



ISSUE IN FOCUS

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# Inside Libya's Wild West

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The fall of Muammar Qaddafi's regime in 2011 after four decades of authoritarian rule gave rise to numerous armed groups competing for territory and influence. More than three years since the uprising began, persistent instability threatens not only Libya's fragile democratic transition but also security in North Africa and the Sahel zone. Tripoli is at the center of a power struggle among competing political factions. Benghazi is the scene of ever more brutal political violence, which now risks drawing the country into a civil war. Then there is the southwestern province of Fezzan, Libya's "Wild West," where human trafficking and smuggling thrive and transnational jihadists hide.

The government has not adequately addressed any of these problems. Political quarrels undermine the General National Congress (GNC), Libya's transitional legislative body, and paralyze the executive branch. Incapable of imposing a monopoly of force, the government leaves the provision of law and order to parastatal forces, effectively invalidating efforts to disarm former rebel fighters. Public frustration at the slow speed of reform and state building, aggravated by allegations of high-level corruption and incompetence, further erodes national leadership, and fuels militarization and conflict.

Seen in the past as little-relevant backwaters, the Fezzan is now a focal point in debates over how to stabilize Libya and the wider region. From a security point of view, the lack of border monitoring represents the main problem. Field research suggests that in order for security policies to be sustainable, a number of underlying causes of instability, including the weak political and economic infrastructure, urgently need to be addressed. The greatest challenge will be dealing with minority demands and citizenship claims in a way that eases tensions between the ethnic and tribal groups.

### Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East

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### The Fezzan

One of three federal provinces at the time of Libya's formal independence in 1951, alongside Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the Fezzan was later split into smaller administrative units with limited powers. Currently there is no regional governance structure above the municipality level, but this could change with the soon-to-be-drafted constitution.<sup>1</sup> Located on the northern end of the Sahara desert,<sup>2</sup> the Fezzan is by nature a challenging environment. The inhabitants—estimated to be less than 10 percent of Libya's population of 6 million—are classified as either Arab, Tuareg, or Tebu. While the latter two minorities have a stronger collective identity, the Arab community is split along tribal lines. Inhabitants with no tribal affiliation are referred to as Fezzazna or Ahali. The mix of cultures is testimony to centuries of trans-Saharan caravan trade and slavery, as well as Qaddafi-era demographic changes.<sup>3</sup> Although some people in the Fezzan maintain a seminomadic lifestyle, most are settled in the regional capital Sebha or remote desert oases where they live off livestock breeding and

1 Libya has not had a constitution since Qaddafi abrogated the one that enshrined Libya's independence in 1951. An assembly was elected in February 2014 to draw up a new text. The very controversial issue of how to administer the country and distribute its natural resources pits federalists against centralists and provides the backdrop to the ongoing protests.

2 The analysis includes Ghadames due to its location on the Algerian and Tunisian border and the resulting problems it shares with towns in the Fezzan.

3 Qaddafi encouraged the relocation of "friendly tribes" to the south and offered citizenship to foreigners or previously exiled population groups in exchange for loyalty.

agriculture, in addition to public sector wages.<sup>4</sup> The region's vast but underexplored natural oil and gas fields have so far yielded little benefit for locals. There is hardly any industry outside the producing fields, and the standard of living remains low. Unsurprisingly, informal trade and smuggling are by far the most lucrative activities in the Fezzan.

### At the Margins of the State

The consequences of Libya's nation-building challenges are particularly evident in the Fezzan, where the modern state never gained a strong foothold. For centuries, outside rulers relied upon the collaboration of borderland tribes to assert their control. Qaddafi took the same approach; he not only sustained relative stability but also gained much support in the Fezzan by allowing for patronage networks to form and for locals to join security forces.

The collapse of his regime upset the preexisting order. Rebel groups, including those from northern Libya, seized new ground, enhancing the position of their respective communities and forcing Qaddafi loyalists onto the defensive. With longtime tribal arrangements breaking down, fighting erupted over the control of borders and oil fields, both of which generate income. Control over borders means being in charge of smuggling and collecting tariffs, while the protection of oil facilities on behalf of Libya's National Oil Corporation and its foreign partners provides lucrative contracts and leverage over the Libyan government.

Fueled by the war experience and the availability of weapons, clashes between neighboring communities<sup>5</sup> are recurrent. Spheres of influence shift depending on the struggles and alliances between local players (leaders of communities, tribes, and armed groups) and their respective political linkages.<sup>6</sup>

In this unstable environment, kinship has become an ever more important source of identity and local players have taken over state functions. This, together with the poor performance of postrevolutionary national

institutions,<sup>7</sup> has created a vicious cycle. Despite a greater representation of diverse constituencies since 2011 at the central level, people in the Fezzan share a strong sense of marginalization. They generally believe that decision-makers in the more developed northern part of Libya take no interest in their views and are unwilling to grant the Fezzan an adequate share of the country's power and wealth. "The capital does not care about the country's interior. We are far from Tripoli and have little connections there," complained Mayor of Ghat Mohamed Abdelqader Maji, reflecting a widespread perception of political dynamics.<sup>8</sup>

### Perilous Borders

Poor border control creates multiple problems at the local, regional, and national level. With the state absent from effectively enforcing the rule of law, crime has reached alarming levels and the black market thrives. Illegal migration from sub-Saharan Africa is yet another unresolved issue that evokes mixed feelings in Libya, where immigrants are frequently blamed for social ills even though the economy relies on a cheap foreign workforce. The most dangerous phenomenon, however, is the uncontrolled spread of weapons and growth of militant groups.

### Crime

Crime places a massive strain on the Fezzan, particularly in the Sebha district, where displacement, uncoordinated urbanization, and illegal migration cause genuine grievances. Residents rely on neighborhood protection schemes to prevent armed robbery and looting, and to identify fake roadblocks. Theft of public property reduces the availability of already poor services. For example, hundreds of solar panels for communication networks along the Sebha Ghat road were stolen. In another case, one security official in Ghat accused corrupt officers of selling police vehicles to a smuggler gang. Crime is primarily a local concern, but it also undermines state authority and exacerbates communal tensions.

### Smuggling

The Fezzan has only three operating border crossings, leaving roughly 2,000 kilometers of largely unpatrolled borderland through which people and goods transit

4 As much as 70 percent of Libya's workforce is employed in the public sector, which redistributes the oil wealth. But corruption and exclusion of Libyans with no full citizenship generates inequalities.

5 Fighting repeatedly pitted the Tebu minority against the Awlad Suleiman tribe in Sebha and the Zway tribe in the Kufra area. Smuggler rivalries appear to have been the trigger, although the conflict took on a wider ethnic dimension.

6 For a detailed analysis of the breakdown of pre-revolutionary structures and the emergence of new political and security actors see Wolfram Lacher, "Fault Lines of the Revolution: Political Actors, Camps and Conflicts in the New Libya," German Institute for International and Security Affairs, May 2013, [http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research\\_papers/2013\\_RP04\\_lac.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2013_RP04_lac.pdf).

7 In late 2011, the National Transitional Council (NTC), which had been internationally recognized as the legitimate representative of Libya in Qaddafi's stead, set up an interim executive to govern Libya until general elections in July 2012. Since then, the elected General National Congress (GNC) and the (transitional) government have been in charge. The transitional period will conclude with the promulgation of the constitution and the election of a more permanent legislature to replace the GNC.

8 All quotes are from interviews conducted in the Fezzan during April and September 2013.

## Libya's Tribal and Ethnic Diversity

Arab Tribes	<p>Some of the main Arab tribes in the Fezzan are the Warfalla, Magarha, Qaddadfa, Awlad Suleiman, Awlad Buseif, Utman, and the Hasawna.</p> <p>Through political alliances and intermarriage, Qaddafi (himself of the Qaddadfa tribe) consolidated his leadership over Libya's tribal society. Since the revolution, the Awlad Suleiman have a prominent place in Sebha, and their involvement in border smuggling has led to clashes with other communities. The Qaddadfa, on the other hand, lost much land ownership in retaliation for past property confiscation. The Magarha, one of Libya's largest tribes and one that played a prominent role under Qaddafi, are accused of leading the tribal insurgency against Sebha in February 2014.</p>
Amazigh	<p>The Amazigh (pl. Imazighen), or Berber people, are the ancient inhabitants of North Africa whose presence predates the arrival of settlers from the Arab peninsula. They speak Tamazight (many Libyan Imazighen also speak Arabic) and uphold their own cultural roots. This is a source of contention in Libya, where mainstream opinion, shaped by Qaddafi's narrow definition of Libyan nationhood, rejects any identity other than Libyan Arab. Imazighen face no ethnic discrimination in Libya, but their political activism is widely rejected by the Arab population.</p>
Tuareg	<p>The Tuareg are a branch of the Berber people and are spread across the entire Sahel. Once nomads, today most Libyan Tuareg are settled, although many maintain links to relatives in Niger, Algeria, and beyond. Clan-based, rather than tribe-based, Tuareg society used to be led by loose confederations. Today, political lobby groups perform this leadership role. Qaddafi backed Tuareg rebellions in neighboring countries and integrated fighters into a special force aimed at extending his influence into the Sahel. This, together with disputed claims for citizenship, accounts for the discrimination the Tuareg face in Libya today.</p>
Tebu	<p>The Tebu people originate from the Tibesti mountains in northern Chad. They number around 350,000 across Chad, Niger, and southern Libya. Libya is home to between 15,000 and 50,000 members of the Teda branch and speak a Tebu dialect called Tedega. In the 1970s, when Qaddafi sought to annex the Chadian Aouzou strip, he offered the Tebu citizenship to secure their political support but later stripped them of their rights. Having joined the rebel side during the uprising, the Tebu forces expanded their sphere of influence, which neighboring communities resent.</p>

almost unrestricted. Truckloads of household equipment and electronics, cigarettes, and other “luxury” items arrive daily from Chad and Niger via the few main roads. Although this goes against official trade regulations, it is generally tolerated, not least because customs officials and local security forces collect road tolls. The resale of subsidized Libyan fuel and staple goods destined for the poorer neighboring markets is also common practice but frowned upon. The occasional seizure of goods—usually drugs and bootleg alcohol (illegal in Libya)—appears to be more show than substance. Libya is at the intersection of two major drug routes, with Latin American cocaine and Afghan heroin coming in through the southern borders on the way to Europe. Smuggling has shaped the region's socioeconomic fabric, empowering communities with cross-border ties. The former regime refrained from cracking down on smugglers to secure their tribes' loyalty. Now, with tribal forces exerting

exclusive control over border sections, the state has lost almost all means of control.

### Jihadism

The influx of fighters and weapons from Mali is spurring fears that the Fezzan is becoming a crucial link in the expansion of Islamic militancy. The fear is that outside radical elements will turn the Fezzan into a launching pad for terrorist operations against Western targets. Locals acknowledge the presence of militants, including individuals with ties to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Mukhtar Bel Mukhtar, who claimed responsibility for the hostage situation at the In Amenas gas facility in Algeria, close to the Libyan border. Ghat Mayor Abdelqader Maji confirmed the arrival of Libyan and foreign militants in the Ghat district through 2013 as well as the abundance of weapons. “Until recently, weapons would exit Libya to the Sahel, but since the Mali intervention they have been flowing back,” he explained.

Local residents do not, however, believe the region is a major breeding ground for radicalism and mostly discard claims that the Fezzan harbors jihadist training camps and operating bases. For many, the greatest danger of Islamic militancy comes from the north. Tebu brigade members in Ubari, for instance, allege that Cyrenaica-based radicals pose as defense ministry forces to expand their influence, gain control of the borders, and possibly reach out to jihadists in the Sahel.

All of these security problems are interconnected on various levels. Militant groups are most certainly involved in the drug business, fueling the spread of weapons and violence. Nowadays, convoys across the desert are heavily protected and competing smuggler gangs frequently ambush one another, stirring further violence.

### No Clear Security Framework

Without an effective army after the collapse of the old regime,<sup>9</sup> the interim government set out to bring the many disparate armed groups (commonly referred to as *thuwwar*, or revolutionaries) under some degree of centralized order.<sup>10</sup> The resulting paramilitary umbrella groups are loosely affiliated with the defense or interior ministry but have their own command structures and operate independently from one another. The largest is Libya Shield, a network of largely autonomous regional battalions, several of which are present in the Fezzan.<sup>11</sup>

Initially deployed from Cyrenaica to Kufra to quell communal fighting,<sup>12</sup> Libya Shield became a vehicle for the southward expansion of better-organized forces from revolutionary strongholds in the north, including Zintan in the western mountains and the port city of Misrata. Zintan brigades that took part in the southern anti-regime offensive used the umbrella force to seize oil facilities along the Tunisian and Algerian border, while Misrata brigades maintain a grip on former Qaddafi-strongholds on the way south to Sebha. Libya Shield has only one originally southern unit, which

formed in Sebha along tribal lines.<sup>13</sup> Most of the rebel brigades that took hold of border zones subsequently joined the border guard. After a lengthy tug of war between emerging state institutions, the Guard came under the formal command of the Libyan National Army's chief of staff in January 2013.

The government's long-term goal is to enlist all willing fighters into the emerging national army and police—ideally on an individual basis to break up tribal allegiances—and to dissolve the paramilitary umbrella groups. But security sector reform has been slow and many revolutionaries resist demobilization. Officially, the new army already commands twelve Fezzan-based battalions, but de facto these do not constitute a cohesive structure. Some of these battalions are composed of ex-revolutionaries, whose tribal affiliation compromises their neutrality. Other battalions are holdovers from the Qaddafi era and are kept on reserve because they are not trusted. Law enforcement agencies are gradually being reactivated. Several thousand border police and customs officials are now under the authority of the interior and defense ministry, respectively. On the ground, however, revolutionaries still monitor the borders.

### Muddled Mandates

From the Fezzan's perspective, the ongoing efforts to consolidate and reform the security sector has yielded little result so far. Local interlocutors lament the central authorities' lack of strategy, organization, and leadership.

The multiplicity of forces present, with their separate command structures and varying degrees of authority, obstructs coordinated action. Operations routinely fail because chains of command are weak and forces involved do not communicate with one another. "Every day, we catch at least twenty illegal immigrants walking across the border from Algeria. Mostly we let them go or pretend we didn't notice. What are we supposed to do? The police should intervene, but they don't," a Ghadames border guard commander explained, speaking on condition of anonymity.

In an effort to curtail local powers, the GNC in late 2012 declared the entire south from Kufra to Sebha a military zone. Given that military governors are frequently replaced and have little more than a representational role, however, this additional security measure had little effect. "The governor has not once come to see our forces. What kind of leadership is that?" an official from Murzuq Military Council complained.

9 Little remained of the previous army following war-time desertions and subsequent purges. Moreover, there was no coherent structure to revert to, owing to Qaddafi's long-time policy of substituting regular forces with loyalist and often tribe-based security battalions (to reduce the risk of a military coup).

10 For a more detailed analysis of the security sector restructuring, see Peter Cole, *Borderline Chaos? Securing Libya's Periphery* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2012).

11 Overall, Libya Shield has around 40,000 members, not all of whom are active. At least 3,000 are permanently stationed in the Fezzan (LSF #8 in Sebha), but several thousand more have taken part in temporary missions to the south.

12 It is mainly the Benghazi-based LSF#1 and #3 that intervened in the Kufra district. The Tebu hold a grudge against these forces, whom they accuse of holding radical Islamist views and being biased against them to the benefit of the other party to the conflict in Kufra, the Zway tribe.

13 LSF #8: Hasawna leadership with elements of Awlad Busaif and Warfalla.

The military commander of the Sebha area, who is from a locally influential tribe, has a greater say than the regional governor whom the chief of staff appointed. The state has little oversight of the paramilitary umbrella groups whose units—essentially ex-rebel brigades operating under a new name—remain close to their revolutionary roots. Alliances and rivalries that developed on the frontlines remain intact, and field commanders pursue their own political or economic interests beyond their official mandates.

Law enforcement agencies are in no better shape than the army. Inadequately equipped and not yet free from the stigma of the Qaddafi era, policemen are incapable of imposing law and order in Sebha, where rivaling militias frequently clash, and Ubari, a transit spot for criminal gangs and radical Islamists. “The police are afraid of leaving their stations because the gangs are better armed,” Sebha resident Hussein Mohamed explained.

In more tightly knit localities such as Uwainat and Ghat, police officers have a better social standing, but their work still suffers from poor coordination between forces, some of which are no longer relevant or needed.<sup>14</sup> Border crossings are insufficiently equipped, and there is no systematic follow-up of locally registered data. As a result, only a fraction of border traffic is accounted for, despite the return of dedicated border officials. According to Ghat Mayor Abdelqader Maji, “Most of the time there are not enough police at the border crossing, so passports are rarely checked.” Siraj al-Muwafeq, the mayor of Ghadames, confirmed reports of poor monitoring. “In theory, information such as passport and car registration numbers should be pooled nationally, but since the work is all paper-based much of it gets lost,” he said.

Responsibilities and mandates of the various security forces are muddled, partly because there still is no legal framework to accommodate the post-revolutionary formations. De facto security arrangements obstruct the implementation of border security agreements with neighboring states. “The Algerian army has refused to work with Libyan border guards, whom they described as “militias.” And they are right,” al-Muwafeq said.

The state clearly faces a dilemma. On the one hand, the national army does not yet have the strength to intervene as a single, united force. On the other hand, the continued reliance on ex-rebel brigades to ensure

<sup>14</sup> The tourism police is one example of a force that no longer has a function. During Qaddafi’s rule, the Libyan desert used to attract a limited number of foreign visitors, who had to be accompanied by Tourism Police, both for protection and surveillance. Now, there are strict travel warnings for south Libya.

minimum control both compromises national security and perpetuates local conflicts. Tribal clashes often involve officially sanctioned paramilitaries on both sides. Sebha residents greeted the arrival of army soldiers enthusiastically last December, but just weeks later the troops proved incapable of preventing yet another round of fierce tribal clashes.<sup>15</sup> Once again, the authorities sought the help of militias in northern Misrata, and some of these militia brigades now remain in Sebha as a buffer force.

For some, this quick-fix solution is better than nothing. “Only forces from outside our region can impose a cease-fire. Any existing local group will be perceived as partial” explained a civil society activist from Sebha. Others have mixed feelings. Tebu representatives, for instance, claim that the umbrella groups were formed as part of an “Islamist ploy” to take control of Libya. “Islamists spoiled the interim government’s plan to rebuild the army by filling key positions in the security apparatus and promoting radical brigades. They want to control the southern borders via the border guard and the military governorate,” veteran Tebu rebel and military chief of Murzuq Barka Wardagou said.

International efforts to bolster Libya’s security capacities fail to sufficiently address the country’s needs. Among the more robust programs, the European Union Border Assistance Mission in Libya (EUBAM) provides mentoring at the government level and training for border officials with an aim to develop a broader border management strategy. Actors on the ground welcome the initiative but say the impact of the EU’s work, which began in the summer of 2013, is marginal. “The Germans, the British, the [United Nations], the [European Union]...they have all been here claiming they will help Libya get back on its feet, but there is no tangible change. We need more training and logistical assistance,” several Ghadames officials told the author.<sup>16</sup>

### Powerless Gatekeepers?

The revolution empowered local players by giving them the opportunity to take over state prerogatives and translate military strength into political leverage. Ironically, communities are now helpless in the face of the rising security challenges. Ghat’s mayor was frank about the problems in his area: “Crime, drugs, guns, armed groups...the border is open and traffic is out of

<sup>15</sup> For a very concise explanation of the political and ethnic rifts in the, see Wolfram Lacher, “Libya’s Fractious South and Regional Instability,” Small Arms Survey, Security Assessment in North Africa, dispatch no.3, February 2014.

<sup>16</sup> A leaked EU document sheds light on the program and its many challenges. See “Revised Draft Concept of Operations ‘Plus’ (CONOPS PLUS) for the CSDP mission EUBAM Libya,” Council of the European Union, April 2013.

control! People frequently report suspicious armed groups. Some foreign militants live among us openly, but nobody can do anything about it.”

This paradox is a consequence of social fragmentation, stakeholders’ conflicting interests, and the empowerment of young fighters who reject governmental and tribal authority.

Community-based allegiances stand in the way of effective border monitoring. As much as internal cohesion within each brigade is strong, coordination among brigades tends to be poor. Commanders usually assert they are in full control of their section of the border but that they have no knowledge of what goes on beyond it. “From here to Ghat the border is about 700 miles long. We cannot possibly survey all of it. We think there is al-Qaeda on the Algerian side, but what can we do?” one Ghadames border force commander lamented.

Each community portrays itself as a reliable partner for security while holding the others responsible for shortcomings. “We try to keep our area safe, but Tebu smuggler gangs infiltrate and steal vehicles,” a policeman in Ghat said.

By refusing to yield power, local players undermine the state. Commanders of local armed groups who have nominally joined the army all demand training, money, and weapons. Whether they are ready to accept orders and welcome outside support units is a different matter. The revolutionaries say the government has failed them by not adequately rewarding their efforts and denying them the means to perform their duties, but they do not see themselves as part of the problem. Tebu combatants in Murzuq, for instance, complained that the leadership never thanked them for their efforts to overthrow the regime and instead dispatched Libya shield units from Cyrenaica that “try to steal the show.”

Making decisions that circumvent central authorities can resolve bureaucratic bottlenecks but is also a way for local actors to further their positions.<sup>17</sup>

Community leaders in the Fezzan are in part responsible for a situation in which they can no longer guarantee the protection of their own territory. The mobilization of fighters did not cease after the fall of the regime, but rather increased with the eruption of local conflicts. Often, however, the armed groups are more a liability than an asset. “When communal problems arise we try to solve them collectively. But the truth is we cannot guarantee that fighters will

follow tribal orders,” admitted an elders’ council member on the margins of a civil society meeting in Ubari. A new generation of angry young revolutionaries does not consider itself accountable to tribal elders, contributing to the erosion of traditional means of social control.

### The Center-Periphery Complex

The fear of social and political exclusion runs deep, especially among the minority groups who feel they have been sidelined by dominant Arab tribes in Sebha and ex-rebel leaders from the north with better connections in Tripoli. The widespread xenophobia and negative perception of the southern communities do not help to dispel these fears. The Tebu say their rivals deliberately spread rumors about their ties to Chad to keep them out of politics. Similarly, the Tuareg believe their lack of representation at the national level is largely due to misconceptions about them. “Our demands are modest and we are not threatening anyone. Yet, people in the north fear us,” regretted Ghat Mayor Abdelqader.

The sense of neglect is not a collective delusion but is, in part, a reflection of Libya’s oppressive past and incomplete transition. There is a disconnect between the southern communities’ military strength and their political weakness owing to the region’s low demographic density and underdeveloped institutional structures. All electoral constituencies are represented at the national level, but some in the Fezzan denounce “unfair” post-revolutionary purges “holding the region back.” Ghat resident Mohamed Belaid, for instance, criticized the screening of candidates for the assembly tasked with drafting the constitution, which excludes several categories of people who collaborated with the former regime. “Many qualified candidates were excluded because, in one way or another, almost every educated person in our region worked for the regime. There is not as much choice of candidates as in Tripoli, for instance. They are squandering valuable human capital,” he said.

Minority rights and citizenship are two controversial issues that will have to be addressed in the new constitution. The Amazigh, Tuareg, and Tebu want their respective cultures and languages to be protected and promoted in the new Libya. Under Qaddafi, many southerners, in particular Tebu and Tuareg, were denied Libyan citizenship or failed to obtain the paperwork needed to register. However, there is also widespread fear that granting citizenship retroactively will lead to abuse and allow for local players to bring in kinsmen from Chad, Niger, and Algeria to change the balance of power.

<sup>17</sup> In late summer 2013, Tebu military leader and head of the Murzuq military council, Barka Wardagou, took the initiative to discuss border security with the Nigerian government without explicit authorization.

After representatives of the Amazigh and Tebu, as well as some Tuareg, called for a boycott of the February 2014 elections for the Constituent Assembly, thirteen seats on the sixty-member body remain vacant. As in other parts of Libya, inhabitants of the Fezzan are disillusioned with the elected leadership and increasingly endorse forceful action such as oil sector strikes to press for higher wages, public services, and political concessions. The current authorities' capacity to satisfy many of these demands is ultimately limited. However, in some areas governmental support could make a difference. For instance the elections process for local councils, whose stalling caused trouble in Ubari, could be pushed forward.

Some activists in the Fezzan are now lobbying for regional autonomy. The idea of a Tebu-Tuareg alliance has long haunted northerners, who fear the south could break away. In a thinly veiled threat directed at Tripoli, local players point out that the Fezzan has "all the resources it needs to be self-sufficient." The prospect of water supply cuts by Fezzan's authorities to the rest of the country is of special concern to the central authorities. The events in Cyrenaica, where militant federalists seized key oil ports in an attempt to obtain a greater share of the country's wealth and more decision-making powers, are already threatening Libya's cohesion. However, a Cyrenaica scenario is unlikely to play out in the Fezzan, where communal divisions stand in the way of wider political mobilization. And ultimately, the Fezzan has little interest in going its own way given its economic dependency and lack of political infrastructure.

### The Way Forward

Libya's international partners are providing helpful support with the border assistance mission and the training of army recruits abroad. This should be matched with stronger pressure on central authorities to implement reforms without further delays. Transnational terrorism and smuggling are issues that require regional cooperation and technical assistance. The more complex social problems, however, can only be overcome through inter-Libyan dialogue and clear commitments from all parties. There are several measures that Libyan stakeholders and the international community ought to take to stabilize Libya, among them:

- The Libyan national authorities need to improve working relationships with actors on the ground. Stakeholders in the southwest should be consulted on governance and security in their region. At the same time, local stakeholders should demonstrate greater commitment to peace and security. Fears of exclusion need to be addressed, as they amplify

instability and increase the likelihood of anti-state action.

- Libya's political leadership should prioritize completing the ongoing process of local council elections, as these produce representative local structures with which the state and international partners can engage.
- The Libyan army chief of staff should prioritize the formation of a mixed force that is not affiliated with any particular town or political camp. A neutral rapid response force is needed urgently to quell local conflicts.
- International actors and Libyan authorities should continue to support and reinvigorate the National Dialogue initiative, which is an important vehicle to address the underlying causes of conflict and can lay the groundwork for negotiations on specific issues.
- In order to ensure that any peace agreement between warring factions holds, negotiations should involve, at least for now, not only tribal elders but also militia leaders.
- Civil society initiatives that help to address social divisions must be taken seriously and endorsed by the Libyan government. The country's cultural diversity should be emphasized as a positive in the media and school curricula. More so than the national authorities, Libya's international partners are already providing support for civil society initiatives such as campaigns to raise awareness about the constitution and women's rights, but they can make a greater effort to coordinate their engagement and assistance programs.
- The government should create rural development schemes that would offer attractive alternatives to smuggling. In the longer term, investment in the private sector will help reduce the Fezzan's dependency on the state.

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