



A Fratricidal Libya and its Second Civil War

Harvesting Decades of Qaddafi's 'Divide and Rule'

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Synopsis

Denna studie undersöker Libyens säkerhetspolitiska utveckling under 2011-2015. Rapporten analyserar de stridande parterna i landet inklusive deras ambitioner. Analysen omfattar både inhemska och externa aktörer. Studien finner att säkerhetsdynamiken förändras snabbt i landet och att Libyen har många säkerhetsmässiga utmaningar att övervinna innan en mera stabil och fredlig utveckling kan uppstå. Studiens två huvudsakliga observationer är: för det första, att Libyens konflikter måste ses i ljuset av en bredare regional maktkamp där utländska aktörer (stater och grupper) har egna intressen i att forma Libyens framtid; och för det andra, att Libyen inte kan hantera sina säkerhetsutmaningar ensamt utan ett omfattande stöd av FN och andra regionala organisationer.

Nyckelord: Libyen, arabiska våren, Qaddafi, Nordafrika, jihadism, väpnade grupperingar, inbördeskrig, arabförbundet, afrikanska unionen, säkerhetspolitik, Mellanöstern, Tripoli, Tobruk, EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA, Afrika, afrikansk säkerhet.

Abstract

This study explores the development of Libya's security situation following the so-called Arab spring in 2011 up to September 2015. It provides an overview of Libya's main warring parties and the struggles they are engaged in. The analysis covers both domestic groups and the main external states. The study finds that the security dynamics are changing quickly and that Libya has many political hurdles and security challenges to overcome before a more durable situation of stability can be achieved. Two findings are clear: first, Libya's conflict needs to be seen in the context of the wider regional power struggle in which foreign actors (states and groups alike) have interests in shaping Libya's future; and, second, that Libya cannot deal with its security challenges alone without comprehensive outside political and military support by the United Nations and other regional organisations.

Key words: Libya, Arab spring, Qaddafi, North Africa, Jihadism, armed movements, civil war, Arab League, African Union, security policy, Middle East, EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA, Africa, African security.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AQIM	al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AQIP	al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula
AU	African Union
CoD	Council of Deputies (Libya)
EU	European Union
EUBAM	EU Border Assistance Mission
GNA	Government of National Accord
GNC	General National Congress (Libya)
HoR	House of Representatives (Libya)
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
JCP	Justice and Construction Party
LAS	League of Arab States
LIFG	Libya Islamic Fighting Groups
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NTC	National Transitional Council (Libya)
OAU	Organization of African Unity
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSMIL	UN Support Mission in Libya
WMD	Weapon(s) of Mass Destruction

Preface

Colonel Muammar Qaddafi ruled Libya for nearly 42 years before being toppled and killed in an armed revolt which erupted with the so-called Arab spring in 2011 (here regarded as Libya's *first* civil war). Following his violent death, and the post-authoritarian era that followed, high hopes of a new political beginning for Libya could be sensed among many segments of the citizenry.

However, five years into Libya's transition, the country finds itself in a second civil war with two rival governments and parliaments vying for power: the Tripoli/General National Congress [GNC]/Dawn side vs the Tobruk/House of Representatives [HoR]/Dignity side. In between a large number of armed groups are either separately or in tandem operating according to different interests, including tribal, regional, ideological, religious, and self-interests. During 2015 the expansion of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) added another layer of complexity to the power struggle inside Libya. The expansion of ISIS has even temporarily changed the security dynamic among former adversaries, bringing some combatants together to confront this new threat. Exacerbating the overall insecurity in the country is the ready availability of arms and ammunition as well as direct and indirect foreign government support for different armed groups in Libya.

Rather than bringing in new modes of democratic governance to North Africa, as was initially anticipated with the so-called Arab spring, the transition has largely developed along an unpredictable and mostly negative security trajectory. Even though most decision-makers and policy analysts foresaw a bumpy ride towards more democratic political governance systems, few expected the path to be as rocky as it in fact became.

In this report an analysis is made of the main security developments in Libya up until September 2015. Such a study is relevant for three main reasons. First, Libya's security turmoil is of concern for the international community as civilians inside the country are suffering as a result of the domestic conflict. Second, the conflict in Libya is of concern for its neighbours, including Europe (Libya being on Europe's so-called "southern flank") (not least as a result of ISIS' growing presence). The spiral of insecurity hitting Libya and the region does not stop at national borders. Security developments in Libya are having serious security repercussions for other states in the region, including a number of challenges for Europe. Third, understanding Libya and the options for promoting institutional democracy, popular liberty, human rights and economic prosperity are all foreign and defence priorities for Europe. These three aspects warrant an overview of the actors involved.

Adding to these three reasons, the security situation in Libya during 2015 has caused a new dynamic in the Mediterranean region in two important ways. First, the instability in Libya has led to an increase in the number of migrants from the

shores of Libya to Europe. This alone has led to a dire humanitarian situation for each individual and family that flees. It has also had a vast political impact on European Union (EU) and its member states. This dynamic has partly to be seen in the context of a worsening situation in Libya. The other factor changing the dynamic is the response of the EU in seeking to deal with the situation in the Mediterranean, i.e. the launch of the maritime operation EUNAVFOR Med (also known as Operation Sophia). The EU is currently targeting human smugglers and traffickers close to the shore of Libya. A better understanding of events in Libya could feed into better planning.

All in all, then, by analysing Libya's security dynamic we are likely to get a better understanding of what the future is likely to hold in terms of the security situation in the country and for its neighbours.

A caveat is needed, though. The political and security dynamics in Libya and the region are tumultuous. Political and military processes are moving rapidly and developments can quickly change the course of events. One such important game-changer to consider is the impact the UN-led negotiation process will have on the possibility of a unity government being put in place.

Finally, a word on the context of this commissioned research report. This study of security developments in Libya is part of the research of FOI's Africa Studies project. The Africa security project has been established by the Swedish Ministry of Defence. The purpose is to conduct yearly commissioned research on matters of interest for the Swedish government in the area of African peace and security. Each research assignment is carried out in an independent manner.

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Summary

This study explores Libya's security situation following the so-called Arab spring in 2011 up to September 2015. More precisely, it provides an overview of Libya's main warring parties and the struggles they are engaged in. The analysis covers both domestic groups and the main external states. The study finds, not surprisingly, that Libya's conflict environment is extremely complex. The current conflict, here defined as Libya's *second civil war*, has a number of layers, including (1) the existence of two main competing governments and parliaments (Tripoli/ General National Congress [GNC]/Dawn vs Tobruk/ House of Representatives [HoR]/Dignity); (2) the presence of numerous rival armed brigades (Misrata vs Zintan); (3) the presence of armed militias across the country with constantly changing alliances (e.g. the Islamist Shura Council of Benghazi); (4) the presence of nationalist and federalist groups; and (5) societal tensions existing between local villages and tribes, and other ethnic communities inside Libya. Most recently the expansion of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has begun to change the security landscape. This in turn has united former adversaries in temporary alliances.

Several conflicts in Libya's ongoing civil war have their roots in Colonel Qaddafi's early ambition to dissolve Libya's sense of national identity for the purpose of popular rule and revolutionary modernisation – as is presented in his so-called *Green Book*. However, Libya's deep tribal systems worked against his ambition, which in turned forced Qaddafi to engage in divide and rule policies among political groups and tribes in Libya. As further noted in this study, Qaddafi's political ambitions in the 1980s were also challenged by political Islam, which led him to counter the Islamist group's growing influence with repression and violence.

With the Arab spring and the toppling of Qaddafi and his political system in early 2011, the idea of Libya as a political entity collapsed. The current conflicts in Libya are in a way a direct harvest of Qaddafi's decades-long divide and rule policies. Tribal tensions, as well as challenges posed by radical Islamic, nationalist and federalist groups, are embedded in the rivalry and security dilemmas thriving in the absence of a central authority.

With the Arab spring and the subsequent NATO intervention in 2011 Libya has spiralled into turmoil. Critics have, in hindsight, begun to question the rationale for NATO's intervention, suggesting that there were false expectations of what could be achieved. While there is less criticism of the actual military intervention, more attention has been given to the lack of a post-intervention recovery plan. Commentators suggests that for any future instance of this kind the international community needs to learn more on how to plan for post-intervention recovery, including how to transition speedily from military intervention to counter-terrorism and peace-building.

Regardless of the structural or circumstantial reasons for its current turmoil, Libya is facing a dark future. Most pressing is the expansion of radical groups' influence over the country's political process. This in turn has led foreign governments to side with different actors inside Libya's conflict, changing the vacuum left after Qaddafi into a scene of proxy warfare. However, contemporary developments in Libya need to be read in the context of the wider security dynamic of the Middle East.

Also pressing is the growing influence of ISIS. The challenge it poses threatens not only the political transition in Libya but also the security order in the region, including Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria and the Sahel. Adding to this challenge is the dire humanitarian situation in the country as well as the social and political impact on Libya's neighbours (e.g. the flow of migrants, foreign fighters and the spillover of conflict). The conflict in Libya is not only a local concern, but a regional one, including for Europe and Western powers. This suggests that the current operations being conducted against ISIS in Iraq and Syria also have to be read into an analysis of security developments in Libya.

The study finds glimpses of hope, notably with the national UN-led negotiation process as well as a number of local ceasefire agreements. The main political blocs, currently in rivalry as two parallel governments and parliaments, have come closer to forming a government of national accord, though considerable obstacles exist. Should such accord come about, several main challenges will still remain before Libya finds itself at peace. As the study notes, a number of armed groups are outside the negotiation track. Moreover, no reform or creation of a national army or security forces will work without trust. Hence an agreement, whatever it looks like, will be very frail. In the event of a "political peace" in which a unity government returns, international support will be crucial.

The study ends with a number of recommendations on how to tackle some of the main security challenges in the short, medium and long term. Overall, the international community, and Europe in particular, need to prepare ahead with a plan which should include support for stability interventions or reconciliation efforts. In the short run the potential expansion of the anti-ISIS coalition to include Libya needs to be contemplated and carefully analysed.

1 Introduction

This study is devoted to Libya's current security situation and the main political challenges it faces in 2015. The various conflict layers that exist, as will be explained in the following chapters, are extremely complex, and the available information about what is currently going on is difficult to access. The political and security dynamic is changing by the day.

Overall, the conflict in Libya is largely a political and military conflict between the government of the new General National Congress (GNC) based in the official capital, Tripoli – supported by the Islamist *Dawn* coalition – and the internationally recognised government of the House of Representatives (HoR) in Tobruk, supported by the nationalist *Dignity* coalition backed by various domestic military units, tribes, and political parties with an anti-Islamist agenda.¹ Each side also receives foreign support. While the new GNC in Tripoli and its Dawn coalition is in control of much of western Libya, the HoR in Tobruk and its Operation Dignity coalition is mainly in control of much of eastern Libya.

Described differently, the Libyan civil war could also be seen as a multilayered conflict involving: (1) the existence of two competing governments and parliaments; (2) the presence of numerous rival armed groups partly born out of the so-called Arab spring and the subsequent NATO intervention (on 19 March 2011) – some operating alone or in alliance with one or the other main sides of the conflict; (3) rivalry between nationalists and federalists; (4) societal tensions that exist between local villages and tribes; and (5) a proxy war between different Arab states supporting either of the two sides; and more recently also involving the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).

However, to fully understand the existing conflicts in Libya attention has also to be paid to the wider geopolitical developments in the Middle East and North Africa. As indicated above, foreign actors are currently engaged in a proxy war in Libya similar to what can be seen in Syria. Outside support is currently provided both by direct and by indirect military engagement on either side (further explained below). It is also important to “read” Libya from the dynamics that followed as a consequence of the Arab spring, as the events unfolding in the region are the inevitable result of those turbulent days of 2011, including the intervention by NATO. Before entering on this discussion, a brief comment on the Libya's contemporary historical trajectory is worthwhile.

¹ Note however that the nationalist bloc is anti-political Islam though it still believes that Sharia should be the main source of legislation.

1.1 Libya in a historical perspective

The conflict in Libya can be read through different security lenses and historical perspectives. When we seek to unpack Libya's contemporary conflicts, many of the root causes and grievances can be traced to the Qaddafi era. Qaddafi forcefully undermined any national or central government body that was left from the early post-colonial days under King Idriss (1951–1969). Rather than building a modern Arab state founded on welfare and moderate Islamic values, Qaddafi placed heavy political, economic and social emphasis on new forms of identities, including tribal identities.²

Having early on in his rule tried to modernise Libya, in fact by trying to disable tribal systems and degrade tribal identity, he soon found himself instead having to align himself with various powerful tribes for political support of his ideas. Over the years however, Qaddafi became increasingly embroiled in tribal power dynamics, siding with some tribes at the expense of others. While Libyans increasingly preferred ethnicity as a basis for their identity, rather than the national society, he engaged in a sophisticated practice of divide and rule in Libya's tribal politics. This in turn led to several of the security dilemmas that can be witnessed today. This policy also stretched across Libya's borders into the African continent.

Another historical legacy that needs to be brought into the analysis is the federal division of Libya. Historically, what is now Libya was based on three independent regions ruled by former colonial states (before independence, Italy). More precisely, Libya was shaped as a state construct by the United Nations on the basis of an amalgamation of Cyrenaica in eastern Libya, Tripolitania in north-western Libya and Fezzan in south-western Libya (1949–1951). In today's conflicts, regional competition has led some groups to favour a federal Libya, while some even suggest a breaking up of Libya into these historical entities. Others are taking a national approach. Adding a layer of complexity to the current political transition, different tribes have different preferences for these regions (the Berber community for instance mainly siding with western Libya and tribes that were loyal to Qaddafi favouring the eastern regions).

Another important way to understand current Libya and its security dynamic is to consider its regional security landscape. Unlike many other states in the region, Libya has been entrenched in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and Middle Eastern affairs, as well as part of Europe's southern neighbourhood. Each of these security complexes has come to affect Libya's security posture differently over the years. Below follows a brief discussion of how to think of Libya from a regional perspective.

² Partly based on the ideology of Qaddafi's "Green Book".

1.1.1 Africa

The former Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi (primary leader 1969–2011) was a champion of African integration.³ Based on his sense of personal betrayal with regard to Arab states' foreign policies in the Middle East (notably vis-à-vis their conciliatory treatment of Israel), Africa was central for Qaddafi's foreign and defence policy. Qaddafi saw himself as the "king of all African kings" and favoured the creation of an Organization of African Unity (OAU) so as to balance other powerful regions in the world.⁴

Qaddafi came to see the OAU, which was to become the African Union (AU), as an instrument to assert Libya's foreign policy ambitions. His political and economic support for African states provided Libya with much influence over continental affairs. In practice, his instrument for obtaining influence was simply to bankroll African leaders. This in turn may also explain why many African governments at the time of his ousting by Western governments were highly critical about his removal.⁵

Yet, although in many ways playing constructive roles in dealing with the security challenges in Africa, i.e. by vesting economic and political capital in African institutions, Qaddafi pursued a divide and rule policy vis-à-vis friends and foes alike in the interests of his own personal power and the country's security well-being. This African outlook also explains why Qaddafi was able to bring to Libya ethnic groups from other parts of Africa to serve as domestic guardians of power. This in turn created long-standing animosity between Qaddafi and some African leaders. The ethnic card was also a well-integrated strategy to balance power between Libya's own tribes. With the ousting of Qaddafi from power both domestic and external ethnic groups came to play an important role in the security chaos that followed.

Since Qaddafi's death, Libya's influence in African affairs has clearly contracted. Nonetheless, Libya will continue to have "Africa" on its doorstep. It is therefore important to continue to read Libya through an African lens. As a continent, which the post-Libya world has to adjust to, Africa is experiencing numerous intense wars and armed conflicts between governments and non-state actors. Despite the AU's recent pacifist calls to "Silence the Guns" by 2020,⁶ there are considerable human security challenges, i.e. one-sided violence perpetrated by governments on their citizens, mass violence between ethnic groups, and significant instances of large-scale human rights abuses. Libya will obviously have to relate to these challenges and by definition become a player that other actors will have to deal

³ For a good overview see Zenbou (2010).

⁴ Zenbou (2010).

⁵ At the time, the AU (notably South Africa) opposed NATO intervention.

⁶ See African Union, "Solemn Declaration by the AU on the occasion of its 50th anniversary".

with one way or the other. To what degree and by which instruments it can do so remains to be seen, and depends partly on who comes out of the civil war strongest. A clear example of Libya's role in Africa is its current status as a transit port to Europe.

More immediate from a security point of view, fragile African neighbouring states will continue to influence Libya negatively because of structural inabilities to deal with regional security, just as an unstable Libya will inevitably continue to affect its neighbours' security. For instance, in recent years, the violent suppression of uprisings and popular protests has marked African politics and added to the unpredictability of the security situation around Libya.⁷ There are also great uncertainties as to the actions of and threats posed by armed groups with terrorist intent. Aspects like these will affect Libya's security posture.

As a result of the overall unstable security environment, Libya is also likely to face external actors intervening in African conflicts in its vicinity. A sign of this is for example France's launching of *Operation Serval* in Mali (11 January 2013–15 July 2014), and *Operation Barkhane* (August 2014–) which stretches into five countries: Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. The operation aims to target armed groups operating across the Sahel region.⁸ The rise of Boko Haram and its network with other armed groups is another source of threat attracting military attention. Libya will inevitably have to play a role in all these dynamics.

1.1.2 The Middle East

For many decades under Qaddafi, Libya was a vivid actor in Middle Eastern affairs. A staunch critic of Israel, over the years (mainly from the 1960s to the 1990s) Libya has created various interstate alliances to boost Arab nationalist superiority in the region. Seeking to counter "Western" influence in the region it opted early on for the Arab bloc, including sponsorship of armed groups (e.g. Palestinian and Irish political groups⁹).¹⁰ However, by seeking to take a lead in Middle Eastern affairs, Libya repeatedly ran into political complications with other nationalist Arab regimes and consequently the Arab states' policy attitudes towards Libya grew increasingly wary.

In 1998 Libya turned its back on the Arab world for not giving it the recognition and support it was looking for (notably on the issue of United Nations sanctions imposed on Libya because of its involvement in the Lockerbie). It was also in this

⁷ Branch and Mampilly (2015).

⁸ *The Economist*, 19 July 2014.

⁹ Dalton and Lobban (2014: 120).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 121.

context that the country came to champion African affairs instead. Qaddafi's criticism and ignorance of other Arab leaders may well explain why the members of the League of Arab States (LAS) were later also quick to turn against him once the UN Security Council (UNSC) looked for regional support to handle ISIS in Libya in 2011.¹¹

Today, regional affairs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) look different. Libya has yet to rediscover its identity therein. At the moment it is preoccupied with finding its new-born identity in the post-Qaddafi era and is likely to remain mostly inward-looking. It remains to be seen if Libya in the near future will become more or less MENA-or Africa-leaning. The current geopolitical rivalry in MENA has a strong explanatory value. The Arab League, a generally important institution in MENA's security architecture, is likely to attract little support from Libya. A troubling development since the fall of Qaddafi, though, is that Libya has become a theatre for proxy conflicts.¹² External support has been provided so as to promote a particular preferred outcome of the conflict. This goes in tandem with other geopolitical developments in the region (e.g. Syria).

1.1.3 Europe and the West

Since independence and the coup d'état by Qaddafi in 1969, Libya has had a complicated relationship with Europe and other Western states. During much of the Cold War, Qaddafi took sides with the so-called Global South and was part of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Perhaps more than other leaders in the region, Qaddafi's voice was virulently pro-Arab nationalist. His critique of the West and involvement in state-sponsored terrorism against Western interests, including the proven development of a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme (which he gave up in 2003), prompted Western states to isolate Libya politically and economically. Another element was Libya's involvement in the Lockerbie disaster in which an international passenger jet was blown up over Lockerbie, Scotland. To curb and isolate Libya, the UN Security Council introduced long-standing economic and political sanctions against it. The US government, under the Reagan administration, went further and in the 1980s paved the way for several military operations against Libya.¹³

However, the relationship with Europe and the West has been complex. On the one hand Libya has been suffering from political isolation. On the other Libya's

¹¹ Eriksson (2014a).

¹² Regional powers such as Qatar, Turkey and Sudan are siding with the Tripoli/GNC/Dawn side whereas Egypt and the UAE have provided support to the Tobruk/HoR/Dignity side.

¹³ Dalton and Lobban (2014).

biggest source of income has been gas exports to Europe.¹⁴ In 1998 relations with the West were improving thanks to a compromise on how to handle the Lockerbie case in which Libyan suspects were convicted.¹⁵ In 2003 an important turning point came with Libya's full-transparency policy on its WMD. By giving up its attempts to build WMD, Libya grasped the opportunity to break its international isolation and broker several political and economic deals with a number of Western states. The fact is that on the eve of the so-called Arab spring, Libya was on a path of being increasingly involved in political and economic cooperation agreements with many countries around the world. However, Qaddafi's authoritarian style and unstable political behaviour haunted him and led to his fall. In the end his credibility as a state leader was lost except among those he was bankrolling.

Today, in the post-Qaddafi era, Europe and the West are on new a page with Libya. However, the domestic security turmoil has not favoured any closer relations; hence this new relationship is yet to be fully defined. At the moment, most Western states are currently taking a wait-and-see approach while seemingly favouring a sort of political containment policy that seeks to halt the spillover of violence to neighbouring states that can undermine other states' stability. However, if a new government comes into existence, a new kind of more active engagement is likely to follow.

In sum then, Libya's security posture could be said to have been shaped by decades of a positioning against external actors and neighbourhood dynamics. This has included entering into fluid regional alliances and political projects, e.g. pursuing at times a nationalist Arab ideology, as well as terrorism and intimidation against local and regional actors. With the total collapse of Libya's regime in 2011, many negative political forces were let loose and propelled a number of domestic and regional conflicts and instabilities.¹⁶

¹⁴ St John (2002, in particular ch. 7, pp. 122–151).

¹⁵ *BBC World News*, 25 March 2004.

¹⁶ While the regional dimension is essential, it should not be overstated as the only explanatory factor for Libya's security posture. For instance, historical developments also play an important role here.

2 Method

Below follows an overview of this study's scope, delimitations, methodology and use of the literature.

2.1 Aim

The overall aim of this study is to analyse the current security developments in Libya. A better understanding of how the security challenges inside Libya currently look may provide better grounds for external assistance.

2.2 Research focus

To limit the scope of this study, the focus is on providing an overview of the main actors fighting in Libya's second civil war and what security implications the ongoing turmoil has for the region.

The principal warring parties include on the one hand the currently internationally recognised government of the Libyan House of Representatives (HoR) (also known as the Council of Deputies). The HoR was established in 2014 and resides in Tobruk. The recognised government has the loyalty of the Libyan Army commanded by General Khalifa Haftar. Haftar forms his groups under the name *Operation Dignity* and, moreover, enjoys the support of a number of Arab states, most notably Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (as well as others, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia).

On the other side there is the (new) General National Congress (GNC) based in the capital, Tripoli, mainly supported by the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood. The GNC is backed by a coalition known as Libya Dawn. It is supported by Qatar, Sudan, and Turkey.

Both blocs have a number of supporting militias, some openly supportive, some indirectly or in temporary alliances. In this analysis the emphasis is on the overall conflict between the HoR in Tobruk and the GNC in Tripoli.

There are also a number of other armed groups operating alone in Libya – as will be further discussed. These additional groups include the Islamist Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries (Ansar al-Sharia, Libya), as well as the most recent and violent actor ISIS.

2.3 Method

This study applies a qualitative methodological approach. First and foremost it is an analysis of primary and secondary sources dealing with Libya's conflict. Second, elements of process tracing have at times been applied so as to capture relevant processes that have led to the current conflict situations. To complement the study, open-ended interviews have been conducted with Libyan country experts, staff members at NATO, and European Union (EU) desk officers, as well as number of experts at think tanks following developments in Libya.

2.4 Sources and literature

In terms of publications, a brief academic survey of the research field suggests that research on security post-Arab spring is vibrant. Essentially, research on the Middle East and North Africa is undergoing a rebirth. Old notions are being reassessed as a result of the geopolitical turmoil currently taking place.¹⁷

Further to this, the author has made use of both primary sources (e.g. speeches, statements and communiqués) and secondary data (e.g. UN documentation, country analysis).

While several studies have been reactive to events, a range of studies published have also begun to look more thoroughly into the causes. Here one should mention Gerges' book *The New Middle East: Protests and Revolution in the Arab World* (Gerges 2014). The book takes a comparative and thematic approach to explaining recent developments in MENA. Another valuable book is the 2013 volume published by Kadhim, *Governance in the Middle East and North Africa* (Kadhim 2013). Equally important with regard to developments in North Africa are Lisa Storm's (2014) and George Joffé's (2013) analyses of the development of democracy in North Africa.

There is a wave of studies on the so-called Arab spring.¹⁸ Several of these studies have tried to capture the phenomenon of the Arab spring from different thematic perspectives, such as democratic evolution, political governance, etc., as well as descriptions of how these changes may affect the region's security environment.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ayoob (2014), Pollack (2011), Dabashi (2012), Fosshagen (2014), Haas and Lesh (2012), Danahar (2013), Marcovitz (2014), and Inbar (2013).

¹⁸ Mhenni (2012); and Joffé (2013).

¹⁹ Notably Lynch 2014. For more comprehensive overviews of the region also see the Swedish publications by Fazlhashemi 2014), Hammargren (2014), and Lund (2014).

Some recently published studies are focusing on how different political and armed groups have arisen in the new security environment since the Arab spring.²⁰

In terms of studies on political and security developments in Libya many books and articles have been published in the period 2011–2015. Four categories stand out: the modern history of Libya;²¹ the Arab spring in Libya and the violent revolt;²² the NATO intervention in Libya, including the notion of Responsibility to Protect;²³ and the post-Qaddafi political and security chaos that has come about.²⁴

2.5 Scope, operationalisation and delineations

The focus of this study is the situation in Libya in 2015. To understand the events that led to the current turmoil this analysis examines the conflict dynamics that began with the outbreak of the Arab spring in 2011.

This study has made three important delimitations. First of all, it focuses on armed groups and neighbourhood relations, rather than on in-depth intra-group dynamics or the role played by individual actors. The aim is to provide an analysis of how the Libyan turmoil affects regional dynamics.

Second, this study focuses mainly on the state and societal security, rather than on human security. The reason is that this study seeks to unpack regional security dynamics, which is harder to capture with a human security approach that generally pays more attention to individual security. The limitation with taking a state-based approach is that does not highlight the structural security factors that are generally thought to be crucial for understanding long-term security challenges (e.g. challenges posed by, for example, climate change and food security, etc.). The challenges posed to human security as well as the long-standing threats posed to the state by structural factors warrant their own in-depth studies.

Third, this study does not cover the role of the United Nations' activities in Libya apart from its support of the national political negotiation process.

Finally, over the past five years, the Swedish Defence Research Agency and the Africa research project, has completed a number of studies on regional

²⁰ Cockburn (2015).

²¹ St John (2011).

²² For a comprehensive coverage of Libya's armed conflict 2011–2013 (from an international law perspective) see Bassiouni (2013); Dalton and Lobban (2014); and Chorin (2012).

²³ Hehir and Murray eds. (2013).

²⁴ Pack (ed.) (2013).

developments in North Africa.²⁵ The choice of focus in this study reflects and builds on these previous studies.

2.6 Reader's guide

In the next part of this study, chapter 3 there follows an analysis of what is left of the Arab spring. The argument here is that a deeper understanding of Libya needs to be seen in a regional perspective. In chapter 4, an analysis of the security developments leading to the current state of affairs in Libya is presented. This analysis includes an overview of different actors' use of armed force and diplomacy to gain power and influence in the country. Chapter 5 analyses and provides an overview of Libya's key domestic warring parties. In chapter 6, an analysis is made of external actor engagement in Libya's civil war. The study ends with concluding remarks and recommendations.

²⁵ Zetterlund and Eriksson (2013).

3 The Demise of the Arab Spring

In 2015 the people and states of North Africa entered their fifth year after the Arab spring following its outbreak in 2011.²⁶ The geopolitical impact continues to reverberate both inside and outside the region.²⁷ While the spirit of the popular revolt, and its underlying idea of liberty, freedom and anti-authoritarianism, is still valid and still called for throughout the Arab world, many political reform processes have effectively died.

Nonetheless, to further situate Libya in the light of the post-Arab spring setting and to better understand the security situation in Libya, what have been the implications for North Africa as a region and for its states? The overview is important as the security dynamics are closely tied in to regional developments.

The overall purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of what is left of the Arab spring and what implications it has had for Libya's security situation. In section 3.1, the role of the Arab spring and the NATO intervention during early 2011 are discussed, while in 3.2 the key turning points following the intervention (2011–2015) are presented.

3.1 Libya, the Arab spring and the NATO intervention January–July 2011²⁸

The early demonstrations against the Qaddafi regime were non-violent, but it soon became clear that the regime was not interested in inviting the opposition to any formal dialogue on political and economic reform. In early February 2011, peaceful demonstrations were held across Libya including in Benghazi, Ajdabiya, Tobruk, Derna and Zintan.²⁹ They were carried out by different segments of Libyan society, including a broad spectrum of generations and classes, as well as male and female participants.

In sharp contrast to his neighbours, Qaddafi responded rapidly and fiercely to the demonstrators, using a combination of public verbal threats, intimidation and violence. As early as 25 February 2011, the first rounds of live ammunition were fired against unarmed demonstrators. The warning sent to the Libyan people by the regime gave the impetus for the formation of civil protection militias across the country. While some of these civil militias were mainly created for protection purposes, the overall domestic security order gradually fell apart and as a result a

²⁶ Eriksson (2015: 44).

²⁷ Gounden (2015: 2).

²⁸ This section builds on previous analysis in Eriksson (2014a) and Eriksson (2014b).

²⁹ *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* (2015: 3).

number of other politically and religiously motivated groups were formed. It was also in this context that the loyalties of external militias originating in other African states played an important role in shaping the security turmoil.

By 26 February 2011, the opposition had formed a National Transitional Council (NTC) in a bid to oust the Qaddafi regime and its supporters. This process had a significant impact on the course of events and altered the dynamics on the ground.³⁰ As the security order began to break down in Libya, major Western powers such as France, the UK and the US began preparing to evacuate their citizens in Libya, as well as planning for military operations to respond to events on ground.

Given the deteriorating security situation in Libya, UNSC Resolution 1970 (2011) authorised mandatory action to isolate the Libyan regime following the indiscriminate use of violence against its own citizens. To implement this resolution, the UNSC set out a plan that would subsequently come to include the implementation of an arms embargo, a travel ban and an assets freeze against the regime. Meanwhile, all forms of violence carried out by the regime would also be referred to the International Criminal Court.³¹

However, the mounting pressure by the UN and other security actors had little effect on the way Qaddafi responded to the opposition. In fact, the conflict had already spiralled into armed confrontations across Libya. As violence spread during the spring, the conflict dynamics alternated between government forces and the rebels. However, it was not until events on ground began to tilt the balance in favour of the Qaddafi regime that Arab and Western leaders began to call for intervention.³²

On 17 March 2011, UNSC Resolution 1973 called on UN member states to take all necessary measures to protect Libyan civilians, including the establishment of a no-fly zone and an arms embargo. The guiding political principle for the UN Security Council mandate was what was known as *Protection of Civilians* – support for those targeted by one-sided violence by the Qaddafi regime. As commentators suggested at the time, the resolve of the UNSC was further stiffened by battlefield losses of the opposition in the battle for Benghazi and equally hardened by harsh government reprisals.³³ Moreover, the fear was also imminent among many Western leaders that a capture of an opposition stronghold would effectively seal Qaddafi a battlefield victory. The UN Security Council therefore

³⁰ Gaub (2013: 221–244).

³¹ United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973 (2011).

³² For a comprehensive analysis of French and other states' key decision-making rationale for opting for a military intervention, see Lindström and Zetterlund (2012).

³³ See for instance the so-called “cockroach” speech by Qaddafi on 22 February 2011.

united behind the goal of preventing any further massacres of civilians, thus labelling the acts of the Libyan regime “crimes against humanity”.³⁴

The military campaign against Libya was launched in mid-March. The key intervening states were France, the UK and the US. While France and UK took the political and military initiative, US involvement soon followed under *Operation Odyssey Dawn*.³⁵ The operation was later transferred to NATO’s *Operation Unified Protector*.³⁶ The goal of the military operation was to protect civilians and curb violence, but the campaign increasingly turned into a de facto process of removing Qaddafi. None of the main intervening states had any well-documented national strategic objectives or interests beyond engaging in the Arab spring on the side of the rebels and removing Qaddafi as a general political threat. The military intervention has been hailed by many as a military success, both in terms of the swift response and the minimisation of unintended casualties, and for de facto overthrowing an authoritarian ruler.³⁷ However, as Libya descended into turmoil fewer and fewer commentators hung on to such narrative.

With the fall of the Qaddafi regime on 20 October 2011, Libya entered a new political transition phase, which laid the ground for political chaos.³⁸ While some commentators called this the post-conflict phase, a perhaps more suitable moniker would be the “fragmentation phase” or, as defined here, Libya’s “second” civil war.

3.1.1 Libya and the NATO intervention: reflections in retrospect

The legacy of the NATO intervention continues to haunt not only Libyans but also the international community at large. The debate about what implications the Libya intervention had for the ensuing violence is receiving considerable academic and policy attention.³⁹ In essence five strands of critique have been raised against the intervention.

One strand of criticism deals with the issue of how the military intervention was actually carried out, i.e. how different parties intervened in Libya without a unified

³⁴ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr (2015: 13).

³⁵ Several analysts have argued that the US government took a “leading from behind” position in the intervention.

³⁶ Lindvall and Forsman (2012).

³⁷ See the “positive” analysis of the Libya intervention by Ivo Daalder (former US Permanent Representative to NATO) and James Stavridis (at the time Supreme Allied Commander of Europe) in *Foreign Affairs Magazine* (Daalder and Stavridis, 2012).

³⁸ Based on Eriksson (2014b).

³⁹ Hehir and Murray (eds.) (2013); and for a very critical and comprehensive view of how the international community has handled Libya (including, NATO, the AU, the EU, the LAS and the US), see Campbell (2012).

command. This structure led different states to operate on their own mandate, with complicating consequences for external actors' military responsibilities.

A second strand of criticism suggests that the role played by the League of Arab States, i.e. as provider of a regional mandate to the UN and thereby a green light to military engagement, was mostly an agenda which was driven by the West. In this line of thinking key Western powers had well-defined interests but had to be legitimised by LAS acceptance. Acceptance in turn came with a call for the protection of civilians by the LAS to the UN Security Council.

Perhaps a more extensive third critique deals with the actual rationale for intervention Libya. This critique suggests that there was never a true "Benghazi moment" (i.e. when Qaddafi was about to crush the opposition on the battlefield) and that the international community was simply misled by the anti-Qaddafi opposition. This strand of critique has mainly to do with the accuracy of the entire narrative that was dominant at the time and called for intervention.⁴⁰ As Kuperman claims, in hindsight, the US and other Western states would have been better off not intervening in Libya. First of all, "Libyan civilians were not actually being targeted". There is in fact evidence that suggests that Qaddafi's forces were refraining from using indiscriminate violence. Moreover, Libya would have been better off had Qaddafi's son Saif al-Islam been allowed to govern.⁴¹ In essence Kuperman's critique is that the White House had greatly overestimated the death toll of citizens, which was one main argument for the mission rationale. To quote Kuperman:

"Before NATO's intervention, Libya's civil war was on the verge of ending, at the cost of barely 1,000 lives. Since then, however, Libya has suffered at least 10,000 additional deaths from conflict. In other words, NATO's intervention appears to have increased the violent death toll more than tenfold".⁴²

A counter-argument to this critique is of course that it is a view shaped in retrospect and that that at the time of intervention other dynamics were at stake. After all, world opinion called for intervention to side with what was perceived as a democratic opposition being crushed by an authoritarian ruler. Data on the use of indiscriminate violence inside Libya at the time may not even have been available to Western decision-makers. Western powers and others thus acted on the best information available at the time.

⁴⁰ For an excellent overview see Roberts (2011: 8–18).

⁴¹ Kuperman (2015: 67, 70).

⁴² Ibid.: 72.

The fourth and perhaps main form of critique has to do with how the principle of protection of civilians was overstepped in practice by a regime-change agenda.⁴³ According to the well-renowned international law specialist Professor Richard Falk:

*“As the crisis deepened, it became clear that the civilian population of Benghazi was endangered by Qaddafi’s announced plan to crush the opposition, but also that the internationally proposed military operation to establish a ‘no-fly zone’ was unlikely to protect them – and disguised a far more ambitious plot to achieve regime change.”*⁴⁴

Finally, there has been a strand of critique that questions the absence of any plans for the post-intervention phase. While the military engagement in Libya came quickly, no real and credible post-intervention plan for the stabilisation of Libya was prepared. This is an abysmal failure, as most interventions nowadays testify to the need for post-intervention stabilisation mechanisms to protect a military armistice and political transitions. While the UN was supportive, not enough resources were put forward. In hindsight one could question why so few decision-makers could see violence coming in Libya as Qaddafi was removed and the “glue” that kept the political structure together was eliminated. Moreover, at the time, external political expectations were running high, with political observers suggesting that there were opportunities for Libyans to build their own future. One cornerstone would be oil export incomes that would allow the transition government to rebuild government institutions, reform the economy and reconstruct the security sector.

In sum, then, the NATO intervention that according to some experts was well motivated at the time has increasingly come to be questioned. A main reason for this is that the intervention left Libya with a severe security vacuum. The legacy of the intervention and the lack of a follow-up post-conflict recovery plan are currently building a negative narrative of NATO’s Libya engagement (see further below).

3.1.2 Post-intervention – unfulfilled expectations

Once Qaddafi had been ousted on 20 October 2011 the NATO Operation Unified Protector was officially declared terminated (23 March–31 October 2011). However, as indicated above, the polarisation of Libya as a consequence of the conflict with the Qaddafi regime and the intervention of NATO soon brought the situation onto another political and security trajectory. In a situation of a complete

⁴³ Hehir and Murray (eds.) (2013); and Eriksson (2014a).

⁴⁴ Based on an excerpt published online with *Truthout*: “Richard Falk: US ‘misadventure’ in Libya”, 13 June 2015.

breakdown of security arrangements, power vacuums across the country allowed various militias to claim interests in the new Libya. While the international community backed the new NTC there was simply no overall plan for how to support Libya as a country – including the demobilisation of armed actors. As Zyaigh (2015) and others have noted, a post-uprising reconstruction plan would have decisively altered security. However, the lack of political will, the paucity of the resources invested for stabilisation and false expectations of what Libya could do on its own severely limited the potential for positive change.^{45 46}

3.2 Key political developments in the region in the period 2011–2015

Security developments in North Africa have taken different trajectories for different countries. Furthermore, the transition to a post-Arab spring order is not yet complete as there are also many different trajectories for internal and external security. Continued regional chaos is still a strong possibility.

Tunisia, according to many observers, managed to succeed well in its transition to democracy.⁴⁷ Early on in the transition period, in 2011, the leader of the Islamist Ennahda party, Rached Ghannouchi, celebrated victory in the first free, transparent and fair general elections ever held in the country. As Professor Zoubir (2015) notes, Ghannouchi proved in the most definitive way that Islam and democracy were compatible as a political project.⁴⁸ The steady political transition was further strengthened when Ennahda chose to step aside for its main political rival, Nidaa Tounès under Béji Caid Essebsi, on 28 September 2013 following popular protests by opposition parties, civil society and the national trade unions.⁴⁹ On 26 October 2014 Tunisia held parliamentary elections in which the democratic process was

⁴⁵ Sayigh (2015).

⁴⁶ The fact that Libya was left to its own destiny is further exemplified by the 2015 UK Parliamentary report, a public document revealing that the UK spent 13 times as much money (£320mn) bombing Libya as it provided for rebuilding after the NATO intervention (a cost of £25mn, of which most went to humanitarian support). Although each country has its own reasons for investing money and resources in post-conflict intervention programmes, the asymmetric proportions mentioned in this UK example are likely to mirror same lack of post-intervention reconstruction interest by other states (*MiddleEastEye* 27 July 2015).

⁴⁷ Not least by being awarded the Noble Peace Prize in 2015.

⁴⁸ Zoubir (2015: 13).

⁴⁹ The transition process has been hotly contested. Ennahda claims that former Ben-Ali loyalists across Tunisian political institutions worked against Ghannouchi and effectively brought his party to its knees. A comparison in this context can also be made with Egypt, where democratically elected President Morsi faced major up-hill challenges to lead his country in a post-Mubarak transition era.

further rooted and on the basis of which a new government was later formed.⁵⁰ Having said this, it is also worth mentioning that there was a general sense of insecurity across Tunisia and that there were many pockets of instability and frustration in the country.

As various incidents during 2015 testify, there are forces in the country and the region (with bases in Libya) that are seeking to undermine Tunisia as the Arab spring's only example of a successful move to democracy. Today, one of Tunisia's main external security challenges comes from armed groups operating out of Libya. A number of terrorist attacks in the country are said to have emanated from Libya. These attacks, in turn, not only challenge Tunisia directly, but also play into its domestic politics. On 4 July 2015 Tunisia invoked a state of emergency curfew to deal with domestic threats in the country.⁵¹ Political actions were also taken to curb Tunisians from leaving for and returning from Syria.⁵²

In Egypt, at the outset of the Arab spring, President Mubarak was removed from power by popular protests on 11 February 2011.⁵³ Later, on 30 June 2012, Egyptians brought Mohammed Morsi to the presidency under free and fair elections.⁵⁴ On 3 July 2013, however, Morsi was ousted in a coup by the Egyptian military.⁵⁵ Scholars and practitioners are still reviewing what sort of governance turn the government of former general Abdel Fatah Sisi will take and what approach external actors are said to be taking.⁵⁶

While domestic suppression can buy those in power time, a regime is most likely to accommodate domestic political opposition into a functioning parliamentary system if pressure for reform among the democratic opposition is strong enough.⁵⁷ One question for Egypt is how well and how loudly the opposition is likely to articulate demands for democratic reform. As noted by Bahgat (2015), Sisi's government is mainly focused on regime survival.⁵⁸ In pursuit of this goal the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has been outlawed, the media have been curbed, and

⁵⁰ From a security point of view it is worth talking of a success. After all, tensions were running so high and the regional turbulence was so chaotic that some groups might likewise have taken up arms – a possibility that would easily have reversed Tunisia's security trajectory to the negative.

⁵¹ *The Guardian* 4 July 2015.

⁵² Tunisians are suffering disproportionately high numbers of citizens fighting in various jihadist communities.

⁵³ *New York Times* 11 February 2011.

⁵⁴ *The Guardian* 30 June 2012.

⁵⁵ *The Washington Post* 3 July 2012.

⁵⁶ In European capitals, as well as in Washington, relations with the Sisi government have been dealt with according to geopolitical realities rather than from more liberal, democratic and human rights concerns.

⁵⁷ Bahgat (2015: 5).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

human rights have been infringed upon. And, as the same author further notes, "...there is significant continuity of the Mubarak regime".⁵⁹ As will be further analysed below, Libya's civil war is having considerable implications for Egypt. The rise of armed groups in Libya, such as ISIS, is creating another jihadist front to Egypt's west, complementing al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (AQIP) which is already operating in its east.

Meanwhile, in Morocco and Algeria, the Arab spring never fully penetrated society. While there were opposition demands for political and economic reforms, both countries managed successfully to co-opt or isolate the opposition in its entirety. For example, in Morocco demands for reforms were brought to the government but were never really aimed at King Mohammed. The government and the royal palace responded to the opposition with gradual reform – some opposition figures claiming these were cosmetic – and a referendum on a new constitution (in 2011).

In Algeria, memories from the so-called dark period in the 1990s when Algerians suffered a devastating civil war meant that popular protest movements were not sparked (aside from those that traditionally already existed, e.g. Berber protests). Another reason for Algeria's insulation from regional developments was that the government under President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, together with the "deep state" (the so-called "*pouvoir*"), managed to invite opposition to joint political dialogues. This strategy of co-option undermined Arab spring opposition and thereby most criticism of the government.

Morocco and Algeria had a strong security apparatus that effectively undermined any challenges to the authorities.⁶⁰ However, both are suffering from Libya's civil war. Armed groups are moving to and from Libya (sometimes via Libya), and from other conflicts such as those in Syria and Mali. They bring with them fighting experience as well as subversive networks. Along with radical ideas, these groups will pose an increasing threat to Morocco and Algeria. For instance, in 2014, the Jund al-Khalifah fi Ard al-Jazayer ("Soldiers of the Caliphate in Algeria") declared loyalty to ISIS.⁶¹ To counter the spillover from the Libyan conflict, by early August 2015 Algeria had mobilised nearly one-third of its army, i.e. about 100 000 soldiers, along its borders with Tunisia, Libya and Mali, as part of which nearly 1700 vehicles were deployed for border control against Libya.⁶²

In all, then, the spiralling turn to violence in Libya following the Arab spring has come to affect all the states in North Africa. Developments in Libya will also have

⁵⁹ Bahgat (2015).

⁶⁰ Eriksson (2014c).

⁶¹ TRAC research database (2015).

⁶² *AnsaMed* 25 July 2015.

a long-term impact on regional affairs, not least on hopes for democracy in Tunisia and stability for Egypt.

3.3 Conclusions

Like parallel developments in the region, the so-called Arab spring in Libya started peacefully. However, it soon took on its own dynamic in Libya given the unapologetic reaction by the Qaddafi regime. What was a momentum for a positive political turn following many years of dictatorship has since NATO's intervention and the removal of Qaddafi turned bad. The absence of a post-intervention plan, or rather the support for existing ones, is likely to have significantly contributed to the deteriorating situation in the country.⁶³ This in turn suggests that an important lesson for any future intervention of similar kind is to have a post-intervention plan prepared that will take stock of the challenges that come with a transition from military intervention to a long-term counter-terrorism policy, stability and a peace support phase.

Following this discussion of the Libyan context, the next chapter will engage more closely with the events leading up to its second civil war.

⁶³ In this context it is worth noting that the UK Foreign Affairs Select Committee is to investigate the government's decision to intervene in Libya in the light of its collapse (*The Guardian* 24 July 2015).

4. Towards Libya's Second Civil War

Since the NATO intervention in Libya, the security situation in the country has steadily worsened. In different places across Libya the country has reportedly been lawless since the National Transitional Council announced a rebel victory in October 2011. The political reordering of Libya inevitably led to a sharp increase in polarisation between all those political and armed groups that had fought for or against Qaddafi. Following the removal of Qaddafi, ideological, religious, tribal and ethnic polarisations surfaced and inevitably led to the chaos Libya is currently witnessing.⁶⁴ While such tensions could to some degree have been foreseen, given Qaddafi's domestic divide and rule practice, little action was taken by the international community to help Libya and its institutions meet such challenges.⁶⁵

According to Sayigh (2015) the international community's withdrawal from the Libyan scene left the country with several pockets of conflict based on different causes: conflicts were ongoing on a geographical basis, i.e. between regions, districts, and individual towns; between clans, families and ethnic groups; between different political and religious parties (including the Muslim Brotherhood and the nationalist movement); and between different security actors who had participated for or against the Qaddafi side (e.g. members of the police, the army, and the turbulent revolutionary militias).⁶⁶ Since taking office officially, the NTC (5 March 2011–8 August 2012) was constantly faced by repeated armed challenges by a number of militias from across Libya that sought to secure their own political and economic interests. While some of these armed groups were remnants of the anti-Qaddafi uprising, others were new.

While the NTC on the one hand managed to keep Libya united and advance the political process – for instance, by pushing through a constitutional process⁶⁷ – the interim government on the other hand was still unable to maintain law and order across the territory.⁶⁸ Yet glimpses of hope could be seen. For instance, on 7 July 2012 national elections were held in Libya for the first time, leading to the transfer of power from the NTC to the democratically elected General National Congress (GNC) (8 August 2012–4 August 2014), thereby formally dissolving the NTC.

⁶⁴ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr (2015: 10).

⁶⁵ The fragmentation of Libya and the absence of a recovery plan by the international community are somewhat surprising in the light of the experience of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein.

⁶⁶ Sayigh (2015).

⁶⁷ Among other things it managed to set up a road map for the adoption of a new constitution and for the establishment of a constitutional democracy.

⁶⁸ *Al Arabiya News* 23 January 2012.

The election held in July 2012 brought numerous political actors on to the political scene, all jockeying for power. In seeking to influence and profile each political cause, support and liaisons were sought and secured in the security sector.⁶⁹

Despite political processes taking Libya towards greater political inclusion and political stability, the situation deteriorated in the period 2011–2013. One of the chief conflicts was over how the future state of Libya would determine the role of former members of the Qaddafi regime, as well as what role anti-Qaddafi rebels would have in Libya’s new-born security sector.

In principle, the more conservative Islamist parties in the existing GNC in Tripoli aligned themselves with Libya’s *thuwwar*, revolutionaries. These players pushed for the political isolation law, effectively meaning that former Qaddafi regime loyalists (in the period 1969–2011) should be banned from office.⁷⁰ They further worked actively to set in motion the Integrity and Reform Commission (June 2013) that would seek to identify and exclude members of the military loyal to Qaddafi’s regime. This was unacceptable both to former members of Libya’s elite and to those who did not accept Islamist political rule, i.e. nationalist members later with the HoR in Tobruk.⁷¹

4.1 Libya partitioned 2014–2015

The political and security turmoil continued to intensify during the autumn of 2013 and early 2014 with an increasing number of armed attacks across the country (see also the next chapter). One of the more significant events was the 14 February 2014 challenge to the leadership by former Qaddafi General Haftar.^{72 73} The challenge, described by some media accounts as an alleged coup d’état, was unsuccessful but sharpened the rift between Islamists in the west and nationalist groups in the east of Libya.

⁶⁹ As noted by Sayigh (2015), groups included “...secular opposition activists, some of whom had recently returned from exile; the Muslim Brotherhood and its parliamentary vehicle, the Justice and Construction Party; Salafist Islamists; and the ‘liberal’ National Forces Alliance”.

⁷⁰ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr (2015: 17).

⁷¹ Additional conflict drivers include differences over type of government and governance style in the post-Qaddafi era, as well as what how resources would be distributed over the country. Both drivers have fuelled federalist movements to challenge central authority in Tripoli.

⁷² *The Independent* 14 February 2014.

⁷³ Haftar was previously a serving general under Qaddafi who defected after coming into personal conflict with him. Haftar left the region for the US. During the Arab spring he came back to side with the anti-Islamist coalition in Libya under the sponsorship of countries like the UAE and Egypt.

In March, acting Prime Minister Ali Zeidan was ousted from power by the GNC. On 16 May 2014, forces loyal to General Haftar launched a large-scale air and ground offensive codenamed Operation Dignity (also known as Operation Karama) against the Islamist coalition in Tripoli. The goal of Operation Dignity was to dismantle the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and other conservative Islamist movements. Haftar's forces included, besides the Libyan Army, seculars, Islamists who do not agree with Tripoli, former Qaddafi army officers, and support from outside actors. An early scene of attacks by Haftar was Derna and the primary targets were the February 17th Martyrs Brigade, the Rafallah al-Shati militia and Ansar al-Sharia Libya (all militias).

The aim was to target groups such as the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries in Benghazi (of which Ansar al-Sharia and other armed Islamists were part), which largely rejected the formal political process at the time (the Islamists were at the time influential and in control of parts of Tripoli).⁷⁴ On 18 May 2014 Haftar's forces and loyal militias such as al-Qaaqaa, Sawaaq and Zintan entered Tripoli and challenged the GNC. In a statement Haftar gave the GNC an ultimatum to dissolve itself.⁷⁵ While Zintani groups staged armed attacks, their allies under Haftar challenged the GNC politically with a policy of seeking to establish a House of Representatives (HoR). The goal was to counter the influence of the Islamist parties in Tripoli. In parallel there were skirmishes ongoing in Tripoli, though these were quickly pushed out of the city by the GNC. In the following weeks demonstrations were held demanding that the GNC take part in new elections as its mandate had expired in February.

In response to the critique, elections were held on 26 August 2014 to the 200 seats allocated to individual candidates. In theory, the election was democratic. However, there are questions both about how representatives were chosen and about what legitimacy the turnout gave the election. Voters generally selected candidates on the basis of tribal affiliations. In the elections, the "federalists" did well while Islamist candidates suffered a major defeat. Turnout was only 18 per cent,⁷⁶ mainly because people were outright disillusioned with the political process.

Following the 25 June 2014 elections, Islamists (e.g. the Justice and Construction Party (JCP) and those associated with al-Wafa who had dominated the Congress after the liberals pulled out) have been seeking to discredit the outcome. Some of the main reasons for this are that the JCP did not want to reverse the Isolation Law, and parties and movements in this bloc were also afraid of tougher anti-terror laws,

⁷⁴ *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* (2015: 3).

⁷⁵ *The Guardian* 19 May 2014.

⁷⁶ *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* (2015: 3).

and afraid that the new government would cut militia funding and force a demobilisation process upon them. Most importantly, though, they were afraid that the HoR would provide increased support for Operation Dignity (see further below).⁷⁷ After all, the Islamists had done so poorly in the election that the beginning of the work of the House of Representatives would effectively mean an end to their own political power.

Subsequent to the election, on 10 July 2014, the Dawn coalition (mainly backed by the Misratan militias) loyal to the new GNC in Tripoli appeared for the first time. In a sense the movement was born as a reaction to the loss of political influence in the elections, as well as being a result of the challenge posed to Islamist parties by Haftar, his men, and the Zintani militias in Tripoli.

Following a six-week armed confrontation, the Dawn coalition emerged victorious and de facto reinstated what was left of the GNC and on that basis formed a “government of national salvation”.⁷⁸ In this process, the Dawn coalition pushed a demand that the HoR be dissolved because it constituted a political challenge to the GNC. However, the parallel political conflict meanwhile deepened to such an extent that it was referred to the Libyan Supreme Court – a process that most parties seemed to have accepted at the time.

On 6 November 2014, the Supreme Court ruled that the HoR was illegal and unconstitutional.⁷⁹ As international media noted at the time, the Supreme Court decision effectively left Libya without an officially recognised government.⁸⁰ The GNC for its part claimed that it was the only legal and democratically elected legislature in the country. Critics of the GNC however claim that its mandate had expired in February 2014 and that the Supreme Court had been intimidated into passing its ruling on the HoR.

However, given the level of violence in Tripoli, only about 46 elected parliamentarians (mainly Islamists in the JCP and al-Wafa bloc) out of the 120 needed for passing laws were able to meet in session.⁸¹ This in turn was the result of the spiralling conflict in Tripoli, the fact that several political representatives

⁷⁷ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr (2015: 23).

⁷⁸ Kuperman (2015: 68).

⁷⁹ Members of the HoR, having recognised the Supreme Court up to this point, rejected the court ruling on two bases, arguing (1) that Tripoli, where the Supreme Court operates, was under the control of Islamist and Misratan militias, and (2) that the electoral law to which the Supreme Court referred in its ruling was put in place by the GNC (having been dominated by Islamist and pro-militia blocs and therefore biased) (see Eljarh 2014a).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

had earlier resigned due to the dominance of Islamists, and because some had turned to backing the House of Representatives.

In essence, then, Libya was consequently divided between two rival parliaments. While the government, supported by the majority of the newly elected HoR, relocated to Tobruk, those members and political parties that recognised the GNC stayed in Tripoli.⁸² As a result of the split of power and the division of Libya into two competing parliaments and government representatives, outside actors began to side with one or the other government more forcefully.

Thus, on the hand there was the National Salvation Government under Prime Minister Al-Hasi who was appointed by the GNC after it was reinstated (in March 2015 Al-Hasi was replaced by Khalifa al-Ghawi). On the other there was the Tobruk government led by Abdullah al-Thinni, appointed by the HoR.

The Tobruk government was recognised by most members of the international community even though the Tripoli government had de facto been given legal backing by the Supreme Court. One challenge for the HoR is what role it will play as its mandate expires in mid-October 2015.

In October 2014 the HoR in Tobruk officially allied itself with Haftar and his men.⁸³ Up to this point it had merely been a supportive ally. This official support escalated the conflict and contradicted previous political statements by the HoR about helping to restore order, rebuild the Libyan state and demobilise armed actors in a more non-confrontational way.⁸⁴

During the remainder of 2014 and the early months of 2015 the conflict continued to spiral with various attacks occurring against each bloc and their supporters. An important turn of events came with the armed involvement in Libya's conflict by the UAE and Egypt. On 18 August, the UAE and Egypt launched an attack on Tripoli. Egypt was allegedly also raiding Derna using its special forces.⁸⁵ The attack, however, did not change the position of the GNC in Tripoli.

Moreover, in October 2014, Haftar conducted Operation *Snake's Sting* against Islamic radicals in Benghazi. Public reports suggest that Egypt gave the operation considerable military and intelligence support.⁸⁶ Around the same time the Libyan Army also decided to recognise Operation Dignity. This in turn gave further legitimacy to Haftar and his men.

⁸² Meanwhile the violence intensified across Libya, with the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries taking control of the city of Benghazi, Derna and other cities.

⁸³ *Reuters* 20 October 2014.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *The New York Times* 25 July 2014.

⁸⁶ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr (2015: 33).

While the period covered here suggests that there is a growing negative conflict spiral, it is also worth noting that the situation has not brought about complete social anarchy. Social networks exist and government institutions have been able to provide some levels of welfare and subsidies for consumption goods (energy production and exports have continued, though on a low level because of the conflict, strikes and protests).

4.2 Competition over power and recognition

The competition between the two blocs is about the prospect of power and the opportunity to shape Libya's future in the post-Qaddafi era. It is also about a security dilemma in which neither party can afford to grant power to the other due to the fear of possible reprisals.

On the one hand the goal of incumbent Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni of the Tobruk government is to fight Islamist terrorism and liberate Tripoli.⁸⁷ On the other there is the Islamist bloc and the government in Tripoli led by Khalifa al-Ghawi, whose official goal is to put the revolt following the Arab spring back on track after it had been seen as hijacked by other political interests. In practice this means pursuing an agenda that favours an Islamist political vision for Libya.

As if the rift between two main blocs were not enough, numerous armed groups continue to exist in parallel to these with their own goals and methods. In between the two blocs there are a number of other armed jihadist groups, some of which have a long-standing animosity towards the Qaddafi regime, and others of which have completely new agendas. For instance, with Qaddafi's overthrow (and the overthrow of many other authoritarian rulers in the region, e.g. Mubarak and Ben Ali), groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and others have discovered new opportunities to resist the incumbent regimes in the region.

A pertinent question in this context then is why Libya took this road following the overthrow of Qaddafi. Setting the question of the NATO intervention aside, as discussed in the previous chapter, could the negative turn of security events in the region have been foreseen? The issue is the subject of intense academic debate.

On the one hand, the simple answer is no – there was not so much that could be done. The main challenges that came about with the Arab spring and were not anticipated in the initial analysis were the intensity of the political rivalry between states in the MENA region and the responses of the external powers to developments in the region. The *country-by-country* focus with regard to the

⁸⁷ *The Washington Post* 20 May 2015.

popular protests with the Arab spring, as opposed to a more rigorous *regional* security analysis, could in retrospect be considered futile.

On the other hand, the more complex answer is yes. For any commentator on security dynamics and the regional balance of power in MENA, there have been different factors pointing to simmering political tensions: Libya's ethnic composition, political divides, and complex geopolitical positioning among the states of the region. All factors thus reflect the fact that any security ruptures could quickly tip existing tensions over into chaos.⁸⁸ This is particularly so when one strongman keeping a country together is removed from power without institutions backing the country in the subsequent transition phase.

It is clear that the political and security situation in Libya as late autumn 2015 is the result of both domestic and external interests. The security vacuum that followed Qaddafi's death inevitably led to the Libyan state disintegrating with armed actors effectively filling the vacuum.

Aside from the armed conflict between the various groups, the UN is making a vigorous diplomatic push to unite Libya's political fractions, i.e. the GNC and the HoR. An overview of this negotiation process follows.

4.3 Negotiations

Overall the diplomatic push towards some sort of an agreement has been extremely complicated. Nonetheless, during 2015 a number of important meetings were held between the HoR in Tobruk and the GNC in Tripoli. Consequently, in March the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) unveiled a six-point plan, including the need to establish a transitional government of national unity that would seek to design and adopt a new constitution.⁸⁹ The plan for a government of national unity has since been a key vision for UN and diplomatic backers. In April 2015, the parties met in face-to-face talks for the first time, having previously been negotiating in separate rooms. A number of subsequent meetings were held in early June 2015.⁹⁰ Following the six-point plan, UN chief mediator Bernardino Leon has negotiated different draft agreements.

⁸⁸ A good source of data providing social indications across the region is the United Nations Development Programme's *Arab Human Development Report* (see also the forthcoming report on youth 2015).

⁸⁹ *The Institute for Security Studies* (2015).

⁹⁰ On 13 May 2015, the US hosted Gulf Cooperation Council members (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) at Camp David. Part of the talks was to forge a coordinated response to the situation in Libya (Ibid).

A proposed fourth draft agreement was brought to the parties on 8 June during a dialogue session in Morocco. The talks at the time offered a plan for a unity “Government of National Accord” (GNA), directly in control of a reformed military into which militias would integrate. Moreover, the proposed accord called for a 120-member State Council consultative body.⁹¹ The parties were called upon to sign the agreement.⁹²

On the eve of negotiations, the parties to the talks were brought to Germany (Berlin) with the expectation that they would seal the talks with a joint agreement. However, the HoR rejected the draft after an alleged 55 of the 72 members decided to suspend further involvement in the process.⁹³ In fact, the parliament in Tobruk withdrew support from those attending the Berlin talks, claiming that they were at the negotiations in a private capacity.

A few days later, however, on 11 July 2015, the HoR changed its position as the draft agreement was amended to its advantage (some of the powers of the GNC would be reduced). Hence, the HoR together with other political parties, civil society and local officials, *initialled* the proposed agreement (though not officially signing it). This time around, however, the GNC refused, although it accepted new UN-facilitated meetings. In August and September, the GNC made new demands for a number of amendments to the fourth agreement on the table.

Following a set of meetings with the GNC Bernardino Leon made a number of changes to the draft.⁹⁴ To conclude the negotiations, on 12 September, the UN convened another meeting in Shirat at which negotiators expected the parties to sign up to the modified agreement which the HoR but not the GNC had initialled. Following a brief meeting with the parties, Leon declared that a deal to form a Libyan Government of National Unity had been reached. However, a day later this declaration was downgraded to be considered a “consensus”, and on 15 September the HoR in turn rejected the revised agreement. The rejection of the draft by the HoR suggested that the negotiation process was in vain and the parties were still far away from each other.⁹⁵

⁹¹ *Reuters* 9 June (2015).

⁹² A few days later the parties were flown to Berlin, Germany to meet key stakeholders (such as UN, the EU, Germany, Italy) to sort out their differences over the agreement, only to be flown back to Morocco for final talks on the settlement of a unitary government. See Auswärtiges Amt, “P5+5 Communiqué for Libya meeting in Berlin”, 6 October 2015.

⁹³ Hanly (2015).

⁹⁴ Meetings took place in e.g. Geneva on 10–11 August and in Shirat, Morocco, on 28 August.

⁹⁵ Meanwhile several events on ground influenced the negotiation process, notably Haftar’s escalation of conflict against Benghazi’s Islamist movements (named Operation Doom). The assault on Benghazi suggests that Haftar was not ready to sign up to any unity deal prepared by Leon. Another factor was a potential power struggle between Haftar and his forces and the HoR

There have been several obstacles to overcome. To begin with, one underlying problem has to do with the format of the talks and the question of representation.⁹⁶ On substance, though, one of the main differences was over the future role of the governing council and the Libyan Army.⁹⁷ Another main obstacle has been the role Haftar plays in politics. The Tripoli camp and Misratans are blocking any involvement of Haftar in Libya's future political process, while the Tobruk camp will not accept giving Haftar up.⁹⁸ Related to this is the fact that none of the main parties genuinely wants to sign up to the UNSMIL peace process as they do not want to cede control to their opponents.

While it is possible that the GNC and the HoR can agree on a UN-mediated agreement, the prospect for a complete national peace in Libya looks remote for at least one or two years to come. There are simply too many actors operating around the country, which suggests that things will get worse before they get better. This outlook concerns both Libya as well as its neighbours.

Another challenge to the talks is that there are groups that simply do not accept talks at all. These spoilers, e.g. criminal networks, have too much to lose from a political settlement.

In the light of the situation explained above, there are a number of important turning points that could potentially change the situation. To begin with, if the UN manages to get the GNC and the Tobruk government to agree on a government of national accord this could reduce overall violence and improve the conflict dynamic in the long run. However, once the agreement is signed there will be immediate attempts to spoil it.⁹⁹

Second, an important positive pattern that could allow for a reduction of violence is that, if those local ceasefires that have been signed up to in different villages

(e.g. Haftar preventing Prime Minister al-Thinni from leaving Libya for a meeting in Malta). There were even rumours of a potential coup d'état in the making.

⁹⁶ Questions and obstacles here cover participation in the talks (how were participants to be selected?); the mandate of the negotiating parties (did parties have the backing of their constituencies?); and the absence of some parties (a number of important armed actors, including militia leaders, were left out of the talks), etc.

⁹⁷ *MiddleeastEye* 31 July 2015.

⁹⁸ It is worth noting, though, that there have been signs within the HoR suggesting that some members are wary of Haftar and want to limit his role, while others back him fully as his exclusion from the political process will mean an end to their interests.

⁹⁹ One aspect of the spoiler problematique is that several armed groups are involved in criminality. As war is profitable, it is in some groups' interests to fuel insecurity which can spark further violence.

across Libya are kept, there is a chance that war fatigue will increase. War fatigue is always an important factor in any situation of armed violence.¹⁰⁰

Third, there are several domestic groups that are seeking a comprehensive peace: including civil society organisations such as Youth for Peace, Women for Peace, etc. Advocacy groups like these can play an important role in pushing for political unity. Fourth, given the regional dynamic, including great-power interests and the emergence of ISIS in the conflict, there are new arguments for bringing the main Libyan parties to accord and for concentrating efforts against non-Libyan movements that are simply taking advantage of the chaos.¹⁰¹

The points mentioned above could be seen as indicators of progress in a way. However, if these aspects do not work out, things could get much worse. Overall, though, it remains unclear how the situation in Libya will unfold after 2015.

One possible scenario is the national peace accords take effect and the conflict in Libya changes from its current form of a complete civil war to a national cease-fire, with remaining pockets of low-intensity conflicts on the local level. This would be a better outcome as central forces could more effectively tackle pockets of instability as opposed to the country being completely split and fragmented into different political blocs without a unity government.

4.4 Conclusion

The conflict in Libya traces its roots to different sources, both historical and contemporary. In particular, Libya's second civil war is a partial consequence of Qaddafi's legacy of divide and rule which created a lasting state of insecurity. When the regime collapsed (partly as a result of foreign intervention) a number of regional security dilemmas came about between different groups. The situation has since been further aggravated by the opportunism of old and new armed actors in this political environment, including political interventions by external powers on different sides of the conflict.

Despite the armed conflicts and the spiral of violence there have been political processes seeking to overcome existing security dilemmas. The UN-sponsored political negotiations on a potential unity government are central.

¹⁰⁰ In this context it is also worth considering that the Libyan population in general was materially fairly "well-off" under Qaddafi. The country was stable for many decades. Libyans are not used to a situation of constant fear.

¹⁰¹ The EU is supporting the UN-sponsored talks and by mid-2015 was politically taking a wait-and-see approach. If there were a unity government in place, the EU would most likely be prepared to provide a good deal of support to such a process.

However, even if a unity government comes into being there are several problems. Some of the most pressing challenges will be establishing legitimate security arrangements, dealing with spoilers, disarmament and the withdrawal of militias and their foreign sponsorship, and effectively recreating institutions so that Libya can begin working as a state again.

Chapter 5 gives an overview and analysis of Libya's main warring parties as of mid-2015.

5. The Domestic Warring Parties

During 2014–2015 the security situation in Libya turned from bad to worse. As noted in previous chapters, Libya entered its second civil war which brought new conflict actors to the scene. The second civil war, which effectively started in July 2014 with the split of Libya’s parliament, fractured into a complicated power struggle between government forces, federalist forces, and religious, ethnic, secular, liberal, territorial and democratic forces. By autumn 2015 there were in all five major warring sides:¹⁰² (1) the House of Representatives (HoR) and Operation Dignity in Tobruk; (2) the new GNC and Operation Dawn in Tripoli; (3) the Islamist Shura Council of Benghazi; (4) al-Qaeda forces; (5) ISIS; and (6) ethnic and tribal forces.¹⁰³

Each conflict constellation and each party is trying to shape Libya’s political landscape to its own advantage.¹⁰⁴ Below follows an overview, though it should be noted that security developments in Libya are shifting by the day. The aim is to provide a brief overview of the main warring parties including some of their key motivations and ambitions.

5.1 Tobruk (Dignity) vs Tripoli (Dawn)

By 2015 the split between the two parliaments and subsequent governments in Libya and those that endorse them both domestically and internationally had effectively led to a conflict where two main rivals are each seeking to overturn the other.

¹⁰² The focus is here on armed groups. There are also groups that have shifted between non-violent protest and armed challenges. One such important group is the pro-federalist Cyrenaica Transitional Council (created in 2012). The group is built on thousands of tribal, military and political members whose primary goal is to establish a federal governing structure in Libya based on the country’s 1951 constitution. The constitution at the time of independence gave recognition to three federal states – Cyrenaica (East), Fezzan (South), and Tripolitania (West) which then constituted Libya. The federalist movement has at times played an important role in post-Qaddafi politics, inter alia by blocking Libya’s oil depots and selling oil for its own financial benefit. For more on the federalist tendencies in Libya, see Eljarh (2014).

¹⁰³ In particular there are considerable tensions between ethnic groups and clan groups (e.g. Tabu vs Awlad Suleiman; Tabu vs Zwaya (United Nations Security Council S/2014/131: 5)). Conflicts pertain to various natural resources, territorial control, smuggling and illicit trade, etc. Fighting between these groups has contributed to the fragmentation of Libya while undermining the authority of the state. However, local alliances, frictions, clashes and peace deals are changing by the day. Though there are at times ideological differences, the security dynamics are changed on the basis of day-to-day convenience. For the purpose of this study, these warring actors are excluded from the analysis.

¹⁰⁴ *BBC World News* 20 May 2014.

5.1.1 The House of Representatives (Council of Deputies/Dignity) in Tobruk

As noted in the previous chapter, the *House of Representatives* (HoR) (also known as the Council of Deputies, CoD) is a political bloc consisting of different individual candidates with its base in the city of Tobruk. The HoR has officially formed a government that currently enjoys considerable international recognition. Since the parliament in Tripoli split away, the HoR has had backing from General Khalifa Haftar (on 2 March 2015 Haftar was officially confirmed as the commander of the HoR forces, i.e. the Libyan Army). The HoR and its secular and nationalist camp have set up their support base in Tobruk.

Operation Dignity

Following the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime in October 2011, former General Haftar sought to claim a post in the national transitional government, though with little success. One reason was his strong anti-Islamist agenda, partly built on support from Libyan businessmen afraid of what the Islamists' political agenda would mean for Libya and their own economic interests. On 16 May 2014, forces loyal to General Haftar launched a large-scale air and ground offensive codenamed *Operation Dignity*. The goal was to dismantle the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and other conservative Islamist movements as well as to remove threats posed by brigades that were operating in Benghazi, which for nearly a year had been carrying out kidnappings and assassinations of security personnel.

According to various estimates, Haftar has both ground and air capabilities (claiming eight MiG fighter jets and four Mi25 attack helicopters).¹⁰⁵ Early on his campaign against the Islamists had about 6000 troops. And, as noted above, he has received both indirect and direct military support and logistics from Egypt and the UAE.

An important ally in Operation Dignity is the Zintani Brigade.¹⁰⁶ It consists of several dozen local militias formed in the midst of the uprising against Qaddafi in 2011 and mainly operating out of eastern Libya (including the Zintani Revolutionaries Military Council, the Tripoli Revolutionary Council, the Qa'qa' Brigade, al-Madani Brigade, the Sawa'iqa brigade, etc.). Its members are largely linked to the city of Zintan and are first and foremost opposed to more radical Islamist governance. During the uprising it formed part of the international coalition to overthrow Qaddafi. The group holds different pockets of territory across Libya.

¹⁰⁵ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr (2015: 10).

¹⁰⁶ Migrationsverket (2014).

Since Qaddafi's overthrow, most brigades have been government-funded. The basic idea behind this funding mechanism was to bring the militias into a national army. It enjoys the support of the Libyan National Army and forms an integral part of Operation Dignity. Also allied to the Zintani Brigades is the Tribal Army (mainly members of the Wershefana tribe). Since the split of the GNC in late June 2014 the Zintan Brigade, siding with the HoR in Tobruk, has been in open armed conflict with the Misratans and the Dawn coalition in Tripoli (see below).

5.1.2 Tripoli and the (reinstated) General National Congress (GNC)

The reinstated GNC is formed the remnants of those representing the original GNC following the 25 June 2014 elections. It is dominated by the Justice and Construction Party (JCP) (i.e. the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood's party) and the Loyalty to Martyrs Bloc (i.e. political parties with Islamist leanings). The political parties are indirectly supported by Operation Dawn.

Operation Dawn

The GNC relies on the support provided by a coalition of armed actors working under the Operation Dawn alliance. Broadly, the coalition consists of a number of Misratan brigades, including the Libya Shield Middle; a host of Islamist brigades and militias in Tripoli (including the Libya Revolutionaries Operations Room); other Libya Shield forces including Libya Shield West; and various other Islamist brigades and militias.

Albeit the Operation Dawn alliance is made up largely of supporters of an Islamist agenda, they are far from united. There is considerable lethal infighting within the alliance. While some of its members are siding with the GNC's overall political cause, some also have other shared loyalties. One explanation has to do with the ideology of the group and/or ethnic/tribal affiliations.

On 6 July 2015, the Tripoli-based Prime Minister Khalifa al-Ghawi (elected on 31 March 2015) declared a reorganisation of its armed forces into "11 brigades including militiamen who fought in the country's 2011 revolution". The goal was to establish a 5,000-strong army.¹⁰⁷

The Libya Shield Force

The Libya Shield Force was formed six months after the fall of Qaddafi and the establishment of the NTC. It was formed by the Libyan Ministry of Defence on the basis of existing cadres of anti-Qaddafi militias. The goal was to set up a national force with the aim of protecting the Libya Arab spring and to insulate the new government from being penetrated by those forces that had supported or

¹⁰⁷ *Agence France Presse* 5 July 2015.

fought alongside Qaddafi. In principle the Libya Shield Force has an agenda of promoting political Islam. A considerable element also has an armed radical Islamic agenda. The Shield Force forms the backbone against Haftar's anti-GNC agenda.

As of now the Libya Shield Force comprises three largely independent main subdivisions: (1) the original Libya Shield 1 (currently based in Benghazi) but whose members are now part of (2) the Western Shield (at the disposal of the new General National Congress; and (3) the Central Shield, which is largely built on the Misrata brigades. All forces are operating around Tripoli and in pockets around key cities like Benghazi. The main headquarters is said to be Misrata.

The Misrata militias are considered to be key protectors of the anti-Qaddafi revolution. A principal reason for this is their long-standing mistrust of Qaddafi and his main followers in Zintan (Zintan has been considered a stronghold of the Qaddafi regime while Misratans have generally mistrusted Qaddafi deeply).¹⁰⁸ Indeed, historically there has been mistrust between different regions and cities in Libya.¹⁰⁹ The long-standing conflict between Misratans and Zintanis re-surfaced following the Arab spring.¹¹⁰

The Islamist Shura Council of Benghazi

The Islamist Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries is a military coalition that came together under this umbrella to fight Haftar. The council is led by Ansar al-Sharia (Libya) with the support of the reinstated General National Congress. The coalition mainly consists of Ansar al-Sharia and Libya Shield 1 and has in total only 400–500 members.

Ansar al-Sharia

Ansar al-Sharia Libya is one of Libya's largest armed groups. It made its first appearance after the outbreak of the Arab spring in 2012. Some members are former Libya Islamic Fighting Groups (LIFG) members that existed in Libya before the so-called Arab spring. Its main bases have been in Benghazi, Derna and Sirte since 2012 (though it withdrew from Benghazi for a period). Following Haftar's Operation Dignity in May 2014, Ansar al-Sharia has fought under a loose coalition named the *Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries* (see 5.1.2.3 above).¹¹¹ Principal targets have (at times) been Operation Dignity forces,

¹⁰⁸ The Zintanis have also enjoyed much support from the Warfalla tribe and the Qadhahfa tribe.

¹⁰⁹ This is well covered in Vandewalle (2006).

¹¹⁰ It is interesting to note that, despite long-standing mistrust between Zintanis and Misratans, the dynamic of the Arab spring temporarily put their differences aside.

¹¹¹ Including (aside from Ansar al-Sharia) Libya Shield 1, the February 17th Martyrs Brigade and the Rafallah al-Sahati Brigade.

nationalists and secular-oriented movements, and ISIS (as some members of the Shura Council had refused to pay allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi).¹¹²

The group is a coalition of Islamist and Salafist groups active mainly in eastern Libya. Its members fight under different alliance formations mainly against the secular forces of Haftar, though increasingly also against rival Islamic groups. Ansar al-Sharia has different factions with different moderate-jihadist tendencies. For instance, Ansar al-Sharia – *Derna* (a more hard-line faction) in July 2012 considered the GNC un-Islamic; Ansar al-Sharia – *Benghazi* was claimed by the US to be involved in the 11 September 2012 attack on the US Mission to Libya. Leading up to this development there were several reports of fighting against ISIS. Later in 2015 media reports suggested that segments of Ansar al-Sharia (and possibly the entire group) had pledged allegiance to ISIS.¹¹³

5.2 Other key non-state actors and their influence on the regional security dynamic

The fighting in Libya has to be understood not only from the domestic situation, but also from the point of view of how armed groups are operating on a cross-border level.¹¹⁴

The instability of Libya laid the ground for domestic and regional security dynamics in a number of unforeseen ways. On the one hand there are groups in the region that stage attacks *inside* Libya while residing outside the territory. For instance, terror groups such as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) or Wilayat Sinai, which usually operated in Sinai and has pledged support to ISIS, have been present in Libya.¹¹⁵ On the other hand there are armed groups using Libya as a safe haven to plan and stage attacks *outside* on neighbouring states. Further to this, there are also armed groups that are being “pushed” out of Libya into other conflict settings: for example members of the armed Tuareg movements left Libya in 2011 which in turn brought with it a spiral of conflict in Mali. Following the French intervention in Mali (*Operation Serval*) and the launch of the *United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali* (MINUSMA), a

¹¹² *United Press International* 5 June 2015.

¹¹³ *Newsweek* 8 April 2015.

¹¹⁴ For the purpose of this paper all ethnic and tribal armed groups are excluded. There are several local tribal conflicts and alliances not dealt with there – Tebu vs Turareg and Zwai tribes around al-Kufra; Tebu vs Awlad Suleiman tribes; Awlad Suleiman vs Tebu tribes; Tebu vs Tuareg communities (supporting Libya Dawn) around Ubari, etc.

¹¹⁵ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr (2015: 39).

number of members of different armed groups in Mali (e.g. Ansar al-Dine) have fled to Libya.¹¹⁶

5.2.1 AQIM

One of the most significant groups operating inside and outside Libya is the *al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM). AQIM has been around in North Africa since 1998 (at that time called the *Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat*; it was renamed in 2007).¹¹⁷ In recent years AQIM and al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (AQIP) have sought a role in North Africa. Expanding cell by cell AQIM has challenged most governments in North Africa. More precisely, AQIM, like many other armed groups, is currently taking advantage of the security vacuum in Libya. Although AQIM is not based in Libya, it poses a threat to the state of Libya.

In 2015 news reports suggested that AQIM (as well as other radical Islamic groups such as Ansar al-Sharia) has a presence in north-eastern Libya. Reports also suggest that one of its strongholds is around Benghazi and Derna.¹¹⁸ Benghazi is currently the scene of the more intense fighting in Libya. One main reason for this, as mentioned above, is Dignity's goal of battling Islamist militias.¹¹⁹ Aside from Benghazi and Derna there are also various accounts to the effect that Ansar al-Sharia and AQIM have a presence in southern and south-western Libya.

These territorial locations can partly be explained by long-term historical reasons related to the type of governance and levels of economic development, but also by more contemporary policies of Qaddafi. For instance, the region around Benghazi was widely neglected by Qaddafi which led to widespread poverty, a lack of developed infrastructure, less political representation, etc. This in turn, according to some experts, led to a marginalisation of the region and thereby laid the ground for resentment and support for alternative support structures offered by Islamic groups.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.: 38.

¹¹⁷ Jakobsson and Eriksson (2012). See also the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (<http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/>).

¹¹⁸ Benghazi is known as a transit zone for numerous organised crime syndicates as well as a major arms bazaar.

¹¹⁹ For example, AU news media suggest that nearly 1,700 people have been killed in the area between the autumn of 2014 and May 2015 and that civilians in the city are stuck between fighting actors (The AU Situation Room. Wednesday, 27 May 2015 Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division (CPEWD), Peace and Security Department (PSD); see also *The Washington Post* 19 May 2014).

Since 2014, ISIS has increasingly rivalled AQIM. The rivalry between the two groups has led to a number of skirmishes (a rivalry that needs to be read from their competition over power in the wider Middle East). As further noted below, ISIS is seeking to dominate AQIM and the al-Qaeda movement Ansar al-Sharia Libya and their followers (by fighting them and by buying over their followers). However, both groups seem more prone to create temporary alliances to confront the anti-Islamist coalition than to engage in a complete conflict against each other.

At the moment there are rumours that ISIS are winning support and members from AQIM.¹²⁰ It is not unlikely that AQIM may want to make itself more relevant in the existing security environment in order to boost its support base. This dynamic could lead to an escalation of violence on their side. But, again, the rivalry between ISIS and al-Qaeda should not be overplayed. Rather, ISIS is increasingly winning over supporters from the Ansar al-Sharia group.

An important internal development for AQIM occurred in December 2012, when its leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar¹²¹ left to form his own movement, al-Mulathameen (“Masked”), alias the al-Mua’qi’oon Biddam (“Those who Sign with Blood”).¹²² ¹²³ According to media reports, Belmokhtar’s movement later merged in 2013 with the *Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa* (MUJAO) to form al-Mourabitoun (“The Sentinels”) (MUJAO and AQIM broke their alliance in 2011). In 2015 there were signs of a split between MUJAO and AQIM as the former publicly declared loyalty to ISIS.

Whereas power struggles have led to armed groups seeking a presence inside Libya to carve out political and economic gains, another more hands-on explanation for the presence of armed jihadist movements is that many Libyans over the years have travelled abroad to participate in armed jihad. For instance, there are several examples of Libyans fighting in numerous armed conflicts over the past decades. While some of these wars have been anti-imperialist (e.g. fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan), others have been related to post- or neo-colonial struggles (participation in various Palestinian factions), nationalist wars (Chechnya) or direct involvement in anti-Western struggles (e.g. al-Qaeda).

¹²⁰ For instance, it has been suggested that the Bardo attack in Tunisia on 18 March 2015 was an AQIM design but was carried out by defectors to ISIS who claimed responsibility for the attack.

¹²¹ Belmokhtar was reported killed in mid-June 2015. However, by July 2015 his death had not been confirmed. *Reuters* 19 June 2015.

¹²² *BBC World News* 20 August 2014.

¹²³ Though still keeping loyalty to al-Qaeda Central.

5.2.2 ISIS

ISIS has been present in Libya for at least a year, since early autumn 2014.¹²⁴ The exact timing of its establishment is open to debate. There have been a number of radical forerunners to ISIS in Libya. For example, Rosenthal suggests that al-Qaeda forces were an integral part of the anti-Qaddafi rebellion (that was indirectly supported by Western states intervening under a UN mandate).¹²⁵

By mid-2015, ISIS had been able to locate itself in at least four cities across Libya.¹²⁶ Having initially established itself in Benghazi and Derna in 2014 (see below), in 2015 it later moved into Sirte and to Tripoli (2015).¹²⁷ During the spring of 2015, ISIS was no longer only operating through different cells but had declared the presence of a local ISIS “caliphate” in local provinces in Libya: Wilayat al-Barqah in the east, Wilayat al-Tarabulus in the west, and Wilayat al-Fizan in the south.¹²⁸ Since February 2015, ISIS’s main stronghold in Libya has been Sirte, having no real rivals.

There may be several reasons for ISIS’ expansion. On the one hand it may be intended to signal a broad presence (though it may simply be a matter of minor cells); on the other, ISIS may have been forced to expand into western Libya as a result of having increasingly been faced by military action by pro-Haftar and Egyptian Army forces.¹²⁹

Despite its expansion ISIS is not a centralised hierarchical organisation. Rather there are different groups pledging loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (to be compared to franchising).¹³⁰

ISIS’ road to Libya

The chain of expansion is not clear. It may have come about in several ways. However, Wehrey (2015a) provides an interesting analysis. According to Wehrey, a group of Libyans travelled to fight in Syria in 2011.¹³¹ Records testify that the group established an armed group calling itself the Battar Brigade (deployed at

¹²⁴ Wehrey (2015a).

¹²⁵ Rosenthal (2013 chapter 3).

¹²⁶ Subject to change given the events on ground.

¹²⁷ In Sirte the group was estimated to have between 200 and 400 members in mid-2015. Wehrey (2015a).

¹²⁸ Adding to Iraq and Syria, ISIS had also declared its administrative presence in Algeria (Wilayat al-Jazair), Libya (Wilayat al-Barqah, Wilayat al-Tarabulus and Wilayat al-Fizan), Egypt-Sinai (Wilayat Sinai), Saudi Arabia (Wilayat al-Haramayn) and Yemen (Wilayat al-Yaman). See *The Washington Post* 28 January 2015.

¹²⁹ Wehrey (2015a).

¹³⁰ Stratfor (2015).

¹³¹ Wehrey (2015a).

first in Deir Ezzor in Syria and then at Mosul in Iraq¹³²). The group expressed thanks on social media to the citizens of Derna for their support for the struggle in Syria. At some point in the period 2011–2014, it expressed its loyalty to the Nusra Front.

During the first part of 2014, about 300 members of the Battar Brigade returned to Libya and Derna. Some of their members teamed up with a local group named the Islamic Youth Shura Council (IYSC). The IYSC had previously declared loyalty to al-Baghdadi of ISIS and eventually, during the autumn, also claimed eastern Libya as part of the ISIS “Wilayat al-Barqah” caliphate. Scholars and experts have examined why radicals have been able to root themselves and gained local support in Derna.

One explanation provided in a recent study by Eljarh (2015) is that for many decades Derna was politically and economically neglected by the Qaddafi regime. This led to high levels of unemployment, a lack of economic opportunities and a lack of prospects for those living there. Moreover, Eljarh notes that for many years the Libyan authorities have also pursued a brutal hunt for local sympathisers (notably Islamist groups such as the Libya Islamic Fighting Group). Neglect of the region has marginalised local communities and made them susceptible to radicalisation.¹³³ This is not to say that there is much support for extremist versions of Islam (such as ISIS ideology); it is rather a case of resentment at the lack of social order. Local citizens have minimal representation and local elections have been prevented. Another factor that may have spurred radicalisation is the existence of several militias operating in Derna, partly rivalling each other.¹³⁴

Aside from its geographical expansion, what is perhaps more significant is ISIS’ activities. Since its appearance in Libya, ISIS and its supporters have claimed responsibility for a number of high-profile attacks in Libya and the immediate region, including the attack on the Corinthia Hotel on 27 January 2015,¹³⁵ the killing of 21 Egyptian Christians on 15 January 2015,¹³⁶ and the killing of 30 Ethiopian Christians on 20 April 2015.¹³⁷

According to Wehrey (2015b), ISIS’ successes have largely built on its ability to establish itself in areas where other Islamist parties fail: “...by tapping into various kinds of disenchantment to divide opponents and attract potential recruits, whether among disillusioned Islamists, aggrieved tribes, or marginalized minor

¹³² *CNN World News* 18 November 2014.

¹³³ Eljarh (2015).

¹³⁴ E.g. the Salim Martyrs Brigade and Derna’s Islamic Youth Council.

¹³⁵ *BBC World News* 28 January (2015).

¹³⁶ *The Guardian* 15 January (2015).

¹³⁷ *The Guardian* 20 April (2015).

factions".¹³⁸ ¹³⁹ Moreover, in Derna it has set up its own police force and court system, and begun to transform the local education system (the separation of men and women, the banning of science and philosophy from the curriculum) and local taxes.¹⁴⁰

While ISIS' presence in a location such as Derna is significant, its success should not be exaggerated. Again as noted by Wehrey (2015 2015a), ISIS' presence in Libya is the result not of a clear strategy but of opportunism. How durable ISIS is likely to be in Derna is yet to be seen. By early August 2015 it was reported that it was increasingly being pushed out of Derna by the much stronger Shura Council, the Abu Slim Martyrs' Brigade and others in the Derna Mujahideen Shura Council. ISIS has at times also been put under military pressure by Haftar forces.

Finally, in terms of size, their exact number is difficult to estimate. In early 2015 it was estimated that the group numbered 3000–5000.¹⁴¹ Although ISIS has made significant progress, it is difficult to conclude that it has grown in strength during 2015. On the other hand there are clear signs of and a rationale for ISIS wanting to appear in new territories as it may lose ground in others (Iraq and Syria for instance).

ISIS potential expansion

ISIS is seeking to expand its presence in Libya. It is difficult to say how far its expansion will go. At the moment, Wehrey sees two main obstacles. First, Libya, unlike Iraq and Syria, has a fairly homogeneous Sunni population. The sectarian divide is therefore not as strong and hence not a factor to play on. Second, Libya, unlike Syria for example, is not generally a resource-rich state. Though Libya has a great deal of oil, ISIS is not able to take over the central state-run oil company and sell oil and thereby gain income (as opposed to Iraq where it has taken control of a number of oil fields). Thus, it will not be in the position to generate much of the income which is crucial for spreading social welfare in order to gain local support among Libyans.¹⁴² ISIS is deeply embedded in the crime-terror nexus. It is only likely to survive if Libya is kept in turmoil and ethnic and provincial rivalry continues. The existing turmoil also allows it to profit from a war-type economy. Adding to Wehrey's points, there are reasons to believe that the military coalition in Syria and Iraq against ISIS, as well as Russian air strikes in Syria, will also influence ISIS' strategic movements in countries like Libya.

¹³⁸ Wehrey (2015b).

¹³⁹ For instance, ISIS has developed local rules of conduct including the banning of smoking.

¹⁴⁰ Eljarh (April 2015).

¹⁴¹ Wehrey (2015b).

¹⁴² Wehrey (2015a).

One interesting side-effect of ISIS' expansion, however, is that it seems to be having a unifying effect on the warring parties in Libya. While the political leadership of the two rival parliaments may never recognise it openly, there are anecdotal reports that both sides' security forces are at times talking to each other on how to deal with ISIS. The threat of ISIS in many ways pre-empts other threats as it has a completely different and radical political and religious agenda for Libya compared to all other groups. Tackling the threat of ISIS is a growing priority for all groups, although at the moment it has not overtaken other security concerns among the Tobruk and Tripoli sides.

What is perhaps as important is how regional and global powers decide to take on ISIS. This is further analysed and discussed below.

The Abu Slim Martyrs Brigade

The Abu Slim Martyrs Brigade is an independent armed Islamic movement backed by al-Qaeda and operating for its own religious and political cause in Derna. Further to imposing a religious agenda, its goal has been to provide security and protection for the town which has been abandoned by the authorities for many years. The Abu Slim Martyrs Brigade was largely a creation of the Libya Islamic Fighting Group but took on a new role in 2011 as a result of the Arab spring. The primary goal has been to implement Sharia law in Derna and then to have it spread in Libya. The Brigade has mainly battled Operation Dignity as well as ISIS. According to news reports it forced ISIS out of Derna in mid-June 2015.¹⁴³ However, the movement is relatively small compared to the other major actors.

5.4 Conclusion

The overview of armed actors provided above is not complete, but it testifies to the fragmentation of Libya's social order. While some of these groups are struggling for political and economic compensation for having taken part in the uprising that removed Qaddafi from power, others make reference to root causes such as lack of equitable political representation and prospects of a stable social and economic life. Adding to this complexity is the growing crime-terror-war nexus, in which groups burgeon, as well as the increasing presence of ideologically motivated groups that are competing for power in Libya.

In the next part, chapter 6, foreign states' interests in Libya's ongoing conflicts are discussed in more detail.

¹⁴³ *The National* 15 June 2015.

6. External Actors and Libya's Second Civil War

The security turmoil in Libya has had several repercussions for the stability of the region over the past four years, in two notable ways.

First, instability in Libya has had negative security spillover effects including societal stress among all of Libya's neighbours. Notably, the violence in Libya has been a source of armed groups, arms flows, illicit trade, migration and trafficking, etc. This in turn has contributed to undermine political stability in a region already suffering from volatility.

Second, the conflict in Libya has been propelled by external powers meddling in Libya's domestic affairs. Although it is accurate to talk about the domestic turmoil in Libya as a second civil war, it is a civil war with external interference, i.e. proxy war. Indeed, external actor engagement has fuelled domestic conflict and augmented the rivalry between Libya Dawn and Libya Dignity and other groups.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of how Libya's civil war is affecting its regional neighbours and why it is important to read the conflict from a larger regional security perspective.

6.1 Regional and external actors

Since early post-colonial times and the rise of Arab nationalism in North Africa during the 1960s and 1970s, there has existed a security order providing a form of stability in the region that has tied regional states together. Within this order, though, governments have favoured different political systems and security postures to protect the integrity of the state. Though states in North Africa generally tend to consider themselves as having a common identity, the region is partly fragmented in economic and security terms. Partly this situation is self-chosen, i.e. driven by distinct political styles of governance and political competition (e.g. monarchy vs presidency, socialism vs liberalism, and different forms of authoritarianism and economic development). Another reason for the region's security fragmentation can be found in European powers' political decision to deal with the region on a state-by-state basis rather than as a regional entity. This approach has divided regional actors more than it has united them.

From a regional outlook, Libya shares borders with six states: Tunisia, Algeria, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan and Egypt. The borders with Libya have historically been very porous which has made it easy for states and armed groups to cross into each other's territory. Dozens of groups were operating in the region prior to the Arab

spring and the second civil war in Libya. However, over the past five years, borders have become even increasingly porous as a result of the central power in Tripoli being unable to control its territory.

This has had detrimental effects on Libya's neighbours. Mali is a case in point: there local conflicts were suddenly propelled by the influx of armed groups with roots in Libya. Similarly the instabilities themselves have led Western actors to launch a number of operations and security programmes in the region, e.g. the France *Operation Barkhane* and the EU *Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*.¹⁴⁴

6.1.1 Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The civil war in Libya is currently at the top of Egypt's national security agenda. The possibility of the civil war bringing the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood into power would be one of Egypt's worst fears.

Thus, following Islamist rule in Tripoli, President Sisi engaged in a more active foreign policy and sided with the anti-MB bloc. The reason was simple. Since the military coup against former President Muhammed Morsi on 3 July 2013, the Egyptian Army and the government have struggled to maintain domestic order. The most immediate security challenge has been the political challenge posed by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (and members of the Justice and Freedom Party) which it has determined to be a terrorist movement. Another security challenge has been dealing with AQIP.¹⁴⁵ While AQIP gained a presence in Sinai in January 2009, and blended into local grievances among marginalised communities in the east (such as Bedouins), the security challenge posed by the Muslim Brotherhood grew significantly as it was labelled a terrorist group by the Sisi regime on 25 December 2014.¹⁴⁶ Thus, as the political process in Libya developed unfavourably to Egypt, Egypt engaged militarily in Libya's internal conflict by siding with Haftar's forces. However, Egypt was not alone. Fearing the same unfavourable outcome, the UAE has also taken active side in the Libyan conflict. Thus both Egypt and the UAE made surprise attacks inside Libya from Egyptian territory.

More precisely, Egypt and the UEA allegedly attacked Derna with Special Forces and on 18 August 2014 Tripoli was targeted with air strikes. New air strikes allegedly by Egypt and the UAE took place on 23 August 2014.¹⁴⁷ In February

¹⁴⁴ EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel (2011, 2014 and the 2015 annex).

¹⁴⁵ Another abbreviation is AQAP – Al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula.

¹⁴⁶ *The Washington Post* 25 December 2014.

¹⁴⁷ *The Washington Post* 26 August 2014.

2015 Egypt attacked ISIS positions inside Libya in response to the killing of 21 Egyptians.¹⁴⁸ The aerial campaign was conducted jointly with the UAE. Neither country officially confirmed its involvement. According to Gartenstein and Barr, the city of Derna was the scene of that attack. It struck "...islamist and jihadist targets indiscriminately, not constraining its response to targets affiliated with the Islamic State".¹⁴⁹

Moreover, during the first half of 2015, Egypt scaled up its support for the anti-government side, first and foremost providing backing to General Haftar and his Operation Dignity. Egypt and the UAE have allegedly provided Operation Dignity with training, ammunition and intelligence support.¹⁵⁰ Another action by Egypt has been a closing of its borders for migrants and refugees.¹⁵¹

6.1.2 Qatar, Turkey and Sudan

Meanwhile, whereas Egypt and the UAE favour the Tobruk government, Turkey and Qatar are siding with the government in Tripoli. Qatar has provided support to the Tripoli government as part of seeking to influence the regional balance in a way that reflects its political engagement across the Middle East. Early on there were reports in the media of arms shipments to Misrata militias.¹⁵² In other media reports Qatar and Sudan have provided support to the Tripoli government.¹⁵³

Overall, the role of external Arab states follows similar patterns of foreign policy behaviour as seen throughout the Middle East, notably in Syria, in response to the Arab spring.

6.1.3 Libya's neighbourhood: Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco

The policies of Tunisia, Algeria and the Sahel states towards Libya have mainly been policies of containment. The historical presence of armed groups in the region, notably AQIM, but also more recently MUJAO and Ansar al-Dine, has challenged governments and kept them on the alert for potential attacks.

Tunisia for its part is absorbing many fleeing Libyans. Over the course of the conflict it has maintained a policy of openness towards Libyans wanting to leave Libya. Other nationals can enter for a short stay before having to leave.¹⁵⁴ This in

¹⁴⁸ *The New York Times* 16 February 2015.

¹⁴⁹ Gartenstein-Ross and Barr (2015: 9).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 40.

¹⁵¹ Although Libyans were allowed in to some degree.

¹⁵² *The Guardian* 20 April 2011.

¹⁵³ *IBTimes* 15 September 2014.

¹⁵⁴ *Amnesty International* (2015: 8).

turn has placed an extreme burden on a country that is already facing its own societal challenges. For example, with its already huge economic challenges, the influx of nearly 2 million Libyans in a country with a population close to 11 million means that Tunisia is currently experiencing high food prices. The demand posed by a temporarily increasing population exceeds the production and availability of food. Housing prices have also gone up as Libyans are buying into the rental and real estate market, and the labour market is affected as a result. Factors like these exacerbate local tensions and grievances.

A more immediate consequence of the Libyan turmoil is that Libya has turned into a breeding ground for armed jihadist groups. From the point of view of Tunisia, there is a strong sense of fear that these groups will turn on Tunisia. To begin with, Tunisia has a disproportionately large number of citizens fighting in Iraq and Syria.¹⁵⁵ Estimates suggest that as many as 3000 Tunisians have joined ISIS and that about 8000 Tunisians have been prevented from leaving for Syria. These are very high figures if compared to other countries in the region. Several of these could return via Libya. The presence of 2 000 000 Libyans inside Tunisia has also caused some alarm as some of the migrants may be a security risk for the Tunisian state (which led Tunisia, in mid-July 2015, to announce that it would build a 160-km-long wall along the border with Libya).¹⁵⁶

During 2015 so far two significant attacks have occurred in Tunisia that were rooted in the regional turmoil: the Bardo attack on 18 March 2015, when 21 persons were killed by an alleged splinter group of AQIM, the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade; and the attack on the Riu Imperial Marhaba Hotel in Port el Kantaoui, when 38 persons were reported killed by supporters of the group Ajnad al-Khilafah, an outgrowth of Tunisia's Islamist Ansar al-Sharia.¹⁵⁷ It is not inconceivable that several regional and local groups want to challenge the democratic path Tunisia has chosen since the ousting of Ben Ali.

Algeria and Morocco meanwhile have taken on the role of power brokers in Libya. Although the two countries may prefer different political outcomes for Libya, a unity government and stability are preferable. A stable Libya would reduce several security challenges, including putting pressure on armed groups such as Ansar al-Dine, AQIM, MUJAO, etc. which can hide arms and fighters in Libya. Since the fall of Qaddafi, Algeria, Mali and Niger have suffered from attacks (e.g. Islamists used the Libya turmoil to stage the In Amenas attacks against Algeria on 16–19 January 2013).

¹⁵⁵ *The New York Times* 2 January 2015.

¹⁵⁶ *BBC World News* 8 July 2015.

¹⁵⁷ *The Telegraph* 20 June 2015.

6.2 Other key external actors

Aside from Libya's most immediate neighbours there are other key external actors with interests in Libya. Below follows a brief overview of their main concerns and activities.

6.2.1 The EU and its southern member states

Security developments in Europe's southern neighbourhood are of great concern for the European Union and its member states. Following the Arab spring, security developments have become increasingly acute. A raging civil war in Libya, the increase of terrorism and radicalisation, a worsening humanitarian situation, a sharp increase of migration, and authoritarianism among North African leaders (e.g. Egypt), have required more active political attention to developments.

However, Libya is also important for Europe for many other traditional geopolitical reasons, notably when it comes to migration from Africa;¹⁵⁸ as an important supplier of energy; and for the challenges posed by radicalisation.

Libya is an important migration hub. Migration from different parts of Africa has historically gone through Libya and it has increased as a result of Libya's turbulence and the Libyan authorities' inability to control the country's long borders. The shores of the long Libyan coast have allowed waves of migrants to cross the Mediterranean Sea. According to Amnesty International about 43 per cent of persons travelling across the Mediterranean in 2014 were refugees.¹⁵⁹ Syrians and Eritreans accounted for 46 per cent of those reaching Italy by boat in 2014 (170 000). Other large groups came from Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq. Meanwhile there were large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) inside Libya: 269 000 in the west, 90 000 in the east, and 18 500 in the south.¹⁶⁰

With regard to energy, and as Serwer (2015) notes, Libya's gas supply could be part of the answer to Europe's need to diversify its sources of energy in case Russia turns off its energy supply to Europe.¹⁶¹ Hence keeping a constant flow of energy from Libya is a long-term priority for Europe.

Beside migration and energy matters, a third growing concern for the EU has been the potential spread of radical Islamism – and notably the threat posed by ISIS. With further violence in Libya, there is a probability that ISIS could gain a foothold and challenge the EU's entire southern neighbourhood. There is a sense of urgency about the need not only to address the growth of armed jihadist groups for the

¹⁵⁸ Serwer (2015).

¹⁵⁹ *Amnesty International* (2015).

¹⁶⁰ *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* (2015: 6).

¹⁶¹ Serwer (2015).

protection of Europe but also to respond to the needs and safety of Europe's southern neighbours. In particular Egypt and Tunisia are frustrated with the growing radicalisation in Egypt and are calling for the international community to respond to the threat.

All in all, by mid-2015 the EU sensed a strong pressure to tackle Libya's conflict for a number of reasons: humanitarian; for the growing threat of armed jihadist groups such as ISIS and AQIM; and for the growing frustration among regional actors (notably Egypt and some Gulf states which would otherwise risk intervening more actively in Libya).

EU responses to the challenges posed by a lawless Libya

In responding to the humanitarian situation, on 18 May 2015 the EU launched an EU Maritime Force – EUNAVFOR Med (Operation Sophia in the Mediterranean sea) – to act “against human smugglers and traffickers in the Mediterranean”.^{162 163} The decision to do so was taken under intense pressure to demonstrate resolve in the light of the human tragedies occurring as a result of people-smuggling. Although the decision to set up the force was taken in unanimity, there were different responses from different EU member states.

EUNAVFOR Med builds on a large extent on the previous naval force led by Italy in the period 18–31 October 2014, Operation Mare Nostrum.¹⁶⁴ The aim of the operation was to assist fleeing people and combat people-trafficking. According to Amnesty International, Italy rescued nearly 160 000 people. “Since the end of Mare Nostrum, the current search and rescue set-up in the central Mediterranean has been tested to the limit.”¹⁶⁵ However, with the termination of Mare Nostrum, on 1 November 2014 the EU and Frontex launched Operation Triton. Its objective was “to control irregular migration flows towards the territory of the Member States of the European Union and to tackle cross-border crime”.¹⁶⁶ It became clear that Triton was a smaller and less effective mission than Mare Nostrum.

Some of the features of Operation Sophia seem to have been taken from Mare Nostrum and Triton and from the “anti-piracy” force off Somalia (EU NAVFOR Atalanta where the EU dealt with challenges to commercial vessels). However, the rationale for EUNAVFOR Med was completely different. From Libya's political perspective neither of the rival parliaments accepts the EU force penetrating its

¹⁶² *EU External Action Service* (2015b).

¹⁶³ *EU External Action Service* (2015a).

¹⁶⁴ Mare Nostrum had a budget of 9 million euros per month and some 900 staff (see Amnesty International 2015: 15).

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*: 9.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: 19.

territorial waters, which effectively limits the force to patrol only EU states' and international waters. This may hinder the force going after those vessels that enter Libyan territorial waters.¹⁶⁷ As a consequence of the split of the Libyan parliament the EU cannot do much until a unity government is in place.¹⁶⁸ The EU's top priority has therefore been to support the UN-led talks (see section 4.3). On the other hand, the threat posed by armed jihadist groups could potentially become so great that the EU cannot wait indefinitely until the national government is set up. The current approach is therefore political containment in terms of seeking to keep the armed conflict inside Libya and not letting it spill over into other countries. The EU is talking to all governments in the region trying to tailor measures against armed jihadists as well as to provide support to governments that seek to confront them by different means.¹⁶⁹ One important political investment worth noting in this context was the EU's early border assistance support mission EUBAM. The aim was to help Libya secure its borders. However, as the security situation deteriorated EUBAM was forced to close down its operations (the mission was in effect only for one year). Today, the EU is supporting Tunisia with border management and security sector reform training. Meanwhile, Egypt on its part declines EU support, while Algeria on its part has been amassing troops along its border with Libya to prevent the conflict from spilling-over (by early June 2015 Algeria was amassing nearly 50 000 troops).

6.2.2 The US and NATO

As a result of the breakdown of Libya's security order in 2014–2015 (as well as the generally deteriorating situation across MENA), the US is becoming increasingly concerned about the growing presence of armed jihadist groups in Libya and the potential challenge these may pose. This in turn has led to an increase in counter-terrorism cooperation with most states in North Africa. Like many other Western governments, the US is closely following the lack of political progress in areas such as democratisation and human rights. Egypt is a particular challenge here for a number of reasons relating to regional affairs: its proximity to Israel and Palestine, Egypt's authoritarian political turn, its current suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood, its increasing cooperation with Saudi Arabia and the

¹⁶⁷ For example, experience suggests that smugglers bring migrants in small boats and then set them on course to international waters and towards European soil while the smugglers turn back themselves. There are also testimonies that migrant boats are steered towards commercial vessels, vessels that are likely to take migrants on board.

¹⁶⁸ Pending the outcome of the peace talks, restrictive measures are being imposed.

¹⁶⁹ For example, the EU has introduced a planning cell in Tunisia that will try to support Libya to draw up security arrangements. If the unity government works the EU may seek to establish a mediation cell in Tunisia to help Libya.

UAE, and the growing threat of AQIP. All these are important for US interests in the region.

However, the regional states' illiberal tendencies are forcing the US to walk a fine foreign policy line. In this context, Libya poses a particular challenge. From NATO's position, developments in Libya should not be understood in isolation, but from a regional and global perspective. From NATO's European perspective, by mid-June 2015 there were two main challenges to its members: Russia, and Europe's southern neighbourhood, "the southern flank".

With regard to Libya, NATO closely monitor two particular dynamics in Libya: (1) the political rivalry of the two parliaments (including the multilateral talks), and (2) the dynamics of the local violence, including the activities and expansion of ISIS. Pending the development of these two areas, NATO may need to revisit its strategy for dealing with Libya.

For much of mid-2015 there has been no other scenario for Libya but a settlement of the conflict between the two parliaments under UN supervision. Talks will have to go on until an agreement is reached. Hence, NATO could be said to be in wait-and-see mode. At the moment Libya is the scene of a "transitional process" in which there exist several pockets of violence.

Depending on the progress of the talks, NATO will have to await further UN Security Council developments before any other action can be undertaken if the conflict situation becomes more pressing. It is worth noting that there is potential room for an intervention considering the "responsibility to protect". However, neither of the two governments in Libya will currently accept foreign intervention.

However, if there is a unity government in place one alternative to deal with the civil war in Libya could be for NATO to expand its ongoing anti-ISIS operation *Active Endeavour* in Syria and Iraq. Another potential action it could take could be to provide intelligence and reconnaissance for a unity government. Adding to this, NATO could provide physical protection for key infrastructure sites Libya. All of these, however, would need approval from the UN and an invitation/request from a national unity government.

6.2.3 The African Union

The African Union has been playing a rather limited role in Libya. It has mainly contributed to settling the various conflicts in Libya by offering diplomatic initiatives to resolve the Libyan crisis. For example, the AU has initiated the international contact group on Libya and has been hosting a number of regular

meetings in the role of facilitator.¹⁷⁰ With its great political knowledge of regional dynamics, the AU could potentially play a more active role in stabilising Libya. Areas that it could oversee could be border monitoring, local truce supervision, arms collection and disarmament, etc. However, such more on-hands actions would (beyond a mandate) require financial support by the international community.

6.3 Conclusion

Following the end of the Qaddafi era the security turmoil in Libya moved from a political transitional process with pockets of violence to a situation of full-blown second civil war. The civil war is partly driven by the existence of a power vacuum and the struggle for power; various existing security dilemmas between former warring parties and ethnic groups; and growing political and ideological struggles (between political Islam, seculars and liberals). Another aspect is simply opportunism and greed among different actors. In all there are many different drivers of conflict at different levels of state and society.

The descent into chaos should be understood both from the absence of functioning state institutions that were able to deliver minimum state services and from the absence of a legitimate and national police and army that would safeguard public order and a sense of public security.¹⁷¹

Beyond a functioning state, and trust in the state, Libya has been driven into further chaos by regional interests. Regional powers are currently propelling the conflict by siding with actors they want to boost as the calculation rests on the assumption that states would favour their own national interests. This external bias in turn has further increased insecurity and violence. The engagement of external actors also explains why some regional actors by mid-2015 were calling for the lifting of the arms embargo, although more arms would do little to alter battlefield dynamics as the country is already awash with arms.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ For instance, the AU hosted the third meeting of the International Contact Group for Libya in Niger on 1 April 2015. The AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and Foreign Minister of Niger were there to oversee talks. *The Institute for Security Studies* (2015).

¹⁷¹ A comparison could be made with Egypt and the days of the revolutions in 2011–2012 in which several experts agree that strong institutions saved the country from falling into complete chaos.

¹⁷² Hardly any European government favours the lifting of the arms embargo.

7. Analysis and Recommendations

In mid-2015, Libya was in the midst of its second civil war. Despite international efforts to bring the main warring parties to an agreement there was deep mistrust among them. Needless to say, the conflict in Libya has undergone several shifts and the changing character of the conflict is clear. From being a first civil war with fairly united parties, the security situation in Libya has changed into to a fragmented second civil war involving many different types of armed actors. Moreover, whereas the conflict in 2011 was mainly domestic, the current conflict has a considerable cross-border dimension with external party interests.

In the period covered in this analysis, ordinary citizens were living in direct fear of reprisals, repression, revenge and human rights abuses. Testifying to this are reports presented by several humanitarian organisations which provide evidence of indiscriminate shelling and fighting in residential areas, including the destruction of housing and evictions, sieges, and restrictions on freedom of movement in different areas. Thus, going by the principles of protection of civilians, the need for international action is greater today than it was in 2011 (at the time of the NATO intervention).

Besides living in direct fear of armed confrontations and one-sided violence Libyans are also challenged by indirect threats of what the long-term consequences would be of the turbulent security environment currently existing – fear that follows from what the future is likely to hold in terms of the prospects for peace, stability and human security (including welfare, food security, employment, schooling, health and the general political outlook). For example, food prices have been increasing sharply, and access to food is increasingly posing a challenge.¹⁷³ Adding to the general dire humanitarian situation of ordinary Libyans there is also social distress among the great numbers of unregistered migrants from across Africa passing through Libya. Not only are they putting an extra humanitarian burden on the Libyan state, but this also makes the situation worse for migrants that pass through Libya. The combination of direct and indirect threats thus poses a considerable challenge for Libya, its neighbours and the international community.

A lesson for the future from the Libyan conflict is that practitioners and decision-makers need to look more closely at the dynamics that follow military intervention. While general experiences from war-torn societies (ended by outside intervention) calls for a rethinking of the need for post-intervention plans, more specific lessons from Libya suggests the need for a strategy on how to help rebuild political institutions and economic infrastructure (including providing support to war-

¹⁷³ *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* (2015: 9).

distressed regions, promoting trade and welfare, reviving domestic industry, and support for energy diversification).

To help further thinking about what measures the international community can offer in terms of post-intervention stability programmes of this sort, the conflict dynamics as well as the existing grievances and root causes have to be better understood. In this report, an overview has been made of some of the underlying conflict issues. More precisely, the research focus outlined at the outset of this study was to provide an overview of the main actors fighting in Libya's second civil war and what security implications this turmoil has had for the region. To respond to this puzzle, this analysis has provided an overview of the actors as well as some of the main interests.

On the national and international level the conflict in Libya has increasingly been driven by geopolitical dynamics tailored into the existing security challenges posed by states in the Middle East. Security calculus and political preferences have led states in North Africa and the wider Middle East to support local actors that suit their needs. Like Yemen, Iraq and Syria, Libya has become an arena for proxy war.

On the domestic scene Libya is facing old and new security concerns posed by a multitude of armed groups. While some groups build their political agenda on historical identities, others are running distinct religious and ideological agendas (e.g. Islamists, secularists). While the former groups are mainly domestic, the latter are a blend of Libyan-born and foreign actors. The domestic scene is very complex. Not only are conventionally opposed groups fighting each other on different political levels and in blocs and alliances, but these groups are also internally divided: seculars are fighting seculars and armed Islamists are fighting each other.

To further understand why Libya's security situation looks the way it does this study has taken particular note of the following conflict enablers: the complete breakdown of central power, the absence of a functioning security sector, the availability of arms, and the lack of territorial and border control.

Putting the situation on a different analytical level, Libyans do not have an existing social contract. There is simply no legitimate political authority in which the whole of the people is represented, including different political and religious interests. In the absence of a well-functioning state, there is a security dilemma and a spiralling cycle of violence. Because of the erosion of the state under Qaddafi, Libyans are today forced to harvest the fruit of decades of divide and rule tactics which paved the way for deep social mistrust – a mistrust that has been used by different political parties and armed movements inside and outside Libya.

7.1 Short- and long-term challenges and the potential for peace

The security situation in Libya is alarming for a number of reasons. Here, the challenges will be divided into short- and long-term perspectives.

In the short-term perspective, there are two main concerns: the rivalry between the HoR in Tobruk and the new GNC Tripoli; and the growth of ISIS in Libya. With each day that passes without an agreement between the HoR and the GNC the worse the overall situation in Libya becomes. Unless a compromise is reached the mandate of both parliaments will expire and this could spark further violence and give rise to a new set of long-lasting negative dynamics. In the rivalry other armed movements also thrive. The other pressing concern is the growth of radical groups. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS are thriving on the violence in Libya. Not only does this have domestic repercussions for the Libyan state and society; it has implications for its immediate neighbours, including Europe, as well. States in the region will not tolerate a growing presence of ISIS in Libya regardless of whether there is a unity government or not. Thus there is a risk of military intervention on behalf of some neighbours, interventions that could fuel the civil war. Thus, without the consent of the government (or the parliament[s]) the conflict can easily become even worse. The US, for its part, is already pushing an expanding drone programme on terrorism. The expansion of the anti-ISIS coalition could lead to unforeseen consequences for Libya and its neighbours (e.g. pushing radicals further out in the region).

The security challenges for Libya do not stop at the more immediate threats to state and society. Others are looming in the horizon. Though these have not been examined closely it is worth noting that structural threats posed by extreme weather (as a result of climate change), long-term low energy prices, etc. may fuel societal tensions. Hence the main rival parties need to come to terms and tackle other challenges.

While Libya is facing many security challenges, the situation has not brought about complete social anarchy. Social networks exist and government institutions have been able to provide some levels of welfare and subsidies for consumption goods (energy production and exports have continued though on a low level because of the conflict, strikes, and protests). Local leaders have tried to maintain functioning services and some local leaders and political representatives have also sought to foster peace and reconciliation among adversaries in different parts of Libya.

On the national level, political players are growing increasingly aware that a national government is urgently needed. A unity government could provide the necessary room for de-escalation and a way out of the security dilemmas and spirals of armed revenge from the main sides to the conflict. During late spring

and early autumn 2015, UN chief negotiator Bernardino Leon has indicated that political players have been close to a national deal. The challenge for Libya is however that the talks do not include all warring parties (in particular not ISIS and AQIM).

7.2 Bringing Libya back on track: key recommendations

What then can be done to bring Libya back on political track? What would be the role for actors such as the EU and the UN?

On the bottom line, experiences from previous interventions in the post-Cold War era suggest that outside actors could be important in tilting military balances, overseeing ceasefires and at times preventing large-scale violence. However, as much as such involvement can support the prospects for peace, it can also be an obstacle to the parties resolving their own differences. A threshold for involvement should still be the principle of protection of civilians. That threshold has now been crossed. However, a more far-reaching engagement in Libya cannot be undertaken without a unity government. Thus one of the most important recipes for the international community to deal with Libya is to help it to gain capacity to address its own security challenges. Capacity building can be done urgently through international intervention or in a step-by-step approach with diplomatic and political support at the forefront.

Several scholars and policymakers alike suggests that Libya is unlikely to solve the current ISIS problem by itself. This builds into the uncertainty about which way Libya will take post-2015. External engagement is a must, some practitioners, scholars and experts suggest. There are even voices suggesting that Libya should be subject to an UN-mandated trusteeship with full attention to all government sectors. Libya has after all been deprived of much of its ability to function as a modern state following Qaddafi's deconstruction of state and society in favour of a "green revolution". There are also calls for a renewed intervention similar to the NATO intervention in 2011.

The most important area for bringing Libya to security and stability is thus to establish a government of national unity and a national army. Once these are in place, Libyan and international actors (e.g. the UN) could provide support to other urgent areas. Yet even if there is a national unity government in place there will be great challenges. For instance, a unity government requires a united security force. At the moment it is unclear what such a national force would look like. Second, the capability of such a force will be very limited. Although many individuals have gained considerable fighting skills over the years, the security forces need to be professionalised. Thus not only is there a need to establish a

legitimate national security force per se, but there is also a quality element that needs to supplement it.

Once government and security institutions are in place in Libya, international actors need to work on mechanisms to prevent a fresh spiral of violence that would cause Libya to relapse into renewed chaos. There are two ways to achieve this: (1) by confidence-building measures on local and national level; and (2) by preventing biased intervention by external actors (which could be achieved by having a UN presence in such engagement).

A third priority area is border monitoring. If Libya is supported with border patrolling, it may be in a better position to regain territorial control. This in turn may prevent armed groups from crossing the border and undermining peace and stability. As things look at the moment, all borders are in need of monitoring. Again, border monitoring can only be achieved by the establishment of a unity government and a national army.

A fourth area for attention is preventing armed jihadist groups establishing themselves more deeply in Libya. Measures here could include crime prevention and investigation, protection of sensitive infrastructure, the imposition of targeted UN sanctions, and support for regional development initiatives. In this context Libyan actors as well as regional and international actors need to deal with active spoilers of peace (e.g. armed groups) in addition to those currently derailing peace negotiations (e.g. political actors working against the signing of a government of unity).

Once government institutions are in place support is needed for an indigenous nation-building process. As noted, Libya has long-standing internal regional divisions which have come to the surface as a result of the war. A balance needs to be struck between centralisation and decentralisation. However, nation-building involves first and foremost the establishment of a societal trust, i.e. a societal contract that can bring society and state back together. A new social contract between government and its citizens as well as support for civil society will be key to any future peace and stability.

Below follows a number of recommendations for how to deal with the Libyan armed conflicts. The recommendations are partly based on the data covered in this study but also on a more general reading on where Libya is currently moving in terms of its conflict dynamic.

Immediate actions

- *Encourage local ceasefires and build on already existing agreements.* A long-term vision should be a national ceasefire accord under a unity government. Target

terrorists and spoilers of the peace process with targeted sanctions including visa bans and asset freezes and the threat of bringing these to the International Criminal Court. Once in place these sanctions need to be effectively implemented and targets monitored.

- *Insist on the establishment of a unity government.* There several successful examples of power-sharing arrangements that one could build on.
- *Set in place an effective UN arms embargo on Libya.* As the availability of arms is an important factor driving Libya's armed conflicts, the international community should work to ensure that such an embargo works efficiently. One way could be to establish a sanctions monitoring group that can provide up-to-date reports on sanctions-busting activities by different actors inside and outside the region.
- *Support the creation of a representational national army.* Ensure that recruitment is done from across Libya and that troops are loyal to the unity of the state. Meanwhile, dismantle local militias by offering alternative military career paths. Likewise, support the establishment of a reliable police. UN support would be valuable here.
- *Intensify arms collection and security sector reform.* Training and professionalisation are key.
- *Provide economic support in terms of investment and trade* to get the Libyan economy self-reliant. This will undermine the informal market economy and the beneficiaries of a lucrative civil war economy.
- *Invite and support international multilateral actors* to take a more urgent and active role in Libya to stop organised crime, including Interpol, the UN Panel of Experts, the World Customs Organization, the International Organization for Migration, and the African Union in its various capacities.
- *Establish an international panel to assess the role and consequences of an anti-ISIS coalition* that would include Libya.

Medium-term action

- *Support government institutions and rule of law arrangements.* Provide support to the judicial sector.
- *Provide resources and professional experience to support local and national processes of reconciliation.* Pay particular attention to ethnic grievances.

Long-term actions

- *Invite Libya's security forces to joint military exercises.* A Libyan Army could play important roles in the Arab world as well as on the African continent. Training and education are crucial.

- *Help Libya to diversify its economy and transit to other forms of income.* A total dependence on income from its energy sector makes it economically vulnerable.

7.3 Further research

In this study, an analysis and overview have been made of Libya's main security concerns and what the international community can do about them. The analysis has left out a closer examination of the role of ethnic groups and how they play into Libya's conflict dynamic. Further research could address their role.

Future research on Libya could also engage in a more in-depth analysis of active jihadist groups. In the light of recent developments, armed jihadist groups are positioning themselves internally as well vis-à-vis regional governments. A better understanding of this dynamic is therefore worthwhile.

Finally, future research should be focused on Libya's long-term security challenges. While its short-term security concerns are volatile, long-term structural challenges such as the negative impact of climate change will provide a sense of the threats looming on the horizon.

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