



New Government in Libya: Aspects and Prospects

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Abstract:

Since the fall of Colonel Qadhafi's regime in Libya in November 2011 amidst the Arab uprising, the nation has been witnessing a tumultuous phase rendering the state almost defunct. The overthrow of Qadhafi after UN-backed NATO operation with the support of some Arab countries (Qatar, Jordan and UAE in particular), created political and institutional crisis and embroiled the country into varieties of tribal, regional, social, political, ideological, religious and class conflicts. Substantial parts of the Libyan territories are swamped with a host of terrorist and separatist groups fighting not only against each other but among themselves as well.

The absence of a functional state and the multi-layered involvement of different forces in the political evolution has created numerous fault lines offering a sanctuary to other transnational terror groups. After a protracted phase of failure, exasperation and legal and ideological battle for legitimacy between two governments (Tobruk and Tripoli), a government of national accord was finally installed in May 2016. But even the new government seems to have been failing to garner enough support and danger is already looming over its success and longevity.

This paper examines the last five years of political trajectory in Libya and what sort of political interplay and dynamic have shaped the developments there. It will also see how the absence of a functional state provided an opportunity for the Jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS to expand and consolidate in the region. In addition, it will endeavor to look into the future prospect of the new government in light of western imposition of its own model of governance without seeking the consent of internal stakeholders ignoring the public sentiment.

Libya in Brief:

Before going further explaining the trajectory of events in Libya following the uprising, it will be useful to go into a brief history of modern day Libya which since pre-colonial time is marked by the regional and tribal divide. Libya is mostly a desert nation and it holds the largest proven oil reserve in the continent of Africa with 44 billion barrels of oil reserves.¹ Libya is in the north-west of the continent between Tunisia and Algeria in the west and the Egypt in the east. Mediterranean Sea is on its north, while south Libya shares border with Chad, Niger, and Sudan. Compared to other nations of the continent, Libya's population of 6.4 million is quite low. Muslims constitute more than 96 % of the population, followed by the Christians who constitute around 2.5 % of the total population. Arabic is the lingua franca and its official language as well. The Italian language is also understood in the urban parts of the country because of country's close colonial association with Italy in the past. The significant part of Libyan territory is arable and major agricultural products are wheat, barley, olive and dates. Its natural resource is dominantly petroleum and gas and its national economy is based on agriculture (17 %); industry (23 %); and services sector (59%). Libya exports crude oil, natural gas and petroleum products annually worth US \$ 38.4 billion and its major imports items constitutes the machinery, food consumer goods and transport equipments worth US \$ 27.13 billion. Its petroleum exports constitute half of its GDP and its major trading partners are China, Turkey, France, Germany, Italy and South Korea. In the first decade of 21st century, Libya achieved a favorable growth rate of 10 % until it was sabotaged by the Arab uprising in 2011.

Tribal divide has remained an embedded feature of the political evolution of the country. Traditionally the country is divided into three major geographical regions: Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan. Cyrenaica region in the east of Libya is dominated by the descendents of Bani Suleiman tribe and was deeply influenced by the teaching of Al-Sanussiyya religious order², the region of Tripolitania in the west is dominated by Bani Hilal³ while the Fezzan in the south is overwhelmingly dominated by the indigenous Berbers.





Each region is distinct from other in term of cultural and religious mooring providing a distinctive political outlook to each part. In the east, Zuwaya is the most important tribe both strategically and economically. In the Tripolitania, Warfallah is the largest tribe in Libya comprising around one million out of total six million population of Libya while the Qadhafa of Sirte is another important tribe to which Colonel Qadhafi himself belonged. Fezzan in the south-west is dominated by the Berbers with the pinch of the Arab migrants.

Tripolitania in the north-west has its own religious tradition owing much to the Ottoman culture, Fezzan in the south-west has remained culturally and religiously integral to the Arab west (Tunisia and Algeria) while Cyrenaica in the east has more cultural proximity to the Arab east like Egypt and the Levant region.⁴

The chart below shows the division of Libya into three main region and prominent tribes scattered across the cities in each region.

Tripolitania Region in the west	Cities	Sirte	Tripoli & Bin Walid	Tourage	Zlitan	Misrata, Tripoli, Zintan, Zuwaiya
	Main Tribe	Firijan and Qadghafa	Warefallah	Hunn-waddan	Awalad al-Shaykh	Misraten, Zintani, Torhouni
Cyrenaica region in the east	Cities	Albayda	Tobruk	South Benghazi	Kufa	Ajdabiya
	Main Tribes	Al-Barsa	Obeidi-t	Al-Dursa, Awagir, Maghreb	Zuwaya	Zwai
Fezzan	Cities	South of Tripolitania	Kufa Region			
	Main Tribe	Magarha, Awlad , Sulayman	Huttman, Hasawana, Jamaat, adial Shatil, Tourages			

Historically Libya was never united and witnessed several events along with other parts of Mediterranean until the Ottoman captured it in year 1551. Later the political environment surrounding the Ottoman Empire impacted its control on Libya too and paved the way for western colonial powers to intervene in Libya. Italy invaded Libya in 1911 arguing that it was once ruled by the Roman Empire. Italian occupation faced resistance from across the three geographical regions, particularly Al-Sanussiyya. The divide between east and the west abetted the consolidation of Italian rule in Libya. But the emergence of Omar al-Mukhtar, a revolutionary from Cyrenaica brought an alliance between east and west removing the anti-Al-Sanussiyya and creating the national rigor in the country. It was the overwhelming support of Libyans to Britain during Second World War which ousted Italy from all the three regions and subsequently Tripolitania and Cyrenaica fell to Britain and Fezzan fell to France.

King Idrisi, the grandson of great spiritual leader of Libya Al-Sanusi, proclaimed the independence of Cyrenaica in June 1945. He was accused of hobnobbing secretly with British masters to carve out an independent provisional government leaving behind the cause of the Tripolitania and Fezzan. He had made the east only focus of his political and economic stability creating further mistrust, separatism, regional consciousness and power tussles in future.

The new monarch's internal social basis was uneven and he failed to integrate the nation and opted for the federal units alienating further one region from other. Alarmed at the Arab

nationalism and Nasserism, King Idrisi had kept the country insulated from other parts of the Arab world.

It was the fractious political structure of Libya under King Idris which made way for Colonel Qadhafi to stage a coup in September, 1969. His philosophy of political revolution was highly inspired by Pan-Arabism of Colonel Nasser of Egypt. He built his political base in Libya among the tribes of Tripolitania and Fezzan which were left abandoned under his predecessor. Colonel Qadhafi primarily drew his supports from Gadhafa tribes in central Libya, Magarha of Fezzan and Warfallah from south-eastern Tripolitania. Colonel Qadhafi preferred pursuing an active foreign policy rather than remaining entangled in the resolution of internal tribal and regional divide. He imitated the Nasserites Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and Free Officers and Arab Socialist Union single party dominated by elites of Tripoli and Benghazi. His political model perpetuated a usual tendency to eschew the standard state structure and showed his personal allegiance to his own family and clan. His personal wealth estimated to amount to billions of US \$ 200 billion.⁵

He took many initiatives to integrate the country with the Arab world unlike his predecessor who was more inward looking. Colonel Qadhafi focused more on the external policies of Libya with an intention of veering away the attention from the internal primordial tribal and regional identities of the country. His ideas of Arab-Libya integration in 1972, alliance with Tunisia in 1974, with Algeria in 1975 and Morocco in 1984⁶ were all indicative of active foreign policy in the entire region. Similarly his involvement in Chad, Nigeria, Mali and huge financial assistance to African Union was aimed to integrate with the larger Arab and African world instead of being involved in internal politics of country. To reinforce the sovereignty of the country and assert economic freedom, Colonel Qadhafi nationalized the assets of the Italian companies and oil sectors, closed down the external military bases, supported number of political movements abroad. Particularly after the Lockerbie crash in 1984, he had almost become an international pariah.⁷ But later due to changing regional and global scenarios, he tried to restore himself and that was reflected in his series of policies like abandonment of Libya's nuclear program in 2003, surrendering of two Libyan nationals accused in Lockerbie crash and further deepening economic ties with EU nations which was reflected in different economic and political agreements signed with them.

Ouster of Colonel Qadhafi

When the Arab world was swept over by political uprising, the Libyans could not remain oblivious or untouched. The Libyan situation was riddled nearly with all those political and economic factors which had facilitated the ouster of long-serving regimes in other countries and that later became a prelude to the overthrow of Libyan regime itself. In order to express solidarity with the revolutionaries of other countries and show their own resentment, people first assembled on the streets in the town of Benghazi, first demanding political freedom but as the violence escalated, the demands transformed into a call for an immediate exit of Colonel Qadhafi and a new slogan was heard on the streets, "Non-rule period".⁸ The more the security forces resorted to an

unmatched response against the protesting civilians, more the violence escalated and spread further and on February 17, 2011 many protestors were killed when they had assembled on the eve of self-labeled “day of rage”.

Colonel Qadhafi never maintained the full-fledged traditional standing army as a part of his political ploy because he always feared that strong army could stage a coup as he himself had come to power through the coup. He relied more upon his own tribal militias which acted as a bulwark against his opponents. After the defeat in the war of Chad in 1986, he had mobilized his own tribal militia which later evolved as Qaddafi Brigade. The same brigade fought to preserve the rule of Colonel Qadhafi in Benghazi and Tripoli. Unlike other rulers who succumbed to people’s pressure, he labeled the protestors as goons in the foreign hands, Al-Qaida’s agents, drugist and the separatist⁹ and vowed to fight till death.

Not long after the protest turned into a civil war in Libya, European Union (EU), Arab League (AL), and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) began expressing their worry over the rising tolls and sought international intervention to rescue the civilians. On March 10, 2011, the EU, announced an arms embargo and travel ban on Qadhafi and his associates.¹⁰ The UNSC resolution (1970) was passed unanimously on February 26, 2011 affirming Libyan government’s responsibility to protect its civilians along with imposing arms embargo.¹¹ The proposed arm embargo was never imposed as in the London conference on Libya in March 2011, attended by UN, AL, OIC, EU, GCC and NATO, Qatar’s Prime Minister himself said that the rebel forces would be armed in Libya. Colonel Qadhafi’s son Saif al-Islam responded to resolution of the AL as, “The Arab League, to hell with the Arabs”.¹² It was a signal that Pan- Arabism had become an obsolete entity.

Invoking the provision of ‘Responsibility to Protect’¹³ the UNSC in its 6498th meeting passed the resolution (1973) on March 17 with India, Germany, Brazil, Russia, China abstaining .The resolution authorized the member states to take all necessary measures to protect civilian and civilian-populated areas.¹⁴ The UNSC resolution 1973 reads, “It demands an immediate establishment of ceasefire. It authorizes the Members States acting nationally or thorough regional organizations or arrangement to take all necessary measures to protect civilian and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. It decides to establish a ban on all flights in the airspace of Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in order to help protect civilians”.¹⁵

A Coalition of States which includes 15 NATO members and other Arab countries like UAE, Qatar, and Jordan under the “Operation Odyssey Dawn” began air strikes on 19 March in the cities of Benghazi, Sirte, Misrate, and Tripoli. On 24 October National Transitional Council (TNC) ¹⁶ announced the end of the conflict after Qadhafi was killed in a joint operation of NATO and the local militias of Sirte on 20 October 2011. UNSC passed a resolution on 26 October ending the no-fly zone and the NATO operation came to an end on October 31, 2011.

That time many had called the NATO intervention a Western War and questioned how the mandate to protect the civilians gradually metamorphed into a regime change.¹⁷

Russia and China felt deceived and alleged that the world had taken a side in Libya¹⁸ and it never protected the civilians but it fought the war along with the NTC.¹⁹ It was one of the reasons that both Russia and China subsequently vetoed a series of resolutions seeking no-fly zone in Syria. The implementation of 1973 was criticized by the African Union also which claimed that what was happening in Libya was more than an imposition of a no-fly zone. The Arab League too which had earlier called for no-fly zone was not happy the way the R2P was executed in Libya. Others have argued that why R2P was adopted so selectively and why it was not implemented in the cases of Syria or Yemen where the situation were equally volatile .

India had voted in favor of UNSC resolution 1970 but abstained from voting on 1973. India was faced with one of the critical moment right at the beginning of its term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. India's abstention on 1973 R2P drew some criticism but it was guided by certain context and the principles. India has always maintained that the military solution was not devoid of danger and risk, and was always concerned about the loss of innocent lives in the collateral damage. The stance of India was further justified because the R2P was passed before submission of the final reports by the UN Secretary Genral's special envoy to Libya. Moreover, the R2P in case of Libya did not stipulate any exit strategy and the outcome is before us.

India's erstwhile Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri speaking on the occasion had said, "The resolution authorizes far reaching measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter with relative very little credible information. We also do not have clarity about details of the enforcement measures, including who and with what asset will participate and how this measure will be exactly carried out. Moreover..... We have to ensure that the measures will mitigate and not exacerbate an already difficult situation for the people of Libya".²⁰He also added that as consequences, today resolution was based on very little clear information.²¹There must be certainty that negative outcome was not likely before such wide ranging measures were adopted.

France, Britain and NATO's Intervention in Libya

The most pertinent question which struck at the moment was why Colonel Qadhafi suddenly became a bad boy for the western powers and why France and Britain were at the forefront of NATO mission in Libya. The past two decades before the Libyan uprising had witnessed a drastic change in the relationship between Libya and the west. Colonel Qadhafi had become a close ally of the west and was seeking a close NATO intelligence cooperation in fighting the Islamic radicalism at home. He had also launched a series of neo-liberal market reforms in the country to benefit the western companies which were later rewarded for helping revoking the sanctions against Libya. In 1999 Britain restored diplomatic ties with Libya and in 2004; British Prime Minister Tony Blair became the first PM to visit Libya after the visit of Churchill back in 1943.

Between 2000-2002, the Libyan National Oil Company (LNOC) organized the international oil and gas conferences announcing new round of concessions for foreign investors under very attractive conditions and cut the custom duties also by 50 %.²²

Later in 2008, both the EU and Libya signed an MoU and in the aftermath of global financial crisis of 2008, both partners had updated the MoU of 2008 to include increased financial support for Libya's reforms as well. In the MoU the proposed financial assistance amounted to total of Euro 600 million for the period 2011-13. EU was also opposed to Iran Libya Sanction Act (ILSA) claiming that it was a barrier against the dialogue with Libya. Meanwhile EU had also adopted the Migration Cooperation Agenda with Libya. Only three years before the rebel and NATO forces ousted Qadhafi, Italy had signed a Friendship and Cooperation Pact with the Libyan leader.

However the escalation of violence and rising civilian tolls suddenly changed the dynamics and Libya became a rouge state for the west, particularly Britain and France. Notwithstanding close ties between the NATO and Libya, NATO countries had a number of issues with Qadhafi. Credibility and sincerity towards economic reforms became doubtful under Qadhafi. Hence not long after the civil war escalated in Libya, both Britain and France launched an intense campaign with the resonance that Qadhafi had lost his political credibility and was no more a reliable ally of the west. Both of them became the most adamant supporters of UNSC resolutions against Libya because of their political and economic stakes , details to come later in the paper) and went to Security Council claiming that, "We have to act because we are really seeing a violent upheaval with a man who has a history of unpredictable violence".²³

British Prime Minister Mr. Cameron had instructed his defense secretary on February 28, 2011 to draw up a plan for no fly zone much before then UNSC resolution was passed for the same which was surprisingly termed by US defense secretary of state, as a sign of "loose talk".²⁴

Both were first for establishing no fly zone that later turned into siding with the rebel forces in the civil war and finally they called for the removal of Qadhafi. French President and British Prime Minister were first to visit Libya after the death of Qadhafi. The British government was more keen in the post Qadhafi Libya and had pledged to train the NTC army, return the frozen Libyan assets worth US \$ 498 million and, to provide medical facilities in UK for critically ill Libyans.²⁵ In his pursuit of war against Qadhafi, French president went to the extern of saying, "Never mind, there is European impotence, what about the Russia power, what about the American power. Russia is evolving and the America has not yet defined its position".²⁶

President Sarkozy had a history of pursuing an aggressive foreign policy to maintain popularity at home. Moreover the presidential election was around the corner and erstwhile President Sarkozy viewed that the campaign against Qadhafi would improve his chance and place him correctly in the regional order. Of late, France had started asserting its military capability to counterbalance the economic-driven foreign policy of Germany as witnessed in the case of Euro zone crisis when

Germany had campaigned hard to bail out the Greece.²⁷ More over France along with Britain was determined to pose a joint front against Germany in the region and both wanted to show that they had the potential to shape the EU foreign policy at their own. The French intervention was also driven by the economic factors as well. French energy major 'Total SA' was involved in Libya but not to the extent as compared to German Wintershall or Italian ENI. Perhaps France had planned of changing the equation in its own favor by installing rebels in Tripoli. In addition, France did not approve the idea of Italy making all the arms deal with Libya at the cost of France which till recently was the biggest arms exporter to Libya.²⁸

What further had irked France was Colonel Qadhafi's irritant policy of playing one bidder against other and his constant threat of nationalization of Libyan oil sectors. France and Britain did not receive preferential treatment as compared to Germany and Italy. For instance, Italy alone constituted 40 % of total foreign investments in Libya. French companies failed to received the contract of Nubian Sandstone Aquifer, the biggest and most fresh underground water source in North Africa despite the lucrative round of bidding and the refusal became more startling when the French companies like Suez Ondeo and Saur control around 45 % of global water market.²⁹

On the other hand unlike France, Britain and had no strong client-partner relationship with Libya and British internal political component was not as strong as in case of France to motivate the intervention in Libya. One of the British officials himself reported to have remarked, "Do not forge in UK we do not have fantastic relationships with Libya".³⁰ But Britain was perhaps of the view that one could develop the close tie after installing the regime of own choice. Though, Prime Minister Cameron was initially accused of not doing enough to rescue strangled expatriate British citizens in Libya but for significant parts, the interest of Britain in Libya was also driven by its economic interest. British energy giant, British Petroleum (BP) had no production in Libya since 1971 and it had announced in 2009 only to begin oil exploration in the country with an initial investment of US \$ 900 million and according to the spokesperson of BP, the investment could touch the US \$ 20 billion in next two decades ³¹ British government thought that it could expedite its plan only after Qadhafi was removed.

Moreover in May, 2010 Mexico Macondo well disaster and subsequent loss of around US \$ 38 billion in form of compensation had pushed the BP to look towards other sources of wealth and in the Mediterranean Libya was the best destination to exploit the oil wealth given the absence of central authority and power vacuum in the country.³² The UK could gain all these by achieving the allegiance of the rebel forces who were bent upon removing Colonel Qadhafi. Libya is at the heart of Africa and southern Europe, home to great source of oil and gas and Italy and France rely on Libya for significant shares of their oil import. Both France and Britain were also eyeing the huge Libyan sovereign wealth worth US \$ 100 billion also enticed the west to oust Qadhafi and engage with post-Qadhafi regime for making the new deals. As the bombs started to drop, the EU member states worked quickly to get the business contract for their companies. Only seven days

after the passing of the Resolution 1973, France is said to have concluded a deal with the NTC stipulating that France would be guaranteed 35 % of the oil contract in Libya.³³

Contrary to both France and Britain, Germany abstained from the UNSC voting on Libya asserting that it would not take part in the military action in Libya. The decision of Germany was seemingly prompted by its deep political and economic interests and moreover the uncertainty involved in the future of Libya shaped its pragmatic policy of 'watch and see'. Germany also argued that use of forces was excluded from the mandate of the UNSC. Italy, on the other hand, had reluctantly offered its air base for NATO operation because of its strong ties with the regime of Qadhafi and its huge economic stakes in the country. Italy receives 23 % of its natural gas and 13 % of its oil exports from Libya alone.³⁴ The chairman ENI, Italian oil giant had also criticized the western leaders for imposing sanctions against Libya

The rising crisis of large scale migration was also threatening the security of the European continent and they were fearful of Qadhafi's repeated threat of invading Europe with the African immigrants. Once Qadhafi had said, "You will have immigration and thousands of people from Libya will invade Europe"³⁵. During a visit to Italy, he sought US \$ 500 billion a year to stop the migration otherwise he would turn the white Europe into black and once European leader had compared him to Mafia extortion racket³⁶. In the month of January 2011, 15,000 Tunisian migrants reached Europe which was more than the total reached in the year 2010. Italian interior minister talked of biblical exodus as Europe is being invaded.³⁷ Muslims were compared to occupying force in French national election campaign.

Post -Qadhafi Libya and Onset of Anarchy

Libyan revolution was never a centralized revolution and so it failed to acquire the national character. The multiple deep rooted divide became visible immediately after his ouster. Colonel Qadhafi had played several divisive cards during turmoil itself and claimed that real power rested with the west and had told his sympathizers that there was no need of empathy with the easterners as they were merely separatists.³⁸ Getting rid of Qadhafi was much easier than building the political order in post-Qadhafi era. The post-Qadhafi politics resulted into chaos, disruption, instability, and power hungry politics rendering 'still an evolving state of Libya' completely powerless. The fragmentation was not only limited to regional or tribal sphere but the ideological and cultural difference further abetted division.

The advent of the civil war intertwined with increasing sense of insecurity and subsequent militarization of different tribal factions both in the east and the west. Different militia groups not only developed the solidarity networks among themselves but also embarked upon influencing the political evolution. Numerous local militias emerged to challenge the authority of NTC and the rebellion in Benghazi very soon turned into a demand of federalism. The urge for new geographical separation between the eastern and western warlords and political stakeholders has

caused the emergence of the local brigades with very narrow political and economic objectives ruining the prospects for a unified nation of Libya. The Tripoli region witnessed major conflicts between the pro and anti-Qadhafi forces and at the stage; different tribal militias seemed to have emerged as the spoilers of the outcome of the revolution.

Apart from tribal and separatist group, the presence of large number of radical and extremist Islamist groups both in the east and the west left a deep scar on the political trajectory. Libya has been a sanctuary for the Islamist radical force since the days of Soviet-Afghan war in 1980s and 90s and today their descendents are very much active in the political flux of Libya. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group is a case in living which emerged in Libya following the Soviet-Afghan war³⁹ and the founders of other Islamist brigades in Benghazi and Derna are the second generation of the Afghan Jihadists in Libya⁴⁰ The rise of radical Islamist forces in Benghazi particularly (it has been the centre of Sufi Islamic activism) may be owed to the increasing presence of the ISIS which struck the region in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The growing political and power vacuum in the country and increasing intra-regional movement of the fundamentalist and extremist forces due to the state-led policies of some countries also abetted the trend of radicalization in the east and Libya as a whole.

The murky nature of the transition in the country has made it difficult to distinguish between the Islamist militias and the local brigades and there are reports that some of these Islamist outfits are working under state structure as well. The growing weakness of the central authority and its subsequent increasing reliance on Islamist militias and other local brigades are also strengthening their presence in the region because they enlist their help for their survival. More over the role of the Islamist militias in bringing down the regime of Colonel Qadhafi also provided legitimacy for these groups to exist and consolidate themselves. The overflow of weapons in the country after the departure of Qadhafi and subsequent supply of huge quantity of weapons from across the borders of Libya also led to the consolidation of different Islamist and tribal brigades in the country. The Fezzan region in south also started practicing self-de-facto- autonomy immediately after the ouster of Qadhafi. It was almost an era of claiming what has been described by Mr. Lisa Anderson as “regional triumphalism”⁴¹. In Fezzan, the Tuareg militia of Ghat (a district in Fezzan region) is the most prominent ethnic militia demanding more rights for the Fezzan region in the aftermath of ouster of Qadhafi. Some time they have used the Berber flag seeking complete independence from the central authority. The Tuareg along with Tebu are the two most dominant tribes in the Fezzan region and hence most of the tribal fighting here takes place between them only for the political supremacy.⁴² Meanwhile in the post-Qadhafi time, the flux of Jihadist in the region from across its southern borders has also made the region a centre of Islamist militias.⁴³

Tripolitania Region in the West			Fezzan Region in South	Cyrenaica Region in the East		
Zintane Militia	Tripoli Militia	Misratan Militia	Ghat Militia	Benghazi Militia	Eastern federalist Militias	Islamist Militia in Benghazi

Zintan revolutionary Military Council	Triple Military Council and Tripoli Local Council	Misratan Militia group	Tuarge militia	17 th February Martyrs Brigade	Army of Cyrenaica	Ansar al-Shariah
Tripoli Revolutionary Council	Nawasi Brigade	Muslim Brotherhood	Tebu Militia	Rafallah al-Sahati Brigade	Al-Saiqa brigade	Abu Salim Martyr Brigade
The Qaqa Brigade	Special, Deterrence Force		Katib-al-Haqq		Cyrenaica Protection Force	
Al-Sawaiq Brigade			Katibah 315			

Distribution of tribal and Islamist militia spread in different cities in the region Tripolitania, Fezzan and Cyrenaica in post-Qadhafi era

What further thwarted the political process and deteriorated the security situation in the country was the advent of Khalifa Haftar as a new actor in the national politics.⁴⁴ He was one of the trusted lieutenants of Qadhafi and the core members of the 1969 coup. But both fell apart after Qadhafi's adventure in the Chad failed in 1987 and subsequently he was captured by the Chad army in March 1987. Later Haftar was rescued with the help of anti-Qadhafi forces in Libya, National Salvation Front (NSF). Later Haftar took the responsibility of training the NSF members in Chad under the full protection of CIA. Because of the changing political scenario in the region in 1990, he along with four hundred members of NSF was flown to US where Haftar was tasked with training the opposition members in the suburb of Virginia. But due the growing proximity between the US and Libya in later years, Haftar no more remained an important figure for US but he continued his association with other anti-Qadhafi forces until he returned to Libya from northern Virginia to participate in rebellion of Libya in 2011.

His emergence in early 2014 almost subdued other actors and pushed the country to the brink of political collapse. He suddenly appeared on TV in February 2014 and announced the unilateral dissolution of the Libyan National Parliament (GNC) and creation of a President Committee.⁴⁵ In a very short span of time, he took much of the eastern Libya in a military offensive known as "Operation Dignity", launched in June 2014. Much as El-Sisi of Egypt boasted of doing in Egypt against the Islamists, he pledged to do in Libya.

His air and ground forces with the help of Russian-made helicopter gunship attacked Benghazi Revolutionary Shura Council which was another Islamist but anti-ISIS frontage. In the guise of fighting the ISIS, Haftar seems to be weakening all his political opponents as claimed by the head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, Martin Kobler. "Haftar brigade is more involved in fighting his internal Islamist opponent like Dawn and less against the ISIS".⁴⁶ Haftar's anti-Islamist war enjoyed the support of the regional powers like Egypt and UAE and both are already engaged their own battle against the radical Islamist forces and other terrorist outfits like the MBH and the ISIS and its affiliates. Some of his old opponents have termed him more dangerous than the ISIS.⁴⁷ The post-Arab uprising has seen new strategic alliances wherein Egypt, Saudi

Arabia and UAE have emerged as an anti-Islamist block contrary to Turkey and Qatar which are showing the pro-Islamist posturing in the region.

The political ascendancy of Haftar was never unchallenged and Mr. Abdal Hakim Biljhaji , former military officer launched a counter offensive called ‘Libya Dawn’ against the Dignity operation. The Libya Dawn enjoyed substantial control over the western Libya and had besieged the airport in Tripoli in August, 2014 after a covert bombing by joint Egypt-UAE air force on Haftar’s behalf, killing several of its members in Tripoli. The Libya Dawn seems to enjoy external support from the nations like Turkey, Sudan, and Qatar giving the conflict the dimension of a proxy war. It is almost as if one part of Libya was controlled by White Russians-that is Haftar-and another part was controlled by Bolshevik.⁴⁸

Very much like in Egypt, the battle between democracy and the authoritarianism in Libya has turned into a war between the pro-Islamist and the anti-Islamist forces. The whole nation as a whole seems to be at the mercy of the extremist forces and Libya has been described by special British envoy, Jonathan Powell as another Somalia on the Mediterranean.⁴⁹

Faction	Libya Dignity	Libya Dawn
Region	Cyrenaica, South of Kufra , east region of Libya	Tripoli, Region of Fezzan, western region
Location	Benghazi, Dherna, Ajdhabiya, Tobruk, Ras Alnuf, Sidre, Zuitina	Zintan, Tripoli, Misratan
Loyal Tribes	Zwai, Zuuwaya, Al-Dursa, Al-Awagir, Al-Marghrba, Obeidat, Al-Barasa	Fawatir, Misratan, Zintani, Awlad al-Shyku
Local Supportive Militias	Zintan revolutionary Military Council, Tripoli Revolutionary Council, Al- Qaqa Brigade, Al-Sawaiq Brigade	Tripoli Militia: Tripoli Military Council ,Tripoli Local Council, Special Deterrence Forces, Nawasi Brigade
Ideologies	Federalist, Secular, non-Islamist	Islamist
Leader	Khalifa Haftar	Abdal Hakim Biljhaji

Political Processes without Headway

Amidst the chaotic political situation in the aftermath of Qadhafi’s departure, a National Transitional Council (NTC) was formed as an interim political authority. But the NTC was always besieged internally and riddled publicly with the crisis of legitimacy. The NTC was divided house between those who had defected from Qadhafi earlier and joined the NTC and those who had suffered exile and had come back to be the part of it.

The first national elections in Libya were held in July 2012 for the National Assembly, known as General National Congress (GNC). The announcement of election itself was followed by a large-scale protest in the east over the question of representation which further aggravated the federal demands in the east. One of the revolutionaries said, “We do not want to be the part of GNC as it is another form of marginalization of the east”.⁵⁰ The elections for choosing the constituent assembly were also held in July 2014 but the participation of merely 13.8 % of total population in it showed the people’s disenchantment with politics of the post-Qadhafi era.

The first parliament in Libya after Qadhafi was doomed to fail because of the entrenchment of extremist Islamist groups and control of large part of territories by tribal factions had ruined the prospect for a peaceful future. Instead of forcing the militias to disarm and providing them jobs, new government put them on the payrolls. To earn the loyalty of the disgruntled populace , the new government increased the workforce (with wage increase of 250 %) , leading to sharp increase in annual budget from US \$ 9 billion in 2011 to US \$ 23 billion in 2013.⁵¹

After the GNC’s survival had become impossible, fresh elections were held in June 2014 to elect a new National Assembly, now known as “House of Representative” (HOR). The political uncertainty and vulnerability remained the same even after the second election because of the growing environment of fear following the escalation of conflict between Dignity-backed Zintani militias in Benghazi and Dawn-backed Islamist in Tripoli. The capital town of Tripoli fell to the ‘Libya Dawn’ in June 2014 and they refused to endorse the second parliamentary election and claimed that the earlier GNC was the only legitimate body. The fragile security situation forced the HOR to flee to Tobruk in the east in August 2014 effectively forcing the administrative division of the county into two. The Tobruk-based HOR was internationally recognised while Omar Al-Hassi, a prominent member of former GNC, in Tripoli formed the National Salvation Government with the support of the Islamists and other local militias in Tripoli.

Two competing governments were entangled in a violent and nationwide power struggle in order to capture the lucrative oil sector. In Tripoli General Obeidi, Libyan Dawn chief of staff spoke of his troops efforts to recover the oil fields from Haftar’s forces and said, “we are the state and it is our duty to retake the fields from these bandits”⁵² The Tobruk-based HOR branded both the Libya Dawn and Revolutionary and its affiliate Council of Benghazi as terrorist outfits⁵³ but its silence on Haftar’s Dignity was ambiguous.

Libya: A New Hub of the ISIS

The current situation in Libya has resulted in a new transitional phase and one main feature of this political transition is the rise of the ISIS. The growing presence of the ISIS in Libya can be explained by the growing military and economic pressures against the ISIS in Iraq and Syria and hence the ISIS has found in Libya a new sanctuary for survival. The main aim of the ISIS in Libya is to search for an alternative for money making and preparing for confrontation with south European countries due to its geographical proximity. The towns of Derna and Sirte in the east

have become encircled with large numbers of the ISIS cadres and they are focusing on affiliates to join them who have in recent past declared allegiance to them like in Nigeria, Niger and Mali. The town of Sirte has become a major network centre for making new recruits and new alliance in several direction in the region. It is reported that around fifteen hundred ISIS militants are in complete control of the Mediterranean town of Sirte and they are reported to be focusing Al-Mabrouk oil field, hundred kilometers south of Sirte and is managed by French company Total.⁵⁴ In recent months, Libya has also become a recruiting ground for ISIS from Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria. Tunisia is reported to have sent the highest number of the ISIS fighters in Libya. There are reports of weapon being smuggled from Libya to Sinai⁵⁵ and from there it is reaching Hamas and other political outfits in Palestine.⁵⁶

The ISIS's presence became explicit only in February 2015 when a video clipping was released by the ISIS showing the killing of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians. Egypt immediately responded by launching the aerial strikes in Derna. The present of a large number of ISIS along with other Islamic militias in eastern Libya has become a source of constant anxiety to the military regime of El-Sisi which itself is engulfed in war against Islamic extremism and terrorism.

The porous border between the two has led to growth in organized crimes such as armed smugglings, drug trafficking, and immigration. Libya has emerged as a thriving market for weapons in the turbulent region and according to a UN report, around one million pieces of weaponry reached Egypt out of the twelve nations currently involved in the arms smuggling in the region.⁵⁷

In addition to the Egypt, US air forces also launched airstrikes in Libya in November 2015 which was its only anti-ISIS operation outside Iraq and Syria. The US operation claimed to have killed one of the prominent ISIS commanders, Abu Nabil in Derna. Another major US air strike in February 2016 near Libya-Tunisia border in the Sabratha region was successful in dislodging the ISIS-inspired Islamic emirates.⁵⁸ The town of Misrate in Libya is controlled by Ansar Al-Sharia which is fighting its own war against the ISIS⁵⁹. One can see how the ISIS got strengthened in Syria and Iraq and was significantly subdued only after US-led operation for months targeted their bases in Iraq and Syria. Now they are consolidating in Libya with the chorus of the sresistence against the sectarian and the secular regimes. The gradual spread of the ISIS in three-province of Libya since 2014 has regional security implication as well. The southern deserts of Libya offer unguarded crossing to the terrorists for trampling into Algeria, Niger, Chad and Sudan where today several armed bands are found roaming freely.

The departure of Qadhafi led to the mushrooming of high-grade weapons like MANPADS, anti-tanks missiles, rocket launchers, and mortars. One study estimates that Qatar only provided around 2000 tons of weapons to Benghazi Revolutionary Council and Ansar Al-Shariah⁶⁰ which later fell into the hand of other extremist groups like Libya Dawn who are operating there. Qaddafi's own arsenal slipped into the hands of the internal and external terror outfits groups and

the UN estimated that Libyan ousted regime had only between 250,000 to 700, 000 firearms⁶¹ while M16 of UK estimated that there were millions of tons of weapons which exceed the arsenal of the British army itself.⁶² The radical and the terror outfits seem to have captured the arsenal of the ousted regime apart from supply of huge weaponries form the supporting powers in the region like Qatar and Turkey.

Government of National Accord and Challenges Before it:

After Libya was run by two parallel governments for almost one and half years since June 2014, UN-led efforts succeeded in bringing the warring factions to the table and subsequently a Libyan Political Agreement was signed on December 17, 2015, in Skhirat town of Morocco and so the declaration was known as Skhirat declaration or Libyan Political Agreement.

In the agreement, three major factions participated: NTC, GNC of Tripoli and Tobruk-based House of Representative government. The agreement provided for a 17-member Council of Ministers under the chairmanship of Prime Minister in addition to a Presidency Council of nine members consisting of five deputy Prime Ministers, Prime Minister and three other ministers known as Government of National Accord (GNA).

The UN-backed GNA was announced on January 9, 2016, and a business-cum-political figure Fayez el-Sarraj was appointed the Prime Minister. The GNA members arrived in Tripoli on April 6 , 2016 from Tobruk. The Tripoli-based Salvation Government warned the members of GNA either to surrender themselves in the safe hands or leave and termed them an illegitimate infiltrator.⁶³ Some political analysts have aptly claimed that now Libya has three governments: Tobruk, Tripoli, and UN-backed GNA and its President Council and all three ironically were the parts of Morocco agreement.

The Presidency council has not been able to win the trust votes in HOR. The internal wrangling led to another deadlock in Libya. UN-backed Presidency Council's chosen Council of Ministers was rejected by the House of Representative. The opponents of the deal have already claimed that UN-brokered peace was not a fair deal as UN appointed negotiator Bernardino Leon himself was accused of acting partisan to the Tobruk group because he was eyeing a job in UAE, a well-known supporter of Tobruk group. Article 8 of the Libyan Political Agreement has become a new bone of contention because it would entail modification in the Libyan constitutional declaration by moving control over armed forces, banks and oil companies from the president of the HOR to the head of the Presidency Council.

The pro-Haftar members in the parliament want the proposed article to be removed because they would like to see him as new chief of national armed force. But anti-Haftar faction wants the particular provision to be removed.⁶⁴The suggestion of decentralization of command forces in Libya by UNSMIL chief Martin Kobler⁶⁵ is manifestation of the fact that Libya is not likely to

achieve political stability in near future. There is a talk of having three military councils from all three region of the country which would further deepen the ethnic and regional identities.

The experience of imposing or installing democracy from outside has not been a very pleasant exercise and dubbed as an export of western democracy. In a devastated Libya marred with more than five years of civil war, there seems to be no sign of any political cohesion among warring factions and security and stability in Libya seems to be a mirage. The war-torn nation is seemingly confronted by a series of challenges and each one of them seems to be bigger than the other.

The most pressing issue before the new government is to reorganize the Libyan national army which has become an obscure entity and a divided institution without any autonomy or legitimacy for itself. The emergence of Khalifa Haftar and mobilization of the discontented members of the armed force against the Islamist militias in all likelihood would challenge the legitimacy of the GNA government's own armed forces and not allow it to have statues of a permanent state institution. Today the army is working more as a personal brigade of Haftar rather than a national army. What is required at the moment is to create loyalist and trusted national armed forces.

The task of establishing political authority in the country, achieving legitimacy for the new government, winning the trust of the masses and different tribal, religious and ideological factions would be another challenge for the government of Mustafa al-Sarraj . Libya has been without a central authority for almost five years and the period has seen the emergence of primordial identity at the cost of inclusive national identity. We have seen how difficult the nation-building process has been in case of Kosovo, Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Neither the external intervention nor the imposition of selective government has been able to help the national building process.

Another formidable challenge in post-Qadhafi era is the federalist movement of the east which has always seen the west as a resources drainer and west has seen the east as an invader.⁶⁶ The east-west divide of the past has further depended and challenged the authority of the western political elite. The question of political unification of east and west may continue to linger on in near future abetting the political instability. The Berbers in the south may also raise their demands for more federal autonomy creating new hindrances in the way of the political unification in future.

The evolution of representative political structure would be another issue before the GNA. The creation of local and provincial bodies and building bottom-up democratic model might create an stable Libya.

What has really ruined the country in the last five years is the mushrooming of Jihadists, warlords and other terrorist groups. The process of disarming these warlords, neutralizing the Jihadist and defusing the terrorist outfits would be the most serious challenge for the new government. These

outfits have morphed into big and small centers of power in recent past and are likely to be the biggest obstacle in the way of political integration of the country.

One of the biggest challenges for the GNA is likely to emanate from the ISIS which in past two years has made Libya a safe haven for itself. Though the US operation in Syria and Iraq against the ISIS has made major headway but this is not likely to be so easy in case of Libya because the new regime is still crisis-ridden unit striving hard for legitimacy. The town of Sirte has been retaken from the control of the ISIS but one cannot predict whether it would bring political legitimacy to the GNA or make the ISIS to shift its focus in other parts of Libya. Mr. Haftar has already dubbed anti-ISIS armed forces as unlawful armed militias of western Libya. There are reports that the operation in Sirte was conducted by foreign troops only and the involvement of Libyan national army was nominal.

Tackling of the Islamists may not be an easy task for the new government because they are not confined in Libya alone but they enjoy cross-border support as well. The affiliation between the terror groups of Egypt and Libya is no more a secret and prevention of mutual supply of arms and crossing over of militias might account for a major source of worry for the GNA.

The differences still persist between the Tobruk and Tripoli blocks. HOR is largely supported by Libyan National Army where Haftar enjoys good clout but on the other hand Salvation group in Tripoli is supported by Libya Dawn. The urgent issue should be to end the conflict between the two and assign the task of the nation's protection to the legitimate national armed force only.

Immediately after the Vienna conference on Libya in May 2016, Prime Minister El-Serraj sought from UNSC to lift the arms embargo imposed against Libya since 2011. If the embargo is lifted, one is not sure where would these weapons go. The example of Syria is very much before us where both the rebels and the regime are armed and consequently the country swamped with all weapons without an end to the crisis.

The establishment of the control over the natural resources and resolution of the fiscal crisis may pose another challenge. Today the substantial parts of the bases of natural resources are controlled by the warlords and armed militias. To restore the control over the central bank and state-run oil companies would be an uphill task.

In addition, the Libyan government will have to muster global support for its survival. The international community already seems to be divided as Egypt has declared its support to Haftar brigade while Italy, a prominent neighboring actor, has declared that Haftar is the biggest hindrance to the success of the GNA.⁶⁷ Italy has accorded full legitimacy to the GNA while Germany has said that Haftar is an important component of the political process. The presence of French forces in eastern Libya has led to a huge protest across the country and the GNA itself termed it a breach of national sovereignty.

Conclusion:

Now Colonel Qaddafi is gone and the future of Libya lies in the enunciation of the comprehensive dialogues and entering into multiple levels of negotiations among different tribal, regional, ideological and political factions. The alacrity that had seemed after the departure of Qaddafi now appears to be a mirage. The departure of Qaddafi ushered into some superficial and some deeply rooted fault lines and these fault lines are shaping the political future of Libya. The political process of 2012 in Libya was immediately followed by the tribal factionalism and clashes among the different stake holders for dominance and failed to achieve any political stability and certainty. The transitional political process is always meant to create a cohesive political culture, inclusive political model and create a central political authority but Libya has failed on all fronts and instead has become a fragile state seemingly surviving at the mercy of Islamists, tribal mafias and the federalist center of power. What has further undermined the national project in Libya is the country's traditional division into east and west in the absence of equal distribution of national wealth. The autocratic policy of Qaddafi was able to suppress the regional desires of the people but once the central authority got dismantled, these fault lines not only surfaced but is likely to continue to pose a major challenge to the unity of the country.

To deter the demands of an eastern cessation, the policy of equal representation should be incorporated in the national political process and a bottom-up program should be initiated for the evolution of local governance which might act as a prelude to the real democracy. The new government is fighting its war against the ISIS but one cant comprehend how much times it will require in cleansing Benghazi, Misrate and Tripoli of the ISIS and other indigenous militias with their own sphere of influence. New regime needs a multi-pronged approach to win the trust of the people, neutralize the indigenous Islamist forces, and create a conducive political environment for comprehensive political dialogue for a secular democratic Libya.

The divisive tribal and regional forces and other militias might play a spoiler in the proposed political process but the new GNA does not need to retaliate in haste because it will lead to failure like in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover the narrowing of the time frame of the transition is not likely to resolve the crisis. Political and national sentiments should always be respected before taking any major decision of involving external players. The GNA should strive for disarmament of the militias through the dialogue among different political factions and political grievances and cultural sensitivities should be taken into account in the negotiation process.

The factionalism within the government and other political groups will always offer a free domain for groups like ISIS and Al-Qaida and if an early resolution of the crises is not sought, Libya might fall into the category of a failed state affecting the regional security situation which is already in a dismal state. There are reports of Libya being used as a transit point for a black market of drugs and weapons. Libya needs an overhaul of its security institution if it is to perform as a modern nation-state. Today's Libya lacks sovereignty in the classical sense of the term and the biggest challenge it might face in near future is state building. Libya strongly requires determining an

inclusive political system for social and economic satiability. Moreover the persistent social tension needs to be resolved through the comprehensive and intense political process and further the country needs to strengthen its administrative agencies like executive organ , police forces and the judiciary as well for a peaceful democratic transition.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed are of authors and do not reflect the views of the Council.

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