DIVIDED WE STAND: LIBYA'S ENDURING CONFLICTS

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WORKING TO PREVENT
CONFLICT WORLDWIDE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 11 September killing of the U.S. ambassador and three of his colleagues is a stark reminder of Libya's security challenges. It also should serve as a wake-up call. There is, of course, more than one way to look at the country today: as one of the more encouraging Arab uprisings, recovering faster than expected; or as a country of regions and localities pulling in different directions, beset by intercommunal strife and where well-armed groups freely roam. Evidence exists for both: successful elections on one hand, violent attacks on the other. In truth, the most and the least promising features of post-Qadhafi Libya stem from a single reality. Because the country lacks a fully functioning state, effective army or police, local actors – notables, civilian and military councils, revolutionary brigades – have stepped in to provide safety, mediate disputes and impose ceasefires. It will not be easy and will have to be done gingerly, but it is past time to reverse the tide, reform army and police and establish structures of a functioning state that can ensure implementation of ceasefire agreements and tackle root causes of conflict.

Colonel Qadhafi's bloody end and the collapse of Libya's police and armed forces left in its wake an armed population with 42 years worth of pent-up grievances. Qadhafi's longstanding divide-and-rule strategy set communities against one other, each vying for a share of resources and the regime's favour. Some towns grew wealthy thanks to connections with the ruling elite; others suffered badly. Meanwhile, the security apparatus at once fomented, manipulated and managed intra-communal conflicts. Once the lid was removed, there was every reason to fear a free-for-all, as the myriad of armed groups that proliferated during the rebellion sought material advantage, political influence or, more simply, revenge. This was all the more so given the security vacuum produced by the regime's precipitous fall.

A measure of chaos ensued, but up to a point only. Communal clashes erupted across the nation both during and after the 2011 conflict. Tensions that had long been left simmering on the back burner came to a boil, aggravated by the diverging positions various communities took vis-à-vis Qadhafi's regime. That most of the fighting ended relatively quickly owes in no small measure to the efforts of local leaders, revolutionary brigades and the variety of civilian and military councils that took it upon themselves

to keep the country whole. The ad hoc security patchwork registered significant and even surprising success. But it is no model; even as it manages to contain conflicts, it simultaneously fuels them. Some armed groups cannot resist the temptation to target foes and settle scores; battle for political and economic influence; evade accountability; and entrench geographic and community rivalries.

Until now, central authorities have acted chiefly as bystanders, in effect subcontracting security to largely autonomous armed groups. They had a reason: the army and police were in disarray, suffering from a deficit in personnel and equipment; officers and soldiers had either defected, fled, been killed or jailed. The rebels who rose up against Qadhafi were much better armed and – both suspicious of remnants of the old regime and pleased with their newfound power – unwilling to either surrender their autonomy or come under state control. Yet, it would be wrong to see the parallel military and police forces that emerged as having done so against the central authorities' wishes. Rather, and although they were set up by revolutionary brigades themselves, the Libyan Shield Forces and Supreme Security Committee – the former operating parallel to the army, the latter to the police – were authorised and encouraged to take action by the ruling National Transitional Council, which viewed them as auxiliary forces without which the state simply could not secure the country.

Just as armed groups physically have kept warring parties apart, so have local notables led negotiations designed to achieve longer-lasting ceasefires. Appealing to the higher ideals of Libyan identity and Islam and resorting to social pressure as well as customary law, they have proved remarkably effective mediators.

However, none of this offers a sustainable solution. Truces are fragile, local conflicts frozen rather than durably resolved. In stepping into the breach, local notables and armed groups have done what the government could not. But effective implementation of ceasefire agreements depends in large part on an impartial authority capable of providing services and enforcing decisions. The involvement of revolutionary brigades and local armed groups in efforts to end hostilities blurs the line separating neutral mediation from partisan meddling. In some instances, their

attempts to simultaneously play the role of army, police, mediator, judge and jury have helped revive old communal hostilities or competition for control over smuggling routes. The hope is that the central state can set up truly national forces equipped to deal with local disputes, notably a gendarmerie and elite auxiliary corps within the army. Until then, reliance on revolutionary brigades and local armed forces will continue to be an uncertain wager.

Perhaps most serious is the fact that, in the absence of a strong state, agreements mostly have remained dead letters. Disputes are rooted in competing claims over land, property and power that pre-existed Qadhafi and were first exacerbated by his regime's clientelism and patronage networks, next by communities' varying positions during the uprising, and finally by acts of revenge in its aftermath. To resolve them requires clear, written understandings, government follow-up, genuine enforcement and accountability. Too, it necessitates proper policing of borders; fair determination of land ownership where the old regime resorted to confiscation; and some form of transitional justice. All are sorely lacking. Although local notables negotiate agreements, these are seldom unambiguous, committed to paper or coordinated with central authorities. Without an effective government, strong state institutions or police force, follow-through is implausible. The judicial system is overwhelmed and the establishment of a justice and reconciliation process awaits. Hard-earned reconciliation agreements founder.

There is much to celebrate in post-Qadhafi Libya but also reason to worry. The battle between central government and armed groups is not yet won, yet of late the latter have been acting as if they enjoyed the upper hand. If steps are not swiftly taken, reversing this trend is only going to get harder – and what has been a relatively good news story could turn depressingly sour.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address immediate security needs

To the Government of Libya and the General National Congress (GNC):

1. Set up an interim Crisis Management Unit comprising the prime minister, interior minister, defence minister, and the chief of staff of the armed forces, as well as the heads of the Libyan Shield Forces and Supreme Security Committee or their successors, charged with:

   a) coordinating emergency responses to communal conflicts and other armed threats;

   b) overseeing governance of areas of the country that are declared "military zones"; and

   c) authorising a special inter-ministerial task force answering to the prime minister to implement any decisions related to peace settlements or extraordinary governance issues arising within "military zones".

2. Create a special inter-ministerial task force answering to the prime minister, with representatives from the interior and defence ministries, that would:

   a) send representatives from the aforementioned ministries to councils of notables to observe peace negotiations and operate a direct line of communication to relevant ministers and GNC representatives during these;

   b) ensure peace agreements are written and specific enough to be implemented; and

   c) monitor and oversee implementation of peace settlements through the justice system or relevant ministries and ensure local notables and affected communities are aware of what is being done.

To the Government of Libya and social and tribal leaders (*hukama'*), notables, prominent personalities and family heads (*'a'yan* and *wujaha'*) participating in reconciliation councils (*lijan al-hukama'*):

3. Ensure effective and coordinated monitoring of conflict zones, reporting back to each other and to the inter-ministerial task force on early warning signs of possible renewed conflict.

4. Consult with all relevant parties as to the feasibility of implementation when considering demands presented to reconciliation councils.

5. Commit peace settlements to writing.

6. Seek the support of international technical experts in conflict resolution, where appropriate.

To the Defence Ministry, including the Chief of Staff of the Libyan Armed Forces:

7. Appoint observers answering directly to the armed forces chief of staff to liaise with the Libyan Shield Forces, border guard units and military councils in conflict zones.

8. Include, for as long as their contracts with the government are active, the Libyan Shield Forces in non-combat-related training programs provided by the international community.

**To the Libyan Shield Forces, Supreme
Security Committee and regional coalitions
of revolutionary brigades:**

9.   Support the work of the Crisis Management Unit and the inter-ministerial task force dedicated to implementing peace settlements in conflict zones.

**To the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)
and the European Union:**

10.   Carry out, with the government's assent and cooperation, an assessment of the army, Libyan Shield Forces and border guard units in military zones, focusing on their performance; status and origins of their weapons stocks; recruitment from, as well as relations with local armed groups and communities; and border management activities.

11.   Task observation missions to monitor the progress and implementation of ceasefire agreements in communal conflict areas.

To address longer-term institutional security issues

**To the Defence Ministry, including the Chief
of Staff of the Libyan Armed Forces:**

12.   Create a new auxiliary corps within the army in charge of future internal deployments to military zones, commanded by well-vetted, politically unaffiliated military officers and comprising thoroughly-trained fighters from the Libyan Shield Forces and army.

13.   Provide incentives for the retirement of existing senior military staff.

To the Interior Ministry:

14.   Create a new gendarmerie that will assume responsibility from the army as well as local councils for front line policing duties, including monitoring activities of armed groups, controlling narcotics flows and combating other illicit activities.

15.   Form units gradually on a geographically mixed basis and assign such units with a good track record to more challenging conflict areas.

16.   Close the Supreme Security Committee, phasing its recruits – subject to the satisfactory completion of training – into the new gendarmerie force.

**To the Libyan Shield Forces, Supreme
Security Committee and regional coalitions
of revolutionary brigades:**

17.   Cooperate in selecting appropriate officers and fighters for inclusion in a new army corps and gendarmerie, preparing unit commanders for eventual integration.

**To the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)
and the European Union:**

18.   Support the creation of a gendarmerie, replacing the Supreme Security Committee, and of a new auxiliary force within the army, replacing the Libyan Shield Forces.

Tripoli/Brussels, 14 September 2012

DIVIDED WE STAND: LIBYA'S ENDURING CONFLICTS

I. INTRODUCTION

After the 20 August 2011 fall of Tripoli and in the wake of the 23 October formal end of hostilities, communal conflicts broke out across Libya. Some grew directly out of the 2011 conflict and activities of the newly formed revolutionary brigades to which it had given rise;[1] others stemmed from longer-term, pent-up rivalries among communities, towns and neighbours that Colonel Qadhafi's divide-and-conquer tactics had manipulated and fuelled over the course of his 42 years in power. None derailed the country's first post-Qadhafi elections on 7 July 2012. Still, the state's weak and fragmentary nature – and notably the collapse of the former regime's army and police force – have left local communities largely responsible for their own defence, security and peacekeeping.

The burden of defence and security fell largely on the revolutionary brigades, which had coalesced into large coalitions parallel to the dilapidated police and army. Armed groups of uncertain allegiance filled the security vacuum, some intent on revenge for past misdeeds, others on seizing the opportunity to promote local interests. The government tried to marshal those forces, focusing at first on those that accepted the authority of the National Transitional Council (NTC).[2] The interior ministry enrolled some into a Supreme Security Committee [SSC, *al-lejna al-amniya al-'ulya*] to act as armed police units; the army called on others to support it in imposing ceasefires on warring communities, acting essentially as rapid-reaction auxiliary forces. Yet, with profound tensions among the transitional government, old bureaucracy and revolutionary fighters, incorporation into official structures was stymied. Brigades preferred to remain separate, answering only to local commanders. By the elections, domestic leaders lacked a clear vision for how to break the brigades' autonomy and integrate them into the state.

In parallel, and in the absence of strong central institutions, the burden of peacemaking has fallen essentially upon local notables (*hukama'*) – prominent personalities and family heads (*wujaha'* or *'a'yan*).[3] Much of their work involves mediating between warring communities; notables convene reconciliation councils (*lijan al-hukama'*) modelled after traditional social and religious dispute-resolution bodies to negotiate ceasefires and peace settlements. Most communities ultimately depend upon and trust their own capabilities more than those of either the fledgling central government or international experts.

Relying on traditional social customs and a newly-invigorated sense of national identity to maintain calm during a shaky transition entailed a huge leap of faith. That it succeeded to the extent it did is remarkable, but enormous problems persist. Many communal conflicts remain unresolved, their causes unaddressed by the transitional government. The state, working alongside local notables and revolutionary brigades, is able to respond to immediate crises but, with fragmented and weak institutions, often is incapable of implementing the ensuing peace settlements.

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[1] On the emergence of armed groups in Libya, see Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°115, *Holding Libya Together: Security Challenges After Qadhafi*, 15 December 2011. For a description and taxonomy of the various armed groups operating in Libya today, see Appendix B.

[2] Established in Benghazi in late February 2011, the self-appointed NTC initially was considered the political face of the uprising, though it rapidly became the new legislative body, charged with drafting and approving laws as well as appointing the transitional government. In March 2011, it appointed Mahmoud Jibril as head of its Executive Board, and in October 2011, after relocating to Tripoli, it nominated a transitional government led by Prime Minister Abdul Rahim al-Keeb. The NTC formally handed over power to the democratically elected General National Congress (GNC) in August 2012.

[3] This report uses the term "notables" to refer to a distinct class Libyans call *hukama'* (wise men). It has played a pivotal – and largely unsung – role in post-Qadhafi Libya by establishing the local councils and reconciliation councils that have kept many communities afloat. It has also successfully negotiated ceasefires between warring communities. For further elaboration of the term, see Appendix C.

II. BACKGROUND: LIBYA'S COMMUNAL CONFLICTS

A. LEGACIES OF QADHAFI AND THE 17 FEBRUARY REVOLUTION[4]

After Tripoli's fall on 20 August 2011, most towns in areas that had not risen up against the regime pragmatically acquiesced to the new order. The bulk of the western revolutionary brigades, led primarily by Zintanis and Misratans, had little desire to forcefully enter neighbouring towns and communities, many of which had armed themselves in anticipation of further conflict.[5] Civilians in both Qadhafi- and rebel-controlled territory had been acquiring weapons and organising local defence forces to prepare themselves for any violent contingency.[6] Many noted with horror how revolutionary brigades had exacted revenge against largely unarmed Mashashya (near neighbouring Zintan) and

Tawergha (near neighbouring Misrata), two communities that had largely backed Qadhafi in the conflict.[7]

Indeed, although Misratan brigades proved effective, neutral ceasefire implementers in other contexts, they continued well into 2012 to harass the Tawergha, displacing former neighbours wherever they found them and using that community's former homes for target practice.[8] Likewise, Zintanis, peacemakers elsewhere, have remained in continuous hot-or-cold conflict with the Mashashya.[9]

In the tense days following Tripoli's fall, the NTC, aware that, as an eastern-dominated body, it was only partly trusted by western Libyans, invited all towns to form their own military councils.[10] It also called on local notables to form

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[4] Use of the term "revolution" can be controversial. For those who sided with them, the armed uprisings that swept Benghazi, the eastern half of the country and the major western cities of Misrata, Zawiya and Zintan in 2011 are seen and understood as a the 17 February revolution, an effort to change the regime, society and politics. The uprisings evolved into a more generalised conflict involving Libyans seeking to save the regime, foreign fighters, Libyans opposed to the regime and NATO. Still, insofar as support or opposition to the "17 February revolution" remains an omnipresent and dominant feature of Libyan political discourse, this report will use the term; in the same spirit, the term "pro-revolution" will be used to refer to those who backed the initial uprisings and "revolutionary brigades" to refer to armed groups that fought the regime.

[5] A Zintani commander said, "we tried to avoid the perception that Zintan was attacking other towns, preferring to see communities voluntarily surrender. Only when they didn't do so did things get difficult". Even when communities put up a fight, Zintanis and Misratas often chose not to intervene directly if it risked sparking communal violence; for example, as discussed below and for different reasons, neither fought or entered Bani Walid during the 2011 conflict. Crisis Group interviews, Zintani commander, Zintan, 22 April 2012; Sebha residents, Sebha, 29 April-8 May 2012.

[6] Just as happened in rebel-held areas, youth in loyalist areas volunteered to fight on the front lines, were given weapons and formed civilian brigades. As of June 2011, Qadhafi's army had begun distributing weapons directly to civilians. Crisis Group interviews, Bani Walid residents and local notables, 23-27 February 2012; Sebha residents, 1-6 May 2012. By then a thriving black market also had sprung up, particularly in the south, with weapons originating from both the rebel-held east and Qadhafi forces. A revolutionary brigade member from Sebha, the largest city in Libya's southern Fezzan region, said, "during the summer, we trained in every kind of weapon you can imagine. We did not know what was going to come next". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, May 2012. On the gradual arming of revolutionary militias and brigades during this period, see B. McQuinn, "Capturing the Peace", Small Arms Survey 2012.

[7] According to both revolutionary commanders and loyalist fighters, propaganda and fear of rebel intentions played a large part in encouraging resistance to the 17 February revolution and support for Qadhafi's forces; the fate of the Mashashya and Tawergha figured prominently in this regard. A Sebha resident described how his brother volunteered to fight with Qadhafi's forces in Sirte after hearing state television reports by Youssef Shakir, a well-known regime propagandist. Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 5 May 2012. According to a Zintani commander, "the residents of Surman [a town on the western coast] were convinced that Zintani fighters were coming to rape and kill them. I remember the town's women running away screaming once they realised who we were. Once pro-revolutionaries from Surman had a chance to tell the townspeople these rumours weren't true, things got easier. Then, word got around to other towns, which surrendered more easily". Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Zintan, 22 April 2012.

[8] Crisis Group observations, Tawergha, October 2011, 14 February 2012. For more on the Tawergha, see Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit. For more details on Misratan harassment of Tawergha in 2011 and 2012, see "Militias Threaten Hopes for New Libya", Amnesty International, 16 February 2012.

[9] The Mashashya originally were nomads. Following disputes with the Magarha tribe, Qadhafi's government resettled a large section of them to the western mountains, triggering land disputes with neighbouring Yefren and Zintan. During the 2011 war, many Mashashya sided with Qadhafi, whose forces shelled Zintan from the Mashashya town of Awaniya; when Qadhafi's forces left in July 2011, more than 10,000 residents of Awaniya fled with them, and their homes were looted and burned by revolutionary brigades. After the war, the two communities fought again in December 2011 and in mid-June 2012, when 105 were killed and 500 more wounded. Crisis Group interviews, Zintani and Mashashiya residents, Zintan, 22 April 2012; Tripoli, 24 June 2012; Sghegha, 12 July 2012.

[10] Many military councils already were emerging in the west and south, and the NTC's policy was essentially a pragmatic acquiescence to facts on the ground. According to a person close to the Tripoli military council, some within the NTC's executive branch were staunchly opposed to the formation of military councils, particularly to the establishment of Abdul Hakim Belhaj's Tripoli military council. Belhaj's plan to secure Tripoli had been developed in mid-2011 with Tripolitanian groups, outside the

local civilian councils.[11] An NTC member said, "the lesson in our minds was Iraq. We wanted the transition to be smooth, and we were eager to avoid internal fighting (*fitna*) – or what occurred with Iraq's 'debaathification'".[12] In this sense, most of Libya was never "conquered" by revolutionary forces. Instead, heavily-armed communities, which weeks before had been fighting under two different flags – the regime's and the rebels' – suddenly were asked to stop fighting and put differences aside.

If communal disputes had related exclusively to whether one had supported or opposed Qadhafi, the formal announcement of the end of hostilities might have marked the end of the conflict. But the differences that divided the country during the uprising never had been solely about loyalty to the deposed leader. For over 42 years, he had exploited and fuelled competition as well as distrust among communities, ensuring they vied for resources and for the central authorities' favour. The regime actively relocated some local populations and encouraged others to resettle, thereby generating relations of dependency toward – and some support for – the authorities.[13] Patronage was rife. The routine circumvention of official channels by Qadhafi's

ministers, governors and other enforcers elevated the status of certain individuals above the government.[14] This led Libyans to make use of personal connections wherever possible; several towns grew wealthy due to their links to Qadhafi's inner circle or leading ministers, who could provide benefits to their constituencies, such as hospitals, stadiums or jobs.[15]

In like manner, the regime ensured that its armed forces remained fragmented, divided along community lines and physically segregated in garrison towns across the country. Patronage and favouritism also were rampant within the security services, with towns such as Bani Walid and Tarhuna providing a significant contingent of recruits. In contrast, other communities languished. These included the business classes of Tripoli and Benghazi, who were dispossessed of their wealth and property, as well as minority ethnic groups such as the Tebu and Tuareg, alternately granted or denied citizenship or transit rights to Libya's southern neighbours depending on Qadhafi's shifting attitudes toward Africa and Europe.[16]

As a result, communal tensions remained on the back burner but simmered. They re-emerged with renewed intensity as groups from these different communities behaved differently during and after the uprising. While a few favoured by Qadhafi chose to side with the emerging revolutionary movement in Benghazi and confront the regime, most tac-

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NTC's purview. Ultimately, Mahmoud Jibril, then NTC head, relented due to pressure from many within and close to the NTC, who argued that military councils were needed to deal with the growing chaos and security vacuum. Crisis Group interview, military council head, Zintan, 25 March 2012.

[11] Like the NTC itself, these local councils typically were self-appointed. During the October 2011-July 2012 transition period, some major towns – under local or internal pressure – organised elections for these councils, but this was the exception. The coastal city of Zuwara was the first to hold elections, on 13 September; rather than a proper council, on that occasion Zuwara elected only one representative, who became the de facto mayor. Misrata elected a 28-member city council on 20 February 2012. Subsequently other towns, including Zliten, Benghazi, Qa'ala, Tajura, Zawiya and Derna, adopted Misrata's electoral procedures to choose their own representatives. The NTC provided little guidance and never implemented a law clarifying local councils' legal roles and responsibilities.

[12] Crisis Group interview, NTC member, Tripoli, 27 April 2012.

[13] Populations were resettled throughout Libya in the 1970s and 1980s, creating innumerable property and land disputes. In urban areas the government built *sha'biyyat* – large-scale housing projects – and seized property from the mercantile class. Both were awarded to government employees, who often came from the rural hinterland, dramatically changing the capital's make-up. Crisis Group interviews, Tripoli merchant families, March-April 2012. Outside the capital the government transplanted communities around the country. As mentioned, both the Tawergha and Mashashya were resettled populations housed in *sha'biyyat*, near Misrata and Zintan respectively. In Sebha in the 1980s, poor Arab tribes (specifically Awlad Suleyman and Warfalla) were resettled in large government-owned shantytowns, forcing long-term residents to move. Crisis Group interviews, Tebu and Sebha residents, Sebha, 4-7 May 2012.

[14] There are many examples of this, such as in Sebha, where an army commander reportedly held untrammelled power and would take commissions from legal and illegal traffic going through the city. Crisis Group interviews, Sebha notables and councillors, Sebha, 1-5 May 2012. In Benghazi, according to a former governor, "Ahmed Misbah became the head of the Agricultural Marketing Company, which was the only legitimate distribution point for crops and vegetables. He imprisoned even the poorest and most helpless who tried to sell crops. He was the second or third man in Benghazi – he could get you anything. In the end, the Benghazians enticed him out of his house and killed him with a knife". Crisis Group interview, former Bani Walid governor, Tripoli, 21 February 2012.

[15] Communities such as the western coastal towns of Jmail, Rijdalin and Surman enjoyed special treatment due to patronage relations with the regime. Surman was the hometown of Khweildi al-Hmeidi, Qadhafi's former head of the External Security Organisation, while Jmail was the hometown of Omar al-Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi, the former health minister and prime minister from 2006 to 2011. Sirte was privileged as Qadhafi sought to transform his hometown into the country's administrative capital; in 1988 parliament and most ministries relocated there.

[16] A Tebu with knowledge of smuggling routes said, "two of three major people trafficking routes go through military zones – al-Wigh near Niger and the Ma'tan as-Sarah airbase near Sudan. The smugglers used to call up the commanders, who would inform them as to current policy. They would say 'Go on – it's clear', or 'Not now'". Crisis Group interview, Murzuq, 7 May 2012.

itly supported the regime or remained on the sidelines.[17] Pre-existing resentments and antagonisms surfaced more directly when, in the wake of the regime's fall, many individuals who had remained neutral sought to join military councils and the transitional government. Those who had participated in the uprising felt cheated and insecure.[18] The term *tahalob* – pond, or scum[19] – crept into parlance as a way of describing the "green" (ie, pro-Qadhafi) inclinations of those who survived the old regime by biding their time and then changing their allegiance as the prevailing winds shifted.[20] So too did the term "dregs of the old regime" (*izlam an-nidham as-sabiq*) – a designation invoked by some towns to justify attacks against their neighbours.[21]

After Tripoli fell in August 2011, many conflicts were instigated by armed groups hailing from pro-revolutionary western towns that had been liberated late in the uprising. These include the coastal towns of Zuwara and Zawiya near Tunisia, the Tripoli suburb of Suq al-Jum'a and the western mountain town of Gharyan. Typically young, disorganised and lacking in fighting experience, these armed groups enthusiastically went after "wanted individuals"[22] (*matloubeen*) in neighbouring towns whom – due both to their actions during the war and communal resentments harboured over the last 42 years – they perceived as being pro-Qadhafi. A local notable from Suq al-Jum'a said of the fighters from his town, "we still were on a war footing, which affected our judgment. We still saw enemies

everywhere".[23] When Suq al-Jum'a's fighters entered Bani Walid on 24 November 2011 to arrest wanted individuals, the resulting clash with local residents sparked a conflict between those two towns that remains unresolved.

The hasty organisation of local civilian and military councils has also provoked conflicts in areas where rival sections of the community – backed by their respective armed groups – vied for power and control of these interim bodies. In the desert town of Ghadames, adjacent to where the borders of Libya, Algeria and Tunisia converge in Libya's far west, local Tuaregs, who had benefited from Qadhafi's regime with grants of citizenship and property, opposed the councils that had been organised by pro-revolution Ghadames residents, who also had formed their own armed group in the western mountains. Claiming that the latter had destroyed property and made arbitrary arrests when they seized the town after Qadhafi's troops fled, Tuaregs attacked Ghadames townsmen on 25 September 2011. In the subsequent fighting seven or eight people were killed, with each side accusing the other of abuses. Subsequent reconciliation negotiations failed to resolve the status of either the councils or the "wanted individuals", and clashes continued through the first half of 2012.[24]

A similar struggle over the new local and military councils was brewing in the central town of Bani Walid, where a pro-revolution minority had installed itself as council leaders. They came into conflict with town residents over council leadership, the fate of "wanted individuals" and allegations of abuses as well as looting. The minority that took control of Bani Walid numbered only a few hundred; they came from a small group of families that had split from town leaders and thrown their support behind the 17 February revolution. But the vast majority of the town was employed by the state and, though poor, had benefited

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[17] Within communities, not all was black-and-white, popular perceptions notwithstanding. Most comprised both pro- and anti-regime elements; more importantly, a majority within any given community typically adopted a stance of pragmatic neutrality.
[18] The border towns of Jmail and Rijdalin were classic examples. Despite having hosted several of Qadhafi's brigades for months, "immediately after those brigades' withdrawal [on 26 August], they presented themselves as the united military council of Jmail, Rijdalin and Zultan". Crisis Group interview, military council member, Zuwara, 13 May 2012; military council head, Rijdalin, 20 April 2012.
[19] The word can be seen in graffiti in Tripoli where it is used as an insult. In Bani Walid, where resentment toward the revolution runs deep, young people have appropriated the term self-referentially. One typical ironic exchange went as follows: "Allahu akbar, pond scum!" followed by "Shut up, rats!" Crisis Group observations, Bani Walid, February 2012.
[20] Qadhafi adopted green as the colour of his revolution and of the country's flag.
[21] The phrase gained currency after Tripoli's fall. It referred to those who had enforced or administered Qadhafi's system of government, whether or not they fled during the uprising or remained at work. It is similar in meaning to the word *fulool* (remnants) in vogue in post-Mubarak Egypt.
[22] Revolutionary brigades drew up extensive "wanted" lists of those they wished to investigate. Some were based on personal knowledge of those who had killed or informed on behalf of Qadhafi's regime. Others were taken from lists of registered volunteers and fighters with Qadhafi's brigades.

[23] Crisis Group interviews, local notable, Suq al-Jum'a, 3 April 2012; Martyrs of Suq al-Jum'a brigade members, 29 March 2012. Revolutionary brigades feared "fifth column" residual Qadhafi loyalists, who, they believed, could attack at any time. As a result, any action, however innocuous, from so-called "loyalist" communities prompted hair-trigger responses. The 16 October reported sighting of a green flag in Abu Slim, a Tripoli suburb, thus led hundreds of militiamen to descend upon the neighbourhood. See Karim Fahim, "Qadhafi-era flag is said to have set off gunfire in Tripoli", *The New York Times*, 14 October 2011.
[24] Fighting ended with nearly all the Tuareg community being displaced to the nearby areas of Dirj and Debaba. Violent skirmishes continually broke out over perceived insults and violations. On 16 May, for example, the alleged harassment of a Tuareg woman outside a Ghadames school prompted renewed fighting, killing at least seven. Crisis Group interview, Tuareg resident, Tripoli, 18 May 2012.

from patronage and favouritism from kinsmen within the government.[25]

Most local notables were deeply sceptical of the idea and legitimacy of the revolution. Memories played a part. A 1993 coup attempt by military officers from the town had prompted brutal collective punishment, turning notables against one another.[26] The regime likewise turned neighbouring towns against Bani Walid.[27] As a result, most of

Bani Walid either opposed the revolutionary movement or remained neutral; many youth from the town volunteered for Qadhafi's forces in Brega and Misrata.[28] On 28 May 2011, the pro-revolution minority staged a small protest at the main vegetable market; they were fired upon and evicted from town by other residents. According to some estimates, twelve of the protesters were executed in a nearby school.[29]

Upon return, the "28 May" pro-revolution minority settled scores, arresting and detaining "wanted individuals", transporting them to (mostly illegal) prisons in Misrata, Zawiya, Tripoli or elsewhere at the behest of other revolutionary brigades. On 24 November, they called in support from nearby Suq al-Jum'a, whose brigade was ambushed by other Bani Walid residents upon entry. Four were killed, instigating a still unresolved conflict between the communities.[30] As in Ghadames, negotiations over composition of the local council, mediated by Zintan, failed because the understanding reached was overly vague, and Bani Walid would not surrender "wanted individuals", some of whom were major local notables.[31] On 23 January 2012, the 28 May group was evicted by Bani Walid residents, with some support from neighbouring towns who felt equally threatened by them. The fight lasted eight hours, with four killed and twenty injured, but was largely supported by the majority of residents. Those who fled continued to agitate against the town's current leadership from distant Tripoli and Misrata.

B. THE TUMULTUOUS BORDERLANDS: ZUWARA, KUFRA AND SEBHA

The Qadhafi regime's patronage networks and divide-and-rule tactics have been particularly evident in border towns

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[25] Bani Walid served the state even prior to Qadhafi's rule. A former Bani Walid governor said, "our people entered the security services and police after Libya's independence, while other tribes took on political leadership positions, such as the Awlad Suleyman in the Fezzan region. When Qadhafi came to power, we acted for Qadhafi just as we had acted for the previous government". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 21 February 2012. An electricity company employee gave a personal account of how the town's youth naturally gravitated toward state employment: "Bani Walid had a college specialising in engineering and electronics. People came from all over Libya, but the majority of the students were from Bani Walid. Graduates from there found it very easy to get a job afterwards in the state telecommunications company, the state electricity company, and so forth". Crisis Group interview, Bani Walid, 23 February 2012. (Some state companies, notably the telecommunications company but also buildings belonging to state utilities services, were used officially and unofficially by Qadhafi's security services.)
[26] A local sheikh explained: "The coup ringleaders were killed, their children forbidden from studying, their houses demolished, electricity cut, salaries withheld, and none from their families could get married. They put Bani Walid under economic siege. There was no money, no construction in the region, no roads". Qadhafi turned the notables within Bani Walid's traditional tribal society into coordinators of his policy; he rewarded those who sided with the government and who publicly backed the punishments. Bani Walid's governor at the time said, "he made us do it ourselves; it was much more humiliating and created real hatred among Bani Walid families". The traditional town leadership that survived was thus instinctively supportive of Qadhafi, at times even to the detriment of their own kinsmen. A resident said, "the notables governing social affairs now are the same as those who did so under Qadhafi. Some of them participated in punishing the Bani Walid". Another resident concurred: "It wasn't like they were driving the bulldozers that destroyed people's houses, but they were complicit in those acts – for example, some would look on and cheer". Crisis Group interviews, Bani Walid resident, 25 February 2012; Bani Walid notables and residents, Tripoli, 21 February 2012.
[27] Bani Walid's governor at the time said, "Qadhafi visited every town in western Libya – Warshfana, Zlitan, Tarhuna – demanding that they punish the Bani Walid as traitors and spies. His security services engineered disputes among us; for example, a Tarhunan student was shot at Tripoli's al-Fateh University and a Bani Walid student blamed". Bitterness festered; a Bani Walid student said, "in 1993 the Bani Walid were the only tribe standing up to Qadhafi. None of the other tribes was there to support them. When the coup failed, all Libyan people kept calling us 'rebels' and 'traitors'". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 16 February 2012.

[28] A Bani Walid notable said, "when the revolution began, the Bani Walid split. Within every family, every house, some would go this way, others that way. We elders said, 'do not split into factions. If you want to fight with Qadhafi, or against him, go to Misrata and the western mountains. But no fighting here'". Crisis Group interview, Bani Walid, 26 February 2012.
[29] Crisis Group interview, 28 May supporter, Bani Walid, 27 February 2012; Zintani commander, Zintan, 22 April 2012.
[30] Crisis Group telephone interviews, Suq al-Jum'a fighter, 25 November 2011; Suq al-Jum'a local council, 3 April 2012.
[31] Crisis Group interviews, pro-revolutionary Bani Walid brigade commander, Tripoli, March 2012; residents and notables, Bani Walid, 24-28 February 2012; brigade commander, Zintan, 22 April 2012. A lead negotiator from Zintan said that the wanted list had been drawn up by the pro-revolutionary faction of the Bani Walid and simply presented to the interior ministry, adding: "The negotiations faltered on one point – the turning over of wanted individuals. Bani Walid rejected any handover either to the interior ministry or to Zintan on the grounds that the state was weak and torture was rife". Crisis Group interview, Zintan, 22 April 2012.

in the west and south. Zuwara, a large town on the coastal road next to the main Tunisian border crossing at Ras Jdeir, was among those that suffered from such unequal treatment. It harboured longstanding grievances against its neighbours in Jmail, Rijdalin and Zultan, three communities that benefited in various ways from Qadhafi's regime. Due in part to connections to Health and then Prime Minister Omar al-Baghdadi al-Mahmoudi,[32] a Jmail native, they profited from greater investments and jobs. Meanwhile, Zuwarans languished, lacking so much as a hospital and forced to live near a highly polluting ethylene plant staffed by residents of Jmail and Rijdalin as well as other communities adjacent to Zuwara.[33] This situation worsened pre-existing land-related tensions between Zuwara and its neighbours, as Zuwarans claimed that Jmail and Rijdalin residents were comparatively recent migrants who had settled on and taken over Zuwaran lands.[34]

During the 2011 conflict, Qadhafi's forces protecting the border crossing at Ras Jdeir were stationed in Jmail and Rijdalin and used those towns as bases to periodically shell Zuwara. Jmail and Rijdalin did not publicly shift allegiance to the rebel cause until immediately after Tripoli's fall, whereupon Zuwaran armed groups began attacking them – both as a form of revenge and due to fears that the two communities were helping Qadhafi partisans flee the country. Between 26 August and 4 October, Zuwarans harassed and attacked the towns' residents, threatening to carry out "a second Tawergha" – code for indiscriminate violence and mass eviction – before a ceasefire finally was imposed by a Misratan brigade.[35]

The power vacuum that followed the regime's collapse incited attempts to settle old scores but also revived struggles for control of smuggling routes – arguably the most significant driver of conflict throughout the borderlands. Here, alliance-building between nascent state security forces and local armed groups proved especially damaging. After September 2011, security forces from the transitional central authorities forged an alliance with Zuwara's military council and armed groups in order to manage the crossing at Ras Jdeir. Zuwaran brigades seized the opportunity to harass and detain Jmaili and Rijdalini residents; south of Ras Jdeir, Zuwaran and other revolutionary brigades encroached on smuggling routes to and from Tunisia that crossed through Jmaili and Rijdalini territory.

On 26 March 2012, Zuwarans secured defence ministry authorisation to set up a unit of the new "Border Guard", a patchwork of revolutionary brigades and local armed groups that sought (or sometimes seized) military control of borders. As part of these efforts, the Zuwaran units joined together with other western (Zawiyan and Naluti) fighters to set up a checkpoint at Al-'Assa, near Rijdalin. Five days later, 29 Zuwarans were captured by Jmaili fighters, prompting three days of fighting; the two communities shelled each other with heavy weapons, killing 48.[36]

The same mix of age-old disputes and contemporary battles for control of smuggling routes was replicated in the south. This was the case in Kufra, a south-eastern town that has long experienced clashes between the Zway, an Arab tribe, and the Tebu, an indigenous sub-Saharan ethnic group primarily inhabiting southern Libya, Chad and Niger.[37] In the power vacuum following Qadhafi's ouster, Abdul Majid Issa, the Tebu's military leader who had sided with the revolution there, seized control of border smuggling routes from Zway communities. This upset the balance of power between Tebu smugglers and tariff-collecting Zway, who ran safe houses and collected other smuggling "tolls". Over the first two weeks of February 2012, the town became the site of full-fledged conflict sparked by a shooting incident that led to the death of a Zway man at the hands of a Tebu militia; soon, a young Tebu was killed as well.

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[32] Crisis Group interviews, Zuwara residents and local council members, Zuwara, 20 April 2012; 13 May 2012.

[33] Crisis Group interviews, former employees of the Abi Qannas ethylene plant, Rijdalin, 20 April 2012.

[34] Ethnic or, more precisely, linguistic-cultural distinctions reinforced this divide. Whereas Zuwara is predominantly Berber-speaking, Rijdalin and Jmail mainly speak Arabic. This has discouraged intermarriage and other types of intermingling that might have helped avert conflict both during and after Qadhafi's rule. That said, throughout 2012, Berber-speaking fighters from Nalut allowed Arabic-speaking Jmailis and Rijdalinis to use the border crossing at Wazin in order to avoid persecution by Zuwarans – a fact that undercuts the notion of powerful linguistic or "ethnic" allegiances. Crisis Group interview, notable, Rijdalin, 20 April 2012.

[35] Graffiti observed by Crisis Group, Zuwara/Rijdalin road, 20 April 2012; Crisis Group interviews, Zuwaran brigade officer, Zuwara, 20 April 2012; notable, Rijdalin, 20 April 2012; military council head, Zuwara, 13 May 2012.

[36] Crisis Group interview, border guard commander, Zuwara, 20 April 2012; Rijdalin notables, Rijdalin, 20 April 2012.

[37] The Tebu and Zway had long been at odds due to population pressure over scarce water and cultivable land at the oasis; ethnic divisions between the sub-Saharan Tebu and Arab Zway fed into the mix. Tebu fought Zway for several days in November 2008 after some were stripped of their citizenship by the government and pressured to leave for Chad. Crisis Group interviews, Tebu and Zway Kufra residents, Sebha and Tripoli, May 2012. Tribal identities, in sharp decline in Libya over the twentieth century, were partially remobilised during the conflict as an organising mechanism for and against the regime, albeit with uneven impact. For example, the Qadhafi regime unsuccessfully attempted to mobilise tribal identity between March and May 2011 on its behalf. For more, see Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit., p. 27; also, Jamila Benkato, "Tribes of Libya as a Third Front: Myths and Realities of Non-State actors in the Battle for Misrata", *Jadaliyya*, 2 May 2011.

These incidents prompted ferocious, community-wide fighting which, although it began with small arms, quickly escalated to include rocket-propelled grenades and anti-aircraft weapons. Long-held, ethnically-based prejudices against the Tebu fuelled the fire. The fierce clashes entirely cut off some Tebu areas from the outside world and deeply polarised Kufra residents. Local notables negotiated a ceasefire, supported by the army and a unit of eastern revolutionary fighters, but in a stark illustration of the challenges of sustaining ceasefires, the understanding repeatedly broke down in April and again in June 2012.[38]

In Sebha, the main administrative capital of south-western Libya (Fezzan), a similar communal conflict between Arab and Tebu ethnic groups was sparked by a car theft. On 26 March 2012, fighting erupted in the town when members of the Awlad Busayf, an ethnic Arab community, accused a young Tebu of stealing a car.[39] By then, another ethnically Arab group, the Awlad Suleyman, had taken control of the local military council; its decision to intervene in the dispute – despite the time-honoured hostility between the group and the Tebu – worsened matters. A planned reconciliation at the People's Hall (a Qadhafi-era municipal building) degenerated into a firefight, with a negotiating team attacked mid-meeting.[40] Five days of ferocious combat ensued, with Sebha residents from various Arab communities – including Awlad Suleyman – converging on and indiscriminately shelling Tebu shantytowns; at least 147 died and approximately 500 were wounded.[41] As in Kufra, old resentments over smuggling routes,[42]

coupled with traditional anti-Tebu discrimination, fed the conflict and complicated the task of peace negotiators.

For the NTC, revolutionary brigades, the army, state security services and local notables, challenges were manifold and complex. Their task was to bring about ceasefires as swiftly as possible, forge peace settlements between aggrieved and besieged communities and implement those understandings or risk further violence. With each crisis and accumulated practice, their collective responses improved, albeit not enough to fully resolve communal conflicts. By April-May 2012, senior government and security sector officials acknowledged that more "root and branch" solutions were needed to bolster the ad hoc ceasefires, which in cases such as Kufra were breaking down.[43]

Agreements reached by local notables lacked teeth because the absence of centralised authority and a credible judiciary made them virtually unenforceable; it was exceedingly difficult to litigate interlocking land, property, citizenship and transitional justice issues without an effective and credible government. Furthermore, given the fragmented security arena and the concomitant deep political tensions among revolutionaries, state security forces as well as local military councils, the army and other groups sent to impose security and administer ceasefires were driven to build alliances with, or sometimes simply recruit, local armed groups. This critically undermined their neutrality, as well as Libyans' faith in the new order.

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[38] In July 2012, a replacement commander of the Libyan Shield Forces (LSF) unit in Kufra and an army unit maintained quiet enough to allow voting.

[39] Car theft to some extent was an accepted, or at least tolerated, form of war booty during the uprising. This was an indirect legacy from the Qadhafi regime, which had used cars extensively as part of its patronage system; certain security services – including senior officials' personal security details – were rewarded with vanilla-coloured Chrysler PT cruisers. Crisis Group observations, analyst working in Tripoli in another capacity, April 2008 and late 2011. In the course of the uprising, Misratans used distinctive cars created from Toyotas seized at Misrata's seaport; the Toyotas had been imported by Saif al-Islam Qadhafi for use as patronage tools. Mokhtar al-Fernana, the Zintani head of the Western Military Command during the uprising, argued that theft of such cars awarded by the regime was acceptable: "Let them have the cars! It's not a big deal". See Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit.

[40] Crisis Group interviews, local councillors, Sebha, 5 May 2012.

[41] See "Libya says 147 dead in week of southern tribal clashes", Reuters, 1 April 2012.

[42] The head of the local council said, "last week the Awlad Suleyman military council tried to confiscate a convoy of smuggled goods from the Tebu as it came into the city. There were suitcases full of money present at the meeting at the People's Hall, which leads me to believe that the dispute over the smug-

gled goods was at the origins of the firefight". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 5 May 2012.

[43] Crisis Group interview, adviser to Mustafa Abdul Jalil, Tripoli, 3 July 2012. A Suq al-Jum'a reconciliation council member noted: "The positive thing about these recent conflicts is that they are opening our eyes to the underlying grievances that drive them. For example, the Sebha fighting opened my eyes to the issue of Tuareg and Tebu citizenship rights". Crisis Group interview, Suq al-Jum'a, 2 April 2012.

III. FILLING THE SECURITY VACUUM

During the transition period, the NTC and the government executive it appointed responded to communal conflicts haphazardly. An official from the prime minister's office said, "we knew, in general, that these tensions and issues existed, but it was impossible to know in advance which were going to spill over into violence".[44] The NTC both blessed and backed local notables to lead the reconciliation councils; some members participated on the NTC's behalf.[45] But the NTC's own "follow-up councils" designed to monitor ceasefire implementation lasted at most a few days or weeks, until revolutionary brigades would impose the ceasefire on the army's behalf and local notables would compel warring communities not to resume firing. The NTC's efforts thus had only limited impact;[46] at most, they served to communicate the NTC's interest and create a temporary sense of activity.

For most of the emerging political class – the NTC and its advisers as well as nascent political parties – that was not enough. They believed the government's role primarily should be to use military means to bring armed groups under control. The sentiment mirrored a broader yearning for a strong military presence that extended across the social and political spectrums. The prime minister's spokesman acknowledged this: "We know that there has been fighting in Zuwara, Sebha and Kufra for years. Naturally, with the revolution, the state's control is weaker and vio-

lence has increased. We need a strong unified military to re-impose control".[47]

If anything, the NTC's steps were headed in the opposite direction. Along with revolutionary brigades, it unwittingly presided over the emergence of a plethora of local military councils and armed groups only nominally under interior and defence ministry authority. The army and police were in disarray. Officers and soldiers who did not defect had fled, been killed or jailed; the new army, its weapons and equipment ransacked, had a deficit in personnel and equipment.[48] To its chagrin, better-armed revolutionaries created their own, parallel organisations, culminating in the Libyan Shield Forces (LSF, *Quwwat Dira' Libya*), over which – though technically it answered to the chief of staff – the army had no control.[49] The interior minister reached out to those who had coordinated armed civilian resistance during the uprising, creating a Supreme Security Committee (SSC) that operated in parallel to the police. As ministers and revolutionary leaders sought a way out of the confusion of parallel institutions and chains of command, they were confronted with the legacies of the revolution and its aftermath.

A. MILITARY COUNCILS

By August 2011, many armed civilian groups were prepared for any contingency, including protracted civil war. As rebels moved south from the capital, they "liberated" towns and populations with no strong loyalty to either the regime or the revolution. Revolutionary brigades mostly sought to reach compromises and avoid battles. The head of one of the largest said, "as military leaders, we were presented with two choices: either cleanse the town or make a deal with its residents";[50] where possible, they tended to opt for the latter. By the same token, the NTC and allied revolutionary brigades also urged communities to set up their own military councils in the absence of a functioning

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[44] Crisis Group interview, government official, Tripoli, 2 April 2012.
[45] NTC representatives, diplomats, former military officers and other government figures participated in local reconciliation talks, but often as notable community figures as much as in their official government capacity. For example, the NTC representative from Suq al-Jum'a, Alamin Belhaj, acted as a local notable during reconciliation talks with the Obeidat tribe in eastern Libya in the aftermath of the July 2011 killing of Abdel Fatah Younis, an army general from that tribe. "Being from Suq al-Jum'a, I was a neutral figure for them". Crisis Group interview, Alamin Belhaj, Tripoli, 5 July 2012. The former ambassador to the UAE, Arif Nayyed, participated in negotiations between Misrata and Bani Walid in June and July 2012. Crisis Group interview, Arif Nayyed, 19 July 2012.
[46] Each conflict demanded the personal attention of Prime Minister Abdul Rahim al-Keeb and NTC Chairman Mustafa Abdul Jalil, as well as the interior and defence ministers. Ultimately, however, the NTC could do little other than listen to and learn from conflicting parties. "It was like they were visitors from another planet", said a foreign observer of the prime minister's whistlestop tour to Sebha on 1 April 2012. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 10 May 2012.

[47] Crisis Group interview, prime minister's spokesman, Tripoli, 2 April 2012. An adviser to Mustafa Abdul Jalil added: "The solution is to build a strong army, which should impose a military zone on Bani Walid, Kufra, Murzuq, Sebha, even Sirte". An NTC member said, "at the moment, we cannot impose a governor or a police force on these areas. We are forced to negotiate. We need a military first to put down these groups". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, April 2012.
[48] Crisis Group interviews, revolutionary fighters in the western mountains and Tripoli, August-September 2011. For more details, see Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit.
[49] An army officer said, "we only command the army's air, sea and land forces. The [Benghazi-based] national security force and some border forces answer to army command. But the LSF and the Border Guard protecting oil fields and ports do not". Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, April 2012.
[50] Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Benghazi, 11 February 2012.

army; because many already were well-armed, this was quickly accomplished. That said, for many such communities – including those with no particular sympathy toward the regime – this was a period of considerable anxiety; both propaganda from Qadhafi's regime and reports of arbitrary arrests and retaliatory forms of justice perpetrated by rebels in parts of the west instilled fear of how they would be treated.

The creation of myriad military councils around the country helped set the stage for the ensuing communal conflicts. Armed groups, most of which already existed in some form, came under the new military councils' authority and styled themselves as revolutionaries; they used the new tricolour flag and were granted permission by the NTC to operate as brigades. Yet, little was known of these groups or of what motivated them. As a revolutionary brigade commander said, "we trusted people who vouched for the character of these councils and groups, without realising what the interests around them were".[51]

In theory, the military councils coordinated local armed groups' efforts to control crime, deal with violent disturbances and police armed gangs.[52] In some locales, however, the military councils ended up promoting an array of divergent agendas. Some saw their task as protecting themselves and their communities against potential abuse by the revolutionary forces, such as arbitrary arrest and extra-judicial detention; this was the case in particular in Bani Walid.[53] Others took advantage of the power vacuum to assert dominance over neighbouring communities and take control of local smuggling routes, border crossings, seaports, airports, farms and major industries. This occurred in border towns such as Sebha, whose military council was taken over by armed groups from the Awlad Suleyman community; once in that position, they forcibly

occupied farms controlled by the Qadhafa tribe[54] and evicted their residents.[55]

In other cases, military councils were infiltrated or even established by gangs, criminal groups or local armed communities with their own specific agendas. Still others engaged in looting or were involved in criminal activities such as drug trade.[56] Many more simply sought employment or equivalent forms of reward from the new government. In some cases, like the more urban Tripoli suburbs of Suq al-Jum'a, Tajura or Misrata, some 5 to 10 per cent of armed groups reportedly broke away from their respective military councils[57] and pursued their own goals, including seeking revenge against rival communities.[58]

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[51] Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 5 May 2012.
[52] In a Tripoli suburb, a military council exhibited the results of a drug raid it had carried out that morning, indicating that such hauls had become a frequent occurrence. Crisis Group observations, Tripoli, 12 March 2012. A prosecutor associated with a military council in a Tripoli suburb averred that much of its day-to-day activities involved controlling organised armed crime. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli suburb, 13 March 2012. The head of Abu Slim's military council said that one of its major tasks was dealing with weapons and policing armed gangs. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 15 February 2012. A Tajura resident showed Crisis Group a chart of small arms with sophisticated night vision and laser sight accessories, noting that his local fish market also moonlit as a weapons market. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 21 April 2012.
[53] Crisis Group interview, members of the "Martyrs of Wadi Dinar" brigade, Bani Walid, 28 February 2012.

[54] Sebha and Sirte are the principal home bases of Qadhafi's tribe, the Qadhafa. In Sirte, his birthplace and his regime's administrative capital, they constitute the majority of the population. In Sebha they are a minority, the major Arab tribes being Awlad Suleyman, Awlad Busayf, Magarha, Warfalla and Hasawna. The Qadhafa are a small tribe, historically of only minor significance, except for their crucial role in toppling King Idris in the 1969 coup that brought Qadhafi to power. As a reward for supporting the coup, Qadhafi showered his tribesmen with senior appointments. During the 2011 conflict, the Qadhafa were one of the few tribal groups that heeded Qadhafi's call and actively supported the regime.
[55] Crisis Group interview, Zintani farmer, Sebha, 4 May 2012.
[56] Crisis Group observations and interviews, Tripoli, Misrata, and Sirte, August-October 2011; Crisis Group interviews, residents and notables, Bani Walid, 24-28 February 2012; deputy head of Sirte local council, Sirte, 15 February 2012. Several individuals, including an LSF commander, a local council head, NTC officials and the deputy interior minister, spoke of the serious consequences of the deliberate release by Qadhafi's retreating prison guards of roughly 16,000 detained criminals during the fall of Tripoli. "Many of those who were released – some of whom had committed grand felonies – subsequently formed armed groups and claimed to act in the name of the revolution. They formed brigades that escaped the military councils' control". Crisis Group interview, LSF commander, Sebha, May 2012. A Tripoli resident said, "the military councils are a mess. The one in my district is staffed with members of the former security services who are trying to play the new system. Some have been joined by what used to be criminal gangs". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 13 May 2012.
[57] Military councils struggled to control wayward brigades. On 1 May 2012, a dramatic seven- to eight-hour firefight erupted after a rogue group of twenty to 30 Suq al-Jum'a residents, acting outside local military council authority, killed a Tajura resident. In response, the Tajuran military council, in coordination with the Suq al-Jum'a military council, amassed an arsenal of heavy weapons and arrested the group. Crisis Group interviews, Suq al-Jum'a residents and local journalists, 4 May 2012.
[58] Crisis Group interviews, heads of military councils, Benghazi, Misrata and Zintan, October 2011-April 2012. Another example is that of the infamous Sirayat as-Suwehli brigade that detained roughly 60 people and refused to cooperate with either the interior ministry or Misrata's military council. Crisis Group

From September 2011 onwards, armed groups – sometimes numbering little more than 25-30 newly armed youth – proliferated to the extent that it was impossible to keep count.[59] For those who had participated in the uprising from the outset, notably on the eastern front at Brega or the Misratan and western mountain fronts, the explosion in the number of armed groups with dubious allegiances was particularly disturbing. A revolutionary commander complained:

> The military councils all came after the fall of Tripoli, and that's when the trouble began. While the real revolutionaries who had fought before that time knew and trusted each other, we didn't know those who formed the military councils. As towns were liberated, the government appointed council heads without background checks, so we didn't know who these people were and whose interests they would serve.[60]

Use of the term "revolutionary" (*tha'ir*, plural *thuwwar*) to describe these new brigades in itself became increasingly problematic. "Particularly in the west, it's not so easy to tell who is a revolutionary and who isn't", said a commander. A Zintani commander concurred: "The way things happened, too few true revolutionaries were left in control. Local and military councils slipped out of our control".[61] Some chafed at the fact that former anti-revolutionary fighters or regime sympathisers had found their way into the new military council system. Others complained that military councils had been formed by army officers who – in their view – had not participated in the uprising.[62]

The mutual mistrust and antagonism among revolutionary brigades, local armed groups and military councils meant each would remain separate, maintaining their weapons and autonomy. A southern revolutionary commander said, "as we went through and liberated areas, each brigade was supposed to surrender its weapons to the relevant military council, which was meant to safeguard all weapons until

eventual handover to a central government. That didn't happen".[63]

B. THE FLEDGLING STATE

Upon the 23 November 2011 formation of the NTC's transitional administration, headed by Prime Minister Abdul Rahim al-Keeb, one of the government's highest priorities was to assert state authority over the patchwork of military councils and armed groups and impose security on restive areas. The stark reality was that its ability to do so was limited, given the near total collapse of both the police and army. At first, even Tripoli itself escaped state control. A deputy interior minister explained: "We tried to activate Tripoli's police stations at the beginning and ask them to come back to work. But the problem is that the police forces were seen as the defeated enemy".[64] Less than two thirds were reporting for duty, and far fewer could be deployed.[65]

Defeated or not, and enemy or not, the former police – and, more broadly, the former security services and bureaucracy – still had a heartbeat. Newly appointed ministers and officials from the ranks of long-term exiles, opposition activists and rebel military coordinators faced the task of dealing with a bureaucracy that, mere weeks prior, had served Qadhafi's regime. They needed to create a defence ministry from scratch;[66] face armed forces that were not used to civilian oversight and authority; and contend with an interior ministry that had ties to the former regime's police force and security services.

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interviews, former detainees, 29 April 2012; human rights researchers and two British journalists held captive by the brigade, Tripoli, 7 March 2012. For more, see McQuinn, "Capturing the Peace", op. cit.

[59] Crisis Group interview, head of the Tripoli Brigades, September 2011.

[60] Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Sebha, 2 May 2012.

[61] Crisis Group interviews, brigade commander, Benghazi, February 2012; brigade commander, Zintan, 22 April 2012.

[62] A senior eastern coalition commander said, "those who are in the military councils were not at the front, doing the work we were doing. The former army officers were securing the cities rather than being at the front, where they were supposed to be. We were supposed to be in the cities, because we were the civilians!" Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, 18 February 2012.

[63] Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Sebha, 5 May 2012.

[64] Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 25 April 2012.

[65] Crisis Group interview, police adviser, Tripoli, 19 October 2011.

[66] Under Qadhafi, an "interim defence committee" relayed orders directly to the (highly fragmented) National Army and to standing brigades in the west and south; the latter were kept in separate bases, with independent lines of communication. Decisions were centralised at the committee level. Crisis Group interview by analyst working in a different capacity, foreign observer, Tripoli, 2010. Although the full picture is not yet clear, the most important and best endowed brigades included the well-known "32" (Khamis) brigade, headed by Khamis al-Qadhafi, one of Qadhafi's sons; the special forces unit, led by Saadi al-Qadhafi, another son; the Imhammad brigade (Qadhafi's personal guard); the Fadeel brigade (based in Benghazi); and the Fars brigade (based in Sebha). Additional brigades were stationed in Tarhuna, Bani Walid, Awbari (Tarq brigade), Gharyan (Sahban brigade) and other locations; members were recruited locally. These brigades were separate from the eastern-based National Army and received great privileges in equipment and pay, leaving the National Army starved of both. Crisis Group interviews, Sebha residents, Sebha, 5 May 2012; Bani Walid residents, Bani Walid, 24-28 February 2012.

Struggles between ministers and bureaucracy existed across the board.[67] The former acknowledged they sometimes had difficulty to get decisions implemented. One said, "we have a middle management problem. I don't quite want to say they are loyalists, but they are not doing their job".[68] In certain cases, regime holdovers purportedly blackmailed new bosses.[69] Behind the scenes, warnings were direr still. An official said, "we are still in a war";[70] another claimed, "we are being infiltrated. They are buying us with jobs, offering us good positions to get our hands dirty".[71] Many middle and senior members of the bureaucracy sold assets and moved abroad;[72] the transitional executive at times felt those who stayed sought to protect their own interests and those of exiled colleagues and kin.[73] A new official

concluded: "The important people with money have fled, but they still have people here, in government, lobbying for them. Keeb and the NTC can't move".[74] Compounding distrust, ministers and officials believed exiled elements of the old government were actively trying to destabilise the new one.[75]

Aware of this tug-of-war, revolutionary brigades were reluctant to cede power to ministries or former state security forces. In December 2011, in an effort to assert control and reduce the armed groups' influence, the NTC set up the Warriors' Commission,[76] an inter-ministerial body under the prime minister's authority. Its goal was to register all fighters still mobilised, channel them into training programs and, eventually, toward employment in the labour, interior and defence ministries.[77] A supplementary objective was to provide the executive with greater understanding of the brigades and their intentions, thereby filling a large gap in their knowledge. The commission, headed by Mustafa Sigizly, handed out forms to the brigades through the intermediary of local civilian and military councils.[78] Amid some resistance and confusion, most brigades and councils ultimately agreed to distribute them.[79]

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[67] An early turf war involved control over passport databases, necessary to monitor and freeze the travel of Libyans abroad, which was fought over among the security apparatus and the interior and justice ministries. Crisis Group interview, government official, Tripoli, 9 May 2012.

[68] Crisis Group interview, minister, Tripoli, 21 April 2012. A problem commonly mentioned by bureaucrats, ministers and revolutionary activists alike was "mentality", meaning a lack of training, respect for institutional work ethics and sense of organisation. The minister said, "we have to teach people how to work correctly. We are struggling with people who have very bad ideas. They ask, 'what's in it for me?' It is particularly hard to choose the right people for the right jobs. Employers make decisions based on the expectation that hiring people from their area will help them". A deputy minister said, "I don't have enough good managers around me. Information isn't so bad, but management is. Most decisions come back up to me". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 21 April 2012.

[69] According to a well-informed security official, an NTC minister received a phone call one morning and "the voice on the other end of the line told him to look down and open the envelope he found on his desk". Inside were pictures of the minister engaged in criminal activity during the Qadhafi era. "Within the hour, the minister had received instructions telling him which individuals to fire in his ministry and whom to appoint in their places". Crisis Group interview, security official, Tripoli, 14 May 2012.

[70] Crisis Group interview, official in prime minister's office, Tripoli, 20 February 2012.

[71] Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 10 May 2012. The term used by members of the public to describe the old order's attempt to reassert itself was "hidden hands" (*mundiseen*).

[72] A Benghazi resident said, "my neighbour was in Qadhafi's security services – he had millions. He fled to Egypt. He sent two of his children back recently to see whether it was safe to return. But his children sold all his assets, including his house and car, and fled". Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, 4 February 2012.

[73] Two officials from the prime minister's office confirmed that salaries and contracts belonging to old regime officials remained in force, with the money still deposited in banks, then withdrawn and transported in cash across borders. The seizure of one of those suitcases in an eastern city prompted a swift phone call

from the interior ministry demanding that the courier be released. Crisis Group interviews, Tripoli, April and May 2012.

[74] Ibid.

[75] True or not, the sentiment was shared at all levels of the government. Prime Minister al-Keeb articulated it publicly in a speech in London: "It is amazing what we have been going through since we took office – a tremendous effort to destabilise the country. … We have some remnants of the past regime in Niger moving freely and trying to destabilise the country". See "Transcript Q&A Libya: Reestablishing the State", Chatham House, 25 May 2012.

[76] See Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit. The body's full name is "The Warriors' Affairs Commission for Rehabilitation and Development". Registration documents were viewed by Crisis Group at a brigade headquarters, Benghazi, 5 February 2012.

[77] Crisis Group interviews, official in prime minister's office, Tripoli, 1 February 2012; labour ministry official, 1 February 2012; deputy interior minister, Tripoli, 25 April 2012.

[78] The committee was said to have been allocated $8 billion, but, in practice, it never received all the promised funds, and Sigizly never fully controlled his own budget. Crisis Group telephone interview, member of commission, 6 July 2012. According to news reports, the government handed over only $1.8 billion to the supposed former fighters before shutting down the scheme. See "Libyan government seeks quicker integration of militia fighters", Reuters, 19 April 2012.

[79] Resistance to the commission and its mandate partly grew out of suspicions directed at Sigizly's agenda and intentions, which themselves grew out of a general distrust towards any attempt by the NTC to regulate or control revolutionary brigades. Crisis Group interviews, local council and brigades members, Benghazi, 4 February 2012; local council member, Sirte,

The Warriors' Commission soon was overwhelmed with submissions by several hundred thousand unemployed youth, who all claimed to be revolutionaries.[80] In January, an exasperated labour ministry official exclaimed at the deluge of forms, "they are throwing papers at us!"[81] Efforts to defraud or take advantage of the system notwithstanding, the commission provided a bureaucratic mechanism for guiding hundreds of thousands of unemployed citizens toward work in the army and police.[82] It also supplied brigade leaders with much-needed training and education.[83]

But the interior and defence ministries distrusted Sigizly, who often was seen to conduct himself as if he were a minister.[84] For them, the pressure to supplement and reinvigorate the collapsed police and army was so great that they began their own registration programs. Critically, both min-

istries started to register and authorise entire brigades at a time – a decision that was to have disastrous consequences.

The interior ministry took bold, early action that promised much. It quickly recognised that the police needed wholesale reform but, more urgently still, needed to regain the public's confidence. To do so, the deputy interior minister said, "we need to supplement and replace the police with fresh blood from the revolutionaries".[85] It set up a temporary body, the Supreme Security Committee (SSC), designed to swiftly absorb revolutionary brigades under its own command.[86] Planning for the longer term, with UN and bilateral support, it promptly rolled out a training program that was designed to put Libyans from the SSC and other armed groups desiring police careers through basic training in Jordan.

To bolster police appeal in the eyes of revolutionaries wary of the force and of the interior ministry, the SSC established local branches so young fighters could serve in their hometowns; it also offered recruits a relatively generous 1000LD (€650) per month. The incentives worked, and the committee grew at an astonishing rate. By late February, it was able to deploy its personnel in major cities in time for the uprising's first anniversary;[87] by late April, 70,000 had registered; by late May, the number had reached 85,000.[88]

But those swelling numbers belied growing issues with the SSC's wholesale enrolment of brigades. Distrust of the interior ministry was still so great that the ministry and police officers were granted no oversight or command over the SSC, which was entirely run and led by revolutionaries,[89] and the pay disparity in favour of the SSC further soured

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15 February 2012; Misratan brigade commander, Tripoli, 25 March 2012.

[80] By June 2012, the commission had registered over 250,000 people. A senior revolutionary commander questioned the number's credibility, commenting: "If we had had that many combatants, the fighting would have been a walk in the park". Crisis Group interview, Zintan, 22 April 2012.

[81] Crisis Group interview, labour ministry, 1 February 2012.

[82] The UN Secretary-General's representative, Ian Martin, briefed the Security Council that "the Warriors Affairs Commission for Rehabilitation and Development reports approximately 148,000 having registered to date, of which 'approximately 15 per cent' registered preferences to join the Army or police, who were therefore referred directly to the Ministries of Defence and Interior". Martin concluded that "the majority of ex-combatants are seeking, and must be afforded, educational or vocational training, and employment or self-employment opportunities". Briefing, 29 February 2012. Crisis Group interviews with military council members whose brigades were present in conflict areas, including Sebha, Murzuq, Zuwara, Rijdalin and Jmail, revealed a large number of mobilised youth who rejected participation in state security forces largely out of concern for the safety and security of their own communities. While hopeful and expressing support for future employment opportunities via the labour ministry, they expressed concern for security over and above desires for training and employment. Crisis Group interviews, February-May 2012.

[83] The Warriors' Commission funded visits by foreign trainers to Libya and covered travel expenses for brigade leaders attending training sessions at home and abroad. At a conference attended by Crisis Group in March 2012, brigade leaders from across the country were assembled to meet with UAE management/administration trainers discussing administration and management techniques; the talk turned into a discussion over the constitution, federalism and religious guidance for some of the issues the country was facing. Crisis Group observations and interviews, Warriors' Commission members, 25 March 2012; international observer familiar with the commission, 20 May 2012.

[84] Crisis Group interview, international observer familiar with the commission, 20 May 2012; interior ministry official, 3 July 2012.

[85] Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 25 April 2012.

[86] See Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit. Early on, the interior minister, Fawzi Abdul Aal, requested international support; the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) seconded three advisers to the ministry. See Ian Martin briefings to Security Council, 25 January 2012, 29 February 2012.

[87] Crisis Group observations and interviews, internal security and interior ministry employees, Benghazi, 17 February 2012.

[88] Crisis Group interviews, interior ministry official, Tripoli, 24 April and 3 July 2012.

[89] The SSC was dominated from the outset by civilian revolutionaries, particularly those who had secretly coordinated and armed the 20 August Tripoli uprising. The SSC's head, Abdul Latif Qudoor, led the armed cell in Suq al-Jum'a responsible for smuggling weapons from Misrata and, some say, was a leading voice in determining the date of the Tripoli uprising. Saleh Rejbani, the SSC Tripoli division head, was a lead coordinator of armed cells across the city. Another member of that network became Libya's deputy intelligence chief; others were placed at mid-level management in the interior ministry and security services. Crisis Group interviews, interior ministry officials, Tripoli, September 2011; Tripoli local council members, July 2012; Tripoli uprising co-ordinators, July 2012.

relations with the police and interior ministry.[90] Most recruits came from the unemployed local youth who had formed brigades following the fall of Tripoli; by recruiting such groups wholesale into the SSC, the latter reinforced the authority and autonomy of unit commanders, with barely any oversight. According to a researcher, a brigade in Janzur increased from 250 to 400 members in April 2012 alone because of the good salaries on offer.[91]

Indiscipline also was rife. In May and June 2012, journalists and human rights NGOs criticised SSC units for beatings and arbitrary detention.[92] The interior ministry cancelled the police training in Jordan in embarrassment due to the trainees' use of alcohol, cavorting with local women and, in one incident, setting a training centre on fire.[93] By late April, the deputy minister said, "the main obstacle slowing down development of police and interior ministry forces is the brigades – it's really the brigades".[94] Ministers adjusted the program to focus on recruiting individuals rather than whole brigades,[95] but by then the damage largely had been done. The SSC's mandate was extended in July 2012, but key issues such as the length of extension and what should come next are all under discussion.

By the time the General National Congress (GNC) was formed in August 2012, the SSC apparently had cemented its role within the security apparatus. Salafists' destruction of Sufi shrines in Tripoli, Zliten and Misrata on 24-26 August triggered a stormy session of the GNC, with several newly-elected congressmen accusing the SSC of actions against the national interest and calling for its dissolution

on the basis that it had failed to properly defend the shrines.[96] Although an SSC spokesperson condemned the destruction, units were seen providing protection to those who demolished the Tripoli mosque while preventing activists intent on safeguarding the site from interfering.[97] Sharp criticism of the SSC, broadcast live on national television, prompted its high-ranking commanders to declare a general strike "to protest against the accusations made by some members of the GNC".[98] The strike was called off only after the prime minister reached out to the SSC asking it formally – through a written statement – to continue "to protect the country".[99]

Similar tensions between revolutionary civilian brigades and Qadhafi-era commanders plagued the army and defence ministry. Chief of Staff Yusuf al-Manqoush was appointed on 2 January 2012, following difficult negotiations between revolutionary forces, the army and NTC.[100] He inherited

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[90] Crisis Group interviews, police officer, Suq al-Jum'a, 2 April 2012; foreign expert and security reform adviser, Tripoli, 3 July 2012. An interior ministry official complained: "We don't want revolutionaries [*thuwwar*] in the police – they don't follow orders". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 17 July 2012.

[91] Crisis Group interview, Thijs Jeursen of Utrecht University, Tripoli, 14 May 2012.

[92] Local journalists reported that seventeen Yafranis arrested by the SSC after an armed protest at the prime minister's office on 8 May were tortured and beaten. See also "Beating of Libyan Doctor is Decried", Physicians for Human Rights, 6 June 2012; C. Stephen, "Libya sees claim of human rights abuses as elections near", *The Guardian*, 3 June 2012.

[93] Crisis Group interview, interior ministry official, Tripoli, 3 July 2012.

[94] Crisis Group interview, interior ministry, Tripoli, 25 April 2012.

[95] The deputy interior minister said, "registration is done individually – we do not bloc-register a brigade as a group. We tried doing that and it led us into problems. The element in our favour now is that when individuals register with us, they also register their weapons with us". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 25 April 2012. Despite such intentions, bloc-registration of brigades and poor oversight of weapons ownership appears to have continued.

[96] GNC session of 26 July 2012 broadcast live on Libya's Wataniyya channel. During this session, a congressman argued that the government should rely exclusively on the regular police force, and efforts should concentrate on consolidating police capacity rather then maintaining the SSC.

[97] Crisis Group observations of the destruction of the Sha'ab Mosque in Tripoli, 26 August 2012. No arrests have occurred, worsening the sense of impunity. Further destruction of Sufi shrines in Tripoli took place on 29 August and continued across the country throughout early September. A Salafi armed group, the *katiba* Fadallah al-Shehati, based in Derna where the influence of Islamists looms larger than in most other towns, appears to be behind most attacks. In at least one instance, in Zliten, SSC officials asserted that the destruction resulted from crossfire occurring on 23 August between security forces and Qadhafi loyalists hiding inside the mosque. According to witness accounts, however, the bulk of the mosque's destruction took place on 24 August, when the hunt for Qadhafi loyalists already had ended. Crisis Group interviews and observations, Zliten, 8 September 2012. In late August 2012 the SSC also led an operation in Tarhuna during which it seized some 100 tanks it alleged belonged to the al-Awfiya brigade, which it accused of being a pro-Qadhafi force. Yet, security officials point out that the SSC had no right to take the tanks, which were stored in a deposit that belonged to the defence ministry. The tanks reportedly were divided up among several brigades that took part in the Tarhuna raid. Crisis Group interview, SSC member, Tripoli, 25 August, 2012. For more on the operation, see I. Lamloum, "Over 100 tanks seized from pro-Kadhafi militia: ministry", Agence France-Presse, 24 August 2012.

[98] Press conference of Ibrahim al-Sharkasiya, head of the SSC local branches administration, Tripoli, 26 August 2012.

[99] Prime minister's office communiqué no. 126, 26 August 2012. Despite the premier's attempt to avoid a rift with the SSC, the distrust and hostility expressed by members of the newly-elected parliament against the SSC are believed to be the main reason behind Interior Minister Fawzi Abdul Aal's 26 August resignation. He only rescinded his decision two days later.

[100] A cleric with knowledge of the negotiations explained: "It wasn't easy at all, but in the end Manqoush was an acceptable

"an army of all chiefs and no Indians".[101] It had few fighting soldiers, and many of its senior officers were advanced in years.[102] A significant number of its western divisions had fought for Qadhafi, and its members subsequently had been killed or imprisoned;[103] members of eastern divisions, though they defected early on, largely stayed clear of the front lines. The rebels widely distrusted those who remained in the army.[104] The defence minister, Osama al-Juweili, was put in charge of a ministry that had not existed prior to the revolution, and lines of authority vis-à-vis the chief of staff were unclear. The two competed with one another but also with the de facto authority of deputies and commanders in the fragmented military and with revolutionary brigades, military councils and armed groups outside it.

As with the interior ministry and the SSC, the defence ministry's initial approach – after an early attempt to dissolve armed groups failed miserably[105] – was to register armed groups as quickly as possible and work with local military councils. But unlike the interior ministry, neither the army nor ministry created a separate corps to accommodate brigades. Instead, Osama Juweili gave official accreditation and identification cards to the military councils, revolutionary brigades and other armed groups across the country.[106] He did so seemingly with only scant investigation into their origins or orientation and apparently no effort or capacity to integrate them under a single command structure.[107] As an incentive, the ministry began responding to fighters' demands for payment,[108] offering each who registered with it and with the army a one-time payment of 2400LD (just over €1500), an amount that rose to 4000LD (just over €2500) for those with families.[109] Again as with the SSC, oversight was absent and unit commanders had almost total freedom to do as they wished with the money. A Tripoli brigade commander said:

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compromise". Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, 4 February 2012. What made this so might have been that he had retired from the armed forces just prior to the uprising against Qadhafi. Since late 2011, he also had served as deputy defence minister.
[101] Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Benghazi, 18 February 2012. Osama Juweili, the defence minister, estimated that the former army "include[s] 55 major generals, 537 brigadiers and 1,350 colonels …. The lack of a formal retirement system has resulted in a situation where some military officers are in their 70s … because salaries were good and pensions poor". Notes from a television interview, 6 July 2012, provided to Crisis Group.
[102] Under Qadhafi, young people had more incentives to join the western brigades that were run by Qadhafi's sons and inner circle as opposed to the largely neglected and unused eastern-based National Army. Western brigade members were paid more generously and during the revolution tended to remain loyal to Qadhafi. "A truck driver working in Khamis's brigade could earn as much as a brigadier with a masters degree in the National Army". They were recruited along communal lines, largely from Sirte, Bani Walid, Tarhuna and Sebha; members of the Ajalat community near Zuwara; as well as the Warshfana community south west of Tripoli. Crisis Group interviews, Khamis brigade member detained by rebels, Tripoli, August 2011; National Army officer, Tripoli, May 2012. Many members of these particular towns and tribes did not support the 17 February revolution, and some joined Qadhafi's forces.
[103] According to Juweili, the defence minister, "most brigadiers took part in the military campaign against the rebels". See notes from a television interview with the defence minister, op. cit.
[104] See Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit.
[105] Defence ministry decision no. 8/2012 involved establishment of weapons collection centres and an assessment of rebel fighters' experience. Most armed groups did not respond. See notes from a television interview with the defence minister, op. cit.

[106] A volunteer with an armed civilian group from Sebha said, "in Sebha, we formed our brigade of 3,000 persons well before the defence ministry even existed. The money came from local interests – my father contributed, for example. All weapons came from the black market or weapons stores opened by Qadhafi's forces in the final months of the conflict. Mustafa Abdul Jalil found us nice and ready. We registered the brigade with the defence ministry on 1 February. We don't move except with an order from the commander, but we don't get many orders". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 5 May 2012.
[107] Armed groups did not have to register weapons or change their operational structure. Though orders were relayed from the armed forces chief of staff to brigade heads, the system did not include a verification mechanism to ensure they were carried out and check whether unauthorised actions had been taken. Crisis Group interviews, brigade leaders, Sebha, 5 May 2012; Zuwara, 20 April 2012.
[108] Demands for payment initially emanated from local revolutionaries and armed groups as early as October and November 2011. While better-organised coalitions of revolutionary brigades in the east and Misrata distributed grants and payments to their fighters, western revolutionaries and armed groups enjoyed no such benefits, triggering demands from armed groups that the government pay them. Early attempts in October and November to disburse money via local councils backfired when the NTC's finance ministry, then under Ali Tarhouni, distributed payments to local councils such as Tripoli's that at the time were not prepared to deal with the vast number of fighters (over 20,000, in Tripoli's case) and armed groups. By 26 December, payment demands were so intense that one armed group stormed the Tripoli Local Council offices – "they pulled the doors off the wall" – targeting the council head. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli Local Council member, March 2012.
[109] Under the plan, military councils and brigade commanders had to register the name, ID number and marital status of each member with the defence ministry, which controlled the payment committee; they then presented the list of registered persons to the army administration, which stamped it; finally, they presented it to the military accounts office. The Libyan Central Bank made checks out to the brigade head. As a result, both the defence ministry and army were in possession of registered fighters' identifications. Crisis Group interviews, brigade commander, Tripoli, 1 May 2012; Southern LSF commander, 2 May 2012.

> They didn't register our weapons in the process. Not only that, it was up to the brigade commander to distribute the money and write up the list accounting for it. I kept copies in the event of later disputes. But the ministry did not request payment receipts.[110]

Amounts paid to individual brigades sometimes ran into millions of dollars. Double- and triple-dipping occurred in some instances, while in others brigades received nothing.[111] This prompted violent, sometimes humiliating attacks on the NTC executive; disorganised and ill-disciplined brigades set up roadblocks and organised violent protests when young people did not receive their expected payment.[112] On 10 April, the whole program was put on hold, prompting further protests.[113]

Defence Minister Juweili quickly became dogged by accusations of regional favouritism. Domestic and international observers alike alleged he was acting in Zintan's interests rather than those of the nation.[114] Moreover, army officers

within his ministry resented him, not only for his perceived Zintani bias and the political nature of his appointment, but also because they were not used to and disliked coming under civilian authority.[115] By January 2012, pressure on Juweili to resign reached new heights;[116] on 13 February 2012, the NTC passed Law no. 11, placing much operational decision-making authority under the armed forces chief of staff, thereby narrowing Juweili's remit.[117]

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[110] Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Tripoli, 1 May 2012.

[111] Government documents listing brigades and state payouts viewed by Crisis Group, Tripoli, 29 July 2012. A commander said: "I have heard reports of brigade commanders absconding with the check intended for the whole brigade". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 2 May 2012.

[112] Armed protests against the executive and local authorities occurred with alarming regularity. In March, a *New York Times* journalist witnessed a Suq al-Jum'a brigade attacking a registration and payment centre in Hadhba, Tripoli, to protest the slow delivery of payments. Crisis Group interview, March 2012; see also David Kirkpatrick, "Libya's militias turn to politics, a volatile mix", *The New York Times*, 2 April 2012. In April, another armed group broke into his office and slapped the prime minister in the face. On 8 May, a Yafrani armed group opened fire outside the prime minister's office. Crisis Group interview, official in prime minister's office, 10 May 2012; see also "Several killed in shooting near PM's compound", Reuters, 8 May 2012. In fact police units were equally prone to carry out armed protests against the executive during the same period; in February, while in Benghazi, the prime minister was surrounded by an armed group of police protesting lack of payment and firing in the air. Crisis group interviews, Benghazi residents, Benghazi, February 2012.

[113] Armed groups attacked NTC offices (see "Former rebels attack after Libya stops cash handouts", Agence France-Presse, 10 April 2012), and several youth from western mountains brigades erected roadblocks on a highway bypass, prompting the Zintan military council to "come down and knock some sense into them". Crisis Group interview, Zintan military council head, Zintan, 9 April 2012. Armed groups painted graffiti on bank façades saying "We want our 2400LD" (just over €1,500). Crisis Group observations, Qurji, Tripoli, 15 April 2012.

[114] Crisis Group interviews, international observer, Tripoli, 13 May 2012; Benghazi activist, 4 February 2012; official in prime minister's office, 7 February 2012. Reasons for this perception included his assigning lucrative positions at borders and

ports to Zintan-run brigades and Zintani defence officials. For example, Ras Jdeir – the land crossing with Tunisia and one of Libya's busiest – was assigned to Mokhtar al-Fernana, a high-ranking Zintani defence ministry official who had worked with Juweili in March 2012; Fernana subsequently was rejected by local Zuwaran militias. Tripoli International Airport remained under the control of brigades led by the Zintani commander Mokhtar al-Akhdar until April 2012. Crisis Group interviews, military council head, Zuwara, 13 May 2012; brigade commander, Zintan, 22 April 2012. Another key reason was Juweili's visit to Bani Walid on 25 January 2012, during which he was criticised for appearing alongside local notables who were wanted by rebels for allegedly having fought (and incited others to fight) on the regime's side during the conflict. He also officially recognised the armed group that had risen against the rebels' local and military councils. Authorisation viewed by Crisis Group, Bani Walid, 26 January 2012. A government official claimed: "On that trip, he said to the Bani Walid 'I am asking you to join the new Libya not as a defence minister, but as a Zintani'". That statement, if accurate, likely reflected ongoing Zintani mediation efforts, as well as the special *khut al-jadd* (literally "brother of the [same] grandfather") relationship between Zintan and Bani Walid. According to senior Bani Walid notables, the special relationship dates back to the initial migration of Zintan families to the area and the support Bani Walid residents extended to them at the time. The agreement barred mutual attacks and allowed the two towns to assist each other when involved in communal disputes. Its power was so great that Zintan refused to attack Bani Walid throughout the 2011 conflict. However, the defence minister's reference to his role as a Zintani rather than a Libyan could easily have been misconstrued by some Libyans as indicating a regional bias. Crisis Group interviews, Bani Walid, 23-27 February 2012; military council head, Zintan, 25 March 2012; prime minister's office, Tripoli, 30 January 2012.

[115] Juweili was the former head of Zintan's military council and coordinated its revolutionary brigades during the armed conflict. His appointment, like that of the Misratan interior minister, Fawzi Abdul Aal, was widely seen as designed to placate regional constituencies – in his case, Zintani brigades which, at the time, were heavily mobilised in Tripoli and the western areas and controlled the western oil fields. Crisis Group interviews, official in prime minister's office, Tripoli, 30 January 2012, 10 May 2012; military council head, Zintan, 25 March 2012.

[116] Crisis Group interviews, official in prime minister's office, Tripoli, 1 February 2012.

[117] See NTC Law 11/2012. "Although Law 11 stipulates that the defence minister has overall responsibility for military matters in Libya, effective decision-making powers are vested in the chief of staff, who is 'directly responsible for the technical

The NTC also encouraged Siddiq Mabrouk, Juweili's deputy, to take responsibility for border security and critical national infrastructure – two areas where Zintani brigades were seen to exert undue control – out of Juweili's hands.[118] Mabrouk made efforts to organise various armed groups and military councils into a border guard but with minimal tangible impact.[119] Revolutionary brigades believed both that the state lacked the ability to provide border security and that its attempt to do so was a naked power

grab.[120] Consequently, they rebuffed the state's endeavours in this respect.[121]

Juweili's responsibility was significantly curbed for the remainder of his tenure. He sought to retain some of his authority by cultivating relations with the civilian revolutionary coalitions whence he came. In April 2012 he gave official sanction to the Libyan Shield Forces (LSF), the parallel military structure founded by the revolutionaries; though they nominally fell under the chief of staff's authority for use as an auxiliary, civilian volunteer force, in reality they were independent of the army. The revolutionaries intended to employ the LSF to carry out their self-appointed functions of protecting strategic infrastructure and monitoring conflict zones.

In the tug-of-war between Manqoush and Juweili, the chief of staff was aided by the lack of clarity in the defence minister's and government's authority over the army; as a result, he effectively bypassed the minister. Even so, he still had to contend with an enfeebled and dysfunctional army and, with that in mind, set out to "reshuffle and try to

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aspects of organising, preparing, training, leading, managing and maintaining the combat readiness of the Libyan armed forces'". George Grant, "Defence Minister Juweili launches scathing attack on NTC", *Libya Herald*, 27 June 2012. See also, notes from a television interview with the defence minister, op. cit.

[118] Notes from a television interview with the defence minister, op. cit. There appears to have been some conflict between the NTC-appointed executive, who took a decision to transfer authority over borders to Manqoush, and the NTC, which did not ratify this decision.

[119] Revolutionary brigades had seized strategic ports and infrastructure during the 2011 conflict; with the collapse of the army and police, their capture was unopposed. In a few cases the interior ministry brought customs authorities back to work, but better-armed revolutionary brigades took over the custom duties at the majority of border crossings and ports. Large swathes of the southern border came under the control of Tebu forces that acted in part out of fear that rival communities would seek to "cleanse" the region of Tebu, notably in the wake of communal conflicts in Sebha and Kufra. There was virtually no coordination or cooperation between customs authorities and revolutionary brigades; when Deputy Defence Minister Siddiq Mabrouk sought to assert control over the disparate brigades operating at the borders, he made little headway. Crisis Group interviews, military council and border guard units, Murzuq, 8 May 2012; military council, Zuwara, 13 May 2012; border guard unit, Zuwara, 20 April 2012; Western defence official, Tripoli, 11 May 2012; foreign security officials, Tripoli, 12 August 2012. See also the detailed border management needs assessment report carried out by the European Union, "Integrated Border Management Needs Assessment for Libya", Tripoli, 31 May 2012. An attempt to place border guard duties under the chief of staff of the armed forces' direct authority also failed. Addressing the GNC on 26 August 2012, the prime minister said that the government's decree to that effect was never implemented because "a force, greater than the government" opposed the change. Urged by the GNC speaker to identify that force, al-Keeb declined to elaborate.

[120] The head of Zintan's military council, defending Zintan's control of Tripoli International Airport in March 2012, listed towns that had grabbed significant border crossings and ports: "Suq al-Jum'a controls Mitiga airport, and no one is asking them to leave. Zuwarans control Ras Jdeir, with the interior ministry controlling it in name only. Nalut controls the border crossing at Wazin. Misrata controls its own air and sea ports. This is the real game we are in". Crisis Group interview, Zintan, 25 March 2012.

[121] The interior ministry made multiple attempts to replace armed groups guarding and patrolling the borders, to no avail, while along the borders the army was nowhere to be seen. At best, customs authorities carried out their jobs alongside unofficial armed groups. See "Integrated Border Management Needs Assessment for Libya", EU, op. cit. For example, Ras Jdeir, the main Tunisia border crossing, was controlled by Zuwaran forces registered under the interior ministry, despite multiple attempts to replace them with police, army units or both. In April 2012, after months of failed discussions, the interior ministry was able to negotiate the withdrawal of Zintani forces from Tripoli International Airport, only subsequently to award control of the airport to a Misratan revolutionary brigade registered with the interior ministry. The defence ministry appears to have made a gambit to control at least some posts; on 26 March, Juweili authorised Mokhtar al-Fernana, a fellow Zintani and army officer within the ministry, to assert "control over the Ras Jdeir border crossing … and the customs and duties which it generates". Upon learning of this, Zuwaran local authorities swiftly reacted. A Zuwara council member said, "we kicked al-Fernana out. He was one of the only Zintani leaders not to secure his own port, and he was trying to manoeuvre". Crisis Group interview, Zuwara, 22 April 2012; documents shown to Crisis Group by Zuwaran activists, 13 May 2012; also Crisis Group interview, Zuwaran government official, Tripoli, 10 May 2012.

bring together into battalions remains of the old army".[122] At the core of his effort were Benghazi-based army units, special forces and the navy and air force, most of whom had defected in the first week of the revolution.[123] In early April, the government declared certain conflict areas military zones and placed them under army control, with Manqoush assigning army commanders to each.[124]

However, despite appearances and the army's best efforts to present an image of authority, these military zones never genuinely came under the control of a single force. Instead, as mentioned, a variety of heavily-armed actors (military councils as well as civilian and armed groups) vied for influence. Among them, army officers typically were the weakest and least-equipped. Having lost much of its capacity, with a large amount of weapons in civilian and revolutionary brigades' hands, the army had to shore up its own depleted stocks through various means, including by purchasing or borrowing them from rebel brigades and arms dealers on the black market.[125] Strategic infrastructure, oil fields and borders remained outside its control and morale palpably low.[126]

As a result, whenever military zones were imposed – which occurred only once all-out intercommunal conflict had broken out – Manqoush had to rely on revolutionary brigades, the only actors potentially capable of reining in warring communities. Like the defence minister, he developed pragmatic relations with the most prominent revolutionary leaders so he could count on their support in major communal conflicts or other violent disruptions, with the better-armed revolutionary brigades doing initial crisis response at army request. Under this arrangement, brigades nominally accepted Manqoush's authority while retaining

de facto autonomy.[127] This negotiated system was formalised in the relationship between the state and the Libyan Shield Forces. As with the SSC, it would be wrong to see the parallel structure as having emerged squarely against the central authorities' wishes. Rather, and although set up by revolutionary brigades outside the purview of the army and police services, the two in some ways were implicitly encouraged by the state and accepted as auxiliary forces without which the state simply could not secure the country.

C. REVOLUTIONARY COALITIONS AND THE LIBYAN SHIELD FORCES

Revolutionary brigades not only acted as a de facto army after Qadhafi's fall, they also intervened in communal conflicts.[128] Even as the NTC sought to bolster central state forces, the legacy of the revolution and the uncertain allegiances of many in the state bureaucracy, interior ministry and army undermined what little trust Libyans – and the NTC itself – had in them. A presidential adviser said, "I'm not telling revolutionaries to hand in their weapons – I'm telling them to *keep* them! We are in a very dangerous stage right now".[129] Far from being at odds with revolutionary brigades, some Libyans both within and close to the NTC felt they shared a common interest with those bodies. Like the central authorities, the principal coalitions of revolutionary fighters worried about the proliferation of armed groups, the military councils' uncertain loyalties and the recalcitrant bureaucracy. Some saw themselves as continuing the armed struggle by other means.

Over time, many of the loose networks of civilian brigades that sprung up during the conflict developed into more formal, institutionalised coalitions. This occurred primarily in the key rebel strongholds of Benghazi and Ajdabiya on the conflict's eastern front, as well as in Misrata and Zintan in the west. In the east, Fawzi Bukatf first established the Revolutionary Brigades Coalition (*Tajammu' Sirayat ath-Thuwwar*); likewise, various Misratan brigades

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[122] Crisis Group interview, former army officer, Tripoli, 13 May 2012.
[123] See Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit.
[124] On 1 April 2012, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, the head of the NTC, announced that Sebha was a military zone. See "Al-Kib visits Sebha", *Libya Herald*, 2 April 2012. On 16 June 2012, after a week of fighting between Zintan and neighbouring Mashashya towns, Manqoush declared that area a military zone. "Libya declares military zone in west to stop bloodshed", Agence France-Presse, 16 June 2012. Authorities likewise declared Kufra a military zone.
[125] Crisis Group interviews and observations, Sebha security forces and residents, Sebha, 6 May 2012.
[126] Crisis Group interviews, military council head, Zintan, 25 March 2012; army commander, Tripoli, May 2012. On 6 May 2012, the army in Sebha came under rocket attack from a Magarha armed group attempting to rescue a prisoner. Soldiers returned fire from within the base, not emerging for a full eight hours. "If our commander thinks he's so tough, why doesn't he go out there and fight them?", complained an army volunteer. Crisis Group interviews and observations, Sebha, 6 May 2012.

[127] This in itself was no minor achievement; previously, many revolutionary fighters rejected outright the army's authority, viewing it as the defeated remnants of Qadhafi's state. Crisis Group interviews, brigade commander, Benghazi, 18 February 2012; military council head, Zintan, 22 April 2012; Tripoli military council spokesman, Tripoli, March 2012.
[128] Revolutionary brigades performed other tasks designed to keep the state functioning, such as escorting planes that were carrying cash from Swiss banks to Libyan towns in order to re-liquidate banks undergoing severe cash shortages. Photographs shown to Crisis Group by brigade commander, May 2012.
[129] Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, February 2012. A Misratan commander likewise said, "It's the politicians who are telling the revolutionaries to keep their guns – not the commanders!" Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, April 2012.

coalesced into the Misrata Union of 17 February Revolutionaries (*Ittihad Thuwwar 17 Febrayir Misrata*).[130] The aim was to better unite and organise forces as rebels moved out of their cities of origin and closer to Tripoli and Sirte. Bukatf said, "in the early days, Misratans were fighting for Misrata and Zintanis for Zintan. By the end of May 2011, it was clear that we had to gather together coalitions of brigades. We couldn't fight well if we did not coordinate ourselves".[131]

This consolidation of revolutionary brigades continued after the formal end of hostilities on 23 October 2011. Brigade commanders began to meet regularly and liaise with other coalitions of revolutionary brigades. They implemented rotation systems for duties and patrols, made efforts to keep centralised records of their activities and registered as well as centrally stored their weapons, developing protocols to enable the quick mobilisation and deployment of forces when and where needed.[132] By January 2012, when Bani Walid residents ejected a pro-rebel brigade from their town, Misratan forces were able to mobilise 10,000 within five hours.[133]

It took western Libya longer to organise coalitions than it did easterners or Misratans, since the region fell in piecemeal fashion over eight months, resulting in more disparate and uncoordinated armed groups. By late 2011, Zintani forces had succeeded in forming a loose coalition of western mountain military councils.[134] In Tripoli, no single coalition emerged.[135] Abdul Hakim Belhaj's Tripoli Military Council[136] was intended to secure the capital and organise

Tripolitanian armed groups such as the Tripoli Brigades (*Liwa' Trablus*) and the mobilised youth of neighbourhoods like Suq al-Jum'a, but political and communal differences prevented unification. Its most successful effort was the establishment of the "National Guard", under Khalid ash-Sharif, a colleague of Belhaj's from the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG);[137] the Guard was intended to protect borders and key infrastructure and later became part of the revolutionary brigades' attempt to create a border guard force.

As brigades expanded operations across the country, the need arose for even better and greater coordination. This increased when communal conflicts broke out in February-April 2012, and the armed forces chief of staff called on the revolutionary coalitions to intervene and end the fighting.[138] Revolutionary coalitions were not well-designed for long-term mobilisation outside their home communities, being composed of civilian volunteers (despite the one-off payments handed out at first by the defence ministry) whose source of livelihoods typically was in their hometowns.[139] They also confronted "a problem of legitimacy".[140] With few exceptions, the revolutionaries made efforts to restore stability in step with local community notables; still, their intervention lacked legal and constitutional basis and risked being perceived as regionally biased. Integration into the army was not an alternative insofar as it remained under-equipped and widely distrusted by revolutionary brigades; this meant that brigades required a parallel system to enable their longer-term mobilisation.

The reaction, as seen, was to establish the Libyan Shield Forces, designed to compensate for the army's deficiencies and allow the revolutionary coalitions to deploy in military zones for extended periods.[141] The LSF repre-

[130] For the evolution of Misratan brigades, see McQuinn, "Capturing the Peace", op. cit.

[131] Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, 16 February 2012.

[132] Crisis Group interviews, brigade commanders, Misrata, October 2011-April 2012; brigade commanders, Benghazi, February 2012. See also McQuinn, "Capturing the Peace", op. cit. A foreign observer said, "I have seen warehouses of tens of thousands of weapons held in unmarked buildings in Misrata and Tripoli. The revolutionaries themselves are not mobilised but they are ready, once they receive the signal, to report to storehouses, collect weapons registered to them and mobilise extremely quickly". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 8 May 2012.

[133] See McQuinn, "Capturing the Peace", op. cit.

[134] An earlier version of this coalition was Mokhtar al-Fernana's Western Military Command, which coordinated the rebel western mountains campaign with NATO during the conflict. Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit. After the cessation of hostilities on 23 October 2011, however, it essentially was defunct.

[135] Tripoli's groups were heavily influenced by leaders of the military wing of the August 2011 uprising in the city. Some were former members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, including the head of the military council, Abdul Hakim Belhaj. The head of the Tripoli Brigades, Hisham Buhajar, also helped coordinate military aspects of the uprising.

[136] See Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit.

[137] Belhaj had been a leader of the LIFG, and Khalid ash-Sharif was a LIFG deputy commander.

[138] The first major communal conflict to confront Manqoush occurred in Bani Walid in late January; the force sent in in response was mostly made up of Tripoli coalition groups, the National Guard and Tripoli military council. Crisis Group observations, Bani Walid and surroundings, 30 January 2012. In February, the ceasefire in Kufra was implemented by the Revolutionary Brigades Coalition, with the army entering three weeks after the ceasefire was imposed. Crisis Group interview, Revolutionary Brigades Coalition, Benghazi, 18 February 2012.

[139] The brigades' strong roots in their communities mean that in many cases members can demobilise when home; conversely, they can be called up by brigades or military councils at short notice when deemed necessary to protect local interests. Such a swift mobilisation capacity is both advantageous to local communities and a threat to long-term national stability.

[140] Crisis Group interview, southern revolutionary brigade commander, Sebha, 2 May 2012.

[141] See the LSF homepage at www.facebook.com/LibyaShield Forces.

sented essentially the same brigades that participated in revolutionary coalitions deployed to areas of communal conflict; now, however, they enjoyed formal defence ministry authorisation and nominally answered to the armed forces' chief of staff, whose orders were a necessary prerequisite for deployment. Fighters were assigned to the LSF from revolutionary coalitions for periods of around a month; regional military councils and revolutionary coalitions decided together which towns would dispatch volunteers.[142] In this sense, the LSF in many ways resembled a cross between a reserve force and an army auxiliary unit.

The first LSF unit was set up in March 2012 in Kufra by Defence Minister Juweili and Fawzi Bukatf, commander of the Revolutionary Battalions Coalition, four weeks after the outbreak of fighting in the town. Misratan units created what is sometimes referred to as the "Saharan Libyan Shield", which imposed the ceasefire in Sebha in early April. Other LSF units followed, bringing together revolutionary brigades in the western mountains, Sebha and central regions.[143] The LSF was publicly unveiled through a series of national conferences, beginning with a major one in Misrata in April 2012 attended by the prime minister, defence minister and armed forces chief of staff. By May, it had become a systematised, nationwide – and entirely parallel – defence force that both looked and acted very much like an auxiliary national army and was awarded year-long contracts by the defence ministry.[144] In May, its leadership was formalised as a High Commission.[145]

Revolutionary coalitions also made efforts to have a more effective and unified political voice.[146] The latest materialised in July in the creation of the Supreme Council of Revolutionaries, headed by Abdul Majid al-Kikli.[147] Although from vastly different backgrounds and espousing diverse political views, these leaders were united in the conviction that they were "the real revolutionaries", distinct from those who joined the military councils and other armed groups after Tripoli's fall.[148] Echoing sentiments shared by many of his colleagues, a Zintani commander said, "those of us who were at the forefront of this revolution know each other, whether we were fighting or providing logistics. We know our respective records".[149] Their self-proclaimed goal – made more urgent by the difficulties experienced by the NTC in centralising power – was to "protect the values of the revolution".[150] In March, a spokesman for the Tripoli Military Council said:

> There is a dangerous feeling among real revolutionaries – those who saw their friends and colleagues dying in front of them – that their sacrifices were for naught and that the revolution hasn't achieved its aims. Let's

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[142] "Each time a problem arises, we communicate with each other, with each town sending their own guys to the conflict area. That's not facilitated or organised by the government". Crisis Group interview, Suq al-Jum'a reconciliation council member, 3 April 2012. Similar sentiments were echoed by military and local councils across western Libya.

[143] Zintani commanders claim that their Shield unit arose of their own initiative. "The western Libyan Shield was a Zintani initiative. It contains brigades selected from 25 military councils across the Western Mountains, and its commanders also come from across the area – my deputy is from Zuwara, for example. We presented the idea to the defence ministry, which agreed and signed off on it". Crisis Group interview, LSF commander, Zintan, 19 April 2012. This account could not be independently verified, though it certainly is true that Zintani commanders maintained a close relationship with Osama Juweili, himself the former head of Zintan's military council. LSF fighters stationed on the front line between Rejdalin and Zuwara confirmed the structure and make-up of the western LSF unit. Crisis Group interviews, 21 April 2012.

[144] Senior commanders themselves were quick to make the comparison. A senior eastern commander of a revolutionary coalition that later joined the LSF explained: "We are the army, actually". Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, 16 February 2012. The head of Zuwara's military council and former deputy of the western LSF unit said, "the Shields have a contract for one year signed with Osama Juweili at a conference in Sabratha". Crisis

Group interview, Zuwara, 13 May 2012. Other conferences devoted to the development of the LSF occurred in May in Tajura, Sabratha and Benghazi.

[145] Crisis Group interview, head of Zuwara military council, 13 May 2012.

[146] Efforts to bring revolutionaries together on a national level and articulate collective political views began soon after the fall of Tripoli, with the convening of the Union of Revolutionary Brigades in Misrata on 23 September. See Crisis Group Report, *Holding Libya Together*, op. cit. Attempts to form a National Revolutionary Council were underway by February 2012 but were hobbled by deep suspicions among fighters from western Libya. Crisis Group interview, senior coalition commander, Benghazi, 18 February 2012.

[147] See "Al-I'lan Rasmiyyan 'an Ta'sis al-Majlis al-A'la lil-Thuwwar", *Quryna al-Jadida* newspaper, 30 July 2012.

[148] Some among the more senior revolutionary leadership were civilians in professions and sectors such as medicine, energy, or commerce; others were former military officers from the army or air force. Still others had been political exiles during the years of Qadhafi's rule and had joined opposition groups like the National Front for the Salvation of Libya, the Muslim Brotherhood or the LIFG. Their political and ideological orientation is diverse and impossible to generalise on a political, regional or tribal basis. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli military council spokesman, Tripoli, 25 March 2012.

[149] Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Sebha, 8 May 2012.

[150] The Tripoli military council spokesman said, "Yesterday (24 March) I came back from Benghazi where a meeting was held among revolutionary leaders from different parts of Libya – Benghazi, Tripoli, Misrata, Derna, Bayda, most areas of the east and the western mountains. They decided to form a union, which is to be announced in Misrata on 9 April. The number one goal of this union is to protect the revolution". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 25 March 2012.

be honest. The majority of real revolutionaries in Libya feel that this revolution is about to be hijacked, or to be lost.[151]

The substance of these oft-cited values was far from clear or straightforward, however, beyond vague loyalty to the revolution, a desire for fundamental overhaul of the state and fear of political backsliding. Asked to define such values, a commander launched into an emotional account of a speech delivered at the Misrata conference by a young double amputee who beseeched his leaders to bring about the Libya for which he had fought.[152] At its heart lay deep suspicion of the state institutions that the NTC was attempting to build. The Tripoli military council spokesman said, "to have people who used to be in power still in the driving seat represents a failure of this revolution".[153] In the words of the head of Zintan's military council:

> Right now, the government is putting those who lost on an equal footing with the victors. Those who changed their colours when Qadhafi fell are harder to deal with and to trust. At least those who stood with Qadhafi until the end had a position, whereas these others simply move to where power lies.[154]

The revolutionary brigades' leadership expressed an abstract yearning for a fundamental remodelling of the state. Some went further, worrying about the long-term educational deficit and spoke of the need for a "cultural revolution".[155] One member said: "The best example for Libya to follow is West Germany after World War 2. West Germany dismantled every part of the state that was created by Hitler. East Germany didn't".[156]

Particularly in the western part of the country,[157] revolutionaries displayed antipathy towards the army and police force for reasons that were not merely political but related also to deeper intercommunal tensions and rivalries among towns.[158] A western revolutionary commander and former military officer asserted:

> Frankly, we do not want or trust the army. [Chief of Staff] Manqoush is not going about reorganising the army in the right way. He needs to start from scratch, with a new force and new mentality. I have advised Juweili and Manqoush many times on what needs to be done. The first step is to retire everyone who was not with the 17 February revolutionary forces. Secondly, select from those who remain the best officers for specialised positions. Thirdly, initiate a comprehensive plan to overhaul the army, ending its dependence on outdated Russian technology and revamping military education and training.[159]

Ultimately, the establishment of the LSF and the conferences that supported them were part of a larger political project. Over time, revolutionary leaders formed working committees to oversee all aspects of governmental activity. As they saw it, the goal was not to undermine the election and constitutional process but rather, in the words of a Tripoli military council member, "to watch and observe how things are going and, if necessary, move in to protect this revolution from going astray".[160] Some went so far as to try to join the new political system; at an April 2012 gathering in Misrata, several asked whether they should stand for political office, and some conference attendees registered as parliamentary candidates.[161]

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[151] Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, Tripoli military council spokesman, 25 March 2012.
[152] A brigade commander recounted: "When we talked of our aims and objectives at the conference, a wounded fighter came up to the platform. He had lost both his legs in the fighting. He addressed us, saying 'I lost my legs for the sake of Libya. Now, you must give me Libya or give me my legs'. Many in the room were crying at that point". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 8 May 2012.
[153] Crisis Group interview, Tripoli military council spokesman, Tripoli, 25 March 2012. Another Tripoli military council member added: "The true revolutionaries will not allow this to happen, because we have sacrificed in the thousands. Why would we do all that only to see the very same people wielding power?" Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, April 2012.
[154] Crisis Group interview, head of military council, Zintan, 25 March 2012.
[155] A brigade commander said, "we need to have a cultural revolution, not with guns, but with education". Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Sebha, 8 May 2012.
[156] Ibid. Whether or not this is an accurate reading of German history, his point was that a thorough remake of all state institutions was necessary.

[157] Tensions were most pronounced in the west. An eastern commander said, "the dregs of the former regime are a pretty clear issue for us in the east, because anyone associated with the old regime fled the east in the early days. So the east is quieter, calmer. We think we can cooperate with Manqoush and the army". Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, 16 February 2012.
[158] The eastern coalition commander said, "in the west, they were fighting each other; you had communities such as the Warshfana or Bani Walid that supported Qadhafi's forces. The people in the west think it will take a few years before things calm down". Ibid. Government officials from Zuwara and the head of the Zuwaran military council underscored this analysis. Both said that a key reason for their distrust of the army and police was the large number of officers in both organisations from their neighbours, the Ajalat, as well as from Rijdalin and Jmail, with whom they were then in conflict. During the uprising, officers from those communities policed Zuwara on the regime's behalf.
[159] Crisis Group interview, military council head, Zuwara, 13 May 2012.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Crisis Group interview, revolutionary commander and electoral candidate, Sebha, 8 May 2012.

IV. IMPLEMENTING CEASEFIRES

In the gap between the fall of Tripoli and the 23 November 2011 formation of the interim government, a pattern emerged in which commanders from one of the larger, more neutral coalitions of revolutionary brigades stepped in to separate local warring parties.[162] Due to the involvement of revolutionary brigades in negotiation, the line separating mediation from military operations often was blurred. In the Zuwara conflict, Misrata's Mersa brigade came into the picture after Zuwaran brigades entered and raided neighbouring Rijdalin and Jmail on 4 October.[163] Zintani forces did likewise when fighting broke out on 14 November between the coastal city of Zawiya and its inland neighbours. Such conciliatory behaviour was driven by concern that newly-militarised towns could quickly relapse into armed conflict. The head of Zintan's military council said:

> The next war in Libya, if it happens, won't be between pro-Qadhafi and anti-Qadhafi ideologies, but among communities. So you've got to work hard to maintain harmony. Across the western area, it's not like we as Zintan go and impose ourselves militarily on these places. They call us; they know we can be a balancing force in mediating local issues. These are also tribal traditions; when you find your brothers in need and you have the power to help, you don't ignore them.[164]

In many ways, formation of the LSF allowed revolutionary coalitions to continue their efforts – insofar as major coalitions invariably determined the make-up of LSF units in their respective areas – albeit in a more organised manner, sanctioned by the government and chief of staff. Thus, the LSF helped bring about ceasefires in the violent communal conflicts that erupted between February and April 2012. Upon orders from the armed forces chief of staff, the LSF physically interposed themselves between warring communities and provided security to local notables who entered embattled neighbourhoods in order to negotiate with armed groups.[165]

As a military force, the LSF faced huge impediments, plagued by divided loyalties and lack of discipline. Its efforts in Zuwara were particularly chaotic; the deputy commander was suspended, since he was also the head of the Zuwara military council that was engaged in the fighting; communications broke down between LSF and Zuwaran fighters over ceasefire terms;[166] and, with the head of Zuwara's military council unable to control his brigades the LSF came under such heavy fire that it had to withdraw.[167] As a result, ceasefires sometimes were made possible by the sheer weight of losses and combat fatigue suffered by one side or the other. The southern LSF commander said of the Sebha ceasefire, "the fighting only stopped when they tired of killing each other".[168]

Moreover, although some LSF commanders belonged to respected nearby communities and became involved in mediation efforts, this was not always the case and, even when it was, yielded mixed results.[169] For these reasons,

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[162] Usually one of the brigade coalitions belonging to either Zintan's military council or the Misratan Union of Revolutionaries would step in to stop the bloodshed.

[163] Crisis Group interviews, local notables, Rijdalin, 20 April 2012; Zuwara, 20 April 2012. Both sides expressed satisfaction with Misrata's conduct in imposing the ceasefire.

[164] Crisis Group interview, military council head, Zintan, 25 March 2012.

[165] Crisis Group interviews, commanders in western and southern LSF, Misrata and Benghazi-based brigades, local and military councils in Suq al-Jum'a, Sebha, Zuwara, Rijdalin, Bani Walid and foreign observers in Tripoli, Benghazi, Misrata, Zuwara, Bani Walid and Sebha, January-May 2012. In Sebha,

Misratan brigades "physically stood in the firing line between Awlad Suleyman and Tebu neighbourhoods, pointing their guns at the Awlad Suleyman to make them stop". Crisis Group interview, foreign observer eyewitness, Tripoli, 12 May 2012. The western LSF unit and some Zintani battalions were among the first to arrive at the scene of renewed fighting among Zuwara, Rijdalin and Jmail; they also coordinated the prisoner handover and helped impose the ceasefire. Crisis Group interviews, military council head, Zintan, 25 March 2012; Rijdalin and Zuwara residents, Zuwara, Rijdalin, 20 April 2012.

[166] The LSF commander, Abu Dirbala, said, "I personally delivered the 29 Zuwaran revolutionaries who had been held and beaten in Jmail and Rijdalin back to Zuwara to resolve the dispute between the two towns. But as soon as we delivered them, Zuwara attacked. We blocked their entry into Jmail and Rijdalin but they would fire over our heads. The pressure was intense; some of my men were practically begging me to give the order to attack. Eventually we had to withdraw". Crisis Group interview, Zintan, 22 April 2012.

[167] "When their friends and colleagues saw the prisoners had been beaten and released without their cars and guns, they retaliated immediately, and I couldn't control their retaliation. It took us three days to stop them provoking Jmail and Rijdalin and being provoked". Crisis Group interview, head of military council, Zuwara, 13 May 2012.

[168] Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 1 May 2012. The head of Zuwara's military council also said that exhaustion and losses on the Zuwaran side were the main motivator for its ceasefire. Crisis Group interview, Zuwara, 13 May 2012.

[169] In many cases revolutionary coalition leaders and LSF commanders had close relations, predating the conflict, with local notables from the areas in which they operated. For example, the notable who hosted Sebha's reconciliation negotiations said of the commander of the southern LSF unit, who attended peace talks between Tebu and Awlad Suleyman, "he is one of the most respected men in Sebha"; some Tebu residents – who were otherwise highly suspicious of the allegiance of most military commanders – confirmed this. Crisis Group interviews, 2 May 2012. Rijdalini and Jmaili local and military council heads also

revolutionary brigades tended to work in tandem with local notables. Tripoli's local council and the chief mufti, Sheikh Sadiq al-Gharyani, mediated in Zawiya.[170] In like manner, after the brief battle between the Suq al-Jum'a's brigade and Bani Walid on 24 November, Zintani notables and revolutionary commanders engaged in reconciliation talks with Bani Walid over a two-month period with the aim of reaching agreement regarding who would control the local and military councils.[171]

Once hostilities ended, sustaining the ceasefires was complicated by the fragmented military and political environment. In theory, the chief of staff called in the LSF to impose a ceasefire; the army in theory was then to step in and administer a military zone. Reality was far different. First, the army almost invariably was compelled to adopt a less assertive posture, hampered by lower morale, insufficient manpower and a shortage in supplies.[172] Secondly, the LSF often stayed on along with the army, the two coexisting within the same operational space. They did so nominally under Manqoush's orders but with little cooperation or communication with army units on the ground, whom they distrusted; their daily operations were beyond the control of the armed forces chief of staff.[173]

The outcome was inefficiency and, oftentimes, an inability to maintain the peace. In Sebha, the LSF – led by a respected local Sebhawi – took over the town's military base, leaving the army to make do with a converted *Quranic* recitation school.[174] The Sebha military zone commander complained bitterly, blaming Defence Minister Juweili for authorising the LSF and for his inability to control border guard units operating in nearby oil fields and the southern border:

> I honestly do not know and cannot explain what on earth Juweili is doing. He is allowing these forces to operate and making no effort to centralise them under one power. I don't know what game he is playing.[175]

To make up for deficiencies, local commanders tended to build alliances with forces on the ground which, in turn, further complicated the picture. In Sebha, for example, ceasefire implementation was in the hands of an army unit primarily made up of special forces (a Benghazi-based unit). Lacking in manpower, they enlisted the support of volunteers from local Warfalla and Awlad Suleyman armed groups; short on equipment, they had to borrow cars and weapons from local actors who had acquired them on the black market during the 2011 uprising.[176] Some even scavenged for scrap metal to use as mounts for 14.5mm guns.[177]

Implications could be graver. The Tebu's faith in the army's neutrality was wholly undermined by the sight of local forces working with it – some of whom, they claimed, had been fighting them in early April 2012. A Tebu local coun-

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expressed satisfaction with the role played by the western LSF unit as well as its predecessor, the Misratan Mersa brigade. Crisis Group interviews, Bani Walid notables, residents and armed groups, 24-28 February 2012. Still, LSF commanders who attempted to act as mediators were not always trusted. The head of the Sebha local council described tensions that arose when Misrata's LSF unit imposed the ceasefire. Reflecting in part suspicions emanating from Misratans' treatment of Tawergha and its residents, he said, "Misratans aren't welcome here". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 5 May 2012.

[170] The Tripoli local council, supported by Zintani armed groups, led mediation efforts between Warshafana and Zawiya after an armed group from the Warshfana community took over a major military base in Janzur (on the outskirts of Tripoli, some 30km east of Zawiya). Pro-revolutionary armed groups from Zawiya had been extending their checkpoints to areas adjoining the base and resented their Warshfana neighbours, who had widely served in the former regime's army and police and had benefited from regime policies. Crisis Group telephone interviews, local journalist, 20 November 2011, 10 July 2012.

[171] Zintani notables also were involved in mediation in the September 2011 fighting in Ghadames between Tuareg and Ghadames residents, described above; in the Zuwara conflict in April; and in the Tawergha negotiations. Jadu, another western mountain town that rose up early against Qadhafi, similarly played a strong role in mediation, particularly in Ghadames and Bani Walid.

[172] Crisis Group interview, head of local council, Sebha, 5 May 2012. This assessment was corroborated by local councils in Zuwara and Rijdalin as well as by residents of Kufra.

[173] Crisis group interviews, LSF commanders, Zintan, 22 April 2012; Sebha, 1 May 2012; Tripoli, 18 July 2012; army commander, Sebha, 5 May 2012.

[174] The school in question had no air conditioning and special forces commanders had to make due with little more than mattresses on the floor. "Weapons, equipment, structures, compounds – we just don't have them", said the base commander. Crisis Group interviews and observations at LSF base and army base, Sebha, 4-8 May 2012.

[175] Crisis Group interview, army commander, Sebha, 5 May 2012.

[176] A resident of Sebha who volunteered with the army said, "when the army came in after the April fighting, I handed them my 14.5 mm gun, but I still own it – I'm only lending it to the army". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 4 May 2012.

[177] A member of a private armed group in Sebha said, "I just found three people from Tripoli on my property. They were scavenging for scrap metal to fabricate a stand for their 14.5mm anti-aircraft gun. I took pity on them and gave them a spare one I had been keeping for free – they were so happy". Army recruits chafed at the thousands of dinars that were handed out to civilians claiming to be revolutionaries, while they kept drawing their more meagre state salaries. "Why don't they pay 1,500 a month [€900] to the army forces, not the measly few hundreds they are getting?" asked a volunteer. The army commander for the southern region was furious, explaining: "We need high quality weapons, radar, night vision goggles. NATO was willing to place special forces commanders in our operations centres during the conflict. How can they be so neglectful of us now, at this critical time?" Crisis Group interviews, Sebha, 1-5 May 2012.

cillor said, "we are happy that Benghazi is here" – tellingly referring to the special forces by their city of origin – "but we know they are only here temporarily". His fear was that rival local forces would then take the reins.[178] A Tebu police officer and local council deputy added: "The Awlad Suleyman are manoeuvring behind the ceasefire lines imposed by the army. We are thinking about how to position our own forces in response".[179] The Tebu were not alone in expressing worry; fighters in the southern LSF likewise called attention to the army's inability to implement the ceasefire.[180] The army commander in charge of the Sebha military zone shared that lack of confidence: "As things stand, it is entirely possible that after the army leaves the area, the Awlad Suleyman military councils could reassert themselves".[181]

The adverse consequences of the army's and LSF's attempts to police communities with local support were most in evidence in Kufra. After local notables negotiated a cessation of hostilities, and the Benghazi-based Revolutionary Brigades Coalition kept the warring sides apart, the army arrived three weeks later to administer the ceasefire. Soon after, in early March, Defence Minister Juweili arranged the deployment of a division of the Revolutionary Brigades Coalition; this was to become one of the first LSF units. With no independent police force, the LSF unit became embroiled in actively policing the town, intervening in spats and thefts between the Tebu and Zway communities and arresting those responsible.[182] Tebu residents saw it as cooperating with local Zway armed groups,

leading them to lose all confidence in the LSF.[183] Meanwhile the army, potentially a neutral arbiter, remained out of town.

The LSF was tarnished by ill-discipline and the reputation of its commander, Wisam al-Hameed, said to be hot-headed.[184] When the LSF arrested a Tebu man on 20 April in a dispute with the Zway, Tebu forces surrounded the school building in which the LSF was based, and the LSF soon was firing directly on them. Though notables eventually negotiated a further ceasefire and Wisam was replaced, the absence of an independent police force – neither the regular police nor the SSC were willing to deploy there, and none had sufficient local recruits – meant it was only a matter of time before the LSF once again became drawn into fighting. On 10 June, another LSF attempt to detain a Tebu man provoked a new round of hostilities.[185]

Finally, across Kufra, Sebha and Zuwara, commercial interests in trafficking did much to exacerbate conflict and gave those border communities less incentive to work with – and more reason to suspect – the army and the LSF. As with the Tebu military leader Abdul Majid Issa's attempt to control the borders near Kufra, competing initiatives from local military councils, revolutionary coalitions and the defence ministry to control crossings and ports in Zuwara and Sebha made the ceasefires more tentative and fragile. The border guard itself was perhaps even more fragmented and prone to ill-discipline than the LSF, with excessive power held by unit commanders who drew support from their own communities; consequently its activities fuelled the communal tensions that led to conflict. Their actions in Zuwara in March 2012, for example, may have directly contributed to the outbreak of conflict there.[186]

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[178] Crisis Group interview, local councillor, Sebha, 30 April 2012.

[179] Crisis Group interview, police officer, Sebha, 30 April 2012. A Tebu local councillor reiterated the point, saying, "there is no one to look at how the ceasefire is being implemented. The army is too close to the Awlad Suleyman brigades and is stopping journalists here from working independently". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 30 April 2012.

[180] The LSF commander in Sebha, Ahmed al-Hosnawi, said, "part of the problem is that there are parties incapable of fully carrying out implementation – no follow-up committees or monitoring bodies. For example, by now the army was supposed to have taken over certain areas. They haven't. There hasn't been any move to collect weapons or take over the bases. But they do appear to be affiliating closely with the Awlad Suleyman". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 1 May 2012.

[181] Crisis Group interview, army commander in charge of Sebha, Sebha, May 2012.

[182] Crisis Group interview, Revolutionary Brigades Coalition commander, Tripoli, 10 July 2012. Though the original deployment of the Revolutionary Brigades Coalition was coordinated with Chief of Staff Manqoush, the subsequent creation of the first LSF unit there appears to have been authorised by the defence minister. With relations and lines of command between the Coalition, Manqoush and Juweili at best fluid at the time, the precise arrangements remained unclear. Crisis Group interviews, army and brigade commanders and government officials, Tripoli, July and August 2012.

[183] Crisis Group interviews, Kufra resident, Tripoli, 25 April 2012; Tebu political leader, Tripoli, 26 April 2012.

[184] Crisis Group interview, Revolutionary Brigades Coalition commander, Tripoli, 10 July 2012.

[185] Likewise, in Sebha, attempts by the army and LSF to arrest locals triggered conflicts with local communities, albeit on a smaller scale. The army's arrest of a Megraha resident prompted a daylong attack on the army base by a Megraha armed group attempting to free him. Crisis Group observations, Sebha, 6 May 2012.

[186] In the lead-up to the fighting in Zuwara, a border guard unit made up of Zawiyan, Zuwaran and Naluti revolutionary brigades was formed in late March 2012. It was surrounded at al-Assa by armed groups from the neighbouring towns of Rijdalin and Jmail while attempting to control "their" border territory. Rijdalin and Jmail then seized the 29 Zuwaran members of the border guard, setting off the chain of events that resulted in three days of heavy shelling between the towns in early April. Crisis Group interviews, commander of border guard unit, Zuwara, 22 April 2012; Rijdalini notables, Rijdalin, 22 April 2012.

V. UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS
IN THE WEST

Mutual suspicion among the LSF, the army and various border guard units led to competition, alliance-building with local armed groups and parallel chains of command in border areas, but this rarely triggered direct confrontation. Strong enough only to produce parallel institutions, their differences and rivalry did not reach a level that made cooperation impossible or prompted large-scale armed strife. Reality was different in and around the western and central areas of Bani Walid, Tarhuna and Sirte. There, tensions between serving and former army officers as well as the communities from which they hailed on the one hand, and revolutionary brigades on the other, prompted dangerous armed standoffs that periodically erupted into armed conflict.

Bani Walid long had been a sore spot for the revolutionary coalitions. In the waning days of the conflict in August and September 2011, as rebels advanced toward Tripoli, remnants of Qadhafi's armed forces fled toward Tarhuna, Bani Walid and the Sahel region; some Bani Walid residents chose to protect them. With money and arms from fleeing loyalist elements,[187] local youth fought incoming rebel forces. That Bani Walid fell to its pro-revolutionary 28 May faction, backed by a hodgepodge of eastern brigades and the ill-disciplined, newly armed groups from recently-liberated towns such as Suq al-Jum'a, Zawiya and Gharyan, only exacerbated the town's resentment of its "liberators";[188] when pro-regime holdouts finally surrendered on 17 October (only, they said, after running out of bullets), heavy looting by these outside forces further deepened intercommunal hostility.

The town of Bani Walid was still harbouring as many as several hundred "wanted individuals" in September 2012, including senior Qadhafi-regime figures.[189] Among them were many notables who are still governing Bani Walid's daily affairs. Since 23 January 2012, when the town forcefully ejected the pro-revolutionary local and military councils despised by residents, Bani Walid has remained in most respects independent of the NTC, standing apart from the new order.[190] A sizeable force comprised of local volunteers as well as former army officers and led by Salim al-Wa'ir – who had been an officer in the air force and participated in the 1993 attempted coup against Qadhafi – protected it.[191]

In like manner, Tarhuna, north of Bani Walid, was home to a large armed group commanded by an ex-army officer that had tense relations with revolutionary authorities. During the uprising, it had been one of the most significant sources of soldiers and volunteers for Qadhafi,[192] though not all Tarhunans were loyalists. A Tarhunan army general and tank commander, Bujeila Hibshi, defected early in the uprising (March). When the town surrendered in late August 2011, Hibshi served as intermediary and mediator. He proceeded to set up a force comprising several thousand, called *al-Awfiya* (the "loyal ones", though the name's significance is unclear). Well armed due to the presence of an important Qadhafi-era weapons storage facility, the brigade was accused by revolutionary forces of protecting Tarhunan combatants who had fought for Qadhafi.[193] They also claimed Hibshi was providing Salim al-Wa'ir in Bani Walid with Tarhunan soldiers.[194] He reportedly

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[187] The son of one notable, who had taken a hardline stance against the revolution and whose arrest was sought by revolutionary brigades, said, "some of the Bani Walid – maybe eight or ten among them – who supported Qadhafi possessed money and weapons. They would distribute weapons and say 'Come, fight for your dignity, fight for your land!' They were encouraging young boys – teenagers, kids who were at home alone, with their parents in Tripoli or Misrata for example – telling them, 'OK you, you come, we will give you a weapon and supplies, and you can fight for your land, fight for your dignity, fight to defend your sisters and your families. They were manipulating these teenagers in this way". Crisis Group interview, Bani Walid, 25 February 2012.
[188] Misratan and Zintani forces, the most experienced and heavily-armed groups in the west, refused to enter Bani Walid. Zintan, as discussed above, had a long communal alliance with it that prohibited mutual attacks. Misrata, as discussed below, was wary of reigniting the long feud between the towns. Even in the thick of the fighting, community dynamics mattered more than simple pro- or anti-revolution logic.

[189] Crisis Group interviews, Zintani commanders, Zintan, April 2012; Bani Walid local notables and residents, 23-28 February 2012.
[190] On two separate occasions, demonstrators gathered in front of the GNC building to urge its members to take action against Bani Walid's local authorities. On 30 August 2012, roughly 100 pro-revolutionary Bani Walid residents who had been evicted from the town protested in front of the GNC demanding government intervention to allow them to return to their homes. Then, on 9 September, several hundred demonstrators from Suq al-Jum'a and Misrata urged the authorities to take action to release their relatives detained in Bani Walid and called for the town to be declared a military zone.
[191] His armed group was named the "Warfalla 93" brigade in reference to the coup attempt. His other force, "The Martyrs of Wadi Dinar", was a reference to those who died fighting rebel forces in September and October 2011. Crisis Group observations and interviews, Salim al-Wa'ir, Martyrs of Wadi Dinar brigade HQ, Bani Walid, 26 January 2012; 28 February 2012.
[192] In September 2011, Crisis Group reviewed lists of fighters who had volunteered to join brigades fighting on behalf of Qadhafi's regime; the lists had been seized by revolutionary groups.
[193] Crisis Group interviews, brigade commander, Tripoli, 10 May 2012; head of military council, Zintan, 22 April 2012.
[194] Tariq Durman, a brigade commander who belonged to the pro-revolutionary minority in Bani Walid and was evicted on

prevented revolutionary forces from entering Bani Walid more than once – something he could do since access from the north required passage through Tarhuna.[195]

The presence of another army commander and Hibshi colleague near Qadhafi's hometown of Sirte, Khalifa Hiftar, likewise deeply troubled rebel forces. A Sirte resident from the Firjani tribe who had arrived in Benghazi in 2011 roughly at the same time as Hibshi, he was equally distrusted. Originally a member of the group that had planned Qadhafi's 1969 coup d'état, Hiftar subsequently worked with the U.S. and the National Front for the Salvation of Libya against Qadhafi, based in Chad (1987-1990) and then the U.S.[196] His return to Benghazi in April 2011 triggered considerable political friction among rebels, generating a split between him and the then-chief of staff of the rebel armed forces, Abdul Fatah Younis.

Many rebels saw Hiftar, like Hibshi, as pursuing a personal and at times hazy agenda.[197] His image was further tarnished by efforts to recruit troops and train them with U.S. assistance, as well as by his unsuccessful bid to take control of rebel armed forces after Younis was assassinated in July 2011. From Benghazi, he tried to travel with Hibshi to Tarhuna. After he was stopped by Benghazi airport authorities,[198] he went to the western mountains and Zawiya. In the aftermath of his 11 December attempt to wrest control of Tripoli's airport, he moved to Sirte with around 4,000 men, again for unclear reasons.[199]

According to revolutionary brigade commanders and leading Bani Walid figures, understandings were reached between Hibshi in Tarhuna, al-Wa'ir in Bani Walid and Hiftar, in Sirte during the 2011-2012 transitional period. Their goal purportedly was to work with and protect each other and their respective communities.[200] Regardless of whether this is accurate, there is little doubt that many Bani Walid notables spoke as if they were on a war footing. The revolutionaries' forceful entrance into the town in September and October of 2011 had radicalised many of its residents, and actions of the pro-revolution minority that governed it from October to January radicalised them still further.[201] Throughout, Bani Walid took comfort in its long heritage of resistance to foreign powers.[202]

The town also took comfort in numbers. Its leaders saw themselves as governing not only its approximately 70,000 residents but also the hearts and minds of the estimated over one million Warfalla tribe members across the country who purportedly consider Bani Walid their geographic

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23 January, said, "Salem al-Wa'ir used the stamps of the (former) Bani Walid military council to release prisoners from Tarhuna in coordination with Bujeili Hibshi". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, March 2012.

[195] On 24 November 2011, a large force of Suq al-Jum'a fighters sought to enter Bani Walid in response to a request from one of their units; it was turned back by Hibshi's men. According to a government official, Hibshi's force fired missiles at a unit of the Tripoli-based National Guard that had been dispatched to the Tarhuna area in January. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, April 2012.

[196] See B. Barfi, "Who are the Libyan rebels?", *The New Republic*, 30 April 2011.

[197] Asked why Hiftar, at a time when he was claiming to be the armed forces' chief of staff, was in Zawiya, the NTC defence spokesman said, "I honestly have no idea". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, September 2011. In March 2012, a government official asked: "Can anyone tell me what Hiftar is doing in Sirte?" Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 13 March 2012.

[198] "When Tripoli fell, Hiftar and Hibshi tried to travel to Misrata, go to Tarhuna from there and raise a tank battalion. We stopped him at Benghazi airport". Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Benghazi, 18 February 2012.

[199] An adviser to the prime minister said, "Hiftar tried to reassert himself by targeting Zintani brigades that were unpopular in Tripoli. So first he took troops to the Rixos Hotel and evicted the Zintanis who were staying there; then he drove to the air-

port. On his way, Mustafa Abdul Jalil called him, asking him to desist. Hiftar sped through a checkpoint manned by Zintani soldiers, prompting an extended battle between Zintanis protecting the airport and Hiftar's men based nearby. Hiftar found all of Libyan society lined up against him. We did not like it that Zintani brigades controlled the airport, but we liked Hiftar even less". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 12 May 2012. See also Liam Stack, "Libyan Army Clashes With Militia In Tripoli", *The New York Times*, 12 December 2011.

[200] Crisis Group interviews, brigade commanders, Benghazi, February 2012; commander from Bani Walid's pro-revolution faction, Tripoli, March 2012; adviser to prime minister, Tripoli, April and May 2012; brigade commanders, Tripoli, February-May 2012.

[201] A youth from Bani Walid said, "I had no great love for Qadhafi, but after his death, when the revolutionaries [meaning a pro-revolution faction of Bani Walid] took control – that was when I learned to hate the 17 February revolution". Crisis Group interview, Bani Walid, 26 February 2012.

[202] Bani Walid has a legacy and mythology of resistance dating back at least to a nineteenth century tax revolt against Turkish governors and opposition to Italian colonial occupation in the 1920s and 1930s. In both instances it fought against Libyans allied to the foreign powers. This heritage was the backdrop to the town's struggle against those of their countrymen who were backed by NATO. A Bani Walid notable said, "this isn't the first time we have resisted foreign intervention". A Warfallan from Tripoli added: "There's a story which has come up again in the context of the so-called 'revolution' which we tell ourselves. The Turks were asking all Libyan people to pay a certain tax; the Bani Walid were the only ones to resist. So the Turks sent other Libyan tribes from Zawiya, Tripoli and elsewhere in order to force them to pay or be killed. Bani Walid faced these combined forces and killed them, because we considered them traitors. It's the same as what happened now. Thousands of rebels were fighting with NATO against Bani Walid". Crisis Group correspondence, student from Tripoli, 2 February 2012.

point of origin.[203] On one level, such a way of thinking was false. Being so numerous, Warfalla members fought on both sides during the 2011 conflict; NTC Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril was Warfallan and so were many of his advisers. Still, a large number of Warfallans had sympathy for Bani Walid's fate; even an adviser to Prime Minister al-Keeb who belonged to the tribe invoked Qadhafi's derogatory word to describe the rebels: "I started thinking of the revolutionaries as 'rats' after they attempted to take Bani Walid by force in September".[204]

Consequently, Bani Walid could reach out to sympathetic local neighbours who felt equally threatened, while bolstering its military alliances with current and former army elements. In November 2011, town leaders and other prominent Warfalla members formed the Warfalla Social Council to coordinate activities with notables from the tribe across the country.[205] The Council also built ties to various western towns worried by the emerging new order and the 2011-2012 communal conflicts; these included Tarhuna and Sirte but also a number of aforementioned towns and communities that either stayed on the sidelines of the 17 February revolutionary movement or supported Qadhafi: predominantly the Mashashya, Warshfana and Ajalat communities and the towns of Tawergha, Rijdalin and Jmail, as well as central and southern towns such as Sebha. A major meeting of the Council at the end of May 2012 brought together 23 representatives from other such communities. Separately, Bani Walid residents stockpiled arms, which also were circulated to neighbouring areas.[206]

In mirror image, revolutionary brigades were making their own preparations to circumscribe the activities of these communities. In mid-May, an LSF commander said, "the LSF are setting up a plan to secure the hotspots that weren't properly cleared the first time around, including Bani Walid, Tarhuna and the area around Sirte".[207] A commander with knowledge of the LSF High Commission's intentions added: "The plan is for the LSF to push from all sides to tighten the noose on Bani Walid".[208]

As they grew better armed, groups from Bani Walid and allied communities became more confident and willing to confront both the LSF and pro-revolutionary neighbours such as Zintan, Misrata and Zawiya. This in turn further exacerbated older communal tensions and longstanding rivalries, notably between Misrata and Bani Walid.[209] When, in May, a Misratan LSF unit conducted a reconnaissance mission in Wijdada, an area adjacent to Tarhuna, Hibshi's men and other armed groups mobilised in reaction.[210] Likewise, the 7 July kidnapping of two Misratan journalists as part of an attempt to force the release of Bani Walid prisoners held in Misrata prompted the mobilisation of Misratan forces, some of whom threatened to attack the town. A similar dynamic heightened tensions in the western mountains, where communities allied to Bani Walid felt emboldened enough to challenge Zintani brigades.[211]

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[203] A Warfallan notable said, "Bani Walid is like a capital city for the Warfalla". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 21 February 2012.

[204] Crisis Group interview, government official, Tripoli, July 2012.

[205] The Warfalla Social Council comprises 60 members from Bani Walid (twelve heads of families, *lahmat*, from each of Bani Walid's five branches, *akhmas*) and five representatives each from the east, Tripoli, the south, and central areas. Clearly dominated by Bani Walid, the extent to which the Council meaningfully represents Warfalla interests remains unclear. On 5 February 2012, the Council recognised the legitimacy of both the 17 February revolution and the NTC. Crisis Group interviews, Warfalla Social Council members, Benghazi, 16 February 2012; Tripoli, April and May 2012.

[206] Crisis Group interviews, Bani Walid residents, Bani Walid, 26-28 February 2012; Tripoli, April 2012, July 2012. As discussed above, Bani Walid and other towns that had not sided with the revolution, fearing for their own security, took advantage of the thriving black market to acquire additional weapons either covertly or under the guise of local military councils. The son of a Bani Walid notable, displaying the weapons he had bought, talked of tanks and heavy weaponry being purchased. The head of a senior Bani Walid family said, "we are ready for any path. Rights require force in order to protect them". Crisis Group interviews, Bani Walid, 26 February 2012.

[207] Crisis Group interview, deputy commander of western LSF, 13 May 2012.

[208] Crisis Group interview, brigade commander, Tripoli, 14 May 2012.

[209] Throughout their history, Bani Walid and Misrata often were at war. A low point in relations between the towns came during the Italian occupation, when the Misratan anti-occupation fighter and former governor of the Tripolitania independent republic, Ramadan al-Suwehli, was assassinated in Bani Walid by a local notable, himself also a former governor, Abdul Nibi bil-Khayr. The likelihood of renewed conflict between the towns during the 2011 conflict was so great that Misrata's military council deliberately ordered its fighters not to participate in the assault on Bani Walid in September and October 2011. Crisis Group interviews, grandson of Ramadan al-Suwehli, March 2012; brigade commanders and fighters, Misrata, September-October 2011.

[210] Misratan notables travelled to Tarhuna the following day to apologise. Crisis Group interview, government official, Tripoli, 1 July 2012. Crisis Group interview, former ambassador and negotiator between Misrata and Bani Walid, Tripoli, 15 July 2012.

[211] In early June, Zintani tanks were seized as they moved through territory belonging to the Warshfana. Crisis Group interview, government official, Tripoli, 10 May 2012. That same month, Zintan was drawn into conflict with the Mashashya community as it sought to manoeuvre military vehicles near one of the community's villages. Fighting between Zintan (and their allies) and Mashashya was severe, leading to the death of 105 and wounding of 500. It began when Mashashya fired on a Zintani truck transporting two tanks near the town of Mezda; Mashashya community residents fired on the convoy, prompt-

The cold war turned distinctly hot in the case of Tarhuna, when, on 4 June, Hibshi was kidnapped. Details remain unclear, though many believe he was killed.[212] His car, part of a larger convoy, was stopped by unidentified armed men somewhere on or near the airport road.[213] In response, 200 of Hibshi's al-Awfiya brigade, armed with 14.5mm anti-aircraft guns, occupied the airport runway. The incident played into longstanding revolutionary brigade suspicions that Hibshi, along with Hiftar, was plotting a coup – something that, according to the government, local authorities and revolutionary brigades, his disappearance averted.[214] The conflict marked the culmination of months of political and military tension between revolutionary brigades and former army elements in central Libya.

The behaviour of revolutionary coalition commanders during this episode made one thing clear: although in theory they came under the chief of staff's authority, in reality they acted on their own initiative as soon as they felt it necessary to defend their interests. The commander of the Tripoli Brigades described how his forces ignored both NTC-led negotiations and Manqoush's orders:

> When we heard that the airport had been taken, at about 2pm, we headed towards the airport while asking Manqoush for orders. Manqoush told us we should call him back. I called the interior minister, who told us that negotiations were underway and that they did not want to use force. The minister asked us not to go to the airport but instead to secure the prime minister's office. We thought that was ridiculous. A show of force at the airport was necessary. After all, the Tarhunis had load-

ed RPGs, a tank on the runway and were flying green flags atop their vehicles.[215]

The 4 June events also revealed the depth of distrust between, on the one hand, former or serving army officers such as Hibshi and Hiftar and, on the other, revolutionary forces, as well as the degree to which elements within both had come to see each other as threatening the security of the state and revolution. Other armed groups carried out direct attacks on former army officers. Salim al-Wa'ir, who led the force protecting Bani Walid, was shot in the stomach by an unknown gunman in April 2012;[216] an apparent attempt on Hiftar's life occurred on 29 July in Benghazi; and a Qadhafi-era army intelligence officer was killed on 28 July.[217] In early August, the army's military intelligence headquarters were hit by an explosion, and on 10 August, another army general, Mohamed Hadia al-Fitouri, who was in charge of weapons storage in Benghazi, was killed.[218]

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ing a Zintani patrol to enter the Mashasha town of Sghega. Gunfire on both sides escalated into a deadly heavy artillery exchange in the desert nearby. Simultaneously in Mezda, local residents from the Gontrar tribe, who were Zintani allies, and the Mashashya fought, destroying large sections of the town. A Warfalla Social Council member later claimed that Bani Walid had sold arms to the Mashashya to defend themselves. In response, the NTC declared the area a military zone and deployed LSF forces under Misratan and Gharyani command to implement the ceasefire. Prime minister's spokesperson, press conference, Tripoli, 20 June 2012; Crisis Group interviews, Warfalla Social Council member, Tripoli, 8 July 2012; Mashashya judge, Sghegha, 12 July 2012.

[212] Crisis Group interviews, government and international officials, Tripoli, July 2012.

[213] Crisis Group interviews, prime minister's adviser, Tripoli, 3 July 2012; by telephone, government official, 6 June 2012. See also Umar Khan, "The airport fiasco", *Libya Herald*, 8 June 2012.

[214] Crisis Group interviews, brigade commanders, Zintan, Sebha, and Tripoli, April-May 2012; Tripoli local council member, Tripoli, 15 July 2012; head of Tripoli Brigades, Tripoli, 10 June 2012.

[215] Crisis Group interview, head of Tripoli Brigades, Tripoli, 10 June 2012.

[216] Crisis Group phone interview, Bani Walid resident, April 2012.

[217] See "Terrorists in Benghazi attempt to kill General Hiftar, blow up hotel", *Libya Herald*, 29 July 2012, and "Benghazi assassination aimed to 'create chaos in country': army chiefs", *Libya Herald*, 30 July 2012.

[218] "Libyan General Hadia killed in Benghazi shooting", BBC, 10 August 2012.

VI. FORGING PEACE

Even as fragmented military groups seek to hold communal conflicts in check, the responsibility to negotiate ceasefires, midwife peace deals and manage ensuing grievances has fallen squarely on local notables. This has been the case for hostilities across the country, including in Ghadames, Sebha, Zuwara, Kufra and Bani Walid. An attack – such as killing or capturing certain individuals – almost immediately precipitates a reaction by local notables from neighbouring areas. These community authorities in turn contact one another in order to establish the veracity of information and, if necessary, identify suitable mediators.[219]

If the incident escalates into armed conflict, adjacent towns send their own notables to participate in councils aimed at ending the fighting. In the case of major conflicts, notables from across the nation converge, creating large "councils of notables" (*lijan al-hukama'*).[220] Assembling in appropriately neutral venues,[221] these tend to approach warring parties separately; only afterwards does a meeting take place with representatives from both sides, who are vastly outnumbered by those from other cities as well as members of major local armed groups that enjoy communal support.[222]

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[219] A member of a reconciliation council said, "when a crisis happens, we all communicate very quickly with each other to establish the facts and identify which local councils will send delegates. We all participate; each town normally sends at least one person". Crisis Group interview, Suq al-Jum'a, 3 April 2012.
[220] Councils of notables convened for the purpose of ending fighting are also referred to in this report as reconciliation councils.
[221] Libyans tend to choose notables from neutral tribes or towns to lead negotiations, even as the councils comprise a broad representation of towns across the country. History plays a strong part in deciding whom to select. A Tarhunan Tripoli resident said: "We reach back into our history. Warfallans often played a neutral or mediating role in conflicts as have Zintanis". In Sebha, a Warfallan notable hosted the negotiation, since both the individual and his tribe were considered neutral by all warring parties. In the case of Zuwara, Jmail, and Rejdalin, the nearby town of Sabratha provided hotel space and mediators. In the intra-Bani Walid conflicts, Zintani mediators led reconciliation talks among warring Bani Walid families and between Bani Walid and Suq al-Jum'a, reflecting Zintan's close relations with both Bani Walid and revolutionary fighters. Suq al-Jum'a itself played a strong mediating role as a historically influential and highly-mobilised town that had participated in the uprising; its notables were present in reconciliation talks in conflicts as distant as Zuwara's in the west and the town of Obeidat's in the far east. Crisis Group interview, Suq al-Jum'a, 2 April 2012. The western mountain town of Jadu also played a leading role in mediations in Ghadames and Bani Walid for similar reasons.
[222] Crisis Group observations of video-taped talks, Sebha, 1 May 2012; interviews, negotiation participants, Rijdalin, 20 April 2012; Tripoli, 10, 12 May 2012.

These initiatives have achieved several remarkable results. In Sebha, for instance, delegations crossed front lines under fragile ceasefires to enter heavily-shelled Tebu neighbourhoods. The head of Sebha's local council observed that "local notables did a lot to impose the ceasefire".[223] While brigade coalitions physically keep warring parties apart, negotiations led by notables create the space required to address pent-up grievances and, sometimes, acknowledge past injustices or even offer apologies.[224] The most influential mediators appeal to the higher ideals of Libyan identity and Islam, provoking the outpouring of emotions and tears.[225] Using a body of phrases and social conventions rooted in local culture and resorting to customary law (*'urf*),[226] local notables in many circumstances can hold

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[223] Crisis Group interview, Sebha local council members, Sebha, 2 May 2012. A Tebu police officer said, "local notables dotted the i's and crossed the t's on the ceasefire agreement". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 30 April 2012.
[224] Crisis Group observations of video-taped talks, Sebha, 1 May 2012. A foreign observer who witnessed the Zuwara, Rejdalin and Jmail negotiations said, "the mediating notables function more like arbitrators than mediators", allowing warring parties to engage in direct dialogue and then imposing a reasonable solution through persuasion and moral authority. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 12 May 2012. A participant in reconciliation talks between Gharyan and Asabiyya – two western mountain towns that came into conflict in January 2012 – noted that a key element involved acknowledgment of acts committed during the Qadhafi era in front of a "court", which then acquitted those involved, prompting tears and resulting in a settlement. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 10 May 2012.
[225] Tears as a public display of emotion and sensitivity to higher ideals, including on the part of government ministers and other senior figures, often were observed at public events and reconciliation talks. At one talk, held in Prime Minister al-Keeb's office, "one man began to get hysterical. Another man shouted him down saying 'I will kill you!' The whole room erupted; everyone talking at once. Above the din, one of the oldest sheikhs began calling 'Allahu Akbar!' Everyone in the room cried, and hugged each other". Crisis Group interview, reconciliation negotiation eyewitness, Tripoli, 10 May 2012. The host of Sebha's reconciliation talks described a negotiator's impact: "He was most effective in reaching a ceasefire because he hit the right emotional note. He brought the room to tears". Crisis Group interview, Sebha notable, Sebha, 1 May 2012.
[226] An NTC member who had participated in reconciliation talks said, "the notables use a lots of phrases, gestures, and body language that contain subtle cues that are recognised by those present. For example, if someone says, 'It takes the wisest to take on the biggest issues' [*kibar al-'aqul tatahammal kibar al-masa'il*], that is a sign for everyone to cease talking. If a notable comes early or late, or sits on his knees, those are all signals that have meanings in a tribal context. It works, and even government members who take part in these negotiations would need to be trained in these skills". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 4 July 2012. The *Quran* and religious texts likewise played essential parts. A cleric who participated in reconciliation talks said, "*Surat al-Hujurat* 9-10 [*Quran* 49:9-10] is a foundational text:

parties accountable, at least for the short term, and, by means of social pressure, compel them to agree to a ceasefire.[227]

Still, moral authority and resort to emotions – while effective in putting an end to hostilities – often prove insufficient to sustain calm. Sessions may end on a positive note but, amid the emotional outpouring, demands presented by one or both sides tend to remain unaddressed. Without a distinct chairperson or convener, talks veer from fist-shaking and speechifying to tearful hugging without concrete mechanisms in between. A participant in several negotiations noted: "Everyone talks at once. They don't listen. And if they listen, they don't absorb. They get so emotional that one cannot have a serious discussion about genuine reconciliation".[228] Underlying grievances focused on land, compensation and accountability for past misdeeds, resolution of which likely require technical support from central authorities, remain alive. Ceasefires forged in the heat of the moment thus can break down with equal velocity. In both Sebha and Zuwara, Awlad Suleyman and Zuwaran representatives agreed to ceasefires during negotiations but violated them once they left the meeting room.[229]

When parties agree on implementation plans, these often lack clarity, particularly regarding compensation for various losses and accountability for actions taken. As one observer put it, "some of the agreements included levels of ambiguity and vagueness which rendered implementa-tion impossible".[230] Ambiguity is part of the secret of success but also of the agreements' subsequent undoing; some requirements are poorly defined in order to enable the deal, yet this allows wildly divergent interpretations of what the parties have committed to.[231] What is more, few notables consistently follow up on talks; worse, some negotiations experience an almost constant rotation of visiting notables, further undermining their ability to monitor implementation effectively.

Erratic or shifting attendance by notables; absence of clear, written agreements; and deficiencies at central government level have meant that once ceasefires were agreed, there would be little to no follow-up. Although the NTC sanctioned the councils of notables, it did not supervise or follow up their actions. The NTC convened follow-up committees, but these usually dissipated when guns fell silent.[232] NTC representatives would then only keep abreast of events via personal ties with the notables. Deputy Prime Minister Mustafa Abu Shaagur lamented that the government lacked resources and time to seek more than a ceasefire. "To be honest, the information on the requests [made by the communities] is never even relayed back. People involved in the negotiations are just happy to have been able to reach a ceasefire".[233] Virtually across the board, conflicting parties complain about lack of government implementation and engagement on matters raised by the councils.[234] Notables, lacking enforcement mechanisms,

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'If two parties among the believers fight, reconcile. If either commits injustice against the other, fight the oppressor until they turn to God's command, then reconcile with justice and treat them fairly'. I use this to explain we are in the second stage – reconciliation – now that Qadhafi has gone. I say that the one who gave you victory is now ordering you to reconcile. So with this verse we introduce the concept of fairness – caring about the defeated's fate". Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, 4 February 2012.

[227] A foreign observer who witnessed negotiations among Zuwara, Rijdalin and Jmail said, "the notables who chaired the negotiations just leaned on people. In talks over returning captured Zuwaran cars from Jmail, I saw the committee chair beating up on Jmail's representative, saying, 'you said you'd give the cars back at twelve o'clock! It's now four!' I was expecting the Jmailis to reject the claim, but they offered excuses instead. The chair said, 'this is unacceptable!' Jmail clearly was embarrassed by the fact that it had made a commitment and then failed to live up to it". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 12 May 2012.

[228] Crisis Group interview, reconciliation negotiation eyewitness, Tripoli, 10 May 2012.

[229] Crisis Group interviews, reconciliation talk attendees, Sebha, 1-3 May 2012; Zintani mediator and brigade commander, Zintan, 22 April 2012. There was broad consensus among non-Tebu community authorities that Awlad Suleyman broke the ceasefire agreements at least twice; the Tebu subsequently broke one such agreement.

[230] Crisis Group interview, foreign observer, Tripoli, 12 May 2012. For example, in Ghadames, reconciliation initiatives in September 2011 led by Zintani notables and the then-acting armed forces chief of staff resulted in a vague agreement, assented to by both sides, to surrender "wanted individuals", provide compensation for stolen property and surrender weapons held by former Qadhafi supporters. Nothing was implemented, due to the agreement's ambiguity. On 25 January 2012, a further agreement was reached to integrate Tuareg into local and military councils and to form a parallel executive council for them. It was to be supervised by a follow-up committee led by notables from Jadu. Here, too, the unwritten agreement was vague, and disputes emerged over implementation. Crisis Group email correspondence, foreign negotiation observer, 9 June 2012.

[231] In Ghadames, where an understanding was reached on 25 September on reconstituting the local council, a foreign observer said, "it was never implemented. None of it. It only stipulated the integration of Tuareg into the local council, so the local council allowed for one delegate while the Tuareg demanded half of its members. In the end, the Tuareg set up a parallel local council for a city that does not yet exist but which they intend to build". Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 12 May 2012.

[232] Crisis Group interview, NTC representative, Tripoli, 17 July 2012.

[233] Crisis Group interview, Deputy Prime Minister Mustafa Abu Shaagur, Tripoli, 16 August 2012.

[234] Crisis Group interviews, residents from Rijdalin, Abi Qannash, Zuwara, Sebha, Suq al-Jum'a, Bani Walid and Sirte, January-May 2012. Notables made agreements requiring some meas-

refer demands and protests to national authorities with whom there had been no coordination.

As a result, reconciliation agreements founder; the issues that provoke conflict are rooted in claims over land, property and power that pre-existed Qadhafi's rule but were exacerbated first by his regime's clientelism and patronage networks, then again by communities' varying positions during the uprising, and finally by acts of revenge in its aftermath. Without clearly written agreements, sustained implementation and a central government powerful enough to back them up, reconciliation councils, as a foreign observer put it, "simply raised expectations that went unfulfilled".[235] Conflicts at best remain frozen, warring factions held at a distance through a blend of civilian armed groups and army forces.

ure of follow-up from the government or police, despite their not being present at the agreements. Rijdalin and Jmail residents complained that notables had accepted their demands for compensation for lost salaries and investigations into the deaths of some who had been taken prisoner in Zuwara, but subsequent approaches to the government had been ignored. Factory workers in Abi Qannas complained that they had been evicted from their homes by Zuwaran armed groups, promised salary payments during negotiations and then met with silence from the government. In the south, Tebu local councillors said that as part of reconciliation talks in Sebha and Kufra, NTC negotiators had promised to honour some previously-frozen citizenship permissions, but this was never written down, and the bureaucracy only sporadically honoured the promise. Crisis Group interviews, Murzuq, 7 May 2012. On the question of "wanted individuals", agreements lacked clarity as to their identity, as well as to mechanisms for their arrest or investigation of their supposed crimes. A Suq al-Jum'a local council head said that his community had drawn up a "wanted" list for those responsible for killing Suq al-Jum'a residents that was many times greater than the numbers of possible guilty parties. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 4 April 2012. A Bani Walid negotiator said, "on the issue of arrests, we've agreed that such acts should be carried out by the judicial apparatus, only after a state is established. But these are words. When it comes to putting them into practice, we see nothing yet". Crisis Group interview, Bani Walid, 27 February 2012.
[235] Crisis Group interview, foreign observer, Tripoli, 7 May 2012.

VII. IMPLEMENTING PEACE: THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

The NTC's and government's inability to monitor the implementation of local ceasefire agreements is rooted in three principal features: a lack of hierarchy within the NTC and consequent tendency to endlessly debate matters; the legacy of an over-centralised government overly reliant on directives from the prime minister's office; and, finally, the fact that the NTC and the executive body it appointed were at political odds with their own bureaucracy, notably in the defence and interior ministries. These, in turn, undermined the ability of the entities chiefly responsible for security – notably the prime minister's office and the defence and interior ministries – to coordinate their respective policies. As a result, even when the NTC agreed on a broad set of national security objectives, it did little to implement them.[236]

As seen, the absence of coordination reflected a broader political problem. Rivalries dogged the work of government ministers, executive bodies (such as the Warriors' Affairs Commission) and the chief of staff, among others. An NTC member said, "there is not enough coordination between the main ministries of state", adding that the NTC itself could not effectively oversee ministers, and the ministers themselves were excessively preoccupied with grand strategic plans:

> Ministers were meant to deliver weekly or bi-weekly reports. In practice, they showed little interest. The prime minister, when he stood in front of the NTC, would read out prepared written statements. Ministers would talk in grand theoretical terms about ideals and long-term plans. But there never was any clarity on what needed to be done today or tomorrow.[237]

[236] In theory, they had agreed on the national security strategy discussed at the UNSMIL-organised inter-ministerial retreat in February 2012. Crisis Group interview, NTC member, Tripoli, 27 April 2012. At the retreat, the NTC "recognised the need for an overarching national security framework and strategy, including a national security coordinating committee under the prime minister", but only got as far as setting out a "priority action plan" with UNSMIL support on 20-21 February 2012. See briefing by Ian Martin, op. cit., 29 February 2012.
[237] Crisis Group interview, NTC member, Tripoli, 28 April 2012. As if to prove this point, an NTC-appointed minister shared an extensive PowerPoint presentation detailing long-term strategy for economic reform, while acknowledging that many government factories were on strike and many bureaucrats unwilling to implement his decisions. There was little clarity as to how the reforms would be accomplished within a realistic timeframe. Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 21 April 2012.

Perhaps most telling, neither the NTC nor the government set up a crisis management mechanism to ensure rapid response to urgent situations. Instead, a bureaucracy ill-trained and ill-prepared to deal with rapid change and hollowed out by the loss of its few decision-makers behaved in a business-as-usual mode. The legacy of the past weighed as well. Under Qadhafi, ministers and ministries rarely coordinated their work, instead deferring to instructions from the prime minister, who received them from Qadhafi's office.[238] Yet, Mustafa Abdul Jalil and Abdul Rahim al-Keeb, mindful of the need to preserve national consensus and stability, ended up deferring difficult decisions. A consultant to the prime minister, describing a desk laden with papers, said, "all decisions went to Keeb's office to die".[239] As a result, a bureaucracy accustomed to obey directives emanating from the prime minister's office found itself rudderless, incapable of reacting efficiently, decisively or in a unified manner to emerging or ongoing conflicts. The NTC member said:

> We inherited a government apparatus that continued on as if there was no crisis. But there is a crisis. We as the NTC should have emphasised that we needed a crisis government that allowed ministers to make empowered and confident decisions.[240]

In short, work carried on as normal at a time of great abnormality.

Local councils – particularly those from communities engaged in conflict – paid the price for the government's incapacity to respond to crises. They found themselves forced to play the full range of roles, including that of police, emergency service providers, administrators and mediators. Unsurprisingly, they were overwhelmed, lacking in resources and, although suspicious of the bureaucratic apparatus inherited from Qadhafi, at times eager for back-up from the central state. A local council head said, "I work twelve- to sixteen-hour days. I was so tired that I tried to resign. We are expected to fill all government functions, even to take care of someone's water taps if they aren't working". Another added: "We assume responsibility for everything. When rumours swirl around, people demand action from us, and we have to confirm what has or hasn't happened. It's exhausting – we are basically like a fire department putting out fires everywhere".[241]

One of the most pressing problems facing the local councils is that the police have been barely functioning. They did not participate in ceasefires or dispute resolution efforts and were not in a position to address community demands for justice and compensation.[242] On their own, they could not confront armed groups[243] or revolutionary brigades that often barred them from investigating cases, while refusing to turn detainees over to government authorities or local prosecutors for fear they would be set free.[244]

This meant that notables were overtaxed, carrying the burden of resolving disputes, whether petty or grand; nor were they capable of preventing acts of reprisal. The state's inability to bring perpetrators to justice kept resentment alive; local youth kept memories fresh by repeatedly uploading videos, mobile phone footage and photographs depicting acts of violence on YouTube and Facebook.[245] Minor disputes effortlessly could get out of control; the relatively insignificant dispute between Suq al-Jum'a and Bani Walid that occurred on 24 November 2011, which caused the death of four persons, provoked intercommunal hostility that can be felt to this day. As Suq al-Jum'a brigades attacked,[246] arrested or detained persons from Bani

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[238] Interviews with Libyan civil servants conducted by a Crisis Group analyst working in a different capacity, Tripoli and London 2010.

[239] Crisis Group interview, government official, Tripoli, 12 April 2012.

[240] Crisis Group interview, NTC member, Tripoli, 28 April 2012.

[241] Crisis Group interviews Sebha, May 2012, Suq al-Jum'a, 5 April 2012.

[242] Under Libya's criminal procedure code, police are supposed to carry out the initial investigations and gather testimony and evidence. But they are only able to do so for ordinary crimes. The most common types of offences at stake in local dispute resolution efforts – political or committed during the war – are not straightforward crimes, and there still is no judicial mechanism to address them. Thus, Qadhafi-era officials, military officers and others facing serious charges remain in prison awaiting the start of investigative procedures, hindering conflict resolution efforts; in other instances, investigations into violent attacks by one community against another have yet to begin. Crisis Group interview, general prosecutor's office, Tripoli, 2 May 2012; observations, Supreme Court, Tripoli, 21 April 2012.

[243] The local council head of Sebha said, "we had to calm down a dispute between two armed groups at a school. I contacted the police to deal with the problem. For a few hours they did nothing. Then they sent a couple of cars and a few men, who waited outside the building. The police simply are no match for the armed groups operating here". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 2 May 2012.

[244] See interview with brigade commander on "Libya Wataniya" channel, 11 July 2012. The UN estimates that some 3,000 detainees have been transferred to detention centres under government control, leaving approximately 4,000 under the custody of revolutionary brigades. See briefing by Ian Martin, op. cit., 10 May 2012.

[245] Crisis Group interviews, youth and local notables, Suq al-Jum'a, Bani Walid, Sebha, Zuwara, Rejdalin, Jmail, Murzuq, February-May 2012. Sometimes acts of violence were edited and repackaged into feature-length "films" with an action movie soundtrack, which were then distributed among local youth.

[246] A local council head recounted: "In early January, one Suq al-Jum'a resident was sitting at a roundabout, drunk. He belonged to a small armed group that had broken away from our military council. A cab pulled up with a passenger from Bani

Walid on suspicion of allegiance to the previous regime, Bani Walid residents seethed. "Suq al-Jum'a has a day of reckoning coming to it", said a youth, listing other nearby towns, too, whose youth had killed or looted the homes of Bani Walid residents.[247]

Faced with the peril of everlasting and ever-growing communal conflicts, local notables could do little more than seek to prevail upon irate armed groups not to take matters into their own hands. This was not easy. As the head of the Suq al-Jum'a local council lamented, "Suq al-Jum'a has 300,000 people; even if 1,000 of us are unwise enough to do certain things, we have to manage the consequences". He added:

> I can only make assurances to Bani Walid that Suq al-Jum'a as a town won't escalate the dispute to a communal level. But individual encounters are outside of my control. If the dispute festers, then the risk of further reprisals just gets bigger. Even a few days ago I spoke to a Bani Walid notable who admitted that they had similar control issues there. The people whom the families of the dead want to see investigated have to be handed to the justice system.[248]

Alone and overburdened, local councils performed initial investigatory and prosecutorial work but acknowledged lacking necessary legal foundations.[249] In a few areas, local councils attached legally qualified prosecutors to brigades in order to oversee their activities, but this was largely discretionary, and some councils chose instead to rely on individuals trained in internal security as opposed to legal matters.[250]

The country's religious establishment joined the debate. In early April 2012, the grand mufti, Sheikh Sadiq al-Gharyani, appeared on television to warn the government that communal conflicts would snowball in the absence of a functioning justice system:

> I warned the government about the dangers of the cases that are accumulating. An interim judicial court must

be established. With the case of the Tawergha, for example, if only we could deal with the crimes of a few people, then at least it would make Misratans feel a bit better; justice could be seen to have been served, emotions will calm down and then you could begin to talk about reconciliation for all the other Tawergha.[251]

The NTC did little to support either the police or the notables. In February 2012, it approved a National Reconciliation and Transitional Justice Law aimed at "consolidation of social peace" and designed to "reassure and convince people that justice does exist and is effective". It also authorised creation of a seven-member Fact Finding and Reconciliation Committee reporting directly to it.[252] But these were tentative, incipient steps. It neither envisioned, let alone attempted, to set up a nationwide truth and reconciliation commission.[253] The committee, which took two months to be sworn in, has yet to become fully active. In May, the NTC ordered that specially appointed committees screen detainees held in government-controlled facilities, but no judicial review or screening procedure has yet started.[254] Fearful of antagonising relations with communities and armed groups – in particular in an environment where the judiciary and police felt under threat – the NTC deferred all measures pertaining to justice and reconciliation to a post-electoral government.[255]

Walid. The drunk man approached, got into an argument, and shot him dead". Crisis Group interview, Suq al-Jum'a, 5 April 2012.
[247] Crisis Group interview, youth, Bani Walid, 25 February 2012.
[248] Crisis Group interview, Suq al-Jum'a, 5 April 2012. In Bani Walid, family heads had to calm a number of young residents who wished to forcibly release prisoners held in a nearby town. Crisis Group observations, Bani Walid, 26 February 2012.
[249] A local council head said, "we have to write out our own arrest warrants, just to show that there existed the intention of a legal process". Crisis Group interview, Suq al-Jum'a, 5 April 2012.
[250] Crisis Group interviews, interrogations officer appointed to Martyrs of Suq al-Jum'a brigade, Tripoli, 9 March 2012; former internal security officer attached to eastern brigade, Nowfleen, September 2011.

[251] Crisis Group interview, Tripoli, 6 April 2012.
[252] NTC Law 17/2012, 26 February 2012.
[253] Calls for the establishment of such a commission have emanated from across the political spectrum. Ali Sallabi, the Qatar-based cleric with influence among revolutionary groups, said, "reconciliation issues all need a Supreme Commission [*al-mufawadiyya al-ulya*] set up by the government and the prime minister's office with subcommittees focused on issues such as property damage, compensation, etc. The membership of a potential Supreme Commission – together with the rebuilding of the justice system – should be discussed within the next parliament. Until now, the lack of a representative government has been the major obstacle – as in South Africa, where [the] Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not occur until 1994". Crisis Group interview, Benghazi, 4 February 2012. On the other end of the political spectrum, a Warfallan family head in Sebha whose family members fought on Qadhafi's side during the uprising, while dismissing Sallabi as "someone who is interpreting things as he goes", said, "we need to have in Libya something like the national reconciliation commission that they had in South Africa". Crisis Group interview, Sebha, 1 May 2012.
[254] NTC law 38/2012. The screening committees were tasked solely with determining which detainees in non-governmental custody could be set free and which should be prosecuted in court – a task that has foundered due to both political opposition by revolutionary brigades and shortcomings within the justice ministry. Law 38/2011 requested brigades to transfer detainees to state custody by 12 July; that has yet to occur.
[255] The chief mufti, Sadiq al-Gharyani, said, "the government executive needs to be brave and take risks, but it also has to bal-

VIII. CONCLUSION

Councils of notables and revolutionary brigades have worked hand-in-hand to bring about ceasefires and try to make them stick. Notables provided social authority and legitimacy without which neither the central armed forces nor the still uncoordinated and untrained LSF could have ended hostilities. Likewise, without the LSF – which, under the armed forces chief of staff's nominal authority, impose hastily concluded ceasefires – communities almost certainly would resume fighting. Yet ceasefires at best have been fragile, often breaking down due to the lack of implementation of peace agreements.

The role played by these two actors reflects the deficit at the centre of the state and distrust at the core of the political system. Without adequate equipment or manpower, the army (and, it follows, the central authorities) have had to reach out to the LSF – a parallel armed force only partially responsive to government directives. At the same time, lack of trust between the army and revolutionary brigades encouraged both sides to turn separately to local armed groups rather than to each other, further muddying the picture. A clear casualty has been the army's and LSF's perceived neutrality. More broadly, mistrust and lack of communication among the army, LSF and various armed groups – made worse by their significant political differences – undermine their ability to implement and enforce local ceasefires. Worse, in central and western parts of the country, it brings units into conflict with each other as well as with local armed groups.

There are problems on the civilian side as well. Local notables bring to the table considerable and often decisive moral and social authority, thereby pressuring warring parties to reach agreement. They are respected in part because of their skilful use of language, religious references and understanding of local customs acquired over a lifetime. But the nature of the understandings reflects the way in which they are achieved: at high levels of generality, without proper details or implementation mechanisms, and without follow-through. Here, the absence of a truly effective central authority weighs heavily.

Many of the deals require further action only a government can take. In some cases, notables mediate agreements and make commitments on the government's behalf without coordinating with it and without knowing whether the specifics of the deal could be carried out. Indeed, even NTC representatives who are involved in mediation attempts

are known to provide assurances or make promises they prove unable to keep. As their demands meet with silence, helplessness or confusion on the part of the bureaucracy, parties in conflict naturally are prone to frustration, disillusionment and anger.

Proper management of the country's myriad local disputes will require significant reform of both military and civilian aspects of conflict resolution, notably better coordination between the councils of notables and the government; better coordination among the LSF, army and the groups that make up the border guard, such as it exists; as well as bold, bottom-up reform of the army and police services. The challenge will be to do this even as the newly elected General National Congress (GNC) and future constitutional drafting committee are focused on establishing the legislative foundations of a new state.

❑ On the military side, a first goal should be to clearly delineate responsibilities of the armed forces chief of staff, defence minister and border security forces, so as to untangle presently competing and overlapping chains of command. Significant military reform is imperative to overcome the revolutionary brigades' distrust of the army. The government should recognise that the army's top-heavy structure is a severe impediment and offer incentives for senior officers to retire, thereby both bringing in fresh blood and easing suspicions toward a force many still consider a remnant of the old regime.[256]

❑ The government should intensify efforts to better assert control over the LSF. Untrained soldiers and fighters exhibit loyalty to their commander alone, and the LSF is akin to an auxiliary force only partially responsive to a central, national authority. As a transitional step, the defence ministry should create a new corps that plays the role currently assumed by the LSF – a rapid-reaction force deployed at times of national crises or when intercommunal fighting erupts – staffing it with officers possessing sufficient skill, vision and political neutrality, whether they come from the army or one of the revolutionary brigades. Yusuf al-Manqoush's selection shows that it is possible to identify officers acceptable to both. A particular effort should be made to include officers from previously under-represented ethnicities and communities, notably the Tebu.

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ance the pros and cons; if it allows the judiciary to issue convictions too early, it knows there is a risk of armed groups challenging the decisions". Crisis Group interview, Sadiq al-Gharyani, Tripoli, 6 April 2012.

[256] Defence Minister Osama Juweili prepared a law that contemplated the retirement of some 2,000 senior officers, but it was rejected by the NTC and chief of staff, both of whom argued that senior officers who had joined the revolution should not be sanctioned. Notes from a television interview with defence minister, op. cit.

The most promising members of other armed groups registered with the ministry of defence should be offered training programs and integrated into the new corps. The goal should be to foster new unit identities and national *esprit de corps* in lieu of the more localised, brigade-oriented mentality evinced by most armed groups and, ultimately, when its contracts with the defence ministry expire in 2013, entirely replace the LSF with this more robust, disciplined and politically acceptable entity. In the meantime, heightened cooperation between the army and LSF will be critical; the use of liaison officers on the ground, particularly in conflict areas, is one way to achieve this.

❑ Far-reaching reform of the police and SSC is another priority. Libya needs a gendarmerie-like component to carry out the front line duties a regular police force cannot manage. One lesson learned from the SSC's shortcomings is that recruiting brigades wholesale and relying on unit commanders to act in the nation's best interests cannot work; instead, individuals from various brigades should be intermingled. To succeed, the interior ministry will have to overcome its current predilection for inexperienced youth. As in the case of the new army corps, gendarmerie officers should be selected from among the most adept, least politically controversial members of the SSC, interior ministry, police and armed groups registered with the interior ministry and then placed in an appropriately mentored, rigorous training course.

❑ Another important step would be for the government to set up a Crisis Management Unit answerable to the prime minister and that would include representatives from the military, police, interior and defence ministers as well as the LSF, SSC and border guard (as long as these remain operational). Other armed groups should participate, as appropriate, formally or informally.

❑ Both the new army corps and gendarmerie will have to complete the transition from entities whose constituent units serve only in their towns of origin to a fully national, mixed force. This will take time. In the beginning, the intermingling likely should be limited to regions and areas without a history of communal conflicts. Efforts should focus on promoting leaders from minority or oppressed communities, with deployment of genuinely national mixed brigades coming later.

❑ The international community has an important role to play in supporting these changes. The UN has provided some technical advice and coordination to the police and military; it also has helped produce a defence white paper with the chief of staff and six countries selected by him. Assuming Libyan governmental approval, the UN could extend its work to carry out a full technical review of the army, LSF and border guard activities in military zones, including the status and origins of their respective weapons supplies and their recruitment from and relations with local armed groups and local communities. Likewise, the UN could help monitor ceasefire implementation and identify political and logistical impediments they face. The EU, following Libyan authorities' request, produced a detailed report (mentioned above) outlining the legal, technical and operational obstacles faced by the government in securing its borders and stopping illegal trafficking. It could continue to help with a border management strategy and, assuming it is set up, support the Crisis Management Unit.[257]

❑ On the civilian side, notables have proved effective at ending hostilities; the weakness lies in the vagueness of their peace settlements and loose ties between notables and the central government. Dealing with this problem could help ensure that commitments made during ceasefire talks are implemented and that grievances at the root of many disputes – regarding citizenship status, land ownership, property rights and black-market commercial interests – are properly addressed. In principle, coordinating bodies already exist: one under the prime minister's authority, the other, the National Reconciliation Body (*hay'at musalaha al-wataniyya*), established in June 2012 by the NTC. That said, neither has truly bridged the gap between agreements on paper that are reached by local notables and lack of implementation by central authorities; rather, they have invoked local notables' overconfident assessments of success as a pretext for inaction.

❑ It is crucial that agreements be in writing. A corollary is that any local agreement must be sufficiently detailed and realistic, reflecting commitments the government can put into practice rather than, as at present, ad hoc, vague and often unimplementable promises that generate ambiguity, misunderstandings and discontent. Although notables should continue to lead negotiations, the large councils they convene – in which LSF and army observers periodically participate – should as a general matter also include central government observers attached to the police force and prime minister's office. The observers should study and be aware of the protocols and customs that the notables use; optimally, their primary role should be to act as consultants for the notables, with a direct line to the prime minister's office, to ensure that peace agreements are both implementable and implemented.

In many ways, Libyans have proved to be more resourceful in dealing with communal conflicts than might have been expected. What sometimes comes across to outsid-

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[257] The European Council has reiterated its readiness to provide further assistance in areas of security and border management, including through the Common Security and Defence Policy.

ers as chaos and paralysis can mask underlying caution, pragmatism and awareness of popular opinion as well as of the sensitivities of various groups. But the post-Qadhafi authorities began with a tough hand, and things have not become noticeably better. Confusion in the vast security arena, governmental ineffectiveness, entrenched resistance by armed groups to any central authority, continued violence – all these portend a bumpy and perilous future. As recent events suggest – from the destruction of Sufi shrines to repeated assassination attempts against military commanders – the power balance between the new central authorities and armed groups, never in favour of the former, is giving some signs of tilting toward the latter. Meanwhile, the Congress appears to be more focused on infighting over procedural issues than on tacking security issues.

Precipitous moves against the armed groups are likely to fail and backfire. But time is running out, the government is plagued by inertia, and the need for across-the-board reforms of the military and police is more urgent than ever. Anything less will perpetuate what already is in place: local disputes occurring in a fragmented and heavily armed landscape, with the ever-present risk of escalation.

Tripoli/Brussels, 14 September 2012

APPENDIX A

MAP OF LIBYA

APPENDIX B

TAXONOMY OF ARMED GROUPS

A. TERMINOLOGY

The word "militia", implying armed groups outside state authority, is problematic as applied to the many armed groups operating in Libya. Its Arabic equivalent, *milishiyyaat* – adapted from the English term – is used in Libyan political discourse negatively and generally denotes a force that works against the state. In fact, a majority of the revolutionary brigades feel they are part of a national project and express a desire to work on behalf of the state however much they distrust existing state institutions; hence their resentment of the term "militia". The word *thuwwar* (revolutionaries) has become equally problematic, insofar as it too carries a (positive) value judgment. Most armed groups describe themselves as *thuwwar*, even though not all those now active in them were active during the rebellion, and not all of those active in the rebellion now serve in armed groups.

In this report, the following taxonomy has been used:

Revolutionary Brigades describes the mostly civilian armed groups that were formed and committed themselves to fighting Qadhafi's forces during the main armed phase of the conflict, from late February 2011 to late October 2011.

Army refers to the remaining elements of Libya's professional armed forces that were neither killed nor imprisoned during the conflict. Its pre-revolutionary name was the "National Army", which is still used on official insignia and in most public discourse. Some NTC members and army commanders have attempted to rebrand the army as the "Libyan Army" to avoid association with the Qadhafi era. NTC Law no. 11 also describes the army as the "Libyan Army".

Revolutionary Coalitions refers to the major coalitions (*tajammu'at* or *i'tilafat*) and battalions (*liwa'*) of revolutionary brigades and companies (*kata'ib, sirayat*) that were formed primarily in the strongholds of Benghazi, Misrata, Zintan and Tripoli during the 2011 conflict, though their consolidation continued after the formal end of the conflict on 23 October 2011.

Military Councils (*al-majalis al-askariyya*) refers to the civilian armed groups that were officially acknowledged by the NTC and registered by the defence ministry after 20 August 2011 and were authorised to provide security in various towns.

Armed groups is the default term used for all other localised groups formed by a particular neighbourhood or community, whether under a military council or not, some time after the end of formal hostilities in late October 2011. Although some have lent their strength to the army, state security forces or revolutionary brigades, others pursue purely local – or at times even criminal – agendas.

B. LIST OF MAJOR ARMED GROUPS CURRENTLY ACTIVE IN LIBYA

1. Government Forces (with Commanding Officer)

Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces   Yusuf al-Manqoush

Army
Navy
Air Force
Air Defence

2. Auxiliary Forces (with fields of deployment and Commanding Officer)

Libyan Shield Forces (LSF)   Yusuf al-Manqoush

Western regions (inc. Zuwara, Zintan, Bani Walid)   Abdul Hakim al-Dirbala'
Central regions (inc. Sebha and Bani Walid)   Mohammad Moussa
Southern regions (inc. Sebha)   Ahmed Hosnawi
Eastern regions (inc. Kufra)   Ziad Bela'
The Border Guard   Sidiq Mabrouk
The National Guard (formerly independent)   Khalid ash-Sharif

The Supreme Security Committee   Abdul Latif Qudoor

3. Revolutionary Coalitions (with Base of Operations and Commanding Officer)

Revolutionary Brigades Coalition (Benghazi)   Fawzi Bukatf
Misratan Union of Revolutionaries (Misrata)   Salim Joha
Zintan Military Council and brigades (Zintan)   Abu Bakr ben Juma'
The Tripoli Brigades (Tripoli)   Hisham Buhajar

4. Other groups authorised by the Defence Ministry (with Base of Operations and Commanding Officer)

Warfalla 93/Martyrs of Wadi Dinar (Bani Walid)   Salim al-Wa'ir
Al-Awfiya (Tarhuna)   Bujeila Hibshi (pre-4 June 2012)
[unnamed] (Sirte)   Khalifa Hiftar

APPENDIX C

NOTE ON THE TERM "NOTABLES" (*HUKAMA'*)

This report uses "local notables" to refer to a distinct class in Libyan society termed *hukama'*, literally meaning "wise men". The same class is also termed *'a'yan* ("visible ones"), and in some parts of the country its synonym, *wujaha'* ("prominent faces", or "representatives") is used. The terms are somewhat interchangeable and refer to (invariably male) elders (*kibar as-sinn*), roughly in the 40-60-year age bracket, whose social standing gives them a role in deciding local and social affairs. In parts of Libya where there is little functioning government, or where conflict has broken out, local notables have stepped into the vacuum to maintain social order.

Originally – and, to this day in very tribal and rural parts of the country – the classification was quite rigid; society divided into a set number of family houses (*bayt* in the east, *lahma* in the west). Each house possessed a leader who would represent it. Indeed some towns still are organised on the basis of *bayt* or *lahma*, and leaders play a key role in deciding daily local affairs. In urbanised areas and neighbourhoods of large cities, local notables tended to be drawn from prominent merchant or political families. But as times have changed, so too have the identity and qualifications of notables, with an increasing number from both urban and rural areas being educated professionals, some of whom have studied abroad. Today a council of notables could include a range of persons, including shepherds, foreign university PhD holders and revolutionary brigade or army commanders, as well as professionals such as lawyers and doctors.

"Notables" therefore form a fluid class that is adapting traditional mechanisms of governance to more modern needs. They tend to be selected by social consensus on a case-by-case basis depending on the tasks involved rather than based purely on tribal bloodline or seniority. They help to preserve a collective knowledge of community history, linguistic customs and dispute resolution techniques that have built up over time and are still in use.

Qadhafi sought to co-opt this class by imposing the concept of "social leadership" (*qiyada ijtima'iyya*) in the mid-1990s; the regime lavished enormous benefits on local notables who chose to become "coordinators" (*munassiqeen*) of Qadhafi's policy. Such coordination involved implementing Qadhafi's decisions regarding any given community, including, at times, communal punishments; as such, coordinators in practice could become more powerful than local branches of ministries or official government bodies. Since the 2011 uprising, many of these individuals, too compromised by their actions under the Qadhafi regime, are semi-retired from public life or exiled.

APPENDIX D

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 130 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on the website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former U.S. Undersecretary of State and Ambassador Thomas Pickering. Its President and Chief Executive since July 2009 has been Louise Arbour, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices or representation in 34 locations: Abuja, Bangkok, Beijing, Beirut, Bishkek, Bogotá, Bujumbura, Cairo, Dakar, Damascus, Dubai, Gaza, Guatemala City, Islamabad, Istanbul, Jakarta, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Kabul, Kathmandu, London, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Port-au-Prince, Pristina, Rabat, Sanaa, Sarajevo, Seoul, Tbilisi, Tripoli, Tunis and Washington DC. Crisis Group currently covers some 70 areas of actual or potential conflict across four continents. In Africa, this includes, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, Kashmir, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; in

Europe, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, North Caucasus, Serbia and Turkey; in the Middle East and North Africa, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Western Sahara and Yemen; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti and Venezuela.

September 2012

APPENDIX E

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APPENDIX F

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP BOARD OF TRUSTEES