

## **Background to Libyan Conflict - Qaddafi's Libya**

While the regime engaged in nepotism, favoritism and patronage towards the nations Arab tribes located predominantly in Northern Libya, the government's policy of repressing ethnic minorities and marginalizing ethnic minorities led to the Toubou, Tuareg and Berber tribes declaring for opposition forces during the 2011 Libyan Civil War. Qaddafi's reliance on Arab tribes from Northern Libya predominantly from Sirte and Tripolitania disenfranchised Eastern tribes who during the Libyan Civil War seized the nation's oil terminals and were among the first to denounce the regime. Various pro-government tribes fragmented and factionalized during the Libyan Civil War with pro-government and anti-government factions engaging in inter-tribal conflicts.

### **Summary of the Libyan Conflict**

The ongoing violence that permeates Libya today has its roots in the Arab Spring protest movement that swept through the Arab world in 2011, first taking root in Libya in February, 2011. Security forces belonging to the Qaddafi regime attempted to violently suppress the mass protest movement against Col. Muammar Qaddafi's government resulting in the beginning of an armed revolution helmed by newly formed National Transitional Council (NTC) to remove the Qaddafi regime from power. The violent methods by which the Qaddafi regime attacked Libyans who opposed it drew severe condemnation from the international community and on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011 the United Nations Security Council pass UNSC Resolution 1973, which authorized member states to utilize whatever means necessary to protect Libyan civilians resulting in a NATO-led campaign against military targets belonging to the Qaddafi regime in support of armed Libyan rebel groups fighting to oust the Qaddafi government. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011, after having taken control over most of Libya anti-Qaddafi rebels captured and killed Col. Muammar Qaddafi and proclaimed the revolution as victorious. However, it became quickly apparent that many of the armed militias that had been created during the revolution were reluctant to follow the orders of the NTC, with some seizing key areas and infrastructure belonging to Libya's oil industry for their own gain.

Following Arab Spring and the Libyan revolution in 2011, elections were held on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012, to elect the General National Congress (GNC) to take over governing Libyan from the NTC. Voter turnout was high, however, voting in some areas of Libya was disrupted by violent clashes as some groups in Libya opposed the election due to the granting of more seats to the more populous western regions of Libya, while other groups felt that the election hampered their pursuits for greater autonomy particularly in the oil rich eastern territories of Libya. This election was followed two years later with elections on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014, for the Council of Deputies to replace the discredited GNC and involved all candidates running as independents resulting in the new government being dominated by nationalist and liberal members. Libya Dawn, a coalition whose largest member was the Muslim Brotherhood seized control of the capital of Tripoli, the Libyan Supreme Court in a ruling only recognized by Libya Dawn ruled the Council of Deputies election as unconstitutional and therefore must be dissolved. Those factions that had lost in the Council of Deputies election then revived the GNC beginning the ongoing fighting between the forces loyal to Council of Deputies government in Tobruk and the GNC government in Tripoli.

### **Attempts at Peacekeeping**

### **Libya 2012 Election & What went wrong**

In July 2012, Libya attempted to elect a General National Congress (GNC) to substitute National Transitional Council (NTC), a temporary interim government that was established after the uprising against Gaddafi. (BBC News 2012). The most prominent political parties were: 1) The National Front Party; 2) The Justice and Construction Party; 3) The National or Homeland Party; and 4) The National Forces Alliance. (Coker 2012). Over 80% of the eligible voters registered to vote, and the voter turnout rate was fairly high (BBC News 2012). The election was popular in Libya's capital, Tripoli, but it was not welcomed in the eastern regions. Approximately 94% of the voting stations conducted voting normally, but some cities in the eastern region of Libya delayed and interrupted voting process because of their under-representation in the parliament, desire to seek autonomy, and oil disputes (Gumchian 2012). Many citizens from the oil-rich eastern regions were upset because they were only granted with 60 seats in the 120-seats national assembly (Gumchian 2012). As a result, some armed groups halted Libya's oil operation for half a day in order to protest against the under-representation. Moreover, in order to undermine the credibility of the election and to demand autonomy, some protesters in Benghazi burned ballots, attacked polling stations, and attacked officials (Gumchian 2012). In the southern region, such as Kufra, elections were discontinued because of the clashes between tribal groups (Kirkpatrick 2012). Similarly, in the west, activists from Zintan attacked the Mashashiya tribal group and caused 120 casualties (Kirkpatrick 2012). The TNC were not trusted by the citizens, and they complained that they over favoured the west, and left the east with only 60 seats and the south with 40 seats (Kirkpatrick 2012). However, the TNC decided to carry on with the election with the hope of the restoration of the rule of law (Kirkpatrick 2012). The National Forces Alliance won the election with 39 seats (Libya Herald 2012). However, their legitimacy and trust were greatly challenged.

### **Libya 2014 Election & What went wrong**

In October 23, 2013, Ali Zeidan, the former PM of Libya was kidnapped by a militia. Then in May, the former congress was stormed by a militia group that was related to Khalifa Haftar (Al Jazeera 2014). On June 24, 2014, another legislative election for the Council of Deputies were held in Libya (Ali 2014). However, the voter turnout rate was extremely low, which was only 18% (Al Jazeera 2014). Unlike the last election, all candidates were running as independent with no affiliations to parties (Al Jazeera 2014). The general citizens did not trust the Nationalist Forces Alliance or the Muslim Brotherhood-led Justice and Construction party (Al Jazeera 2014). As a result, nationalists and liberalists won the majority of seats, and the Islamist group only won 30 seats (Ali 2014). Upset by the election result, the Libya Dawn, which was mainly led by the Muslim Brotherhood, established a coup in Tripoli (Al Jazeera 2014). The Libyan Supreme Court ruled that the 2014 election was unconstitutional and the government should be resolved (Al Jazeera 2014). However, other groups criticized that the Supreme Court was under threaten from the powerful militias in the west and they were forced to make that decision (Al Jazeera 2014). The decision was only recognized by the Libya Dawn coalition, but not the international community and the Libyan parliament (Al Jazeera 2014). In addition, the government was moved to Tobruk, and this resulted two rival governments and two rival armed rebels (Al Jazeera 2014). One moderate rival armed rebels were dedicated to the government in Tobruk, and the other conservative group was devoted to the government in Tripoli (Al Jazeera 2014). Moreover, tensions were still high among militants in the eastern region, such as Benghazi (Al Jazeera 2014). Ongoing oil disputes and the illegitimacy of the new government still hinder Libya's capacity of establishing the rule of law.

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