

**REPORT**

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## **Executive Summary**

European policymakers increasingly are looking at the Fezzan, Libya's vast and scarcely populated south west, as their frontier against sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees traveling the Central Mediterranean route to Europe. In 2016, over 160,000 took this route from Libya on makeshift boats; most had entered through this region, which connects the country's southern border with its coast. Several European countries, chiefly Italy, hope that stabilising the situation in the Fezzan and reviving its economy will help curb migrant flows. The idea has merit, but this will be no easy task and cannot succeed without also addressing the broader crises gripping the country. Any European effort to address governance, economic and security problems in the Fezzan should be coordinated with the internationally recognised government and linked to wider, nationwide initiatives to tackle issues that plague the country as a whole.

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The Fezzan suffers from multiple problems, most of which are not of its own making. The region's licit economy is depressed, but the national economic and financial institutions that could help revive it are largely paralysed. By contrast, the illicit economy is booming. The Fezzan sits at a regional crossroads, linking southern Libya to the Sahel and sub-Saharan migrant routes to northern Libya and onto Europe.

While the region is richly endowed with natural resources, it suffers from the absence of a central authority able to impose order. Incentives for smuggling of all types – people, oil, gold, weapons, drugs – far outstrip those for making money through legal means. Ethnic and tribal tensions, magnified by the political vacuum and economic competition, have been exploited by rival factions competing to control the country. External forces – regional powers, foreign mercenaries and transnational jihadist groups – have also meddled, joining local conflicts or using the south as a transit zone. Stabilising the Fezzan in the midst of such a storm will be difficult, but it has been neglected far too long, to the detriment of its residents, its neighbours and Europe alike.

The ongoing fight between Libya's rival military coalitions is perhaps the biggest challenge. The UN-backed Presidency Council and its Government of National Accord (GNA), headed by Prime Minister Faiez Serraj in Tripoli, has little standing and few local allies in the Fezzan. By contrast, factions aligned with General Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) and the eastern government based in al-Bayda enjoy greater influence, as do factions that oppose both Haftar and Serraj. Deadly fighting between these various forces has increased since early 2017 and covert foreign military support to them seems likely to rise. The spread of these national rivalries into the south has been accelerated by tensions among tribes, which have fought five successive local wars since 2011. Despite ceasefires, the risk of further escalation remains high, in part because of the failure to deliver material compensation promised during past negotiations as well as delays implementing reconstruction plans.

Stabilising the Fezzan is urgent, and not just to constrain migration. Without addressing the governance, economic and security issues in the south, Libya's broader political and military normalisation will be impossible. While this requires long-term investments, Libyan authorities and European governments can take immediate steps to smooth relations among southern tribes and improve living conditions – measures that, in due course, could reduce the incentive for people smuggling. For instance, foreign donors could work with Libya's recognised

government to energise agricultural projects in the south that have fallen into disrepair. Oil companies operating in the Fezzan and Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) also have their share of responsibility; they should seek to increase local employment and invest more in local social development projects.

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*“ A more inclusive dialogue focusing on security is needed. ”*

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A more inclusive dialogue focusing on security is also needed. Efforts to gather representatives of different communities around a table to date have included mainly tribal leaders and civil society activists. That is not enough. Talks should include military commanders and the leaders of local armed groups in a first step toward a nationwide security dialogue. As elsewhere in Libya, the question of how to structure and staff legitimate and genuinely national security forces, from army to police to border guards, is central.

Some outsiders, especially some European states, might be tempted to circumvent such a dialogue in search of a quicker military solution. That would be ill-advised: any attempt to impose a solution through military force alone would likely fuel further instability. In particular, recruiting local strongmen or cultivating alliances with specific militias risks exacerbating pre-existing conflicts. Moreover, the enormous profits derived from the black market almost certainly would surpass whatever cash outsiders can dole out to purchase loyalty.

Finally, none of these steps will have lasting effect unless and until there is greater alignment among international stakeholders. Within Europe, this requires greater cooperation between France and Italy, the two EU countries that, each for its own reasons, are focused on the Fezzan. Similarly, the EU, the U.S. and other countries should seek to lower tensions among Gulf Arab states or at least limit their impact on Libya at a time when Egypt and the United Arab Emirates are backing Haftar while Qatar and Turkey support his rivals.

Overall, Libya's neighbours, regional leaders further afield and international powers should make greater efforts to converge on a shared set of principles to address a Libyan peace process that is increasingly adrift, rather than narrowly prioritise their immediate interests. In the Fezzan as elsewhere in Libya, this would serve at least to avoid worsening an already bad situation and provide guidelines for restoring some semblance of a state – a goal that ultimately all should see as being in the country's, as well as the region's, best interests.

**Brussels/Tripoli/Sebha, 31 July 2017**

# I. Introduction

Libya's south west, a region known as the Fezzan, has become a focus of policymakers eager to stem the flow of migrants to Europe. More than 160,000 migrants and refugees, primarily sub-Saharan Africans, left Libya to reach Italy in 2016, numbers that are expected to increase by 20 per cent in 2017. Most enter Libya through its southern border and then use local smuggling networks to reach the coast, where they embark on makeshift boats to Europe. <sup>1</sup> After trying unsuccessfully to interdict these boats as they cross the Mediterranean, European policymakers are now seeking to intervene directly in the Fezzan through economic investment programs and security cooperation with local forces.

This approach is important but will prove no less challenging. The Fezzan, a chronically unstable region, is largely uncharted territory for all but a few outsiders. UN and EU officials have focused most of their resources and attention on the national Libyan conflict or on political and military developments in the country's north west and east. Without a clear understanding of the Fezzan, attempts to intervene there almost certainly are bound to fail. This report, which examines tribal and ethnic rifts, ongoing conflicts and economic hardships in the Fezzan, is a contribution to that effort. It is based on fieldwork in Libya's south west in March and April 2017.

## II. The Fezzan

Libya's south west historically has been a transit zone between sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean coast. Cross-border trade remains prominent today, though smuggling now has surpassed licit trade with the erosion of what little state authority previously existed. The region, which remained under the control of pro-Qadhafi forces until relatively late, did not experience significant violence during the 2011 war. Over time, competition over smuggling routes, resentment over unequal access to citizenship rights and easy access to the enormous stockpiles of weapons left in Qadhafi-era arms depots have contributed to sudden bouts of fighting among local groups. Competition over the region's strategic sites and riches continues to fuel conflict.

### A. Geography

The Fezzan is mainly desert with a handful of cultivated valleys and small oases scattered within hundreds of kilometres of sand. <sup>2</sup> The area is rich in crude oil, generating approximately 400,000 barrels per day, or one quarter of Libya's production, and natural gas. Since 2014, artisanal miners have extracted gold in the region without government oversight.

Sebha, with 200,000 inhabitants, is the region's administrative capital and the main hub for trafficking. The rest of the population (approximately 300,000 people) live in oasis towns.

Towns in the Jufra area (Waddan, Sawknah, Hun) are the northern entry point to the Fezzan, connecting it to Sirte and Misrata in north western Libya and Ras Lanuf and Brega to the north east. Slightly further south, Brak al-Shati and its adjoining valley (*wadi al-shati*) lie at another important crossroads linking the Fezzan to the mountains south of Tripoli. Rival military factions have fought since 2015 for control of the Jufra and Brak areas, whose location makes them the gateway to southern Libya.

South west of Sebha, a rocky plateau known as the Messack rims the Wadi Hayat, one of the region's few cultivated strips of land. Most of this area's trade routes to the south west have been shut since Algerian authorities closed their border following the January 2014 attack on the In Amenas gas complex, which was carried out by jihadists crossing from Libya. <sup>3</sup> In January 2017, Chadian authorities also closed off their border to Libya but they have since allowed limited trade under pressure from residents in northern Chad. <sup>4</sup>

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*“ On the Libyan side of the border, few have an interest in stopping traffickers – or would dare to do so. ”*



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No such restrictions exist along the border with Niger. This remains Libya's most porous border, rife with smuggling and trafficking. Most migrants enter Libya from a desert road that connects Madama in Niger (where French forces are stationed) to Toummo (in Libya) and onward to Wigh, Qatrun and Sebha. <sup>5</sup> Trade of illicit items, like weapons and drugs, goes through the Salvador Pass, which links Niger, Algeria and Libya. As a local resident explained, “Drugs and other illicit stuff goes through Salvador, but not human trafficking because for human traffickers it is easier to go from Agadez to Madama [both in Niger] and then to Toummo because security forces in Niger don't stop them. But they would stop drug traders”. <sup>6</sup> On the Libyan side of the border, few have an interest in stopping traffickers – or would dare to do so. This is either because local security forces are complicit in the human trafficking or because traffickers outgun them. <sup>7</sup>

## **B. People**

The Fezzan is home to less than 10 per cent of Libya's population (about 500,000 people), but its residents are both ethnically diverse and politically fractured. There are Arab tribes: some are large and powerful, like Awlad Suleiman (which is also in Niger) and the Qadhahfa (wealthy and, in the past, politically privileged because they were Qadhafi's own tribe); some are smaller, though intellectually or religiously influential, like the Hodairi, and others who

boast a descent from the Prophet Muhammad (*ashraf*).

There are also non-Arab minority ethnic groups, like the Tebu, Tuareg and Fezzana (*ahali*). The Tebu are an ethnic group comprising different tribes found in northern Chad, parts of Niger and in southern Libya. The Tuareg are a historically nomadic Amazigh (Berber) people who straddle the borderlands of the Western Sahara from Libya to southern Algeria and Mali. Most Tuareg have Libyan citizenship, but around 20,000 families arrived in Libya in the 1980s. Many joined Qadhafi's security forces, though they did not get full citizenship rights. The Fezzana are an entirely arabised local community. All three of these groups are Sunni Muslim. Since 2011, thousands of other people from neighbouring countries have also moved to Libya's south (often posing as Libyans), further complicating the social landscape.

The Fezzana and some smaller tribes have managed to remain neutral, partly because they are uninvolved in cross-border trafficking. Among the others, however, political rifts and competition for control of smuggling routes have contributed to tensions.

### III. Triumph of the Illegal Economy

The Fezzan is rich in natural resources: it has vast reserves of crude oil and natural gas, some deposits of gold and large underground aquifers. Smuggling, which has grown exponentially since 2011, dominates the local economy today, however. "Smuggling here is a job. It is not a crime", said a university lecturer. <sup>8</sup> Libya's deep economic recession, which has caused cash shortages, severe inflation and a soaring black market exchange rate, has encouraged illicit activity, including among the public sector employees who make up most of the formal workforce both in Fezzan and Libya as a whole. <sup>9</sup> The trafficking of people, fuel and gold is widespread and highly visible, though drugs and weapons also pass through the region surreptitiously.

#### A. People Smuggling

The majority of the illegal migrants enter Libya from Niger or Chad; smaller numbers cross over from Algeria. However they enter the country, most migrants (at least over the past year) transit through Sebha. <sup>10</sup> People smuggling through Libya generates annual revenues estimated to range between \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion. <sup>11</sup> Smuggling routes are divided into segments controlled by different groups. The Tebu control the southernmost portion, used by the bulk of migrants, from the border with Niger to Sebha. The Tuareg dominate the route from the Algerian border to Sebha. The next leg of the trip, from Sebha to Shweref, is in the hands of Magarha traffickers. Beyond that, still other tribes take over. <sup>12</sup>

A Tebu journalist explained that people smuggling can be extremely profitable and requires little start-up capital:



If you are young and own nothing you can work as a driver and earn about LYD1,000-1,500 (\$125-190 at the black market exchange rate) for every trip from border to Sebha. You do this once a week, and *voila*, in one month you make more than LYD4,000 (\$500), which is more than four times the monthly salary of a policeman. Not bad. But after a while, you want to do the trade independently and no longer just be a driver. That is because if you own and drive your own car in one trip you make up to LYD30,000 (\$3,750). Considering that a car costs you about LYD80,000 (\$10,000) you see it is very easy to start the business and it provides a quick return on investment. <sup>13</sup>

The promise of immediate cash is so alluring that many young Tebu have given up their studies.

<sup>14</sup> Tebu NGOs are already ringing alarm bells about the long-term effects:

I am afraid we are at a point of no return for the Tebu youth: many high school students take drugs like Tramadol [an opioid painkiller popular with militiamen], which is cheap, and few go on to study at university. Many are now happy with [people] smuggling. <sup>15</sup>

Because the trade generates such high profits and supports so many people, the tribes involved are unlikely to give it up, even if offered alternative sources of employment.

## B. Fuel Smuggling

Fuel smuggling, which was also a mainstay of the south's economy under Qadhafi, has expanded exponentially since 2011. Nationwide, fuel trafficking generates annual revenues valued at approximately \$2 billion. While there are no regional figures, it is reasonable to estimate that about one fifth of these illegal sales take place in the south. <sup>16</sup>

Fuel is heavily subsidised in Libya, costing only LYD0.15 per litre – \$0.12 at the official exchange rate but less than \$0.02 at the black market rate used by smugglers. Since Libya's southern neighbours pay approximately \$1 per litre, there are huge profits in smuggling and reselling the fuel. Petrol station owners control this trade. According to a Sebha resident, "They take truckloads of fuel from the storage tanks in Sebha, but instead of taking it to the petrol station and distributing it to the people, they take it directly to smuggling routes". <sup>17</sup> There is also some smaller-scale smuggling of fuel, via passenger cars and trucks. <sup>18</sup>

## C. Artisanal Gold Mining

Artisanal gold mining has become a booming industry since 2013 when deposits were discovered on rocky plateaus of the Libyan desert bordering Chad. <sup>19</sup> The exact locations of makeshift mining settlements are difficult to pin down, but those involved in the trade said that the town of Murzuq is the main hub of this informal industry, providing services and goods to

gold-rich areas along the border with Chad and Niger. <sup>20</sup> An estimated 70 per cent of the population of Murzuq works in this field (directly or in support roles and trade). At one point, about 15kg of gold (worth locally about \$400,000) were being extracted daily. <sup>21</sup>

For the most part, the Tebu (Libyan and Chadian) control the industry because they “brought in cheap Sudanese workers, who already have experience extracting gold”. <sup>22</sup> Entering the gold business requires an initial capital outlay, but sources in Murzuq describe it as accessible for the Tebu, the only people capable of navigating the desert in this area. Some Tuaregs also are involved but need a Tebu partner to cross into the area close to the Niger-Chad border. <sup>23</sup>

Mining here is entirely in the hands of the miners or their local supervisors. The internationally recognised Libyan government exercises no oversight over the prospecting, nor does it derive any revenues. None of Libya’s three governments has ever attempted to crack down on the mining, though authorities in neighbouring Chad, Niger and Algeria have attempted to do so in the gold-rich areas within their own countries.

## D. Vanishing Legal Economy

The deadly fighting in recent years, the gradual breakdown of government authority and the rise of pervasive smuggling have had a devastating impact on what remains of the legal economy in the south, based mainly on agriculture and the oil.

### 1. Agriculture

Most of the state-owned agricultural projects south of Sebha lie in complete disrepair. Even those further north or east grow only a fraction of their former crops. <sup>24</sup> Until 2011, there were thousands of hectares of state-owned farms in the Fezzan, developed in the 1980s along with Qadhafi’s Great Man-made River Project. These farms used fresh underground water and American centre-pivot irrigation technology to grow cereals and support livestock, part of a government policy to ensure food self-sufficiency. Seen from above, the irrigated lands appeared as perfectly round dark circles, a kilometre in diameter, amid an amber coloured desert. Today most of the circles are dry. <sup>25</sup>

The former head of one of the largest state-owned farms in the Obari area, the Maqnusa agricultural project, explained:

In 2010 Maqnusa used to generate LYD30 million [\$25 million according the official exchange rate in 2010] a year. At the time, we had 250 employees; 120 crop circles; 6,000ha of cultivated land; 15,000 heads of sheep; 500 cows and 300 camels. Now – in 2017 – we only have 300ha of cultivated land and 1,000 sheep. <sup>26</sup>

Other farms in the area are in an even worse state. <sup>27</sup> Employees said that lack of security was the main problem: most of the equipment was stolen, as were the electricity generators used to irrigate during power shortages. Insecurity and the occasional outburst of violence prevented employees from working at night. Another problem was the lack of funding from Tripoli: these state-owned farms are under the administrative oversight of the agriculture ministry and require state-subsidised products like fertilisers, but budgetary bottlenecks have held up needed funds. The Development Authority for the Fezzan Region (*hayyat tanmiyat manteqat fezzan*) has submitted a funding request for more than LYD400 million (\$290 million at the official exchange rate, \$50 million at the black market rate) from the internationally recognised government to relaunch agricultural projects in the south. Many doubt the money will materialise given budgetary restrictions imposed by the Central Bank of Libya.

There is widespread support for the idea of restarting agricultural production in the south; the current high prices for agricultural produce (mostly imported and expensive because of the worsening exchange rate) should make farming highly profitable. <sup>28</sup> But there is no consensus on how to do so. Some find the model of state-owned farms unappealing and support privatisation. <sup>29</sup> Privately owned farms in the area, which have flourished in recent years, seem less affected by pillaging than state-owned farms, perhaps because their owners, who live nearby, take more interest in defending them. Others, however, oppose the parcelling of land into private hands, arguing that it would generate cost inefficiencies. They suggest focusing instead on large-scale industrial farming with processing capabilities. <sup>30</sup>

One thing is certain: Libyan authorities and international development agencies keen to help the Fezzan need to invest more thought and resources in the agricultural sector, which should not be left in its current state of disrepair. This means providing, along with financial credit, greater security and feasibility studies into marketing and distribution channels.

## 2. Oil industry

The Fezzan's potential to pump more than 400,000 barrels of crude oil per day plus huge reserves of natural gas (for the most part exported to Italy via the underwater Greenstream gas pipeline to Sicily), makes the oil industry central to recovery in the south west and Libya as a whole. <sup>31</sup> Most of this production has been offline for the past two years because an armed group further north closed the crude oil pipeline connecting the fields to export terminals. <sup>32</sup>

Even after the pipeline reopened in early 2017, Tebu guards at one site (al-Feel) continued to block production for several months. They permitted it to restart only when the National Oil Corporation (NOC) started discussions about local development projects with area residents.

<sup>33</sup> Even when the fields are fully productive, however, the revenues generated do not benefit the local population directly. Many resent what they perceive as “our wealth feeding northerners”. <sup>34</sup>

The oil fields employ few locals; most of the workforce rotates in and out on special flights from

the north arranged by the operating oil companies. <sup>35</sup> Communities living near the Sharara and Feel oil fields complain there is little interaction with local residents. “There is no development in the town close to the fields, no education opportunities for us”, said a Tuareg from Obari, noting that “even the person in charge of watering the plants in the Sharara oil field is flown in from the north”. <sup>36</sup> Under Libyan law, oil companies are supposed to invest in local social development projects, but they rarely adhere to this provision either in the south or elsewhere. <sup>37</sup> To help stabilise the local economy and soothe local tensions, oil companies, in conjunction with the NOC, should do more both to engage and employ local workers and to invest in local development.

## IV. A Precarious Security Environment

Since 2011, security in southern Libya has deteriorated. Criminal gangs and smuggling rackets are now firmly established. Amid rising criminality, inter-tribal fighting and easy access to weapons, local police forces are effectively non-operational. There is neither a functioning prison nor a detention centre for illegal migrants in Sebha. <sup>38</sup> The same is true in Obari and Ghat. <sup>39</sup> Even the approximately 18,000 military officers from the south trained in the Qadhafi-era are largely inactive. Most have grown weary of the feuds in the area and have refused to resume active service until “the situation becomes clearer”. <sup>40</sup>

This lawlessness prevails despite the deployment of various military contingents, officially tasked with restoring peace and order, to the south from other parts of the country. <sup>41</sup> The rationale for deploying these forces, including, at different times, troops from western Libya, Misrata and the east, was that without them “fighting between local groups and among tribes will flare up”. <sup>42</sup> Security kept on deteriorating, however, as local wars continued.

### A. Lingering Communal Conflicts

Since the Qadhafi regime’s fall in 2011, five local conflicts, each driven by unique factors, have caused hundreds of fatalities. <sup>43</sup> There are three main axes of rivalry:

- The Tebu vs. Awlad Suleiman conflict: This erupted with extreme violence in 2012 and again in 2014. Both tribes emerged as victors following the regime’s 2011 collapse but turned against each other as they started competing over access to state funds and state-subsidised goods. They have also been involved in smuggling to neighbouring countries. <sup>44</sup>
- The Qadhadhfa vs. Awlad Suleiman conflict: Fighting in Sebha in 2014 and again in 2016 pitted losers against winners of the 2011 war. <sup>45</sup> Such tensions persist among other tribes (and indeed the former regime’s green

flag is visible across the Wadi Hayat and in Ghat), but for the most part the pro- and anti-Qadhafi divide of 2011 has been replaced by pro- or anti-LNA (the Haftar-led Libyan National Army) allegiances.

- The Tebu vs. Tuareg conflict: Violence erupted in Obari and in Sebha in 2014-2015 over national-level political and military rifts, external funding and the inflow of foreign fighters. Barely a month after the emergence of two rival Libyan governments and parliaments in August 2014, the Tebu and Tuareg went from being close allies (united in 2012-13 in their quest for minority and linguistic rights against what they both perceived as dominant Arab exclusivism) to foes. <sup>46</sup> The government in eastern Libya backed the Tebu and urged them to seize control of Obari, a southern town that both claimed had become a hotbed for jihadists. <sup>47</sup> In contrast, the Tripoli-based government and allied Misratan military forces in the south backed the Tuareg, who consider Obari historically theirs. <sup>48</sup> The fighting spilled sporadically over to Sebha, and continued in Obari until early 2016. The conflict also had an economic dimension as members of the two tribes competed over control of smuggling routes to Niger. <sup>49</sup>

Most of these conflicts ended without a clear winner. As of July 2017, there is no active conflict between these groups and some argue that “tensions are no longer on the front burner and tribes of the south no longer want war”. <sup>50</sup> Not all agree; some said that ceasefire agreements remain precarious and chances of revived fighting high. <sup>51</sup> One reason is that most of those involved in the conflicts expect monetary compensations (*diya*, blood money) for families of killed tribesmen. Qatar still has not disbursed these payments to the Tebu and Tuareg, which it had agreed to bankroll in late 2015 to pressure the two factions into stopping the war in Obari.

<sup>52</sup> An influential Tuareg from Obari stated:

The peace now is only on paper. The agreement is in your dreams. The truth is that there is no real *sulh* (reconciliation). Seventy houses of Tuareg families here were destroyed and are still in ruins. If there is no compensation, there could be return to war. Everybody here still has weapons. <sup>53</sup>

The slow pace of reconstruction of the war-torn town, where the local university has been closed for three years and several schools still show scars of war, adds to these problems.

Similar dynamics triggered by expectations of payments also affect reconciliation efforts between the Awlad Suleiman and the Tebu. Representatives of both sides convened in Rome in March 2017 under the aegis of the Italian interior ministry and the Presidency Council (represented at the talks by Abdelsalam Kajman from the Brak al-Shati area). <sup>54</sup> The Libyan participants assumed that Italy would provide monetary compensation for casualties of the

Tebu vs Awlad Suleiman conflict, as Qatar had promised to do in the Tebu-Tuareg negotiations, and as government of former Prime Minister Ali Zeidan had done in 2014 following the first Tebu-Awlad Suleiman conflict in 2012. But in Rome the issue of who would pay (and whether anyone would pay) appears to have sparked problems from the outset and continues to cause resentment and misunderstanding, mainly among the Tebu. <sup>55</sup>

This is not to say that peace requires monetary compensation. In fact, some tribal leaders suggest it would be better for all communities to give up these “rights for their dead”. <sup>56</sup> Others argue that the problems are elsewhere and that ceasefire agreements cannot hold because they are negotiated by tribal elders who lack leverage over their youth. <sup>57</sup> Many of the foreign tribesmen from neighbouring Chad or Niger who fight in southern Libya also feel little obligation to abide by agreements negotiated by Libyan tribal elders. <sup>58</sup> The international community should neither overestimate the durability of ceasefire arrangements nor underestimate lingering tensions and those fuelled by external actors.

## **B. East-West Battlefield in the South**

Since the political crisis that divided the country in 2014, the south has become a battlefield for nationwide rivalries opposing Misratan forces aligned with the GNA on one side and the Libyan National Army (LNA) loyal to the eastern government on the other.

A Misratan military contingent (called the Third Force, *al-Quwa al-Thaletha*) arrived in Sebha in February 2014 at the request of local notables and with an official mandate from the (then united) government in Tripoli. It was sent to stop the war between the Awlad Suleiman and the Tebu and, more broadly, help secure the south. This well-equipped force became the main military contingent in Sebha from 2014 to mid-2017. With more than 4,000 men on its payroll, the Third Force controlled the city’s main military airbase at Tamanhindt and brought into its fold some local armed groups that operated as the Eighth Force (*al-Quwa al-Thamina*). For some time, the Third Force also had men stationed in Germa and in the Sharara oil field farther west. <sup>59</sup>

But after three years and the deterioration of the security situation in Sebha, many local residents became weary of Misrata’s presence. A Sebha military officer not aligned to any group said:

Misrata came in 2014 to help and people here were fine with it because they thought that Misrata would stop the fighting, curb crime and reduce illegal migration. But they did nothing of this. In fact they made relations between groups even worse because they divided people and tribes – some were with Misrata, others against it. So people started to think that they were better off without them. <sup>60</sup>

Growing local dissatisfaction toward Misrata played into Haftar's hands, particularly as he imposed himself as the GNA's most formidable opponent by 2016. <sup>61</sup> His southern forces included the LNA contingent stationed in Brak al-Shati under Mohamed Ben Nayel and the Greater Sirte Operations Room (GSOR, *urfat amaliyat sirt al-kubra*), an LNA outfit stationed further north, in Ras Lanuf and Zella. <sup>62</sup>

The Brak al-Shati contingent, after cooperating briefly with the Misratans in mid-2016, became the most vocal proponent of Misrata leaving Sebha and, more specifically, the Tamanhindt airbase. <sup>63</sup> By doing so, they gained support of Sebha notables who also started clamouring for Misrata's withdrawal. In early 2017, Ben Nayel's men began attacking the Third Force in Tamanhindt with heavy artillery.

The aim of the Greater Sirte Operations Room was to capture the strategic Jufra airbase, which was under the control of Misrata and other forces aligned with the Tripoli-based government. These included the anti-Haftar group known as the Benghazi Defence Brigade (BDB), mostly composed of fighters from Benghazi driven out by the LNA. Since 2016, the BDB had been using Jufra, at the crossroads between southern and northern Libya, as a logistical base to attack LNA positions in the east. <sup>64</sup>

Following a rapid escalation of violence in May-June 2017, prompted by an attack on Brak al-Shati airbase by the BDB and pro-Misrata forces, LNA-aligned forces took over both Tamanhindt and the Jufra airbase; by June 2017 Misrata's Third Force withdrew entirely from the south. <sup>65</sup> Since Misrata's withdrawal, there has been only one, rapidly quelled, episode of fighting in Sebha. <sup>66</sup> Jamal Treiki, the head of the Third Force, and others warned of a possible flare up in the south or even ISIS attacks should Misrata be forced to leave. <sup>67</sup>

Though attacks by ISIS affiliates have increased between Sirte and Sebha in recent months, locals apparently most fear rising crime. <sup>68</sup> As a Sebha resident said:

There is no police here, no units fighting against crime. Sebha is full of criminals and lots of drugs come through here. If things don't get better, they can only get worse. [...] Someone can attack you just to steal a phone. I am not afraid of escalation of fighting between tribes because at the end of the day *ayyan* (tribal leaders) can stop that. But they have no control over crime. That is more dangerous. <sup>69</sup>

Other issues of concern are the rapidly shifting alliances among and within tribes. Both are recurring sources of instability in the south and could remain so even after recent dramatic changes in the balance of power on the ground.

### C. Fluid and Fragmented Loyalties

The tribes and ethnic groups of the Fezzan are not monolithic entities. <sup>70</sup> The Tuareg, for example, are internally divided along military lines. At any given moment, some members might fight in the name of forces aligned with the Tripoli-based government, others on behalf of Haftar and still others would be neutral. A similar pattern occurred with the Tebu, whose commanders are on both sides of the military divide, as well as with the Arab tribes.

Among the Tuareg, these divisions were the result of threats by the different Tripoli governments to cut the salaries of all military personnel without a national ID number (*raqm watani*). While the IDs were introduced in Libya in 2013 to control public payrolls, many Tuareg – including some employed as professional military by Qadhafi – did not possess a number nor could they obtain one since they did not meet the requirement of being a full Libyan citizen.

<sup>71</sup> An activist said:

It started in 2013 when Osama Juweili of Zintan was defence minister. The only way for those who saw their salaries cut off to resume being paid was to join the Zintani forces. In that case, a Tuareg would be given a national ID number and a salary. *Fajr Libya* [Libya Dawn, the Misrata-led military coalition that clashed with Zintani forces in Tripoli in July-August, sparking the divide between rival governments and parliaments] did the same: they gave a national ID and salary if you joined them. Since *Karama* [the Haftar-led Operation Dignity to seize control of Benghazi launched in May 2014] started, Haftar has given LYD3,000 a month [\$2,170 at the official exchange rate, but around \$375 at the 2017 black market exchange rate] to whoever agreed to fight with *Karama* forces in Benghazi. <sup>72</sup>

Some Tuareg say they find power struggles within the capital confusing; they feel manipulated by the country's various military factions. Speaking in April 2017, a Tuareg, who before 2011 worked as a desert tourist guide and since the war has been employed by various military forces operating in the Obari area, acknowledged:

We don't really understand what is happening or what will happen. In 2011 when the revolution started, I joined an anti-Qadhafi force of *thuwwar* (revolutionaries). Then Zintan came and said that the force I had been working with was al-Qaeda. So I left them and joined Zintan as part of the Petroleum Facilities Guards. Then Zintan left without warning us [in November 2014] and Misrata came here. So I joined the Misratan force. Now we are with the Third Force. But then people say that Haftar is getting strong and his people say that Misrata is not legal. You see, we don't really know what to do. <sup>73</sup>

Amid this confusion, another Tuareg force is emerging in the south under the leadership of a Qadhafi-era general, Ali Kanna, who says he is neutral in the national conflict and aspires to a unified army. <sup>74</sup> In early 2017, however, Kanna tilted toward the Misratans, leaving open the question of how he will position himself in the long run should the LNA's standing in the south



The Tebu have also experienced shifting loyalties and internal divisions. <sup>76</sup> In 2012, during the first Tebu-Awlad Suleiman war, they aligned with Misrata while the Awlad Suleiman opposed it. In 2014, the alignments were reversed: the three main Awlad Suleiman armed groups in Sebha (*katiba reda*, *ahrar fezzan* and *shuhada sebha*) cooperated with Misrata while the Tebu were backed by the LNA, Zintani armed groups and by factions close to the old regime. Throughout the political and military crisis of 2014-2015 and the Tebu-Tuareg conflict, the Tebu largely remained in the LNA camp. By the end of 2016, as reconciliation talks with the Tuareg matured and relations with Zintan soured, the Tebu-LNA alliance broke down. Several Tebu commanders distanced themselves from the LNA because of Haftar's perceived pro-Arab bias. <sup>77</sup> In 2017, the Tebu split: some units remained aligned with the LNA, others supported Misrata. The same applied to the Awlad Suleiman. <sup>78</sup> Misrata's recent withdrawal from the south signals a major change in the balance of power and is likely to trigger further realignments in the south.

Another wild card is the presence of foreign fighters recruited by both the Misratan-backed coalition and the LNA, as well as their respective local allies. The origin and exact numbers of these fighters remain murky although most appear to be Chadian and Sudanese; local sources offer differing accounts regarding who fights for whom, with some groups switching sides. In mid-2017, fighters with opposition armed groups from northern Chad – mainly from the FACT (Front for Change and Concord in Chad) – appeared to be fighting alongside the pro-Misrata coalition whereas Sudanese and Darfuri groups (eg, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and SL/Mini Minawi) were on the LNA side. <sup>79</sup> There were also allegations of *janjawid* [Sudanese Arab] fighters in Libya, though it was unclear whose side they were on. <sup>80</sup>

A recently published report, which discussed reasons for the Misrata-led coalition's recruitment of Chadian fighters, offers the following rationale:

Their Libyan hosts' initial aim was to prevent these Chadian forces from being recruited as mercenaries by their adversaries in Tobruk. Another aim was to encourage Haftar's Chadian recruits to switch sides, then to use them as mercenaries against Haftar or ISIS. The aim of the 'third force' was also to use these troops to put pressure on [Chad's President Idris] Déby and to distance him from Haftar. <sup>81</sup>

## V. No GNA, Few Internationals in the South

The internationally recognised government in Tripoli remains disengaged and lacks influence in the Fezzan. The EU, most EU member states, and international organisations have at best a limited presence on the ground; only Italy is trying to implement a stabilisation plan for the south.

## A. No Central State

State authorities in Tripoli historically have enjoyed less direct influence in the Fezzan than elsewhere in the country. Yet their presence has never been as marginal as today. An Arab tribesman from Wadi Hayat said, “Serraj is completely uninfluential here. About 60 per cent of the local population supports Haftar”. <sup>82</sup>

The GNA’s two main rivals fare somewhat better. Since 2014, Khalifa Ghwell’s Tripoli-based, unrecognised government and LNA forces, who recognise the east-based government as legitimate, have reached out to local communities and co-opted their support. “Haftar and LNA envoys came here and distributed vehicles and spoke to local military groups. Ghwell also did the same,” said a Tebu, an account confirmed by Arab tribal members. <sup>83</sup> As recently as April 2017, representatives of both Ghwell and Haftar – but not Serraj – were present in the town of Murzuq, for example. A local resident explained:

Murzuq has two heads of police, one appointed by the Ghwell government (a Tebu) and the other by Haftar and the eastern government (a Fezzana). Both operate from the *mudiriya* (police station), and have offices side by side. The two don’t fight each other. They each give their orders to the police force. But the police force is actually the same – so *de facto* these men are taking orders from two heads of police. There is nobody appointed by the Presidency Council here, in the whole of Murzuq. <sup>84</sup>

GNA supporters acknowledge their lack of influence in the south, which the Presidency Council attributes to its inability to access and dispose of funds for southern institutions. <sup>85</sup>

The Presidency Council also lost ground militarily. Its main ally in the Fezzan, the Misratan Third Force, withdrew from Sebha’s Tamanhindt military base in late May 2017; its departure weakened the council’s local allies. Advancing LNA forces expelled the Benghazi Defence Brigade (BDB), an unofficial military coalition stationed in Jufra and backed by al-Mahdi al-Barghati, the Serraj-appointed defence minister, in June 2017. This has given LNA-aligned military groups the upper hand, at least for now.

## B. The International Community in the South

Aware of the fragility of the Tripoli-based government and its lack of operating capacity across the Fezzan and in the border area, the EU and member states until recently brushed off Libya’s south as “a region where we simply do not have an institutional partner and therefore where we cannot operate”. <sup>86</sup> As a result, European efforts to curb migrant flows until recently had focused mainly on stopping smugglers in international waters off Libya’s north-west coast and in Niger.

Established in late 2014, the European Union Naval Force Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED), also known as Operation Sophia, tried to disrupt human smuggling and trafficking networks between Libya and Europe while saving lives at sea. <sup>87</sup> Notwithstanding these and other efforts – such as training coastguards, facilitating voluntary repatriation flights and enhancing UN agencies’ migrant-related activities – migrant flows from Libya to Europe continued to increase. <sup>88</sup> Efforts to stop people from entering Libya through Niger also have fallen short of expectations. Despite EU support for authorities in Niger and a government-led crackdown on smugglers in Agadez in 2016, which briefly reduced entries, by mid-2017 the number of migrants entering Libya via the Niger border rose again. <sup>89</sup>

In early 2017, with attempts to stem migration off Libya’s coastline or from northern Niger faltering, European policymakers shifted gears and decided to tackle the problem also from southern Libya. <sup>90</sup> Some of Serraj’s international backers – particularly Italy, the European country most directly affected by Libya’s migrant flows, and Germany – appear keen to take the lead. <sup>91</sup>

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*“ For the past several years, most international organisations and Western countries have eschewed work in southern Libya. ”*



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But they do not know where to begin. For the past several years, most international organisations and Western countries have eschewed work in southern Libya. The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) team, the EU delegation to Libya and most embassies (all of which had moved from Tripoli to Tunis by early 2015) admitted they barely followed dynamics in the south, focusing instead on the national political crisis and the east-west military divide. <sup>92</sup> The exceptions are the French military (which was interested in southern Libya as part of Operation Barkhane) and neighbouring states – Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Algeria and Tunisia – that need to secure their borders and monitor the flow of people and fighters. As mentioned, Qatar was also involved in mediating peace talks in the Obari conflict.

In April 2017, the EU allocated €90 million (\$105 million) for development aid to Libya as part of the North of Africa Window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, some of which is due to be spent on projects in the south. <sup>93</sup> EU officials said additional funds could be earmarked for such projects, though Libyans are sceptical. <sup>94</sup> Many questioned whether the UN agencies that will receive these funds can do much in the south. A Libyan diplomat said:

They allocated these funds without asking themselves what they can do. There is a simple

problem of access: how are these organisations going to roll out their projects in the south if they lack implementation capability and access? <sup>95</sup>

Difficulties operating in the Fezzan will continue to be a key impediment. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has local staff in Obari and Sebha, working on the rehabilitation of local hospitals, schools and sanitation, but this appears to be more the exception than the rule. <sup>96</sup> Several international NGOs engage in reconciliation projects in the south yet these initiatives tend to occur outside of Libya. A number of UN agencies are trying to implement development projects across southern Libya but they operate mainly through local partners or the Libyan Red Crescent. <sup>97</sup> Most foreign NGOs that were considering starting operations in Sebha gave up because of security concerns. <sup>98</sup> Even the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which has a presence in Sebha, has had trouble operating since it likened the treatment of migrants there to the slave trade. <sup>99</sup>

Despite these constraints, Italy, which is eager to become more active in the Fezzan, is promoting its own stabilisation project. Since early 2017, a government-funded NGO has convened meetings with stakeholders from southern Libya for an ambitious project titled “A plan for peace, stability and security in the south of Libya”. <sup>100</sup> Its aim is to confront “illegal immigration, illicit traffics and terrorism” and it includes a tribal reconciliation program; cultural and medical hubs; an economic project to create industrial centres; and local anti-illegal smuggling police units with members recruited from groups currently involved in human trafficking. Initial costs are estimated at €90 million for which Italy is seeking EU funding. <sup>101</sup> The idea, an EU official familiar with the project said, is that “if you want to peel away people from the human trafficking business you need to co-opt them and to do so you must buy them over”. <sup>102</sup>

Many expressed doubts about the project, however. Some tribal leaders who attended the Rome talks questioned the “cultural hubs”, telling their hosts they did not need their former colonial masters “to help the tribes preserve their cultural identities”. <sup>103</sup> Some Italian analysts fear that trying to co-opt local tribes into anti-smuggling local police units without parallel efforts to address Libya’s macroeconomic problems will not reduce the number of migrants, just increase the price they must pay to smugglers. <sup>104</sup> Questions likewise surround the proposed industrial projects, which include glass and marble factories, whose products will be difficult to market in the sparsely populated south and hard to deliver to wider markets further north because of insecurity on the roads. <sup>105</sup>

## **VI. Policy Implications and Conclusion**

Libyan authorities, the EU and European governments can take steps to improve conditions in the region, which over time can discourage the people smuggling that is Europe’s paramount concern.

## A. Security

Initiatives to end the tribal wars that have killed thousands in the Fezzan over the past five years have failed thus far to build a solid peace. Despite ongoing ceasefire arrangements and dialogue between groups once at war, lingering tensions remain, some deepened by these very efforts to end the fighting. Qatar's failure to deliver the monetary compensation promised during its mediation efforts, for example, has become a potential trigger for renewed violence. Given uncertainty over what Qatar will do – particularly given its isolation from other powers seeking to project influence in Libya, especially Egypt and the United Arab Emirates – expectations need to be adjusted in subsequent negotiations. Efforts still underway, such as negotiations between the Tebu and the Awlad Suleiman, should avoid empty promises. Monetary compensation may not be the most effective way to engineer a settlement; it may be wiser to focus on concrete issues – such as security, freedom of movement and access to services such as hospitals and universities – that affect people's everyday lives.

More importantly, there needs to be rethinking about how to address Libya's security challenges, with an eye to the south. Narrow, local talks among tribal representatives and civil society activists are not enough. These should be accompanied by negotiations specifically aimed first at bringing together military commanders and leaders of armed groups operating in the south and then integrated into a wider national security dialogue. Stabilisation of the south will depend largely on the outcome of competition between military groups nominally aligned to the internationally recognised government in Tripoli and those belonging to the military coalition under General Haftar. Crisis Group previously urged a national dialogue to address this rift, but it has yet to materialise. Instead, conversations on security so far have focused on creation of a secure zone in and around Tripoli. This is vital but insufficient; it will do little for the rest of the country, including the south.

Restoring an effective, integrated national army with a clear chain of command is crucial both nationally and in the south, where Arab, Tebu and Tuareg officers all aspire to positions of influence. Ordinary citizens, meanwhile, crave a legitimate armed force that can impose a modicum of order.

Beyond the military, other security functions – ordinary policing, securing oil and gas facilities, border guards, etc. – should be addressed both in any southern strategy and in the wider national security dialogue that remains, for now, largely unstructured. UNSMIL, pursuant to its mandate, should take the lead in constructing and conducting this security dialogue and ensuring inclusion of the south and of its concerns. As a preliminary step, and as it prepares to return to a permanent presence in Libya after a prolonged absence, UNSMIL should deploy to the area.

*stabilisation could spill over to the south and undermine stabilisation efforts. ”*



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The different political and strategic agendas that drive various European countries also need greater coordination. Today, France and Italy have taken the most active approach toward the south, each motivated by separate and at times competing priorities. Paris is concerned about the Sahel’s strategic stability not only because it has troops deployed there but also because it is an area of privileged French influence in Africa. Rome has energy interests in Libya (including in the natural gas extracted in the south) and is concerned primarily about the flow of migrants that land on its shores. The two countries have lent political and at times military backing to rival sides in the Libyan conflict (with France giving LNA forces covert military support in 2016) even as they both nominally support the UN-led diplomatic process. <sup>106</sup> Tensions between Rome and Paris over their respective roadmaps for Libya’s stabilisation could spill over to the south and undermine stabilisation efforts.

Europe as a whole is motivated by the migration question, and often appears to be seeking the kind of partnerships it has implemented with countries such as Turkey, designed to prevent refugees and migrants from reaching the continent. In Libya, this is not feasible: the internationally recognised government has little implementing capability, especially in the Fezzan, where forces opposed to the Tripoli government have the upper hand. Instead, it would be wiser to exert greater diplomatic pressure on Libya’s meddling neighbours (particularly Egypt and the UAE, whose military action and aid in support of Haftar have been most disruptive), while avoiding the temptation to pick winners in local or national conflicts. At the same time, Europe should provide greater support to UN efforts to resolve the Libyan conflict, stabilise the national economy and create a negotiation track for armed actors aimed at creating a more integrated security sector. <sup>107</sup>

## **B. Economic Alternatives**

Without security, it will be hard to build the economy; without economic alternatives, it will be difficult to curb trafficking, including of migrants; and as long as trafficking continues, Fezzan residents will have incentives to resist efforts to impose security. This vicious cycle has left European officials both seized with the urgency of reducing migrant flows on the Central Mediterranean route and deeply pessimistic that anything meaningful can be done.

That pessimism has stymied even modest, but useful initial steps. In the long term, an end to the Libyan conflict would create opportunities that will lure many back into the licit economy while absorbing migrant labour from sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, as was the case before 2011. Libya has massive potential wealth and a long backlog of major infrastructure and

reconstruction projects. In the short to medium term, even as the conflict endures, some measures are both possible and advisable:

First, economic or social development projects require careful feasibility studies, especially given the EU's and member states' lack of experience or contacts with the Fezzan. The agricultural sector is especially worth exploring: farming is not highly reliant on high-tech equipment, which is difficult to maintain and secure, and it can quickly bring food and employment to the local population. As Crisis Group observed in the south, privately owned and secured farms have continued to function, even amid the current disorder, because owners have a stake in protecting them. In contrast, low paid employees fled the now largely defunct state-owned farms when conditions deteriorated. Further studies are necessary to determine whether the better solution would be privatisation, cooperative ownership structures or another form of collective organisation. In the meantime, the EU and others should encourage and, if necessary, help the UN-recognised government to improve its agricultural sector, which also would enhance its standing among the Libyan people.

Second, UN agencies, in coordination with the internationally recognised government and local municipal authorities should seek to reopen Sebha airport, facilitate negotiations among local security factions to secure it and carry out the minor infrastructural work necessary to enable commercial flights to Obari. This would help decrease the Fezzan's sense of isolation.

Third, national and international oil companies – notably around Murzuq and Obari, the two locations where they have facilities – should implement small-scale development projects in cooperation with local civil society. According to Libyan law, oil companies are supposed to invest in communities and promote social development projects, but they do not. Legal obligations aside, it would be smart business to lower community resentment. In April 2017, promises by managers of Libya's NOC to invest in Murzuq persuaded local guards in al-Feel, an oilfield operated by Italy's ENI, to lift their blockade on production. The NOC should deliver on its promises to avoid new problems and it should reach out to other communities in oil-rich areas. Maintaining good relations with civil society groups is all the more important in the current atmosphere of insecurity, where a single militia leader can block production in hopes of a pay-off. When a community has an interest in ensuring that does not happen it can pressure local militias to back off.

These would all be modest beginnings, but the international community has much ground to make up in Libya's south.

**Brussels/Tripoli/Sebha, 31 July 2017**

## **Appendix A: Map of Libya**



## Related Tags

HUMANITARIAN FALLOUT OF CONFLICT

LIBYA

groups to create common ground with eastern commanders (as well as reassure Haftar backers such as Egypt) and space to start local contacts between military representatives from both sides.

In turn, Haftar's forces should halt their offensive in Benghazi and refrain from moving west of the Gulf of Sirte, as they have threatened. They should engage with Benghazi residents who have relocated in the west and reassure them they can go home safely. They and their affiliated security forces (such as intelligence and internal security organs) should also cease abuses against residents accused of siding with the Presidency Council.

Haftar should likewise re-engage with UNSMIL, particularly its security team, to reach a broad understanding on a possible security dialogue. The priorities in any political solution should be an Article 8 compromise, especially on army and police command chains, and consensus on a unified security force. Disagreement, including over who should lead the military and which Islamist factions should be fought (only IS and al-Qaeda or also groups that have collaborated with them), can be overcome by ensuring that key military representatives from both sides are at the table. This means staking out a compromise whereby, as a French diplomat said, "Haftar has to be in the picture, even if he cannot be at the centre". <sup>330</sup>

Both the UN and council members have floated the idea of creating a forum for security actors to negotiate these issues and be directly involved in shaping a unified military command. Thus far, these efforts have been limited to one July meeting, hosted by UNSMIL in Tunis, bringing together military actors from both camps. <sup>331</sup> Several proposals have been aired. In June, Kobler proposed a military council divided into regional commands – essentially acknowledging current reality – but under the Presidency Council's authority. In September, boycotting council member Qatrani, a Haftar ally, proposed a five-person body, separate from the council and including Serraj, two of his deputies (possibly Maitig from Misrata and Koni from the south), Haftar and HQR President Saleh, that would assume the council's supreme commander role.



These separate but similar proposals have drawbacks: Haftar and his associates rejected Kobler's as an attempt to divide the army; Qatrani's excludes western military leaders. But the underlying acknowledgment that military power has become localised is worth retaining. A third, perhaps better way forward, may be to separate the Presidency Council's civilian and military roles. Some council members are considering a "Supreme Defence Committee" in which Haftar would sit with western officers such as Colonel Salem Joha from Misrata (nominated, though he did not accept, as a member of the military operations room for the Misrata-Sirte area), but it is unclear if Haftar and key Misrata armed groups would agree. <sup>333</sup>

Whatever the format, a forum is needed for the Presidency Council and its military advisers to negotiate with military from both sides over the command chain, or at least find a placeholder formula until a solution to the Article 8 dispute can be found. The council must do more to create confidence that its security strategy will lead to a working army and police that stand above the political divide. What it has done thus far – announcing creation of a Presidential Guard and empowering eastern military actors such as Barghathi and Jadran to try to fragment Haftar's forces – is far from a national security strategy and has backfired, particularly as internationals have worked to contrary ends. Instead of creating a Presidential Guard that would deepen the divide, the council and its TSC should draft a security plan that would put Tripoli under the army and police, including elements from the east and Zintan.

## **D. The Need for International Convergence**

The international community has a key role. Polarisation of political and military support to Libyan factions entrenches the conflict and makes it more difficult to salvage the accord elements all can agree on. Outside actors – pro-Presidency Council (the U.S., UK, Italy, Algeria, Turkey and Qatar) and those who support the council while also providing support to Haftar (Russia, Egypt, the UAE and to an extent France) – must chart a way based on the common ground between them.

Many in the first camp have been too optimistic that an agreement imposed on recalcitrant factions would eventually be accepted. The focus on eliminating IS in Sirte, which they hoped would establish Misratan forces' counter-jihadist credentials for states such as Egypt that have long argued Haftar was the only leader taking on jihadists overshadowed other factors. <sup>334</sup>

The gamble that the accord roadmap could be implemented even without HoR endorsement underestimated the extent to which opponents could exploit this to gain support in the east. It made it easy to paint the UN as biased, thus hindering its impartial mediator role. Conversely, those who have supported Haftar, undermining an agreement to which they pay lip-service, have derailed the process but not provided constructive alternatives. If they want to maintain a united Libya and stop the conflict spiralling toward worse confrontation, they will have to set limits on their client.

Perhaps unavoidably in a context of regional, even global, upheaval, some of these actors filter

their Libya policy through the lens of geopolitics: the U.S.-Russia rivalry over Syria and Ukraine, the regional divide over political Islam and contests for influence over the Sahel and Maghreb. By this logic, compromise is undesirable if considered success for a rival.<sup>335</sup> Yet, the status quo (a deteriorating situation) can only lead to protracted conflict that would plunge Libya into further chaos, with no certain victory for any camp, great damage to the economy and few of the opportunities many hope for in post-conflict reconstruction.

At a minimum, states with leverage over Haftar should press him and his allies to stop calling for further military operations toward southern and western Libya and withdraw their support if he continues to refuse a negotiated solution. Similarly, those backing Tripoli- and Misrata-based forces should dissuade them from a counteroffensive against Haftar in the Gulf of Sirte.

Generally, outside actors should refrain from taking sides, for instance through increasing military support to Haftar or supporting a Presidency Council call for a partial no-fly zone.<sup>336</sup> They should instead focus on the lowest common denominators, which do exist, and not endorse measures that they undermine on the ground.<sup>337</sup> At a minimum, these include the need to stabilise the economy by increasing oil and gas exports; creating a unified army chain of command as part of a reunified security structure; preserving Libya's territorial integrity; and confronting IS and al-Qaeda. They should also persuade their Libyan friends that a military solution does not exist and agree on parameters for renewed negotiation.

## V. Conclusion

The absence of a security dialogue and agreement among competing internal and external actors has rendered the well-intentioned Skhirat accord impossible to fully implement at this time. It is critical to return to hammer out a security agreement that can be married to those elements of the accord that both sides support. On its current trajectory, the peace process is headed for a failure that would leave pressing international issues unresolved, such as combating people-smugglers and jihadist groups, and ensure dramatic worsening of living conditions for most Libyans. What has been achieved by the UN-led negotiations – broad agreement on the need for a transitional framework and some of its critical political elements – would be lost. The December 2015 agreement could have been imposed on recalcitrant actors had they been marginal and the international community united. That was not the case. Salvaging a political solution requires dealing with the fragmented and deeply frustrating Libya that exists, with its local leaders and armed groups, not the one we wish for.

**Tripoli/Brussels, 4 November 2016**

## **Members of the Presidency Council of the Council of Ministers**

Members of the Presidency Council of the Council of Ministers, as appointed according to the Libyan Political Agreement:

### **Faiez al-Serraj**

President of the Presidency Council, from a prominent Tripoli family and trained as an engineer, he worked prior to 2011 in the housing ministry and in August 2014 became an HoR member representing Tripoli.

### **Ahmed Maitig**

Deputy President of the Presidency Council, and a Misrata businessman, the GNC elected him prime minister in May 2014, but the Supreme Court annulled the vote on procedural grounds. He is a nephew of Abdelrahman Swehli, president of the High State Council.

### **Fathi al-Majbari**

Deputy President of the Presidency Council, an academic and economist at Benghazi University who served as education minister in the Abdullah al-Thinni government in 2014-2015. He is originally from Jalo.

### **Musa al-Koni**

Deputy President of the Presidency Council, a Tuareg from the south and consul-general in Mali under the old regime, he defected in 2011 and was appointed the Tuareg representative to the National Transitional Council.

### **Ali al-Qatrani**

Deputy President of the Presidency Council, a Benghazi businessman and late addition to the council seen as General Haftar's appointee, he suspended his participation in January 2016 after a row over the appointment as defence minister of al-Mahdi al-Barghathi, who is from Qatrani's al-Awaqir tribe.

### **Abdelsalam Kajman**

Deputy President of the Presidency Council, an engineer from Sebha believed to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood and picked instead of GNC Deputy President Salah Makhzoum, whose nomination some members of the dialogue committee refused.

### **Omar al-Aswad**

Minister of State for Legislative Affairs, from Zintan and a member of Qadhafi's amn al-khariji (foreign security service), he withdrew from the Presidency Council in January 2016, accusing it of cronyism and corruption.

### **Mohammed Ammari**

Minister of State for Specialised Council Affairs, a former GNC member from Benghazi, he is a non-aligned Islamist who prior to 2011 studied in Germany and the UK.

### **Ahmed Hamza**

Minister of State for Civil Society Affairs, from Traghen in the south, was a member in the Qadhafi era of the revolutionary councils and part of the "Libya al-Ghad" (Libya Tomorrow) reform initiative led by Seif al-Islam al-Qadhafi, the late ruler's son.

These appointments follow a geographical partitioning, with three members from each of Libya's three provinces: west (Tripolitania), east (Cyrenaica) and south (Fezzan). For the west: Serraj, Maitig, Aswad; for the east: Majbari, Qatrani, Ammari; for the south: Koni, Kajman, Hamza.

## **Glossary**

**EUBAM:** European Border Assistance Mission in Libya

**EUNAVFOR MED:** European Naval Force – Mediterranean (also known as Operation Sophia)

**GNA:** Government of National Accord

**GNC:** General National Congress, the parliament elected in 2012, based in Tripoli

**High State Council:** Advisory body created by the LPA, primarily composed of former GNC members

**HoR:** House of Representatives, parliament elected in June 2014 and based in Tobruk since August 2014

**IS:** Islamic State

**JCP:** Justice and Construction Party, associated with the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood

**LPA:** Libyan Political Agreement (signed on 17 December 2015 in Skhirat, Morocco)

**LIAM:** Libyan International Assistance Mission

**NOC:** National Oil Corporation

**Presidency Council:** Nine-member body created by the December 2015 Libyan Political Agreement, holding executive powers and tasked with nominating a GNA

**Presidential Guard:** New security force under the control of the Presidential Council

**TSC:** Temporary Security Committee, task force in charge of security questions created by the LPA and answerable to the Presidency Council

**UNSMIL:** United Nations Support Mission in Libya

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