

BULLETIN

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Libya's Problems After Qaddafi

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After the downfall of Muammar Qaddafi's regime, Libya has been forced to begin laying the groundwork for the establishment of democratic public institutions. So far, the organisation of the elections and their results, and Libya's economic perspectives suggest a positive outcome for the country's transition. At the same time, the establishment of centres of power that rival the government in Tripoli, the presence of paramilitary groups, proliferation of weapons, strengthening of extremism and revanchism towards members of the previous regime will only prolong the state's reconstitution and reconstruction. The EU and the U.S. will continue to play a relatively minor role in this process.

Post-revolutionary Libya is faced with economic, political and social problems that threaten to undermine its transition. One of the examples of these issues is the security situation in Eastern Libya where a U.S. consulate in Benghazi became a target of a terrorist attack on 11 September 2012. Four people, including Christopher Stevens, the U.S. ambassador to Libya, died in the attack.

Political and Economic Situation. The first post-Qaddafi parliamentary elections in Libya took place on 7 July 2012. The National Forces Alliance, led by Mahmoud Jibril, the former prime minister of Libya's revolutionary government, won the highest number of seats in the General National Congress. The Islamists polled worse than expected, especially the Muslim Brotherhood-aligned Justice and Construction Party and the Al-Watan party, which includes veterans of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, formerly associated with Al-Qaida, failed to win a single seat. Mustafa Abushagur, former deputy prime minister, was chosen as prime minister by the parliamentarians. The new government promises to liberalise the Libyan economy, disarm Libyan civil militias and reintegrate their members, and enact health and education sector reforms.

These initiatives would be financed by increasing oil exports, which constitute up to 90% of all government revenue. The government wants to see an expansion of oil production to 2 million barrels a day (pre-revolutionary Libya produced about 1.6 million barrels a day).

Regionalism and Paramilitarism as Threats to Statehood. Despite ongoing positive processes in Tripoli, Libyan statehood seems hollow, partly created as a result of the international community's expectations. Libya is now struggling both to build democratic institutions from scratch and with strong regionalism. Four de facto rival local centres of power have developed, in Tripoli, Benghazi, Zintan and Misrata. The capital Tripoli is the only formal linchpin of the whole territory. Benghazi is the capital of Cyrenaica, a region notorious for its Islamist and extremist tendencies (Derna) and considered to host one of the most conservative neighbourhoods in the country (al-Baida). Cyrenaica is also known for its strong separatist sentiments. As for the people of Zintan, they are now famous for their heroic struggle against Qaddafi and for having first entered Tripoli. Misrata is the biggest port in Libya—its inhabitants have historically been in conflict with the biggest Libyan tribe, Warfalla, once a pillar of the Qaddafi regime. While the state lacks local power centres, it is relatively autonomous thanks to its seclusion and offers people a basic level of security.

An additional element providing local security to selected groups of Libyans lies in the use of revolutionary and paramilitary regional militias, which maintained public order during the elections and have been both successfully and unsuccessfully employed by the central authorities to fight the Qaddafi remnants and to secure Libya's borders and oil installations. Until now, two rival coalitions of militias have evolved in different parts of the country, the High Security Committee, in theory under

the Interior Ministry, and Libya Shield, which is connected with the Ministry of Defence. Both structures remain under central supervision, but only nominally. In reality they are governed by regional leaders (i.e., from Misrata or Zintan) who have been posted in central government structures. In this light, disarmament and demobilisation of the militias may not prove successful, although two Islamist militias, including Ansar al-Sharia ("Followers of Sharia", which perpetrated the 11 September 2012 attack on the American consulate), have disbanded as a result of protests in the east of the country and Abushagur's government pressure. But this does not mean the other militias are weaker, even those theoretically under Tripoli's supervision.

Deteriorating Internal Security Situation. Libya's increasing regional tendencies and the continued functioning of the militias have meant only a short-term improvement in Libya's security situation. The de facto decentralisation of the security sector could threaten the safety of some of Libya's regions, its non-Arab population or former Qaddafi loyalists as the representatives of the four centres of power might attempt reprisals against their assumed foes. The return of inter-militia squabbling is also possible, and this could strengthen the appeal of the radical Islamists.

Cyrenaica is the most unstable of Libya's regions, and the U.S. ambassador's death is the latest in a series of violent attacks on foreigners in this part of Libya (including an attack on the International Red Cross office in Benghazi). Numerous anti-Western and or anti-foreign groups exist in the vicinity of Benghazi and other areas of Cyrenaica.

The Libyan anti-Americanism is partly a byproduct of the American war on terror. According to the American Combating Terrorism Center, Libyans constituted the second-most targeted group after Saudis amongst foreigners fighting alongside Al-Qaida in Iraq. The members of the Libyan Islamist groups who fought against the Qaddafi forces are probably not directly linked with Al-Qaida. Nonetheless, they may react to calls and suggestions from its leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who on the day of the Benghazi attacks, called for revenge for the death of Abu Yahya al-Libi, a Libyan and former prominent member of Al-Qaida.

Conclusion. The stabilisation of Libya is *sine qua non* for further progress in reconstruction and democratisation. A significant financial surplus and the election process, including voter registration, actual voting, the results and turnout, bode well for the future, though they have had the biggest impact in the capital and much less elsewhere.

After the elections, the parties and groups that did not make it into parliament have been left with no other option to gain power but to grab it by force. Extremist tendencies are vented through attacks on foreigners and moderate Muslims. The emergence of the four centres of local power makes a partition of Libya possible, although unlikely. Institutionally weak entities would then emerge, characterised by instability and an inability to control their borders. The re-emergence of civil war is also unlikely due to the fact that the aspirations of militias and other interest groups have a clear local, rather than national limit.

Faced with the difficulties brought on by new statehood, the Libyan authorities could restrict the scope of cooperation with the international community, especially the U.S. More suitably positioned is the European Union, which, however, has few instruments at its disposal to pressure oil-rich Libya. After Qaddafi's downfall, EU-Libyan relations became less energetic at an official level. An Association Agreement with Libya is not being negotiated, but as the country returns to stability and improves its governance, such a structure could act as an incentive for further reform. The EU, while stressing the importance of cooperating within the framework of available European instruments (European Neighbourhood Policy, Union for the Mediterranean) and regional forums (such as the Arab Maghreb Union), should focus on social initiatives that, for example, facilitate the reintegration of militia members or take on health services reform. Polish experience with security sector reform could be of an immense value to Libya. It could prove useful to consider cooperation with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, which is already active in North Africa and is keen to draw on the Central European experience. In this regard, Poland has also developed specific aid mechanisms based on its transition experience. It could offer Libyans a very concrete package of development programmes, such as SENSE training (on interdependence of security, economic and social growth).