

ISIS enters the Stage in the Libyan Drama – How the IS Caliphate expands in Northern Africa

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ABSTRACT

Four years after the Fall of Gadhafi, Libya finds itself in a state of chaos and lawlessness. Two rivaling governments in the East and West compete for the country's resources and seek to gain control. The highly unstable situation enabled other actors to enter Libya, among them radical Islamic elements such as ISIS. ISIS seeks to take advantage of the precarious situation in Libya and works to apply its own model of governance, while trying to expand its territorial control through force. Theoretical approaches such as the idea of limited statehood/governance or "The Network State" are used to help to understand the highly complex and volatile situation in Libya.

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Section A. - Overview

1) Introduction

Libya currently finds itself in political chaos and internal armed conflict. Two separate governments, one located in the eastern city of Tobruk, the other in the capital Tripoli, battle one another throughout the country in ever changing coalitions of local tribes and their respective militias. The power vacuum created by the downfall of Libya's dictator Gadhafi in 2011 and NATO's intervention has led to widespread chaos, lawlessness and the influx of radical Islamic elements, such as ISIS and Al Qaeda affiliated groups. With the capture of Libyan cities like *Derna* and *Sirte* by ISIS affiliated groups such as the *Islamic Youth Shura Council*, the self-proclaimed *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria*, (or *Islamic State* as the organization renamed itself in 2014), has been able to establish a foothold on the Mediterranean shore, the ultimate goal being to incorporate Libya in its entirety into the Caliphate's territory. So far only a handful of local affiliates have sworn allegiance (*bay'ah*) to ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. Nonetheless, the footprint of ISIS in Libya is growing. The final goal being to further expand IS territory in North Africa.

The following paper will in its initial steps give an overview of the somewhat chaotic political and strategic situation in Libya, caused by the breakdown of governance, the loss of domestic sovereignty and currently evolving *Second Libyan Civil War*. This will be followed by a section on the current presence in and entry of ISIS into Libya. Furthermore it will also elaborate on the recruitment efforts of the organization, as well as the current and potential, future territorial expansion of ISIS in Libya and beyond. The section also includes a treatment of the Islamic State's modus operandi in Libya. A third section of this report will compare the efforts of ISIS in Libya with the IS methodology used in Syria and Iraq, while trying to filter out differences and commonalities. This report's last section, will deal with a future outlook and attempt at a prognosis of the ISIS

threat in North Africa. However, this first requires a theoretical perspective to the advent of ISIS in Libya and its activities in Northern Africa; in accordance with the typology of IR theoretician Thomas Risse, who introduced the idea of *Areas of Limited Governance and Statehood* into IR discourse. This perspective will be enhanced by the work of Shaul Mishal, which focuses on political (trans-) actions in a network state environment. The aim of this paper will be a portrayal of the current situation in Libya in scientific and academic terms, using IR methodology, in order to facilitate the connection of empiric evidence and theory.

2) Situation in Libya

Since the end of the First Libyan Civil War in 2011, which ultimately saw the violent demise of Libya's longstanding dictator Muammar Al-Gadhafi, caused by the Libyan uprising and NATO's subsequent military intervention, the country has found itself in a constant state of widespread instability, lawlessness and protracted power vacuum¹. The situation seemed to improve slightly in 2012, when a constitution was implemented and general, democratic elections were held by the Western and NATO backed National Transitional Council (NTC), the umbrella organization of the majority of Libyan rebel groups who fought against Gadhafi. These elections brought a moderate, non-conservative coalition government to power, which represented a stark contrast to Gadhafi's four decades of autocratic rule²³. However, this positive progress did not bear fruit for long. The first elected Prime Minister, Mustafa Abu Shagur, lasted less than a month in office⁴. This was mainly due to the fact that the first post-civil war parliament called *General National Council*, was although numerically inferior, dominated by

¹ Wehrey, Frederic (2014): "*Ending Libya's Civil War - Reconciling Politics, Rebuilding Security.*", in: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 2014

² In its publication Dabiq, ISIS propagandists ridicule the secular forces of the GNC as "democratic murtads"; "*Sharia alone will rule Africa.*", Dabiq, Vol. 8, 2015, p. 25-26

³ Stratfor, "*After Elections, Libya Contentious Path Forward.*", July 10th, 2012, available under: <https://www.stratfor.com/sample/analysis/after-elections-libyas-contentious-path-forward>

⁴ BBC News, "*Libyan Prime Minister Mustafa Abu Shagur Dismissed.*", October 7th, 2012, available under: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19864136>

Islamist leaning parties⁵. These parties managed to bring Nouri Abu Sahmain into office as president on June 25, 2013. Abu Sahmain, although affiliated with Islamists and the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, was considered a compromise candidate even the moderate forces could agree upon as he was elected with 96 out of a total of 184 votes by the GNC⁶. When Abu Sahmain blocked inquiries into the distribution of state funds, apparently channeled to Islamist militias loyal to his political affiliates, called the *Libyan Revolutionaries Operations Room (LROR)*⁷, as well as the Islamist dominated GNCs plan to introduce Sharia law in Libya by decree⁸ and extending the mandate of the GNC without prior public elections for another year until 2014, the opposing moderate-secular forces accused him and his allies of abusing their powers^{9,10}.

Additionally, the new government failed to demonstrate strength in exercising its monopoly on the use of force to disarm the dozens of militias and criminal armed groups throughout the country, which have sprung up during the revolution and NATO's subsequent military intervention. Especially local, Islamist leaning militias were not willing to give up their arms and thereby created local zones of failing/limited statehood, a nationwide power vacuum, leading to continuous deadly turf battles between rival tribes and their militias. Under Gadhafi these rivalries were encouraged, so he could present himself as the only viable solution to keep the tribes at bay and under control¹¹. With the demise of Gadhafi, local rivalries among the tribes resurfaced and led to open

⁵ "Sharia alone will rule Africa.", Dabiq, Vol. 8, 2015, p. 25-26

⁶ Al Arabiya, "Libya's National Assembly Elects New President.", June 25th, 2013, available under: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/06/25/Libya-s-national-assembly-elects-new-president.html>

⁷ St. John, Ronald Bruce (2014): "Historical Dictionary of Libya.", in: Historical Dictionaries of Africa (Series), Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; 5th Edition, June 4, 2014, p. 201

⁸ Reuters, "Libyan assembly votes to follow Islamic law"., December 4th, 2013, available under: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/04/us-libya-law-idUSBRE9B30M220131204#rMFfLPfGoOFMQuu.97>

⁹ Reuters, "Libya Parliament Votes On "New Roadmap", Extends Mandate.", February 3rd, 2014, available under: <http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL5N0L842620140203>

¹⁰ Eljarh, Mohamed, (2013): "Citizens Versus Lawmakers in Libya.", in: Foreign Policy, December 29th, 2013, available under: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/29/citizens-versus-lawmakers-in-libya/>

¹¹ Khadra Yasmina, (2015): "How the West broke Libya and returned it to the hatred of the past.", The Guardian, October 22nd 2015, available under: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/22/how-west-broke-libya-gaddafi-national-unity>

conflict and politically motivated assassinations throughout the country. To make matters worse, large weapon depots of Gadhafi's troops were looted by these various militant groups. The weapons, among them advanced surface to air missiles, were then distributed, smuggled and sold to militants throughout Libya and partially also smuggled out of the country¹².

General Khalifa Haftar, a former general of the Libyan army, himself leaning towards a secular-moderate, nationalistic agenda and opposed to the Islamist policies originating in the *GNC*, staged an attempt to oust the ineffective government in February 2014¹³. This attempt was called *Operation Dignity* and ultimately failed¹⁴. Although Haftar's forces did not achieve their operational goals, such as conquering the capital Tripoli's airport, many former army commanders, military units, non-religious militias and secular political figures aligned with Haftar in order to oppose the Islamist dominance over Libya's political system and put an end to instability, chaos and lawlessness that perpetuated since the fall of Gadhafi¹⁵. As a reaction the *GNC* tried to improve its legitimacy by holding elections, which only saw a voter turnout of 18%, compared to the 60% turnout of 2012, an apparent defeat of the Islamists in the *GNC*¹⁶¹⁷. Due to the Islamist parties and their armed affiliate's violent refusal to accept the outcome of the

¹² Mangan F. & Shaw M. (2014), "Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition – Profits and Losses." Peaceworks No. 96, United States Institute for Peace, p. 17-19

¹³ Madi, Mohamed (2014): "Profile: Ex-Libyan General Khalifa Haftar.", BBC News, October 16th 2014, available under: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27492354>

¹⁴ Tawil, Camille (2014): "Operation Dignity: General Haftar's Latest Battle May Decide Libya's Future.", in: Terrorism Monitor, Vol. 12, Issue: 11, Jamestown Foundation, May 30th, 2014, available under: [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=42443&cHash=24a38c40982c66819e7196d24603335b#.VQ2DyuFNPyk](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=42443&cHash=24a38c40982c66819e7196d24603335b#.VQ2DyuFNPyk)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed & Barr Nathaniel (2015): "Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War." in, International Center for Counterterrorism (ICCT) – The Hague, Research Paper, February 2015, p. 7

¹⁷ Freedom House Country Report on Libya (2015): <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/libya> ; retrieved December 1st 2015

election¹⁸, the new unicameral parliamentary chamber called *Council of Deputies* had to vacate the capital Tripoli for the Eastern Libyan city of Tobruk. While the *COD* received international recognition as the only legitimate government of Libya, the Islamists proclaimed a counter government called *New General National Council*, with Abu Sahmain as President and Omar Al Hasi as Prime Minister¹⁹. General Haftar declared his loyal to the internationally recognized government in Tobruk and acted as chief military commander and advisor. At gunpoint Libya's Supreme Court later declared the Eastern government as unconstitutional, due to the pressure of Islamist militias controlling the capital²⁰.

The schism between both governments caused a second civil war in Libya and instability to the extent that the upkeep of law and order, as well as basic governance functions collapsed in some areas. Both governments lost effective control over large swaths of territory to opposing militias, rivaling tribes, armed gangs and other radical Islamic elements²¹. In essence, the civil conflict in Libya can be perceived through various different lenses: revolutionaries against former members of the ancient régime, political Islamists against non-religious and secular nationalists as well as ethnic Arabs against Berbers and other non-Arabs. Ultimately, this severe power vacuum paved the road for the Islamic State to enter Libya and establish a bridgehead in the country.

¹⁸ Stephen, Chris, & Penketh, Anne (2014): “*Libyan capital under Islamist control after Tripoli airport seized.*”, in: The Guardian, Sunday 24th August 2014, available under: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/24/libya-capital-under-islamist-control-tripoli-airport-seized-operation-dawn>

¹⁹ Deutsche Welle (2014), “*Libya government resigns after Islamists restart GNC.*”, August 29th 2014, available under: <http://www.dw.de/libya-government-resigns-after-islamists-restart-gnc/a-17887684>

²⁰ Associated Press (2014): “*Libya supreme court rules anti-Islamist parliament unlawful.*”, November 6th, 2014, available under: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/06/libya-court-tripoli-rules-anti-islamist-parliament-unlawful>

²¹ Freeman Colin (2015): “*Libya four years on from Colonel Gaddafi's death.*”, in: The Telegraph, November 5th 2015, available under: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/11976639/Special-report-Inside-Libya-four-years-on-from-Gaddafis-death.html>

Section B. - ISIS in Libya

1) ISIS Entry into Libya

The Islamic State self-proclaimed a Caliphate under its leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi on June 29, 2014. Albeit the physical presence of the Islamic State began in Syria and Iraq, its expansion into Libya has marked ISIS's successful first attempt at colonization. The Islamic State took advantage of a precarious situation of governance caused by Libya's ongoing civil war and likeminded groups willing to pledge allegiance (*bay'ah*), such as the *Battar Brigade* of Benghazi and *Islamic Youth Shura Council* of Derna. Thereby the self-proclaimed Islamic State spread far beyond Syria and Iraq into a dangerously close region right across the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and the European Union's southern border²². ISIS considers Libya a strategic gateway to North Africa and naturally used every opportunity to gain a foothold in the country. Moreover Libya is seen as a potential launching point of attacks on European countries²³.

ISIS main bridgehead and base of power in Libya is the northeastern coastal city of Derna, located in the largely by the internationally recognized government held Eastern part of the Libyan shoreline. Derna has long been known to be a smuggling-hub, a hotbed of Islamist activity, religious conservatism and lawlessness^{24,25}. The Gadhafi regime cracked down heavily on Islamists in Derna before the revolution of 2011 and was content with many militants leaving the country to fight US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. Oppression by the regimes security apparatus made it easier to recruit fighters and propagate Jihad as an alternative living model to Gadhafi's rule. A sizeable number of approximately 800 young men from Derna joined ISIS fight in Syria against Bashar Al-

²² Taylor, Adam (2015): "Why the Islamic State has its eyes on Libya.", in: Washington Post, February 19th 2015, available under: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/02/19/why-the-islamic-state-has-its-eyes-on-libya/>

²³ Winter, Charles (2015): "Libya: The Strategic Gateway for the Islamic State - Translation and Analysis of IS Recruitment Propaganda for Libya.", Quilliam Foundation, Great Britain, 2015

²⁴ Tharoor, Ishaan (2015): "How this Mediterranean city became Libya's extremist capital.", in: Washington Post, February 17th 2015, available under: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/02/17/how-this-mediterranean-city-became-libyas-extremist-capital/>

²⁵ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed & Barr Nathaniel (2015): "Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War." in, International Center for Counterterrorism (ICCT) – The Hague, Research Paper, February 2015, p. 26

Assad. Simultaneously the power vacuum after Gadhafi's fall gave birth to several militias, of which not all were radical, but Islamist. Radicals nonetheless established a foothold in Eastern Libya and brought Derna under their control by attacking local politicians, judges, attorneys, remaining police and army personnel, but also by killing rival militias commanders, leading the state to withdraw while radicals remained.

Derna is now controlled by various militias, the most important being the *Islamic Youth Shura Council*, an organization founded after splintering off from the Al Qaeda affiliated *Ansar al-Sharia* and mostly made up of radicalized local youth and about 300 returned ISIS fighters. In Derna, the leaders of *Ansar al-Sharia* have sworn allegiance (bay'ah - religiously binding oath of allegiance) to the Islamic State, while the Benghazi branch has not. Estimates hold that about 1,100 men from Derna have joined the ranks of ISIS in 2014, thereby creating the first bridgehead for the Islamic outside Iraq and Syria and poised to expand the boundaries of the Islamic State in their home country and North Africa^{26,27}. The new ISIS branch in Derna divided Libya into three zones: the Islamic State in *Barqa*, the Islamic State in *Fezzan* and the Islamic State in *Tarablus* (Tripoli). By now the total number of ISIS affiliates in Libya is estimated to have reached between 3000-5,000 militants^{28,29} as groups associated with ISIS control a significant part of *Nafaliya*³⁰ in Libya's center, a number of neighborhoods in former dictator Gadhafi's

²⁶ Paul Cruickshank & Nicolas Robertson (2015): "*ISIS comes to Libya.*", in: CNN, November 18th 2014, available under: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/18/world/isis-libya/index.html>

²⁷ Keilberth, Mirco, Von Mittelstaedt, Juliane (2014): "*The 'Caliphate's' Colonies: Islamic State's Gradual Expansion into North Africa.*", in: Spiegel Online, November 18th, 2014, available under: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-expanding-into-north-africa-a-1003525.html>

²⁸ Numbers mentioned by Mohammed Al-Dairi, Foreign Minister of the internationally recognized Libyan government in Tobruk, taken from: Moore, Jakob (2015): "*5,000 Foreign Fighters Flock to Libya as ISIS Call for Jihadists.*", in: Newsweek, March 3rd 2015, available under: <http://europe.newsweek.com/5000-foreign-fighters-flock-libya-isis-call-jihadists-310948>

²⁹ Hosenball, Mark (2015): "*U.S. fears Islamic State is making serious inroads in Libya.*", March 20th, 2015, available under: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/20/us-libya-security-idUSKBN0MG2G520150320#R18yx15ku4bAHFqs.97>

³⁰ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed & Barr Nathaniel (2015): "*Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War.*" in, International Center for Counterterrorism (ICCT) – The Hague, Research Paper, February 2015, p. 4

hometown of Sirte, including television and radio stations, renamed *Al-Bayan*, now broadcasting propagandist programs^{31,32}.

ISIS headquarters in Raqqa, Syria has sent senior emissaries such as top jurist Turki Al-Bin'ali and former “Emir” of Iraq’s Anbar province, Abu Nabil al-Anbari, to Libya in order to take matters into their hands³³. Al-Anbari appears to have be the terrorist who allegedly carried out the beheading of 21 Coptic Christians in Libya on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea^{34,35}, but is reported to have been killed outside of Derna in a US drone strike the same day the terror attacks with more than a 120 dead occurred in Paris on November 13, 2015³⁶. These emissaries first act was made in accordance with standard IS procedure by renaming ISIS held Libyan territory into *Wilayat Al Barqa*, a reference to the Arab name given to Eastern Libya following the Arab conquest of the Byzantine province of Cyrenaica in the 7th century AD. This tactic by ISIS is used in order to heighten the symbolic and propagandistic significance of “returning” yet another Islamic territory to pure Islamic rule under Sharia law.

The arrival of ISIS was not welcomed by all radical Islamist groups, since some Derna and Benghazi based groups, such as *Ansar Al Sharia* have sworn allegiance to Al Qaeda and its leader Ayman al Zawahiri as well as Al Qaeda’s regional affiliate *Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM)^{37,38,39}. Open conflict between these groups is now commonplace

³¹ BBC News, (2015): “*Guide to Key Libyan militias.*”, October 9th, 2015, available under: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19744533>

³² Kirkpatrick, David D. (2015): “*ISIS Finds New Frontier in Chaotic Libya.*”, in: New York Times, March 10th 2015, available under: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/11/world/africa/isis-seizes-opportunity-in-libyas-turmoil.html?_r=1

³³ Winter, Charles (2015): “*Libya: The Strategic Gateway for the Islamic State - Translation and Analysis of IS Recruitment Propaganda for Libya.*”, Quilliam Foundation, Great Britain, 2015, p.4

³⁴ Ashour, Omar (2015): “*Between ISIS and a failed state: The saga of Libyan Islamists.*”, in: Rethinking Political Islam Series, Working Paper, August 2015, Brookings Institution, p. 9

³⁵ United Nations Support Mission in Libya (2015): “*Report On The Human Rights Situation In Libya.*”, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 16th November 2015, p. 15

³⁶ Pengelly Martin & Stephen, Chris (2015): “*Islamic State leader in Libya ‘killed in US airstrike’.*”, in: The Guardian, November 14th 2015, available under: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/14/us-airstrike-isis-leader-libya>

³⁷ Congressional Research Service (2014): “*Al Qaeda-Affiliated Groups: Middle East and Africa.*”, p.20, p.48

in Derna, with violent clashes and politically motivated assassinations taking place every week⁴⁰. However, diverse rivaling Islamist leaning forces in Tripoli and Western Libya, loosely aligned within the so called *Libya Dawn* coalition, and opposed to the internationally backed government in Tobruk with its figurehead General Khalifa Haftar, are also fighting against ISIS's advances further west. Currently, the *Libya Dawn* aligned militia *Brigade 166* is engaged in surrounding and engaging ISIS held positions in Sirte⁴¹. Although *Libya Dawn* considers the internationally backed government in Tobruk, partially made up of former Gadhafi loyalists, un-Islamic and a threat to their vision of a conservative Libya, ISIS puritan, radical interpretation and application of Sharia is too extreme for *Libya Dawn* and its militias as interviews of the New York Times indicate⁴².

The black ISIS colors with the *Shahada* inscribed upon it, flying above former dictator Gadhafi's hometown, roughly four years after the beginning of the Arab Spring, represented a highly symbolic propaganda victory for the Libyan branch of ISIS. Moreover, the defection of fighters from Jihadist groups in Benghazi, Derna and elsewhere to the Islamic State can clearly be seen as the successful outcome of this strategy. Consequently, ISIS has been able to fortify its position and grow largely unchallenged within the current political chaos and security vacuum in Libya.

2) Fighters & Recruitment

As a de-facto failed state, Libya has become a prime target for ISIS, which thus far only directly controlled territory in Syria and Iraq. A recently released propaganda piece of the

³⁸ Other Solutions Consulting (2015): “*Mapping Features of armed groups – Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya.*”, p. 2

³⁹ Keilberth, Mirco, Von Mittelstaedt, Juliane (2014): “*The 'Caliphate's' Colonies: Islamic State's Gradual Expansion into North Africa.*”, in: Spiegel Online, November 18th, 2014, available under: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-expanding-into-north-africa-a-1003525.html>

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch (2014): “*Libya: Extremists Terrorizing Derna Residents.*”, November 27th, 2014, available under: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/27/libya-extremists-terrorizing-derna-residents>

⁴¹ Kirkpatrick, David D. (2015): “*ISIS Finds New Frontier in Chaotic Libya.*”, in: New York Times, March 10th 2015, available under: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/11/world/africa/isis-seizes-opportunity-in-libyas-turmoil.html?_r=1

⁴² Ibid.

Islamic State in Libya, titled “*Libya: The Strategic Gateway for the Islamic State*”, translated by the Quilliam Foundation from Arabic into English, and intended for a regional, jihadist audience, named a few of the motivations of why ISIS’s⁴³ ascribes major strategic significance to its Libyan colony. The very same arguments mentioned in Quilliam’s propaganda piece have also been reiterated by Abul Mughirah al Qahtani, in his lengthy interview with Dabiq, Vol. 11. In the propaganda piece from the Quilliam Foundation, the authors assess that Libya would be an “ideal territory” to relieve pressure from ISIS in Iraq and Syria, being able to draw the attention of the West and international community away from the heartland of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Moreover, Libya represents a strategically well placed crossroad between the ethnically predominantly Arabic Northern African states and Sub-Saharan Africa, in essence a hub for Jihadist expansion further South into the African continent but also simultaneously in close vicinity to the Southern borders of the EU.

Additionally, the ISIS propagandists like to touch on the immense potential of the freely available weapons depots and ammunition caches of the Gadhafi era to the organization’s cause. They point out the example of Mali 2013, when a few hundred Jihadist-Touareg fighters, using weaponry freely acquired in Libya⁴⁴, were able to take over two thirds of Mali’s territory within a short period of time. Publications like this give glimpses into ISIS’ intentions and ways of thinking, the strategic goals it pursues not only in Libya, but also the long-term planning underlying its actions in North Africa. Since the publication is written in Arabic and intended for a regional, jihadist audience, it is safe to say that the argumentation is intended to draw new recruits from abroad and also within Libya, since the authors also maintain that the window of opportunity to expand in Libya is closing, if it is not taken advantage of⁴⁵.

⁴³ Winter, Charles (2015): “*Libya: The Strategic Gateway for the Islamic State - Translation and Analysis of IS Recruitment Propaganda for Libya.*”, Quilliam Foundation, Great Britain, 2015

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 6

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 7

As mentioned before, the actual expansion of ISIS on the ground in the West to Sirte clearly marks a propaganda victory with high symbolic value, since it is directly aimed to attract new recruits from inside Libya but also from the outside, such as the neighboring countries of Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt. This is especially true after ISIS has received pledges of allegiance (*bay'ah*) from Jihadist terrorists and radical Islamic insurgents on the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, who thereby established a separate ISIS entity in Libya's neighboring country⁴⁶. Besides its propaganda efforts, ISIS is trying to raise its profile in Libya via so called signature attacks, meaning rather spectacular, sophisticated and brutal terroristic assaults on specific, high value targets. The beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic guest workers and the bombing of a popular Tripoli hotel frequented by Westerners, are testament to ISIS determination to cleanse Libya from all foreign influence and add it to the territory of the self-proclaimed Caliphate. The Libyan ISIS branch indeed managed to raise its profile regionally, when jihadist fighters from Libya attacked the visitors of the Bardo museum in neighboring Tunisia⁴⁷. Taking these examples into account and bearing the rising numbers of ISIS aligned Jihadist fighters in mind, it is only logical to conclude that ISIS is thus far successful with its strategy in Libya.

The Islamic State's relatively successful recruiting efforts are based on effective symbolic demonstrations of power, since it does not yet control oil fields or oil terminals on the coast, which would enable a stable source of income through crude oil smuggling in order to pay subsidies to fighters or finance social programs in the spirit of Salafist Da'wa activities. Although ISIS simply represents the most brutal handwriting of Jihadism to outside observers, its activities are highly symbolic and meant to inspire,

⁴⁶ Lee, Ian, (2015): "*Exclusive: ISIS in Sinai held back by Egypt's Bedouins.*", in: CNN, November 12th, 2015, available under: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/10/middleeast/egypt-isis-sinai-bedouins/>

⁴⁷ Stephens, Chris (2015): "*Tunis museum attack: 20 people killed after hostage drama at tourist site.*", in: The Guardian, March 18th 2015, available under: "<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/18/eight-people-killed-in-attack-on-tunisia-bardo-museum.>"

attract and sway those who already believe in the same ideals and values. Considering the fractured nature of localized conflict in Libya and the current chaotic state of affairs, the Islamic State's message of unity through submission is spread with the intention to attract as many conservatives and radical, militant Muslims as possible. Again, the message of submission and unity has led large numbers of *Ansar Al-Sharia* fighters to defect and join the Islamic State, which can only be understood as the success of the propaganda. The official Libyan military under the control of the internationally recognized government in Tobruk estimates that ISIS currently upholds a huge training camp⁴⁸ sizeable enough to accommodate up to 4,000 fighters near Sabratha, just 45 km from the Tunisian border and less than 70 kilometers west of Tripoli, Libya's capital⁴⁹.

Training and recruiting efforts are currently underway and directed to increase ISIS strength in North Africa. With already experienced and battle-hardened jihadist fighters from Derna, Benghazi and elsewhere, who have the capability to religiously indoctrinate, militarily train and familiarize new Libyan recruits with core IS battle strategies, due to the experiences made when Libyan Jihadists were bundled in the so called *Battar Brigade*⁵⁰ and fighting for the Islamic State in the *Deir Al Zor* province in Northern Syria, and bearing the gradual return of these fighters from the battlefields of Syria and Iraq in mind, ISIS prepares to raise a whole new strike force in its Libyan colony. Repeated calls in *Dabiq* magazine to all interested Muslims to join the cause of the Islamic State and to make their way to its heartland or its colonies in Africa, mainly Libya, functions like a magnet for those who are disillusioned with their life in Western societies, or have been radicalized elsewhere in the region. ISIS in Libya began in late 2014 with approximately

⁴⁸ Ansamed, (2015): "*ISIS training camp 45 km from Tunisia.*", February 25th, 2015, available under: http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/generalnews/2015/02/25/isis-training-camp-45-km-from-tunisia_8af33e95-ac91-42a3-8d3e-8c98a9f27915.html

⁴⁹ Martino, Peter, (2015): "*ISIS Sets Sights on the Mediterranean.*", March 2nd, 2015, Gatestone Institute, available under: <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/5301/islamic-state-libya>

⁵⁰ Wehrey, Frederic (2015): "*Rising Out of Chaos: The Islamic State in Libya March.*", in: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 5th, 2015, available under: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/03/05/rising-out-of-chaos-islamic-state-in-libya>

800 *Ansar Al Sharia* fighters in Derna who defected from the main Al Qaeda affiliated *Ansar Al Sharia* branch in Benghazi and with 300 fighters returning from the *Battar Brigade* from Syria and Iraq, who formed the *Islamic Youth Shura Council*, totaling about 1.100 men at the end of 2014^{51,52}. At the end of 2015, the number of Islamic State fighters in Libya has reached between 3000-5000⁵³, which is at least a triple of previous numbers and a clear sign that the Islamic State is able to maneuver the Libyan chaos to its own advantage.

3) Modus Operandi

ISIS modus operandi in Libya is mainly based on two concepts: intimidation and propaganda. The obedience of the local populace is mainly extorted by intimidation tactics. A “Sharia police”⁵⁴ called *hisbah* (accountability patrol) has been established by ISIS in Benghazi, Derna, Sirte and elsewhere, patrolling local shops, neighborhoods, marketplaces, making sure they are Sharia-compliant, do not sell spoiled food, confiscating tobacco as being against Islam, and demanding stores to close when it is time for daily prayers. *Hisbah* patrols also punish citizens for alleged sins against Sharia, such as consumption or possession of alcohol, indecent clothing, sexually deviant behavior, drug-abuse and many more⁵⁵. The religious police are also present in local markets and public places, trying to either persuade or force citizens at gunpoint to attend prayers at the mosques. All resistance is rigorously broken by violent means, ranging

⁵¹ Paul Cruickshank & Nicolas Robertson (2015): “*ISIS comes to Libya.*”, in: CNN, November 18th 2014, available under: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/18/world/isis-libya/index.html>

⁵² Keilberth, Mirco, Von Mittelstaedt, Juliane (2014): “*The 'Caliphate's' Colonies: Islamic State's Gradual Expansion into North Africa.*”, in: Spiegel Online, November 18th, 2014, available under: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/islamic-state-expanding-into-north-africa-a-1003525.html>

⁵³ Numbers mentioned by Mohammed Al-Dairi, Foreign Minister of the internationally recognized Libyan government in Tobruk, taken from: Moore, Jakob (2015): “*5,000 Foreign Fighters Flock to Libya as ISIS Call for Jihadists.*”, in: Newsweek, March 3rd 2015, available under: <http://europe.newsweek.com/5000-foreign-fighters-flock-libya-isis-call-jihadists-310948>

⁵⁴ Mid-East Eye (2015): “*Militants claim to set up 'police force', court for Libya's Benghazi.*”, Mid-East Eye February 2nd 2015, available under: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/militants-claim-set-police-force-libyas-benghazi-1375804023#sthash.mpNoGkHk.dpuf>

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch (2014): “*Libya: Extremists Terrorizing Derna Residents.*”, November 27th, 2014, available under: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/27/libya-extremists-terrorizing-derna-residents>

from public flogging to public execution. ISIS also systematically tries to destroy what little government presence has been left in the territories under its control. Judges, police officers, mayors and administrative clerks have been directly targeted and assassinated in order to destroy the local governance infrastructure and last tangible, physical manifestation of statehood in the form of its civil servants. The Islamic State has established Sharia run courts to dispense their interpretation of justice and authoritative, hierarchical decision making⁵⁶.

Besides intimidation and the use of force to gain more territory in Libya, ISIS's second favored strategy is propaganda. Spectacular suicide attacks on Western hotels⁵⁷, signature beheading videos⁵⁸, hit and run attacks on security forces⁵⁹, a refinery in Al-Ghani and Islamic *Da'wa* activities (propagation of Islam) are instrumental to serve as a propaganda tools⁶⁰. Naturally, ISIS's own infamous publication, *Dabiq*, portrays the Libyan branches exploits meticulously, as the ISIS branch in Libya is not a detached Jihadist entity, but works closely and in cooperation with Islamic State (propaganda) headquarters in Syria. *Dabiq*, gives some insight into the activities in Libya and Issue 6, 8, and 11 feature information about the Islamic State in Libya ranging from recruiting calls to join the cause in Libya (if the journey to Syria or Iraq proves too complicated for new recruits), testimonies for consolidation efforts, to a lengthy interview with the alleged leader of ISIS in Libya, Abul Mughirah al Qahtani⁶¹.

⁵⁶ Mid-East Eye (2015): "Militants claim to set up 'police force', court for Libya's Benghazi.", Mid-East Eye February 2nd 2015, available under: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/militants-claim-set-police-force-libyas-benghazi-1375804023#sthash.mpNoGkHk.dpuf>

⁵⁷ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed & Barr Nathaniel (2015): "Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War." in, International Center for Counterterrorism (ICCT) – The Hague, Research Paper, February 2015, p. 4

⁵⁸ Ashour, Omar (2015): "Between ISIS and a failed state: The saga of Libyan Islamists.", in: Rethinking Political Islam Series, Working Paper, August 2015, Brookings Institution, p. 9

⁵⁹ Celso, Anthony (2015): "The Islamic State's Colonial Policy in Egypt and Libya.", in: Journal of Political Science and Public Affairs, Vol. 3, Issue 2, p. 4

⁶⁰ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed & Barr Nathaniel (2015): "Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War." in, International Center for Counterterrorism (ICCT) – The Hague, Research Paper, February 2015, p. 4-5

⁶¹ "Sharia alone will rule Africa.", *Dabiq*, Vol. 8, 2015, p. 24-25 ; "From the battle of Al-Ahzab to the war of coalitions.", *Dabiq*, Vol. 11, 2015, p. 60-63 ; "Al-Qaeda-of-Waziristan.", *Dabiq*, Vol. 6, 2015, p. 28-30

Sermons are held in open spaces and young men are called upon to join the ranks of ISIS affiliates. The outside intervention of Egypt was used for propaganda, directed against the loosely aligned conservative militias of *Libya Dawn* in the West and the Al Qaeda affiliated branch of *Ansar Al-Sharia* in the East⁶². Although they oppose ISIS, the Islamic State in Libya seeks to recruit into its ranks the more undecided and radical members of the opposing *Libya Dawn* militias and Ansar Al-Sharia using propaganda, the continuous sermons from the captured radio station in Sirte being a fitting example. ISIS argues that foreign forces are backing *Operation Dignity* and *Libya Dawn* who both reject the establishment of Sharia based governance in Libya⁶³. Since violent opposition to Sharia is a cardinal sin in the eyes of (ultra-)conservative and radical Muslims, the ISIS leadership in Libya hopes to stir the anger and a feeling of solidarity amongst the more conservative elements of *Libya Dawn* and bring them over to the side of the Islamic State. This was previously successful with many members of the Al Qaeda affiliated *Ansar Al-Sharia* of Benghazi.

In terms of (propaganda of) governance activities, the Islamic State in Libya has primarily focused and limited itself to cultural symbolism⁶⁴. The Islamic State in Libya has also conducted some *Da'wa* activities, the largest being the forum, “*The Caliphate Upon the Manhaj [methodology] of the Prophet*” on November 25th, 2014. ISIS also provided aid to the poor, distributed gifts and sweets to children in Benghazi. Lastly, the aforementioned and designated Libyan ISIS leader Abul Mughirah al Qahtani specifically called upon believers with administrative talents to join the Islamic State in Libya, which only underscores that ISIS is keen to expand its governance activities further as well.

⁶² Jocelyn, Thomas (2015): “*In Dabiq magazine, Islamic State complains about jihadist rivals in Libya.*”, in: The Long War Journal, September 13th 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/09/in-dabiq-magazine-islamic-state-complains-about-jihadist-rivals-in-libya.php>

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Zelin, Aaron Y. (2015): “*The Islamic State’s Model.*”, Washington Post, January 28th 2015, available under: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/01/28/the-islamic-states-model/>

4) Comparison

The methods of ISIS in Libya strongly resemble tactics used in Syria and Iraq. ISIS fighters from the former *Battar Brigade*, who have been battling in Northern Syria, naturally imported Islamic State strategies from the Islamic State's heartland. However, the tactics used are not entirely equivalent to Syria or Iraq, due to different realities and constraints ISIS faces on the ground in each theater. The methods used in Libya are a mixture of symbolic attempts at persuasion and coercion through the use of extensive Islamic *Da'wa* activities, to either gain new recruits or absorb opposing groups or factions to the cause, and when that fails by the application of violent means, meaning brute force as well as shock and awe tactics⁶⁵. These have ranged in Libya from public executions in a soccer stadium and corporeal punishments, such as public floggings, maltreatment and murder of entire groups of African refugees, migrants, foreign guest workers, to the beheading of outspoken local critics and assassination of senior figures within opposing groups. Moreover, these atrocities have been carried out alongside ISIS aligned preachers holding sermons and speeches to justify and religiously legitimize these actions in open market areas in the presence of armed fighters and to coerce or persuade the local populace and merchants to join them in the mosques five times per day for services. Three independent reports ranging from the NGO Human Rights Watch⁶⁶, NGO Freedom House⁶⁷ and the United Nations Human Rights Councils⁶⁸ concur with this assessment.

⁶⁵ Wehrey, Frederic (2015): "*Rising Out of Chaos: The Islamic State in Libya March.*", in: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 5th, 2015, available under: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/03/05/rising-out-of-chaos-islamic-state-in-libya>

⁶⁶ NGO Human Rights Watch World Report 2015: Libya (2015): <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/libya>

⁶⁷ Freedom House Country Report on Libya (2015): <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/libya> ; retrieved December 1st 2015

⁶⁸ United Nations Support Mission in Libya (2015): "*Report On The Human Rights Situation In Libya.*", Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 16th November 2015

The aforementioned Human Rights abuses and atrocities committed by Islamic State militants in Libya, independently documented by the three aforementioned entities, are on their own comparable or even equivalent to the Islamic State Human Rights violations and atrocities committed in Syria and Iraq. The Human Rights abuses committed by the Islamic State in its heartland are however committed on a much larger scale than in Libya. Bearing in mind that the propaganda efforts of ISIS in Syria, Iraq and Libya are coordinated closely in concert by its propaganda machinery, and remembering that the men from the former *Battar Brigade* returned from the Syrian theater to Libya, it comes as no surprise that the organization uses the same or similar tactics.

However, some stark contrasts remain. In Libya ISIS cannot feed off or build on sectarianism and sectarian based hatred as witnessed against Iraqi Shia or minorities like the Kurds or the Yazidi sect in Iraq's Northern Sinjar region. The population of Libya is to 96.6%⁶⁹ adhering to Sunni Islam and the country possesses virtually no noteworthy Shia community. Although Libya possesses noteworthy minorities in the form of non-Arab Amazigh, Tuareg and other Berber tribes, who have suffered historically and culturally from negative relationships with the Arab majority⁷⁰, the nature of armed conflict in Libya is one of localization and not a full blown clash of ethnicities with potential for genocide. Old clan feuds and tribal disagreements sometimes even leading to bloodshed are part of Libya's history, but those ethnic clashes were kept under control skillfully by former dictator Gadhafi for decades^{71,72}. In essence, the Islamic State cannot utilize or feed off negative resentments of non-Arab minorities or other sectarian groups

⁶⁹ Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, 2015, Libya Country Report, available under: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ly.html>

⁷⁰ Harding, Luke, (2012): "*Can Libya's elections reconcile opposing forces in a new democracy?*.", in: The Guardian, July 6th, 2012, available under: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/06/can-libyas-elections-reconcile-opposing-forces>

⁷¹ Charles, Stratford (2012): "*Navigating Libya's tribal maze.*", on: Al-Jazeera English, July 24th 2012, available under: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xsdaji_navigating-libya-s-tribal-maze_news

⁷² Tawil, Camille, (2011): "*Mapping Qaddafi's tribal allegiances in Libya: An Overview.*", in: Terrorism Monitor, Volume IX, Issue 17, April 28th, 2011, The Jamestown Foundation

among the Arab majority population to the same degree as in Iraq or Syria. Therefore its social footprint in Libya is yet not as deep and developed as it is elsewhere.

5) Territorial Map & Expansion

The following section illustrates the territorial advances of ISIS made in Libya, as well as the current state of affairs concerning the civil war between the rivaling governments in Tobruk and Tripoli. As the map illustrates, the country is mainly divided into three spheres of influence.

To the East and with a small exclave to the far West, the officially recognized government is colored in green. The Tobruk government does not control all green colored territories simultaneously, but is able to take influence in those areas through affiliated militias, tribes, army units and the remaining state institutions. Derna, Benghazi and the surrounding countryside are either entirely or partially controlled by ISIS and rivaling Al Qaeda affiliates, such as the Benghazi branch of *Ansar Al-Sharia*⁷³⁷⁴ colored in either black or grey. Western Libya is mainly under the control of the *Libya Dawn* militia coalition and the internationally unrecognized counter-government in the capital Tripoli, colored in yellow. *Libya Dawn* is fighting ISIS in Gadhafi's hometown of Sirte, located on the shoreline of the Mediterranean and on the coastal road to the capital Tripoli, colored both yellow and black due to its contested status. Finally, there are territories mainly in the far West and Southwest of the country colored in red and brown, which are under the control of local ethnic tribes, such as the Tuareg, Tebu, Amazigh and other Berbers. These territories are not directly aligned with either of the two governments, Libya Dawn, Operation Dignity, ISIS or Al Qaeda. Momentarily, these ethnic groups and the territory they control stand for themselves with no clear preference or long-term

⁷³ Other Solutions Consulting (2015): “*Mapping Features of armed groups – Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya.*”, April 2015

⁷⁴ Congressional Research Service (2014); Congressional Research Report: “*Al Qaeda-Affiliated Groups: Middle East and Africa.*”, October 10th, Washington D.C.

alignment for any actor. Although ad-hoc based alliances or tacit understandings seem to be implicitly underlying this cautious stance, the volatility involved in the current situation can change any informal agreements or tacit understandings at any given moment in time.

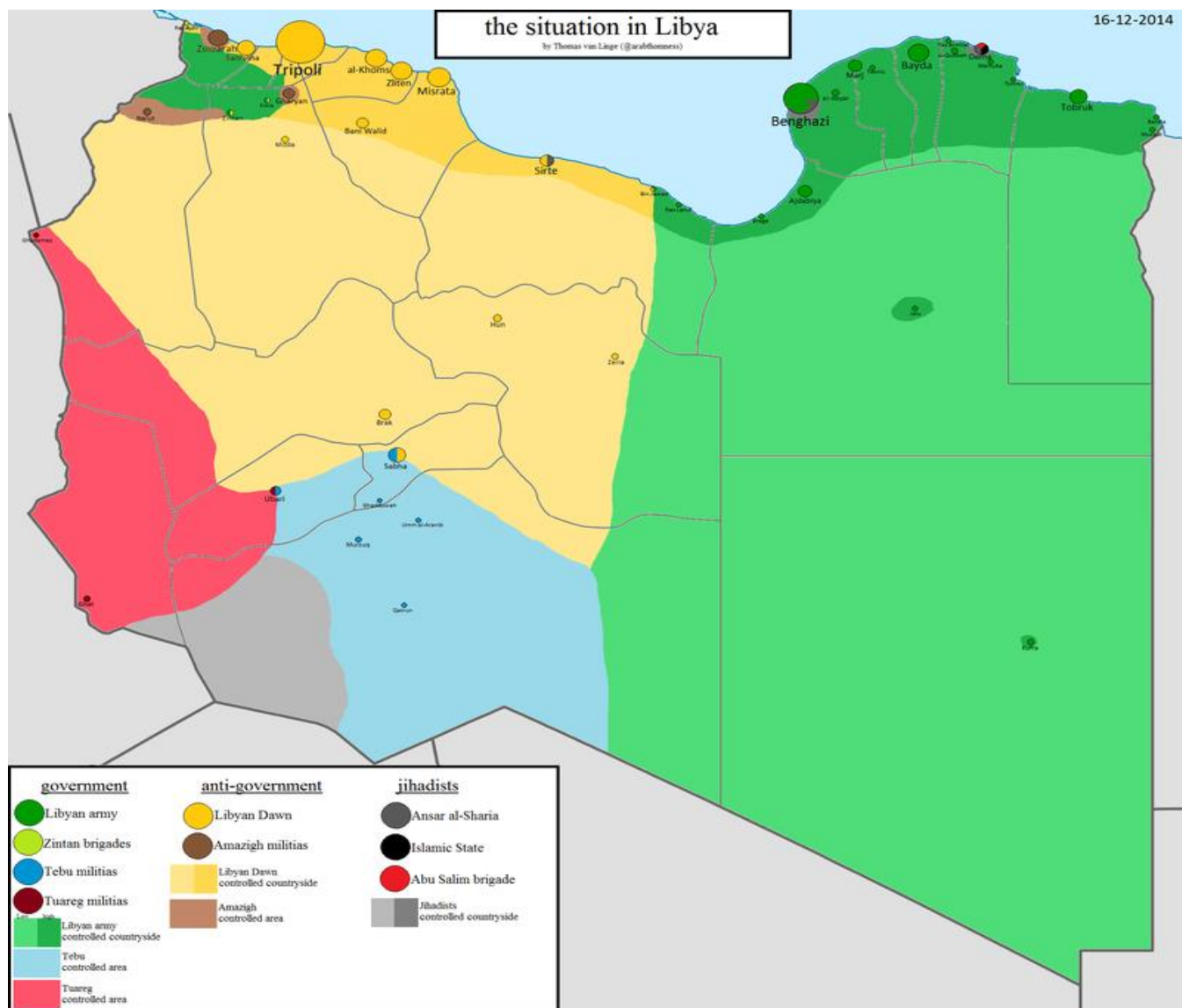
Baring these aforementioned realities on the ground in mind and taking ISIS current capabilities into consideration, including the type of armaments circulating in Libya, estimated number of fighters, currently held territory, hopes to attract more fighters from outside Libya, e.g. Tunisia and Algeria, ISIS speculating to sway undecided, disillusioned or ultra-conservative *Libya Dawn* fighters into defection to join their cause, the most likely road for expansion in Libya is further West. At the moment expansion further east seems unlikely, since Egypt under President Al-Sisi and the United Arab Emirates⁷⁵ have declared their support for the internationally recognized government in Tobruk and already attacked ISIS from the air, after the brutal massacre of 21 Coptic Egyptian guest workers⁷⁶. Although attacks on the Egyptian border have been reported⁷⁷, expansion further east would attract even further intervention by Egypt, due to a constantly increasing Egyptian threat perception of ISIS and provoke an ongoing Egyptian airstrike campaign, which would disrupt IS recruitment and logistics. At present the Islamic State in Libya simply cannot yet absorb this caliber of organized, armed opposition.

⁷⁵ Black, Ian, (2015): “UAE’s leading role against ISIS reveals its wider ambitions.”, in: The Guardian, October 30th 2014, available under: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/30/uae-united-arab-emirates-leading-player-opposition-isis-middle-east>

⁷⁶ Malsin, Jared, (2015): “Egyptian air strikes in Libya kill dozens of Isis militants.”, in: The Guardian, February 17th 2015, available under: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/16/egypt-air-strikes-target-isis-weapons-stockpiles-libya>

⁷⁷ Simon, Steven (2015): “Egypt’s Security Challenge: ISIS, Sinai, and the Libyan Border.”, February 19th, 2015, Middle East Institute, Available under: <http://www.mei.edu/content/at/egypts-security-challenge-isis-sinai-and-libyan-border>

The Frontlines in Libya as of End of December 2015⁷⁸



⁷⁸ Zachary, Beauchamp (2014): “*Libya’s horrible year in one map.*”, in: Vox, December 25th 2014, available under: <http://www.vox.com/2014/12/25/7447099/libya-conflict-map> ; The map has been provided by Dutch Human Rights activist and Mapping-Expert, Thomas Linge, available under Twitter Account @arabthomness ; <https://twitter.com/arabthomness/status/544882879151763456>

Further explanations of Graphic “The Frontlines in Libya as of End of December 2014”

1. The main stronghold of ISIS is located in Derna, on the shores of the Mediterranean within the Eastern shoreline of Libya and the sphere of influence of the Libyan Army and int. recognized government in Tobruk. (Colored in green)
2. The second area of influence of ISIS is located in Benghazi as it controls swaths of territory in the city and surrounding countryside. (Colored in grey and black)
3. Another outpost of ISIS is former dictator Gadhafi’s hometown of Sirte, located in the West of the country on the sea road to the capital Tripoli.
4. The internationally unrecognized counter-Government in Tripoli with its Libya Dawn coalition. (Colored in yellow)
5. Islamist and criminal networks partially control Libya’s Deep South, use it for criminal activity, including human trafficking, smuggling of weapons, narcotics, and as an inroad into the country as well as training ground. (Colored in red)

6) Possible Explanations – Areas of Limited Statehood

The current, rather chaotic situation in Libya is dominated by localized armed conflict and the efforts of various actors to establish modes of governance, even though existing parallel to one another. Decision making on the local level in the territories under the control of a specific tribe or their respective militias is achieved informally and on an ad-hoc basis, which ultimately further diminishes the existing centralized governance structures of the state. This however also happens in Libya on the national level. For example, the Libyan National Bank has declared its neutrality in the conflict between both warring governments and decided to distribute the revenues of Libya’s crude oil exports to both governments in Tobruk and Tripoli⁷⁹. Moreover ISIS in Libya is keen on

⁷⁹Kirckpatrick David D. (2015): “*One of Libya’s Rival Governments Moves to Control Oil Revenue.*”, in: New York Times, APRIL 5th, 2015, available under: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/06/world/middleeast/one-of-libyas-rival-governments-moves-to-control-oil-revenue.html>

dismantling the existing governance structure and replacing it with their own organizational values and governance system through the application of Sharia. The establishment of a “Sharia police”, the so called Hisbah, furthermore the continuous targeting of government representatives such as judges, police officers and administrative clerks, are proof of these efforts⁸⁰. These continuous parallel undertakings to either dismantle the state or capitalize on the existing governance structures for the benefit of one’s own faction, can be analyzed by International relations theory as well.

Thomas Risse, a German political scientist of note, has developed a mode of explaining highly complex situations as prevalent as those in Libya. Risse defines a state as a hierarchical structure of authority. This means, that the state has the authority to hierarchically conceive, impose and enforce central decision making for a national collective, within the territorial boundaries of that particular state. States ultimately command what Risse called “domestic sovereignty,” meaning the formal organization of political authority within a state and the ability of the authorities to exercise effective control. In this view, the ability to enforce the law and the monopoly on the use of violence is a constitutive feature of the state, ultimately enabling to distinguish between statehood as an authoritative structure and the actual outcome in each respective empirical case⁸¹.

In this view, areas of limited statehood represent a space of a given country, where central authorities, meaning governments, lack the capability to implement and ultimately enforce rules and authoritative decisions and or in which the legitimate monopoly over the usage of violence is lacking, at least temporarily. The ability to enforce rules is restricted to certain dimensions such as territory, specific policy, social and temporal

⁸⁰ Freedom House Country Report on Libya (2015): <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/libya> ; retrieved December 1st 2015

⁸¹ Risse, Thomas (2012): “*Governance Configurations in Areas of Limited Statehood - Actors, Modes, Institutions, and Resources.*”, in: Sonderforschungsbereich 700; Working Paper Series, No.32, April 2012, p. 6

areas. It consequently follows that the opposite of “limited statehood” is not “unlimited”, but “consolidated” statehood, meaning that spaces of a country in which the legitimate authority enjoys the monopoly over the application of force and the ability to impose and enforce authoritative decisions⁸².

For Risse, the purpose of a state is to provide governance by ensuring the availability of certain public goods such as security, welfare and a system of political and social institutions to generate and implement hierarchical and authoritative political decisions. Governance does happen in areas of limited statehood as well, where the state lacks the monopoly to enforce rules. The actors within governance can either be the state itself, non-state actors such as NGOs, private companies or local authorities such as tribes. The way in which governance is ultimately exercised and distributed, is called by Risse “modes of governance”. He differentiates between seven modes of governance that can be empirically observed and can exist besides one another⁸³. The most relevant of these seven modes of governance in the case of Libya and ISIS’s expansion in North Africa, is the so called situation of Parallel Governance⁸⁴.

In a Parallel Governance setting, state, non-state actors, as well as domestic and international actors exist besides one another competing for resources and power, sometimes detrimentally opposed to one another, sometimes cooperating. The mode in which governance is dispensed, is non-hierarchical and non-cooperative, due to a lack of either central governance structures or weak institutions, but also (deliberate) lack of coordination among the actors. The means to project authority and ultimately power is linked however to the availability of specific tools or resources. Considering each individual case, the manner in which these are endowed upon the actors within a Parallel

⁸² Ibid. p. 7

⁸³ Ibid. p. 7

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 24

Governance setting, can vary greatly. Ultimately, Risse albeit does not specify what these resources are, nor how and to what extent they are used.

Shaul Mishal, another scholar of note, however specified these tools or resources further in his influential paper “*The Network State: Triangular Relations in Middle Eastern Politics*.”⁸⁵ Ultimately and logically, there can only be three types of resources available to a political actor: symbolic, utilitarian or coercive. Symbolic resources are systems of meaning and can be used for persuasive measures to ensure control over a population by either obedience or compliance. The latter is given freely and voluntarily, the result of the persuasive forces behind symbolic resources; the former is a result of hierarchy and does not necessarily imply freely given consent, but one out of necessity. In the case of ISIS in Libya, symbolic resources were inextricably linked to the ways in which the Islamic State is trying to communicate propaganda through its own and international media, but also through its communication, negotiation and interaction with local tribes and affiliates, either through violent or non-violent means. Utilitarian resources represent a means to an end and imply a form of compensation for given compliance or consent. Governance measures can include enticements for citizens to participate in the political arena or legitimize the current hierarchical order by means of compensation. Currently the internationally recognized Libyan government in Tobruk is trying to seize assets abroad and widen its control over financial means, to ensure its ability to pay the salaries of state servants⁸⁶.

At least in theory, these state servants dispense the government’s authoritative and hierarchical decisions on the local level and need to be compensated accordingly. Since

⁸⁵ Shaul Mishal & Ilan Talmud: “*The Network State: Triangular Relations in Middle Eastern Politics*.”, in: *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 37, Issue No. 2, pp.176-207

⁸⁶ Kirckpatrick David D. (2015): “*One of Libya’s Rival Governments Moves to Control Oil Revenue*.”, in: *New York Times*, APRIL 5th, 2015, available under: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/06/world/middleeast/one-of-libyas-rival-governments-moves-to-control-oil-revenue.html>

the acceptance of financial compensation reiterates the legitimacy and mutual recognition of parties in a social as well as legal, contractual setting, one can argue on the grounds of utilitarian resources as the government is trying to enhance its ability to govern efficiently. ISIS itself is also trying to achieve something similar. By helping the poor, distributing sweets to children and building up social rudimentary welfare structures as it did in Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State by offering something in return for the compliance of its “citizens”, has clearly a utilitarian – meaning compensatory agenda⁸⁷.

It is ultimately irrelevant, whether the consent/compliance of the local populace is established through fear of negative repercussion or genuine success at persuasion. Ultimately, Mishal argues that coercive resources are the last resort, when all other resources and measures have failed. Coercive resources are aimed to force opposing actors to submit to one’s authority and hierarchical decision making and naturally comprise the use of force or at least the threat of the use of force. In the case of Libya and its setting of Parallel Governance, it is clear that the violent efforts of all sides involved, represent the actors drive to seize control and the ability to dispense their preferred model of governance over the concerns and interests of others. The Islamic State’s efforts to assert Sharia in Libya are an adept and fitting example of a non-state actor with a set of specific political, social and religious values, trying to impose its organizational logic through the application of force, coercion and intimidation by means of public executions, corporeal punishment, politically motivated assassinations⁸⁸ and the use of threats.

⁸⁷ Zelin, Aaron Y. (2015): “*The Islamic State’s Model*.”, Washington Post, January 28th 2015, available under: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/01/28/the-islamic-states-model/>

⁸⁸ Tharoor, Ishaan (2014): “*Islamists carry out ‘public execution’ on a Libyan soccer field*.”, in: Washington Post, August 22nd, 2014, available under: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/08/22/islamists-carry-out-public-execution-on-a-libyan-soccer-field/>

Lastly, it clearly follows that the situation in Libya currently resembles *Parallel Governance*. ISIS, despite its local affiliates and their pledges of allegiance to the Syrian based headquarters of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, is a foreign actor to Libya, an outside element. Two domestic and opposing governments and their local affiliates are fighting a low profile civil war with one another countrywide to either absorb or defeat the other. The modes in which the remaining governance is dispensed are non-hierarchical and clearly non-cooperative, since rival governments naturally do not enact or care about the decision making of their rivals. ISIS does not cooperate in any way with either one of the two Libyan governments and seeks to dismantle the remaining, but weak institutions and replace them with its own set of rules and mode of governance, dominated by coercive as well as persuasive measures – meaning the aforementioned intimidation and propaganda efforts. Lastly, the resource endowment of the actors varies and each actor is keen to use the tools at hand to gain more legitimacy, internal and external support, and ultimately power. Both governments in Tobruk and Tripoli are aligned with local militias and tribes in a continuously changing environment of ad-hoc cooperation, confrontation and cooptation⁸⁹. The strength of their forces varies and both governments seek support from other states and the international community to establish their symbolic, utilitarian and coercive resources. Each government is trying to market itself as the sole sovereign over Libya and claims the sole right of international representation and authority to hierarchically dispense governance. Recognition from the international community in turn brings authority and legitimacy. Both governments are trying to size control over Libya's sizeable oil exports to ensure their capability to act and dispense utilitarian governance in the form of subsidies, salaries, welfare and social security. Since no side has the upper hand within the coercive resource dimension, which in essence means hard power, Libya finds itself in a deadlock. This in turn plays into the

⁸⁹ Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed & Barr Nathaniel (2015): “*Dignity and Dawn: Libya's Escalating Civil War.*“ in, International Center for Counterterrorism (ICCT) – The Hague, Research Paper, February 2015, p.

hands of the Islamic State and all other non-governmental actors, who thrive in an environment of weak institutions and limited statehood.

7) Outlook

Prognoses on, where Libya will head next, are nearly impossible to give. Not only is the situation rather chaotic, but the ad-hoc nature of developments on the ground makes it harder to predict any secure outcome of the current crisis. However, a few statements can be made in good faith. Without the cessation of hostilities between the two rival governments in Tobruk and Tripoli, the Islamic State's Libyan branch is free to thrive and build its strength mostly unhindered in the areas ungoverned by either government in Tobruk or Tripoli.

Without an internally or externally initiated process of national, political reconciliation or some form of functioning unity or national salvation government, Libya will undoubtedly further slide into deeper chaos and protracted insecurity. As large ungoverned swaths of territory in Libya at present already give a grim picture of localized armed conflict, lawlessness and anarchy, a failed state dystopia as in Somalia is no longer an unthinkable scenario. A second Somalia, right across the southern border of the European Union, is undoubtedly in no one's interest. The Islamic State has made its intentions clear in word and deed to further expand in Libya, as the growing number of fighters and the propaganda in infamous publications like Dabiq indicates⁹⁰.

Although it cannot bring the same resources, such as sectarian strife, or ethnic grievances to bear at all or in a very limited capacity as in the case of Iraq or Syria, the self-proclaimed Caliphate has made some noteworthy and alarming inroads into Libya. Many more are to follow, if neither the Libyans themselves nor an international coalition unite

⁹⁰ Interview with Al Qhatani, designated leader of the Islamic State in Libya, in: *"From the battle of Al-Ahزاب to the war of coalitions."*, Dabiq, Vol. 11, 2015, p. 60-63

against the Islamic States colony in Libya. The strategy paper of the Islamic State (translated by the Quilliam Foundation) on Libya has made clear that it considers the country to be an ideal springboard to Europe. As the Islamic State builds its strength in Libya, the threats of attacks in Europe partly made by terrorists from Libya⁹¹, might a few weeks ago just have raised some eyebrows. However, since the grim reality of the horrendous, meticulously coordinated terror attacks of ISIS terrorists in Paris on November 13th 2015 with at least 120 dead, no one can any longer doubt the intentions and capabilities of the self-proclaimed Caliphate to strike at the very heart of Western societies, or ignore the expanding ISIS threat in North Africa right across the Mediterranean Sea and the southern borders of the EU.

⁹¹ Malsin, Jared, (2015): “*Egyptian air strikes in Libya kill dozens of Isis militants.*”, in: The Guardian, February 17th 2015, available under: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/16/egypt-air-strikes-target-isis-weapons-stockpiles-libya>

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