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Stakeholders of Libya's February 17 Revolution

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Summary

- Who the rebels are in Libya has been a common question surrounding the revolution that overthrew Muammar Gadhafi. This report maps out the factions in Libya's east, centering on Benghazi. It identifies the various groups, their narratives, their part in the revolution, and emergent grievances that could translate into instability or future conflicts.

- Libyans share a strong sense of historical narrative and ownership of the recent revolution, but complexities lie within that ownership. There are tensions between the youth movement and the National Transitional Council; between local Libyans and returning members of the Libyan diaspora; between secular groups and religious ones, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood; within militia groups that did the fighting; and among Libya's tribes and ethnic groups.

- The widespread sense of ownership of the revolution, which kept morale high during the fighting, has translated to expectations of quick improvements, both overall and in people's day-to-day lives. Managing expectations will be key to ensuring that tensions within Libyan society do not overcome the sense of unity that the revolution fostered.

- International actors should ensure that local ownership of the political process remains at the fore and is not undermined. In addition, research is needed to understand the situation in Libya more clearly, in order to identify ways that the international community can support, aid, and advise local efforts in forming a stable and secure environment in Libya.

The question of who the Libyan rebels are has animated the analytical discourse surrounding the revolution against and overthrow of Muammar Gadhafi. The question has spurred polarized debate, yet scant research has actually been carried out on the composition of the opposition. With recent developments within the opposition to Gadhafi—beginning with the U.S. recognition of the National Transitional Council (NTC) as part of a larger move to help release Libyan frozen assets and continuing through the emergence of increasingly violent internal factionalism, the death of the rebel leader Abdel Fatah Younis, the reshuffling of the cabinet, and internal tribal disputes—the question of how to define the rebels

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accurately moves away from abstract political rhetoric to concrete political urgency. The opposition is not a unified and homogenous group; there is little ability to predict how the factions will cooperate now that Gadhafi is gone and little understanding of how the groups composing the opposition will interact with the many factions in southern and western Libya in a post-Gadhafi setting. This heterogeneity has dire implications for Libya's people and for policymaking in the international arena.

Multiple reintegration and reconciliation problems in a post-Gadhafi Libya are a given, as the depth and nuances of the conflicts to come are unforeseeable. In Benghazi, which was a rebel-controlled territory before the fall of Gadhafi, a pro-regime insurgency arose, as have interopposition conflicts that remain significant to this day. Molotov cocktails, gun battles, and assassinations have become the daily norm in Libya. Developments such as these threaten the unity urgently needed to create a stable post-Gadhafi society.

This report broadly maps out the factions in the east, identifying the various groups, their narratives, their sense of ownership of the revolution, and emergent grievances that could translate into instability or future conflicts in a post-Gadhafi setting. Such an exercise can help foster dialogue and continue to facilitate engagement in the political processes to come, while identifying indicators and dynamics of potential conflicts before they grow to a point of no return.

Overarching Cultural, Historical, and Contemporary Narrative

To an expatriate visiting Libya during the revolution in spring 2011, the visual landscape of Benghazi was striking: The strong presence of a vibrant revolutionary spirit was omnipresent. Revolutionary flags, graffiti, billboards, posters, pins, and hats were found on every car, wall, and person, signaling that the revolution was indeed a people's revolution. All these inspiring sights indicate the strong sense of popular ownership that the international community would like to have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, beneath the surface of Benghazi's revolutionary spirit lurk complexities in the sentiment of political ownership. Various groups have different narratives and perceptions of their roles in the revolution. This diversity translates to different expectations for power sharing in political and social life. The narratives are not only different but often compete.

The common narrative found in the rebel-held territories and projected to foreign diplomats and media is that of a consolidated Libya with few religious, ethnic, and tribal divisions. Mottos and phrases found on posters and across various media are "Tripoli is in our heart" and "Tripoli is our capital." Unexpectedly, very little Benghazi-ism can be found. When asked in spring 2011 how much of the population in the west may be pro-Gadhafi, many east Libyans responded: Nobody. It's Gadhafi and his mercenaries against the people; all of the Libyan people. Events however, clearly defied the common rhetoric that western Libya did not support Gadhafi. The east, from Tobruk to Benghazi, fell in six days, whereas it took more than six months for the west to fall in a protracted conflict. Military capabilities alone do not bolster a region; popular support of Gadhafi's regime must have been present in the west for it to resist the revolution as it did. That said, it is impossible to estimate what proportion of the populace actually supported Gadhafi or to predict what implications that loyalty may have. Loyalties may disappear now that the paymaster is dead or reappear as an ideological insurgency. More likely, loyalty to Gadhafi may manifest itself as the source of tribal and ethnic conflicts.

The notion of Libyan nationalism emerged only in 1949, when Libya became the first African state to achieve independence from European rule and the first and only state created by the General Assembly of the United Nations.[1] The monarchy and the Senussi movement—created by the al-Senussi royal family—united the tribes after the Italian presence in North

Africa dissipated. The king delegated administrative authority to locally powerful families. Many older eastern Libyans identify the old al-Senussi monarch, King Idris, as the one who led the resistance against the Italians and subsequently united the nation. However, the more commonly used symbol for the resistance is Omar Mukhtar, the lead fighter against Italian colonization, who was captured and executed in 1921.[2]

Gadhafi formulated and introduced a greater Libyan and pan-Arab nationalism to the Libyan *Jamahiriyya*; he "skillfully blended the threads of nationalism, anti-imperialism, and pan-Islamic loyalties . . . with contemporary movements for Arab nationalism, Arab social- ism, and Arab unity."[3] Libya was to become the greater dominant state in the region, the ultimate symbol of pan-Arab socialism and pride. When Gadhafi led his coup against the al-Senussi monarchy in 1969, he also used and transformed the image of Omar Mukhtar into a symbol of national freedom fighting.

Again reincarnated, Omar Mukhtar is very much part of the Libyan narrative today. His portrait can be seen everywhere, on most posters and billboards, and has become a symbol for Libya's February 17 revolution against Colonel Gadhafi. The pre-Gadhafi flag and national anthem have been revived. All this indicates a strong sense of a commonly held cultural and historical narrative in the east.

Competing Group Narratives, Identities, and Ownership of the Revolution

Despite a strong sense of a common cultural and historical narrative, many groups have expressed different views regarding how the revolution was carried out, how different groups contributed, and how those actions should or should not translate into future power- sharing arrangements. Most people say they watched the revolutions develop in Egypt and in Tunisia but never believed it could happen in Libya. Once the revolution began in Libya, however, everybody claimed to be the first one there. Some women have stated that "we started it on February 15 in Benghazi, when we demonstrated against the political prison- ers." Others say the revolution was started, as the name indicates, on February 17, 2011, by the youth—though some youth claim that the revolution actually started on February 17, 2006, in Benghazi, referencing the demonstration against the Italian embassy due to the Mohammed drawings. Events are always experienced subjectively, but in this very loaded context the statements above indicate different levels of ownership of them, based on per- sonal experiences and sacrifices, which ultimately translates into expectations of the future. As seen throughout history, after major political transformations, inflated expectations can turn quickly into failed expectations, leading to apathy or radicalization.

Having looked into the principal groups and factions currently present in eastern Libya— some formal, some less formal—we have found that these groups are fluid and allegiances change quite rapidly. That said, the outline below identifies some broad groupings and the key competing narratives.

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The National Transitional Council, the Executive Board, and the Local Councils

According to the NTC's website, the council was officially established on March 5, 2011, as the sole legislative body of the interim government.[4] Eastern Libyans have often described the council as "a group of friends, lawyers, who got together and said, 'Hey, let's create a government.'" The NTC, however, has been working to include various factions within Libyan society in its structure. These include, but are not limited to, religious representatives, a member of the former al-Senussi royal family, Gadhafi government defectors, and members

from cities outside of Benghazi, including western cities. Despite this, the NTC suffers from a reputation of being noninclusive and dominated by a few powerful families. Voices in Benghazi quietly criticize the NTC selection method. As one professor expressed in a private conversation in a hotel lobby in Benghazi in June 2011, "The selection is not based on merit. It's based on who suffered most under Gadhafi [e.g., former war prisoners]—but we all suffered under Gadhafi, and it's not fair. It should be based on merit." Others observed that the NTC seemed to be dominated by two key families, the Bogaigis and the Garianis— people who are part of the Benghazi elite and largely considered to not have suffered under the Gadhafi regime.

In addition, the council has been accused of being heavily influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), as several members of the council are said to be high-level MB officials. This accusation is typically heard from younger Libyans throughout the east, who are presumably less supportive of the MB; they are prone to state in private that "they [the NTC] stole the revolution from us." Another common accusation is that the NTC are "all foreigners"— that is, made up primarily of Libyans with dual citizenship, who have spent a lot of their time abroad. What the population sees as a greater threat, however, is what they deem to be the ultimately pro-Gadhafi makeup of the council. Many of the members defected from the Gadhafi government after the revolution began and were suspected of having links and loyalties to the Gadhafi administration, to keep "all doors open." General Younis, the highest-profile government figure to defect, was accused of having maintained Gadhafi links. He was arrested and later executed in mysterious circumstances.[5] There have been rumors of assassination attempts against other members of the council as well, not only because of possible links to the Gadhafi regime, but also based on accusations of corruption, particularly of members trying to carve deals out of foreign direct investment contracts.

The NTC members themselves have expressed very different opinions, stating that the council was created before the no-fly zone went into effect and thus can lay claim to legitimate ownership of the revolution. The members also point out that, fearing for their lives and taking significant risks, they created the council when there were no funds, no end in sight, and when the outcomes in Benghazi and east Libya were uncertain.

The constitution drafted by the NTC provides for an executive board, which is to serve as the main governing body with the council as the legislative arm of the government. The executive board is also referred to as the crisis management committee or simply "the government." This body acted as a government in exile, focusing primarily on diplomacy. As with the NTC, according to local perceptions, the board is composed of "foreigners," such as those in the Libyan diaspora, formerly led by Dr. Mahmoud Jibril. The board and the NTC have at times been perceived as "competing entities." Though the constitution delineated their mandates, this grievance was more apparent with the dissolution of the entire board after the fall of Tripoli, excepting Jibril, its chairman, who resigned in October 2011. Some have speculated that the cabinet was reshuffled to accommodate General Younis's tribe, the Obeidis.

Local councils emerged throughout the east with great speed after February 17. The rapidity of the emergence can be explained by Gadhafi's former structure of local councils: In the 1970s, Gadhafi established people's committees to run almost every facet of the country.[6] His motivation was to undermine the idea of a political party, as a "party allows a minority to seize the power that belongs to the People."[7] In principle, all citizens were already members of the Basic People's Congress of their electoral district and could express themselves politically through it. Each Basic People's Congress delegated to a committee the responsibility of organizing their congress.[8] This infrastructure remained and was adopted during the revolution, remolded to adapt to local councils. The population outside of Benghazi seems unclear as to whether the councils are coordinating with the NTC or not. Council representatives in Benghazi claim to be doing so actively. Recent research indicates, however, that the councils

are perceived as more efficient in delivering governance than the NTC itself. It is unknown the extent to which preexisting tribal structures have determined the formation of the local councils, but it can be assumed that the tribes influence the selection process of likely candidates for local council positions. Even though people have expressed that the NTC is "good for now" in focus group discussions conducted in Libya in April 2011, and Chairman Abdul Jalil seems to be genuinely popular, grievances have emerged rapidly.

The February 17 Youth Movement

In many people's perceptions, the February 17 youth movement created, and was created by, the February 17 revolution: Very early on, it became the key group uniting the revolutionaries. Several members of the youth movement were targeted by Gadhafi's snipers. A young cartoonist and the charismatic media leader Mouhammed Nabous were assassinated in the early months of the conflict. Those in the movement largely perceived themselves as initiating the revolution and are primarily centered in the Benghazi Media Center, a former courthouse turned into a makeshift media production headquarters and recreational youth haven, hosting everything from newspapers to rock bands. As the status quo was emerging in Benghazi, however, the youth volunteer presence became less relevant.

The February 17 movement has a strong sense of ownership of the revolution, even as political grievances have emerged within the movement. Divisions have also already emerged between the movement and the NTC, with youth who prefer to remain anonymous opining that "the revolution was hijacked by the lawyers," a critique aimed at the NTC. Though the February 17 youth claim that there is no divide, it has become clear to a majority of observers that the youth movement constitutes a key political constituency that may eventually form a distinct party able to challenge any post-Gadhafi government. The youth movement itself is largely composed of young, urban, middle-class citizens, most of whom have obtained a higher degree. This trend is also found among revolution leaders in neighboring Tunisia and Egypt, with whom the leaders of the February 17 movement coordinate and cooperate.

The youth movement claims to have about one hundred civil society organizations under its umbrella, in addition to considerable student backing. Their power is thus already tangible in the east. At the same time, competition appears to be emerging for civil society organizations between the movement and the NTC, which may further foretell future political rivalry. The youth movement has already begun to claim that the NTC is corrupt, infiltrated by former Gadhafi officials, and dependent on Italian money. The concern over pro-Gadhafi allegiances is especially sharp; youth movement leader Abdul Salam Mismary stated in June that "we are getting advice from our Egyptian brothers. They say don't make the same mistake as us. Both Gadhafi and his sons and his loyalists must go."

In contrast, the movement has taken a largely populist stance, claiming that its platform revolves around eliminating corruption and bringing the voice of the people into government. The February 17 movement has attempted to convey in various meetings that it has already pressed a key checks-and-balances function upon the NTC. It has also expressed a fear that a small group of people could take control of what began as a broader movement for revolutionary change, as the military has been seen to do in Egypt. In Libya, this could be the case with key families at the center of the NTC. The movement also clearly resents the MB influence in the NTC; it perceives the MB and the NTC as highly linked—potentially in a conspiracy involving the media, specifically al-Jazeera, and the Qatari backing of the council as well—which ultimately could undercut the democratic aims of the revolution. When Gadhafi was still alive, the movement viewed the MB as potentially open to cutting a deal with him or his sons, whereas members of the youth movement, as the revolution's authentic leaders, have resisted the involvement of those closely associated with the

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regime. Now that Gadhafi is gone, there is tension between the February 17 youth and the emerging government, which may not fully realize all of the movement's revolutionary goals and may very well be accommodating remnants of the previous government.

The Armed Forces, the Rebel Fighters, and the Militias

According to the NTC, the armed forces comprise approximately a thousand people, accounting for the actual trained armed forces that defected from the Gadhafi military. There currently are no reliable data on the number of rebel fighters. Early popular impressions of the rebels indicated that the fighters were drawn from a broad cross-section of society, from the bread baker to the jihadist to the urban law student. Those who decided to become involved managed to obtain a firearm, often paying for it themselves, and then literally jumped into their cars, drove to the front lines, and started shooting—more often in the air, hurting themselves, than at Gadhafi's forces. Two trends have emerged in the structure of the militias: large and organized units that coordinate with the NTC, and smaller, looser groups that perform various activities. The latter tends to be comprised of friends who took up weapons to fight at the front lines, guard neighborhoods, or conduct the now infamous rat hunts that have involved targeted executions of Gadhafi loyalists.

Many local Libyans, as well as diplomats and the foreign media, have expressed concerns over the numerous and disparate armed groups across the country. The common desire is to bring them all under the NTC umbrella, although concrete suggestions as to how to do this have yet to be heard. On paper, the various militias fall under the umbrella of the Union of Revolutionary Forces, which answers to the rebels' minister for defense.[9] Colonel Ahmad al Qutrany, the leader of the 3,000-fighter strong Saraya al Shohada—meaning Battalion of Martyrs—stated in June that "all my fighters have signed a contract with the council to hand over our weapons when the fight has ended." Whether this is true and actionable remains to be seen. Recent news coverage indicates that there is fighting among factions, which seems to be largely regionally based. The western militias are still lingering in Tripoli despite orders to depart, the rebels from Misrata are executing former loyalists, and conflict among these groups—Misrata, the western militias, and the Benghazi forces—seems to occur regularly.

In summer 2011 the rebels further divided. After the mysterious death of General Younis, clashes broke out in Benghazi between rebel factions. Those loyal to Gadhafi, such as the Nida Brigade, helped three hundred loyalists break free from jail on July 29.[10] Rebels fought against the escapees and the brigade, but the escapees remain at large. The Benghazi-based brigade was rumored to have been allied with Gadhafi but had been operating under the prorevolutionary banner until Younis's death.

From the perspective of future stability, it may be difficult for bread bakers turned rebel fighters who have experienced the adrenaline rush of the front lines to simply hand over their weapons and return to being bakers once the conflict is over. Further, the swinging nature of rebel groups' allegiances will prove problematic in any attempt to reestablish normalcy.

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Civil Society, Volunteers, Women, and the Libyan Diaspora

The first wave of volunteerism was led primarily by the February 17 youth movement, as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, in addition to individuals who at that point did not have any particular loyalties. The volunteers performed all societal functions: picking up garbage, establishing neighborhood watches, distributing food to the poor, and regulating vehicle traffic. In one well-known instance of volunteerism, boy scouts acted as traffic policemen. In our focus groups, many expressed gratitude about the role the volunteers performed directly after the revolution, primarily thanking the youth movement.

Despite a general waning optimism, there remain an inspiring number of volunteers in the streets. Many of them have become nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and have registered with the council. Others are under the February 17 umbrella, or are independent entities. This is an encouraging development for a strong and inclusive civil society. Inside the council there is even a Ministry of Civil Society Organizations, without any trace of irony.

Although eastern Libya is a culturally and religiously conservative society, most women are well educated. In 2002, adult female illiteracy had fallen to 29 percent, 6 percentage points less than in 1998. In Morocco, female adult illiteracy stands at 64 percent.[11] According to Gadhafi's statistics, more women than men have obtained a higher education. Despite this trend, however, before the revolution, many women stayed at home without working once they were married. During the revolution, this changed: Many women demonstrated and took to the streets, especially on February 15 in Benghazi in a protest against the Abu Salim massacre. During the uprising, women provided food and clothes to the fighters on the front lines, gave charity to the poor, produced media, organized in civil society, and otherwise contributed to the rebel cause.

One revolutionary Libyan woman, Ferjal al Shari, formed an NGO she calls Lighthouse, through which she recruited 150 volunteers in Benghazi to clean the streets. Lighthouse also produced movies that encouraged women to "send their men to the front lines." al Shari says that the NTC has placed significant numbers of women in important positions and that it has become much easier to participate in the political sphere. While this may bode well for the future role of women under a new government, there also was not much of a political sphere for anyone to operate in under Gadhafi. Like most women we spoke with, al Shari wished for better health care, education, environmental protections, and child care and expressed a mild worry over the number of arms in the streets of Benghazi. She also appeared to be less vindictive against pro-Gadhafi elements than most men, though she did state that "we will not forgive [them for] our lost relatives. And we will not forgive the rapes that happened before the revolution, by the Gentorya." As in many wars, women tended to play a strong role in society while the men were fighting at the front lines. They then became accustomed to new forms of empowerment, and they expect to maintain their new positions. Although both men and women are equal under Libyan law, women only comprise 25 percent of the work force.[12] The desire to remain integrated in the political arena may clash with cultural expectations now that the fighting is over.

A large number of Libyans from the diaspora communities in Europe, North America, and the Gulf countries have come to Benghazi. Some assisted the council through advice. Others focused on creating media outlets and fighting on the front lines. Many in the Libyan diaspora remain engaged from outside the borders of Libya, with both sides of the conflict benefiting from this external source of financial and operational support. Recently, public grievances against the involvement of diaspora communities and the desire to have more local Libyans in the council led to extensive reshuffling of council positions. Comments such as "they weren't here during Gadhafi, they didn't suffer like we do, and now they're taking all the power" were commonly heard around Benghazi during spring and summer 2011.

As in many conflict and postconflict situations, diaspora members are often well educated and able to provide technical expertise during a transition phase. The ruling authorities cannot all be from the diaspora, however, as this would leave them open to accusations of "not having suffered" or "not understanding or having any connection with the people."

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The Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafists, and the Jihadists

It appears that Libyans consider themselves religious but not extremist. In interviews and focus groups, many people responded that "we're not extreme like the people in Iran

or Saudi Arabia. We are a moderate population." The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Libya, however, is very strong and, as in Egypt, well funded and organized. Eastern Libya has historically been particularly receptive to the ideology of political Islam. From the Libyan branch of the MB to the militant cells that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, these groups have been located primarily in and around the cities of Benghazi, Derna, and Ajdabia.[13] The MB is commonly perceived as having organized an underground resistance to Gadhafi for years, with its members suffering numerous arrests and terms of imprisonment. In the last few years, the MB had been willing to open channels with the regime in Tripoli, hoping to be allowed official presence in the country. With the revolution, however, the Brotherhood returned to the eastern parts of the country.

The MB claims that its members participated in the revolution from the beginning, providing aid to the wounded and food to the hungry, among other benevolent activities. In stark contrast to other groups who play down their future political ambitions, the MB is refreshingly honest about it. "Of course we are a political party. We will run in the future elections, and we will win. Otherwise I would never have joined!" said Mohamed Alkouafi, the chief financial officer of an MB civil society organization. Their political aspirations are also obvious in their public relations, as they market themselves as moderates by organizing events where women are invited to attend and speak. A number of civil society organizations are under their umbrella, along with media outlets such as Sabil Rahid, Shabab Libya, and Libya Lion. Brotherhood officials have also expressed resentment against the February 17 movement because of their frictions with the NTC and fear of tribal involvement in politics, probably sensing these two groups as competitors. "If there is an election, people will vote for their tribes. We need to educate people to vote for political beliefs, not tribes," stated Alkouafi. MB officials seem to generally support the council but have voiced concerns about the NTC's technical expertise and suggested that the NTC use more consultants. Others in Libyan society say the MB is too involved in the council, especially as the minister of economics and the minister of media are said to be MB members.

Salafists appear to be a large part of eastern society. However, unlike the Wahhabists, the Salafists claim that they have renounced violence. Some claim that they did not even participate in the revolution on either side because of their nonviolent approach. They seem to be popular with most Libyans and are perceived as "honest and clean-living Muslims" without any particular political objectives.

Most journalists and experts have found the fear of the jihadi Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) in Darna to be overstated. Many can testify that radical elements are found within the rebel groups, but there are too few of them to be considered a true threat. That said, if prolonged instability plagues the country or when the inevitable postrevolution disillusionment hits the youth—especially those who have become fighters—radical Islam may become a catalyst for those deceptions and grievances.

Recent reports suggest that the jihadi movement is growing significantly, with several prominent LIFG members rising to power. The LIFG claims to have renounced links to al-Qaeda, but it remains unclear whether this is true or not.

Tribal and Ethnic Divides

Tribal and ethnic dynamics in Libya are very complex. More than 90 percent of Libyans consider themselves to be an ethnic mix of Arab and Berber, but other ethnicities in Libya include the previously nomadic Touareg and Tebu tribes in the southwest (important from a border control perspective), sub-Saharan Africans (often subject to discrimination), and Berbers (Amazighs). There are an estimated 2,000 tribes in Libya, divided into 140 main tribes, and of those about 50 seem to be key, playing large socioeconomic and political

roles within the country. Both the opposition and the pro-Gadhafi forces have been actively pursuing the allegiance of these key tribes by organizing meetings and conferences with the respective tribal leaders.

Most citizens in Benghazi claim that tribes are important culturally but not politically. Research conducted in other cities suggests otherwise, however, and the role of tribes in governance is a subject of debate. Different reports suggest that Gadhafi both undermined and empowered tribes at various times. An opposition leader expressed that the tribes were widely disliked because Gadhafi had previously used them to overpower the traditional legal system of courts and police officials, creating a corrupt alternative power structure. Historically, under Gadhafi, tribal leaders resolved local conflicts, liaised with the People's Congresses and committees, and implemented socioeconomic development plans. Under the Popular Social Leadership, established in 1993, tribal leaders were meant to be communities' natural leaders, serving on a three-year rotational basis.[14]

Arabic graffiti against tribalism appeared around the courthouse turned youth headquarters in Benghazi, even as some reports suggest that the revolution was essentially a tribal uprising, with the eastern tribes pitting themselves against the western tribes (as well as the Berbers). Gadhafi had integrated a large part of his own tribe, the Ghaddafa, as well as the Warfalla tribe (Libya's largest tribe with an estimated two million people) and the Maghara (the tribe Gadhafi married into) into top positions within the government and the military. Gadhafi had to leverage the Maghara and Warfalla tribes during his rule, as historically, the Warfalla tribe not only outweighed the Ghaddafa tribe in prominence and resources, but also maintained power relations of domination; the Warfalla historically employed the Ghaddafa to look over resources and cattle.[15] After 1969, Gadhafi continued to forge alliances with the powerful tribesman of the Warfalla, employing them in higher ranks. Guards and chiefs of the revolutionary committees, as well as the armed forces, belonged to the Warfalla tribe. Gadhafi's clear favoritism of tribes, despite historical tradition, has become a cause for grievance among the eastern tribes.

It is difficult to draw the line between the political and social realms. In the east, tribal law systems overrule national laws, which is not unexpected given Libya's traditionally weak governing institutions. Each Libyan must pay a tax between LD1 and LD15, depending on the size of the tribe, to his tribal leader. If murder or rape occurs between members of different tribes, compensation is owed to the tribe of the victim. Tribal leaders maintain their claim that their role is strictly social and do not overtly express any interest in being involved in post-Gadhafi governance, even as their continuing hold over local law and order is the essence of political order in the east; their claim to political neutrality may be more accurate in the realms of national governance and foreign affairs. Once the national discussion of common pool resources, such as oil and natural gas wealth, begins at the end of Gadhafi's rule, the claims to political neutrality may very well change quickly. Land rights will be another major legal issue that the tribes will want to have a say in.

The southern ethnicities—the Touareg and the Tebu—are different from the northern tribes in lifestyle and in culture. Originally nomadic, they have been impoverished since the demise of the camel trade due to droughts and political conflicts. The Touareg, originally caravan traders linking the Mediterranean coast and south Saharan Africa, lived in a "stratified society based on tribe-entities and pastoral activities."[16] The south of Libya is underdeveloped and discriminated against; the black population of the Tebu has struggled significantly to obtain Libyan citizenship. The Tebu and the Touareg have resented the Gadhafi regime because local rulers in the south were commonly Arab, and during the Gadhafi regime neither tribe had the right to speak their own language or express their culture.

However, many Tebu and Touareg managed to obtain citizenship and become integrated into the military through links with the Gadhafi regime. The Tebu became a leverage point

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for the regime, as Gadhafi helped them conduct proxy wars in neighboring countries in exchange for loyalty towards his regime. In the early 1990s Gadhafi had enrolled young Touareg men in the Libyan Army and his Islamic Legion, established solely to fight for Libya in Chad.[17] Both the Tebu and the Touareg expressed strong grievances towards the NTC, claiming that they did not receive enough weapons, food, and medicine from it to support the revolution in the south. They also feel that they have too little representation within the council. This type of aspirational deprivation is common in postconflict societies and must be addressed, as it is a prime motivator for continuing internal instability.

There has been much talk about Gadhafi's infamous African mercenaries. The government certainly used some mercenaries, but many were Tebu from the south that had held Libyan citizenship for up to thirty years. Some fighters were also Touareg from Mali and Chad. Gadhafi's forces trained the Touareg and Tebus in Obari, as Ahmed Mohammed Atargi, a tribal Touareg leader from Obari, has reported. Atargi also asserts that there will be conflict unless the tribes from the south have more rights in a post-Gadhafi regime. He estimates that roughly 50 percent of Touareg and 68 percent of Tebu still do not have formal Libyan citizenship, because Law 18 forbids non-Arabs from obtaining Libyan citizenship. Despite this, the Touareg and Tebu call themselves "the real citizens of Libya" because historically the tribes came to the desert before the Arabs. "We hate the Arabs and Islam because of what Gadhafi did," said a Touareg refugee, "but since the revolution we feel that Arabs are our brothers, and Islam our religion." "We are looking for the new Libya, not the new Arabic Libya," said Ali Agari, a Tebu leader. There seem to be specific grievances toward the Ghaddafa and Stemanza tribe, as they were enforcing the law of the Gadhafi regime in the south. Gadhafi once told the Tebu "that they were not Libyans. All of them." For the Tebu, there is a clear and strong identity conflict between being Arabic, African, Libyan, and Islamic. The inability to reconcile these dissonant elements likely will eventually lead to further rebellion, as the tribes dissociate from the dominant national identity and seek enough autonomy to express the social, cultural, and economic elements of their own group.

The Berber—more commonly referred to as the Amazigh—are found in the west and have suffered a similar fate as the Touareg, with whom they share a common language. The Libyan government has always struggled with the Berber and its attitude toward the tribe has been consistently ambiguous and contradicting; the government recently attempted to promote Berber folklore, while simultaneously denying the people's existence.[18] Like tribes in the west, the Amazigh have historically been impoverished, were denied the right to speak their own language, and denied other cultural rights. Recent reports from humanitarian workers in the Nafusa Mountains not only confirm underlying tensions between the Berber and the Arabs, but also inter-Berber tribal rivalries and conflicts. The Amazigh cooperated with the eastern tribes, uniting against a common enemy, but in the post-Gadhafi setting, historical grievances are likely to reemerge.

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The Monarchists

Eastern Libyans tend to romanticize the former government of King Idris, whose power derived from the religious legitimacy of the al-Senussi order, presumably because Gadhafi deposed King Idris in 1969.[19] The popular claim is that King Idris united the Libyans and brought infrastructure and wealth to the country, though the gross national product was significantly lower during the king's rule than Gadhafi's. Ultimately, the monarchy's mismanagement of resources undermined its authority, and by 1969, the Idris monarchy "collapsed under the weight of its own stagnation."[20] The newfound nostalgia for the former monarchy within the Libyan diaspora could translate into a desire to return the self-proclaimed crown prince, Mohamed al-Senussi, to power from his current base in London. However, there

seems to be little or no appetite among local eastern Libyans to have Libya return to any sort of monarchy. They have expressed a genuine wish for a democratic system.

Grievances and Frictions during Transition

Postrevolution Aspirational Deprivation

The lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan suggest that when the dust settles after Gadhafi's demise, people will begin to realize that improvements will not come to Libya quickly. The resulting feelings of aspirational deprivation will start the inevitable blame games over the slow progress, with power grabs, corruption, and failures of security and governance possibly to follow. At best, deception can lead to apathy; at worst, to armed conflict and radicalization. A prolonged state of aspirational deprivation can fuel an insurgency.[21] Because of the country's small population and vast oil wealth, the risk for frustration of tribal and national aspirations is greater in Libya than it was in Afghanistan or Iraq. Many Libyans speak about the post-Gadhafi future optimistically, stating that "every Libyan will have lots of money to travel and won't have to work" and "we'll be like Qatar." The vision of a Qatar-like Libya is not founded in economic reality, as Libyan oil per capita is significantly lower. The sense of ownership of the revolution thus becomes a double-edged sword: It kept the population's morale high during difficult times but can lead to unmet expectations that translate into deeper grievances as people feel more personally vested in the outcomes.

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February 17 Movement Resentment toward the NTC and Muslim Brotherhood

A strong sense of postrevolution disillusionment seems to have hit the February 17 youth already and is likely to grow. The youth population in Libya is large and although the movement does not represent the entire age cohort—even in the east—it remains a large and influential group. If aspirational deprivation and resentment of the NTC and MB escalates, it may become a source of armed conflict. The NTC should work more closely with the February 17 youth instead of alienating them. The NTC also needs to check other factions to make sure that one is not dominating the others. This monitoring will prevent accusations that the February 17 youth have already made against the MB from growing into larger problems.

Tribes and Islamic Organizations

In the West, there is a tendency to fear tribalism and Islamic organizations. Instead of fear, these existing structures should be leveraged to create stability in the current power vacuum. The tribes should be engaged with caution, as it is in nobody's interest to empower a parallel structure that could undermine the future governing body. However, supporting a well-defined and limited social mandate can benefit all parties and create a more stable environment. The same goes for Islamic organizations; from individual imams to organized parties such as the MB, there needs to be engagement and support. Islamic organizations are integral to the east Libyan social construct and are often trusted and respected sources of information and advice. These factions should be engaged in the debate instead of pushed to the side.

Potential tribal conflicts can be mitigated through dialogue rather than through violence. During Gadhafi's half-century in power, a process of meta-contrast kept the tribes in a state of stasis with respect to their support of—or oppression by—his military regime. Now that the oppressive structure is removed, the natural divisions and competitions between cultural identities will surface, requiring mediation. The successes and failures of the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Balkans should be kept in mind.

A serious intelligence effort should be conducted to learn more about the radical elements—the jihadists—as their growth could potentially undermine a stable transition, not only in Libya, but within the entire region.

The South

The south tends to be dismissed as "the desert," implying that the population is so small that it is irrelevant to stability. This is a dangerous assumption. While they may be few in numbers, the southern population has access to and controls many of the borders, water resources, and some of the energy resources. As mentioned before, southerners feel alienated by the NTC. Some kept allegiances to the Gadhafi government throughout the conflict. Unless current and past grievances between the Arab ruling elite and the Amazigh, Touareg, and Tebu are addressed, conflict is almost a certainty. Another scenario that could lead to conflict involves Arabs accusing Touareg and Tebu of not having fought on the side of the revolution and of having allowed mercenaries and supplies to enter Libya. In addition to the racism that already exists—specifically concerning the Tebu, who are black Africans—this could lead to more discrimination and violence. There will most certainly be conflicts between and within the tribes in the south and west as well, potentially undermining not only Libya's internal peace and reconciliation process, but also creating wider instability in neighboring countries.

Recommendations

- *Researchers should engage in further mapping of stakeholders as well as talking to community and other key leaders.* Gadhafi authorized very little research on his country and kept Libya closed to journalists and researchers for many years. It is difficult to understand and obtain access to data, whether those data exist or not. Very little is understood about Libyan social constructs, tribal and intertribal dynamics, and the more recent groups that have emerged. Most accounts are solely qualitative, such as this one, and none is a serious quantitative approach for a deeper understanding.

- *Once a thorough understanding has been achieved, an engagement plan should be outlined.* Ideally, local Libyans would implement such a plan. But should the situation be too tense, international assistance could help monitor and provide advice in the process. The international community should also remain the neutral outside element.

- *Local ownership of the political process should not be undermined.* In the West, there is a tendency to rapidly claim the ownership of other nations' successes and failures. While this generally stems from a genuine desire to help, the good-natured helping hand can undermine the local sense of ownership of the process. This outside direction in Iraq and Afghanistan led to political apathy locally. By claiming others' ownership processes, the West provides excuses for failure: in taking responsibility for locals' failures, the local movement never attempts to stand on its own and address its own issues. Western help will be needed in the form of advice and possibly funding, but international actors should be careful to keep a genuinely local face on everything. Any political change must be locally driven, just like the revolution itself. The strong sense of ownership of the revolution present in Libya must be maintained and enhanced. This sense of ownership can only be enhanced through an inclusive and open political process and further empowerment of civil society. Foreigners must avoid being highly visible and coming across as patronizing—something that has already happened as various foreign diplomats hold forth to the opposition on how they should handle internal conflicts. However well meaning those comments are intended to

be, they would be more beneficial stated over a cup of tea in Tripoli than in a White House press briefing broadcasted on television.

- *Post-Gadhafi expectations need to be managed.* The postrevolutionary disillusionment phase will pose huge challenges to security and political progress. This challenge needs to be addressed immediately. Facts and examples about democratization, different governance systems, the importance of a strong private sector, foreign direct investment, the structure of an economy that is not dependent on energy exports, the time it takes to rebuild a society and repair physical and psychological damage caused by conflict, and the time it takes to rebuild basic functions such as security and elections need to be disseminated soon. Now is the time to create realistic expectations, avoid a situation like Afghanistan, and help bring security and stability to Libya.

Acknowledgements

Notes

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Of Related Interest

- *Security Sector Transformation in North Africa and the Middle East* by Mark Sedra (Special Report, November 2011)
- *Extending Libya's Transitional Period: Capitalizing on the Constitutional Moment* by Jason Gluck (Peace Brief, September 2011)

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