

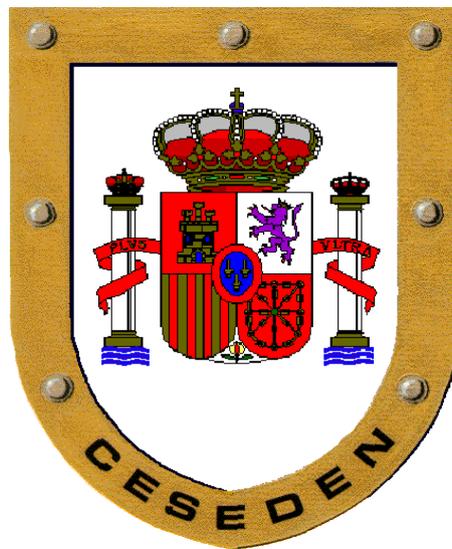


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*Militant groups of radical ideology and violent character
region: "MENA"*

**The nature of the Libyan chronic
instability aggravated since 2011
and its consequences in national
and international terms**

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The nature of the Libyan chronic instability aggravated since 2011 and its consequences in national and international terms

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Abstract

Libyan society has traditionally been characterized by their tribal and conservative aspects. The Arab revolts that started in Libya on 15 February 2011 provoked the overthrow of the Muammar El Gadaffi's regime and accelerated a process of security collapse. This paper explains why and how lawlessness and chaos have engulfed the country. Various governments and parliaments and the spread of militia fighting and radical Islamist actors are demanding a number of regional and international responses that have not been able to stop the violence and to provide security and stability.

Keywords

Ansar Al Sharia; Arab revolts; illegal trafficking; Islamic State/DAESH; Maghreb; militia; Sahel strip; Salafist-Jihadist; UN.

Domestic and international actors contributing to the chronic instability

Our contribution is mainly dealing with the actors involved in the political and security evolution of Libya since 2011, and with the consequences of the deterioration of security in domestic and international terms. This 1,7 million square kilometers is an enormous and almost empty country, with the most important oil reserves in Africa and with an enormous amount of Islamic State (IS/DAESH) militants, around 5,000 and growing.

Given that the situation is very volatile at the moment of concluding our chapter, the study of the actors playing relevant roles and of the factors affecting the situation are demanding a continuous up-dating. Nevertheless, the key-issues explaining the way in which the actors do play their roles and the relevance of the factors are useful in order to provide a complete vision of the situation. In sum, this contribution together with that of the Italian contributor provide the reader with a global vision on how Libya has changed since 2011, with dramatic consequences for the country and for the region.

Proliferation of actors in tribal, clanic, regional, religious, and political terms

Chaos has very much affected Libya since the overthrow of the Muammar El Gadaffi's regime in October 2011. Libya is largely tribal, and the countries who contributed to the overthrow of Gadaffi failed to take account of the most essential consideration concerning this North African state: the nature of the Arab-Berber world, and the tribal aspects in particular¹. For decades Gadaffi acted as guarantor of the nation's stability and a careful moderator between tribal leaders.

The Libyan people did not exist as a homogenous nation sharing one common ideal. It is a collection of fiercely autonomous, proud and unruly tribes, suspicious of centralized rule (first there had been a substitute Ottoman regency, then a mandated principality, next a short-lived monarchy under King Idris I), which they saw as a potential threat and to which they would only give allegiance to preserve their own independence².

¹ KHADRA, Yasmina: "How the west broke Libya and returned it to the hatred of the past", *The Guardian*, 22 October 2015, in www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/22/.

² *Ibidem*.

For instance, Misrata and Zintan are the two largest forces in the western part of Libya, where Warshefana, Tajoura, Suq Al Juma, or Zawia are also relevant tribal actors³. In 2011, the rebels expelled 30,000 black residents from the town of Tawergha and burned their homes and shops, on the grounds that some of them supposedly had been mercenaries. Together with the tribal identity, Libyans also share a very conservative profile, reflected in individuals such as Sheikh Sadek Al Ghariani, head of the Dar Al Ifta' s fatwa organization and who is accepted as Grand Mufti by the Libyan Dawn regime in Tripoli⁴.

Libya has been split between two governments since summer 2014, one of which is Islamist-backed and remains in Tripoli. The winner of the July 2014 general polls was obliged to leave Tripoli and is based in Al Baida since then. Two parliaments also remain in place, the General National Council (GNC) is loyal to Tripoli and the House of Representatives (HoR) is loyal to the Al Baida government. Both “blocs” are backed by loose alliances of armed groups and former rebels who helped topple Muammar El Gadaffi in 2011.

The efforts led by the UNSMIL in 2015 led to agreement signed in Skhirat (Morocco) on 17 December that year. Nevertheless, the process defined by this limited agreement has not been supported by the main political actors on the ground. Libya's internationally recognized parliament, the HoR, voted on 25 January 2016 to reject a unity government proposed under this UN-backed plan adopted in Skhirat⁵.

The nature of the jihadist-salafist threat acting in Libya before and after the 2011 revolts

The Islamist militias played a very active role in the revolts and refused to disarm after Gaddafi fell. Their persistent threat was highlighted in September 2012, when jihadists, including from the group Ansar Al Sharia (AAS), attacked the US Consulate in Benghazi, killing Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three of his colleagues. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) was the most active opposant to the Gadaffi's

3 See our two analyses in ECHEVERRÍA JESÚS, Carlos: *La milicia de Misrata, and Zintán y otras milicias originarias de la región de la Tripolitania*, both as Documentos de Investigación del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos (IEEE), nº 03/2015 y nº 01/2016, Colección Grupos Militantes de Ideología Radical y Carácter Violento. Área 2. Región MENA y Asia Central, 03/2015, May 2015, and January 2016, in www.ieees.es.

4 Ghariani is the Great Mufti since the Gadaffi's time. See “Ghariani rails against credit cards”, *Libya Herald*, 22 July 2015, in www.libyaherald.com.

5 “Libya's recognized parliament rejects unity government”, *Al Arabiya English*, 25 January 2016, in <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/>.

regime in the 1990s and 2000s, and their members were also present in Jihadists groups abroad. For instance, Ahmed Abou Khattala, suspected of involving in the attack against the US Consulate in Benghazi in September 2012, was captured by an US special forces' team in June 2014 in Tripoli⁶.

For the time being, Libya's Islamists are fighting for control of the entire country. In 2013, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) formally declared AAS a terrorist organization because of its affiliation with Al Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

The International Community hopes a unity government will deliver stability and be able to tackle a growing threat from IS terrorists.

The evolution of these actors at the domestic level

In tribal terms, Libya's past is the history of deeply hostile relationships between ethnic groups littered with violent raids, betrayals, unfulfilled vendettas and long-held frustrations carried like shameful injuries that have festered over the years as each generation is brought up to seek revenge for old sins.

Colonel Gaddafi played a defining role in the rebuilding of the modern Libyan nation. By overthrowing King Idris I and declaring five years later the Jamahiriya (a republic of the masses in which political power was to be passed to the people), Gaddafi achieved what no sovereign before him had accomplished.

Gaddafi succeeded in bringing together the intensely opposed ethnic groups of the north and south, east and west, who had always despised one another. Today no region has been spared violence and mass criminality.

Gaddafi also faced a domestic threat from Al Qaida-affiliated militants, the LIFG. From 2009 to 2010, Saif Al Islam Gaddafi persuaded his father to release nearly all of Libya's political prisoners, creating a de-radicalization program for Islamists that Western experts cited as a model

In the afterwards of the 2011 Libyan revolts optimism about Libya among Western countries reached its apogee in July 2012, when democratic elections brought to power a self-declared moderate, and "secular" coalition government. But the country quickly slid downhill. Its first elected Prime Minister, Mustafa Abu Shagour, lasted less than one month in office. In the following three years between 2012 and 2014 Libya had

6 ECHEVERRÍA JESÚS, C.: *Ansar Al Sharia (AAS) y otros grupos yihadistas salafistas actuando en la Cirenaica y su creciente tensión con el Estado Islámico (EI)*, Documento de Investigación del IEEE nº 08/2015, 25 August 2015, 14 pages, in www.ieee.es.

seven Prime Ministers. Since the second general elections were held, in July 2014, two governments and two parliaments have existed in Libya.

Islamists came to dominate the first postwar parliament, the General National Council (GNC). Meanwhile, the new Government failed to disarm dozens of militias that had arisen during NATO's seven-month intervention, especially Islamists ones, leading to deadly turf battles between rival tribes and commanders, which continue to this day almost five years later.

In geographical terms, in August 2013 secessionists seized oil ports in central and eastern Libya. In October that year, secessionists in eastern Libya, where most of the country's oil is located, declared their own government. That same month, Ali Zeidan, then the country's Prime Minister, was kidnapped and held hostage. In August and October 2013 the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt launched air strike against Islamists in Tripoli and Benghazi.

The Libyan jihadist group Ansar Al Sharia (AAS, in its acronym) has traditionally been based in Benghazi but also had branches in Ajdabiya, Derna and Sirte. On 29 April 2014 the Libyan Government labelled AAS as a terrorist organization for the first time.

Algerian jihadists' presence in Libya improved sophistication of Jihadist actions. For instance, Algerian media conformed on 17 May 2014 that two Algerians were killed and another was injured while fighting alongside AAS in Benghazi. In Libya, the terrorists of AAS had reiterated in that time that security and stability in the country were dependent on the establishment of Sharia law (Islamic law) and not democracy, calling on "every Muslim to unite against infidels and traitors". Among the latter they situated the retired Libyan army officer General Khalifa Haftar who began military operations on 16 May 2014 against Islamist militias in Benghazi.

By May 2014, Libya had come to the brink of a new civil war between self-proclaimed liberals and Islamists⁷. That month, General Haftar, who was loyal to Gaddafi until the first half of the 1980s, seized control of the air force to attack Islamist militias in Benghazi, later expanding his targets to include the Islamist-dominated legislature in Tripoli.

In light of the growing Islamist influence within Libya's government, in the spring of 2014, the US postponed a plan to train an armed force of 6,000-8,000 Libyan troops. In April 2014, Islamists captured a secret military base near Tripoli that US special operations forces had established in the summer of 2012 to train Libyan counterterrorist forces.

7 SELLAMI, Mourad: "Crise politique et sécuritaire à Tripoli et Benghazi: Le gouvernement libyen toujours sans chef", *El Watan (Algeria)*, 22 April 2014.

In June 2014 secular parties declared victory and formed a new legislature, the House of Representatives (HoR), but the Islamists refused to accept that outcome. Elections in June 2014 did nothing to resolve the chaos. Most Libyans had already given up on democracy, as voter turnout dropped from 1,7 million in the previous poll in 2012 to just 630,000. The result was two competing parliaments, each claiming to be the legitimate one.

General Haftar's operations, together with the proclamation of the Islamic Caliphate in Mosul, northern Iraq, in June 2014, served as a further catalyst for Islamist militias in Libya to increase their cooperation. While increasing cooperation between Libyan jihadists allowed those militants to coordinate and to extend cooperation with jihadists elsewhere in the region. Close relations between AAS in Libya and Mokhtar Belmokhtar was an example of how Libya was being transformed into a theatre for the battle for ascendancy between a number of Al Qaida regional wings and global jihadist groups such as the IS⁸.

In July 2014 an Islamist militia from Misrata responded to Haftar's actions by attacking Tripoli, prompting Western Embassies to evacuate. After a six week battle, the Islamists captured the capital in August 2014 on behalf of the so-called Libya Dawn coalition, which, together with the defunct legislature, formed what they labeled a "national salvation government"⁹.

Prime Minister Abdallah Al Thinni lost control of the Libyan capital in August 2014 when the Misrata militia seized the city and set up an alternative government and parliament.

In September 2014 Qatar and Sudan provided weapons to the Islamists. In October 2014, the newly elected parliament, led by the secular Operation Dignity coalition, fled to the eastern city of Tobruk, where it established a competing interim government, which Libya's Supreme Court later declared unconstitutional. Libya thus finds itself with two varring governments, each controlling only a fraction of the country's territory and militias. The Fajr Libya coalition or Libya Dawn remained in Tripoli¹⁰.

The armed forces allied to the eastern government are led by General Khalifa Haftar, a former Gadaffi ally who has become one of the most divisive figures among Libya's rival groups. Many in the east see him as the future leader of a national army, but he is despised by forces allied to the government in Tripoli.

8 "Militia-Libya tackles Islamist militant groups", *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst (Section: Africa. Country: Libya)*, 28 May 2014.

9 "Libyan capital under Islamist control after Tripoli airport seized", *The Guardian*, 24 August 2014, in www.theguardian.com.

10 "IS attacks to the east and west of Sirte", *Libya Herald*, 1 February 2016.

In one year with two governments and two parliaments, the political and security situation has increasingly deteriorated. Early in 2016, Libya is gripped by violent militia fighting, has three governments and this chaos has allowed IS jihadists to set up in the country to the great disquiet of neighbors such as Algeria and Tunisia.

Autumn 2014 is the very moment when the Islamic State/DAESH starts to become active and influential in Libya, starting in Derna, in the east of the country.

One year later the IS is gaining ground in Libya, controlling Sirte and Bin Jawad and remaining active in the surroundings of Derna. Sirte fell under IS control in June 2015 and Bin Jawad on 4 January 2016. In November 2015 an US drone attack killed Abu Nabil Al Anbari, a former Iraqi's Army officer who had become a leader of the IS branch in Libya¹¹.

On 7 January 2016 an enormous suicide attack launched by IS in Zliten killed more than 65 people, and this was the deadliest terrorist action in the history of Libya¹².

A balance of the impact of the revolts in Libya in regional terms

After civil war, each ethnic group has withdrawn to its own territory and demands autonomy. Each militia, each religious community, each ethnic group rebels against the other. And into this advanced decomposition other deadly actors are expanding: this process fostered Islamist terrorism elsewhere in the region. An unintended consequence of the Libya intervention was to amplify the threat of terrorism from the country, involving the EI from the north and Al Qaida from the southern borders with Algeria and Niger.

The terrorist threat was exacerbated by the leakage of sensitive weapons from Gaddafi's arsenal to radical Islamists across North Africa, the Sahel, and the Middle East. In the face of Western inaction, the situation is spreading throughout the whole region, turning neighbouring countries into poles of instability as well. Allegations of substantial deliveries of weapons over the years 2014 for the Tobruk camp from Egypt and the UAE, and for the Tripoli camp from Qatar, Sudan and Turkey, were frequent¹³.

¹¹ "Norte de África. Cuenta atrás de la OTAN en Libia", *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior (ISPE)*, nº 973, 8 February 2016, p. 6.

¹² Centro de Análisis y Prospectiva (CAP) de la Guardia Civil: *DAESH en Libia*, Nota de Actualidad del CAP nº 2/2016.

¹³ Prime Minister Al Thinni visited Jartum in October 2014 in order to stop these deliveries and to look for political and diplomatic support. See "Conflict libyen: Al Theni pretent dialoger avec ses rivaux", *El Watan*, 30 October 2014.

But it was the remobilization of weapons and fighters from Libya since 2011 the fact that fed the contradictions in northern Mali and transformed the situation into a strategic threat for the region and for the Western countries as well¹⁴.

The effects in the southern border

When Gaddafi fell, the ethnic Tuareg of Mali within his security forces fled home with their weapons to launch their own rebellion. It was that remobilization of weapons and fighters from Libya since 2011 an unprecedented achievement for the terrorists – the emergence of an embryonic Al Qaida Jihadist state – requiring urgent and immediately countermeasures from the International Community, mainly from the West.

That uprising was quickly hijacked by local Islamist forces and AQIM, which declared an independent Islamic state in northern Mali. Up to that moment, AQIM had been operating terrorist training camps in northern Mali and providing arms, explosives and financing to groups such as Boko Haram in northern Nigeria.

Since NATO's intervention Libya and its neighbor Mali turned into terrorist havens. By December 2012, this zone of Mali had become the largest territory controlled by Islamists in the world. But the spillover from Libya did not stop there, also spurring the growth of radical Islam in Niger. To contain this threat, in January 2013, France was compelled to deploy thousands of troops to Mali, some of whom continue to fight jihadists in the country's north.

Libya was for decades a country of opportunities for the people of the region, from Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt to the Sahel strip countries, mainly Mali and Niger. It provided jobs to hundreds of thousands and even millions of immigrants until 2011. The revolts and the civil war and internationally military intervention in Libya transformed negatively the situation of this country.

Together with the direct effect of the Libyan war in the Malian domestic politics since the beginning of 2012, Niger has also become affected by instability in Libya. Northern Niger, with its central point in Agadez, is one of the key routes between southern Libya and northern Mali, an often-used route for terrorists and traffickers, the latter trafficking mainly human beings, weapons and drugs. Since 2012, Niger is trying to leverage its concerns over instability in Libya to gain concessions from France and

14 ECHEVERRÍA JESÚS, C.: "Risks and Threats in the Western Sahel. Radicalization and Terrorism in the Sub-Region", in *Paix et Sécurité Internationales. Revue Marocco-Espagnole de Droit International et Relations Internationales, Nouvelle Époque-Version électronique*, n° 3/2015, January to December 2015, p. 172, in <http://catedras.uca.es/jean-monnet/revistas/paix-et-securite-internationales/index>.

other Western countries. Massoudou Hassoumi, Interior Minister of Niger, demanded a French foreign intervention in southern Libya – a region he defined as an “incubator for terrorist groups” – on 5 February 2014. On 10 October 2014, in northern Niger, French forces destroyed an AQIM convoy transporting weapons from Libya to Mali¹⁵.

The effects in Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt

Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt, but also other Sahelian and Near Eastern countries have become very much affected by Libyan instability. Its projection in the Near and the Middle East has been focused in terms of export of weapons and fighters contributing to war scenarios, mainly in Syria. Radicalization and the role played by Jihadists during and after the revolts must be pointed out¹⁶.

1,000 kilometers of border between Algeria and Libya and 500 kilometers of border between Tunisia and Libya have become a big concern in security terms. Algeria is becoming more and more concerned due to increasing insecurity in Libya¹⁷.

Border between Libya and Egypt is also central in terms of paying attention by the Cairo's authorities to the threats coming from its western neighbor. In October 2012, jihadists fired one MANPAD for the first time in the border between Egypt and Israel, just missing an Israeli army helicopter, and Israeli officials said that the weapons originated in Libya. In early 2014, Islamists in Egypt used another such missile to shoot down a military helicopter. Walid Kalib, the leader of a western islamist militia, was arrested in the Tunisian International Carthage Airport in May 2015.

Libya has become a sanctuary for terrorists, allowing them being active in the Sahel to regroup, train and avoid detection in the afterwards of Operation Serval was launched led by France in January 2013. The In Amenas attack against a gas plant in January 2013, and the two suicide attacks in Niger, in May 2013, were launched from the Libyan ground by a group led by an Algerian terrorist, Mokhtar Belmokhtar (aka Mr. Marlboro or Beluar).

In Mali, the initial Tuareg revolt was led by the National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA, in its French acronym) elements moved from Libya to Mali in January 2012. This Tuareg revolt was kidnapped by Jihadist Salafist groups, and an enormous portion of the Sahelian country fell into the hands of a myriad of terrorist groups, and many of them were based in Libya¹⁸.

15 *Ibidem*, p. 174.

16 “Jihadists on the rise in Libya”, *Al Ahrum Weekly*, 13 June 2013.

17 “Algeria cuts Libya air link”, *Libya Herald*, 27 January 2016.

18 ECHEVERRÍA JESÚS, C.: “Risks and Threats *op. cit.*, *ibidem*, p. 173.

In Tunisia, the three most relevant suicide terrorist attacks suffered by this country in 2015 – the Bardo National Museum, in March, with 21 died people; the June attack in the Sousse beach where 38 tourists were killed, and, finally the attack against a bus of the Presidential Guard, in central Tunis in November, where 13 agents were assassinated – were planned in Libya¹⁹.

Tunisia and Libya have become a single space for radicals and terrorists. Boatloads of radicals, sailing from Tunisia to Sabratha, Zlitan, Sirte and other coastal Libyan towns remain up to now. In addition, Zlitan is also one of the locations for smuggling migrants to Europe²⁰.

The IS and AAS are widely reported to have training camps in Sabratha and its area, and terrorists who have been arrested elsewhere have claimed that Sabratha is a major staging post for IS between Tunisia and Sirte. A number of terrorist attacks were launched in Sabratha in Autumn 2015. The IS claimed on 7 January 2016 the massive suicide attack made that day against the Zliten Coast Guard training center, saying that the author was a Tunisian national (Abu Yakin Tunisi)²¹.

The situation in Libya is very much affecting North Africa and the Maghreb as a whole. For instance, more than 500 Moroccan citizens were blocked in the Algiers' Houari Boumediene International Airport at the end of January 2016. Given that there were no direct flights between Morocco and Libya, these people tried to arrive to Tripoli and other Libyan destinations, and the Algerian authorities suspected on the potential intentions of some among these group to join IS.

According to the Rabat authorities these people tried to return to work in Libya or headed off there to seek employment²².

The situation in 2015: consolidation of instability in the country and projection of instability from the Libyan soil

Libya, an oil-rich but chaotic country, is fragmented between a parliament elected in June 2014, based in the eastern coastal town of Tobruk, and the previous one in Tripoli, each with its associated government and militia forces. While the internationally recognized Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) was chosen

19 “Sirte, el nuevo bastión del Daesh”, *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior (ISPE)*, Number 965, 7 December 2015, in www.politicaexterior.com/articulos/informe-semanal/ispe-965-7-diciembre-2015/.

20 SABER, Ayyub: “Massive suicide bomb in Zliten; over 50 dead”, *Libya Herald*, 7 January 2016.

21 AJNADIN, Mustafa: “IS admits Zliten slaughter”, *Libya Herald*, 7 January 2016.

22 “Algerians stop hundreds of Moroccans heading for Libya”, *Libya Herald*, 25 January 2016.

in a democratic vote, a significant number of its members, mainly from the country's west, have boycotted it. Its legitimacy is challenged by the rival GNC, seated in Tripoli. Libya's Supreme Court decided in November 2014 that the HoR should be dissolved.

There is no Libyan military worthy of that name. What calls itself the Libyan National Army (LNA), loyal to the Tobruk parliament and headed by General Haftar, a former army general who in early 2014 announced his ambition to stage a coup against the then-unified government, is little more than a coalition of militias just as one finds on the other side.

In this chaos Islamist militant groups have thrived. Some, like AAS, were born from the revolutionary groups that took up arms in 2011, received NATO backing and have further radicalized since. By 2014-2015 Libya's jihadists include factions aligned with IS. The Islamic State's three Libyan branches are a newer and partly imported phenomenon that have drawn recruits in towns such as Sirte and Nawfiliya from pre-existing groups like AAS and even former Gaddafi loyalists.

These groups have perpetrated killings and kidnappings in all three of Libya's traditional administrative zones (Tripoli, Cirenayca and Fezzan) now transformed into "provinces or wilayts of the Caliphate". In February 2015 up to 21 Coptic Christians were killed by the IS, and two months later, in April, 28 Ethiopian Christians were also beheaded by the same terrorist group. In parallel, centers of human smuggling are emerging in Sebha, Ajdabiya and Beni Walid, to through Zwara and Tripoli and to the sea²³. Near Tripoli the situation is aggravating in Zliten (160 kilometers east of Tripoli) and Khoms (120 kilometers from Tripoli)²⁴.

On the Tobruk side, leaders like Haftar make no distinction between Libya Dawn, the coalition of militias associated with the Tripoli-based government, and IS. Conversely, on the Tripoli side some point both the Tobruk government and IS as Gaddafi loyalists, and see IS as a convenient invention. As these two sides fight each other, they largely ignore IS, which considers all factions as apostates and has called for their destruction.

On 13 November 2015 US officials announced two F-15 aircraft launched an airstrike against the Islamic State's leader in Libya killing him. Abu Nabil (aka Wissam Najm Abd Zayd Al Zubaydi), an Iraqi national who was a long-time Al Qaida operative was killed according to the Pentagon²⁵.

23 In October 2015 the IS killed two Salafist imams and the local army intelligence chief in Ajdabiya. See "Anti-IS imam killed by Ajdabiya car bomb", *Libya Herald*, 29 October 2015.

24 VARO, Laura J.: "La guerra libia agrava el desastre", *El Mundo*, 20 de abril de 2015, p. 21.

25 "Islamic State leader in Libya 'killed in US airstrike",

On 26 October 2015 several military commanders of Libya Dawn were killed after their helicopter was shot down by an armed faction, triggering clashes west of Tripoli. According to Colonel Mustafa Al Sharkasi, spokesman for the Tripoli's government's chief of staff, the helicopter was returning to Tripoli when it was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed into the sea near Maya. Fierce clashes erupted immediately after the crash between armed brigades from Zawiyah city, which support the Tripoli government, and from Washafana town, whose fighters it blamed for shooting down the helicopter²⁶.

Between November and December, the IS control of Sirte was consolidated. The IS/DAESH is supposed to be led in Libya by the Iraqi Abu Ali Al Anbari, a former Saddam Hussein's Army officer²⁷. Under his command more than 3,000 Jihadist combatants are also supposed to be contribution to the building up of the IS/DAESH banch in this North African country.

By December 2015, the IS was threatening the town of Ajdabiya, gateway to the country's oil wealth. Fierce fighting was raging the town by 19 December. Capture of this town would give the IS command of the Sirte basin, home of Libya's largest collection of oilfields. Western countries were waiting for a new unified government issues a formal invitation. Between December and January Ras Lanuf oil facility and the Es Sider port were attacked, and the Marsa Al Brega oil refinery, the most important in the Northern African region, was threatened²⁸. On 7 January 2016 a suicide bomber attacked a checkpoint in the oil terminal town of Ras Lanuf, 350 kilometers south west of Benghazi killing at least four people²⁹. On 4 January the IS had attacked the oil terminal town of Sidra, using four suicide bombers in two vehicles and damaging five oil storage tanks. Reacting against these attacks, the head of the Libyan armed forces, General Khalifa Haftar, ordered fighter planes at Benghazi's Benina air force base to move to Ras Lanuf to protect the oil terminals and nearby oil fields from further attacks by the IS³⁰.

On 7 January 2016 an IS terrorist massacre was made in Zliten. A massive truck bomb driven by a suicide bomber exploded at Coast Guard training camp in the

26 As many as 13 bodies were recovered out of the 19 people on board, including three colonels from the Tripoli military command. See "Shot down helicopter in Libya triggers fighting west of Tripoli", *The Guardian*, 27 October 2015, in www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/27/.

27 "Sirte, el nuevo bastion del Daesh", *Informe Semanal de Política Exterior (ISPE) op. cit.*

28 STEPHEN, Chris: "Western leaders urge Libyan factions to allow bombing of ISIS fighters", *The Guardian*, 19 December 2015, in www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/19/. See "África del Norte. El petróleo libio, objetivo del Daesh", *ISPE*, Number 969, 18 January 2016, p. 4.

29 The checkpoint attacked was manned by Ibrahim Jadhran's Petroleum Facilities' Guards (PFG). See "After Zliten, Ras Lanuf targeted", *Libya Herald*, 7 January 2016.

30 SABER, A.: "Haftar orders airforce to defend oilfields amid fears of further IS attacks", *Libya Herald*, 6 January 2016.

coastal town, 50 kilometers West of Misrata, killing at least 50 cadets and injuring dozens³¹. This camp was being used as a main centre to train and deploy coast guards in operations against the smuggling of human beings. The Zliten attack has become the deadliest single terrorist attack since 2011.

On 14 January 2016, IS were thought to be responsible for an attack south of Ras Lanuf which saw the kidnap of six locals as well as the destruction of a length of a pipeline³². On 23 January 2016 the Libyan Air Force carried out air strikes against IS vehicles mounting medium and heavy weapons in Ben Jawad, the town used by terrorists as a jumping-off point for devastating attacks on Sidra and Ras Lanuf³³. Missile and artillery attacks on the export terminal made by IS forces provoked enormous damages. Five store tanks were affected and some three millions of barrels of crude were in the tank farm when IS attacked. Tripoli NOC chief Mustafa Sanalla described the conflagration as an economic and environmental disaster³⁴. Also early in January 2016 the IS targeted Benghazi North Power Station, the main source of electricity for not just the city but much of the wider area³⁵.

Thirty seven countries led by US Secretary of State John Kerry met in Rome on 4 February 2016 to define actions against the increasing violence and chaos in Libya³⁶. Foreign ministers of these countries participating in the coalition against IS met to discuss Libya as well as the current airstrike-dominated campaign in Syria and Iraq³⁷.

The nature of the domestic political and security actors in Libya and their limits

In political and institutional terms, two general elections, in 2012 and 2014, produced weak governments. In terms of security and defence, almost five years after the revolt

31 “Massive suicide bomb in Zliten. Over 50 dead” and “Zlitan carnage victims given free treatment abroad”, both in *Libya Herald*, of 7 and 14 January 2016.

32 “Pipeline blast south of Ras Lanuf, hostages taken”, *Libya Herald*, 14 January 2016.

33 “Air force attacks IS in Ben Jawad”, *Libya Herald*, 23 January 2016.

34 “Ras Lanuf tank fires almost extinguished says NOC”, *Libya Herald*, 23 January 2016.

35 SABER, A.: “Presidency Council commits to support LNA, says Benghazi attacks carried out by “terrorists””, *Libya Herald*, 11 January 2016.

36 “Des pays occidentaux font pression pour intervenir. Intenses bruits de bottes en Libye”, *El Watan*, 4 February 2016.

37 “US-led anti-IS Rome meeting sticks to the Libyan political script”, *Libya Herald*, 2 February 2016.

started Libya still has no national army. Brigades of rebels have been put on the state payroll as a security forces, but they often remain more loyal to their cities or regions, and have steadily turned against one another to ally with rival political forces in a battle for control.

The UNSMIL is supporting negotiation process in order to provide political and institutional bodies to Libya. In December 17 countries signed up the Rome Declaration in which they committed themselves to backing the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) and the Government of National Accord (GNA) to be led by Prime Minister Fayez Serraj. On 17 December 2015 an Agreement was signed in Skhirat, and its direct result was a Government of National Accord to be implemented before the 17 January 2016. But early in February the GNA, endorsed by the UN Security Council, remains as a project and its embryonic element is based in Tunis due to the fact it is not able to establish his Government in Tripoli³⁸.

The General National Congress (GNC), led by Nuri Abu Sahmain, and its “government” led by Khalifa Ghwell refuse to accept the LPA. The GNC was no longer directing its attention to the Libya Dialogue and the Skhirat agreement according to its deputy president Awad Abdul Saddeq³⁹.

Their rivals are in Al Beida, where is placed the government led by Abdullah Al Thinni, and in Tobruk with its parliament, the House of Representatives (HoR). Serraj was supposed to complete nominations for all the GNA’s ministries by 16 January 2016 for presentation to the HoR, and it then had ten days to meet and vote on them⁴⁰.

In military terms, in Libya Dawn areas, PM Khalifa Ghwell runs directly the Ministry of Defence. In January 2016, Ghwell promised to double the salaries of militiamen⁴¹. The Western region and his Chief of Staff Abdessalem Jadallah is lacking a military instrument, and the eastern region has the General Haftar forces with his Central Command in El Marj. Prime Minister Serraj is supporting the LNA led by Haftar⁴².

The Zintan militia was the most important armed actor within the Al Baida/Tobruk bloc until General Haftar entered into scene as military actor in Libya in 2014. For the

38 Serra jis heading the Presidency Council in Tunis, See SELLAMI, M.: “Serraj ne peut réussir qu’à l’intérieur de la Libye”, *El Watan*, 14 January 2016.

39 “GNC gives up on Libya dialogue, to re-focus on economic and social issues instead: Abdul Saddeq”, *Libya Herald*, 13 January 2016.

40 SELLAMI, M.: “Klober et Sarraj ont-ils besoin d’une intervention militaire?” *El Watan*, 7 January 2016.

41 “A jittery Libya Dawn seeks to clamp down on foreigners”, *Libya Herald*, 24 January 2016.

42 SABER, A.: “Presidency Council commits to support LNA, says Benghazi attacks carried out by “terrorists””, *Libya Herald*, 11 January 2016.

time being, the Zintan militia has become one among the most important pillars of the Haftar's led-Libyan National Army (LNA), the embryonic future Libyan Armed Forces. The Zintan's militia's geographic base in the Nafusa Mountains, a strategically situated region south-west of Tripoli, played an important role providing this armed group protagonism during the 2011 revolts against Gadaffi's regime. The Zintan militia remains, almost five years after the revolts started, an additional armed actor in the fluid and chaotic Libyan scene⁴³.

According to the supporters of the LNA the emerging Serraj's Government is receiving the support of the main Western militias, Misrata and Zintan, but it is not clear the position of the Islamist Al Moukatila militia, led by Abdelhakim Belhaj and responsible for the security of Tripoli and its region⁴⁴. Abdelhakim Belhad is a former Al Qaida leader, and the fact of him providing support to the Serraj's embryonic Government based in Tunis does illustrate on the Libyan contradictions⁴⁵.

In fact, Belhaj and other Islamist figures remain as important actors. For instance, this Islamist dimension is as important in Libya as it is also relevant in Algeria today. Belhaj is the owner of the Naaba TV that has been accused of sympathizing with the IS and other radical groups acting in and out Libya. In addition, Tanasah TV that is belonging to Sadek Al Ghariani still accepted by the Tripoli regime as the country's Grand Mufti, is also accused of pro-Islamist and pro-Jihadist instrument⁴⁶.

The lack of acceptance to General Haftar in the West of Libya is an additional problem⁴⁷. Khalifa Ghwell, the Prime Minister of the Tripoli's Government, ordered the arrest of any members of the new Security Team appointed by Prime Minister-designate Serraj, who set foot in Libya Dawn territory. This gesture reinforced the GNC's rejection of the GNA and the presidential council that Serraj will head⁴⁸.

In the east of the country, a number of majors and even the General Haftar were supporting the Political Accord but the HoR had to vote the support to such initiative⁴⁹.

43 ECHEVERRÍA JESÚS, C.: *Zintán y otras milicias op. cit.*, p. 2.

44 SELLAMI, M.: "Instabilité politique et manque de moyens militaires en Libye", *El Watan*, 14 January 2016.

45 "Serraj confers with Turkish PM in Ankara", *Libya Herald*, 11 January 2016.

46 "Anger over Zliten attack turns towards TV stations", *Libya Herald*, 8 January 2016.

47 "Serraj picks security team ahead of eagerly awaited government announcement", *Libya Herald*, 14 December 2016.

48 SABER, A.: "Ghwell orders arrest of Serraj's new Security Team members", *Libya Herald*, 15 January 2016.

49 SABER, A.: "Haftar hosts mayors who support Libyan Political Agreement", *Libya Herald*, 17 January 2016.

In addition to these political difficulties we must add the tribal dimension. In the first half of 2015 a number of gatherings were held both inside and outside the country at which tribes debated Libya's situation. In March, leaders from Cyrenaican and Fezzani tribes as well as from Zintan and the Tebu came out with a strong statement of support for the HoR. This was followed in May by a much larger assembly of Libyan tribes in Cairo.

However, a number of others, notably the Barasa tribe, boycotted the proceedings on the grounds that there should be no such gatherings outside the country – the same complaint as from those in Bani Walid in May who rejected the Dialogue meetings taking place in Morocco. They and others then met in June 2015 at the Barasa's invitation near Al Baida where they called for a restoration of the 1951 constitution. So far, however, nothing concrete came from these and other tribal meetings, most of which tended to reflect the views of the tribe in the locality where the gathering was held⁵⁰.

The Tebu are members of a black community traditionally settled in the Libyan deep south, and the Tuareg constitute the main nomadic group existing in the wide Western Sahel territories. The Tuareg are also present in south Algeria and in the southern Libyan region of Fezzan, where they coexist with the Tebu. Both communities have been traditionally fighting among them, and the situation is aggravating since the year 2014. Given that conflict between the two communities is becoming one among the most important security problems the post-revolts Libya is facing, the identification of the defining elements of this situation is obliged⁵¹.

Heavy fighting among Zway and Tebu fighters occurred in Kufra in July 2015. Despite report of a ceasefire agreed on 26 July intermittent clashes between the two communities re-erupted into full-scale violence killing dozens of people⁵². Six months later, in December 2015, renewed fighting between Tuareg and Tebu forces remained in Obari. On 12 January 2016 the fighting broke out while elders from both communities were meeting in Sebha to try and harden the Qatari-sponsored truce of November 2015⁵³.

50 AJNADIN, M.: "Tribal assembly in Soulog postponed", *Libya Herald*, 21 June 2015, en www.libyaherald.com/2015/07/21/.

51 ECHEVERRÍA JESÚS, C.: Los actores Tubu y Tuareg *op. cit.*, p. 2.

52 "Fresh deadly fighting in Kufra despite ceasefire promises", *LH*, 21 July 2015.

53 "Historic Obari castle damaged in renewed Tebu-Tuareg fighting", *Libya Herald*, 12 January 2016.

The role played or to be played by foreign actors in the country and their limits

The West and a number of Arab states armed and trained rebels, some of them actors who already rejects peace talks and an international-backed proposal of solution under a government of national unity formula. In political terms, the country is a chaotic scenario and it is becoming a matter of urgency that a unity government is imposed in Libya. In 2014 the second general elections were held, and the chaos increased. Warplanes from Egypt and the US are known to have carried out raids in Libya in that year. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) air force was widely suspected of a series of airstrikes against Libya Dawn targets in September 2014. In that year a number of NATO countries begun plans to train some 20,000 Libyan military in Europe but the Alliance as such was not implicated and specific results of that initiative is lacking. Qatar and Turkey have traditionally supported the GNC and the Government of Tripoli, and Egypt, the UAE and even Oman back the Tobruk HoR and the Al Baida Government in their conflict with the GNC⁵⁴.

In February 2015, Egyptian aircraft attacked militants in Derna killing 7 people, in response to the IS beheading of 21 Christians on a Sirte beach. In November 2015 US warplanes killed IS terror leader Abu Nabil Al-Anbari in Derna. In June 2015 an US strike that obliterated a farm outside Ajdabiya apparently failed to kill the target, Algerian terrorist leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar. In mid-January 2016, two air attacks targeted IS positions in Sirte⁵⁵.

The UN talks started in 2014 envision the creation of a national unity government capable of restoring stability. In the summer 2015, for more than a year, Libyans were watching their politicians shuttle between foreign cities on rounds of peace talks without concrete results. Initiated in Geneva, these negotiations continued in scenarios such as Algiers or Skhirat⁵⁶.

UN-brokered peace talks aimed at resolving the political turmoil in Libya started in Morocco in March 2015. Delegates at the talks in Skhirat near Rabat met separately with the UN mediators. The talks agenda included a unity government and security.⁵⁷

54 Oman is officially home to Gaddafi's widow, Safia, daughter, Ayesha, and sons Mohamed and Hannibal. The sultanate follows the Ibadi school of Islam, also followed by many members of the Libyan Amazigh community. See "Abu Sahmain and Ageela Salah to meet again, possibly in Oman", *Libya Herald*, 22 December 2015.

55 SABER, A.: "Mystery remains over Sirte airstrikes", *Libya Herald*, 15 January 2016.

56 "Skhirat Draft initiated: GNC left aside", *Libya Herald*, 12 July 2015.

57 "Morocco hosts Libya peace talks", *AlJazeera*, 6 March 2015.

Finally, on 8 October 2015 Bernardino León proposed as prime minister of the national unity government Fayez Sarraj, a member of the Tripoli-based parliament. That day León announced the proposal along with a list of candidates to head the new body. Both governments have slammed León for announcing candidates for the unity government when they had not agreed on forming one yet⁵⁸.

The Libya's internationally recognized government rejected this UN proposal and the internationally recognized parliament did not sign the agreement to form a unity government because the UN refused to exclude amendments added by the Islamist authorities from Tripoli without its consent⁵⁹.

In brief, the amendments that angered the Tobruk lawmakers would have given the unity government the power to fire all senior Libyan officials not unanimously approved by its members. The Tobruk authorities saw this as an attempt to remove their fiercely anti-Islamist army chief, General Haftar, whose forces have been battling Islamist militias nationwide for over a year. The Tripoli government objects to the deal because it does not provide sufficient guarantees that Shari'a will be implemented.

Concerning the neighbors, Algeria and Egypt have paid attention to the negotiation efforts. The Algerian Foreign Minister, Ramtane Lamamra, has been very active in terms of proposing the involvement of as many Libyan actors as possible in terms of defining a specific Libyan solution for the Libyan problem⁶⁰. In Egypt, a number of meetings have been held, most of them involving tribal actors.

Algeria and Italy supported in a bilateral meeting the international efforts in order to provide stability to Libya⁶¹. Libya is much more supporting contacts and dialogue than France in January 2016. In the afterwards of the 13 November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, the French government is inviting allies to use force against Jihadist terrorists, also in Libya⁶². In addition, Malta has also played a role facilitating contacts between Libyan relevant actors.

58 PACK, Jason: "Libia, un precipicio aterrador", *El País*, 20 October 2015.

59 "Libyan officials reject UN-proposed unity deal with rival government", *The Guardian*, October 2015.

60 BOZONNET, Charlotte: "Sauver la Libye, c' est la boussole qui doit guider les uns et les autres", *Le Monde*, 27 October 2015, in www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2015/10/27/.

61 Prime Ministers Abdelmalek Sellal and Matteo Renzi met together in the framework of the High Level Algerian&Italian Meeting. See "La situation en Libye rapproche l' Italie et l' Algérie", *El Watan (Algeria)*, 29 May 2015.

62 "Situation sécuritaire en Libye: la méfiance domine entre la France et l' Italie", *El Watan*, 16 January 2016.

The presidents of the GNC and the HoR, Nuri Abu Sahmain and Ageela Saleh, met in Malta on 15 December 2015. The two planned to finalise details of an agreement to create their own national unity government⁶³.

Finally an Agreement was signed on 17 December 2015 in Skhirat but its implementation remains an enormous challenge given the critics it received since its signature⁶⁴. The Agreement is supported by Resolution 2259 approved by the UNSC on 23 December 2015, but its strong support abroad has not been reflected in strong support at home⁶⁵. The Agreement is plenty of ambiguities, there is no accord about the implementation of the GNA, the attempts at putting together a cabinet are weak and, finally, the HoR did not approve the process⁶⁶.

Given these strong political difficulties and the increasing discussions focused on foreign military actions against the spread of the IS in Libya, In January 2016 the African Union (AU) declared that the time was not right for a military solution in this country. It appointed a new task force made up of five heads of state to push the political process and the formation of a GNA⁶⁷.

Concerning no non-state actors, the terrorist organizations must be addressed again. The October and December 2015 diplomatic efforts led by the UNSMIL were lacking backing by the two parliaments and the IS profited for consolidating positions in the Sirte region. For instance, the IS compounds at Al Ajaylat was defined as a training ground for terrorists sent abroad, many of them to Tunisia⁶⁸.

Finally, the IS has become a central actor, but also other traditional Jihadist-Salafist groups and cells such as AQIM are becoming central profiting the chaos. The latter has warned that the Skhirat deal and the resulting GNA represent “a sell-out to foreigners”.

63 “Abu Sahmain and Ageela Salah to meet again, *op. cit.*”

64 See SABER, A.: “Amazigh Supreme Council distances itself from exclusionist Skhirat process”, *Libya Herald*, 24 December 2015, and “Algérie-Libye: Faïz Serradj aujourd’hui à Alger”, *El Watan*, 25 January 2016.

65 “UNSC resolution 2259 on Libya’s GNA: Terrori groups and sanctions for spoilers”, *Libya Herald*, 25 December 2015.

66 SABER, A.: “Ammari suspends Presidency Council membership over Serraj-Haftar meeting”, *Libya Herald*, 31 January 2016. On this meeting held in Haftar’s Marj Headquarters see “Serraj meets Haftar in Marj”, *Libya Herald*, 30 January 2016.

67 The AU in Addis Abeba appointed a new special envoy to Libya, former Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, who was replacing Djibuti premier, Dileita Mohamed Dileita. See “AU relaunches Libya peace drive: warms against military intervention”, *Libya Herald*, 31 January 2016, in www.libyaherald.com/2016/01/31/.

68 STEPHEN, C.: Western leaders urge *op cit.*

AQIM leader Abu Yousef Al Anabi published an audio statement on 13 January 2016 against the “conspiracy of Skhirat”, threatening the UNSMIL chief, Martin Klover, and his security chief, Italian General Paolo Serra⁶⁹.

Conclusions to the Spanish contribution

The intervention in Libya undermined nuclear non-proliferation, chilled Russian cooperation at the UN, and fueled Syria’s civil war. Lawlessness and chaos have engulfed the country since the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime. In the afterwards, the Libyan people were left to their own devices in an appalling state of upheaval, with no roadmap to guide them. For the time being, an internationally recognized government is based in the far eastern town of Tobruk, while a rival Islamist-led government is based in the capital, Tripoli. Libya’s democratic transition is failing and as long as the fight between pro-Tobruk and pro-Tripoli continues, the IS and other jihadist groups will continue growing. The Libyan state is failing and the country is emerging as a key people-smuggling route for migrants heading to Europe.

For decades Gaddafi acted as guarantor of the nation’s stability and a careful moderator between tribal leaders, reconciling warring parties and delicately handling the hangovers of the past that still awoke old demons from time to time. Intractable rivalries, violent raids are becoming normal, and since 2011 rival factions, united in their hostility to the Gaddafi’s regime but divided geographically, ideologically, religiously and ethnically, are attacking one another. In addition, the economy is near collapse and the UN considers an estimated 2,44 million people in Libya - nearly 40% of the country’s population – are in need of protection and some form of humanitarian aid.

Radical Islamist groups, which Gaddafi had suppressed, emerged under NATO air cover as some of the most competent fighters of the rebellion. Revolts allowed extreme Islamist groups like the IS to turn Libya into an radical entity. Instability in the country is giving room for extremist groups like the IS to expand.

The growing power of IS is raising fears in the west that Libya’s proximity to Europe makes the continent a tempting target for extremists based in the North African country.

In the chaos, Libya is becoming a haven not only for IS and other radical militants but also for people smugglers who are taking advantage to ship illegal migrants to Europe. Libya is the perfect environment for human traffickers to operate and to make enormous profits, threatening Libya and its surrounding region. IS is gaining

69 “AQIM threatens any foreign intervention”, *Libya Herald*, 14 January 2016.

influence in the country and will continue killing and kidnapping in order to reinforce its Jihadist enterprise.

The UN pursues fragile negotiations between the two blocs to form a unity government and administration, but hardliners on both sides are resisting a peace deal and see any violence as an excuse to challenge the talks. If both governments continue refusing the UN proposals, the country can split into militias' controlled territories.

Finally, the UN-brokered Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) signed in Skhirat on 17 December 2015 and backed by UN Security Council Resolution 2259 of 23 December 2015 is already refused, by the end of January 2016, by a relevant number of members of the two blocs. In fact, the Skhirat agreement has faced off opposition from many members of the two parliaments and from factions on the ground.

In fact, by January 2016 Libya is gripped by violent militia fighting, IS activism, and has three governments instead of two. This political and security chaos has allowed IS jihadists to set up in the country to the great disquiet of neighbors such as Algeria and Tunisia.

At the very moment of the finalization of this chapter, the AU's two-day summit in Addis Abeba (30-31 January 2016) closed with the Organization saying it was deeply concerned that IS was gaining ground in Libya. According to UNSMIL chief Martin Klobber terrorist cells in the south of Libya could overflow into Niger and Chad.

The priority in Libya to re-establish security in political and security terms, but an enormous effort is needed toward implementation of the UN-brokered Libyan Political Agreement and the formation of the Serraj GNA and the activation and rebuilding of Libyan security forces. The Serraj-led Presidency Council proposed a 32-Minister Government of National Accord that both blocs do not accept either.

This new Government is needed urgently to deal with terrorism and rescue the economy. Three important terrorist attacks on key installations in Sidra, Ras Lanuf and Benghazi in January 2016 are a potent reminder of the need to forge a united front to contain and eliminate the growing danger represented by the IS terrorist actor.

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