



An Introductory Study on the Status, Challenges and Prospects of the Libyan Society

Part II of a Baseline Study for the Libya Socioeconomic Dialogue Project



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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

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Summary

This paper presents a critical sociological and historical analysis of the Libyan crisis and its impact on Libyan society after 2011. In addition, it reviews and focuses on local strategies for survival and resistance. Four major arguments are made in the analysis of the Libyan crisis. First, that the persistent violence does not stem from cultural concepts such as fragmentation and tribalism but, rather, has been manufactured by the failed leadership and outside intervention. Second, that the case of Libya is not one of a failed state, but one of a failed transition due to intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO) and the inability of the country's elites to lead the country after 2011. Third, the paper presents a historical and sociological reading of State-society relations as a strategy to understand the genealogy of the current crisis. Fourth, the paper examines five specific cases in depth. It interprets the impact of the conflict and the resilience of the society in the face of violence, lawlessness and statelessness after 2014. Finally, specific recommendations are introduced to strategize a plan for moving forward towards a local dialogue that will bring stability, peace and future reconciliation.

Contents

P. 3 Acknowledgements

P. 4 Summary

P. 7 Introduction

P. 7 Conceptual, empirical and theoretical problems

P. 7 Alternative sources

P. 8 Recovering Libyan civil society

P. 9 Is Violence in Libya: cultural or politically based?

P. 11 1. State-formation conflict and the impact of conflict on social fabric cohesion and reintegration

P. 11 1.1 The post-colonial social origins and contradictions of the Libyan State

P. 13 1.2 The militarization of society and the civil war

P. 17 2. The southern question and national identity – regional and tribal affiliations

P. 18 Demystifying regionalism and tribalism

P. 21 3. Violence, radicalization and violent extremism

P. 27 4. Role of cultural and religious norms and values

P. 31 5. National and local reconciliation/dialogue and establishing a social contract

P. 35 Recommendations: strategies for social, political, and institutional reconstruction in Libya

P. 35 Social and political reconstruction

P. 36 Institutional reconstruction

P. 38 Selected Bibliography



Introduction

Conceptual, empirical and theoretical problems

“You cannot take down a mountain with a hammer.”
Libyan proverb

**“The point of it all is not to avenge the dead,
 but to give the living a second chance.”**
Mahmood Mamdani,

Professor, Political Science and Anthropology, Columbia University I encountered two main obstacles as I started my research on the impact of the Libyan post-2011 uprising and the unresolved crisis of transition on Libyan society. First, in reviewing the current scholarship on Libya in both Arabic and English, the policy analysis I encountered was dominated by biased research with ahistorical assumptions of the current crisis. Most of the literature on the Libyan crisis focuses on the present and interprets the past through the lenses of civil conflict and war. This includes regionalism, tribal ideology and social fragmentation as if there was no social history of the crisis. What has been missing is a genealogy of the making of society and how it viewed social conflict through its cultural and social values and experiences, during the colonial and post-colonial periods, along with what has changed and persisted. The second obstacle is the enormous difficulty in conducting research in a time of war and conflict, and the lack of reliable data and statistics on Libyan social structure after 2011. Most of the available data have been manipulated and used for political purposes by various actors.

Yet there are a few reliable studies, including reports by the United Nations Panel of Experts on Libya; the University of Benghazi Research Centre;

plus the studies of Libyan scholars Mustafa al-Teer, Nagib Elhassadi, Zahi al-Moghierbi, Amal Obeidi, and Abeer Mnaina on urbanization and modernization, values and radicalization, gender relations and self-governance in municipalities. There are also valuable insights by Wolfram Lacher and Alaa al-Idrissi on the militia of Tripoli; the United Kingdom’s House of Commons critical report on the NATO intervention in Libya; and the Economist Intelligence Unit’s report on Libya. In this paper on the social baseline of Libya, I argue that without awareness of these two obstacles and the processes behind them, no in-depth analysis of the crisis or impact on and reactions by society to the collapse of the regime, the crisis of transition and the current civil war is possible.

Alternative sources

There are still no reliable quantitative data on such topics as crime, displacement, kidnapping, rape and death. Also, when reviewing available statistics, one encounters discrepancies between various sources both in Arabic and in English. For example, we still do not know how many people were killed due to the NATO intervention in 2011. Some sources state 10,000 casualties, while others indicate much higher numbers. Consequently, one has to be cautious and compare and contrast the various sources. Here I refer mainly to the difficulty of verifying quantitative sources and surveys conducted inside Libya during the time of civil war and conflict. I found that the most reliable surveys were conducted by the University of Benghazi Research Centre due to the fact that in Benghazi and the eastern region of Libya, the war ended earlier and most institutions, including

Benghazi University and other public institutions, survived the civil conflict.

I conducted a research survey via the internet with the help of colleagues and academics inside Libya and in exile. In early April 2019, I posed two basic questions: first, what has changed in Libyan society after 2011, especially in daily life? Second, how did people resist and survive the violence, war, economic hardship and the collapse of the state? I emailed these questions to the respected Libyan veteran journalist and activist Mehdi Kajiji. I asked him not to mention my name, but to post the questions to people who follow his Facebook account. The reactions of men and women were remarkable. I received more than 120 answers from all over the country.

In addition, I interviewed 30 colleagues, asking them the same questions and following up with a request for further elaboration and specifics. The answers from the survey and the interviews provided me with insight into trends about how to think of the social baseline of Libyan society. I use some of these findings in the analysis of the cases I chose to focus on in researching the Libyan social baseline after 2011. Of course, Facebook and the internet reflect only trends and perspectives, rather than providing statistical data.

I also used literary sources that enhanced my research. First, I examined published modern Libyan novelists by focusing on their social backgrounds and by determining their main questions and views of their society in 2011. The novelists, both men and women, presented their own questions and critiques of society, and posited visions for the future to overcome social, sexual and religious inequalities.

Second, I read Shams al-Nawafid Mughlaqa (Sun on Closed Windows), a collection of young Libyan writers edited by the Libyan-American poet and scholar Khalid Mattawa. The collection provides new perspectives on the upheavals that engulfed Libya. It includes chapters from novels as well as poems, memoirs and short stories. The collection

allows us to see how young Libyans view and react to their society's upheavals, armed conflict and displacement.

Third, I conducted a survey questionnaire on seven Libyan university campuses between 2008 and 2010. The survey assessed the views of university students regarding the memory of colonial genocide. The answers from 300 students present an indirect picture of how Libyan youth in the east, central, southern and western regions of Libya viewed their colonial and national history, State ideology and the purpose of education.

Recovering Libyan civil society

The second challenge, after the problem of collecting reliable data and sources, is even more significant, because it involves how to read and intersect the data and the current state of society. I am referring to the problem of assumptions and categories used to understand the current conflict and crisis of transition in Libya after 2011. A summary of the main models and dominant assumptions about Libyan State and society are relevant for this paper.

Two questions must be assumed as a prelude to examining the social baseline in Libya. First, how Libyan society is viewed and the main epistemological assumptions behind reading and interpreting its dynamics and politics. To start, one has to remember that the 2011 uprising was overlooked and not even anticipated by most scholars. In addition, the Libyan opposition to the Gaddafi regime made a risky choice in relying on outside forces to bring regime change without a vision for State-building and reconciliation. When the regime was defeated, contradictions surfaced among the ill-prepared leaders, who went after their rivals and new enemies, driving the society into a state of civil war. It is not surprising that Libya today resembles other nations in conflict.

There is a larger conceptual problem. The vast literature on the Libyan case is defined by what I call the tribal thesis, fragmentation and the lack of modernity. The reference point is the Tunisian and Egyptian colonial models. The Tunisian colonial experience is taken as the ideal, successful model of modernization aided by a Westernized elite, which created a modern secular State. Libya is viewed to have had a failed Italian colonial experience. To put it crudely, Libya was not colonized deeply enough. First of all, is this true? What if one assesses this question from the point of view of the Tunisian south or non-elite perspectives? Above all, this colonial view ignores the historical fact that Libya went through genocide, not modernization, and its history should be viewed from its own cultural and historical traditions rather than the Tunisian elitist case.

Is Violence in Libya: cultural or politically based?

I approach the social baseline of my paper through different assumptions. First, I started from the point of view that Libya is a living society with history deeply rooted in the struggle for self-determination against colonialism and post-colonial dictatorship. Second, I examined both State and society relations. Two significant processes are keys to my analysis: the impact of the civil war on Libyan society and, equally

important, how the society reacted, resisted or existed in this conflict. Finally, I argue that what has been taking place in Libya must be viewed as a civil war when looking back at the structure of armed conflict that has continued with few breaks from the start in 2011, then in again in 2014 and now since 4 April 2019. Instead of a pre-modern tribal and fragmented society, there was a living and modern civil society that was misled by a failed elite leadership, aided by outside actors, and a counter-revolution aiming to maximize its interest to dominate the country. The civil war was manufactured, not inevitable. The crisis in Libya is not caused by tribalism, lack of modernity or the absence of Libyan national identity, but has been a crisis of transition and failed leadership. I shall focus on five issues to examine the impact of, and the reaction to, the conflict in Libyan social structures, institutions and culture.

The five main issues are as follows:

1. State-formation conflict, and the impact of conflict on social fabric cohesion and reintegration.
2. The southern question and national identity, regional and tribal affiliations.
3. Violence, radicalization and violent extremism.
4. Role of cultural and religious norms and values.
5. National and local reconciliation/national dialogue and establishing a social contract.



1. State-formation conflict and the impact of conflict on social fabric cohesion and reintegration

Before examining the impact of the Libyan State on social cohesion, two steps are needed: first, to review the nature and characteristics of the State; and second, to describe the impact on Libyan society since 1951. This social and historical background will provide the context to understand what was accomplished; what was postponed or silenced; and to assess the impact of the collapse of the State and its consequences on Libyan society since 2011.

The modern Libyan State was created in 1951 as a result of an alliance between the Libyan eastern leadership of Sayyid Muhammed Idris al-Sanusi and the British Government during the early stage of the Cold War. This alliance was consolidated through a compromise made by the western and southern Libyan elites to accept Sayyid Idris as the king of the country in exchange for Libyan national unity. Libyan delegates from southern and western Libya gave Sayyid Idris the “Bay’ah”, an oath of allegiance, in 1920 and 1948. The new State was both a post-colonial and rentier State. It was post-colonial because the country went through a brutal settler-colonization by Italy. That led to the destruction of the pre-colonial elite, genocide in 1929 and 1934 and the death of half a million Libyans between 1911 and 1943, as well as the exile of more than 60,000 people. The colonial experience has shaped Libyan nationalism and Libyans’ perceptions of themselves, their identity and politics in 1951, 1969 and even after 2011. When people protested against the Gaddafi regime, they mobilized by reclaiming the heroes and symbols of anti-colonial resistance, notably Omar al-Mukhtar, the national flag and

the national anthem of Libyan independence. These national symbols were modified. In the national anthem, Omar al-Mukhtar replaced the king; and the flag was interpreted as the flag of independence, not just of the monarchy. The point is that Libyan society relied on its now national historical symbols to mobilize and express its views. These symbols originated in the fight for independence and the anti-colonial struggle, but they had a new meaning in 2011 in a society that was urban, literate and integrated into the global economy. Anti-colonial nationalism is a key factor in trying to understand modern Libyan culture and nationalism.

1.1 The post-colonial social origins and contradictions of the Libyan State

Independence in 1951 was shaped by the colonial experience that led to the boundaries of the modern State. The questions about who collaborated and who resisted, who died and who was forced into exile, are questions that are still present in Libyan society and culture. The new State was a rentier State relying upon continued rent from foreign aid after the discovery of oil in 1959. Oil was exported for the first time in 1961. As oil became the main source of revenue for the State, it required central planning and management. This economic change led to a need to replace the federal system with a unitary one, which happened in 1963. Oil and gas are still the main sources of revenue, which give the

State relative autonomy from taxation and social engineering. The revenues are the main source of finance for public institutions, sponsoring primary economic activities and functions. The monarchy (1951-1969), the republic (1969-1977) and the Jamahiriyya State (1977-2011) provided a continuity of welfare services and subsidies for basic goods, free education and health care for Libyan citizens. Today, almost one third of Libyan people are salaried by the State. The rentier State is here to stay.

The Sanusi monarchy emerged as a federal State, which united the three regions. The social base of the monarchy was dominated by the eastern region, the home base of the Sanusiyya and King Idris I. The western region was the most populous and urban region, while the eastern region was the home base of the Sanusiyya. Because of British support, the eastern region became an independent State in 1948. The southern region leadership of Sayyid Ahmad Saif al-Nasr, a follower of the Sanusiyya, sided with Sayyid Idris and Barqa. This compromise was a key to Libyan independence. The monarchy had a democratic constitution and a modern education system, but limited media coverage. It rigged the 1953 election and expelled Bashir al-Si'dawi, the leader of the most popular party, the Tripolitanian National Congress Party, after stripping him of his citizenship. The 1969 military pan-Arab nationalist coup changed the social base of the State and its ideology.

The 1969 coup was led by junior officers in the Libyan army. It brought the repressed anti-colonial resistance history and culture and, through Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, a pan-Arabism State ideology. The new republic banned political parties, expanded the welfare state and allowed poor regions and women to have more educational and job opportunities. The social base of the new regime was central and southern Libya. Both States were modernizing, but with different social bases. Modernization should be interpreted along local history and traditions of "statelessness" or traditions of self-governance, plus the local

traditions of the Sanusi movement (1859-1932) and the Tripolitanian Republic (1918-1920).

Libyan social history is often seen through the models of the well-established urban State formation in Tunisia and Egypt, where urban central elites created a modern State in collaboration with French and British colonialism. These Westernized models are applied to the Libyan history and State formation, explaining why the tribal thesis of Libyan politics and culture is still popular among western and Arab populists and scholars. I disagree with this myth. I propose a different narrative of patterns of State and society in modern Libya. One point is the weakness of urban centres until the end of the colonial period. Instead of an urban-centric model, the interior or the hinterland provided autonomous and resistance forces to the Ottoman and the Italian States in Tripoli and Benghazi. Two thirds of the Libyan population lived in the countryside until 1951. It should not be surprising that the leaders of the Libyan State, King Idris I and Colonel Gaddafi, both came from the rural countryside in eastern Libya, central and southern Libya. Both States resolved and overlooked the two questions that matter most to Libyan society: the national question and the struggle for independence, plus the struggle for educational, economic and constitutional representation.

The monarchy achieved independence, but with some contradictions. These included silence about anti-colonial history and struggles, excluding the young who became radicalized by the late 1960s, and the alliance with western powers. The republic and the Jamahiriyya scored enhanced national credentials by negotiating the end of the American and British military bases, and by designing new egalitarian policies empowering poor communities and women. Yet, after 1975, Gaddafi reacted to a coup attempt against his leadership by mobilizing his followers and relying on informal forces and institutions that had made him a military dictator. He used the State oil reserves to consolidate his power and control. The regime's policy of executing and imprisoning its opponents led to the radicalization of many

alienated youths, who were attracted for Islamist political ideologies: the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafism and the radical jihadist movements such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. Disaffected youth joined the war in Afghanistan, Iraq and later in the Arab Republic of Syria. The monarchy, the military republic, and the Jamiharyya were based on the politics of modernizing educational, economic and social development, but without political and institutional renewal. These contradictions have not been resolved and still are at the centre of today's social conflict and civil war that followed the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in 2011.

1.2 The militarization of society and the civil war

The Libyan uprising in 2011 started as a social protest by women in Benghazi demanding accountability for the victims of the Buslaim massacre in 1996. The NATO intervention changed the nature of the uprising by destroying the military regime, but without any comprehensive plan for State-building. The unintended price of the militarization of the uprising and NATO intervention was the changed direction of the Libyan uprising. Regional powers and fervent Libyan Islamists, who had military experience in Afghanistan, dominated the civil war. Arms inherited from the regime spread weapons all over society. The Gaddafi regime spent more than \$30 billion dollars on arms between 1969 and 2010. This large stock of arms fueled the Libyan conflict and contributed to the militarization of the uprising and the civil war. In turn, the militarization led to some cities, such as Benghazi, Misurata and Zintan, adopting an attitude of triumph, while cities that sided with the regime were defeated, including Bani-Walid, Sirte, Sukana, Warshfana, and Terhuna. Furthermore, the most organized and disciplined radical Islamic groups took over many Libyan cities, including Sirte and Derna, and declared allegiance to Islamic State and al-Qaeda. In other words, the civil war was won in some cities and regions while

in others was defeated. Some cities, including Sirte and Derna, became autonomous from the central state until 2017, while Libyan southern borders became controlled by Islamic State in the Maghreb and armed Chadian and Sudanese opposition groups and smugglers. The remaining Libyan towns and cities were self-governed by elders and elected municipalities. Libya returned to the self-governing autonomous community of the era before 1951. The post-2011 elites failed to resolve the problem of militarization. The 2014 civil war was the consequence of this problem, which continues to persist.

The spread of arms as a consequence of the civil war made security worse because of two factors. The first was the failure of the plan to disarm militias, which increased in number from 10,000 in 2011 to 230,000 by 2015. Consecutive governments since 2011 made the error of appeasing armed militias and adding them to the State payroll. Second, no serious attempts were made to recall the military, police forces and supporters of the old regime. In 2013, the Exclusion Law banned most officials of the old regime from holding new official positions which made things worse. The law excluded thousands of Libyans from holding or running for political and public life. It was a declaration of war against a large segment of Libyan society, pushing many of the excluded people to fight the new transition. The civil war continued as a result of this policy of exclusion, and communities turned against one another to settle scores and grievances from the old regime. Consequently, violence, crime, kidnapping, smuggling and vigilante justice spread and many unemployed young men and criminal elements became the most powerful in their communities at the expense of elders and public institutions. This outcome was not inevitable. It was a result of the terrible choices made by the leaders of the Transitional Government, which refused to make a political compromise with the supporters of the old regime. Other factors were the disengagement of NATO countries, including the United States under the Obama administration, from the Libyan conflict, which emboldened Gulf States and Turkey to assume a free ride in making Libya a stage for

proxy wars, expecting that the populist pan-Arab Gaddafi regime would be punished. Instead of building on existing State, social and political institutions, the 2011 uprising was hijacked by

counter-revolutionary and outside forces. These factors are what define the current conflict and violence in Libya.





2. The southern question and national identity – regional and tribal affiliations

Libya is the third largest State in Africa. Its southern question and borders are significant, yet overlooked. The southern question is often reduced to tribal and ethnic conflict of Arab Libyans versus Africa black Libyans, especially the Tibbeau and Tuareg. This colonial narrative assumes a major distinction and conflict between ethnic groups and inherent discrimination against blacks. Also, it assumes that the southern region of Fezzan has always been marginal and, because it has a smaller population, is viewed as insignificant compared to the larger and more populous western and eastern regions of the country.

The defeat of the Gaddafi regime and resulting civil war led to the disastrous unintended outcome of lack of security, especially in opening Libyan borders in the north and south. The security of the southern borders should be seen as a key to the survival of the Libyan State. I call this issue the southern question. Unfortunately, it is the least understood question not only by western policy analysts but by Libyan northern urban elites as well.

The Libyan south, Fezzan, is populated mostly by Muslims and mixed Arabs, Tuareg and Tibbeau. Tuareg live in Ubari, Ghat, Ghadamis, Idri and Daraj, while the Tibbeau Libyans live in Gatrui, Tijirhi, Auzo, al-Waigh, and Kufra. The Libyan Tibbeau numbered only 300 in 1951. The Tibbeau population today is around 30,000. The majority of Tibbeau live in northern Chad and the borderland area between the two countries. The Libyan Tuareg are larger in number (around 60,000) and more integrated through intermarriage than the Tibbeau. Many Tuareg served in the Libyan State, and the Gaddafi regime recruited many of them into his army, including non-Libyan Tuareg from

Mali and Niger. The Libyan Tuareg are linked to other Tuareg groups that live across the borders in Algeria, Mali, and Niger. Like the rest of Libya, Fezzan's population belongs to Sunni Malki Sunusi Islam (including the Tibbeau and the Tuareg), unlike the Amazigh of western Libya and the city of Zuwara, which practice Ibadi Islam.

The region of Fezzan has been the frontier and borderland region of Libya since the Ottoman period. Tripoli dissidents, trans-Saharan traders and rebellious tribes look at Fezzan and the desert frontier as a region of refuge and freedom from the reach of the State in Tripoli. The population organized itself through a self-governing tribal/peasant and traders' organization called Sufuf, and had its own local state, the state of Awlad Muhammad (1551-1812). During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the south became ethnically mixed and a key to security of the State in Tripoli. The southern region, Fezzan, supplied the country with its main crop: dates. All Libyan States from the Ottoman period to the Jamahiriyya recognized the strategic and economic significance of the Libyan south, with the exception of the Governments in 2011. For example, the Ottoman State sent delegates to the south, as did the Qaramanli State. The Sanusi movement unified the population of eastern Libya, Fezzan and northern Chad under its transnational brotherhood. The Libyan anti-colonial resistance found refuge in the region and, when defeated in 1930, took refuge in northern Chad. Under King Idris, the monarchy and the elite continued to assert these ties, as well as alliances and links with the Libyan south and Chad. King Idris hired his own guards from Sanusi Tibbeau followers in Chad.

Equally significant was Gaddafi's deep knowledge and awareness of the southern question. Gaddafi had an advantage over other Libyan urban elite members, because he came from the south and was aware of the borders and links with Chad. One of Gaddafi's cousins, General Masud Abdal-Hafid, the governor of Sabha, married the sister of Kakuni Wadai, son of the sultan of the Tibbeau and future president of Chad. Libya gave refuge and training to people from all northern Chad opposition groups, including the current president, Idris Dibi. The Libyan Tibbeau had integrated into Libyan southern life, yet the collapse of the Libyan State in 2011 enabled the armed Chadian Tibbeau to take over many towns in Fezzan, control the smuggling trade and seek Libyan citizenship. They were armed not only under Gaddafi, but by the opposition and the Governments in the eastern and western regions as well. Many governments and think tanks associated with the European Union popularized the myth of Arab racism against blacks, and the myth of the Tibbeau as a minority was invented. In short, the Tibbeau became a formidable military force and, for the first time, advanced into southern Libya. The Tuareg Libyans stayed neutral and have not been involved in the conflict.

Sabha, the capital of Fezzan, has a mixed and diverse population, with older settled peasants, Fezzani, or Ahali populations in al-Jadid, al-Gurda and Hajara; the newly settled tribal population of al-Manshiyya; and the modern urban population of the heart of the city Qa'id, and the mixed sections of the Sukara and al-Tauri neighborhoods. Sabha also has residents from other parts of Libya, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, other Arab countries and even from Europe. Sabha's governors under the monarchy came from the House of Saif al-Nasr, the chiefs of Awlad Sulyman and the tribal alliance of al-Suf-al-Fugi, which dominated the southern region for two centuries. The military coup in 1969 changed the balance of power. Gaddafi targeted the family of Saif al-Nasr; persecuted them; confiscated their property; and replaced them with his own tribe, the Qadhdhfah, Mgaraha, Hasawana, and the al-Ahali of Awald Hdair. It was a shrewd political move to create new alliances without ignoring

the competing groups fighting over power, State positions and mobility.

It was not a surprise when the February uprising began in 2011. The Saif al-Nasr and Awlad Sulayman confederation rose against its rival and joined the uprising. They attacked the Qadhdhfah, taking their farms and their property. It is clear that the south did not have major armed groups, but various small ones dominated different parts of the region. For example, the armed Tibbeau tribesman took advantage of the vacuum and advanced north to the outskirts of Sabha where they clashed with Awlad Sulyman. The Tibbeau as a military force and the Sudanese opposition gained more influence as the Libyan Government in Tripoli, Benghazi and Misurata tried to pay them money and make allies in the south. The Tibbeau and the Tuareg became more involved with the lucrative cross-Saharan smuggling trade in arms, fuel, drugs and illegal immigrants. Many civilians in the cities and the towns of Fezzan became victims of these armed groups and militias. When the Libyan Army "Karama Forces" led by Field Marshal Haftar moved to the south, people welcomed them as liberators because of the dire situation, lack of security and the lawlessness in the Libyan South. It is also important to keep in mind that many southern families escaped to Tripoli (the capital), and the ones who had money emigrated to Tunisia and Egypt.

Demystifying regionalism and tribalism

Libya is the third largest country in Africa, and regionalism is a fact of geography and history. It is a result of the large size of the country and its economic and social organization. This should not be surprising: all societies have such local identities and histories. The question should not be raised as an exceptional case. Rather, it should be recognized that the conflict is rooted in the failure of the leadership that led to the transition after 2011 and mobilized regional and local forces to fight their rivals. Libyan society had included three

major regions and was able to reach consensus and compromises that recognized these local identities until 2011 and the current civil war.

As I argued earlier, the literature of the Libyan crisis focuses on tribal identities and politics as if the whole society were a collection of fragmented pre-modern tribes. That assumption is a misleading myth that reproduces colonial ideology and orientalist gazes. It is misleading when it assumes that Libyan society comprises tribes that are ageless and not affected by capitalism, social change, urbanization, class formation, gender identity and detribalization during the past 100 years. It has become an ideological evolutionary concept assuming the persistence of pre-or/ and anti-modernism. The question that should be asked is what it means to talk about tribal identity and tribes today as compared to Libyan society on the eve of independence in 1951. When people use this concept, what do they mean by it and how does one contextualize the use of tribe by the State and by actors within the society? The use of the word “tribe” without context is misleading. It overlooks a society in which the meaning of tribe has changed and transformed over a long time and where tribal chiefs no longer have the same power as before. In 2012, most Libyans lived in the following main urban centres:

- Tripoli 1,019,000
- Benghazi 633,000
- Misurata 286,000
- Tobruk 138,000
- Sabha 99,000
- Zawiya 87,000
- Sirte 78,000

Several valuable studies addressed the question of tribes, including studies by John Davis, Omar Al-Fathali, and Amal Obeidi. The vast majority of the Libyan people today live in five major cities and urbanization today is as high as 80 per cent. Libyans are no longer confined to tribal collective property, residence and self-sufficiency. The literacy rate is the highest in the whole African continent for both men and women. Yet tribal identity was revived and used by the old regime as a way to shore up support and divide opposition. Society, in turn, reacted to this polity to gain access to power and goods at a time when the regime closed cafes and cinems and banned political parties and associations. The tribes and the mosques became the few remaining public institutions available. The meaning of tribe, therefore, became very different.

In short, Libyan society today is urban, market-integrated and stratified along social classes, gender and regional political economies. The problem facing Libyan society is not its tribal character but, rather, the categories used to understand its complexity and diversity. Above all, the failure of the Libyan transition is not due to tribal society but, rather, to failure by Libyan leaders to build national consensus, reconciliation and inclusiveness for both the monarchy and Jamahiriyya supporters. I believe that there is an alternative option that could still resolve the failure of transition after 2011. I think that Libyans could learn from the great compromise among the regions that recognized King Idris in order to have a unified Libya, rather than punishing the collaborators with Italian colonialism or overlooking the heroic Libyan struggle against Italian colonialism and foreign domination.



3. Violence, radicalization and violent extremism

Two main factors led to the conflict and the civil war: the politics of revenge and exclusion inherited from the old regime and the militarization of Libyan society after 2011. Libyan cultural values of tolerance, coexistence and all-of-Libya nationalism came under attack, which I believe forms the most serious threat to the country's future. The collapse of the State, combined with increased militarization, created a war economy and a group of cartels interested in keeping the status quo in which they controlled office, money, power and blocked any peaceful transition to State-building and elections. These policies originated under the old regime, particularly during the 1980s, when Libyan society faced two challenges: closing the country and experimenting with failed socialist policies as well as the United States sanctions that led to the spread of smuggling and corruption to survive hardship. By the end of the decade, public institutions and offices came to be seen as booty and open game for personal enrichment. Yet corruption was not as bad as today, when the State has collapsed and no deterrence remains. Another legacy of the old regime is its repressive and brutal punishment of difference and dissent.

The Gaddafi regime provided stability, welfare services and benefits to working and middle-class Libyans. But, from 1975, it refused to tolerate dissent, referring to its opponents as "stray dogs" and justified execution and assassination. This policy of punishment and retribution was an official public policy and no secret. Some dissidents were publicly hanged; others were kidnapped or assassinated in other Arab countries or Europe. This punitive policy radicalized many groups inside and outside the country. Some became radicalized jihadists inside Libyan prisons, in exile or in the war in Afghanistan. They leaned

towards the Muslim Brotherhood or other groups such as Salafism, or more radical groups, such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and its affiliates Ansar al-Sharia in Benghazi, Derna, Sirte, Ajdabiyya and Subrata.

The militarization of the conflict was aided by the availability of millions of arms, leading to further violence and militarization of society at large. As mentioned before, the Gaddafi regime purchased more than \$30 billion dollars of arms between 1969 and 2010. While 21 storage locations were destroyed, the remaining contents of 70 storage locations were smuggled out and used in the civil war. The United Nations special envoy, Ghassan Salame, estimated that there were 20 million pieces of weaponry in Libya and that each household had three or four guns. That is a huge number for a country with a population of only 6.5 million people. What exacerbated the spread of weapons was the lack of reconciliation and the local civil wars between cities and towns split into different sides of the Gaddafi regime and the February 17 Transitional Nation government in eastern Libya. There was the well-known conflict in 2011 between Tawargha and Misurata. Tawargha sided with Gaddafi's forces and participated in the attack against the city of Misurata, which joined the February 17 uprising. Tawargha had a small population of 40,000. Misurata was the third largest city in the country, with a population of 300,000. When the Gaddafi regime was defeated after the NATO intervention, Misurata retaliated against its rivals, including Tawargha and Bani-Walid. The population of the town of Tawargha was expelled, its inhabitants becoming refugees inside and outside the country. The terrible displacement of the people of Tawargha was experienced elsewhere, including

Sirte, Benghazi, Warshafana, Sabha, Kikla and Bani-Walid.

Misurata has the most formidable military force now in western Libya. It has more than 200 tanks, 25 fighter jets, an airport, a major port and strong relationships with Turkey and Qatar. This commercial city is now a de facto city-state. The city leaders enhanced their power by making an alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamist groups. Consequently, the city of Misurata became the leading economic and military player in the Libyan civil war. The western Jabal population turned against one another, such as the Jbaliyya Amazigh, the Zintan and Rijban who joined the uprising in 2011. They rebelled against other towns and tribes that sided with the Gaddafi regime, such as the Mashashiyya, the Si'an, the Warshifana, the Nuwail and the Terhuna. The lack of leadership and militarization brought out the worst side of people against one another. The town of Zintan was the first town to rise against the old regime. It received military and economic aid, emerging as a key player in the Jabal, despite having only 40,000 people.

The unemployment rate reached a high of 30 per cent among a very young population. But young adults with guns found jobs and prestige. Violence became widespread. Rivalries and hostilities that went back to the Italian colonial period were revived, as in the case between the two large western cities of Misurata and Bani-Walid. Libya became a body without a head, but the body itself was fighting against its parts. Outside forces took advantage of the State collapse, including the armed opposition groups from Chad and the Sudan, becoming guns for hire. The Jihadist and Safi militant groups from Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, and Somalia moved into the Libyan South, and Benghazi, Sirte and Derna. In the case of Derna and Sirte, the Islamic State took over and separated the two cities from Libyan State control, even appointing non-Libyan governors.

Violence became widespread and members of society turned against one another. Simple disputes led to the use of guns. Violence led to more people seeking revenge. The case of the group Aliwa al Dam (the Custodians of the Blood), is a good example of the rise of vigilante groups seeking revenge. It was founded in 2017, led by Sulayman Bulhaty from the town of Quba in the Green Mountain of eastern Libya. He had lost three sons in the fight over the city of Derna and formed this group to bring justice to the people who were killed by terrorists and joined the Libyan army "Karama Forces" led by Field Marshal Haftar. An even more significant radicalization was demonstrated by the rise of some external extremist ideologies in Libya.

Libyan Islam is Maghribi Sunni and Malki, Sufi and Ibadi. The combination of moderate and Sufi traditions was enhanced by the Sanusiyya social movement, which combined Malki and Sufi traditions with innovative reforms in education, trade and an internationalist non-racial world view. It relied on the North African Maghribi institutions of Zawaya, lodges, self-help and tolerance towards other cultures and languages. It also contributed to the unity and cohesiveness of Libyan society prior to the Italian invasion of 1911. Salfasim is alien to Libyan society and culture but, for the first time in centuries, it is making headway inside Libya today, especially what is called Madkhilism, in reference to Saudi Shaikh Rabia al-Madkhali. The type and extent of influence on various groups in Libya of such a rigid brand of Islam is unclear and requires further research. We know that a group of Madkhali Libyans is fighting with Field Marshal Haftar's Libyan army "Karam Forces" and similar groups are part of the Tripoli militias such as Special Deterrence Forces and the Daman Battalion. Non-Libyan missionary activists recruited Libyans who fought in Afghanistan and could not return to Libya. Other activists were recruited in Libyan and western prisons, or during the Haj and Umrah in Saudi Arabia. Some Libyan Salafi groups advocate the separation of sexes in Libyan schools and colleges and harass women not wearing the hijab. Some have also banned books deemed un-Islamic and destroyed many

centuries-old shrines and tombs belonging to Sufi saints and Awlia. They now have influence in the Ministry of Education and religious endowments, many mosques, radio and television stations. With this control, they are likely to further damage the cultural and religious tolerant traditions of Libyan society. The role of women has been targeted as a way to change social and religious values. Some of the Salafi and Jihadist ideologues view Libyan women and civic liberal groups as “other”. During the past 50 years, Libyan women have struggled heroically for the rights to education, work, social and public space, in what can be described as “gendered nationalism”.

The role of Libyan women has been remarkable. Libya was one of the world’s poorest countries in 1943, with illiteracy rates as high as 98 per cent. Thanks to Libyan women’s social movements and the spread of education since independence, millions of Libyan women are educated today. Such progress in Libyan women’s education made it possible to see young women active in the 17 February 2011 revolution. The revolution began when mothers of the 12,000 political prisoners killed in the 1996 massacre of Busalim marched, as they had done annually, on 15 February 2011, demanding justice. That protest was the start of the revolution. Libyan women contributed in many ways – tending the wounded; documenting regime atrocities; making videos and sending messages over the internet; cooking for fighters; caring for children; speaking to the media; and sewing the revived independence flag of the monarchy. Today, there are more women in Libyan higher education than there are men. In the humanities and social science departments of Libyan universities, women make up 80 per cent of the student population.

Yet one of the unintended consequences of the civil war and the rise of conservative Islamists has been the attack on Libyan rights and public space. Indeed, Libyan women’s rights are under siege. It was clear that, from the day the Gaddafi regime ended, a conservative, organized and armed faction began to express itself. On 23 October 2011, Mustafa Abdaljalil, the judge who became

the head of the Transitional National Council, made a memorable statement that indicated a return to a patriarchal, conservative view of Islamic law. Judge Abdaljalil objected to a Libyan announcer, Sara al-Mislati, who came on stage to introduce him to the rest of the country. To the surprise and shock of many people watching television, he scolded the young woman for not wearing a head scarf and asked her to leave. Then he shocked the audience a second time when he announced that polygamy is Islamic and had to be reasserted in the new Libya. Mr. Abdaljalil sided with the Islamic faction of the coalition that led the uprising. His speech sent a depressing message to the liberal and women’s groups that had fought since 1951 to enhance egalitarian and legal rights. Some of Gaddafi’s Jamhiryya laws that gave women many rights in 1984 were overturned. The Islamic groups that formed one faction of the coalition that fought the Gaddafi regime were small and well organized, armed and had strong support from outside forces. The conservative speech of the judge was followed by more losses for Libyan women, including the right of a Libyan woman to give consent before her husband can take another wife. One recent example of repression took place in Benghazi when Salafi police harassed and arrested young Libyan women socializing at Cafe Kaza.

This ultra-conservative view was propagated by “ex-Mufti Sheikh Al-Sadiq al-Ghariani”, who advocated segregation of the sexes in Libyan schools and waged harsh attacks against Libyan liberals and women’s rights advocates as non-Islamic and against the faith. This neoconservative attack on Libyan women became violent. Many activists were threatened and assassinated. Salwa Bug’aigis, a Libyan lawyer and activist, was murdered on 25 January 2014, and her husband kidnapped. Fraiha Barkawi, a member of the National General Congress from Derna, and Intisar al-Hasa’iri, an activist in Tripoli, were killed. A new law barred Libyan women from travel without a male companion. Many women and men were threatened. An estimated 230 people were killed, especially in Benghazi during the three-year war

between the Libyan army “Karama Forces” led by Field Marshal Haftar and the jihadist groups until it ended in 2016. Some women and liberal activists were forced to leave the country for Tunisia, Egypt, Europe and the United States. Needless to say, the

cities of Benghazi and Sirte were devastated by the Libyan civil war. Many Islamists who lost the war fled Benghazi. The reverse happened in Tripoli in 2014, when many people who lost the war had to flee.





4. Role of cultural and religious norms and values

On the eve of the 2011 revolution, Libyan society had been transformed into a modern economy, including in terms of urbanization and education. The culture was still like many North African societies based on Sunni/Malki and Ibadi Islam. Anti-colonial nationalism had developed against brutal Italian colonization and displacement. It had high literacy rates for women as well as men.

The 2011 uprising, the NATO intervention and the ongoing civil war led to major changes in the culture and values of society. There is no comprehensive study of these changes but most of the answers to an informal internet survey I initiated agree on this issue. For example, people made the following points in response to the questions of social change in Libya post-2011:

- “Many hostilities spread after the collapse of the state”;
- “Attacking women and imposing conservative values alien to Libyan Islam”;
- “Outside groups came to Libya and imposed their views, including separation of the sexes, Islamic dress, and extreme Islam”;
- “The spread of arms, corruption, and crime ruined society; crime increased; disintegration of the State and law; and fear which impacted children and created a gap between generations”;
- “Regionalism and ethnicity were new for us and are being used at the expense of Libyan nationalism”;
- “We returned to 1911, when Italy invaded us”;
- “If you want to understand what is happening now, you need to understand what Libyan society was like before”;

- “Under the monarchy, we behaved because we still felt shame. Under Gaddafi, we behaved because we feared the law and the State. But now, we have neither shame nor fear. Instead, we have anarchy and violence”;
- “Our uprising was stolen by militias, smugglers, and outside forces”;
- “What do you expect when you have 20 million weapons and no army or police? Violence is expected in any society, including ours”;
- “We were fooled by our leaders and the West”;
- “We voted three times, but our votes were stolen by corrupt leaders and militias”;
- “Under Gaddafi, we had one tyrant. Now, we have many tyrants.”

While these answers were common and expressed frustration caused by years of turmoil, chaos and violence, they emphasized condemnation of the groups that had caused such destruction and conflict.

Empirical indicators are difficult to find, so we need to look at trends. For example, we know that unemployment is very high for a rich oil-producing country with a population of 6.5 million people. In 2011, the unemployment rate was estimated to be 45 per cent, and even higher at 50 per cent among Libyan men between the ages of 19 and 34. The working and middle classes had been suffering financially due to delays in salaries and pensions, inadequate liquidity in Libyan banks and a 10 per cent decline in the exchange rate of the Libyan dinar with foreign currencies. Parts of the middle class became impoverished.

Poverty became widespread. The number of beggars increased. Middle-class families lost their savings and were forced to sell their jewelry to pay for food. There were cases where Libyans were living in mosques and asking for help, even when living in Tunisia and Egypt. A Libyan journalist living in Egypt wrote to me: "I had to leave Tripoli after I received death threats and was forced to leave for Egypt, where I am struggling to pay for my rent and food." A college professor from Benghazi told me that she, like many people, was pressured to leave for Tunisia because her home was burgled and her furniture stolen.

Recent studies on poverty in Libya indicate that 2 million Libyans require financial support to make ends meet. This alarming hardship shouldn't be surprising, as Libya's per capita income declined from \$25,000 in 2010 to \$10,000 in 2014. Such new hardship puts pressure on the Libyan family. Divorce rates have been increasing and reached 30 per cent in 2018. According to the Libyan civic records office, a record 4,019 cases of divorce were filed in 2018 alone. Some of the main factors cited for divorce were economic and psychological factors where the husband was unable to provide for his wife and family.

Another alarming sign is the increased violence against women and children. We don't have precise statistics about these crimes, including rape, but there are undeniable indications. There are many reports of rape around the country. One recent terrible case, which indicates increased violence against women, was a video circulated on the internet of three men raping young Libyan women, which shocked the country. Furthermore, as many young men were killed in war or had to leave the country, many women were left living alone or as single parents. In addition, many eligible young women had no potential suitors for marriage. Some clinical studies conducted on the impact of violence against children in the capital of Tripoli found 54 cases of stress, depression and violent behavior were found among children in 2018, and that probably was only a sampling of actual cases.

What is really at stake is the pressure on the core religious and social values of Libyan society, or what I call Libyan social capital, such as the values of connectedness, civic associations and coexistence. These core values of social capital are under tremendous stress and have begun to weaken. The only valuable study on these social changes is the one conducted by the University of Benghazi Centre for Research and Consultation, led by Dr. Zahi Mogherbi and Dr. Nagib Elhassadi in 2014. This study came up with very specific results on the status of values and trust today:

- 10 per cent of people do not see others as worthy of trust;
- 5.5 per cent of people mind if their neighbor is a stranger;
- 59 per cent mind if their neighbor is a foreign worker;
- 49.8 per cent believe the husband should have the right to marry a second wife;
- 26.6 per cent believe women should wear the hijab;
- 31.3 per cent believe in no freedom of religion, only strict adherence to Islam;
- 34 per cent believe in a political system with a strong, single leader for the country;
- 36.2 per cent believe inserting Islamic law into the constitution is more important than free elections and political parties;
- 92 per cent believe that national security should be given top priority over individual freedom when the country is under national threat.

The above survey results are alarming but should be read within the context of the civil war and suffering in Libya today. This is different from the deep-rooted coexisting values that sustained Libyan society for a long time and led people to trust one another. It shows that the violent civil war produced lasting major social and economic changes. These violent and hostile values and

attitudes were exacerbated by the cultural and media wars on television and social media, which demonize the parallel Libyan Governments in the east and the west, in Tripoli and Tobruk. Now, the conflict is between the Libyan army “Karam Forces” led by Field Marshal Haftar that controls the eastern and the southern areas of the country, and the Government of National Accord, supported by the Tripoli militias and Misurata forces. It is not only a fight over Tripoli, but a fight over who should represent Libya’s national

interests and public opinion. It is a stalemate that cannot be resolved without resolving the problem of the militias controlling Tripoli, and without concrete compromises on both sides. The civil war will not end even in the case of a victory for the army or the Islamists and the militias of Tripoli and Misurata, because no group can govern the country alone. Only a national compromise and reconciliation will remove the structural factors behind the Libyan civil war.



5. National and local reconciliation/dialogue and establishing a social contract

On 26 December 2011, I participated in an all-Libyan Conference called “Toward a New Democratic Civil Republic in Libya”. The conference took place after the liberation of Tripoli and was organized by the faculty of Tripoli University. I chose the topic of political reform and national reconciliation. My paper was titled “Why and How to Think about National Reconciliation”. I based my presentation on my long scholarship of State/society history in modern Libya and my teaching of theories and politics of social revolution and models of national reconciliation and trans-national justice in late twentieth century comparative cases. I warned against complacency and predicted the danger of exclusion and settling scores with the supporters of the old regime and new rivals. Also, I made the argument that defeated uprisings are often taken over by counter-revolutions and foreign agendas. I stressed that Libyan society was at a crossroads and that the best guarantee to avoid predicted pitfalls was to agree on a political reform followed by a Libyan-based Commission of Truth and Reconciliation that would grant clemency and inclusion in exchange for confessing all crimes and atrocities committed before and during the 2011 uprising. Unfortunately, that course of action was not taken. Instead, leaders of the transition chose the opposite course, which led to exclusion and revenge. What happened was predictable: civil war and violence in many regions and cities of the country.

First, both new bodies, the Transitional National Council in 2011-12 and the General National Congress in 2012-14, failed to act decisively and, instead, allowed armed and foreign groups to take control of the State. They appeased armed groups

by putting them on the State payroll, with annual salaries. This foolish policy encouraged many members and new ones to assert the power of the militias. The numbers of people serving in militias increased from 10,000 in 2011 to 230,000 by 2014. They used their arms to control elected politicians and the economy, especially in Tripoli, where four powerful militias are now a de facto cartel that controls even the Government of National Accord. United Nations Special Envoy Ghassan Salame said publicly that what is going on in Libya now is not just corruption but pillage of the national treasury. Second, the United Nations brokered Skhairat agreement in December 2015 was flawed and full of contradictions. The accord has two limitations. The first is spatial, as its authority did not cover many communities, because many were occupied by armed groups or transnational jihadists in Derna and Sirte, and Libyan southern borders in Fezzan. The second is structural. The accord did not resolve the question of security and the private militias and imposed a weak government that was not elected and dependent on the militias. Yet the international community recognized this government, which is controlled by armed militias and Islamists. The United Nations created a flawed agreement in Morocco and rewarded the armed groups that dominated the new government in Tripoli. While in the east, General Khalifa Haftar was appointed as General Commander by the House of Representatives as a reaction to the collapse of the State and the question of security. When I asked a family member about why the general is popular now and what happened to the uprising against the Gaddafi dictatorship, she said: “The West and our leaders abandoned us, and we have no alternative. Even if there is no General Haftar, we have to find one.

We are fighting for our peace and security. He is a lesser evil for us until we recover our security and our voices.” Libya is going through a civil war and, as in other civil wars, few people are innocent.

Unless there is a creative and serious disarming of private armed groups, there is no hope for empowering people to vote and elect a new legitimate government that can complete the transition. Libya’s crisis is not a crisis of culture or tribalism; it is a crisis of failed transition and leadership, plus outside intervention. Violence in Libya is not cultural but political. The question is: how to build trust and reconciliation?

Three factors are key: First, political reform among various groups and regions. Second, local traditions for reconciliation, including the concepts of Mi’ad (tribal communal gathering), Sulh (reconciliation) and Jabr al Khawater (mend angry souls). Third, a National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation. Local traditions and practices are good tactics for intercommunal reconciliation and Libyan society has already successfully initiated some. However, the scope of local traditions in terms of justice is limited and cannot deal with conflicts that have arisen from State-generated violence and policies. Libya should learn from the different experiences of other societies that have pursued the strategy of transnational justice and the creation of truth and reconciliation commissions. I would argue for the combination of the three strategies in Libya’s case, and to let local Libyan municipalities deliberate and provide their views for at least six months to a commission set up for this purpose.

After the security problem is resolved and major compromises agreed, a Libyan-based Commission of Truth and Reconciliation should be set up, based on Libyan local traditions of mediating and reconciliation, led by Libyan ulama, tribal elders and Ashraf. These traditions go back as far as 1946 when the elders of Harabi tribes and notables of Derna agreed and signed the “Harabi Pact”, which ended long tribal disputes

that emerged during the colonial period. Other Libyan reconciliation meetings helped defuse conflict after 2011 in many parts of the country. The main weakness of Libyan local mediation and reconciliation agreements is the lack of power and mechanisms to ensure that the agreements are followed through.

The new commission should still be based on Libyan local traditions. The United Nations can provide comparative expertise and take an advisory role. I think that it might be useful to look at the South African example, the Moroccan first Arab commission of truth and reconciliation commission, and the ongoing Tunisian case. The South African case generated the most extensive examination study, in terms of post-apartheid democracy. A Libyan commission should be organized after the essential requirement of political reform granting legal and constitutional equality for all citizens under the rule of law. Only then could a commission accept and grant clemency in exchange for confession and recording the truth about past crimes and atrocities. In short, the goal should be not to avenge the dead but to give the living a second chance.

How has Libyan society survived until now despite having no State, no police force, army nor security; 20 million weapons; thousands of illegal immigrants, criminals, armed gangs; plus open borders? What are the secrets of this resilience and self-government? Libyan society has survived before under poor economic conditions, plus settler and genocidal colonialism, because of its values and institutions based on Islamic law, local alliances, self-help and self-government, often described negatively by western anthropologists in Africa as “statelessness”. The 99 elected municipalities should be seen in a positive light, as societies managing their own affairs. The future State should be based on the role of Libyan municipalities and the old traditions of self-rule before the discovery of oil and the hegemony of the rentier State.





Recommendations: strategies for social, political, and institutional reconstruction in Libya

Resolving the Libyan crisis of transition will require a deep knowledge of the scholarship on comparative social revolutions and failed States, plus a deep grasp of Libyan social, institutional, and political struggles for national independence from colonialism and for the rule of law and democratic governance. Libya is not an isolated entity but part of regional Arab, African and Mediterranean societies. The problem of transition is complex, requiring bold leadership and creative solutions. The United Nations can play a constructive role if it recognizes the obstacles and the negative factors behind the persisting paralysis of the crisis and the stalled process of rebuilding the State and civic institutions after 2012.

Social and political reconstruction

The rest of the current crisis of State collapse is political, the result of failed leadership to disarm the armed militias, especially in the western and southern regions. After NATO bombed Libya, Gaddafi's forces withdrew from the country and left it to remaining forces, including Misurata and Zintan in the west. Other forces included returned Islamic Mujahedeen radicals from Afghanistan, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, such as the Libyan Muslim Fighting Group, that were supported by rival powers, including Qatar, Turkey and the Sudan. Libyan army "Karama Forces", under the leadership of Field Marshal Haftar, were supported by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

The first step to resolve the current crisis is to stop outside intervention and the flow of arms and aid to the groups concerned. The United Nations can play a constructive role here.

The second step is to realize the errors of post-2011 leaders appeasing the armed groups and militias, especially the disastrous policy of rewarding them with positions and money to buy their support. The armed militias have to be given options of either civilian or military jobs in the army and the police forces as individuals, not as part of a collective group.

The third step is to call for a conference that includes military and radical groups, plus supporters of the old regime, and let them work towards agreeing key principles. Here is a chance to resolve the original sin of the 2011 coalition – the lack of a clear programme for State-building and a lack of awareness of the negative role played by outside intervention. Compromises will need to be made in terms of political reform.

The Misurata military force, its political Islamist and Muslim Brotherhood, and the Libyan Army "Karama Forces" led by Field Marshal Haftar in the east and the south have agreed to give up their arms and accept political reform, calling for rebuilding the Libyan National Army and the police force.

Under this compromise, there would be no defeated group. Everybody would be a winner: no warlords but statesmen; no revenge but justice for survivors; and rights of citizenship for all Libyans. This strategy would not be easy but, without it, the proxy wars in Libya will prolong

the current catastrophic situation of lack of food, health, and security. This strategy is not an idealistic wish but is based on the positive examples of modern history in Nigeria after the 1967 civil war, Mozambique in 1994, El Salvador and Uganda (1980-1986), Bosnia, Colombia and South Africa. As Mahmoud Mamdani argued in his assessment of the South African transition: “The real breakthrough represented by the South African case is not contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), but in in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) talks that preceded it, which so far had been dismissed as nothing more than hard-nosed pragmatism.” Mamdani referred to the political compromises among all opposing sides, and the acceptance of political reform that led to a breakthrough and the transition process.

To some extent, the Tunisian opposition to the Ben Ali dictatorship is a good example of building a coalition and compromise: opposition groups met in 2003 and agreed to have a unified goal for transition after the fall of the regime. Libyan opposition groups have made no similar compromises. The only meeting of opposition groups was dominated by The Front for the Salvation of Libya, an exiled group tainted by close ties to Western and Arab allies.

Institutional reconstruction

Libya needs two strategies to rebuild its political institutions. First, the United Nations should provide mediation among the various factions. Second, the United Nations should provide professional help to create new institutions. The crisis is more acute in western Libya, where creative work is needed, while the east and the south are under the Libyan Army “Karama Forces” led by Field Marshall Haftar. The main challenge remains in respecting the principle of state civility and democracy.

Most experts on the Libyan crisis overlook the existence of 90,000 army members and 30,000 policemen and policewomen who are not active but still receive State salaries. These 120,000 people should be recalled to active service. At the same time, State leaders should offer members of the current militias the choice of joining the army, the police or the civil service. Leaders should also offer study scholarships in order to encourage fighters into productive activity.

A national dialogue must be inclusive if it is to work. All members of Libyan civil society must be invited, including elders, ulama, Sufi shaykhs, members of trade and professional unions, intellectuals, poets and Libyans in exile. All women must be included, too. Women still carry the heavy burden of patriarchy. To overcome it, they must fight for dignity and equality. Finally, Libya needs a new leadership committed to national causes, avoiding the traps of patronage, corruption, and allegiance to regional, clannish or selfish interests. The goal is not to find leaders with charisma and the ability to mobilize support, but to find leaders willing to serve the people as part of talented, hard-working teams.

Libya needs leaders able to manage and be accountable for public finances, with no tolerance for corruption or viewing the State as a source of enrichment. New leaders must invest in human capital and shared values, supporting public institutions such as schools and universities. Leadership must focus not just at State level, but on local, decentralized institutions as well. The 104 Libyan municipalities are critical for good governance. Libya does, after all, have institutions that were built under the two regimes.

The contribution of the Sanusi monarchy from 1951 to 1969, and the 1969 populist coup, especially in the first decade, were instrumental in making peace with history and achieving some consensus rather than the rupture and silence that were the shame of the Libyan elites that ruled the country after 1969. Libyan independence is a good example to look to for lessons. The Libyan leaders in the

three regions and in exile argued, debated, and disagreed over how to envisage Libya and who Libyans actually were. Their contribution rests on agreeing to focus on the national good and including all political groups, even ones that had collaborated with the genocidal Italian settler colonial state. That is how Libyan independence was made. It was achieved by Libyans with the support of the United Nations and Western powers.

The weakness of the monarchy's effort at State-building was its silence on the national Italian genocide, plus the atrocities and close ties with Western governments that led the wave of anti-colonial populism in 1969. The Gaddafi authoritarian regime weakened those institutions under the monarchy and rising civil society until the late 1960s. Yet the Gaddafi regime was successful in asserting national independence,

protecting Libyan borders and expressing legitimate Libyan national grievances against Italian colonial atrocities. It is time for Libya to make peace with the history of the two States, and their contribution to nation-building and institution-building.

However, Libya will need a Commission for Truth and Reconciliation to record the abuses from 1969 until today, in exchange for pardon and forgiveness. Only then will Libya be able to heal the open wounds of the past and achieve justice for the survivors.

In summary, the challenge is formidable but, with the right leadership and unified international support, success in building durable democratic institutions in Libya and good governance is possible.

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