THE HISTORY OF LIBYA AND ITS PEOPLES:
THE ROAD TO AN EXPLOITABLE VULNERABILITY

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Abstract

It is an often-committed mistake that the currently still ongoing war in Libya is being associated with Qadhafi's removal in some way. Finding a comprehensive analysis with sources on development of the society itself is not common even today. However, as this work is going to prove, examining this issue from the Ottoman era is more than essential. Regulations and relations amongst tribes living in the three major territories evolved during the centuries, but their development curve is hardly comparable to e.g. European countries'. The purpose of this article is to show that the current civil war is fundamentally still a domestic issue, even if throughout the past five years it became exceedingly more international in nature.

Keywords: Libya, Ottoman Empire, Italian occupation, Qadhafi, oil economy

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Introduction

Libya's history easily provides ground for over-simplification, generalization and a lack of comprehensive approach. Albeit the combination of these frequently lead to defective conclusions and analogies, an incomplete set of impressions influenced by personal experience or attachment have from time to time led to misinterpretations in the case of many states. Precisely, numerous misleading assumptions on Libya arose as a result of Qadhafi's infamous reign. Nevertheless, the post-2011 fierce opposition and massive domestic tension can only be fully conceptualized when the roots of tribes, groups of peoples as well as individuals in the context of statelessness during the Ottoman period, Italian colonial decades, unsuccessful monarchy and era of dictatorship are all considered. Only then can one properly understand Libya's way to the current maze. The state of masses and its many-times contradicting ideology are often referenced as the primary reason behind the state's missing modernity manifested by the lack of experience of institutions and the persisting preference of reliance on families and other sorts of local groups instead of

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a central authority (Harris, 1986). Notwithstanding, the following paragraphs will demonstrate that unpleasant historic experience, economic independence and the subsequent autocratic leadership have all contributed to a fundamental discontent in society, eventually developing into a civil war.

The Ottoman centuries

It occurred in the first half of the 16th century that the Ottoman Empire gained control over the coastal territories: Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. Predominantly, the following centuries entailed a somewhat loose exercise of power, in which the collection of tax due to the sultan preserved utmost importance. Two centuries later, French and British advancements commenced to endanger Ottoman interests and have directly led to a second occupation in 1835, which marked the beginning of a more than two decades-long lasting fight on the territory of today's Libya. An increasingly heated opposition that mostly derived its actions from aversion to bureaucratic control and taxation for the sultan has led to the birth of the first generation of heroes in the eyes of proponents of rebellion. Indeed, organized tribal uprisings spread out across the provinces and brought about the first sense of perceivable patriotic feelings, even though the Ottoman military's superiority eventually broke the resistance (Ahmida, 1994). The coming decades saw vital developments both culturally and religiously inasmuch as local families headed by Ottoman officers set out to consolidate the order in exchange for receiving political and economic benefits, while the Sanusiyya¬, a conservative Islamic movement with the goal of returning to the roots, quickly spread from Cyrenaica to all the surrounding territories and became a vital platform of opposition (Gall, 1989).

However, by this time it basically meant opposition not only against the de facto colonizers present but also to European states that threatened economic, political or other interests of these territories. Naturally, this entailed a struggle against French and British pressure from every continental direction that severely hurt geographic and commercial interests and against which the Ottomans failed to act, only furthering the dissatisfaction. Ironically, the combination of these events provided common goals for the inhabitants of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan possessing various linkages and for the first time has led to the appearance of a sense of nationhood. In the meanwhile, relationship with Italy was steadily improving as the southern European country aimed at gaining its portion of the numerous advantages stemming from obtaining influence over territories at the southern shores of the Mediterranean. The eventual takeover might not have been possible had the Ottoman Empire possessed the same might and power as it had used to for the preceding centuries. Notwithstanding, the directed Italian penetration aimed at supporting the economy, which was awaited originally from the colonial master, all in vain. If the Ottoman era in the history of what we call Libya is to be evaluated, a somewhat odd conclusion presents itself. Without a doubt, the single most palpable weakness was the combination of inability, unwillingness and perhaps reluctance that hindered any development of economic circumstances that were under massive attack. Instead, emphasis was laid on setting up and preserving administration with little attention paid to the issue of identity (Vandewalle, 2012). Hence, military superiority could only provide success on the surface layer, but deep down the society's rules were circulating around tribal lines.

Italian ambitions: a change of colonial headmaster

Although Italy as nation state was one of the youngest of all Europe when it sent troops on the Libyan territories in 1911, the eventual move was preceded by a decades-long preparation that involved investments into various segments of the economies, weapon supply to back up locals' struggle as well as diplomatic efforts to avoid confrontation with other European states. Once the invasion commenced, the Italian army quickly occupied the major coastal cities but then struggled to break opposition, especially in Cyrenaica where the sultan was still being identified as religious and political leader. Still, opposing troops were soon forced to alter their approach and started to apply means of guerilla warfare but the First World War pulled much of Italy's concentration elsewhere, which provided the ideal opportunity for nationalist movements (Spaulding &Kapteijns, 1994) that culminated in the creation of the short-living Tripolitanian Republic. Simultaneously, as a result of a set of negotiations with British as well as Italian stakeholders, Cyrenaica was predominantly brought under recognized Sanusi control (Ryan, 2018), which also prevented possible tension at an economically and militarily critical period for the victorious Italy. Moreover, the residents of both Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were provided special citizenship rights to Italy and the newly established local Parliaments were meant to resolve the long-persisting issue of taxation (Raza, 2018). It would be a vague overestimation to claim that these have led to a successful settlement of the situation – especially given the

fact that in Tripolitania experienced a level of tension it arguably had not previously – but the Sanusi order seemed to have taken the chance to consolidate its authority and signs of cooperation with Italy started to manifest.

The issue was more complicated than a challenge between the two original provinces. Arab and Berber tribes had their own division in Tripolitania while Bedouins and followers of the Sanusi were digesting the changed status quo that brought them a new Catholic colonial master against which many actions were committed in the name of jihad, but which also occurred to help legitimizing the rule of the new Amir and was willing to keep troops to defend his authority. Sayyid Idris of Cyrenaica was considered to be an acceptable candidate to unify the two provinces, but as the fascists rose to power in Rome, it became obvious that such agreement would be against Italian interests and Idris had to flee to Cairo. The subsequent new wave of occupation was a rapid and overwhelming success in Tripolitania and Fezzan, but the eastern parts of Cyrenaica once again represented meaningful challenge due to thousands of Bedouins applying means of guerilla warfare (Evans-Pritchard, 1946). But the coming decade exemplified that Italian fascists were willing to go beyond the Ottomans' involvement; estimations differ but a huge portion of the province's population was killed during this time (Evans-Pritchard, 1944).

Nevertheless, colonial intentions certainly had goals other than pure territorial occupation. Between the two World Wars, more than a hundred thousand Italian farmers and their families moved to the coastal areas of the Libyan territories and huge amounts were invested to establish a functioning agriculture and infrastructure among the harsh circumstances. However, this also entailed the oppression of Libyans in their own territories as they rarely received the same benefits as incoming Italians (Ryan, 2012). The role Mussolini intended for the North African country might have eventually materialized, but the involvement in and decisions made during the Second World War ruined the ambitious plans. Precisely, Libya accommodated one of the decisive grounds, where German and Italian troops were defeated, after which a British Military Administration (BMA) was created in the coastal provinces and a French Military Administration (FMA) was established in Fezzan. The new status quo has brought about a so far unexperienced political freedom – when it came to governance – that entailed signs of nationalism as well as inter-tribal and inter-group struggle for influence. Representation of various groups became a major cornerstone as the number of parties and followers increased. Provided by the fact that the Ottoman centuries' heritage still persisted and tens of thousands of Italian settlers lived mostly in Tripolitania – as well as the numerous and different tribes and their political culture elaborated above – reaching an agreement on the future of the country seemed a challenging issue (Ahmida, 2005).

Notwithstanding, territorial integrity and independent governance were undebated matters throughout the negotiations by members of all three territories. In reality though, the question of governance was a thoroughly-discussed and debated matter among the nations and the UN had to closely investigate before coming to a conclusion, while keeping in mind that the longer the process went, the further domestic parties departed from any sings of alignment. The Tripolitanian vision of total unity was incompatible with a Sanusi government demanded by the majority of Cyrenaica, which seemed to have created an unresolvable obstacle. As a matter of fact, maintaining territorial unity was not in the interest of most foreign governments. France, for instance, attempted to obtain total control over Fezzan and local population seemed to have accepted such an action (Vandewalle, 2012). For the rest of the states, Libya represented a geopolitical issue that had to be interpreted within the new Cold War arena, which entailed any potential gain of opposing parties was to be prevented. After a failed attempt to impose foreign trusteeships on the territories by Western nations, the UN finally created the resolution granting independence, which materialized on 24 December 1951 with the birth of the United Kingdom of Libya under the rule of King Sayyid Idris, who returned from his exile in Egypt.

Libya's first attempt of self-governance

This new state faced an exceeding number of challenges. First and foremost, there existed no stable income. Locust plagues and droughts meant a constant danger for agriculture, directly harming commercial and capitalist aspirations. The latter also received a major damage as Libyans continued to identify the concept of modernity with the Italian colonial era, which brought them inequality, lack of representation and torture. Additionally, the state of infrastructure was in a poor condition and international trade routes have long been redirected to flow through neighboring countries. Moreover, no class structure evolved, which once again led back to the revaluation of tribal relations at a period when unemployment rate peaked. The fact that the independence was reached without war against the colonizer might trigger envy in the eye of

some, but the truth is that the above hardships combined with the exceedingly high percentage of illiteracy composed a far from ideal situation to the new monarch.

Creating political, economic and national unity – in addition to the persisting territorial – now became the first and most important task. But the question was how can unity be created without a shared ideology, and how can a common ideology evolve in the lack of shared interests? The division also had to be interpreted in the urban – rural context, inasmuch as Tripolitania – that accommodated approximately two thirds of the total population mostly living in cities – favored a unitary government, while Cyrenaica and Fezzan preferred federalism where they would see tribal interests served better (Vandewalle, 2012). The peoples of Libya were aware of the role of the West in obtaining their independence and the new country received many sorts of aid from foreign governments, especially from the United States, but the promoted modernity still had a negative general estimation. King Idris shared these views and relied on proponents of a federal state in the coming years. The subsequently established structure of governance had multiple points of vulnerability given the domestic diversities and regional events – most notably with the rise of Nasser in the neighboring Egypt and his influence. The central government obtained only a limited amount of power while significant rights were granted to the provinces. Importantly, the right to dispose any sort of revenue resided with provinces, the state had no right to intervene in the economy and this proved to be the most essential matter. Namely, Standard Oil of New Jersey discovered huge and premium quality crude fields in Cyrenaica during the mid-50s, which was followed by numerous companies' explorations (Yergin, 2009).

The subsequent rapid spread of corruption and an even elevated scale of internal tension were in alignment with later studies finding the negative effects of giant discoveries on societies (Tsui, 2011) and they have combined led to the abandonment of the federal structure in 1963. The new unitary government held greater and a significantly wider set of authority, and was intended to resolve the stalemate induced by the post-colonialist federalism, which swiftly became outdated in the midst of enormous changes in Libya that occurred in only a decade. The Kingdom of Libya favored nationalists but it certainly was not welcomed by those who would lose power and influence as a result of its introduction. A single national government was granted authority over all regions' matters, be it legislative, financial, commercial, etc. This flow of centralization was accompanied by a set of rational cuts in the size of the country's bureaucracy, and several ministries' establishment or reorganization (Khadduri, 1963). Although this restructuring had numerous advantages – that included the setting up of a quick and beneficial system through which concessions were granted to foreign oil companies and so revenues increased exceedingly – it was not able to exclude preferences in giving out influential positions to members of tribal elites. Multiple ministries and institutes were led by members of tribes supporting the King as corruption was constantly strengthening (Simons, 1996). As these incumbent leaders had a profound responsibility over the distribution of wealth, they have had direct contribution to the enormous increase of inflation. This negative trend was well-observed at high-level offices too and there existed several programs with the articulated goal to decrease social inequality – predominantly focusing on education so that the exceedingly high rate of illiteracy (approximately 90 percent) could be decreased, as well as advantageous housing loans that have unfortunately resulted in further rise of prices – but these proved to be insufficient, a rising unrest was tangible.

Coup and revolution

The king, reluctant to rule fully over the country was losing support, which was due to several reasons. Out of these, historians mark political exclusion to be the single most important. This meant King Idris continuously relied on a selected groups of individuals from selected tribes (mostly from Cyrenaica), which weakened the state as the people could not be represented. Furthermore, even though the era of 18 years of monarchy proved to be exceedingly eventful, the illiterate society – that shared very few mutual interests beyond family, tribe or region – could not actively benefit even from such unexpected advantages as the increasing oil revenues. All these occurred simultaneously with radio broadcasts spreading anti-western ideology that could not remain unheard in the midst of multiple Western oil companies, military bases and soldiers in country, let alone the role Western countries have had in the establishment of the monarchy itself. It was not a single casus belli, only the combination and eventual culmination of these factors that followed a revolutionary petrostate pattern (Colgan, 2010) and have led to a bloodless coup on 1 September, 1969 committed by a group of young officers under the flag of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) – that became the most powerful authority after the 1969 Constitution – led by Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi. All the members of the RCC came from non-prestigious tribes, middle-class families that were neglected in many

ways under the King and they sympathized with the arguments of Nasser (First, 1975). On the other hand, they all lacked both experience and expertise (Davies, 1988). Having all gone to Military Academies, none of them held the key to resolve the social, political, economic, or other issues that triggered their dissatisfaction in the first place.

Their goal was to restructure the political life through mobilization and destroy any bad heritage they have inherited from the monarchy. But the initial means failed the expectations as the so called popular rule through Popular Congresses did not produce the necessary participation, regardless of enthusiastic campaigns and the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) was also not able to mobilize the masses. 1973 was a vital turning point as Qadhafi launched the Cultural Revolution – or as he often cited: the popular revolution – which was meant to erase any obstacle in the way of reforms. Suspending the existing laws meant the commencement, which was followed by a reversed approach: a bottom up mobilization (Obeidi, 2001). Historically speaking, the timing could not have been more advantageous. Increasing crude prices on the international markets – as well as the appearing crises – combined with a new and financially more beneficial approach towards foreign oil companies operating in country (later their nationalization) all proved indispensable for doubling the size of army, as well as bureaucracy (Yergin, 2009). Distribution of wealth was fundamentally different as compared to the monarchy era, which could be exemplified by the far-reaching development of national infrastructure, financial support offered to private businesses (predominantly in the farming sector), increasing minimal wages and income-based loan benefits, health care related investments, as well as until then unforeseen budget spent on reaching higher literacy (Vandewalle, 2012).

The Green Book and the Third Universal Theory

Qadhafi was adamant in suggesting the revolutionary nature of the takeover, which he found to be a vital characteristic since it showed the selfless set of goals stemming from the people. After the first years and several attempts – with varying scale of success – in extending the revolution to every level of society in all distant corners of the land, he wrote his famous three volumes of the Green Book, in which he drafted his vision on society, state-structure and bureaucracy, economics, politics and in general his ideology labelled as the Third Universal Theory. As the title suggested, the book set out to offer a new dogma that is distinct from Marxism as well as capitalism, and that is based on the underlying concept of governance of the people without any party or bureaucratic establishment. This was the fundament behind the stateless society, or as the official term later phrased the state of masses, the Jamahiriya. Qadhafi blamed the outdated institutions and the establishment for the failure of attempts at political mobilizations, and argued the new system offered an equal and fair way for citizens to directly make political, economic, social or other decisions effecting their life (al-Qadhafi, 1980). In line with these directives, a thorough redistribution of wealth commenced to provide equal shares from the peoples' fruit of labor and to erase differences persisting until then among classes.

Basically, the private sector ceased to exist, as the new conditions made it impossible to survive. Moreover, other signs implicated the dubious success of reforms too. Tens of thousands with higher-education have fled the country at a period when a significant shortage of technocrats prevailed and the only desirable export commodity of the country could still only be produced with the help of foreign experts and laborers in a decade severely hit by crises resulting in sharp falls of oil prices, boycotts and embargos, as well as international and intra-regional political tensions (Simons, 1996). Qadhafi ceaselessly argued that the new state was a victory for democracy but in fact, the real power and decisions rested with a thin group of elites that was not held accountable by the people. He also attempted to deter the importance of his role but the many Revolutionary Committees reported to him – and he appointed their members too –, which also commissioned him with an extensive web of domestic intelligence, control over the entire national press, the economy, police and military forces, as well as decisive influence in the legal bodies and the political arena (Vandewalle, 2008). Henceforth, the cultural revolution that also set out the mobilize peoples in an unprecedented way eventually deprived the general people of the possibility to make those exact same decisions that it was articulated to guarantee. In the midst of a seemingly lawless state, where political and economic decisions were based on a few individuals' interests ultimately led back to a stage, where the "masses" did not control the state.

Economic experiments and shortcomings of old politics in a new age

It cannot be claimed that the international storms of the following decades did not contribute to domestic politics' revise, specifically amid of Libya's role in global terrorism and stemming acts of retaliation. Precisely, financing, preparing and appraising plots committed against the West might have been in line with Qadhafi's way of fulfilling Nasser's agenda – even if seeking unity in the Arab world was slowly replaced by similar ambitions in sub-Saharan Africa – but gaining upmost notoriety in the international arena triggered strikes of various nature against the leader of this mission. One of these occurred in April 1986, when USAF bombed Benghazi aiming at the killing of Qadhafi himself and hoped that even if that goal would not materialize, it would at least provide a sign for those secretly opposing the establishment (Boyle, 2013). Neither of the two goals were met but it has led to the demotion of RCCs and several easing measures including political liberalization, border openings, introduction of People's Courts, etc. (Vandewalle, 1995). Notwithstanding, the multiple economic sanctions imposed by foreign states and the increasing list of causalities stemming from the Toyota War with Chad have led to several Islamist groups' uprisings that the army fiercely put down (Simons, 2003). Subsequently, economic reforms commenced in order to deal with international pressure, but these failed to live up to expectations, leaving the population in a struggle to get through daily life.

Apart from this, there existed many obvious signs necessitating the change of course including the extremely high import ratio, approximately 30 percent unemployment rate, the dissolution of bipolar world order, and the international community's interpretation on Libya as the single biggest supporter of global terrorism. Having run out of real options, Qadhafi agreed to comply with a list of demands in exchange for lifting trade embargoes and sanctions, as well as the country's return to markets. Subsequent years brought about privatization, emergence of private banks and stock exchange, tax reforms – all in sheer contrast with The Green Books – but as these did not provide short term 'returns', they have often been in the center of Qhadafi's rhetoric (Vandewalle, 2012). In truth, the country was in deep need of economic and political reforms, but due to a set of reasons including the lack of institutional background, constitution and appropriate national bureaucracy, the below issues became increasingly visible:

1.   rightful grievances could not adequately be addressed
2.   revelations on the needs of younger generations, many of whom returned after having been graduated at Western Universities (transparency, accountability, representation), were not compatible to be factored into policymaking
3.   efficiency of the still being adopted means of the Jamahiriya on attempting to aid standard of living – that included an equal distribution of oil wealth among the people – were questionable, at best

On the way towards civil war: an inevitable uprising

The rise of economy and living standards of most inhabitants in the last few years of the regime is incontrovertible. Libyan crude was still an exceedingly demanded commodity, while a newly arisen group of entrepreneurs started their businesses during a time when foreign direct investments were finally allowed to be made in country. On the other hand, the sense of revolution has by this time substantially weakened amongst citizens, who have allegedly been part of the greatest political participation but in fact had no real control or influence. Very much relevantly from the perspective of later events, national identity did not materialize during these four decades of 'mass mobilization'. The final nail in the regime's coffin came from outside. Namely, an enormously-promising and later thoroughly-debated region-wide movement, the Arab Spring started to spread out and reached Libya simultaneously with the above-described issues' exacerbation. Considering the earlier history of the country, it is not surprising that the first revolt has taken place in Benghazi on 15 February, 2011, which then quickly spread across the whole of Cyrenaica (Garland, 2012). Even though Qadhafi had military superiority in all aspects, diplomatic support was being directed to the newly created Transitional National Council (TNC) of the East. The eventual intervention of NATO – Operation Unified Protector – was required in order not to let the revolt die just months after its outbreak and to try to avoid further fracturing of the society (Haesebrouck, 2016). Nevertheless, this latter could not be achieved since tension was palpable between loyalists and rebels, but also amongst proponents of a regime change (Schnelzer, 2016). Rebels – backed by Western know how and air support – gained ground, occupied several major cities in Tripolitania before finally killing Qadhafi in Sirte on 20 October.

The role of tribalism

The end of the 42 years of constant stateless revolution left behind a still predominantly tribal society in a country that could hardly carried the attributes of modernity. The lack of institutional background impeded any form of conflict-management among separate groups and tribes, while essential decisions made by individuals were still based on tribal preferences (Obeidi, 2001). Throughout the decades, Qadhafi often manipulated these tribes alongside his needs and strived for maintaining a balance among the biggest ones (Prashad, 2012). The first election held after his removal on 7 July 2012 demonstrated the extant preference of local candidates over others campaigning with state-wide programs. Almost half of the voters cast their ballots on nominees of the National Forces Alliance (NFA) at a turnout rate of 61.58 percent (Anon., 2012) that exemplified the further persistence of tribal association over political or ideological orientation, which is no surprise considering the above noted correlations. Every group and tribe was seeking greater influence, or recognition, e.g. the Amazigh was seeking to obtain constitutional assurances to secure their right to use their language and have initiated a movement for common political activism, which quickly spread out in the Berber cities (Lane, 2011). It would be a minor exaggeration to claim that the outbreak and subsequent spread of the revolution was a purely tribal-dynamics dictated process – since there existed regional, as well as city-specific lines of fracture – but due to several major tribes' junction and involvement (Anon., 2011) overwhelmingly in Cyrenaica, their prominent role in the events is unquestionable.

The concept of tribalism is a subject of debate among academics – and in some cases criticism due to its indication on lack of development and modernity (Hüsken, 2009) – both in a general and the Libyan context. This work is on an agreement with those arguing that while certain principles of tribes and tribalism may be encased within society, there exists a constant evolution (Charrad, 2011) that is necessitated by fundamental needs of these groups of peoples, including a classical realist set of goals, e.g., for tribes that have enjoyed prominent role under Qadhafi, physical survival was at stake. While state institutions were falling apart at the dawn of civil war, tribes of various regions started to implement different means of guaranteeing their security. Revolutionary brigades emerged in Misrata based on neighborhoods, while defense was organized for entire cities within Benghazi (Lacher, 2013). Conflicts arose between tribes in many instances about decades-long lasting issues including the historic occupation of land, support provided to loyalists as well as historic opposition that has been managed during the Jamahiriya (Ahmida, 1994). Consequently, the kindling national civil war also possessed a tribal dimension that was based on a territorially and ideologically more limited scheme.

In this struggle of gaining or maintaining power, stance was in many cases object to role during the preceding years, numerous clashes among neighboring tribes throughout most of the country – with the exception of Cyrenaica – manifested both the goals of parties and the incapability of TNC to manage the situation (failure to settle conflicts and prosecute crimes committed). The revelation on the alteration of tribal balance of power might be the most significant factor here, inasmuch as tribes of Cyrenaica started to outweigh the historically most powerful alliance of Warfalla, Maqarha and Qadhadhifa tribes while those attempted to preserve their influence as much as it was possible (Lacher, 2013). To use a phrasing not alien to Libyan politics, tribal actions in the hinterland represented the bottom-up mobilization, while revolutionary militias' role in major coastal cities could rather be characterized as top-down mobilization. Most certainly, the widening discrepancy among constituents of the first one stemming from the exclusive insistence on own agendas hurt the chances of the latter and has directly contributed to the incapability of all parties and alliances to take complete control. The struggle between the old and new elite truly began.

The new Civil War

Several attempts were prepared in order to reform the political landscape in the aftermath of the 2012 election – led by the General National Congress (GNC) –, but lacking the necessary support, most of these proved to be short-lived experiments an no new constitution was created. A new wave of intensification within the post-Qadhafi era arrived in May 2014, when General Khalifa Haftar – the commander of the East – leading renegade troops-initiated Operation Dignity and attacked Benghazi, which resulted in the unified standup of Islamists and jihadists against a common enemy (Anon., 2019). Simultaneously, a Misratan-led coalition has managed to obtain control over Tripoli (Pack, 2019). As opposed to the clashes with relatively-limited territorial importance outlined above, these strings of events represented a higher-level opposition; two camps fighting for greater recognition and power. They have ultimately resulted in the gradual creation of two opposing governments: Tripoli in the West and Tobruk in the East. The rivalry between the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) and House of Representatives (HoR) located in Tobruk – as well as the Libyan National Army (LNA) – provided a platform for the deeply-rooted societal issues to come

to surface. Although a sense of nationhood is palpable in today's Libya, tribal and local elite competition have hindered national alliance-forging and directly-led to the current status quo (Lacher, 2016).

The GNA – that is supported by the UN and is recognized by most governments around the world – is led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj since 2016 and has politically and militarily influential members in its Presidential Council (PC). Furthermore, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) and the Central Bank are both directed from Tripoli, which theoretically speaking should provide a strategic advantage for the GNA – though past years' events radically decreased its capacity to influence matters concerning these two. On the opposing side stands General Haftar leading the LNA and backed by Tobruk. Importantly, frontlines between the two are not exact as there are members of proponents of Tripoli and Tobruk in both establishments (Toaldo, 2016). However, the rise of Haftar also marked a period when the relevance of Libyan Civil War started to spread across the borders. An increasing number of signs started to indicate the development of a predominantly domestic combat into another classic proxy war involving numerous foreign state and non-state actors, where declared and real goals might not necessarily align.

Finally, numerous scholars and academic figures have argued over the course of the past decade that Libya became a failed state due to its weak or complete lack of statehood. This work strongly refutes these allegations because of the following reasons. Even though the country's history did not comprise unitary processes within society i.e. similar to those that occurred in Europe throughout the centuries, this first chapter thoroughly explained that the post-colonial era provided opportunities to secede. Contrary to the fact that significantly different regions and peoples were merged via the relatively late birth of the country and that many further challenges were imposed by the Qadhafi reign, national territorial integrity remained untouched. The lack of similar sense of identity was without a doubt present – predominantly between Tripolitania and Cyrenaica – but it did not lead to a separation as regimes followed each other. One might reflect on the destructive heritage of the Qadhafi era that indeed created real sense of grievance that culminated with the outbreak of the revolution. Nevertheless, no serious attempts were made to fragment the territorial integrity of what we call Libya by either of the two major opposing parties. Presumably, local preferences rooting in tribal standards contribute to the nature of the ongoing war that seems to carry no sufficient domestic superiority between actors, but this does not equal with a complete statelessness.

Conclusion

The societal dynamics elaborated on throughout the upper pages all suggest that there are many sources of internal tension and sense of occupation between various groups of people. These are important to understand as they provide a vital room to exploit weaknesses for foreign actors. The fact that the uprising against Qadhafi was predominantly domestic-motivated or not can be debated. However, the strict increase of external actors indirectly or directly participating in country, often openly addressing these weaknesses is well-visible today.

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