

Conflict Analysis: The Second Libyan Civil war – and how to avoid a third one

Introduction

Since the fall of the Qaddafi regime in 2011, the stabilization expected for the post-conflict transition in Libya has not been achieved yet. On the contrary, the country is now divided into two main political centers of power and has been sinking into an endemic civil war ever since. Eight years after the revolution, Libya remains in a chaotic state, home to armed groups, terrorists, and criminal networks. After the expiration of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) in December 2017, any effort to find a political compromise between Tripoli and Tobruk have been constantly undermined both by the political fragmentation on the ground and by detrimental foreign proxies. Moreover, a solution for the East-West division seems now even further out of reach with tensions reaching their peak in 2014 and have been deteriorating since. Following the recent offensive on Tripoli launched on April 4 by forces from the country's East and coming only 10 days ahead of a UN-sponsored peace conference that was supposed to finally break through the political gridlock and schedule new general elections, the long-hoped-for stabilization of the country remains a long way off. Still, with the possibility of a third full-scale civil war in less than ten years becoming increasingly likely, a solution to the conflict is needed now more than ever.

The ultimate scope of this conflict analysis is therefore to propose recommendations for a swift interruption of violence and to set the stage for the creation of those *sine qua non* conditions for a national reconciliation and stabilization process. In other words, following a comprehensive analysis of the conflict, the most proximate causes of the conflict will be specifically addressed to find a near-term solution for the achievement of a functional “negative peace”, leaving future analyses the onerous task of addressing more deeply rooted

problems for a long-lasting stability. In order to re-build the profoundly fractured Libyan society, the first step is to reach a permanent truce between the two blocs in order to achieve a sufficient stability to disarm and demobilize the several armed groups active in the country and therefore allow the formation of a national unity government. This conflict analysis precisely aims to address these very last points.

Conflict's Causes

The deep-rooted tensions within Libyan society, substantially deriving from the unequal distribution of power and wealth, date back to the birth of the post-colonial state but re-emerged only in 2011 with the removal of Qaddafi after 42 years of authoritarian regime. More proximate vulnerabilities, on the other hand, have crippled the post-revolution political system since its earliest days until when, at the beginning of 2014, rising tensions between increasingly polarized factions eventually resulted into widespread outbreaks of violence across the country.¹ The Libyan conflict is ultimately driven by the desire for power and resources rather than competing ideologies.

Proximate Drivers of Violence

The most obvious reason behind the ongoing crisis is the absence of a strong central authority that could fill the vacuum of power left by the Qaddafi regime and the consequential political fragmentation. Since the 2011 overthrow of the regime, no political faction has ever enjoyed sufficient support to rule the country and an overabundance of actors have consequently crowded the national political landscape due to a total lack of political consensus.² This situation resulted in conflict in 2014 and is now the main reason for the ongoing political stalemate. As an immediate consequence of the absence of a central government with the resulting

monopoly of violence, the most compelling problem in Libya is the extremely volatile security environment. The two competing political authorities both rely upon different power arrangements to encounter their security needs, but none of them has firm control over each actor within their security complexes. Therefore, neither in Tripoli nor in the East, there is anything that could possibly be construed as a stable, legitimate security authority.³

On a different level, the Libyan conflict is, to a large extent, a conflict for oil.⁴ The resource accounts for 82% of Libyan export earnings and 60% of the GDP.⁵ It is self-evident why the control of the oil industry lies at the heart of the quest for power and legitimacy between East and West.⁶ Not for nothing, with the split of the national institutions between the Tripoli and the Tobruk-al-Bayda's authorities, the NOC, the Libyan state-owned oil company, also got split into two parallel institutions respectively based in Tripoli and Benghazi, with the former operating under international recognition and the latter exporting the crude illicitly.⁷ While keeping on calling for the dissolution of its counterpart in Benghazi, the Tripoli-based NOC has recently suspended operations at the country's largest oil field due to an “unlawful” closure of a pipeline valve linking the El Sharara oilfield to the port of Zawiya, on the Mediterranean coast.⁸ Albeit in control of the El Sharara oil field, Haftar's forces do not exercise full control of its pipeline's route which runs partially through territories held by militias allied with the Tripoli government.⁹ This shows, on the one hand, the fragility of the Libyan oil production – at its lowest levels in the last five months – and, on the other hand, how the ability to control or disrupt it plays a pivotal role in the conflict.¹⁰

Finally, all the above is compounded by detrimental foreign proxies. As pinpointed by the human rights activist and former

Vice-Chairman of the National Transitional Council of Libya during the 2011 revolution, Abdul Hafiz Ghoga, “there will be no peace and stability in Libya unless the international community reaches consensus.” Mr. Ghoga touched the heart of the issue here as competing interests from various global and regional powers have significantly crippled the efforts of the UN to find a political compromise between Tripoli and Tobruk, with the former supported, among the others, by Qatar, Turkey, Italy, and the United States and the latter mainly backed by Egypt, United Arab Emirates (UAE), France, and Russia.¹¹ Among them, France, Italy, Egypt, the UAE, and the United States have called in a recently issued rare joint statement for an immediate end of hostilities around Tripoli warning how “terrorist groups” are exploiting the country’s security vacuum and “there can be no military solution in Libya.”¹² Still, the disunity so far exposed at the international level is far from being replaced by a more robust international approach to resolving the conflict as seeking a simple cease-fire is likely to merely give Haftar and the GNA-aligned forces the opportunity to rearm, reorganize, and re-entrench themselves on offensive positions.

Resulting Sources of Instability

There are several destabilizing elements contributing to further complicate the precarious situation on the ground. Among them, radicalization and violent extremism play a critical role. Libya’s chaos, insecurity, and abundance of hydrocarbon resources have been attracting jihadist groups and various terrorist organizations that infiltrated every major coastal city or found “safe haven” in the vast ungoverned territories of the south. These groups, while representing a serious security threat per se, substantially disrupt and undermine any attempts of dialogue with local communities significantly contributing to further destabilize the situation by perpetuating the status quo.¹³

Tied hand in glove with the lack of control over territory and resources, organized crime proliferates giving rise to an incredibly lucrative war economy. Profitable

illicit trafficking and smuggling of migrants are a constant occurrence in Libya. As the war economy intensifies, the chances of restoring a national central governance drastically diminish, since armed groups and local militias are among the major beneficiaries of these illegal lucrative networks.¹⁴ Criminal and terrorist organizations are the biggest spoilers of the conflict. The two, present in both the GNA and LNA-controlled territories and enabled to sustain themselves by the remunerative incentives offered by the Libyan war economy, represent a serious impediment to peace as short-term gains get prioritized at the group level over wider national stability and security.

On top of the above, and partially due to both the absence of government and the presence of lucrative networks, the instability in Libya has awakened ancient tribal feuds throughout the country. This is the case, for instance, in Tripolitania between the Zintan and the Wershefana’s Tribes, in Fezzan between the Tuaregs and the Tebus, and in Cyrenaica where the Awaqeer, Magharbeh and Obaidat tribes have been growing resentful towards the Haftar’s leadership.¹⁵ Further complicating this situation, historical rivalries are also inflamed by the aforementioned opportunities offered by the war economy, especially with regard to the smuggling business that has been benefitting some groups over others, as in the case of the Tebu who dominate smuggling routes through Libya’s southern borders. Addressing the tribal question is therefore crucial since, not only tribal wars contribute to the instability of the conflict, but also because tribal power dynamics historically represents a central element in national cohesion and identity.

Stake-Holder Mapping

Political Actors

The situation in Libya is complex, chaotic, and extremely dynamic due to the highly fragmented political landscape characterized by rapidly shifting alliances and to the maze of armed groups pursuing different agendas in different parts of the country. On the political level, two main

centers of power compete for power, legitimacy, and everything that goes along with it, above all, the control over financial institutions and resources. The main political actors are therefore split between the capital Tripoli, the western stronghold, and the eastern bloc of Tobruk and al-Bayda. Originally, the competing centers of power were three, with Tripoli having a second claimant, the **Government of National Salvation (GNS)**. Headed by Prime Minister Khalifa al-Ghawi until March 2016, the GNS is today no longer in control of any relevant institution.¹⁶ The quest for legitimacy is therefore a two-horse race between the UN-backed government in Tripoli and the parliament in Tobruk. The politico-administrative structure in Tripoli is the outcome of the fragile-born UN-brokered agreement, the LPA. Since March 2016 the capital has been officially governed by two institutions deriving their legitimacy from the agreement, the **Presidential Council (PC)** and the **Government of National Accord (GNA)**, holding respectively the supervisory and executive powers of the country. The two are both headed by **Fayez al-Sarraj**, who’s leadership is weak and constantly crippled by the necessity to lean on a complex of several different security actors to exert control over the capital.¹⁷ Still, the control of Tripoli gives Al-Sarraj and his GNA a considerable advantage, namely the control over strategic infrastructure such as ports and airports and over strategic financial assets such as the Libyan Central Bank (LCB), the Libyan Investment Authority (LIA), and (only partially) the National Oil Corporation (NOC).

In eastern Libya, there operates two main political entities, both of which are in opposition to the official authorities in Tripoli: The **House of Representatives (HoR)** based in Tobruk, and the dissident **Government of al-Bayda**. The HoR, originally designed to cooperate with Tripoli’s government under the LPA, in two occasions has voted down the list of ministries proposed by the GNA.¹⁸ Headed by Aguila Saleh Issa, it therefore supports the rival government of Abdullah al-Thinni which operates in al-Bayda, eastern Libya. The “Eastern Government” in al-Bayda,

originally conceived as the *ad interim* transition government, was elected after the fall of Qaddafi, and was supposed to hold executive power until the official recognition of the GNA from the HoR. The recognition did not occur yet (if ever) and so did not the transfer of powers. Both the Hor and the al-Bayda's government are aligned with the anti-Islamist General Khalifa Haftar, head of the **Libyan National Army (LNA)** and *de facto* ruler of the dissident East. Haftar represents the military strongman that many believe being the only way forward in unifying the country. Yet his leadership is weaker than publicly portrayed.¹⁹

Armed Groups

Two main blocs built around the two competing political authorities of Tripoli and eastern Libya, and a plethora of autonomous and semi-autonomous militias, crowd the Libyan scenario, while spoilers have been almost equally distributed across the two blocs and as autonomous third parties.

In eastern Libya, the armed wing of the Tobruk-Al Bayda bloc is substantially represented by the Libyan National Army (LNA) alone. The LNA is an assorted army and a discreet military force composed by soldiers, former police officers, special forces, armed civilians, brigades of militias (including units from Misrata), tribal militiamen, foreign mercenaries (mainly Chadian and Sudanese forces), and other military groups such as the eastern and central branches of the Petroleum Facilities Guard, led by general commander Khalifa Haftar and that controls the east and the south of the country and a portion of the western border.²⁰ Lined up among Haftar's troops feature also the Salafist Tariq Ibn Ziyad Brigade and the recently formed 73rd Infantry Brigade. Both have joined the ongoing battle for Tripoli.²¹ All in all, the LNA's core militia is made up of around 7,000 military troops coupled by some 18,000 auxiliary units and supported by a limited air force counting approximately eight combat-ready aircraft and by a naval force seemingly restricted to coastal patrol vessels.²²

On the other hand, the analysis of the armed groups active in western Libya shows an entirely different picture. The anti-Haftar alliance, significantly less integrated than its eastern counterpart, is a conglomerate of official and semi-official armed forces, more or less-radicalized Islamist groups, and tribal militias. The Presidential Guard, of which the Supreme Commander is the Chairman of the Presidential Council (PC) Fayez Al-Sarraj, together with the weak Libyan Navy, is the only regular military force serving under the GNA. Its establishment, is indeed the attempt by the latter to form a unified Libyan national army loyal to, and under the control of, the authorities based in Tripoli. Yet, its function is perhaps more symbolic than with the burden of the conflict mostly divided up among the powerful allied city-states and the control of the capital entrusted to local armed groups. Among them, Misrata's Brigades are unquestionably the most powerful militia. Originally part of the Libya Dawn coalition and particularly active against the Zintan's militias, the brigades from Misrata, a city-state situated 187 km to the east of Tripoli, are run independently but still linked to the GNA and are now reconciled with their former Zintan enemy. The latter, the second most powerful armed force in Libya after Misrata, is based in the Nafusa mountains 144km southwest of Tripoli and established across much of southwest Tripoli. The militias from the small but powerful town of Zintan were pushed out from the capital by the Dawn Coalition in 2014 with which members they subsequently aligned while distancing themselves from Haftar. Another important component of the anti-LNA coalition is represented by the Zawiyah's Militias. Nominally on Haftar's side following a recent agreement between the general and local leaders to enter the city peacefully on his march to Tripoli, the militias instead ambushed Haftar's fighters and captured several LNA forces as soon as they rolled into town while sending troops to the capital in support of the GNA.²³ Finally, as mentioned above, a central part of the GNA's territorial control passes through the role of Tripoli's Security Forces, a highly fragmented conglomerate of armed groups (with different official or semi-official roles within the

security apparatus of the capital) among which the dominant players are the Rada Special Deterrence Force (SDF), the Nawasi Brigade, the Abu Salim Brigade, and the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade (TRB).²⁴ Nonetheless, to further complicate the situation, in Libya there is a number of autonomous and semi-autonomous third players active across the whole country. Somewhere in the middle between the two blocs, operate a, somehow official, security force that plays a pivotal role in the conflict, the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG). A federalist militia that controls a number of oil and gas infrastructure in eastern Libya, the PFG has separated from the Tripoli-based armed forces but officially still operates under the Ministry of Defense of the unity government. Yet, as a matter of fact, the militia acts mostly independently, and some units even aligned with the LNA.²⁵ Even in the "stabilized" east under Haftar's strong military rule a series of militias are active against the LNA-Dignity campaign, the so-called Benghazi Armed Groups. Among them, the Benghazi Revolutionary Shura Council (BRSC) and the Benghazi Defence Brigade (BDB).²⁶ Moreover, as listed among the drivers of violence, the presence of independent militias is compounded by the threat of jihadist groups and tribal disputes both in the eastern and the western side. The main jihadist groups active in Libya are Daesh and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, with other minor Salafi-jihadi factions like the Madkhali-Salafis further enriching the intolerant, radical, and anti-democratic compound spoiling Libyan civil society and of which growing influence across key armed groups and religious institutions makes them central actors in the Libyan crisis.²⁷ On the other hand, especially in the south of the country, tribes such as the Tuaregs, the Tebus and, to a lesser extent, the Awaqeer, Magharbeh and Obaidat tribes are deeply involved in the conflict in some cases conducting parallel tribal wars against each other.²⁸

Conflict Dynamics

After the capture of almost the entire Fezzan with all its oil wells and major clusters of populations, the LNA had already

ensured the control of about two-thirds of Libya. By strengthening his position in the south Haftar had also strengthened his position in the wider national framework, making the possibility of a military solution to the conflict increasingly plausible. Indeed, this scenario eventually materialized on April 4, when the head of the LNA declared his intention to take over Tripoli through military means. Yet, with the fighting flaring at the gates of the capital, paradoxically, Haftar's position has never been weaker. If, by taking the south, the LNA had secured an important strategic area while at the same time reinforcing its legitimacy in the eyes of the national public, the assault on Tripoli is bringing to light weaknesses and internal tensions.²⁹ Haftar's domestic and international support has substantially decreased, with foreign leaders condemning the action and some local allies on the ground turning to the opposition.³⁰ Moreover, after the initial surprise, the LNA's advance became bogged down and it is now evident how the battle for Tripoli will not be over any time soon. With the first attack, Haftar's forces had quickly seized control of the strategic outpost of Gharyan, a small town about 80 kilometers away from the capital taking up positions in Tripoli's suburbs 11 km circa south of the center.³¹ Yet, in June, the GNA forces launched a surprise counter-attack taking back control over Gharyan, which had become the main supply base for Haftar's offensive by then. Following the setback, by now, Haftar's way to the city is fiercely opposed by the GNA-aligned militias as the General is now facing better-armed and better-trained combatants than the ones he defeated in the south and the east.

On the opposite side, the GNA that had seen its position constantly weakening since its initial appointment, is now regaining strength. The LNA's operations in Fezzan further marginalized the presence of Tripoli in the south, while Al-Serraji was clearly more concerned with substantiating his uncertain control over the capital.³² Yet, Haftar's offensive is now giving momentum to the anti-LNA coalition. The government, quickly after Haftar's lightning assault, had announced a coun-

teroffensive to reclaim all areas seized by the enemy retaking control over strategic areas and outposts such as the aforementioned Gharyan and the Mitiga airport, the capital's only functional airport that had initially fallen into enemy hands. Troops from Misrata, Zintan, and Zawiyah have been constantly flooding into the capital and, albeit not under the GNA's direct control, are actively assisting the government in its counteroffensive.³³ However, the now blatant inability of both factions to make significant military progress is pushing both the GNA and the LNA to rethink their tactics now mainly consisting in targeting each other's bases and supply centers with air-raids and drone-strikes. The situation is substantially the same in Tripoli's southern suburbs, where front lines might shift daily, but where the two sides have been locked in a standoff since last May. Despite the growing number of casualties on both sides and among civilians, by now, neither party seems willing to accept a ceasefire as both still believe they can achieve their goals through military means. Against this backdrop, the war around Tripoli will likely drag on bringing further stalemate and greater destruction until a diplomatic solution is found.

Recommendations for Conflict Reduction

With the window for opportunity that was opened by the Abu Dhabi Agreement now inevitably close, it is hard to imagine a gradual conciliatory mediation as a solution for the conflict.³⁴ With Tripoli's precarious peace now fatally gone and with the third full-scale civil war spreading around the capital, the priority, as of this moment, must be to bring back to the negotiating table the opposing leaderships by proposing an alternative political process. Haftar's move is a gambit, and potentially a tactical and strategic trap. Hence, his military campaign against Tripoli means primarily one thing: there is no political future for him in the new Libya, or at least not in the one that formal negotiations were leading towards. Haftar, confident in his strength, opted for the military solution just as Salamé's political reconciliation efforts have started paying off, most likely with the intent of getting a better

deal by disrupting the pro-GNA coalition. Therefore, a new political solution must be created in light of the new balance of power in place while it cannot retreat from the decisive action of the international community, perhaps coalesced around the concerted leadership of a neutral power as the two parties will likely try to prolong the fight if each sustained by its own regional allies.

Recommended Course of Action

Given the above, a peace conference is urgently needed.³⁵ As soon as conditions permit, international key-players should work to broker a sustained ceasefire between the two factions and allow the conference to take place. An immediate de-escalation of the conflict is of paramount importance. To this end, a window of opportunity may be offered by the fact that Haftar's march on the capital is not exactly working out as planned. By pivoting on the now crystal-clear military deadlock around Tripoli, Haftar's international allies should increase their pressure on the General to get him back to the negotiating table. International actors, the US and the EU in the first place, should persuade regional proxies in Libya to abandon the unrealistic belief that either side can achieve its own political goals without first reaching a settlement with the other. In other words, the international community must convince Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and Cairo, on the one hand, and Doha and Ankara on the other, that neither side will likely obtain any swift, significant military victory in the pursuit of their independent political road map and that both the LNA and the GNA should abandon their zero-sum logic.

Once in place, the conference should be centered around the disarmament of combatants, perhaps by providing incentives and promising inclusion to all forces that put down their arms, restrain from future clashes, and distance themselves from hard-line radicalized or particularly aggressive leaderships. Secondly, the role of Haftar in the future Libyan state should be re-discussed by compromising between a necessary engagement and justifiable concerns while avoiding a harm-

ful and dangerous appeasement. The Abu Dhabi agreement was rather opaque and ambiguous on this particularly delicate point that should instead be made clearer. In light of the latest developments, the increased importance of the LNA at the strategic level cannot be ignored, but any compromise must be made while bearing in mind the necessity of assuring the continuation of an unconditionally civilian state after the war.

The political constituencies of Tripoli and Tobruk should agree on the path towards a new constitution and on the eventual electoral procedures. Moreover, unrelenting diplomatic efforts must be undertaken by both parties to gather all the influential actors within their respective spheres of influence in a joint effort to ensure the most inclusive cooperation towards this common goal. Finally, inter and intra-bloc dialogue is necessary to assure the restoration of a sufficiently safe environment aimed at guaranteeing the holding of free and fair elections.

The two blocs should collaborate in fighting the several conflict spoilers and restore the control of the territory through the empowerment of local authorities and municipalities. Especially in the south, explicit arrangements must be taken with tribal leaders to stem the proliferation of impeding criminal activities. Divided national Institutions such as the Central Bank and the NOC should be reassembled to restore the oil export and restart a virtuous circle of production and investment as soon as possible.

These guiding lines, if supported by major regional actors, properly coordinated by the EU and the UN, not hampered by conflicting bilateral initiatives, and with the necessary blessing from the United States, might finally translate into a significant push towards a substantial stabilization of the country.

Endnotes

- 1) Please note that, whilst an analysis of the conflict would ordinarily focus on the widest possible range of underlying causes and interests at stake, for the purpose of this assessment only those immediate issues that are more directly preventing the achievement of a peace agreement are analyzed in depth.
- 2) The 2011 uprising stood out for lacking a strong political leadership or a unifying political ideology. Consequently, while after the demise of the old regime different political constituencies declared themselves as the legitimate rulers of Libya, none of them has ever since been able to exercise an effective governance.
- 3) This situation gets even more exacerbated in the vast desertic region of Southern Libya, the Fezzan, where the absolute lack of government allows various tribal factions to divvy up the control over the territory.
- 4) "After the Showdown in Libya's Oil Crescent." Crisis Group, 24 Sept. 2018, www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/libya/189-after-showdown-libyas-oil-crescent.
- 5) OPEC. "Annual Statistical Bulletin (ASB)". (2018) available at: <https://asb.opec.org/index.php/interactive-charts>
- 6) Haftar seized the oil ports of Lanuf, Es Sider, Zueitina and Hariga claiming that the head of the central bank in Tripoli was using petroleum income to fund extremist and hardline groups. Put under pressure by foreign importers, after three weeks Haftar returned the sites to the NOC. S, Chris, and P Wintour. "Four Libya Oil Ports Closed amid Corruption Allegations." The Guardian, 2 July 2018, www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/02/four-libya-oil-ports-closed-amid-corruption-allegations-allies-khalifa-haftar.
- 7) Oil is an extremely sensitive component of the Libyan crisis, to the extent that every time the conflict interests the hydrocarbons production the fragile national economy breaks down. M, Hatem, et al. "Libya Oil Chiefs Unify State Producer to End Row on Exports." Bloomberg, 3 July 2016, www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-07-03/libya-oil-chiefs-reunify-state-producer-to-end-row-on-exports.
- 8) S. Alharathy. "NOC calls for the dissolution of the parallel institution in Benghazi." The Libya Observer. July 06, 2019. <https://www.libyaobserver.ly/economy/noc-calls-dissolution-parallel-institution-benghazi>
- 9) "Libya's NOC declares force majeure at key Sharara oilfield after valve closure." Reuters. July 21, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-oil/libyas-noc-declares-force-majeure-at-key-sharara-oilfield-after-valve-closure-idUSKCN1UG00G>
- 10) S. Wardany. "Libya Oil Output at Lowest in Five Months as Some Exports Halted." Bloomberg. July 21, 2019. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-07-21/libya-oil-output-at-lowest-in-five-months-as-some-exports-halted>
- 11) "A Quick Guide to Libya's Main Players: A Quick Guide to Libya's Main Players | European Council on Foreign Relations, www.ecfr.eu/mena/mapping_libya_conflict; P, Jason. "The West Is Letting Libya Tear Itself Apart." Foreign Policy, Foreign Policy, 22 June 2018, foreignpolicy.com/2018/06/22/the-west-is-letting-libya-tear-itself-apart/; M, Ilardo. "The Rivalry between France and Italy over Libya." AIES, 9 Aug. 2018, www.aies.at/publikationen/2018/fokus-18-05.php.
- 12) Al-Jazeera. "No military solution": World powers urge Libya de-escalation." July 16, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/military-solution-world-powers-urge-libya-de-escalation-190716170347253.html>
- 13) Wolfgang, Pusztai. "What Makes Libya A Perfect Place for Terrorists?" ISPI, 17 March 2015. <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/what-makes-libya-perfect-place-terrorists-12894>; RHIPTO. "Libya: a growing hub for Criminal Economies and Terrorist Financing in the Trans-Sahara." The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. May 2015.
- 14) These groups allow criminal activities such as human

- trafficking and the smuggling of all kinds of goods (including oil, arms, and drugs) in their territories to finance their war. In other instances, as in the case of the tribes in the south, groups historically excluded from national politics and economy found in the illicit activities one of the few sources of income. Tim, Eaton. "Libya's War Economy Predation, Profiteering and State Weakness." Chatham House. April 2018
- 15) <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180808-libyan-tribes-part-of-the-problem-or-a-solution/>
 - 16) The GNS authority hinged on the General National Congress (GNC), the original parliament elected in 2012 after the fall of Qaddafi and that lost the 2014 elections. The Congress dissolved and the government capitulated after fierce clashes in Tripoli between forces loyal to the resigning GNS and the pro-GNA forces. Members of the GNC converged into the new formed State Council (SC), established in accordance with the LPA. H., Ken. "Op-Ed: Former GNC Headquarters Taken over by State Council of the GNA." Digital Journal: A Global Digital Media Network, 25 Apr. 2016, www.digitaljournal.com/news/politics/op-ed-former-gnc-headquarters-taken-over-by-state-council-of-the-gna/article/463725
 - 17) L., Aidan. "Militia Leader's Bravado Shows Limits of Libya Reforms." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 13 Dec. 2018, www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-insight/militia-leaders-bravado-shows-limits-of-libya-reforms-idUSKBN1OC0GN.
 - 18) al-Warfalli, Ayman. "Libya's Eastern Parliament Votes against U.N.-Backed Government in..." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 22 Aug. 2016, www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-un-idUSKCN10X1DY.
 - 19) The LNA relies on a system of alliances and mutual convenience between military and tribal leaders, aspect that raises some doubts on the sustainability of his power, especially in the long run. Virginie, Collombier. "Libya: Moving Beyond the Transitional Mood." Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI). April 2018.
 - 20) The deployment of foreign mercenaries, coming especially from the Sudanese and Chadian rebellious forces, has been increasing in the last months to secure the new LNA outposts in the oil crescent region. Howes-Ward, Thomas. "Libya's Foreign Militias." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 10 Apr. 2018, carnegieendowment.org/sada/76034.
 - 21) H., Kodmani. "Libye: Le Maréchal Haftar Fait trembler Tripoli." Libération.fr. April 08, 2019. https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2019/04/08/libye-le-marechal-haftar-fait-trembler-tripoli_1720166.
 - 22) A., Delalande. "Forces on the Libyan ground: Who is Who." ISPI, May 28, 2018; J. Pack. "Kingdom of Militias: Libya's Second War of Post-Qadhafi Succession." ISPI, May 31, 2019.
 - 23) D., Kirkpatrick. "Ambush Slows Libyan Militia's Drive to Take Capital." The New York Times. April 05, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/05/world/middleeast/libya-militias-hifter.html>.
 - 24) Virginie, Collombier. "Libya: Moving Beyond the Transitional Mood." Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI). April 2018.
 - 25) Nathan, Adam, and Adam Nathan. "Militiaman Who Became Libya's Oil Kingpin." POLITICO, POLITICO, 31 Aug. 2016, www.politico.eu/article/ibrahim-jadhran-libya-separatist-gna-qadhafi/.
 - 26) The BRSC comprises a number of Islamist, and revolutionary factions among which the jihadist group of Ansar al-Sharia, and also the BDB is composed by fighters coming from various political affiliations including hardline Islamists.
 - 27) "Addressing the Rise of Libya's Madkhali-Salafis." Crisis Group, April 25, 2019 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/libya/addressing-rise-libyas-madkhali-salafis>.
 - 28) For a comprehensive study of the tribal composition of Libya see: Mohamed, Ben Lamma. "The Tribal Structure in Libya: Factor for fragmentation or cohesion?" Fondation Pour la Recherche Stratégique. September 2017.

29) The Sahara oil field had been closed for months before Haftar's offensive in Fezzan which finally normalized and increased local oil production.

30) Russia, UAE, and France, all Haftar's major allies, have formally condemned the Tripoli's offensive. The city of Zawiya formally had an agreement with Haftar but shifted alliance in favor of the GNA following the assault on Tripoli. Pack, Jason, and Matthew Sinkez. "Khalifa Haftar's Miscalculated Attack on Tripoli Will Cost Him Dearly." Foreign Policy, Foreign Policy, 10 Apr. 2019, foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/10/khalifa-haftars-miscalculated-attack-on-tripoli-will-cost-him-and-libya-dearly-un-benghazi-gna-ina/.

31) Wintour, Patrick, and Chris Stephen. "Battle for Tripoli Escalates as Fighting Nears Libyan Capital." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 7 Apr. 2019, amp.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/07/libya-us-forces-evacuated-haftar-seeks-military-control

32) With the implementation of the new "Security Plan 2019-One", in fact, the GNA is now tightening its ties with the militias in Tripoli trying to harness them under its authority while reorganizing the whole administrative structure of its security system. Yet these efforts are constantly undermined by several spoilers of the negative status quo that are present in, and around, the capital.

33) "Libya's GNA Forces Announce 'Counteroffensive' to Defend Tripoli." Al Jazeera, 8 Apr. 2019, www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/libya-gna-forces-announce-counteroffensive-defend-tripoli-190407121535177.html.

34) The new agreement between Al-Serraj and Haftar was recently achieved in Abu Dhabi where the two leaders concurred on the new general elections to be held in 2019 to guarantee the end of the state of transition in the country Al Jazeera. "Rival Libyan Leaders Agree to Hold National Election: UN." News | Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera, 28 Feb. 2019, www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/02/rival-libyan-leaders-agree-hold-national-election-190228200021025.html.

Still, since the beginning, the Abu Dhabi agreement was met with suspicion and criticism by Haftar's opponents, especially the Misratan and Tripoli-based militias.

35) Amid "artillery shelling and air raids", the U.N. envoy, Ghassan Salamé, has been forced to postpone the two-day conference scheduled for 14-15 April.



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