for donors wishing to support good governance without imperilling an eminently fragile post-revolutionary settlement.

Libya's recent history and the path to revolution

For much of their history, most Libyans were merely bystanders as affairs unfolded at the national level. A succession of local and foreign rulers shaped a highly authoritarian system that was held together through intricate mechanisms of patronage and cronyism. Throughout the colonial period, the monarchy and the Qadhafi era, the spending and squandering of state resources served to keep a carefully crafted network of regime loyalists in place and ordinary citizens voiceless – all to secure regime survival. For decades, it was 'problematic to even consider Libya's people truly as citizens'.[1]

Libya's natural wealth permitted the emergence of such a system. From the time that significant oil reserves were discovered in 1959, the Sanusi Monarchy and Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi both used the revenues from oil (and later also gas) to practise exclusionary and sometimes far-fetched policies, and to fund the networks of loyalists that kept them in power. Moreover, revenues from natural resources allowed the regimes to provide subsidies and to finance the bloated public sector that kept ordinary Libyans employed and 'silent'. The existence and survival of Qadhafi's *Jamahiriyya* (rule of the masses) relied almost exclusively on the state's capital inflows.[2]

To understand the dilemmas and opportunities of the current political culture in Libya, a thorough understanding of its historical roots is essential. Libya's modern political history explains how the volatile relationship between the centre and the periphery was shaped; how Libyans came to rely on personal connections rather than on formal positions; and why external influence in the country is largely, though not always, rejected.

Prior to the revolution against Qadhafi, Libya's modern political history can broadly be broken down into two parts. *The accidental state* refers to the period of Italian colonial occupation, and the Sanusi Monarchy, in which the United Kingdom of Libya was created out of the three provinces: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan. This was followed by what is perhaps best described as a period of *institutionalized statelessness*, whose onset can be dated from the 1969 military coup and the start of the regime of Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi, which combined extraordinary political experimentation with rather more mundane repression and stifling of debate. This chapter will finish by examining the

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1 Vandewalle, D. 2012. *A Modern History of Libya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1.

2 Vandewalle, D. 1998. *Libya Since Independence: Oil and statebuilding*. London: Cornell University, p. xiii.

circumstances which led to the overthrow of Qadhafi's regime and the inception of the Libyan

The accidental state

Until well into the 20th century, the three provinces of Libya – Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan – shared little common history or physical contact. For centuries, 'Libya's history was a story of regions.'[3] Though Ottoman rule (1551–1911) did bring a level of bureaucratic and military organization to the country, it also allowed local authority structures to act semi-autonomously. Most illustrative of this policy was the emergence of the Sanusiyya movement,[4] a revivalist Islamic movement that established a number of religious lodges and created a rudimentary structure of governance in Cyrenaica by collecting taxes, providing social services to tribes, and maintaining peace in the province. The early form of social, economic and political organization by the Sanusiyya preserved Islamic values and tribalism in the region, and would later 'crystallize into the nucleus of an oppositional movement to the Italian occupation'.[5]

In the early 20th century, when European colonial powers extended their spheres of influence in North Africa, Libya was targeted by the colonial policies of Italy. In 1911, the three provinces were invaded by Rome, which signed a secret agreement with the Ottomans. Native Libyans were completely sidelined by the Italian colonizers, in a brutal period of national history that remains a deeply ingrained part of collective memory.[6] For Libyans, the 'first encounter with the mechanisms of a modern state was that of an authoritarian and domineering administration that could be used, seemingly unchecked, to subjugate and often dispossess them'.[7]

During the Second World War, Fascist Italy lost control over Libya to the British, and by the late 1940s conflicting visions of post-colonial Libya had emerged. Cyrenaica and Tripolitania in particular had different outlooks on unity. Sayyid Idriss, the grandson of the Grand Sanusi, preferred independence for the already autonomous Sanusi Emirate in the East, whereas Tripolitanians declared themselves in favour of unity, largely under the influence of the Arab nationalism that swept the region at the time. After years of international negotiations, internal wrangling, and mediation by the United Nations, Libya

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3 The East (Cyrenaica) is known for its tightly preserved tribal structures, its orientation towards Egypt and its socially and religiously conservative population. The West (Tripolitania) had a more worldly and cosmopolitan approached to life, oriented towards the Mediterranean. The South (Fezzan) is Libya's sparsely populated hinterland, inhabited by the Tuareg, Tebu and their caravans. These regions are separated by vast distances, and overland travel between them is to this day arduous. Pargeter, A. 2012. *Libya. The rise and fall of Qaddafi*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 13.

4 Its founder was Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi, also known as the Grand Sanusi. His teachings combined Islamic orthodoxy and Sufism (a form of Islamic mysticism). St. John, R.B. 2012 . *Libya: From Colony to Revolution*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, p. 47.

5 Pargeter, op. cit., p. 19.

6 The Italian *riconquista* met with heavy resistance from Libyans. Umar al-Mokhtar, the Sanusi sheikh who led the Eastern resistance guerrilla against Italian occupation, is still considered one of Libya's great icons of national liberation. Al-Mukhtar's image also frequently popped up during the 2011 uprising.

7 Vandewalle 2012, op. cit., p. 34.

achieved independence in 1951. It became a federal state under a constitutional monarch: King Idriss al-Sanusi.[8]

Unlike the long independence struggles of other Arab states, Libya's unity and independence was externally dictated by Great Power interests, with only a 'low level of national consciousness or national identity'.[9] Therefore, to exert power over the country, King Idriss needed to surround himself with not onlythe leaders of powerful tribes in Cyrenaica such as the Obeidat and the Al-Awaqir, but also important commercial figures from Tripolitania.[10] The King's royal office, the *Diwan*, represented the centre of authority and the principal mechanism for patronage. Powerful local families consolidated their authority chiefly through their links to the *Diwan*, for example through intermarriage.[11]

Although the United Kingdom of Libya brought together the three provinces under one flag, Libyans had very little experience in running a centralized administration. The Italians had left Libya with considerable infrastructure, but few administrative or bureaucratic institutions. The colonizers had also deliberately prevented the emergence of a 'politically active [Libyan] citizenry'.[12] To mark a breach with the past, King Idriss decided to exclude the emblems of this colonial past from influential positions in the new state. Urban elites that had engaged with the colonizer were banned from the bureaucracy and the local economy. Their space was filled by the members of the *Diwan* and its circle of loyalists, in particular many of Cyrenaica's 'elites and powerful families, [that] had found their way into the Council of Ministers and the diplomatic corps'.[13] As all decision-making was in the hands of the *Diwan* and the top bureaucracy, at the local level, apart from small groups of nationalists in Tripolitania, most Libyans felt little enthusiasm for the King and his policies. Instead, ordinary people 'overwhelmingly identified themselves with family, tribe or region',[14] as well as with the Islamic community of believers. The early independence years thus came to be characterized by a combination of weak institutions, political and economic exclusion of colonial 'collaborators', and a weak national identity.

Much changed for Libya when large reserves of high-quality oil were discovered in 1959.[15] Foreign oil companies were invited to the country, and the central state now

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8 King Idriss was the grandson of the Grand Sanusi, the founder of the Sanusiyya movement. From 1920 onwards, Idriss was the Emir of the Sanusi Order in Benghazi and Tripoli. During World War II, he strategically allied with the British, who rewarded him with the throne after the unification of Libya.
9 St. John, op. cit., p. 109.
10 Pargeter, op. cit., p. 39.
11 St. John, op. cit., p. 112.
12 Ibid., p. 81.
13 Ibid., p. 50.
14 Vandewalle 2012, op. cit., p. 41.
15 Libya has the largest proven oil reserves in Africa (an estimated 47.1 billion barrels as of January 2012). In the first decade of production, Libya followed a volume-oriented instead of a price-oriented policy, pushing production to 3 million barrels per day (bpd) in 1969. Until 2011, production of crude oil ranged between 1.4 and 1.8 million bpd and production of natural gas was around 0.2 million bpd. Until 2011 hydrocarbons accounted for, on average, more than 70% of GDP, more than 95% of exports, and roughly 90% of government revenue. United States Energy Information Administration. 2012. *Country Analysis Brief Libya*.

enjoyed a steady income. The most important ministries, in charge of allocating oil revenues, were all headed by supporters of the King and Tripolitanian technocrats, and sources of traditional authority were converted into monetary value. 'Being an influential tribal leader – particularly in Cyrenaica – or belonging to one of the influential families, the royal *Diwan*, or the Sanusi family literally became a paying proposition as these individuals effectively controlled the economic bureaucracy.'[16] Indeed, Libya's oil wealth strengthened the authority of the monarchy and gave a tremendous boost to the system of state patronage. By the end of the 1960s, the monarchy was tainted by accusations of elitism, corruption, intrigue, patronage and self-enrichment. As on the eve of the 2011 revolution, resentment among ordinary Libyans against the monarchy built rapidly and paved the way for another radical breach in the country's politics.

Institutionalized statelessness

In the late 1960s, a group of young army officers from lower-class, rural backgrounds and minor tribes became the 'articulation of the desire for change felt by so many Libyans'.[17] The leadership of this Free Unionist Movement, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), staged a military coup in 1969 against the monarchy. The speed with which they overthrew King Idriss reflected just how inert and disconnected from popular sentiments the monarchy had become. Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi, then aged 27, immediately became the charismatic leader of the RCC and commander-in-chief of the new regime.

Qadhafi had a particular vision for Libya. In a dramatic turn, he announced that the Libyan masses were to govern themselves (*Jamahiriyya*).[18] Instigating the People's Revolution and the notion of 'People Power' (*sult al-sha'b*), which put control directly in the hands of the 'masses', was Qadhafi's answer to widespread political apathy in Libya. In 1975, Qadhafi codified his 'Third Universal Theory' (an alternative to capitalism and Marxism) in the *Green Book*. According to his theory, Qadhafi himself would never be head of state; instead he was named the Guide of the Revolution, or Brother Leader. This was because the Revolution dictated that Libya would be a stateless society, without a president or a king. Despite the concept of statelessness, Qadhafi 'unleashed over Libya a wave of policies that put the state in charge of all economic and social activity, while simultaneously trying to make the state irrelevant as a focus for political identity'.[19] Moreover, in spite of the Revolution's appeals to bottom-up mobilization, many Libyans continued to express little interest in their national political affairs.

Washington DC: US EIA; International Monetary Fund. 2012. *Libya Beyond the Revolution: Challenges and Opportunities*. Washington DC: IMF, p. 2.

16 Vandewalle 2012, op. cit., p. 68.

17 Pargeter, op. cit., p. 59.

18 The country's official name was changed into *Al-Jamahiriyya al-Arabiyya al-Libiyya al-Sha'biyya al-Ishtirakiyya* (the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriyya). Al-Qadhafi, Mu'ammar. 1999. *Al-Kitab al-Akhdar* [the Green Book, 3rd edition]. Tripoli: World Center for the Study and Research of the Green Book.

19 Vandewalle 2012, op. cit., p. 98.

The representative bodies for the masses, the General People's Congress and the local committees, were never truly in charge.[20] From the outset of his rule, Qadhafi remained in complete control over the country – in essence Qadhafi *was* the Jamahiriyya. Surrounded by his family, and an entourage of fellow revolutionaries and members of loyalist tribes,[21] Qadhafi took all the key decisions. The Brother Leader effectively dislodged the monarchy's old elites and strategically placed individuals from his inner circle in key security and military positions, such as in the much-feared Revolutionary Committees.[22] These committees were given the task of 'safeguarding the revolution', but also came to control the media and the police system as well as various companies, and was responsible for the culture of intimidation and fear that took hold of Libya.

The Revolutionary Committees (*lijan al-thawriyya*) also established separate courts, staffed by Committee members, which acted completely outside the justice system and committed gross abuses of power.[23] But these Committees were only one part of a multi-layered and overlapping system of security apparatuses. Other security organizations, which were also deliberately kept separate and reported directly to Qadhafi and his security advisers, included the Intelligence Bureau of the Leader (*maktab ma'lumat al-qa'id*), the Military Secret Service (*al-istikhbarat al-askariyya*), the Jamahiriyya Security Organization (*hai'at amn al-jamahiriyya*), and the Purification Committees (*lijan al-tathir*), among others. All were headed by the regime's most trusted supporters and confidantes. Interestingly, Qadhafi judged the national army to be suspect and a potential threat to the regime, and he never assigned security tasks to the regular armed forces. Through a carefully balanced system of rotations and promotions, the army was deliberately kept weak, ill-equipped, and de-politicized.[24] When the conflict erupted in 2011, the structural weakness of the regular army became apparent. Not only was its arsenal outdated, the official figure of 76,000 troops proved to be artificially inflated – in reality, the regular army totalled 20,000 men.[25]

A dominant feature of Qadhafi's rule thus became the persistence of a formal structure of government – the General People's Congress and the local committees – while real power remained in the hands of an informal structure of authority. This informal structure consisted of Qadhafi and his small circle of intimates, supported and kept in place by a number of (partly overlapping) security sector institutions that used repression to ensure

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20 In reality, these bodies had a consultative role at best. They were also used by Qadhafi to gauge popular sentiments.

21 These included Qadhafi's own tribe, the Qadhadfa, but also the Warfalla and Maqarha tribes.

22 Qadhafi's personal secretary and member of the Qadhadfa tribe, Ali al-Kilani, headed the Revolutionary Comittees. Vandewalle 2012, op. cit., p. 9.

23 The Revolutionary Committees' power in society was omnipresent. Repression included the surveillance of average civilians; public humiliations; torture and targeted killings; and executions of political prisoners. Death sentences were often televised. The Committees even posted bounties for anyone capturing a foe, instilling a culture of suspicion and fear in society in which no one dared even to question the power and methods of the Revolutionary Committees. See for instance: Hafez, M. 2011. 'The Height of Hypocrisy'. *Al Ahram Magazine*. Issue 1041, 31 March–6 April 2011.

24 Vandewalle 2012, op. cit., p. 146.

25 Qadhafi had created a regular army lacking leadership, morale, cohesion and effectiveness. It explains why large numbers of troops defected early in the revolution. Gaub, F. 2013. *Libya: The Struggle for Security*. Paris: EUISS. June 2013, p. 1.

regime survival.[26] It is revealing that for the first 30 years in power, only 112 people occupied ministerial posts in the regime, and were frequently shuffled from one job to the next.[27]

Despite the positioning of regime loyalists in key positions, Qadhafi shrewdly prevented any institution or social group from creating an independent base for political support. Even the Revolutionary Committees were not allowed to be in contact, and operated as separate cells. Powerful tribal leaders were courted by Qadhafi by handing out privileges, money and influential positions in return for support. Indeed, the power of each tribe came 'to rest only on its relationship with the Leader. Qadhafi managed to create a situation in which the tribes were left competing for his favour.'[28] The regime acted as the father of all tribes,[29] and yet by adopting this divide-and-rule tactic Qadhafi effectively neutralized tribal authority.

Libya's oil wealth, meanwhile, enabled the regime to implement its adventurous (and sometimes outright bizarre) revolutionary policies, at home and abroad, and to appease the population through economic patronage. Indeed, 'the regime bought off people whenever it saw fit'.[30] As part of his Third Universal Theory, Qadhafi had abolished all private commerce, retail and trade (apart from the much-needed private companies in the oil and gas sector).[31] As state companies took over the function of the private sector, well-educated private sector entrepreneurs left the country by the thousands, whereas everyone else turned to the state for a living. Most Libyans opted for a job in the bloated public sector,[32] even though the majority were not properly qualified, and salaries were low and always paid late. Virtually every family depended on the state for nearly every aspect of life, notably housing and food; and in return for political quiescence, the state took care of Libyans' daily needs.

Importantly, this reliance on the state to sustain a livelihood has survived the 2011 revolution, and still dominates public expectations towards the state today. Qadhafi's rule created a 'stateless society, [in which] the state had become everything'.[33] Enormous amounts of money were spent on subsidies for ordinary citizens,[34] and maintaining the fortunes of favoured groups, but Qadhafi failed to restructure and innovate the crucial oil

26 Vandewalle 2012, op. cit, p. 118.
27 Pargeter, op. cit., p. 194.
28 Ibid, p. 161.
29 Being from a tribal background himself, Qadhafi continuingly stressed the tribal ethos and its values, most importantly egalitarianism, honour and inclusiveness.
30 Pargeter, op. cit., p. 113.
31 According to the theory as set out in the Green Book, entrepreneurs, traders and small merchants were nothing but parasites because their economic activity would not lead to economic productivity, only to exploitation of the masses. The private sector as a whole had no place in the 'classless society'. Al-Qadhafi, op. cit., pp. 43–69.
32 In the late 1980s, between 70% and 75% of working Libyans were employees of the state. Vandewalle 2012, op. cit., p. 161.
33 Pargeter, op. cit., p. 113.
34 It must be noted that formal figures provided by the regime paint an incomplete picture. For example, in 2006, direct subsidies (mainly on food items) only accounted for 2.4% of GDP. However, billions were spent on indirect subsidies, especially through fixed low consumer prices. From African Development Bank and OECD, *African Economic Outlook – Libya 2008*. http://www.oecd.org/dev/emea/40578167.pdf, accessed 26 June 2013.

and gas sector. Over time, Libya has internalized many of the characteristics[35] of a resource-rich but badly managed rentier state that depended on skilled expatriate labour.[36]

In the late 1980s, cracks started to form in Qadhafi's revolutionary experiment. Because of the regime's support for international terrorist groups and alleged involvement in terrorist activity,[37] selected regime targets were bombed by the US military in 1986. From 1992 Libya was subjected to a heavy international sanctions regime until its rapprochement with the West, which began in 1999 and was sealed in 2003, when the country formally renounced all interest in developing Weapons of Mass Destruction. The sanctions left Libyans completely isolated from the outside world, and the oil and gas sector struggled to function as many international companies left the country. In an effort to diversify the economy, the regime embarked on a privatization drive called the *infitah*, which cautiously permitted the growth of a private sector. In reality, however, more liberal economic policies were manipulated so as to benefit solely the regime's favoured groups. The business privileges and personal luxuries afforded to Qadhafi's own family would later become, as in the case of other Arab regimes, a source of deep popular grievance.

These stark disparities fuelled resentment among many parts of society, but in particular Islamist groups in Cyrenaica who already had long-standing reservations about Qadhafi.[38] Because this wave of Islamist activism was rooted in an international ideology (many Libyan Islamists had fought in the Soviet–Afghanistan war), Qadhafi perceived it as an exceptional threat to his revolution. Throughout the 1990s, the regime brutally put down a series of Islamist uprisings.[39] To make the message even more clear, the east of the country was collectively punished and kept in a permanent state of underdevelopment.

35 These include, for example, an inefficient bureaucracy, lack of economic organization and the absence of a high-skilled technocratic workforce. The dilemma of Libya as a rentier state is that it can provide for substantial growth, but it has missed real economic development. See for instance: Mejia, P. 2012. 'Libya's Cursed Wealth'. Al Majalla Magazine, 26 July; African Development Bank. 2011. *Libya: Post-war Challenges*. September 2011; Vandewalle, Dirk. 1987. 'Political Aspects of State Building in Rentier Economies: Algeria and Libya compared', in: Beblawi, Hazem and Luciani, Giacomo. 1987. *The Rentier State. Nation, state and integration in the Arab world*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, pp. 159–171.

36 High-skilled foreign (European) workers filled the ranks of the oil and gas companies, whereas low-skilled workers (many from Egypt) took over the jobs many Libyans refused to fill.

37 Throughout the 1980s, Libya was one of the principal sponsors of terrorism worldwide. Qadhafi directly supported groups such as the IRA and ETA, as well as various Palestinian groups including the PLO. Libya also (allegedly) staged several terrorist attacks, such as the bomb explosions in a discotheque in West Berlin (1986) and the explosion of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie (1988). Qadhafi's involvement in terrorism can be explained by his rejection of Western dominance, and his tendency to support rebels and revolutionaries. Interestingly, Qadhafi never supported Al-Qaida, most likely because the latter judged Qadhafi (and other regional regimes) to be heretic.

38 Particularly because Qadhafi sidelined the traditional religous scholars (*'ulama*) in his revolutionary version of Islam.

39 In 1996, the regime turned against the best-known Islamist group, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG, founded in 1995) after an assassination attempt against Qadhafi.

The uprising of 2011

Inspired by events in Libya's neighbours, Tunisia and Egypt, a group of young Libyans organized a Day of Rage in Benghazi in February 2011. Their initial demands included economic and political reforms, such as the introduction of a constitution – though not the overthrow of the regime. Despite the peaceful character of these protests, the regime's security services hit back hard, opening fire on the crowd. Other spontaneous eruptions of public dissent soon appeared elsewhere, and were similarly suppressed. But the strategy no longer worked. Libyans were finally expressing their pent-up anger and resentment against the regime, and especially the uneven distribution of power and wealth. The eastern province of Cyrenaica, which had suffered the most from Qadhafi's policies, 'was ready to explode'.[40] The history of armed opposition in the East, from the anti-colonialist guerrilla of Umar al-Mokhtar to the insurgency of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, came to serve as both a symbol and a practical example of opposition to the state.

Qadhafi brutally put down the unrest, counting on his security forces and pockets of loyalists in the West to stick with him until the end. Nevertheless, Cyrenaican cities fell into the hands of the rebels with remarkable speed. In the liberated areas, the oil and gas sector went on to function reasonably untouched by the political tumult, while in the East influential businessmen decided to join and financially support the uprising against a system that severely limited the scope for private economic opportunity.[41]

It was also in the East that the opposition forces went on to establish a coordinating body, the National Transitional Council (NTC). The helm of the NTC was made up of technocrats and members of the regime who had defected, most of them from the military. Many of them had attempted but failed to introduce reforms under the Qadhafi regime. The NTC swiftly declared its vision of a free, democratic and united Libya, and espoused the principles of political democracy. However, the real power-brokers during the revolution were the armed brigades, many of which were linked to a city or region. Supported in their struggle by the NATO military intervention that was based on the controversial Security Council Resolution 1973, the brigades could unleash an all-out military campaign against regime strongholds (such as Bani Walid and Sirte) until Tripoli fell to the rebels in August 2011. Members of the armed brigades eventually executed Qadhafi on 20 October 2011 in the battle of Sirte.[42] the deposed ruler's last stronghold.

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40 Pargeter, op. cit., p. 216.

41 For example, it is widely believed that Abdulhamid and Ali Dubaiba, two brothers who owned a multi-billion construction company that carried out contracts for the government contributed financially to the revolution. It is not known how much they contributed, nor have the authorities publicly acknowledged or denied the support. Zaptia, S. 2012. 'NTC Freezes 338 Assets Of Which 260 Are Individuals And 78 Are Companies'. *Libya Herald*. 21 May 2012.

42 When Tripoli fell on 28 August 2011, Qadhafi and his confidantes fled the city in different convoys. Qadhafi travelled to Sirte, his town of birth, where he was eventually captured on 20 October 2011 by Misratan militiamen while sheltering in a drainage pipe. The wounded Qadhafi was put into an ambulance for a two-hour drive to Misrata. It is likely that the fallen leader had died before the convoy left the scene of his capture. It is unclear whether Qadhafi was shot to death. He was buried in a secret, unmarked desert location. For a detailed account of Qadhafi's final days, see Human Rights Watch. 2012. *Death of a Dictator. Bloody vengeance in Sirte*, 17 October 2012.

Not long after Qadhafi's death, the enormous variety of dispersed and competing group interests in Libyan society, which had long been suppressed, began to find new forms of expression. The collapse of the personalized and charismatic 'state' exposed the historically rooted fragmentation of Libya, but also emboldened groups that were determined never to be marginalized or excluded again. Most notable in this respect was the hostility between the revolutionary forces, particularly the armed brigades, towards anything and anyone that could be associated with the Qadhafi regime. The dislodging and 'clearances' of pockets of Qadhafi loyalists by the brigades provided early evidence of this dynamic.[43] A second immediate result of the revolution was the tension within the NTC between the political leadership and the revolutionary base. NTC 'politicians' were high-ranking regime officials who had defected, as well as formerly exiled opposition members. Many brigade leaders, who in their own opinion did the 'dirty work', resented the NTC's elitist character. Third, soon after the ousting of Qadhafi, liberal-nationalist forces also voiced concerns about Libya's Islamist camp and its ideological agenda. The presence of Islamist heavily armed groups in Libya, and their possible transnational connections to other countries in crisis and tumult (above all Syria and Mali), worried many Libyans. Finally, the aftermath of the revolution was marked by continued disagreement about who actively participated and fought in the revolution, and who joined only once Qadhafi was killed. Upholding and safeguarding the revolution against 'fakery' became a serious matter.

The ousting of the joint enemy and the implosion of the Jamahiriyya has radically modified the nature of political authority across the country. The Jamahiriyya was so 'overwhelmingly centralized, that when it collapsed, the entire state collapsed with it'.[44] Under Qadhafi, there was no such thing as civil society. Political parties, civic clubs, trade unions, even seemingly harmless civil initiatives such as parent–teacher organizations, were forbidden. Denied civil organizations, Libyans were conditioned to turn to family and tribe for social support and interaction.[45] It is therefore hardly surprising that in the post-Qadhafi power vacuum, local figures – be it tribal leaders, militia chiefs, or Local Committee members – moved in to restore a sense of organization and authority.

Conclusions

Libya is the product of a remarkable series of transformations. In less than one century, it went from being an Ottoman province, to an Italian colony, to a constitutional

43 For example, militiamen captured approximately 140 Qadhafi loyalists in Sirte following Qadhafi's death. It is believed that at least 60 of them were summarily executed. Human Rights Watch, op. cit., p. 34. Human rights abuses by militia, including tortures and executions, continued in the months after the fall of the regime, for example against the Qadhafi stronghold of Bani Walid. Revolutionary fighters from Tripoli entered Bani Walid in 24 November 2011 to capture 'wanted individuals' (*matloubeen*), resulting in a conflict with local residents that remains unresolved. See for instance CNN. 2012. 'Libyan Militias "Out of Control", Amnesty International says', 16 February 2012; Stephen, Chris and Harding, Luke. 2012. 'Amnesty Finds Widespread Use Of Torture By Libyan Militias'. *Guardian* 16 February 2012; International Crisis Group, 2012. *Divided We Stand: Libya's Enduring Conflicts*. ICG Middle East/North Africa Report no. 130, p. 4.

44 Pargeter, op. cit., p. 254.

45 St. John, op. cit., p. 279.

monarchy, to a *sui generis* socialist state, to a democracy in the making. However, these ruptures in Libya's formal political system have contained within them a number of continuities that together make up a stable and long-standing core of state–society relations.

First, patronage and favouritism have been used by all leaderships, with the exception of the repressive colonial regime run by Mussolini's Italy, as a means to neutralize dissent and keep decision-making in the hands of the ruling elite. The stabilization of regimes through such practices of co-option has been greatly enhanced by oil revenues, although the coup of 1969 and the revolution of 2011 also suggest that the corruption and rent-seeking behaviour fostered by the availability of these resources may be lethal to a government's long-term survival.

Second, the Libyan social context remains marked by attachments and affinities based on primordial ties, above all those of family and tribe. These ties have tended to impede efforts to establish an integrated nation and more centralized forms of political community – above all a modern state structure based on competition between programmatic political forces. On the other hand, they have also given rulers the practical tools needed to build durable governing coalitions. Patronage targeted at tribal or regional leaders has effectively bought a kind of surrogate popular majority for the non-democratic regimes that ruled Libya until 2011. It has also gone hand-in-hand with the exclusion from influence, access to power and state spending of those groups deemed not to align with the interests of the ruling 'majority', such as the eastern tribes and the city of Benghazi during the later years of Qadhafi's rule.

In light of the extreme political fragmentation that followed the unravelling of the regime, it was only natural to expect that the transitional government would seek to patch together a working national legitimacy by seeking to use co-option to agglomerate group interests. As we shall see in the next chapter, the revolutionary camp has also pressed hard for its own coalitional hegemony, and the exclusion of all leftovers from the old regime.

The emerging political economy of the Libyan patron-state

The revolutionaries who toppled Qadhafi's dictatorship in 2011 appeared determined to overcome decades of repression, co-option and selective distribution of oil wealth. As a result, Libya's transition rapidly generated a major upheaval in the political 'hardware' by establishing a system of political representation, free elections and reformed state institutions. Changing the institutional 'software', on the other hand, is set to take many more years.

Exclusionary political practices from the past, of the sort described in the previous chapter, have resurfaced. Increasingly brutal competition over power and resources is shaping Libya's transition, and may well be influenced by a regional context in which tensions with Islamists and the violent repression of political opposition have intensified. At the same time, Libya's political landscape is undoubtedly different from and more diverse than any the country has seen before. Coalition making and breaking reveal the imprint of emerging political disputes – in which revolutionary hardliners, Islamists, vested moderate elites and dominant tribal groups are the main protagonists. The essence of post-revolutionary Libya is thus simultaneously both a narrowing and a diversification of the political battlefield; and the crux of the country's future stability is the way in which governing coalitions are formed and consolidated.

This chapter explores the contours of the emerging state in relation to an extremely factionalized political reality. It identifies new or renewed sources of political fragmentation and coalition formation in the post-revolutionary area, and tries to assess the underlying complexities and possible consequences. Finally, it explores the means by which coalitions can exert influence over newly formed institutions.

The contours of the emerging state

When the Qadhafi regime fell, observers were quick to note that the Libyan state had to be built from scratch. For decades, Libya was deprived of genuine national public institutions, and whatever structures did exist – most notably the patronage-based political networks that formed the backbone of Qadhafi's regime – crumbled with the fall of the dictatorship. The revolutionaries inherited the remnants of a bureaucracy that had been merely a façade. What was left was a group of apparatchiks without a state apparatus, particularly within the judiciary and the security sector, and an immense

challenge for the transitional leadership wishing to rebuild legitimate and effective institutions.

During the revolution and in the ten months that followed, the National Transitional Council (NTC) acted as Libya's *de facto* government. The NTC was headed by Mahmoud Jibril, who had served as Qadhafi's economic adviser until he defected in 2011.[46] The NTC aimed to provide the revolution with a 'political face', and to lead the country in the transition towards a free and democratic state.

To an extent, however, the experienced bureaucrats and formerly exiled politicians who filled the NTC's ranks were out of tune with that revolutionary power base, particularly the powerful brigades that accused the NTC of elitism and a lack of transparency. Hence, the immediate post-revolution political setting was characterized by a very loose and factionalized coalition of those who claimed to represent and support the revolution: the NTC, the brigades, local coordination committees, and everyone else who had taken part in the anti-Qadhafi struggle.

The 20-month political road map presented by the NTC, including parliamentary elections and the drafting of a new constitution, only set the stage for further competition for power between the different factions that dominated the post-revolution polity. In essence, the political arrangement that followed the toppling of Qadhafi was designed to prevent premature factional takeover of the emerging state, but simultaneously introduced factionalism into the very heart of it – a clear indication that the contest for power had yet to start.

Power politics in the General National Congress

The primary vehicle for elite in-fighting is the General National Congress (GNC) which was elected in July 2012, with a voter turnout of 62 per cent.[47] Of the 200 GNC seats, only 80 are assigned to party lists – the largest being the national centrist National Forces Alliance (NFA) of Mahmoud Jibril with 39 seats, and the 17-seat Justice and Construction Party (JCP) which aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood after the elections. Other political parties received between one and three seats. The remaining 120 seats are reserved for independent candidates, to prevent majority control over the parliament and promote political inclusiveness.[48] Owing to their range of affiliations, and the continuously shifting alliances these entail, it is impossible to gauge fully the interests of these independents.[49] The chairman of the GNC is chosen by its members and is *de facto*

46 Stephen, C. 'Libya's hard landing'. *Foreign Policy Magazine*. 13 August 2013.

47 The High National Election Commission (*Al-Mawdiya al-Wataniyya al-'Ullia lil-Intikhabat*) registered 1,764,840 voters. HNEC official website (in Arabic), http://www.hnec.ly/. Accessed 26 June 2013.

48 Earlier drafts of the electoral law proposed a 136/64 division of seats between party lists and independents. Some believe the 60/120 ratio was an attempt by the NTC to prevent the electoral success of Islamists. Eljarh, Mohamed. 2012. 'The Libyan Election Law 2012 and The Muslim Brotherhood'. *Middle East Online*. 1 February 2012. An English translation of the electoral law can be found on the website of the High National Election Commission, http://hnec.ly/en/modules/publisher/item.php?itemid=7, accessed 26 June 2013.

49 This dynamic was confirmed by every interviewee consulted in May and June 2013.

head of state: he has control over state expenditures[50] and, as of 5 August 2013, is mandated to take all measures required to establish security and the rule of law.[51]

However, this model of democratic inclusion has not changed the way politics is conducted in Libya. Both the NFA and the JCP derive their electoral success from accommodating as many interest groups as they can, thereby attracting as many voters as possible. For both parties, personal connections of party candidates, individual characteristics and charisma, and local, tribal and ethnic loyalties have proved to be crucial in attracting votes.

The NFA was born out of the NTC. It is an opportunistic conglomerate of 58 political parties, all with vested interests in the Libyan state and determined to fend off the perceived threat from the advances of the Muslim Brotherhood.[52] With its liberal and moderate Islamic outlook, and with many experienced politicians and revolutionary figures among its ranks, the NFA managed to attract a majority of votes in the GNC, initially at the expense of the JCP, whose profile is markedly more ideological and less pragmatic. However, affiliations within this elite coalition are fluid, and only as strong as the personal relations that hold it together.

Compared with the NFA, the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated JCP has exceptional internal unity, which is a result of the years that the Brothers, some of whom are now deputies and ministers in the new government, spent together in prison under the Qadhafi regime or in exile. On top of that, the JCP has successfully forged alliances with Islamist independents within the GNC. Many of them are senior Muslim Brothers who deliberately entered the GNC as independents to strengthen the Muslim Brotherhood's clout in parliament. Furthermore, the JCP has shown its ability to tie other Islamist-leaning independents and hardline revolutionaries to the party on a case-by-case basis, much to the benefit of its position vis-à-vis the dominant NFA.[53]

The JCP enjoyed one of its greatest successes when it managed to push through the Political Isolation Law, which bans former government officials from public and political life, in May 2013. The Muslim Brothers were supported in this campaign by the Salafi Central Nation Party, federalists, representatives from revolutionary strongholds like Misrata, and revolutionary armed brigades that did not hesitate to use shows of force in their support for the bill. The cross-cutting backing for this law should be viewed as a

50 The Audit Bureau of the GNC has the mandate to review, approve or veto every government expense. On top of that, the Cabinet is denied the ability to shift spending between different budget lines. Abdulhadi, F. 'The economic paradox of Libya: it's rich, but it's bankrupt'. *Foreign Policy Magazine*. 14 August 2013.

51 GNC Decision no. 73. Article 1. 5 August 2013.

52 Stephen, C. 'Libya's hard landing'. *Foreign Policy Magazine*. 13 August 2013.

53 For example, the Islamist voting bloc has demonstrated particular unity in its position on sharia as the (sole) source of law in the constitution, as well as the political debates on the role of Islam in other policy areas (such as the banking system). Unity in the Islamist camp has also been promoted by Grand Mufti Sadiq al-Ghariani, who has good contacts with the various Islamist parties and is considered as one of the most influential political actors in Libya. Early 2013, around 60 conservative independents formed the Block of Loyalty to Martyr's Blood, which created a *de facto* majority for the JCP in the GNC. Daoud, A. 'JCP Islamist party seeks way out of government in Libya'. *The Africa Journal*. 21 February 2013.

strategy to remove a common rival, the NFA, from government – as many of this latter party's members at some point figured in political life under Qadhafi – and attain a level of dominance across Libya's state.[54]

The Cabinet rendered powerless

The volatility of bonds of loyalty in the GNC has impeded the functioning of the other arena for coalition formation and rent distribution: the Cabinet led by Prime Minister Ali Zidan,[55] which was inaugurated in November 2012. Like the GNC, its composition was intended to reflect the new political and geographic balance of the country. The most important governmental portfolios – including those of Minister of Interior, Minister of Defence, Minister of Justice and Minister of Foreign Affairs – were initially deliberately assigned to independents not aligned with political parties, so as to 'prevent controversy'.[56]

The Cabinet has been consistently weak in comparison with the GNC. Having no budgetary autonomy, the Cabinet is fully dependent on parliamentary goodwill and the networks of support it can establish. An extremely high ministerial turnover[57] and shifting coalitions within the GNC have not helped the Cabinet in this regard. Personal attacks on Zidan in which, for example, his 'Libyan-ness' is questioned,[58] have stripped the Prime Minister of a large part of his power. In one recent move, Zidan reduced the Cabinet to a 'Crisis Committee',[59] officially in response to the escalation of violence in the country. It could, however, also be explained as a tactic to consolidate the NFA's last political stronghold, and cope with the increased influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the GNC.

The primacy of the faction

The deliberate choice of inclusion as a strategy driven by electoral and party interests could create a unifying element in Libya's fragmented and polarized post-revolutionary context. Both of the two biggest parties appear inclined to use patronage towards groups from which the parties gain support. In the longer run, political parties in Libya might eventually transcend cleavages at the regional and local level, and possibly act as a force

54 Atlantic Council MENASource. 'The politics of Libya's political isolation law'. 28 February 2013.

55 Ali Zidan served as a diplomat under Qadhafi in the 1970s, but defected in 1980. Together with Mohamed Magarief – who would in 2012 be appointed as president of the GNC – Zidan founded the National Front for the Salvation of Libya in exile. He returned to Libya during the revolution and joined the NTC. Zidan was elected as Prime Minister by the GNC on 14 October 2012.

56 Quote by Prime Minister Zidan. 'Libyan Prime Minister Nominates His Government Line-up'. *The Tripoli Post*. 30 October 2012.

57 For example, Interior Minister Ashour Shuwail stepped down in May 2013 after the approval of the Political Isolation Law and was replaced by Mohamed Khalifa al-Sheikh, who is reportedly close to the Muslim Brotherhood and hardline revolutionary armed groups. 'Libya Appoints New Interior Minister'. *The Tripoli Post*. 27 May 2013. Also confirmed in interview with International Crisis Group researcher based in Tripoli, 15 June 2013. Al-Sheikh, in turn, resigned after four months, allegedly because Zidan interfered in his daily work. 'Libya Minister of Interior Mohamed al-Sheikh resigns'. *BBC News*. 18 August 2013.

58 Zaptia, S. 'I am an authentic Libya – Zeidan'. Libya Herald. 22 August 2013.

59 Zaptia, S. 'Cabinet reshuffle u-turn – Zeidan'. *Libya Herald.* 1 August 2013.

for inclusion and national unity, although this approach would also risk creating unwieldy and elitist coalitions of rent-seekers.[60]

However, despite the institutional safeguards against factional takeover, the reality today is that the construction of a functioning central government in Libya is severely hampered by new and emerging rifts in Libya’s political and economic landscape. These rifts have been at the center of the coalition formation and competition that ultimately led to the collapse of the transitional political arrangement brokered by the NTC, as will be described extensively in the next section.

Shifting coalitions of interest in response to shocks in Libya’s transition

Libya’s nascent state has become the site for a merciless zero-sum struggle over which elite coalition is to control emerging institutions and profit from exceptional rents. Political success has so far been based on personalities, and the level of trust they generate among potential coalition partners, rather than on the official position occupied. Moreover, these political networks criss-cross the new and emerging institutions of the state, and are strengthened by the ability to exploit these weak institutions for revenue distribution and the organization of force if and when required.

The dominant coalition changes size, composition and colour in response to internal and external shocks. As a result, it would be rational to suppose that the emerging state can only consolidate itself once one of the many factions has brokered the most beneficial deal for the broadest range of interests.[61] This section will explore how critical events during the transition have shaped Libya’s political landscape, either by placing key actors in the dominant coalition or pushing them out of the political marketplace (illustrated in figure 1: coalition formation in response to shocks in Libya’s transition on page 34).

Shock 1 – The immediate aftermath of the revolution: the NTC-brokered political arrangement

In the immediate post-conflict period, safeguarding the outcomes of the revolution proved a dominant concern. Despite the factionalized and fragmented political outcome, support for the revolution was the common denominator of the loose coalition that had seized power in Libya. Indeed, the revolutionary credo was powerful enough to forge unusual alliances that shared the goal of completing the ousting of pro-Qadhafi forces

60 There are numerous examples of inclusive coalitions that become at some stage detrimental to a country’s political life and national interests owing to the multiple vested interests they contain. Notable examples include India’s Congress, and the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico. Closer to Libya, the demise in 2012 of the Malian government led by Amadou Toumani Touré demonstrated the decay of an all-embracing coalition government.

61 North, Wallis and Weingast have analysed the dynamics underlying the coalition-making rationale in closed-access orders such as Libya – ranging from the personalities and identity of competing elites, means for patronage and pursuit of elite interests, and the size of dominant coalitions. Their conceptual framework has been very helpful in this section. North, D.C., Wallis, J.J., Weingast, B.R. *Violence and social orders. A conceptual framework for interpreting recorded human history*. Cambridge University Press. New York. 2009. pp. 30–75.

and their interests. The ‘revolutionary camp’ included a wide array of anti-Qadhafi forces: brigades that fought in the war, the experienced politicians of the NTC, ideology-driven (Islamist) groups, anti-Qadhafi tribes and their militias, and eastern federalists.

These were pitted against the groups that had stuck with the regime until the end: loyalist tribes such as the Warfalla and Magarha, and the political and business elites that were part of, or at least had tied their fate to, the regime. In the revolution’s aftermath, support for the toppling of the regime was a binding factor, which superseded the wide variety of interests and backgrounds among the allied factions.

Nevertheless, it was only a matter of time before the inherent weakness of this new political settlement became apparent. The anti-Qadhafi coalition was too broad to survive internal wrangling over rents and interests, especially in a context where the new political and institutional norms and procedures had yet to be defined.[62] From the outset, the NTC endured the criticism of brigades for being too elitist, connected to the Qadhafi regime and lacking in true evolutionary credentials. In 2012, the Council was confronted by large-scale protests in Benghazi demanding a greater degree of transparency, the sacking of Qadhafi-era officials, and the introduction of sharia.[63] By then, the post-war period was already becoming characterized by contests for power over political influence, resources and roles. Towards the end of its mandate, the NTC found itself increasingly exposed to the factionalized reality of post-Qadhafi Libya, in which a plethora of interest groups fought to secure their footholds.

Shock 2 – First democratically elected transitional government in over 40 years: interests define the political arena

In the run-up to the first democratic elections, extreme fragmentation of interests and actors had come to define the Libyan political landscape. Qadhafi loyalists were banned. Among those who had joined hands during the revolution, a new rift emerged between the ‘hardline revolutionaries’ and ‘moderate centrist revolutionaries’. The hardline coalition consisted of newcomers in the political arena from a wide variety of backgrounds, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, brigades from revolutionary strongholds like Misrata, Islamist brigades and federalists from the East. The moderates were those with vested political and economic interests in the Libyan state, such as the politicians and bureaucrats united in the NTC and later the NFA, and tribal brigades that were favoured under the Qhadafi regime but changed sides early on in the revolution, such as the Zintan.

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62 North, Wallis and Weingast explain such a dynamic as a fundamental trade-off: “Expanding the coalition without increasing rent-generating activities adds members and increases the coalition’s ability to survive against internal and external threats. However, it also dissipates rents, which both lowers the value of being in the coalition and reduces the ability of members to punish the coalition by withdrawing their support. (…) Too large a coalition is unstable.” With regard to coalition-building, the authors also explain how “members of the coalition cannot commit to rules or constitutions when the month-to-month balance within the coalition is in flux”. North, Wallis and Weingast, op. cit., p. 42.

63 Al Arabiya. 2012. ‘Libyan protestors storm government headquarters in Benghazi’. Al Arabiya, 21 January 2012 .

Those united in the hardline revolutionary camp sought 'root-and-branch renewal of the political and business elite to their advantage',[64] despite their distinctly different agendas and constituencies. However, the ultimate goal of undermining vested interests[65] in the broadest sense of the term obviously threatened the pro-revolution centrist forces. The NFA firmly rejected excessive revolutionary influence[66] and managed to win the first GNC elections and nominate the chairman of the GNC, Mohamed Magarief, on the basis of a more pragmatic and inclusive approach than the hardline revolutionaries represented by the JCP and its allies.

Despite the NFA's numerical dominance in parliament, the revolutionary camp has proved highly successful in pushing through decisions aimed at excluding groups from the political arena. In this, it has been helped by the balance of power between the NFA and JCP party lists and the independents, coupled with the ever-shifting tactical alliances of the latter. The rift between the two competing coalitions reached a climax when the 'law on political isolation' (*qanun al-'azl al-siyasi*) was approved in May 2013. The passage of the bill, which stipulates that former regime officials can be excluded from the country's public life, [67] illustrates the signal importance of coalition-building and alliance formation in Libya's post-revolutionary politics. Those at the radical end of the revolutionary spectrum – the JCP, Salafi parties, hardline urban revolutionaries, their affiliated independents and the federalists – effectively joined forces to push through the law[68] in spite of the electoral victory that had been enjoyed by the NFA and its affiliates.

Moreover, even before its implementation, the potential of the Political Isolation Law to alter the power balance in the GNC and the Cabinet became clear. High-ranking

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64 Lacher, Wolfram. 2013. *Fault Lines of the Revolution. Political actors, camps and conflicts in the New Libya.* Berlin: SWP Research Paper. p. 5.

65 The emergence of a strong revolutionary force that sweeps through national politics with the objective of isolating remnants of the previous order is not a new phenomenon in Libya. In the 1950s, the Sanusi Monarchy sought to erase the era of Italian occupation, especially by disbarring the colonial-era elite from influential administrative and economic positions and replacing them with the monarchy's confidants. In a similar fashion, after 1969, Qadhafi unleashed in his Green Revolution a campaign of exclusion against the Sanusi monarchical elite. In a sense, Libya is currently witnessing a 'third wave of exclusion' in the public domain, enforced by the forces claiming to represent the 2011 revolution.

66 NFA frontman Jibril consistently objected to the exclusion campaign of his political competitors: "My goal is to send a message to the Libyan youth of the coalition, that the battle to rebuild Libya has just started, and will not end by excluding Mahmoud Jibril." Fornaji, H. 'New law will exclude half a million Libyans: Mahmoud Jibril'. *Libya Herald*. 7 May 2013.

67 The far-reaching scope of the bill applied to anyone who held an official position in politics, security or business in the last 20 years of the Qadhafi regime, thereby threatening to undermine the positions of many who play prominent post-revolutionary roles in Libya while failing to take into account their defections or support for the uprising. For example, the law also extends to the country's current Prime Minister, Ali Zidan, who served as a diplomat under the Qadhafi regime. See *The Tripoli Post*. 2013. 'Libya at the Crossroads: The Choice Between Inclusion and Exclusion'. 5 April. An English translation of the bill is available at http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/05/14/political-isolation-law-the-full-text/, accessed 27 June 2013.

68 The Salafi's and Muslim Brotherhood's support for the Political Isolation Law should be viewed as a strategy to remove their top political rival (the NFA) from government and, over time, attain a level of political dominance. Atlantic Council MENASource. 2013. 'The Politics of Libya's Political Isolation Law', 28 February 2013.

politicians, including the GNC chairman Magarief, stepped down from office.[69] The foul play surrounding the adoption of the law[70] further widened the rift between the two main coalitions, the NFA and JCP – a forewarning of the zero-sum power struggle that would lie ahead.

The emerging power of the hardline revolutionary camp is also apparent in the decisions of the National Commission for Integrity and Patriotism, or National Integrity Commission. This body, consisting of 12 men, was created by the GNC's predecessor, the NTC, and is believed to wield enormous influence in Libyan politics.[71] The authority of the Commission was ratified by the GNC, and it can now ban anyone who had a senior position in the state sector under Qadhafi.[72] Fifteen GNC members have been disbarred so far, many of whom came from Qadhafi strongholds such as Ghat and Bani Walid.[73] Because of its power, the Commission remains a controversial body, especially as it publishes no criteria or rationale to explain its decisions.[74]

A disbarred person can appeal against the National Integrity Commission's decision through the courts. However, having survived as almost the sole institution of state throughout the monarchy and the Qadhafi regime, Libya's judicial system has now partially crumbled due to a severe lack of capacity[75] and continued political pressure. Many judges and prosecutors working during and after the revolution have either been discredited or physically threatened by (revolutionary) armed brigades for their roles

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69 *Al Hayat*. 2013. 'Libia: *Al-Magarief yatawi mustaqbalihi al-siyasi wa Zidan yanju min 'maqsala al-qanun al-siyasi* [Al-Magarief turns down his political future and Zidan threatened by "political isolation guillotine"].' 28 May 2013. One of our sources also explained how the National Front Party might disappear altogether as a consequence of the Political Isolation Law. From interview with democracy expert in Tripoli, 7 May 2013.

70 The two parties struck a deal on the approval of the bill, that included an agreement that leading members from both parties would be excluded as a result of it. Allegedly, the JCP reneged on the negotiated agreement on voting day, 'tricking' the NFA into approval of the law. From interview with democracy expert in Tripoli, 7 May 2013. The NFA later reported that the bill MPs had voted for was different from the original version that had circulated before the voting. The law could not be re-examined as it is protected from any legal changes. Fhelboom, R. 2013. 'Sneaky Legislating'. *Correspondents.org*. 4 June 2013.

71 The justice sector is well-represented in the Commission: it is headed by Judge Hilal Sanussi, while the other members include three other judges, three lawyers, and also businessmen, university professors and a psychologist, representing all parts of Libyan society, including the Amazigh and Tebu tribes. Galtier, M. 2013. 'Inside the Commission for Integrity and Patriotism'. *Libya Herald*. 11 April.

72 This even extends to those that have worked for the state TV channel. See for example Fornaji, Hadi. 2013. 'Dubaiba and Dohga disbarred by Integrity Commission'. *Libya Herald*. 9 April.

73 Galtier, Mathieu. 2013. 'Inside the Commission for Integrity and Patriotism'. *Libya Herald*. 11 April.

74 Interestingly, the Political Isolation Law stipulates that the mandate of the National Integrity Commission ends with the implementation of the law. However, a new entity, the political isolation committee, will be appointed for the implementation of the law. It is believed that this committee will be a 'rehash' of the National Integrity Commission.

75 Notably, the weakness of the judiciary and Libya's inability to rebuild it so far have resulted in the decision by the International Criminal Court to reject Libya's request to try Saif al-Islam, Qadhafi's son, who is currently held captive in the city of Zintan. *BBC*. 2013. 'Libya not ready to try Saif al-Islam Gaddafi – ICC'. 31 May.

under the Qadhafi regime.[76] Thus the rift between pro-revolutionary elites and the hardline revolutionary camp is also apparent in the justice system. The judiciary has served as a tool to practise political exclusion, while also becoming a target of ostracism. Judges', prosecutors' and lawyers' fear of intimidation and retaliation by revolutionary and armed groups, coupled with capacity problems, has paralysed the functioning of justice other than in some family and less controversial civil cases.[77]

In the revolutionary rift – or the contest for power between hardliners and moderates – political Islam plays a particular role. Although the NFA should not be typified as secular or non-Islamic,[78] the two main Islamist currents in the GNC, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis,[79] have found a common interest in their views on the role of Islam in society and politics. Despite ideological differences, they are in a marriage of convenience, and share with their occasional allies the aim of attaining political dominance over the NFA-dominated government.

This has resulted in tactical political cooperation, not only between those within the Islamist camp, but with other non-ideological hardline revolutionary groups as well. Indeed, even JCP frontman Abdulrazzaq Al-Aradi does not highlight the Islamic character of the new rift in politics, by stating that '… the conflict in Libya is now between the followers of the former regime who want to control aspects of the state, and [those] who

76 Ironically, the vetting of justice system actors for their roles under the previous regime has a significant impact on the system's ability to process cases, especially those that bring charges against former regime officials. International Legal Assistance Consortium. 2013*. Libya 2013. Rule of Law Assessment Report*, p. 7.

77 Judges in particular are afraid to rule, especially in criminal cases. This is worsened by the fact that many justice system actors do not know who threatens them. From interview with justice system researcher in The Hague, 11 June 2013.

78 The NFA is a national-centrist coalition that also supports Libya's Islamic character. When former GNC president Mohamed Magarief claimed that Libya would become a secular state, many NFA deputies switched sides to the JCP in protest against his statement. *Al Tadhamon*. 2012. 'National Congress Protests Statements by Magariaf'. 2 October. The statutes of the NFA also state that democracy and sharia (Islamic law) are the main sources of law. See for example also *The Daily Beast*. 2012. 'Libyans say sharia will be the law of the land', 11 December. Further, according to one opinion poll carried out in 2011, 63% of Libyans declared that their primary identity was as Muslims, against 30% who identified themselves first and foremost as Libyans. ORB International. P*ost-revolution citizen poll between 26 October and 15 December, 2011*. http://www.orb-international.com/article.php?s=4-in-5-libyans-agree-country-heading-in-right-direction-according-to-post-revolution-citizen-poll, accessed 2 July, 2013.

79 The Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, established in the late 1940s, was modelled on its Egyptian counterpart. The movement suffered from severe state repression in the 1990s but remained a relatively well-organized and coherent organization. Its main objective is to Islamize society and introduce Islamic policies through political participation. Libya's Salafi movement emerged in the 1960s, and also holds a conservative Islamic agenda. Some in the movement accept the democratic system and approve of participation in it, while others reject the political system altogether as a 'man-made' (instead of God-given) construct. Jihadi-Salafis, finally, believe in the use of violence to topple the system. All currents can be found in Libya's Salafi movement. See also: Gartenstein-Ross, D. 2013. *Salafi Jihadism in the North African Regional Context*. Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 10 July 2013; Ashour, O. 2012. *Libyan Islamists Unpacked: Rise, transformation, and future*. Brookings Doha Center, May 2012.

agree to remove them from the new scene in Libya'.[80] The hardline revolutionary coalition in the GNC, dominated by the JCP, readily mobilized fellow revolutionary forces – most notably the federalists, local groups and Jihadist forces – to assist the Islamists' claims on power in national politics. This tactical move by the JCP proved exceptionally successful, as many actors in Libya's political arena identify with a local or regional base. Thus, the efforts by the JCP to forge alliances with other anti-establishment groups, and to bind independents with a local power base to their cause, proved essential in challenging the dominant NFA-led coalition.

In Libya, the most high-profile manifestation of regionalism is the Eastern federalist movement, which draws its support mainly from certain eastern tribes, such as the Obeidat and Awaqir (although by no means all tribal leaders have declared their support) as well as intellectuals, many from the exiled opposition.[81] Under Qadhafi, the Eastern region in particular was kept in a state of underdevelopment. Unsurprisingly, therefore, anti-establishment demands for federalism surfaced in Cyrenaica after the revolution. It is this opposition against vested interests that has wedded the federalists to other hardline revolutionary interest groups – notably the Islamists – despite their distinctly different constituencies, and despite Islamist criticism of federalist objectives. One source interviewed for this paper summarized the influence of the federalists as 'there aren't many, but they have a loud voice'.[82] The occasional alliance between the hardline revolutionary coalition in parliament and the federalists therefore proved crucial in pushing for adoption of the Political Isolation Law.

Another outstanding feature of post-revolutionary Libya is the presence of local actors in the GNC, and the government's sensitivity to their demands. Local councils, tribal chiefs and revolutionary brigades played a leading role in the revolution, and now derive legitimacy and popular support from their protagonism. In the post-revolutionary context, all compete for authority and influence at the local level, but also set out to pursue their interests at the national level.[83] The 120 independent deputies of the GNC primarily represent the interests of cities, tribes and families. Local loyalties have proved to be the deciding factor in their election; it is widely understood that many GNC members received votes because of their roles at the local level, and most voters appear to have made their choices through the influence of their community.[84] An apparent

80 Al-Misrati, M. 2013. "Al-Qiadi fi l-hizb al-adila wa-l-bina' Abdulrazzq al-Arradi: Al-sira' fi-Libia al'an baina attiba' al-nidham al-sabiq alladhina yuriduna al-sitra 'ala mufasil al-dawla wa baina al-wataniyyin 'ala bukra alaihim", *Al-Manarah*, 11 March 2013 [authors' translation].

81 One example of a prominent participant is Ahmed Zubayr al-Sanusi, a member of the royal family.

82 From interview with democracy consultant based in Middle East, 4 June 2013. Nevertheless, attempts to declare the eastern region autonomous triggered furious reactions in other parts of the country over the perceived threat to national unity. Libyans across the country – particularly in Fezzan and Tripolitania where no movement for autonomy has developed – tend to view the federalist agenda with suspicion, and accuse federalists of intending to lay claim to the oil produced in Cyrenaica.

83 The changing roles and opportunities for local and traditional actors present a distinct breach with the *status quo* under Qadhafi. Under the previous regime, influential local and traditional actors were co-opted, and the room to pursue special (non-state) interests was kept to an absolute minimum.

84 A poll by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems shows that word of mouth has been the dominant source of information for Libyan voters, as information on candidates and

example of the predominance of local actors is the north-western city of Misrata, one of the heartlands of the revolution.[85] Early on in the revolution, Misrata developed a structure for local governance,[86] and its deputies are now represented in the GNC.[87]

Importantly, Misratan as well as other local parliamentarians simultaneously push for the interests of their locality as well as the interests of the hardline revolutionary camp. Their seemingly unconditional support for revolutionary policies – such as the Political Isolation Law – coupled with a strong local power base has made Misratans key allies in the JCP-led coalition. However, the importance of local interests at the national level presents the government with the challenge of distributing state resources strategically. Until municipal elections take place towards the end of 2013, local councils receive central state resources to perform local governance. At present, local councils 'negotiate their budget with the government on a case-by-case basis, thereby entering into competition with each other'.[88] In Libya, the pattern of state spending is a leading mechanism for patronage. Although concrete data is lacking, the African Development Bank has reported how subsidies and wealth transfers are generally directed to the regions most affected by the war.[89] Indeed, this might imply that the central government is reverting to patronage to keep local interests satisfied in areas that were gravely damaged in the conflict. Hence, the distribution of state revenues is a powerful tool for the current JCP-led coalition in government to keep deputies with localist agendas tied to the hardline revolutionary agenda.

The ideological, regional and local interests that are shaping the transitional political landscape are further complicated by the importance of tribalism in Libya. The impact of localism in the transitional political context infringes upon such long-standing and traditional forms of local organization. The transition has placed traditional roles and

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political programmes was often lacking. Candidates from other districts, except for the 'famous politicians on TV', largely remained unknown to voters. IFES, op. cit., pp. 9–10. Much of the tension over appointments to positions in government and the public sector should also be viewed in this context of localism. One result is the attempt by Prime Minister Zidan to reflect a geographic 'balance' in the appointments for his cabinet. ThinkAfricaPress. 2012. 'Libya: A chaotic start for the new government', 31 October. See also: United Nations Security Council. 2013. *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya*, S/2013/104, p. 2.

85 Other revolutionary strongholds are Zawiya, Souq al-Jum'a and Tajoura, as well as the Berber towns of the Nafusa mountains. Misrata owes its authority to its key role in the 2011 revolution.

86 In Misrata, local councils were formed early on in the revolution; these became responsible for the protection of citizens and the supply of basic goods and services, bringing them into a close working relationship with brigades and local (tribal) leaders. Misrata also held local elections in February 2012 on its own initiative.

87 Misratan politicians elected into the city council as well as the GNC as independents seemed to trade on their proximity and connections to voters, rather than political orientation. Misratan deputies attracted votes for their family and tribal backgrounds, revolutionary credibility, and personal charisma. One of our sources referred to a conversation he had with two Misratans on the eve of the 2012 Misrata municipality elections. The men were not campaigning for their political agendas, because the elections were "all about connections anyway". From interview with democracy consultant based in Middle East, 4 June 2013.

88 Lacher, op. cit., p. 3

89 African Development Bank. 2013. *African Economic Outlook* – Libya 2012. http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/Libya%20Full%20PDF%20Country%20Note.pdf, accessed 27 June 2013.

tribal leaders'[90] social standing at the mercy of other interest groups. Armed groups in particular can erode established tribal structures of authority. The brigades provide an alternative model for social and economic advancement – particularly for young men – and directly affect the tribal chiefs' ability to assert control. Despite the moral and social authority of the elders, and despite efforts to create an overarching tribal structure,[91] there seem to be limits as to what the local notables can achieve in post-revolutionary Libya. Furthermore, not all tribes managed to retain their standing in society: some tribes have been discredited thanks to their loyalty to Qadhafi, and quarrels have emerged between tribes that can be described as pro- and anti-Qadhafi, such as between the Zintan and the Al-Mashashia tribes.[92]

The tribal struggles to maintain their roles in society should be understood in a context where a wide array of interest groups – ideological, local, regional, established – engage in constant competition with the aim of attaining power and influence at the centre. To that end, seemingly illogical and shifting alliances have been shaped that can only be explained using the 'revolutionary' paradigm, in which the hardline revolutionaries are pitted against moderate pro-revolution groups and established actors. As we have seen, the revolutionary camp has seriously challenged the prevalence of moderates.

Towards the government's first anniversary, the hardline revolutionary camp had managed to turn the tables and had become the dominant coalition in politics, at the expense of the once-dominant NFA-led coalition. Although it started out as the subordinate alliance in the coalition government, the hardline revolutionaries have managed to redefine the rules of the political game, and open the door to a much greater level of influence over the central state.

Shock 3 – The collapse of institutional safeguards against factional takeover of the state

The approval of the Political Isolation Law was evidence of the increasing influence of the Islamist–hardline revolutionary coalition at the expense of the alliance of vested political

90 Primordial ties, above all those of the family and tribe, have for centuries provided Libyans with social structure and a system of authority. Qadhafi acknowledged the importance of tribal affiliations in society by co-opting influential tribes and allowing them a reasonable amount of autonomy as long as they did not impede Qadhafi's revolutionary policies. Pargeter, op. cit., pp 217–218.

91 The councils of elders (also named councils of wise men, or *majalis hukama'* in Arabic) asserted themselves during and after the revolution as mediators and negotiators. There are numerous examples of how local notables stepped in to negotiate peace deals between armed brigades and restored peace and order. In 2012, the councils of elders attempted, but failed, to create a joint structure through two overarching councils (the *Majlis Hukama*' Libya and the *Ittihad Majlis al-Hukama' wal-Shura*). The initiative can be understood as an effort to promote the importance of traditional leadership in Libya at the national level. Most local notables claim their aim is not get involved in national politics, but they seem to be seeking national support for their societal roles. Many consider the roles of tribal elders in the post-Qadhafi polity as effective traditional justice. However, efforts to elevate tribal initiatives to the national level are likely to fail, as the authority of these wise men is circumscribed by their local context.

92 Camille al-Tawil. 2013. 'Libia 2012: *intikhabat tatwi aqudan min al-diktaturia ala waq' fawda wa inqisamat*' [Libya 2012: elections wrap up decades of dictatorship under the impact of chaos and divisions]. *Al Hayat*, 31 December; *Al Monitor*. 2013. 'Libya's Quarrelling tribes extend a post-revolutionary nightmare', 6 April.

and economic interests headed by the NFA. As a result, the carefully crafted safeguards against factional takeover of the emerging state have largely collapsed, with far-reaching consequences not merely for the NFA, but also for influential urban and tribal groups such as those from Misrata and Zintan and federalists from the East.

The Political Isolation Law caused a number of NFA politicians to resign and eventually, on 4 July, led to the entire alliance withdrawing from participation in the GNC – except for constitutional matters – under the pretext that the law was approved under the threat of armed violence.[93] This left the GNC *de facto* in the hands of the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates,[94] and radically rearranged the parameters of coalition formation in Libyan politics.

The increased weight of the Muslim Brotherhood's influence in the GNC paid off almost immediately, with the election of new GNC chairman Nuri Abu Sahmain on 25 June 2013. The chairmanship had become vacant after NFA member and long-time ally of Zidan, Mohamed Magarief, stepped down in anticipation of the implementation of the Political Isolation Law. Prior to his inauguration as GNC chairman, Abu Sahmain was an independent member, representing the Amazeigh minority from the hardline revolutionary town of Zuara, and affiliated to the conservative, Islamist-leaning Block of Loyalty to Martyrs' Blood. His appointment is therefore widely perceived as further confirmation of the strength of the JCP. [95] Unsurprisingly, in his first major speech as GNC chairman, Abu Sahmain underlined the critical role of revolutionaries in the state-building process and in achieving stability.[96] The JCP did not wait long before amending the mandate of their nominee, authorizing him to take all necessary actions to establish security, arrest criminals and enforce the rule of law,[97] promoting him *de facto* to the role of Supreme Military Commander of Libya.

This gave Abu Sahmain significant executive power at the expense of the NFA-dominated Cabinet. Within a month, the GNC appointed hardliners Abdallah Al-Thani and Abdulsalam al-Obeidi to respectively the positions of Minister of Defence and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, and called for an investigation into Zidan's 'poor performance'.[98] As a result, the Islamist takeover of the nascent state appears to have become an established fact. Meanwhile, the JCP dismisses allegations that it controls the GNC and exerts undue influence over the government as 'a systematic campaign to counter the February revolution'.[99] According to JCP leader Al-Aradi, the JCP's objective is to not 'cancel any

93 Eye on the General National Congress. '14th Report, from July 1st to July 16th'. Posted on 24 August 2013.
94 The JCP followed on 6 July, announcing its suspension of all GNC activities. The party, however, 'asked the GNC to deal with its members as independents non-affiliated to the Party. It also demanded that the interim government deals with JCP ministers as technocrats according to the public interest.' Eye on the General National Congress. Op.cit. 104th session.
95 Elumami, A. and Cousins, M. 'Nuri Ali Abu Sahmain elected Congress President'. *Libya Herald*. 25 June 2013.
96 Elumami, A. "The revolution is no goldmine says Sahmain". *Libya Herald*. 7 July.
97 GNC Decision no. 73. Article 1. 5 August 2013.
98 Elumami, A. 'Ali Zeidan should be questioned on his performance, says J&C Party'. *Libya Herald*. 2 September 2013.
99 Elumami, A. 'We do not controll GNC: Justice and Construction Party'. *Libya Herald*. 24 August 2013.

previous institution, project or service, rather [to create] an alternative for working with them, before new ones are introduced'.[100] This strategy set out by Al-Aradi explains the party's move to push political opponents – notably the NFA-led coalition – out of the country's political institutions, and to implement a JCP-led political 'alternative'.[101]

However, fears over an Egyptian style coup d'état against the Muslim Brotherhood are rife in JCP circles,[102] as they believe their political opponents are determined to push political Islam to the margins, much like 'the tyrants who suppressed Islamists in the past'.[103] In defence of the Islamist winds that are now blowing through Tripoli, Abu Sahmain hurried to use his newly achieved executive powers to order their armed allies from the Libya Shield Forces/Central Region, which hail from the revolutionary stronghold of Misrata,[104] to the capital – a clear sign to its competitors that the newly dominant coalition is perfectly capable of organizing a strategy of armed violence to ensure its own survival.

The NFA has been left empty-handed. In response to Abu Sahmain's emergency measure, the party has further scaled down its activities in the GNC.[105] Prime Minister Zidan has refrained from commenting directly on the escalation of the militia presence in Tripoli, instead suggesting that this is an issue that goes beyond the responsibility of the Cabinet, which is limited to creating 'an environment for the GNC to draft the constitution and hold elections to choose a 'permanent government''.[106] Nevertheless, it is obvious that the NFA has to forge new alliances and dust off old ones if it is to stay in the political game.

In the recent rearrangement of the coalitional composition in Libya, the tribal dimension has once again surfaced. The actions of the most influential revolutionary armed groups from Misrata and Zintan, whose name simultaneously signals their tribal and communal loyalty,[107] typify this dynamic. Misratans have made good use of their revolutionary prestige[108] and armed strength to embed their interests at the national level: this is evident in their alliance with the JCP, the Islamist bloc and Misratan independents in the GNC[109] and, more recently, their warm connections with the new security trio in the GNC

100 Al-Misrati, op.cit.
101 Idem.
102 According to the JCP, a movement of army officers who served under Qadhafi, called the 'Libya Free Officers Movement' is allegedly planning an Egyptian-style coup d'état, but it is impossible to verify this information. 'Libya politics and security: Rumours of a coup d'état'. *Menas Associates*. 16 August 2013.
103 Idem.
104 The security situations and the armed actors at play will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this report.
105 Stephen, op.cit.
106 Zaptia, S. 'I do repeat what I say – Zeidan'. *Libya Herald*. 18 August 2013.
107 In many instances, the names of tribes in Libya are the same as the names of towns or cities where the tribes originate. In those cases, there is often an overlap between communal and tribal affiliation, and a common pursuit of tribal-communal interests, whether by armed groups, community/tribal leaders, the business elite or local politicians.
108 Misrata was responsible for capturing Qadhafi's home town of Sirte in September 2011, and the Misratan fighter, Omran Shaaban, was credited with capturing Qadhafi himself. See *Al-Arabiya English*. 2012. 'Misrata tense as it mourns death of Qaddafi captor'. 27 September.
109 IHS. 2013. *Zintan's tribal alliance against Misratah raises civil conflict risks in Libya*. 7 August.

and the Cabinet. Never before have their prospects been so promising. With allies in key security positions, they may well be favoured in the security sector reform process.[110]

Groups from Zintan, which are related to the NFA and its frontman Jibril,[111] are watching the Misratan rise to power the country with concern and caution. After the revolution, the tribal-communal Zintan group and its armed units sought, with some success, to extend their influence across the country,[112] thereby boosting the position of their political allies in the centrist NFA. However, the approval of the Political Isolation Law has changed Zintan's fortunes. According to the Zintani, the law is used 'to disenfranchise swathes of the country to the benefit of Misrata and its allies'.[113] In an attempt to regain military and political leverage in Tripoli, Zintan is renewing long-standing tribal alliances with other powerful western tribes – several of which fought on Qadhafi's side during the revolution.[114] As a first step, Zintan hosted a tribal conference on 6 July 2013, which was boycotted by Misrata, to emphasize 'the contribution of cities and Libyan tribes (…) in accelerating the process of building a political state',[115] and call for the dissolution of political parties.[116]

In this new political reality, two interest groups have been pushed into the margins: the federalists and the Jihadist side of the Salafi spectrum. Both shared an interest with the hardline revolutionary coalition in undermining the claims to power of the vested interest coalition and benefiting from the absence of state control. Now that the common goal of undermining the NFA has been attained, these groups see a dominant alliance emerging that will not necessarily be in favour of the ideological objectives of the Jihadists, or the federalist agenda.

The political marginalization of both the federalists and the NFA, meanwhile, has sparked a further militarization of politics. What started as a 'turf war over who should get to guard which oil facility'[117] between various armed brigades co-opted by the government's Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG), notably armed Zintani groups and federalist militants, has deepened into a country-wide armed stoppage of Libya's chief hydrocarbon sites. This appears to be a last resort for both the federalists and Zintan to bring the dominant coalition on its knees, albeit for different political objectives. The federalist leader of the

110 Minister of Defence al-Thani announced that the Political Isolation Law will be applied to the army to replace Qadhafi-era commanders with revolutionaries. Khan, U. "Thousands of militia vehicles in Tripoli as revolutionaries announce support for new Chief of Staff". *Libya Herald*. 11 August 2013.
111 Eljarh, M. 'Libya reacts to the turmoil in Egypt. *Foreign Policy*. 15 July 2013.
112 "We are like wolves," said a fighter from Zintan, "we roam and protect our country." In Holmes, O. 2011. 'Zintan's hold on Saif al-Islam reflects Libya divisions', *Reuters*, 20 November.
113 IHS, op. cit.
114 Including Oulad Suleiman, Maragha, Warfalla and Qadhafa tribes. IHS. Op.cit.
115 Mziousdet, H. and Ash, N. 'Town elders defuse Zintan Ghariyan dispute'. *Libya Herald*. 8 July 2013.
116 Idem.
117 Zaptia, S. 'Most PFGs are "asleep in Tripoli" – PFG spokesperson'. *Libya Herald*. 20 August 2013.

strikes in the East, Ibrahim al Jathran,[118] calls the actions a reaction against a 'seizure of power – and oil revenues – by the Muslim Brotherhood'.[119] The Zintani use a similar argument, stating that they want to weaken 'oil thieves who are controlling the state'.[120] So far, these armed industrial actions have brought oil production to a 'virtual standstill',[121] deprived the government of an estimated US$4.5 billion of revenues,[122] and forced the government 'to declare a *force majeure* regarding its inability to deliver orders'.[123] Any attempt to retake the sites by the government will be perceived, at least by the federalists, as a 'declaration of war'.[124]

The revolutionary rift in the contest for power over the emerging state is increasingly becoming irrelevant, as coalition formation begins to focus around a division between the Muslim Brotherhood, supported by urban revolutionaries, and a tribal coalition connected to vested interests in the centre that is in a temporary marriage of convenience with the federalist movement in the East. The next section will discuss the ways and means, most notably connected to Libya's oil reserves that all actors working in the political domain may deploy in pursuit of their goals.

118 Jathran was the chief of the PFG in the Eastern region before instigating the strikes. He is currently heading a self-governing political council announced in the eastern oil town of Ras Lanuf. 'Libya protesters threaten stability'. *Reuters*. 2 September 2013.

119 Ibrahim al Jathran, cited in: Stephen, C. 'Libya at crossroads as strikes threaten oil supplies'. *Guardian*. 3 September 2013. In addition, the federalist Cyrenaica Regional Transitional Council claimed to have taken over the national oil corporation in the east of the country. Makan, A. and Daragahi, B. 'Strikes and lawlessness bring Libya's oil industry to its knees'. *Financial Times*. 30 August 2013.

120 The Zintan Facebook page, cited in: 'Libya without oil'. *Tripoli Post*. 3 September 2013. The strategy of closing off pipelines out of protest against the current government was also confirmed by the head of Zintan's local council. Elumami, A. 'Oil production down to quarter of a million barrels a day'. *Libya Herald*. 29 August 2013.

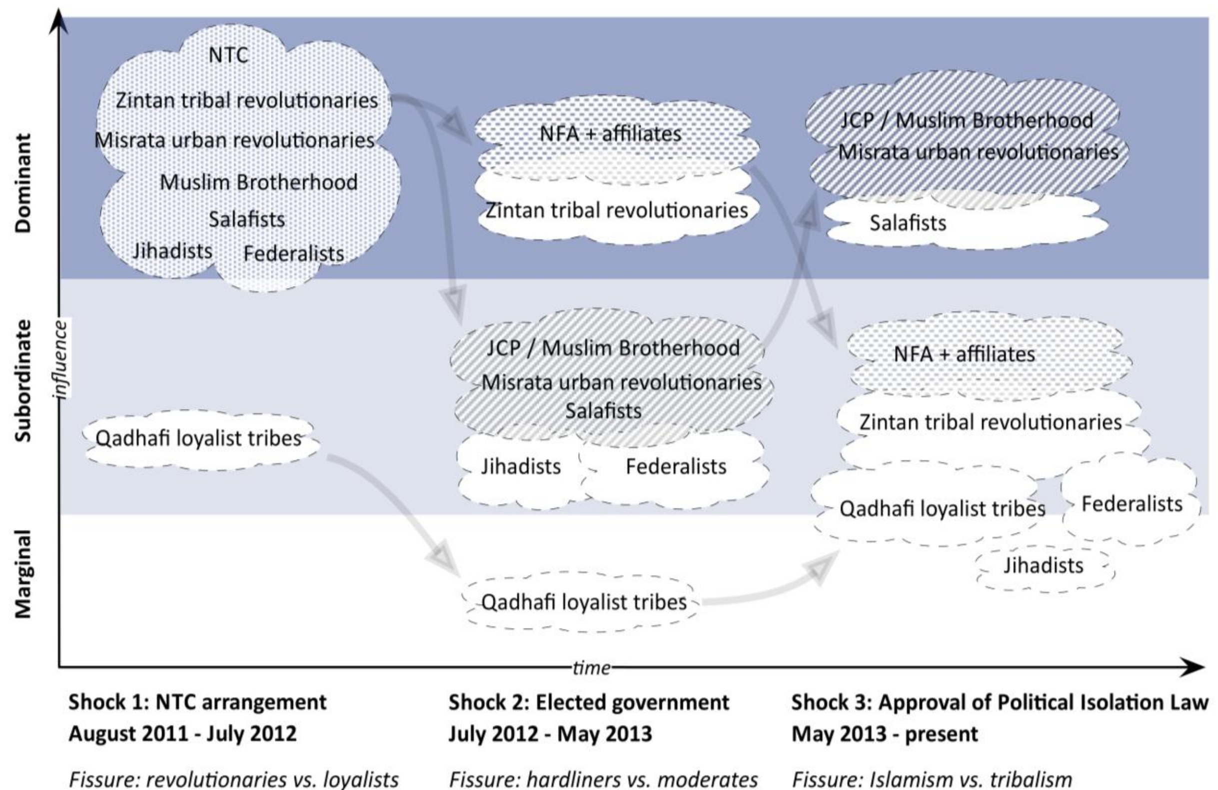
121 Energy Committee of the GNC, cited in: Elumami, A. 'Oil production at "virtual standstill" says Energy Committee'. *Libya Herald*. 3 September 2013.

122 Makan, A. and Daragahi, B. 'Strikes and lawlessness bring Libya's oil industry to its knees'. *Financial Times*. 30 August 2013.

123 Zaptia. S., op. cit.

124 Al-Jathran, cited in Stephen, op. cit.

Figure 1: Coalition formation in response to shocks in Libya's transition



Tools for coalition formation: oil revenues, appointment logic and protection rackets

The large reserves of high-quality oil and gas in Libya, and the steady stream of state revenues generated from it, have profoundly affected the ways in which politics is conducted. In a context where patronage and co-option are widespread, the rents from Libya's natural wealth are used for both exclusionary and inclusionary purposes, especially when targeted at specific groups.

Historically, the Libyan central state has used the revenues from natural resources for a wide range of redistributive policies: subsidies (on electricity, water, food, fuel); investment (on popular housing projects, infrastructure); social benefits (such as pensions); and employment (mostly in the large public sector). This created a situation in which the state relied on economic patronage to keep large parts of the population politically 'silent, whereas ordinary citizens counted on the state for a living. Indeed, the Libyan state for years has been the primary employer, with a disproportionally large (but inefficient) bureaucracy. Especially under Qadhafi, economic diversification was not encouraged,[125] and the private sector was virtually absent.[126] In many ways, therefore, Libya has developed the characteristics of a rentier state.[127]

125 From the 1990s, the state embarked on the *infitah* (economic liberalization). Economic diversification was presented as one of the objectives, although it never materialized in practice.

Much has changed since the revolution, but the production and export of oil and gas has remained the main source of income for the central government and, more importantly, the dominant coalition running it. During the uprising, oil production dropped sharply,[128] but the sector made a remarkable turnaround almost immediately after Qadhafi was ousted.[129] Barring extreme fluctuations, most notably in August and September 2013 when production dropped by 70–90 per cent as a result of protests and strikes by the Petroleum Facilities Guard,[130] the production of oil and gas has ensured a steady source of income for the central state.

Observers argue that the current leadership is – like its predecessors – fully dependent on the incomes from oil and gas, and that it seeks to enhance its popularity and legitimacy by spending its earnings, and not always in the most rational or transparent ways. For example, the government opted for one-off payments to the entire population to mark public holidays, such as the distribution of 'a sheep for every Libyan family' during the 2012 Eid al-Kabir (Feast of Sacrifice) celebrations.[131] It also massively increased social allowances to the population, such as child benefits and subsidies on housing, and spending on the public sector seems to be expanding. Meanwhile the Libyan Investment Authority (LIA), which was set up as a sovereign wealth fund in 2006 and now holds an estimated US$65 billion, continues to operate in an opaque fashion; according to a recent IMF report, it 'lacks a clear definition of its objectives and the rules governing the accumulation and use of its resources.'[132] Indeed, although concrete data is lacking or incomplete, it is widely assumed that the ruling coalition is using these

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126 Under Qadhafi, the oil and gas sector accounted for about 75% of GDP, while other private sector activity (namely non-oil manufacturing, agriculture and small-scale enterprises) contributed less than 20%. African Development Bank. 2009. *The Social People's Libyan Jamahiriyya Country Engagement Note*, Tunis: African Development Bank, January 2009.

127 The concept of rentier state was developed in the 1970s by the Iranian scholar Hossein Mahdavy. Rentier states are resource-rich and derive their income from external revenues. Generally, only a small proportion of the working population is involved in the generation of revenue. Many petroleum states in the Middle East can be classified as rentier states. There is a huge body of literature available on the 'resource curse', in which the consensus view is that rent-seeking regimes weaken governance and institution formation in many ways, above all because the dependency on external rent fails to create a bond between tax-paying citizens and the state. See for example: Beblawi, H. 1990. *The Rentier State in the Arab World*. Los Angeles: University of California Press; Ross, M. L. 2012. *The Oil Curse. How petroleum wealth shapes the development of nations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Gray, M. 2011. *A Theory of 'Late Rentierism' in the Arab States of the Gulf*, Qatar: Georgetown University Center for International and Regional Studies. Occasional Paper no. 7.

128 The International Monetary Fund estimated that towards the end of the war, Libya's economic output was US$35 billion, half of the pre-revolution output. During the uprising, the oil production dropped from an average of 1.6 million bpd to 0.2 million bpd or less. From: US Energy Information Administration. 2012. op.cit.

129 According to the World Bank, in 2012 the hydrocarbon sector represented 80% of GDP. By the end of that year, oil production was almost back at pre-war levels with 1.6 million bpd. World Bank. 2013. *Libya Overview*. http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/libya/overview, accessed 25 June 2013.

130 Essul, S. 'Oil exports down to 160,000 barrels a day – Oil Ministry'. *Libya Herald*. 1 September 2013.

131 From interview with expert on post-conflict societies, 15 May 2013.

132 Caceres, C., Cevik, S., Fenochietto, R. and Gracia, B. 2013. *The Day After Tomorrow: Designing an Optimal Fiscal Strategy for Libya*. IMF Working Paper WP/13/79, p. 25.

incomes to 'buy-in' certain coalition members, such as political actors from influential localities or even armed groups, so as to consolidate or sustain its position.

Interestingly, despite the importance of the oil-rich state, the private sector is also gaining ground in Libya. The post-revolution context is one of democratization of economic opportunity, marked by a highly unregulated business sector. Close observers have described the current situation in Libya as a 'consumerism bonanza'. in which 'every Libyan wants to be a businessman' and benefit from the opportunities in the private sector.[133] Importantly, however, few of the 'post-revolution entrepreneurs' prefer a full-time job in business over a job in the state apparatus. Many even 'work in the state's bureaucracy during the day, and in their shops at night.'[134]

A novel situation has thus arisen in Libya: most average Libyans feel entitled to a job in the public sector (and are still dependent on social allowances from the state), but are also attracted by the opportunities afforded by the private sector. Despite Libyans' 'entrepreneurial spirit', sources have noted that many Libyans regard the private sector as the 'fastest way to getting rich'.[135] At the same time, Libyans do not always regard themselves as the motor behind their own economy; for decades, Libya has depended on both high- and low-skilled foreign labour to fill the jobs Libyans themselves could not or did not want to take on.[136] Libyans still feel they 'need' foreign labour. A much-heard phrase on the streets of Tripoli is 'We want to be like Dubai.'[137]

Although interest in the private sector is increasing, it is too early to state that a 'new business elite' is emerging in Libya. The increase in private entrepreneurship is largely confined to small-scale business. The established business families that were also active under the previous regime, and who hoped the revolution would bring more economic opportunities, are now struggling with the effects of Libya's security troubles on the business climate and persistent corruption within the government. Influential businessmen have been complaining about the lack of control and regulation in the post-

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133 From interview with democracy consultant based in Middle East, 6 May 2013; interview with expert on post-conflict societies, 15 May 2013. Although these statements on Libyans' economic behaviour are based on local observations and experience of our interviewees, news reports indicate that there has indeed been an increase in private entrepreneurship. See for example: *BBC News*. 2013. 'Libyans' new love affair with ice cream', 1 January.

134 From interview with democracy consultant in Middle East, 6 May 2013; interview with expert on post-conflict societies, 15 May 2013.

135 From interview with expert on post-conflict societies, 15 May 2013. According to our source, many Libyans view the public sector as "necessary for a stable income".

136 The oil and gas sectors rely on high-skilled labour, mainly from Europe, whereas lower-skilled jobs are filled by migrants from neighbouring countries (notably Egypt) and South-East Asia.

137 As well as Dubai, Qatar is also mentioned as the example of a country in which native citizens enjoy the wealth of an oil state, distributed by the government, and foreign labour is imported to do the work. Interestingly, however, demonstrations have taken place in Benghazi against the alleged meddling of Qatar in Libyan affairs (particularly against the buying of land by Qatari investment companies). Qataris have been quite visible in post-revolution Libya, an external influence that is not appreciated by all Libyans, especially in the East. See for example: Ellawati, Maha. 2013. 'Benghazi protestors support government, condemn Qatar'. *Libya Herald*. 10 May.

revolution business environment.[138] Also, they argue that the current power structure – especially the remnants of the previous regime – is hampering opportunities for large-scale (foreign) investment. Business actors have also been critical of Libyans' dependence on the state for a living, and the government's spending in the public sector.[139]

Despite such challenges and concerns, many established businessmen, including those who chose to support the revolution, have been able to hold on to their positions and are confident the business climate will improve.[140] Others who worked for state-owned and privatized firms, and were on the side of the regime, have chosen either to leave the country, or freeze their projects and not openly display their wealth.[141] On the initiative of the National Integrity Commission, former elites have been purged from state-owned enterprises. Meanwhile, one of our sources noted that power struggles over appointments to vacated posts are just beginning.[142]

At this point it remains to be seen what consequences will be attached to the implementation of the Political Isolation Law, which also extends to the business and financial elites – including business actors who actively supported the 2011 revolution. Although business leaders are probably active behind the political scenes, they are notably absent from high-profile political positions,[143] clearing the ground for other political forces to undermine business interests. As the hardline revolutionary coalition gains ground in central politics, it is to be expected that anti-establishment sentiments will also weaken business leaders who had a role in the previous regime.

Meanwhile, the longer-term effects of Libya's new fascination with consumerism and capitalism on the practice of state economic patronage is harder to gauge. The rapid development of the free market may be regarded as destabilizing to patron–client relations, as it undermines the influence of the state through the creation of alternative

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138 The business climate seemingly varies across Libya, as will its development. For example, in Misrata, the business community is highly active, involved and visible. Many businessmen there sponsored the revolution – a move that is now paying back in dividends from the local leadership. In the East, on the contrary, the business community had limited engagement in the revolution, and can be described as less active and influential. The explanation for this may be that the eastern business community needs time to evolve after years of deprivation and repression under Qadhafi. In the Tripoli area, where most of the country's wealth was centred, the business actors of the pre-revolution era seem to be keeping a low profile, whereas businessmen from the diaspora are fulfilling more visible and active roles.

139 Daragahi, B. 2012. 'Entrepreneurs struggle to rebuild Libya'. *Financial Times*. 5 November 2012; Marro, R. 'Reflections on Libya's most successful businessman's view of the free market there'. Speech by president of the American Libyan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, accessed on 5 August 2013.

140 An example is Husni Bey, an entrepreneur from Benghazi who built an imports business empire in Libya along with his brothers. The family has been one of Libya's principal business families for decades. Before the uprising, Husni Bey was under scrutiny by the Qadhafi regime because he was becoming 'too rich', a crime in socialist Libya. *Bloomberg Businessweek*. 2011. 'Libyan Tycoon Husni Bey Tells Al'l" 8 December.

141 For example, it is known that many wealthy families live in the towns of Bani Walid and Sirte. Presumably out of fear of reprisals, they seem to have abandoned their lavish lifestyles. From interview with democracy consultant in Middle East, 4 June 2013.

142 From interview with democracy consultant based in Middle East, 4 June 2013.

143 From interview with democracy consultant based in Middle East, 4 June 2013.

sources of wealth and power.[144] For the time being, though, Libyans overwhelmingly rely on the central state for a living – a dynamic that the revolution has not yet altered.

Nevertheless, the steady stream of oil and gas revenues flowing to the state has been in serious jeopardy in recent months as a result of the armed stoppages affecting oil installations. The extreme dependence on natural resources for coalition survival is now a vulnerability exploited by groups opposed to the dominant groups in central politics. Therefore, a novel and highly significant phenomenon is now taking shape in Libya. Out of frustration with political developments at the central level, and sensing their exclusion from the ruling coalition, militias are now disposed to carry out what can best be described as extortion schemes or protection rackets by threatening the essential scaffolding of state power.[145] Zintani armed groups and federalists thus targeted the oil and gas revenues on which central state, and thereby the ruling coalition, depend in order to maintain internal cohesion and the approval of the general public.

In the Libyan context, in which hundreds of armed groups vie for power and resources, the emerging phenomenon of non-state protection rackets could have huge significance. Instead of supporting a gradual state-building process in which a wide variety of groups combine into increasingly stable coalitions – which, roughly speaking, was the model embraced by Libya in the first 18 months following the victory against Qadhafi – armed militia may calculate that the main risk to their groups' interests comes not from the extreme factionalization of power, but rather exclusion from the central state. In light of the state's weakness, the militia may therefore decide that the most effective way to influence politics is not by competing directly with the dominant coalition, but rather by starving it of the official resources, authority and institutional apparatus that it seeks to control.

Other armed groups may, for example, seek to upset the functioning of the political arena directly. Jihadi groups could step up their attacks on political targets, as has been seen in recent months. The establishment of territorial enclaves, coercion of people in urban centres, blockages of key trade and water or food supply arteries and closures of major transport links are all putatively feasible tactics that militias might use to challenge basic state authority, and exact their demands from an otherwise unresponsive ruling coalition. As we will explore in the next chapter, the incentives for such actions by armed

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144 This weakening influence of state power through the effects of greater prosperity is a central theme of Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J. 2012. *Why Nations Fail. The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*. London: Profile Books.

145 Interestingly, practices that resemble protection rackets – broadly defined as schemes where a (nominally criminal) group exacts money or other resources in exchange for not disturbing peace, security or the provision of other public goods – can be discerned in other Arab transition countries, such as Egypt and Syria. Although differences between the contexts are numerous, and both countries have few natural resources compared with Libya, rackets operate in Egypt and Syria as a means for fragile ruling groups to underline their claim to authority. In Egypt, the protection racket may be seen in the way the 'deep state' and the military have convinced a disorganized popular movement that it is the best defender of the values of the transition. In Syria, protection rackets have been mounted by armed rebel groups on local communities wishing to combat Bashar al-Assad's regime. In seizing local assets, such as oil wells or arable fields, these rebels are exerting lucrative territorial control as the price for local people's liberation.

groups in the current Libyan context are numerous, resulting in the extremely volatile security situation.

Conclusions

There are numerous challenges for Libya's new leaders in centralizing authority and building a functioning and effective central state. Importantly, many of the key obstacles in the transition can be traced back to Libya's political history. The country still needs to come to terms with an authoritarian legacy, and the collapse of a peculiar brand of informal despotic rule that deprived the central state of any stable, rule-governed institutions. In the immediate post-revolution period, Libyans bravely took on the tremendous challenge to build the state comprehensively and simultaneously embarked on the path towards democratization.

Despite efforts to transform the political order, two historical continuities in the political economy of Libya impinge on all efforts to achieve post-revolutionary stabilization: the role of patronage, fuelled of course by oil and gas revenues; and the agglomeration of a variety of local, tribal and ideological interests into strategic coalitions, which at the same time risk generating new axes of exclusion. Libya's transition thus far has revealed an extremely factionalized political reality in which politics of control and exclusion have consolidated at extraordinary speed, much as they did under previous authoritarian regimes. The approval of the Political Isolation Law reflects how exclusion has already become – or remained – a deliberate and accepted part of politics at the national level. Ironically, it seems to be the forces that claim to represent the 2011 revolution that are now the most fervent supporters of such entrenched practices.

An overview of recent political developments in Libya indicates that the political battlefield has both narrowed and diversified, creating an arena in which tactical coalition-building and forging alliances are crucial to attaining a level of political dominance. Over the past year, the initial NFA-led dominant coalition has been challenged and pushed aside by a once-subordinate coalition of hardline revolutionaries, led by the JCP. Now that the power balance in government has shifted, new strategic alliances and tactics are crystallizing between those who have been marginalized. It is here, this paper has argued, that the non-state protection racket is likely to play a significant role.

For decades, the steady flow of oil and gas revenues to the central state has allowed the government to 'buy' stability and appease the population. With respect to economic patronage, not much has changed in the post-Qadhafi era. In fact, people's dependence on state spending, and the practices of the rentier state that have survived the revolution, may also have a destabilizing effect. Counter-establishment groups are developing an interest in corrupting the state's incomes from hydrocarbons, thereby disrupting the government's ability to 'buy' loyalties in crucial political coalitions. Indeed, Libya's natural wealth has become an important tool in challenging the political leadership and forcing the government to comply with certain demands. Clearly, in the Libyan context, such practices bode ill for the country's security situation, which we will explore in the next chapter.

The insecure aftermath of revolution: brigades, the monopoly of force and armed politics

Post-revolutionary Libyan politics is being pulled in two mutually antagonistic directions: towards the inclusion of as many interest groups as possible, and towards the exclusion of certain groups from power. Arguably, the goal of excluding the remainders and leftovers of the previous regime is characteristic of all successful revolutions.[146] But the opposing urge towards co-option can only be fully understood on the basis of the security dilemmas that Libya is now facing. The intense political activity and coalition-making of the past two years must be interpreted against a backdrop of fundamental state weakness. There is, for now, no monopoly on the legitimate use of force in Libya. In short, the revolution has bequeathed to the country a vast diversity of non-state armed groups,[147] which are the dominant providers of law and order in their communities[148] and the primary vehicles of their political patrons for deploying force.

These so-called brigades are perceived across much of the country and the international community as the primary obstacles to security, stability and peaceful transition. They are believed to be responsible for some of the worst acts of violence since the revolution, including attacks on diplomatic outposts, and are thought to have unparalleled access to weapons arsenals. Since the fighting in Benghazi in late June that killed 31 people, some brigades appear to be exerting ever more coercive and illegitimate powers over local communities, even as the lack of coordination between them undermines their ability to provide real security for citizens. And the pressure they are able to exert on behalf of revolutionary and Islamist causes, notably in the campaign leading to approval of the Political Isolation Law or in the JCP's grasp for power in the GNC in August 2013, or against them, which may be the case in the recent armed industrial actions at the oil installations, suggests that they may be striving to polarize political life across the country.

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146 Mayer, A. J. 2011. *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

147 Their numbers are estimated at around 1,500 – 300 of whom fought in the revolution. *BBC News*. 2012. 'Disarming Libya's militias'. 28 September

148 Wehrey, F. 2012a. *Libya's militia menace: The challenge after the elections*. Foreign Affairs.12 July.

This chapter will seek to understand the threat and challenges posed by the continuing proliferation of non-state (or quasi-state) armed groups from two perspectives. The first aspect concerns the efforts by segments of the central state to assimilate these groups within a cohesive security apparatus as a crucial step towards strengthening control over Libya. Following the toppling of Qadhafi's regime, remnants of the security apparatus fled, or were killed or jailed, while weapons and ammunition were plundered.[149] The first task of a new national security apparatus is to assert authority over the scores of armed groups that emerged during and after the revolution. However, the early attempts of the National Transitional Council (NTC) to consolidate command[150] met with resistance from revolutionaries who were unwilling to submit to central authority,[151] above all to a political authority that included defectors from the former regime. Ongoing efforts to enlist the armed groups within a single chain of state-led command have encountered numerous obstacles.

A second part explores what might be regarded as the political extrapolation of these revolutionary formations: the spread of armed violence across Libya as a means to exert pressure on authorities, exact group demands or implement a federalist or extremist agenda. The chronic, low-intensity violence that characterizes the country at present is symptomatic of an arena of political competition in which the availability of arms and use of violence is standard practice. The question remains as to whether this marks the inception of a period of deepening instability, perhaps involving a revival of tribal conflict between Zintan and Misrata, or an expansion of Islamic extremism, or is a transitional process that will eventually lead to uniform state control of national security.

The trials and errors of assimilation

Since the fall of Qadhafi's regime, the policies adopted towards armed groups have been only partially effective, creating a superficial relationship between these groups and the transitional governments that was mutually beneficial only in the short term. Yet the security scene continues to be dominated by influential armed groups prone to collusion with interests outside the central state, and to serving their own factional objectives.

The **Warriors' Affairs Commission for Rehabilitation and Development (WAC),** headed by Mustafa Sigizly, began life as a non-governmental body at the end of 2011, with the aim of registering and demobilizing revolutionary armed groups. However, it was soon transformed into an inter-ministerial body under the authority of the Prime Minister's Office. Six months after coming into existence, around 140,000 revolutionaries

149 International Crisis Group. 2012. op. cit., p. 8.
150 The branding of the National Liberation Army – previously known as the Free Libyan Army – by the NTC in May 2011 was an early signal of intent to the myriad armed groups taking part in the uprising. Gaub, F. 2011. *Libya in Limbo: How to fill the security vacuum*. NATO Research Report.
151 "'We move when we think the time is right,' said Sa'adun Zuwayhli, 29, a field commander in the western city of Misratah, in June. 'We don't really coordinate our movements with anyone outside Misratah.'" In Sotloff, S. 2011. 'Libya's Long Endgame: Which Rebels Exactly Are Gaining on Gaddafi in Tripoli?' *Time*. 21 August.

had eventually made it on to its books.[152] However, WAC faced opposition from within government, where it became entangled in personal and budget disputes with the Interior and Defence ministries.[153] In addition, it was perceived as favouring those affiliated with political elites[154] and dismissed by some influential revolutionary armed groups, such as brigades from Zintan.[155]

Reflecting the tussle for authority over security policy within the government, the Interior Ministry also began registering armed groups under the **Supreme Security Committee (SSC)** in late 2011. The SSC sought to supplement police forces with assorted revolutionary armed groups to form a cohesive national force based on decentralised local branches. Offering a competitive monthly salary of around US$850, the SSC was soon heading towards 100,000 enlisted combatants.[156] However, the decision to integrate whole units into the SSC, while delegating registration and payments to unit commanders, undermined the authority of the Interior Ministry and enhanced loyalty to the commanders of armed units. As a result, the authority of these commanders is likely to heavily influence the continued actions of SSC units, including unilateral decisions on the use of violence, such as the kidnap and torture of a health surgeon and human rights activist by an SSC unit in Tripoli last year.[157]

Likewise, the Defence Ministry has endeavoured to elevate the **Libyan Shield Force**, which had originally been an initiative of the Union of Revolutionary Fighters (or 'Rebels Union'), into a national auxiliary security force. The Ministry of Defence does try to exert some control over particularly influential groups by providing them with direct financial and material support.[158] However, the sheer weight of the Libyan Shield Force units, which bring together the influential, revolutionary armed groups from such centres of the uprising as Benghazi, Misrata and Zintan, as well as the Tripoli Military Councils,[159] guaranteed their *de facto* independence from the state.

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152 Over 230,000 fighters had registered originally. But following a process of cross-checking with other registration processes, only around 140,000 were considered 'true revolutionaries'. Jeursen, T. 2013. *Reintegration of ex-combatants in eastern Libya: A stakeholder analysis*. SPARK, p.8.

153 It has been reported that Interior and Defence ministries were suspicious of Sigizly's tendency "to conduct himself as if he were a minister". See International Crisis Group, op. cit., p. 12. about the responsibility to allocate US$8 billion set aside for demobilization only. McQuinn, B. 2012. *After the fall: Libya's evolving armed groups*. Small Arms Survey, Working paper no. 12, p. 11.

154 Jeursen, T., op. cit., p. 9.

155 Perhaps in part owing to its management board being dominated by members from Benghazi. A commander from the powerful Western Zintani armed group "dismissed the WAC as an 'academic' exercise". Wehrey, F. 2012a, op. cit.

156 International Crisis Group, op. cit., p. 12.

157 PPJA Initiative: Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI). 2012. *Libyan government's anti-militia SSC held responsible for kidnapping and beating of leading human rights figure*. 3 June.

158 United States Embassy in Tripoli. 2012. 'Benghazi weekly report'. September 11.

159 Cole, P. 2012. *Borderline chaos? Stabilizing Libya's periphery*. The Carnegie Papers. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. p. 10.

The addition of another central security body in the form of a **Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG)** in October 2012,[160] with the aim of protecting oil infrastructure primarily located in the East, represents yet another government attempt to co-opt armed groups who had already taken the initiative of providing private security services or running protection rackets. Out of the 21,000 conscripted members, only 3,000 are said to be stationed at oilfields,[161] and consist mainly of brigades from Zintan in the West[162] and federalists in Cyrenaica.[163] Like its predecessors, the PFG is struggling to assert control over its armed members, as has recently been witnessed with the armed stoppage of the oil installations by precisely the PFG brigades that were supposed to protect them.[164]

Despite bringing an estimated 75–80 per cent of the armed groups nominally under state authority, centralisation initiatives have so far experienced little success in asserting real control over these groups. Many have been late responses to grassroots structures, and the incentive of steady employment in the new security structures of the central state has had limited appeal.[165] The design of these policies also presupposes a level of homogeneity in the interests of armed actors, and a willingness to prioritise national interests that have not been given sufficient attention in the transition so far. In fact the activities of many of the armed groups, from nominal 'employment' within state security structures, to private security services and, at the other end of the scale, illicit cross-border trade and protection rackets, all point to profit-making and predatory behaviour rather than a fervent desire to serve national stabilisation and security interests. For this reason, the question arises as to what extent armed groups registered with the WAC, the SSC, the Libyan Shield or the PFG recognize the impersonal authority of the central state beyond its role as actual or potential paymaster.

Meanwhile, the half-hearted attempt to dissolve the militias and integrate them into the formal security apparatus must be understood in the context of political competition in the centre. As payments, bonuses and politically motivated appointments still appear to be the preferred tools in dismantling the militias, the willingness or otherwise of armed groups to be integrated into the formal security apparatus is closely connected to the political colour of the dominant coalition in the GNC. The new Chief of Staff Al-Obeidi together with, interestingly, Misratan Colonel Muhammed Musa, have jointly presented the latest strategy to dissolve the brigades to the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) in early August. The strategy entails the replacement of Qadhafi-era army commanders with 'true revolutionaries'. As a result, it is envisioned, the primary obstacle for all

160 Petroleum Facilities Guard. Facebook page, English: https://www.facebook.com/PFGuard.en . Accessed 29 May 2013.

161 Zaptia, S. 'Most PFG are "asleep in Tripoli" – PFG spokesperson'. *Libya Herald*. 20 August 2013.

162 Karadsheh, J., Abdelaziz, S. and Sterling, J. 'In Libya, fears of oil field attack grow'. *CNN*. 24 January 2013; 'Libya confident oil, gas installations secure'. *Tripoli Post*. 20 January 2013; Stephen, C. and Alexander, C. 'Libya oil guards protect nation's "blood" against enemies'. *Bloomberg*. 7 March 2013.

163 Zaptia, S. 'Oil strikes: will use full force if peaceful action fails – Zeidan'. *Libya Herald*. 29 August 2013.

164 For an account of the recent escalation of violence by PFG brigades, please refer to chapter 3 of this report.

165 In fact, only a minority (15%) of registering fighters wished to pursue employment within security structures. International Crisis Group, op. cit., and Small Arms Survey, op. cit., p. 12

revolutionary brigades to join the Libyan army will be removed, namely the reluctance to serve under commanders they fought against during the revolution.[166] Unsurprisingly, the SRC received the proposal with great enthusiasm: 'The new Chief of Staff is a very respectable man. He is very committed to making a strong army and the revolutionaries trust him as he is a real fighter.'[167] Contrary to former Chief of Staff Mangoush, who 'was surrounded by people not sincere to the formation of the army.'[168]

Armed pressure groups and the competition for influence

In the wake of the successive failures of disarmament and demobilization campaigns, non-state armed groups across Libya have set about consolidating their power.[169] This includes aligning with political and ideological interests, including the main political blocs NFA and JCP, or pursuing their own agendas, as is the case for the federalist movement. Each of the different violent or armed 'pressure groups' has its particularities, and its local or contextual inflections: the group or individual member may be primarily motivated by political interests, by a sense of duty to his community, by financial need, ideology, religion or some combination of the above. Indeed, armed actors in Libya can be found to correspond with divisions in almost every domain and cleavage of transition politics,[170] and many members of armed groups are loyal to more than one faction.[171] This section will seek to explore the dimensions of this new field of militarized political competition.

Territorial loyalties

Regional and local transition dynamics in Libya are reproduced in the specific interests of armed groups. One example can be found in the political economy of southern Libya, where financial interests are linked to cross-border illicit trade and ethno-tribal affiliation. Competition between the armed groups of the Arab-Zwei and the African-Tebu in the south-eastern town of Kufra has been driven by control over smuggling routes to and from Darfur and Chad.[172] However, tribal and racial tensions based on immigration and citizenship rights have been exacerbated by the reversal of ethnic fortunes caused by the 2011 uprising, when the formerly subordinate Tebu were assigned responsibility for

166 Khan, op cit.
167 SRC Executive Officer Muhammed Shabaan, cited in Khan, op cit.
168 Idem.
169 Amnesty International, *Militias threaten Hopes for New Libya'*. Amnesty International Publications. February 2012, p. 7.
170 The spectrum of interests ranges from Qadhafi loyalism; revolutionary; individual tribal, clan or community interests; Eastern regionalism; elitism; regime-era opposition; ideological Islamist politics; and straightforward financial motivations. See International Crisis Group, op. cit., and McQuinn, B., op. cit..
171 Interview sources reported individual fighters working for different groups from one day to the next, while unit commanders move in and out at regular intervals. Interview with democracy expert in Tripoli, 7 May 2013; interview with expert on post-conflict societies, 15 May 2013.
172 This centres around "government-subsidised fuel and food smuggled out of the country, and weapons, drugs, alcohol and migrants ferried in" in Murray, R. 2012. 'Libya's Tebu tribe hopes for lasting peace'. *Al Jazeera* English, 3 December.

border security during the revolution.[173] A similar story of conflict over control of smuggling routes and ethno-tribal tensions has also played out near the south-west borders, with the Qadhafi-loyalist nomadic Tuareg fighting to maintain their stakes in illicit cross-border trade in the face of armed challenges by revolutionary groups within the Libyan Shield Force.[174]

In contrast, as the seat of power for the past four decades, the more urban and densely populated north-west hosts a crowd of tribal and communal interests with varied political and financial motivations, often cloaked in a strong revolutionary or tribal discourse. The mounting tensions between the armed groups from Misrata and Zintan are exemplary in this regard.

There are obvious political and financial advantages to be gained by tribal and communal groups from the expansion and projection of armed strength. Misratan units represent just under half the revolutionary armed groups in Libya, and slightly over half of the heavy weapons, including more than 800 tanks.[175] This provides them with substantial leverage over weak central security bodies, and an incentive to continue to project and consolidate their armed capacity. For example, Misratans have converted their strong revolutionary credentials into protecting the interests of their political alliance,[176] and securing legislative approval for revenge attacks[177] or carte blanche to carry out alleged extra-judicial detentions and torture of those deemed to be Qadhafi loyalists.[178] With such capacity, few other groups in the West aside from the Zintan could hope to challenge the Misratan forces. However, despite initial cooperation between Misrata, Zintan, Benghazi and Tripoli military councils in the Libyan Shield Forces, there is increasing competition between Misrata and other influential revolutionary groups, above all the Zintan brigades.[179]

The tribal-communal Zintan group and its armed units are widely believed to support the NFA.[180] Recognising the instrumental role of Zintani armed groups during the uprising,[181]

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173 Ibid.

174 Human Rights Investigations website: US Embassy – Tripoli Libya security incidents since June 2011. October 22, 2012. http://www.wired.com/images_blogs/dangerroom/2012/10/7.19.12-Libya-Security.pdf

175 Stephen, C. 2012. 'After Qadhafi, Libya splits into disparate militia zones'. *The Observer*, 10 June.

176 Khan, ibid.

177 Lacher writes that GNC Decision No. 7 of October 2012 was taken following the death of a revolutionary from Misrata. The decision, supported by Misratan representatives within the GNC, authorized a military offensive against Bani Walid – a city perceived to harbour regime loyalist tendencies – by militias from Misrata and other revolutionary groups. Lacher, W., op. cit., p. 13.

178 Amnesty International. 2012. op. cit.

179 "Competing brigades from particularly Zintan, Misrata, and Tripoli have clashed in often deadly fights." UNICEF. 2011. *Libya Crisis*. Situation Report No. 31. Reporting period: 23 November – 15 December 2011.

180 IHS, op.cit.

181 Zintani and Misratan armed groups are credited with capturing Tripoli in August 2011.

the NTC appointed the commander of the Zintan Military Council, Osama Juwali,[182] as Defence Minister. Juwali was perceived as biased, allocating significant security responsibilities to Zintani armed units during his tenure (which lasted until October 2012), such as ports, borders and Tripoli International Airport. In addition, the capture of Saif al-Islam Qadhafi by Zintani units provided Zintan with significant leverage in its relations with central authorities.

However, with the NFA in free fall, Zintan has entered a new chapter in its relations with central authorities.[183] Zintan made efforts to expand its influence in Tripoli, using its significant strength within the national PFG[184] to operate a protection racket on the nascent state by cutting off the state's oil lifeline when politics moved in a less favourable direction. Further south, clashes between armed units of the Zintan and the Tuareg[185] – a tribe with well-known links to illicit cross-border activities – raises the question of whether Zintan's expansion is more a matter of competition for lucrative smuggling routes as opposed to revolutionary fervour and patriotism.[186]

Meanwhile, many of the actions involving armed actors in the north-east display political and ideological motivations.[187] As well as upholding their reputation as guardians of the revolution, many north-eastern armed groups have also intervened overtly in national politics. In the run-up to the GNC elections in July 2012, offices of the High National Election Commission in the East were attacked and federalist armed groups blockaded oil terminals in protest at the allocation of seats to Cyrenaica.[188] Very recently, in an attempt to terminate the political process and reverse the consolidation of power in the centre, the federalists have escalated this tactic into a country-wide stoppage of oil production. Gunmen from eastern Islamist brigades, in turn, joined hands with brigades from revolutionary stronghold Misrata, in the sieges outside the Foreign and Justice Ministries in early May 2013 to demand the passage of the Political Isolation Law.

The divide between Islamists and Centrists

Although a spirit of cooperation initially seemed to settle on relations between armed groups with federalist, Islamist, and Salafist agendas in the East, their common interest

182 Former NTC defence minister, Osama Juwali, has recently acted as a spokesperson on behalf of Zintani authorities in the trial of Saif al-Islam in his latest position as a member of Zintan Local Council. Cousins, M. 2013. 'Saif Al-Islam appears in Zintan court', *Libya Herald*. 2 May.
183 Lamloun, I. 2013, op.cit.
184 Interview with Crisis Group Analyst, 14 June 2013.
185 Human Rights Investigations. 2012, op.cit.
186 Zintani units have also been implicated in weapons-smuggling from the south following the seizure in the north-west of a truck from the 'Combating Crime Unit of Zintan' carrying 34 surface-to-surface missiles. Mzioudet, H. 2013. 'Libya Shield brigade arrests group with rockets'. *Libya Herald*, 18 June. The very same 'Combating Crime Unit' is arresting other groups on the charge of illegal possession of weapons. Mzioudet, H. 'Libya Shield Brigade arrests group with rockets'. *Libya Herald*. 18 June 2013.
187 Armed groups in the East are frequently described as hardline revolutionaries, Islamists, (transnational) extremists and eastern separatists or federalists (though the politics of separatism appears to be cross-cutting and less deeply embedded in the political agenda).
188 United Nations Security Council. 2012. *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)*. S/2012/675. 30 August.

was based on a shared hostility towards the predominance of national-centrists in the transitional government. The passage of the Political Isolation Law, however, has triggered a series of changes that is trickling down into the strategies of armed groups.

The popular protest in June against the influential Islamist **Libyan Shield 1** in Benghazi, and the killings that followed, are illustrative of the fluidity of these alliances. As the most high-profile Islamist-oriented armed group, composed of the most powerful revolutionary armed groups, the Libyan Shield Forces enjoy significant influence over the security institutions of the central state. In contrast, the national armed forces in the East, which are more closely associated with the federalist movement, have comparatively little capacity and prestige.[189] The power grab by political Islamists following the passage of the Political Isolation Law had thus been shifting the balance of power within the Eastern alliance away from federalists. In the weeks prior to the protest, tensions and resentment rose among some military officers over the position of Libyan Shield Forces and the then Army Chief Yousef Mangoush's inability or unwillingness to curb them.[190] The reported involvement of federalists among the protesters, and the deployment of the Special Forces unit who are more affiliated with the federalists in the East, suggests that the protests against Libya Shield 1 was yet another example of manoeuvring by armed interest groups, in this case in response to the assertion of power by political Islamists within the state.[191]

The growing influence of political Islamist and Islamist armed groups thus appears to have pushed federalists out of the arms of their fellow Eastern factions and into a new tactical alliance with the NFA.[192] While this shift is undoubtedly significant for political developments in Libya in the short term, it also exemplifies the fluidity of affiliations in Libya, where the vicissitudes of transition politics trigger shifts in the patterns of interest, dynamics and mobilization of armed groups.

Nationalist extremist groups

Unlike the brigades who use their armed strength in support of their political allies, extremist jihadist groups ultimately aim to overhaul the political system in order to establish an Islamic state. A number of incidents, such as the recent spate of bombings in Benghazi and Derna, and the routine targeting of state security bodies,[193] appear to be calculated to undermine the authority of the government and the emerging central state

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189 Interview with Crisis Group Analyst, 14 June 2013.
190 Mohamed, E. and Batrawy, A. 2013. 'Benghazi Protest Violence: Clashes Between Protesters, Libya Militia Leave At Least 31 Dead'. *Huffington Post*, 9 June.
191 News coverage after the protest reported the presence of federalists among the protesters, which was ended when the army's Special Forces moved in to secure the headquarters after Libya Shield 1 members fled. Mohamed, E and Batrawy, A., op. cit.
192 Interview with Crisis Group Analyst, 14 June 2013.
193 *Libya Herald* articles: 'Derna intelligence officer murdered'. 11 May 2013; 'Bomb at Benghazi police station'. 27 April 2013; 'Policeman killed in Derna'. 15 April 2013; 'Derna courthouse bombed'. 30 March 2013; 'Benghazi CID chief abducted by armed men'. 3 January 2013; 'Bomb targets North Benghazi Prosecutor's Office'. 31 December 2012.

apparatus, as well as to increase the extremist clout vis-à-vis other armed groups.[194]

As a result of this escalation, the international community is eyeing Jihadism in Libya with trepidation. Notwithstanding their limited popular support, armed extremist groups are said to be the best financed, to have transnational ideological allies and to be well positioned within smuggling networks.[195] A prime concern is that these groups 'may attract international support in the form of fighters and material assistance or, equally, be a source of support to ideologically aligned groups beyond Libya'.[196] This potentially hands them a comparative advantage over other armed groups, who are likely to be circumscribed by the central state following the recent shift of power within the GNC, and weakened by the pull of other political or group affiliations within Libya.

Strong material support for extremist groups could profoundly upset the Libyan transition. However, an assessment of violent extremism in Libya points to complex ties between Jihadist groups and other armed interest groups within the country, transnational organizations, and the emerging central authorities. Jihadism must in the first place be understood as part of the post-revolutionary political and security landscape.

Many of today's leading Jihadist figures in Libya can be traced back to the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood and its armed offshoots, such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). Despite their long history of opposition to the Qadhafi regime, the LIFG and affiliates were not the main instigators of the 2011 revolution. Nevertheless, as a result of their unique paramilitary experience and ties to foreign patrons,[197] they soon dominated the insurgency.[198] For example, former LIFG leader Abdelhakim Belhadj, who was once held by the CIA, played a key role in seizing Qadhafi's compound as head of the Tripoli Military Council in August 2011, reportedly with military and financial backing from Qatar.[199]

The LIFG has since fragmented into a wide spectrum of interest groups and many of them now figure in Libya's political arena. However, in particular the younger generation, more likely to have been radicalized by witnessing Qadhafi's persecution of the older LIFG generation and inspired by Salafist-Jihadist *YouTube* clips, have regrouped to pursue a more militant Jihadist agenda in the East.[200] Most notable among them are the **Abu**

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194 Ellawati, M., Wahab, A. A. and Elumani, A. 2013. 'Defence Minister Barghati calls Benghazi attacks "unbearable"'. *Libya Herald*. 18 May.

195 United Nations Security Council. 2013. *Final report of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011) concerning Libya*. S/2013/99. 15 February. p. 11

196 United Nations Security Council. 2013, op. cit.

197 Although Qatar denied all allegations, there is evidence to back the claim that Qatar has sent military support to the revolutionaries. United Nations Security Council. 2013. Op. cit., pp. 16–19. Many believe that Qatar is still supporting Salafist groups in Libya. See for example: Ellawati, M. 2013. 'Benghazi protestors support government, condemn Qatar'. *Libya Herald*, 10 May.

198 "Most of the brigades that fought against Qadhafi had an Islamist, and sometimes Jihadi, background" in Ashour, O. 2012a. *Libyan Islamists unpacked: Rise, transformation, and future*. Brookings Doha Center. p. 3.

199 Risen, J., Mazetti, M. and Schmidt, M.S. 2012. 'U.S.-Approved arms for Libya rebels fell into jihadis' hands'. *New York Times*, 5 December.

200 This split may reflect a generational conflict as much as an ideological divide over the former LIFG's working relationship with the centrist national government. Both Abdelhakim Belhadj

Salim Martyrs' Brigade in Derna and **Ansar al-Sharia** in Benghazi.[201] All pursue a Jihadist agenda, albeit taking different stances towards state authority, the population and foreign actors.

Named after the 2006 massacre of Islamist political prisoners in the high-security prison Abu Salim, the Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade emerged in response to the LIFG's transition into politics. Unwilling to give up militancy, LIFG veterans with alleged links to the Al-Qaida Senior Leadership (AQSL),[202] founded the Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade in the Islamist stronghold Derna with the aim of continuing violent campaigns against Qadhafi-era officials and 'infidels'. Today, Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade has effectively taken over state responsibilities in Derna. It supervises community projects, and has pushed its way into the SSC after having assassinated a former colonel of the Libyan army who was next in line to be the new head of the security services in Derna.[203] This gives them enough leverage to impose a strict interpretation of Islamic norms on the population.[204] The brigade is further strengthening itself through illicit enterprises such as drug-trafficking and arms-smuggling to Gaza, as well as running a transfer training camp for volunteers in Syria from Europe and the Maghreb.[205]

More radical still are the Libyan branches of **Ansar al-Sharia**[206] in Benghazi and Derna, which are not connected to one another.[207] The Ansar al-Sharia brigade in Benghazi is most closely followed, and is held responsible for the terrorist attack on US Ambassador Stevens in September 2012 as well as being linked to the bomb explosion at the French

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and Sami al-Saadi, former deputy of the LIFG, have complained about younger members and other Jihadists challenging their authority in this regard. Ashour, O. 'Ex-Jihadists in the New Libya'. *Foreign Policy Magazine*. 29 August 2011.

201 In addition, an eye should be kept on the lesser-known Brigades of Imprisoned Sheikh Omar Adbul Rahman, which have claimed responsibility for bomb attacks against the US consulate and the International Committee of the Red Cross in June 2012, and the attack on the US consulate in September 2012 that resulted in the death of US Ambassador Christopher Stevens. Robertson, N., Cruickshank, P. and Lister, T. 2012. 'Pro-al Qaeda group seen behind deadly Benghazi attack'. *CNN*, 13 September; *YouTube*, '6/6/12 Attack at US Consulate in Benghazi by Brigades of the Imprisoned Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman'. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhhyGB-ttMU.

202 Among the founders of the Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade are Abd al-Hakim al-Hasadi, former LIFG member and veteran of the Afghan war who personally recruited volunteers to go to Iraq, and LIFG veteran Sufyan bin Qumu, who had links to Osama bin Laden in Sudan and fought with the Taliban. Wehrey, F. 2012b. *The struggle for security in eastern Libya*. Carnegie Endowment, p. 10; Zelin, A. and Lebovich, A. 2012. *Assessing Al-Qa'ida's presence in the new Libya*. CTC Sentinel. 22 March.

203 Wehrey, F. 2012b. op. cit., p. 11.

204 U.S. Embassy in Tripoli. op. cit.

205 Wehrey, F. 2012a. op. cit., pp. 10–11.

206 Some observers point at the trend among Jihadists worldwide to adopt the name '*ansar*' (supporters), often followed by sharia (Islamic law) in, for example, Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Libya. Or followed by *dine* (Islamic religion), such as in Mali. This name should be considered more of a brand of a shared ideology rather than a homogeneous group with unified command structure. Zelin, A.Y. 'Know your Ansar al-Sharia'. *Foreign Policy Magazine*. 21 September. 2012[a]

207 Wehrey, F. 2012b. op. cit., p. 11.

embassy in April 2013[208] – although the movement has denied responsibility for the attacks.[209] Led by former political prisoner Muhammad Ali al-Zahawi, the movement 'aims to unify all Islamists groups in Libya, to wage jihad against 'tyrants and polytheists' and eliminate secular courts in the country'.[210] Al-Zahawi maintains that there are no links with Al-Qaida, though contrary to the former LIFG leadership, he thoroughly approves of its strategy.[211]

There are strong indications that Ansar al-Sharia and affiliated militant Salafist groups pragmatically cooperate with the JCP affiliated Libyan Shield Forces in the East,[212] and have even penetrated the highest echelons of the SSC. In the past, this has materialized into armed support for the revolutionary hardliner coalition in Tripoli. Ansar al-Sharia's infiltration of the SSC became particularly apparent during its violent campaign to demolish Sufi shrines.[213] 'SSC personnel were on hand to 'maintain order'', but against official orders, '[this] turned out to mean stopping protesters from disrupting the Salafists in finishing the job'.[214] Some of the local brigade commanders taking part in the demolition were heads of SSC branches.[215] The weak government response to the shrine attacks could be interpreted as evidence of collusion, or of the presence of prominent Salafists within the SSC, the Interior Ministry and the Justice Ministry who were acting to protect the Salafi project of Ansar al-Sharia.[216] Above all, the attacks by Ansar al-Sharia may be regarded as a means to undermine the dominance of the NFA in the nascent post-revolutionary state.[217]

Despite links with the new paramilitary security institutions, the Jihadist agenda does not yet resonate across Libyan society. In Derna, Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade vendettas against Qadhafi-era government officials have faced popular opposition, and the brigade was briefly chased out of the city in 2012.[218] Ansar al-Sharia's rally in Benghazi after the attack on the American consulate met with fierce protests from local NGOs and women's groups, causing the group and two other militant Salafi groups to abandon their

208 McKeon, H.P. et al. 2013. *Interim progress report for the members of the House Republican Conference on the events surrounding the September 11, 2012, terrorist attacks in Benghazi, Libya*. US House of Representatives.
209 Maher, A. 2012. 'Meeting Mohammad Ali al Zahawi of Libyan Ansar al-Sharia'. BBC News. 18 September.
210 Wehrey, F. 2012b. op. cit., p. 11.
211 Muhammad Ali al-Zahawi in: Maher, A., op. cit.
212 Benghazi-based units from the Libyan Shield Forces secured and participated in Ansar al-Sharia's heavily armed Forum for the victory of Sharia in the centre of Benghazi, which was the group's first step to achieving to the unification of groups with a Jihadist agenda. Lacher, W., op. cit., p. 17.
213 The campaign reached its peak in August 2012 when Ansar al-Sharia used an excavator to demolish the Sidi al Sha'ab Mosque in the city centre of Tripoli. Ward, S. 'The battle of the shrines'. *Foreign Policy Magazine*, 12 September 2012.
214 Grant, G. 2012. 'Why the Supreme Security Committee must be brought to heel – before it's too late'. *Libyan Herald*, 29 August.
215 Wehrey, F. 2013. op. cit.
216 Ward, S., op. cit.; and Grant, G. 2012. 'National Congress summons PM, Defence Minister and Interior Minister for questioning over shrine desecrations'. *Libya Herald*. 25 August.
217 Schwartz, S. in: Ward, S., op. cit.
218 Wehrey, F. 2013. op. cit.

headquarters.[219] This has led to a tactical re-branding of Ansar al-Sharia as a civil society organization, with their well-known logo of automatic rifles, an open Koran, and a fist appearing on local anti-drugs campaign posters,[220] while their members patrol hospitals and provide humanitarian services to residents.[221] Investing in social programmes is likely to earn the groups the soft power they will need to increase popular receptiveness to their objectives,[222] and may also weaken some of their more rigid ideological precepts.

Transnational extremism

The security vacuum after the fall of Qadhafi's regime has also opened a wealth of opportunities for al-Qaida affiliates from the Sahel, the Maghreb, the Arab Peninsula and Pakistan to pursue their interests on Libyan territory. Ample evidence shows that weapons and resources from Libya are fuelling wars in Syria, Mali and other conflict areas,[223] and are falling mostly into the hands of Jihadist groups. **Al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)**, as well as renegade AQIM-commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar's Signatories in Blood battalion, are both linked to activities in southern Libya. It is on Libyan territory where al-Qaida affiliates appear to be testing a new decentralized strategy, focused on cooperation with local Jihadist groups instead of outright alliance-building, with results that are so far uncertain.[224]

Libya's weapons caches, porous borders and proliferating radical militia afford various possibilities for foreign Islamist fighting groups seeking a safe haven and a source of supplies. But a significantly greater degree of strategic cooperation between transnational extremists and national counterparts would be needed to wrest political control over Libyan territory – in the way that Jihadist insurgents and local tribes annexed northern Mali in 2012. An assessment of the possibility of more systemic cooperation of this kind hinges on two connected questions: what are the prospects for Libyan extremist groups wishing to exploit linkages with al-Qaida-affiliated foreign sponsors? And to what extent

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219 Stephen, C. 2012. 'Unarmed people power drums Libya's Jihadists out of Benghazi'. *The Observer,* 22 September.
220 Interview with expert on post-conflict societies, 15 May 2013.
221 Elourfi, A. 2013. 'Ansar al-Sharia returns to Benghazi'. *Magharebia*. 26 February.
222 This radical change of tactics echoes broader Jihadist guidelines developed by AQIM in the context of Mali, prescribing that national Jihadist initiatives keep a low profile and focus on winning the hearts and minds of the population before aiming to acquire political and military power. The guidelines warn against radical activities such as the application of the had (religious punishment) and destruction of 'idolatrous' shrines. See: Droukdel, A. 2013. *Mali-Al-Qaida's playbook*. Found by the Associated Press in a building occupied by Al-Qaida fighters in Timbuktu.
223 United Nations Security Council. 2013. op.cit.
224 An analysis of letters from the Shura Council of AQIM to Mokhtar Belmokhtar, obtained by the Associated Press in Timbuktu in 2013, suggests that the reason for this change of tactics is twofold: 1) The Arab Spring "showed the power of people to break regimes, and turned on its head al-Qaida's long-held view that only violence could bring about wholesale change." Callimachi, R. 2013. 'The big story: In Timbuktu, Al-Qaida left behind a manifesto'. AP, 14 February; 2) 'The lowering number of mujahedeen and the widening territory in the north [Mali]'. Letter from the Shura Council of AQIM to Mokhtar Belmokhtar, obtained by the Associated Press in Timbuktu in 2012, p. 18. See also: Zelin, A.Y. 2012b. *Jihadism's Foothold in Libya. Policy Analysis*. Washington Institute.

could transnational Jihadist organisations become embroiled in the disputes and competition between Libyan armed groups?

One clear example of the sort of inter-relations that have flourished between foreign and local Jihadists can be found in the south of Libya. After the French-led forces drove AQIM and its affiliates Ansar Dine and MUJAO from their bastions in northern Mali,[225] Islamist militants have reportedly moved to south-west Libya. Among their ranks are many Malian Tuareg, some of whom – including Ansar Dine's leader Iyad Ag Ghali – were trained in Qadhafi's Islamic Legion in the 1990s. Their control over the primary smuggling route between West Africa and Libya and their tribal linkages with the local Tuareg in the South – who are themselves active smugglers – has helped to turn the vast and lawless territory of south-west Libya into a natural refuge for Mali's Jihadists. It is likely that the Malian Tuaregs integrated themselves into the local Tuareg-dominated smuggling economy. They may well use their firepower to support their kin against competitors for control over borders and trading routes.[226]

The exodus of the Jihadists from Mali to Libya has also served to ease AQIM's entrance into the South and enabled the group to use the lawless region as a logistical base for planning and carrying out terrorist attacks across the Sahel, with the help of the large cache of weapons left over from the Libyan insurgency. Dissident AQIM commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar appears to have sought sanctuary in the Fezzan,[227] along with his Malian allies[228] and may be helped by strong connections to the Tuareg community.[229] Belmokhtar allegedly masterminded both the Amenas hostage crisis in Algeria in January 2013, and the twin suicide bombings of 23 May 2013 in Niger from his hiding place in Libya.[230] Some observers also link him to the deadly attack on the US embassy in September 2012, in which he was assumed to have played a role.[231] Through these

225 The UN Security Council lists evidence for the alliance between AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO in the *Narrative summaries of reasons for listing – 1267/1989, QE.A.135.13.ANSAR EDDINE*, http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE13513E.shtml. Also see AQIM's manifesto in which the Shura Council offers to set aside a portion of the mujahedeen of Al-Qaida and "put them under the complete control of the emir of Ansar Dine to participate in bearing the burden of running the affairs of the liberated cities". Droukdel, A., op. cit., p. 1.

226 For example, with armed groups from Zintan. For an overview of security incidents involving Tuaregs and the Zintan, see Human Rights Investigations website. op. cit.; For an analysis of the Tuareg in Libya and their relations with their Malian kin, see: Cole, P. 2012. op. cit.

227 Koepf, T. 2013. *Terrorist attacks in Niger: not another Mali*. European Union Institute for Security Studies. Issue Alert.

228 Belmokhtar joined the administration of Gao after it was seized by MUJAO. See: *BBC News Africa*. 2013. 'Mali: Key players', 12 March.

229 Belmokhtar is reported to have married four wives of whom at least two are believed to be Tuareg. See: *BBC News Africa*. 2013. 'Profile: Mokhtar Belmokhtar'. 4 June.

230 On 23 May 2013, two groups of suicide bombers targeted a military barracks in Agadez and a French-owned uranium mine in Arlit. About 30 people were killed in the attacks (at least six of the dead were Jihadists). See: Nossiter, A. 2013. 'Militant says he is behind attack in Niger'. *New York Times*, May 24.

231 After the Benghazi attacks US officials supposedly intercepted a telephone call between Ansar al-Sharia and a senior figure in AQIM, allegedly Belmokhtar, which they linked to the attack(ers). See: Cruickshank, P., Lister, T. and Robertson, N. 2013. 'Phone call links Benghazi attack to al Qaeda commander'. *CNN*, 6 March; Nossiter, A. 2013. 'Some Algeria attackers are placed at Benghazi', *New York Times*, January 22.

attacks he may have been trying to boost his own standing among Jihadists, hoping to be rewarded with AQIM's leadership.

Links with transnational extremism take on a different character in the (north-) east of the country, home to Libya's political Islamist interests and a historic stronghold of national extremism. AQIM's partnership opportunities with those groups are limited, despite claims by the senior leadership of AQIM that, for example, they had taken advantage of the situation in Libya by forming two teams, which '(…) were able to enter Libyan territory and lay the first practical bricks there'.[232] It should emphasized that AQIM's alliance with the Qhadafi-loyalist Tuareg in southern Libya generates resentment among the pro-revolutionary and outspoken anti-establishment extremists in the East. In addition, historical schisms between the LIFG and Algeria-based al-Qaida affiliates (AQIM's predecessor) may also generate resistance against the influence of al-Qaida in Libya.[233] This reduces the receptivity of Libyan extremists to outside support coming from the Maghreb.

Nevertheless, there are definitely pragmatic connections between Libyan extremists and al-Qaida affiliates across the Middle East. Eastern Libya has become both a transfer point for fighters from Western Europe and the Maghreb heading to Syria,[234] a source of weapons for the Syrian rebels,[235] and a recruiting ground for homegrown Jihadists.[236] In addition, eastern Libyans have a reputation for participating in Jihadist conflicts abroad. Libya sent more fighters to Iraq on a per capita basis than any other Muslim country, and Derna sent more than any other city in the world.[237] More recently, dozens of Libyans have joined the armed opposition in Syria.[238] Given the potential for foreign Islamist fighters participating in conflicts abroad to become sources of unrest upon their return, the Libyan Jihadists abroad deserve attention.[239] They may be more prone to exploiting

232 Letter from the Shura Council of AQIM to Mokhtar Belmokhtar. op. cit.
233 The one strategic alliance that the LIFG did build with another Jihadist movement – the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), a predecessor of today's AQIM – ended in a bloodbath. Important commanders from LIFG's leadership were executed by the GIA, after refusing to pledge an oath of loyalty to the Emir of the Algerian movement. See: Ashour, O. 2012a. op cit., p. 6.
234 French and Algerian security services identified 21 Algerians and 5 French citizens fighting with al-Qaida in Syria. These fighters went through Libya for training before travelling to Turkey with fake Libyan passports to cross the border to Syria. *Al-Manar News*. 2012. 'Algerians, French fighting with Al-Qaeda in Syria', 14 March.
235 Donati, Jessica, Shennib, Ghaith and Bosalum, Firas. 2013. 'The adventures of a Libyan weapons dealer in Syria'. *Reuters*. 18 June.
236 The Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade is reputed to run a training camp for volunteers in Syria. Abd al-Baset Azzouz, a senior Libyan al-Qaida member and long-time close associate of AQSL leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, is supposedly one of five extremist commanders said to be operating militant training camps in and around Derna. Al-Qaida affiliate Sufyan bin Qumu, a former Guantanamo Bay detainee and leader of Derna's Ansar al-Sharia, is said to be operating a small paramilitary force training camp in the Bou Musafir forest in the outskirts of the city. Ashour, O. 2012b. *Libya's Jihadist minority*. Project Syndicate; Robertson, N., Cruickshank, P. and Karadsheh, J. 2012. 'Libyan official: U.S. drones seeking Jihadists in Libya'. *CNN*, 7 June.
237 Zelin, A.Y. 2012b. op. cit.
238 Most Libyans join Liwaa al-Umma in Syria, formerly led by Mahdi al-Harati, an Irish-Libyan who led the Tripoli Brigade during the Battle of Tripoli. Zelin, A. 2012b. op. cit.
239 Zelin, A.Y. 2012b. op. cit.

their contacts with outside patrons to achieve national objectives than extremists who are strongly embedded in local communities.

Transnational extremist groups seem to benefit from the large stock of weapons and ungoverned areas of post-revolutionary Libya, and the East continues to be a transfer hub and recruitment pond for Jihadists. However, there is no substantial evidence that al-Qaida affiliates would collude directly with Libyan extremist groups to intervene in national affairs as they did in Mali in 2012. In the same fashion, Libyan extremist groups do not yet seem intent on forging transnational partnerships with like-minded organizations, despite support for global Jihad, notably Syrian rebellion. Therefore, the fear that Libya could become the next epicentre of global Jihadism by linking the destabilizing presence of al-Qaida affiliates seems overrated at present.

Conclusions

An era marked by the existence of hundreds of militia factions, low-intensity combat, terror attacks on state and foreign targets, shoot-outs between armed groups and local people and the penetration into national territory of transnational extremists fresh from annexing half of Mali's territory does not seem to augur well for Libya's future. However, the analysis presented in this chapter has sought to focus less on the immediate impact of acts of terror and intimidation, and much more on the way these manifestations of post-conflict instability fit within the broader frame of security policy, political competition and extremist ideology.

Libya's security reality is based on an awkward balance between peace by co-option and disarray in official security policy, which generates the spaces in which political violence and extremism can flourish. Peace by co-option invariably rewards the use of intimidation and coercion in political life. As the pattern of interests that generate cooperation and competition between armed groups of different affiliations evolve, groups and individual fighters demonstrate an ability to adapt their partnerships and strategies to emerging realities. Indeed, the volatility of coalition formation in Tripoli is mirrored in armed group behaviour across the country.

Former revolutionary allies are now split between Islamist armed groups and brigades hailing from Misrata on the one hand and the tribal alliance around Zintan on the other, generating new unexpected partnerships between former competitors. Many scenarios may unfold as new political realities emerge in the near future, the riskiest of which is likely to be an outright military stand-off between the militias supporting the dominant coalition hardline revolutionaries and the Muslim Brotherhood in the GNC on the one hand and, on the other, those with vested tribal interests, federalist aspirations and Jihadist ideologies who see their interests crushed by the consolidation of power of this new coalition.

The benefits of pragmatic deals and buy-outs have serious drawbacks in terms of consolidating state control. Achieving any real central command over the security system will be hampered by armed groups loath to relinquish the power and livelihoods that have been guaranteed by their weapons. Weak or factionalized security institutions and

the array of armed groups allow opportunities for armed groups under pressure to operate protection rackets on the dominant coalition in the nascent state, and for transnational Jihadist groups to access arms and territory, or to link up with Libyan armed groups. As a result, Libya is now widely considered at risk of a lurch towards further escalation of violence.

With this in mind, any future initiatives aimed at centralizing coercive force must be balanced against the risk that this could drive extremist groups into the arms of the other estranged opposition forces and protection racketeers, like Zintan and the federalists. Another risk is that it will prompt extremist groups to convert ideological linkages with transnational like-minded groups into direct cooperation. One result could be that these groups gain the upper hand over other influential militia tied to the state, such as the Misratans.

On a more positive note, the fluidity of the multiple, overlapping affiliations within armed groups, and even within individual members of armed groups, affords significant space for state-supported moves to pacification as it diminishes the risk of violent schisms and the formation of self-governed enclaves. The multiple channels connecting state officials to armed groups, the flow of funds to the groups and their links to political life in the GNC and local authorities are not, perhaps, typical elements of a healthy democracy. However, they also represent important impediments to a radical expansion strategy by any armed extremist group.

To have any chance of success, initiatives to neutralise the power of armed groups will require much more than a security strategy. They will need to address the myriad political, tribal-communal, economic, and ideological interests driving armed groups in Libya and their individual members, and do so in a way that recognizes the prime importance of factional rivalry between these groups.

Likewise, any effort to achieve stricter control over Libya’s southern borders should be undertaken with the greatest caution. In the absence of a coherent national security apparatus, and given the likelihood that any eventual national security forces will be composed of factional constituents from the leading militia groups, efforts to impose strict control on smuggling, illicit activity or Islamist extremism risk being regarded as the opportunistic work of certain militia seeking to use official policy to their own advantage. As already seen in the violent rivalry sparked between Zintan border guard brigades and Tuareg in southern Libya, it is not advisable to declare a national security policy for the country without being sure that it is being undertaken as a state, and not through an assemblage of interest groups.

Supporting Libya's transition: policy considerations

Post-revolutionary Libya is riven by numerous internal divisions and disputes, each with an uncertain dénouement. Just as significantly, the surrounding region is immersed in multiple crises that are likely to spill over borders in unforeseeable ways, whether through tribal tension, extremist migration, weapons trafficking, or new forms of democracy or authoritarianism that could dramatically alter the course of the Arab transitions.

In this turmoil, the country's political settlement is characterized by extreme factionalism and ever-shifting coalitions of disparate interests – be they locally or tribally grounded, ideologically inspired, or financially motivated – glued together by oil and gas revenues. On top of these highly unstable foundations of the state, exclusionary politics have been resurfacing at exceptional speed, and the use of violence continues to be common and decentralized.

Libya's transition has brought serious headaches for those trying to improve governance and security, let alone for international actors – like the United Nations, the European Union and bilateral donors – who aim to support stabilization strategies for the country. Islamist extremists and cross-border smugglers enjoy strong links to state actors; armed Qadhafi-loyal elements are seeking new alliances; arms and Jihadist warriors flow freely in and out of the country; and counter-establishment groups are setting out to challenge their marginalization. None of this revolutionary riptide is in doubt. But unless close attention is given to the way Libya's interest groups and factions compete for power at the centre stage, the international community might support government policies that look good on paper, yet only serve to worsen the country's divisions and aggravate extremism.

Parameters for policy-making in Libya

On the basis of insights from this study, recent events in the Arab region, and similar troubled transitions in other parts of the world,[240] it is reasonable to expect that low-level

240 Particularly instructive as comparisons are the ongoing instability in Egypt, the violent and criminalized post-conflict transitions in Central America and the Balkans, and the intra-elite post-war settlements in Lebanon and Tajikistan.

violent competition between fluid interest groups will continue to set the parameters for any international engagement with Libya.

Given the alignment of Libyan armed groups with political and ideological interests in the centre, as well as the volatility of these coalitions, efforts to eliminate the threats posed by armed groups through pay-offs and sporadic crackdowns are unlikely to have great success. It is probable that the much-anticipated new national security forces will be composed largely of those who are linked to the dominant political coalition, aggravating competition for state resources and rents, and potentially driving unaligned armed groups into the arms of extremist factions. In such a context, shadowy 'fixers' connected to militia forces, political parties and parts of the oil industry could be empowered to become key arbitrators in the formation and overthrow of administrations. This is likely to make government coalitions weak and short-lived, even though the state's capacity and performance may improve through technical reforms.

Unfortunately, patronage and interest groups embedded in the administration and the security apparatus cannot be wished away without incurring considerable risks of instability. Untimely and poorly handled efforts to rein in the armed groups, based on 'peace by co-option', could generate a backlash, should factionalism creep into the security apparatus and opportunities arise for transnational Jihadist groups to expand their influence in the country

Principles for engagement in the Libyan patron-state

This somewhat discouraging reality may curb ambitious objectives set out in the many engagement strategies of multilateral agencies and bilateral donors. The balance of evidence from the evolution of the country's political economy since the overthrow of Qadhafi's regime indeed suggests that a limited number of trajectories are open to the country. A realistic assessment of the basic requirements for governance and security support in the country will help policy-makers in the international community to identify those programmes and projects that are geared towards the incremental development of a public-interest state, while preventing them from actually contributing to worst-case scenarios riddled with chronic instability and violence.

At the same time, it is best to adopt a cautious approach towards the foreseeable impact of international support strategies. Despite a number of sensible initiatives aimed at helping the country's post-revolutionary path towards stability and democracy (initiatives that are merely a diverse set of assistance measures in the area of governance, rule of law and security), suspicion of external involvement is widespread. Meanwhile, certain interest groups are keen to frustrate any international presence in Libya. Such sentiments are likely to impede the effectiveness of international support, and might lead to backlashes against well-intentioned programmes in the fields of governance or security.

The basic principle for development assistance in Libya is the understanding that any type of action or engagement by the international community could produce side effects, or unintended consequences. Current conditions in Libya challenge many donor

perceptions and assumptions, and require counter-intuitive reasoning based on acknowledgement of the country's real political economy.

This is illustrated by, for example, international and bilateral support strategies for the political transition process, as well as assistance aimed at enhancing stability and countering violence. In light of the current disintegration of transitional Libyan state institutions, the reflex is to support processes that promote political inclusion and improve state service delivery; for example, national dialogue, political party development, strengthening civil society and national associations of businesses or lawyers, and technical capacity-building of the state bureaucracy. These are all important routes to the development of a state that can identify and act on behalf of the public interest. But the Libyan political reality defies this logic in the short term. Given the plethora of factionalized interests, political inclusion or co-option of too many different interests may in fact lead to further fragmentation of the state. In Libya, chronic political rivalry over the distribution of power and rents has resulted in the 'takeover' of government by the coalition that proved to be dominant, and a consolidation of the practice of exclusion. Capacity-building of the state bureaucracy in this context raises the question of whose capacity is being built, and for what purpose.

Efforts to strengthen good governance, as outlined for example in UN and EU strategies, are thus likely to be confronted with increased polarization within the political domain. Such dynamics make it difficult for the international community to help steer Libya away from state capture by local, private or regime interests.

Likewise, strengthening the formal security apparatus and Libya's border control capacity, as envisaged by the UN Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM), does not necessarily lead to more security. This paper has argued strongly for a cautious and temperate approach towards the risks of escalation of conflict and criminal activity across Libya, tailored to the dispersed geographic profiles of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the Fezzan. Any strategy towards building a national security force that is too simplistic would be likely to aggravate the exclusion of groups unaligned with the governing coalition, further upsetting the equilibrium between armed groups and possibly driving extremists into the arms of foreign sponsors.

In the same fashion, the absence of a coherent national security apparatus and the self-interested behaviour of armed groups counsel against introducing imperfectly trained and equipped personnel to control border areas or factional havens, where they might become complicit with criminal or extremist activity. The opportunistic work of militia seeking to use official policy to their own advantage poses a real threat to initiatives aimed at achieving stricter control over Libya's borders. However, it is also abundantly clear that Libya will have to muster the capacity to deflect extremist and criminal penetration, and clear the path towards the eventual formation of national security and armed forces. Much of this process will thus rely on persuasion and negotiation with existing militia, programmes for demobilization that address basic demands and grievances, and, inevitably, a strategic distribution of state rents that seeks over time to reduce such dependencies.

On the basis of this study's findings, it is reasonable to suppose that other areas of engagement also require counter-intuitive logic – for example, the initiatives supported by the UN, EU and bilateral donors like the Netherlands that aim to strengthen the justice sector, civil society, gender equality, or media. This is not to say that such avenues for assistance by the international community need to be closed. On the contrary, the current conditions in Libya call for international donors to thoroughly think through and re-evaluate their approach towards the country. The volatility of the transition, marked by the ever-shifting coalitions, invites ongoing analysis of power shifts, and a sensible prioritization and sequencing of policies and programmes. Focused programmes to resolve the political deadlock, to counter violent extremism, and to prevent the penetration of Libya's nascent state by ideological hardliners and organized crime should form keystones of an international strategy to support Libya's struggling transition.

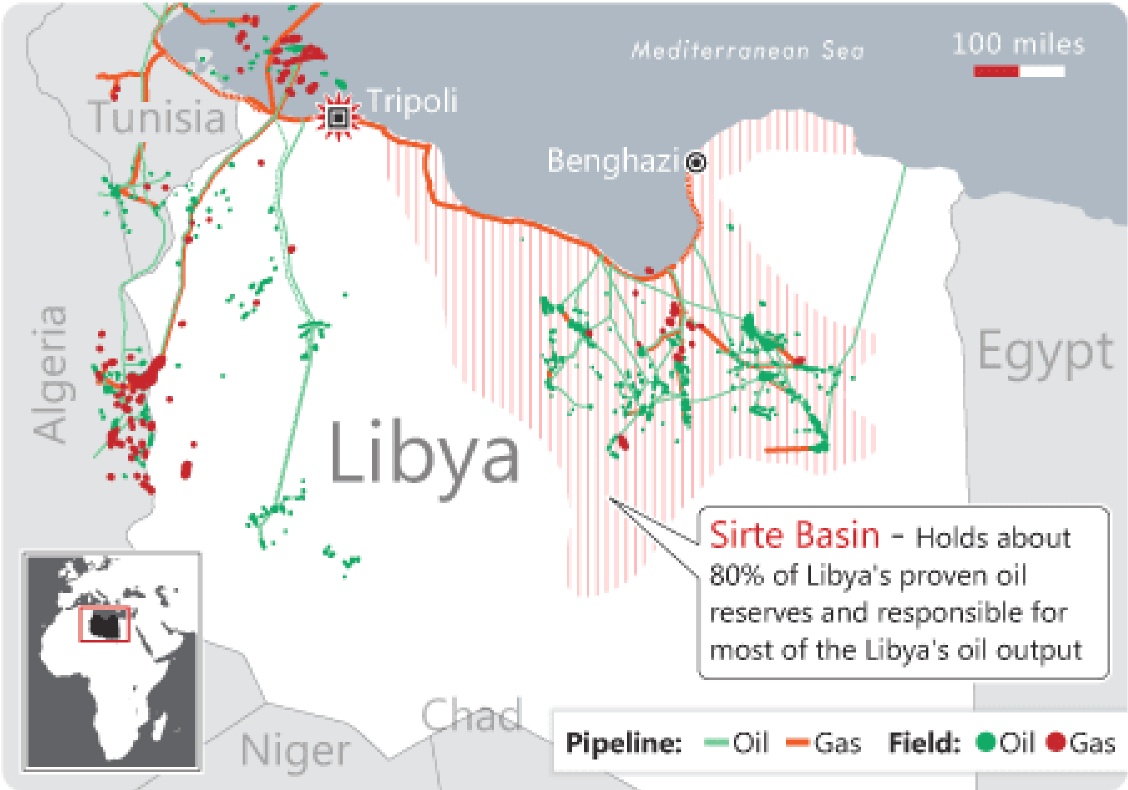
Appendix A: Map of Libya

Source: United Nations, Department of Field Support/Cartographic Section. *Map of Libya.* Map no. 3787, rev 7, February 2012.

Appendix B: Map of traditional provinces and tribes in Libya

Source: Fragile States Resource Center, fragilestates.org

Appendix C: Map of main oil and gas fields in Libya



Source: NBC news

Appendix D: List of abbreviations

AQIM	Al-Qaida in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb
AQSL	Al-Qaida Senior Leadership
EU	European Union
EUBAM	European Union Border Assistance Mission
GNC	General National Congress
JCP	Justice and Construction Party
LIA	Libyan Investment Authority
LIFG	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
NFA	National Forces Alliance
NTC	National Transitional Council
PFG	Petroleum Facilities Guard
SRC	Supreme Revolutionary Council
SSC	Supreme Security Committee
UN	United Nations
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
WAC	Warriors Affairs Committee

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Revolution and its discontents: state, factions and violence in the new Libya

As the international community watches with concern the extended and bloody aftermath of the Arab Spring, Libya has come to exemplify the tortuous route out of dictatorship in North Africa. This paper aims to provide an overview of an extremely variegated and turbulent polity, by outlining the identities and motives of all the main protagonists in modern Libya, from the politicians of the GNC to the allies of the grizzled Jihadist warrior Mokhtar Belmokhtar. It illustrates the need to base international support strategies for Libya's transition on a deep, context-specific understanding of different political and armed groups, the interests that motivate and unite them, and the ways in which they might differ or agree around efforts to strengthen the state and a coherent security system. Rooting the analysis in history and the new political economy of Libya, the report points to the ways in which donor strategy may be devised so as to avoid the lure of quick solutions that might estrange powerful groups and deepen the country's instability.

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Colophon

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