

Chapter Five

Libya: The Major Security Concern in Africa?

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Having ruled Libya for 42 years, Muammar Gaddafi came to his final demise in October 2011, after a bloody eight-month civil war. The country was then governed for ten months by the National Transitional Council (NTC), until the elections for the General National Congress (GNC) were held. In November 2012, the new incoming Prime Minister, Ali Zeidan, was tasked to run the country in a very difficult climate: in fact, there has been a real political vacuum, which has been filled by the militias that de facto control Libya. The failure of the government to ensure security even just within the capital, Tripoli, as shown by Zeidan's kidnapping in October 2013 and his forced resignation in March 2014,¹ has made Libya a very unsafe place, where tribal conflicts are recurrent; al-Qaeda (AQ) has gained ground in the south; and militias are roaming free.

The Impact of Insecurity on the Oil Sector

Libya's economic structure makes it a rentier economy, because the exports of its main natural resource, hydrocarbons, constitute 90 percent of the state revenue.²

The revenues of exports should be injected into the private non-hydrocarbon sector, in order to further decrease the high rate of unemployment in the country. During the Gaddafi era, the ensemble of the imposed sanctions hampered the economy from reaching its economic potential. The conflict, furthermore, damaged the

¹RFI, "La Libye n'a plus de Premier ministre," March 12, 2014, available at: <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20140311-libye-premier-ministre-perd-confiance-deputes/>.

²IMF (2012) "Libya Beyond the Revolution: Challenges and Opportunities" (Washington D.C., International Monetary Fund), p. 2, available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/dp/2012/1201mcd.pdf>.

economy.³ It is estimated that the economic cost of Libya's civil war has been around \$15 billion.

The security situation (in this case, the heightened insecurity) is not conducive for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Interestingly enough, because of the rewards that the Libyan energy market can bring, some foreign oil companies have returned to Libya, including *Total* (France); *Repsol* (Spain); *Wintershall* (Germany); as well as *British Petroleum* (BP) (UK). However, the timing changed for some companies because of the security outlook (especially after the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi on 11 September 2012, and the attack on the In Amenas gas facility in neighbouring Algeria in January 2013). In 2007, BP had signed an exploration-and-production agreement with Libya's National Oil Corporation, but suspended this contract in February 2011. This suspension was lifted in May 2012;⁴ however, in May 2013, BP withdrew non-essential foreign staff from operations in Libya, following "UK government advice about uncertainty in the country."⁵ In November 2013, BP stated that it was withdrawing investment in Libya, but not ceasing activity altogether.⁶

Oil has become a tool for political negotiations,⁷ especially since summer 2013, and, to make matters worse, in April 2013, Libya announced that it was not going to allow foreign security forces to protect its oil fields. Why is that problematic? Because even though the Libyan security force around the oil facilities is 15,000-men strong, it is not up to the level it should be to instil any confidence in the minds of foreign oil executives. The infighting between the various militias, coupled with the lack of equipment and adequate training, makes this task almost insurmountable.

³Deveaux, J. (2013) "La Libye, 20 mois après Kadhafi," *Geopolis*, June 4, available at: <http://geopolis.francetvinfo.fr/la-libye-20-mois-apres-kadhafi-17045>.

⁴BBC, "BP to resume oil operations in Libya," May 29, 2012, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-18256587>.

⁵BBC, "BP withdraws some Libya staff over security concerns," May 12, 2013, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22501901>.

⁶Ash, N. (2013) "BP to slash Libyan plans—report," *Libya Herald*, November 6, available at: <http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/11/06/breaking-news-bp-to-slash-libyan-plans-report/#axzz2sea2uNXM>.

⁷Casalis, M. (2013) "Libye: les conséquences de la crise pétrolière," *RFI*, October 4, available at: <http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20131004-libye-petrole-crise-budget>.

Sabotage is also playing a big role in the major disruption that the oil sector is regularly witnessing. For instance, the Italian oil company, *Eni*, was forced to suspend gas exports to Italy in March 2013, because of a dispute between terror groups near its Mellitah facility.⁸ Militias are using their full power to show how they are in control, in effect, of most oil facilities. In other words, nothing can be done without them, and that is one of the major signs of the state's total lack of control over its main resource.

There have been also some social grievances—demand for more jobs and increased salaries—which have resulted in strikes that paralysed oil production over the summer of 2013. As a result, the oil production fell to 250,000 barrels per day (bpd), from an average of 1.5 million: a drop of 80 percent.⁹

A Power Vacuum

The Gaddafi regime kept an artificial balance between the local and regional powers, as well as between the institutions. He imposed the authority of one militia over the whole territory therefore when the regime collapsed, there was a power vacuum. Numerous separate militias jumped in to fill that void and replace the weak and defective central authorities. Even though the government tried to integrate these militias in order to avoid a civil war, it is still lacking to control any of them.

The militias are used for securing/defending the country, most notably to control the borders. The problem is that the integration of armed groups (particularly those with a jihadist or regionalist logic) within the government is hostile to the establishment of a centralised authority.¹⁰ Not all these militias work against the government; most of them have been drafted by the authorities that require their services

⁸RT, "Libyan gas exports to Italy disrupted due to clashes," March 3, 2013, available at: <http://rt.com/news/libya-gas-export-italy-744/>.

⁹*L'Expression*, "Crise pétrolière en Libye: La production en chute de plus de 80 percent," November 5, 2013, available at: <http://www.lexpressiondz.com/internationale/183922-la-production-en-chute-de-plus-de-80.html>.

¹⁰*Le Monde*, "L'Europe face au désastre qui s'installe en Libye," October 15, 2013, available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2013/10/15/l-europe-face-au-desastre-qui-s-installe-en-libye_3495807_3232.html.

for policing, defence, and border-control purposes.¹¹ The process of slow integration has been preferred over forced disbandment of the militias, in order to avoid the throes of a civil war which the central power could not win. The downfall of this policy will be the rise of a bundle of armed groups with jihadist; regionalist; or mafia-like inclinations, and which are hostile to a strong state.

Gaddafi was using these conflicts, and had revived the social divisions, in order to establish his authority. Since his fall, no one controls the situation: the country's regions have never been so divided, and tribalism will continue to persist in the post-Gaddafi era,¹² presenting the risk of a fragile or failed state.¹³

The Libyan government is finding it hard to restore its authority over the multiple armed groups that are still active all over the country.¹⁴ Despite the dismembering of some militias in Tripoli and Benghazi since September 2012, the security apparatus remains in the hands of some 300 brigades that have emerged from the ruins of the Gaddafi regime. These local brigades are attempting to establish their own authority, thereby replacing the redundant central authorities.¹⁵ In fact, post-Gaddafi Libya suffers less of an institutional void than a cruel lack of centralisation. In Tripoli, two main militias—the katiba from Zintan (a city located in the north-west of the country), constituted of “mountain warriors”, and the katiba of Misrata (east of Tripoli), dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood—ensure the security of the capital, with the help of several ex-rebel groups.

¹¹*Le Monde*, “Libye: le premier ministre brièvement enlevé par d'ex-rebelles,” October 10, 2013, available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/libye/article/2013/10/10/le-premier-ministre-libyen-ali-zeidan-a-ete-enleve_3492883_1496980.html

¹²Haimzadeh, P. (2012) “Scrutin libyen sur fond de chaos,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July, available at: <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2012/07/HAIMZADEH/47931>.

¹³El-Katiri, M. (2012) *State-Building Challenges in a Post-Revolution Libya* (U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute), p. 2.

¹⁴*Le Monde*, “Libye: le premier ministre brièvement enlevé par d'ex-rebelles,” *op. cit.*

¹⁵Barulet, A. (2013) “Libye: des milices mafieuses occupent le vide laissé par l'État central,” *Le Figaro*, October 10, available at: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2013/10/10/01003-20131010ARTFIG00445-libye-des-milices-mafieuses-occupent-le-vide-laisse-par-l-etat-central.php>

The Militias

While Libya underwent a very violent civil war, compared to the other countries of the “Arab Spring”, the violence did not stop on the day of Gaddafi’s death. In fact, with the numerous attacks; violence; and thefts, Libya may follow the same path as Iraq.¹⁶ For instance, Benghazi suffers attacks and violence on a daily basis.

The popular uprisings in the neighbouring countries have presented a further threat to the security of Libya. The absence of a strong state and clearly delineated border has allowed an increase in arms smuggling and proliferation. This is relevant because it threatens the security of Libya’s neighbours and Europe. Libyan fighters have been shipping arms to Sinai, Gaza, and Syria, among many other places.

The revolutionary armed militias refuse to disarm, fearing a possible retaliation from an opposing tribe. In addition to the tension created by the tribal configuration of Libya, there is the contention between Benghazi (the focal point of the rebellion in the east) and Tripoli (the ex-Gaddafi stronghold in the west). This rivalry could result in a shift of power from Tripoli to Benghazi. Several regions in the country are pushing towards federalism, especially the regions that have oil fields (such as Ras Lanuf, Zueitina,¹⁷ and the province of Cyrenaica).

Since the fall of Gaddafi, the victorious rebel groups have been taking revenge against the tribes that supported the dictator who ruled for 42 years. An example of this tribal violence is after the Misratans were allegedly tortured, massacred, and raped en masse by the pro-Gaddafi Tawerghans during the uprising;¹⁸ the wind has turned and, now, the Misratans are violently attacking the Tawerghans.

When it comes to the largest concern regarding the country’s stability, i.e. the militias, the situation is very difficult to assess and is

¹⁶*Jeune Afrique*, “La Libye est-elle sur la voie de l’irakisation?” November 21, 2013, available at: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20131121091114/>.

¹⁷*Libya Herald*, “Libya’s oil production at 233,000 b/d,” December 23, 2013, available at: <http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/12/23/libyas-oil-production-at-233000-bpd/#axzz2sea2uNXM>.

¹⁸Abrahams, F. (2013) “Why have we forgotten about Libya?” *Human Rights Watch*, March 25, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/25/why-have-we-forgotten-about-libya>.

really a moving target.¹⁹ All the issues and identities are murky, at best, between the “elected” militia groups; the revolutionary groups fighting against the political instability; the institutionalised armed groups who have integrated the official security forces; and the revolutionary and illegal ones.

The renewed fighting between militias, in January 2012, led the National Transitional Council (NTC) to warn of the risks of another civil war.²⁰ Dozens of separate armed groups took control of Tripoli’s neighbourhoods and strategic infrastructures, including the airports. They used this as political leverage to make sure that they would not be excluded from power, as had happened in Egypt and Tunisia.²¹ The militias are estimated to comprise around 140,000 to 150,000 men in Tripoli alone. Efforts were made to integrate militias into the Ministry of Interior’s forces;²² this act was an effort to curb violence in Libya. Militias would be removed from the capital, disarmed, and the men integrated into security forces.²³ The transitional government has integrated into the national security forces only 29 percent of the estimated 170,000 militiamen who fought Gaddafi.²⁴ Because of the lack of a police or military force able to maintain order and security, the Islamist militias are ruling and filling the security void. An estimated 200,000 armed men involved in militias rule over the territory and bring insecurity to the region:²⁵ they exert control over the administrations and ministries, organise drug and arm traffics, hold to ransom the population, and attack the various diplomatic representations.

¹⁹Lussato, C. (2013) “LIBYE. “Les milices se nourrissent de la faiblesse de l’Etat,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, October 10, available at: <http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/monde/20131010.OBS0726/libye-les-milices-se-nourrissent-de-la-faiblesse-de-l-etat.html>.

²⁰El-Katiri., *op. cit.*, p. 18.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 19.

²²Touchard, L. (2013) “Armée libyenne : le casse-tête de l’intégration des milices,” *Jeune Afrique*, November 26, available at: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20131125163018/>.

²³*Al-Akbbbar English*, “Libyan government reveals plan to integrate militias into armed forces,” November 20, 2013, available at: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/17658>.

²⁴*Al-Akbbbar English*, “Libya violence killed 643 over 2013: report,” January 23, 2014, available at: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/18356>.

²⁵*Le Monde*, “L’Europe face au désastre qui s’installe en Libye,” *op. cit.*

The militias' success is made all the more possible because of the lack of unity within Libya,²⁶ the fragmentation of the political landscape, and the regional divisions between the federalists in the east; the Amazigh in the west; and the border minorities of the west and south (the Berbers of the Nafusa Mountains) who demand the recognition of their culture and language in the future Libyan Constitution.

One of the largest and most powerful militias in the country is the Misratan Union of Revolutionaries, comprised of 40,000 members: a real state within a state. These brigades are said to control significant military equipment (heavy artillery, tanks, and vehicles mounted with machine guns).²⁷

Although the group is based in the city of Misrata, it is also involved in central and western Libya.²⁸ Around 50 people were killed in Tripoli, on 18 November 2013, when Misrata militia opened fire on demonstrators protesting against their presence in Tripoli.²⁹ As a consequence, the Misrata militia was required to leave the city.

What one has to keep in mind, when looking at militias, is that they are not a new post-revolution phenomenon. The scale of their power is definitely new; but they were around in the 1990s, after the imposition of sanctions on the country.³⁰ In addition, the Muslim Brotherhood—as well as the jihadi Salafists—appeared as early as the Afghan war in the early 1980s.³¹ Gaddafi was quite successful in clamping down on Islamist terrorists; he jailed most of them and dissolved the terror groups such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). Yet, even before his fall, he released LIFG members and prominent Muslim Brotherhood leaders, for unclear reasons. Interestingly, many of these

²⁶*L'Express*, "Libye: conflit autour de l'or noir," September 5, 2013, available at: http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/proche-moyen-orient/libye-conflit-autour-de-l-or-noir_1278661.html.

²⁷BBC, "Guide to key Libyan militias and other armed groups," November 28, 2013, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19744533>.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹BBC, "Libya clashes: Misrata militia ordered out of Tripoli," November 18, 2013, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24982399>.

³⁰Skandrani, G. (2013) "Un an après la mort de Kadhafi: la Libye n'a plus d'Etat," *La Voix De La Libye*, January 28, available at: <http://lavoixdelalibye.com/?p=7248>.

³¹*Ibid.*

men—who were veterans of the Afghan war and/or al-Qaeda (AQ) members—joined the militias that overthrew Gaddafi.³²

On a hopeful note, the Libyans are determined to get rid of the militias ruling the country.³³ So, for example, militias surrounded buildings of the Ministry of Justice and Foreign Affairs,^{34 35} on 30 April 2013. On 10 May 2013, though, pro-democracy protesters supporting the government drove them out.³⁶ Local authorities also called for a three-day general strike and civil disobedience in Tripoli, to start on 17 November 2013.

The Libyan central power has been trying to confront the difficulty of establishing security forces for two years now. After the attack against the U.S. embassy in Benghazi that killed the U.S. ambassador in September 2012, the government has been attempting to control the armed groups that were formed during the uprising against Gaddafi.³⁷ Interestingly enough, the government has legitimized some of those militias and has declared others illegal. Even though the militias have been denounced countless times (and for good reasons), they still keep a certain legitimacy because of their fighting during the revolution.

But the real problem lies more in the weakness of the state, rather than the power of the militias. Gaddafi really intended for himself and his cronies to be in charge of the country, and so neglected to build

³²*Le Parisien*, “Extrémistes en Libye et Al-Qaïda: des affinités mais pas d’affiliation,” October 8, 2013, available at: <http://www.leparisien.fr/flash-actualite-monde/extremistes-en-libye-et-al-qaida-des-affinites-mais-pas-d-affiliation-08-10-2013-3206927.php>.

³³Tigrine, M. (2013) “Grève générale et appels à la désobéissance civile à Tripoli: Les Libyens déterminés à se débarrasser des milices,” *Liberté Algérie*, November 18, available at: <http://www.liberte-algerie.com/international/les-libyens-determines-a-se-debarrasser-des-milices-greve-generale-et-appels-a-la-desobeissance-civile-a-tripoli-210572>.

³⁴BBC, “Libya gunmen surround justice ministry in Tripoli,” April 30, 2013, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-22352530>.

³⁵DW, “Militias again surround ministry buildings in Libya,” April 30, 2013, available at: <http://www.dw.de/militias-again-surround-ministry-buildings-in-libya/a-16780981>.

³⁶Eljali, A. and Fornaji, H. (2013) “Protestors force out Ministry militiamen,” *Libya Herald*, May 10, available at: <http://www.libyaherald.com/2013/05/10/protestors-force-out-ministry-militiamen/#axzz2sea2uNXM>.

³⁷Gouëset, C. (2013) “Libye: “Les enlèvements illustrent la faiblesse de l’Etat,” *L’Express*, October 10, available at: http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/afrique/libye-l-enlevement-du-premier-ministre-illustre-la-faiblesse-de-l-etat_1289945.html.

any institutions that could have been helpful in the post-revolution environment.

The militias know how to use their leverage in order to reach their goals; so, for instance, when they seized the oil fields over the summer of 2013, it was more a matter of pressuring the government than actually receiving some of the oil revenues.³⁸ The militias have also obtained the removal of several Defence and Interior ministers who were not particularly favorable to them.

Tribal Violence

Unfortunately, the violence is not limited to the militias and terror groups; tribal conflicts could be a ticking time bomb as well. There are several of them in Libya, with the most potentially dangerous being between the tribes of Misrata and Warfallas (the latter being the largest tribe in Libya, located all over the country).³⁹ The Misratians accuse the Warfallas of assassinating Omar Mukhtar, the hero of Libyan resistance against Italian colonialism for 20 years;⁴⁰ but it is widely believed that Italian forces captured and hanged him in 1931.⁴¹ In addition, the Warfallas' stronghold in Beni Walid was the last pro-Gaddafi bastion standing, thus further increasing the tension between the two tribes. The fighting between the two has resulted in the deaths of hundreds. For the moment, the conflict seems to be limited to Beni Walid; yet it could possibly spread.

The tribal animosity is not just confined to large cities, or to one particular region, or to Arab groups alone: for example, ethnic Tebu militias largely oversee Tuareg districts, and have suffered from the ire

³⁸Mandraud, I. (2013) "Libye, un Etat en morceaux," *Le Monde*, December 3, available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/libye/article/2013/12/03/libye-un-etat-en-morceaux_3524722_1496980.html.

³⁹Skandrani, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰*The Milli Gazette*, "The Italian occupation and the Libyan resistance," n.d., available at: <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/15122001/1512200105.htm>, accessed on: January 30, 2014.

⁴¹*Ibid.*; See also: "History of Omar Mokhtar and Libya," *Home of Islam—Muslim Unity*, available at: <http://www.freewebs.com/islamic-site/warrior/omar.html>, accessed on: January 30, 2014.

of Arab militias that have long viewed them with suspicion.⁴² In January 2014, 88 people were killed and 130 injured during fighting between the two tribes. Back in 2012, infighting killed 150 people.⁴³

This just adds to the already extremely volatile situation that pushed the government to declare a state of emergency on January 19, 2014.⁴⁴

Hanan Salah, a researcher for *Human Rights Watch* in Tripoli, perfectly describes the untenable chaos that is reigning over the country: “In Libya it has become fully acceptable to use force as a means to achieve certain objectives [...] It has become an everyday thing. You don’t like something? Kidnap the prime minister for a few hours. Kidnap the son of the defence minister. Whether willingly or unwillingly, the government has put itself in this position.”⁴⁵

Al-Qaeda

The militias are not the only ones instilling terror; AQ is actually very active in the country. Some of the Libyan AQ operatives came back to Libya during the insurrection against Gaddafi in 2011.⁴⁶ Their involvement with the Libyan rebels allowed them to be recognised, to obtain military weapons, and to form militias that have had particular influence in the east of the country. They also established some training camps—especially in the south, where they recruit young men to send them to Syria.

AQ has progressively established itself in Libya, taking advantage of the chaos and the power vacuum after Gaddafi’s fall and the lack of a capable army. It has actually thrived after the French intervention in Mali that pushed a number of hard-core jihadists such as Mokhtar

⁴²Daragahi, B. (2013) “Libya: Rule of the gun,” *Financial Times*, November 19, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a8f8a2e2-5107-11e3-9651-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2sTRIHNyf>.

⁴³*Jeune Afrique*, “Heurts dans le sud libyen : au moins 88 morts en deux semaines,” January 25, 2014, available at: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/DEPAFP20140125162657/>.

⁴⁴Daragahi, B. (2014) “Tripoli declares state of emergency in Libya’s south,” *Financial Times*, January 19, available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/0c672536-8102-11e3-b3d5-00144feab7de.html#axzz2sTRIHNyf>.

⁴⁵Daraghi (2013), *op. cit.*

⁴⁶Skandrani, *op. cit.*

Belmokhtar to settle in southern Libya, where no one really controls the territory.

Former Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan has conceded that government investigations have turned up Tunisians, Algerians, Sudanese, and Nigerians undergoing training in Benghazi.⁴⁷ Yet, despite the regular arrival and departure of fighters undergoing training, Zeidan has said that “there are no permanent camps.”⁴⁸ Instead, he thought that most fighters stayed only one or two days. This is highly unlikely, and it seems that this is purely a damage-control statement.

Indeed, large swaths of Libyan territory are under jihadist control, and the training camps are very much of a reality.⁴⁹

Libya has porous borders, with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) cells established in Derna and Benghazi. The In Amenas attack in neighbouring Algeria also occurred close to the porous desert border with Libya.

The most active terror group within the country is the AQ-affiliated Ansar al-Sharia (AAS)—which attacked an army’s patrol near Benghazi, on 25 November 2013.⁵⁰ This group was also responsible for the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi in September 2012,⁵¹ although it denied its involvement.⁵² AAS took advantage of the secu-

⁴⁷Youssef, N. (2013) “Benghazi, Libya, has become training hub for Islamist fighters,” *Miami Herald*, December 12, available at: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/12/12/3814687/benghazi-libya-has-become-training.html>.

⁴⁸Ibid. See also: Tilouine, J. (2013) “Mohamed Abdelaziz: ‘La Libye risque de devenir un État failli,’” *Jeune Afrique*, December 5, available at: <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Articles/Dossier/ARTJAWEB20131205174501/onu-developpement-securite-aqmimohamed-abdelaziz-la-libye-risque-de-devenir-un-tat-failli.html>.

⁴⁹Lasserre, I. (2013) “Guerre contre Kadhafi, une victoire tactique mais un échec stratégique,” *Le Figaro*, October 10, available at: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2013/10/10/01003-20131010ARTFIG00568-guerre-contre-kadhafi-une-victoire-tactique-mais-un-echec-strategique.php>.

⁵⁰Tigrine, M. (2013) “Affrontements meurtriers entre les salafistes et l’armée à Benghazi: La menace djihadiste prend forme en Libye,” *Liberté Algérie*, November 12, available at: <http://www.liberte-algerie.com/international/la-menace-djihadiste-prend-forme-en-libye-affrontements-meurtriers-entre-les-salafistes-et-l-armee-a-benghazi-211058>.

⁵¹Mandraud, I. (2013) “En Libye, les Islamistes très présents mais en ordre dispersé,” *Le Monde*, December 3, available at: http://www.lemonde.fr/libye/article/2013/12/03/en-libye-les-islamistes-tres-presents-mais-en-ordre-disperse_3524724_1496980.html.

⁵²Ibid.

rity void and now controls some territories in the east and in some districts of Benghazi, Sirte, and Derna.⁵³

Since the fall of Gaddafi, major public and visible targets have been hit by terror groups: the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, on 11 September 2012; the French embassy, in March 2013; the Ministry of Interior, in July 2013; and the kidnapping of Prime Minister Zeidan, in October 2013. Abou Anas al-Libi, one of America's most wanted terrorists, was captured in October 2013, by U.S. Special Forces, in a raid in Tripoli.

While Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and other Salafi outfits refuse to be affiliated with AQ (and prefer acting under an independent leadership), some still share an ideological affinity with AQ that should not be underplayed. According to several experts on Libya, some of these Islamist groups have become so powerful that they have refused to become part of AQ's network, as they would rather act independently under their own emir.⁵⁴

The West's Future Role

The West should very much try to solve the ever-thorny issue of the loose weapons. It is not just all about the light weaponry, but more seriously of the roughly 4,000 surface-to-air missiles and 6,400 barrels of "yellowcake" (uranium ready to be enriched, which could come into the hands of AQ).⁵⁵ According to Bharuddin Midhoun Arifi, a military commander in the city of Sabha, AQ has offered one million dollars in exchange for the leftover weapons from the Gaddafi era, which includes uranium "yellowcakes" and surface-to-air missiles. Also, as sheer numbers go, MI6 estimates that the amount of weapons in Libya is more than the entire British arsenal.⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴*Le Parisien*, "Extrémistes en Libye et Al Qaida: des affinités mais pas d'affiliations," October 8, 2013.

⁵⁵Colomès, M. (2013) "Libye—La poudrière nucléaire du capitaine Arifi," *Le Point*, October 27, available at: http://www.lepoint.fr/editos-du-point/michel-colomes/libye-la-poudriere-nucleaire-du-capitaine-arifi-27-10-2013-1748388_55.php.

⁵⁶Drury, I. (2013) "Don't turn Syria into a 'Tesco for terrorists' like Libya, generals tell Cameron," *Daily Mail*, June 17, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2342917/Dont-turn-Syria-Tesco-terrorists-like-Libya-generals-tell-Cameron.html>.

The situation is so dire that calls for international military have been heard very recently. So, for example, Niger has been very vocal in advocating Western military action⁵⁷ underlining that the countries that helped unseat Gaddafi needed to provide the “after sales service.” But at least France publically said through its Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius that an intervention was not in the works.⁵⁸

Even former Prime Minister Zeidan had warned or maybe bluffed back in November 2013 that the “international community cannot tolerate a state in the middle of the Mediterranean that is a source of violence, terrorism and killings.”⁵⁹

Even though full military intervention has been ruled out by Western countries, undercover and sporadic operations by various countries have been taking place in the south. Even the Algerians have reportedly been active in dismantling jihadist training camps.⁶⁰ Le Figaro recently revealed that U.S. Special Forces are actually conducting military operations against the jihadists in the south with the blessing of Libyan authorities.⁶¹ Indeed since late 2013, U.S. Delta forces disguised as nomads, supported by drones, are supervising a group of Libyan Special Forces fighting off al-Qaeda in the south. According to a French military source, “The United States estimate that the threat of a disintegration of Southern Libya is such that it cannot just use aerial means to handle this threat.” It is also likely that French and British forces might join the Americans in such operations. French Admiral Edouard Guillaud, the just outgoing Chief of Defense Staff, recently stated “The ideal would be to mount an international operation with the blessing of Libyan authorities in the south

⁵⁷Champeaux, N. (2014) “Le Sud de la Libye, nouveau sanctuaire des jihadistes,” *RFI*, February 5, available at: <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20140205sud-libye-nouveau-sanctuaire-jihadistes-terrorisme-hassoumi/>.

⁵⁸Cherfaoui, Z. (2014) “Intervention militaire occidentale dans le sud de la Libye,” *El Watan*, February 11, available at: http://www.elwatan.com/international/les-francais-disent-non-aniamey-11-02-2014-245357_112.php.

⁵⁹Bouatta, D. (2014) “Face au chaos généralisé de la Libye,” *Liberté Algérie*, February 27, available at: <http://www.liberte-algerie.com/international/des-occidentaux-pensent-qu-une-nouvelle-guerre-est-necessaire-face-au-chaos-generalise-de-la-libye-216560>.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Champeaux, *op. cit.*

of the country.”⁶² Adding to that, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, said “Libya is a first-rate challenge” and “we will be obliged to help the neighbouring countries to defend themselves against the Libyan chaos.”⁶³

Conclusion

The socio-economic and political issues that led people to revolt against the Gaddafi regime have mostly survived the transition and are potentially threatening the “democratic” rule. The risks remaining are associated with a revival of civil unrest and the creation of a societal hierarchy, plus a territorial division that could lead to what Abdul Alhakim al-Feitouri calls the “Balkanisation of Libya.”⁶⁴

The country has been hit with a perfect storm: first, militias controlling every aspect of the daily life of people; second, al-Qaeda (AQ) and its affiliates very present in the south, and potentially launching terror attacks; third, a very weak state. Libya has turned into a virtual failed state, where most of the socio-economic and political issues that contributed to Gaddafi’s ousting are still very much alive and threaten the “democratic” rule.

In many aspects, “Libya 2014” is much worse than “Libya 2011.” Human security remains the biggest problem, and, until it is tackled properly, Libya has no shining prospects. Of all the Arab Spring countries, Libya is actually the one that has fared the worst, while having the best potential. The problems facing the country are daunting, and it is very difficult to see a way out. Nonetheless, the resources and, hence, the financial interests at stake in Libya make it clear that the international community will one day, sooner rather than later, have to tackle these issues head-on.

⁶²Duteil, M. (2014) “Toubous contre djihadistes: la pétaudière du Sud libyen,” *Le Point*, February 3, available at: http://www.lepoint.fr/editos-du-point/mireille-duteil/toubous-contre-djihadistes-la-petaudiere-du-sud-libyen-03-02-2014-1787235_239.php.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴El-Katiri., *op. cit.*, p. 29.