Libya: The Death of Authoritarianism and the Birth of Democracy

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Abstract: This essay offers a basic framework for analyzing Libyan democratization by looking at the deficit of a modern (post-modern) political transition élite and the potential of civil society.The Libyan transition to democracy has covered an extensive time frame during which the state has regressed politically. After the transatlantic exit, all that remained was tribal politics and military weakness. Thus, the absence of checks and balances, which rendered the country resistant to democratic reform, yet vulnerable to civil war.The *Jamahiriya* (state of the masses) functioned along relatively weak administrative and security institutions, as such the National Transitional Council (NTC) hoped, upon assuming power, to reconstruct major state structures and embark on a seamless transition to democracy, within one year. However, almost eight years following the end of the Qaddafi regime,and Libya is still in a transition phase. The Libyan transition is remarkable because this is the state's first democratic and state building attempt since independence.Also, the nuances of the Libyan transition will greatly impact the type of democracy that will eventually materialize.

I.   INTRODUCTION

"Last week I was in Tripoli and Benghazi. I saw the hunger of a people eager to get on with reclaiming their country, writing themselves a new chapter of freedom and democracy…The people of the Arab world have made their aspirations clear. They want transparency and accountability of government. An end to corruption; the fair and consistent rule of law. The chance to get a job and to have a stake in how their country is run. The freedom to communicate, and the chance to participate in shaping society as citizens with rights and responsibilities." David Cameronaddressing the U.N General Assembly in September 22, 2011.

The 2011 outbreak of mass-civilian uprisings in Libya were a representation of local uprisings of a regional crusade for democracy, human rights, and freedom, termed the Arab Spring or Arab Awakening. The revolutionary spark that started in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, when Mohamed Bouazizi set himself ablaze in Sidi Bouzid to protest the humiliation and loss of income visited upon him by the Tunisian police (McMurray and Ufheil-Somers, 2013), kindled a blazing mix of hope and anger that had been suppressed for several years. Most of the Arab society was fighting to introduce human rights and greater political freedom and to transform and rehabilitate state structures heretofore unknown to them. Aided by media houses like Al Jazeera, people around the Arab world watched their counterparts fight for human rights and democratic institutions. A shared sense of anguish accompanied by the realization that democracy trumps authoritarianism (perhaps an unanticipated upshot of Pan-Arabism) unified people across state borders who shared similar grievances. The Arab Spring was the first momentous occurrence to destabilize Middle Eastern politics. The outset of these uprisings promised to end decades of Arab exceptionalism and introduce Arab nations to the third wave of democratization.[1]Why then did the revolution that had so many promises fail? Is a democratic Libyan state feasible?

The answer to my research question is grounded in understanding the performance of the transition élite following the end of the Qaddafi regime.[2]This essay holds that the Libyan revolution failed due to the near absence of a modern élite to create a strong and democratic transitional government. The transition élite in Libya depended on pre-modern techniques in an effort to democratize. In the aftermath of the fall of President Mu'ammar Qaddafi on October 20, 2011, there was hope that Libya would flourish and experience slow, but steady political growth.[3] The Libyan revolution promised the reemergence of democratic politics and popular

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[1]The Arab Spring promised to introduce democratic politics to the Middle East and reassert popular sovereignty against the heretofore corrupt and geriatric leaders.

[2] According to Pareto (1915-19) the governing elite comprises "individuals who directly or indirectly play some considerate part in government" (Pareto 1915-19: 1423-4).

[3] British Prime Minister, David Cameron said "people in Libya have an even greater chance after this news, of building themselves a strong democraticfuture"http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8839970/Death-of-Gaddafi-is-a-momentous-opportunity-for-Libya-says-Barack-Obama.html

sovereignty. However, Libya has regressed economically, politically and socially. Following the fall of Tripoli into rebel coalition hands, the diversity of actors emerging on the political scene increased tremendously; militant groups remain a threat, frequent targeted killings of politicians and civic actors, and economic growth decelerated (as Libya sank into recession). The absence of security is the ultimate expression of a pre-modern notion of statehood and sovereignty. According to Wolfram Lacher, while "well-defined political parties, camps and institutions appear to be operating in neighboring Tunisia and Egypt, external observers have trouble identifying and placing political actors in the new Libya" (Lacher 2013: 5). The political climate in Libya since the second quarter of 2011 has been destabilized rendering the need to understand state building (and state formation) paramount in 21st century scholarship. Beyond wide-scale violence, the impact of the transition has been devastating on public institutions, national economy, political structure, and social cohesion of Libya and neighboring states in the Sahel.

II.   POST-QADDAFI LIBYA

The intervention that toppled Qaddafi was crafted on the notion of the Right to Protect (R2P) and human rights' concerns, yet the mandate that legalized Operation Unified Protector (OUP), neither mapped out nor adopted a post-Qaddafi plan of action (as was the case in Kosovo). In Kosovo, for instance, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was mandated on June 10, 1999, following the end of the NATO military intervention by UNSCR 1244. This resolution authorized member states to establish a security presence to deter hostilities, demilitarize the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and facilitate the return of refugees. The mandate also demanded that the Secretary-General establish an international civil presence in Kosovo to provide an interim administration for Kosovo under which the people could enjoy substantial autonomy and self-government.[4]Chivvis (2014) maintains that during the 2011 Libyan war, the interim leadership (NTC) largely objected to foreign ground force deployments, advocating only airspace support and weapons' supply. The elected General National Congress (GNC)sustained the decision of the NTC even with the multiplication of revolutionary brigades.[5] The GNC's decision to refuse foreign military presence was partly due to calls by postwar rebel leaders, who "were deeply concerned with their legitimacy, which they feared a foreign troop deployment would undermine" (Chivvis and Martini 2013: 5). Coupled with the interim government's opposition, the UNSCR 1973 explicitly ruled out an "occupying force." Thus, rendering NATO's continuous presence illegal after October 31, 2011.

The transatlantic exit resulted in the makings of civil war sparked by extremists and militant groups like Ansar al-Sharia and the Zintan militia. The first post-revolutionary attacks occurred in February 2012 when "militias raided a Tawerghan refugee camp in Janzur and killed seven civilians, three of them children, in what they claim was a weapons' inspection" (Siebens and Case 2012: 23). As is typical of a pre-modern élite,the NTC failed to sanction or investigate this initial attack, enabling revolutionary brigades to continue perpetuating abuses on civilians. The dilapidating security conditions were neither limited to human rights' abuses nor racial feuds. Ethnic clashes also ensued between Arabs in Zuwara and Berbers resulting in the loss of at least two hundred lives in April 2012. According to the International Crisis Group (2012), these conflicts could neither be resolved by the local councils nor the justice system, because of the inability of the interim government to follow-up on agreements that had been previously negotiated by tribal leaders to deploy security forces meant to impeach extremists and militias.

The tribal system (council) is one of the major problems stalling Libyan democratization; loyalty has thus far been to tribe rather than state. Tribes have become self-sufficient and powerful to where they are able to afford their own security and administer justice. Not only did traditional leaders (councils of wise men) install themselves as peace negotiators for the tribal militias and armed brigades, they also influenced political outcomes.[6] For instance in Zintan, the *Shura Council* became the highest order to which both civilian and military cases deferred (Lacher 2013). Loyalty to these tribal structures supersededacknowledgment for the justice system, further strengthening the periphery while the central government suffered major structural weakness.

Another profound flaw in post-Qaddafi Libya has been the continuation of tribal politics by the transition elite. Instead of engaging in innovative problem-solving (political inclusivity) at the onset of the transition, the NTC (and subsequently, the GNC and later GNA) rather administered the transition state similar to the *Jamahiriya*; along tribal lines.[7] Qaddafi exploited tribalism as anapparatus to consolidate his position and

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[4] See complete document, "UNMIK United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo" at
http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmik/background.shtml
[5] A power vacuum was established in the wake of Qaddafi's oust, as such the NTC acted as the unelected government until July 7, 2012, when the GNC won the national elections and assumed power in Tripoli.
[6] "Outside the big cities of the north-west, tribal loyalties were often the deciding factor. In Benghazi, for example, six of the nine independents, each of them associated with a particular tribe or party, were elected on less than 2 percent of the votes" (Lacher 2013, p. 10).
[7]Tribal structures are a pertinent fragment of the Arab culture.See Ellie Kedourie, *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*, 1992; Larry Diamond, *Why Are There No Arab Democracies?* 2010.

enforce direct democracy, but not as an instrument to administer the rule of law. Only he ruled and governed Libya.These problems were further heightened by the NTC whose party was formed along counter tribal lines (and lacked legitimacy because it assumed power as a de facto government without electoral accolade) to oppose tribes that were loyal to Qaddafi's government, marking the continuance of tribalism into the transitional phase. Given that Libya's transition élite was identical with the old regime, tribalism ultimately became the expression of a conception of sovereignty. Loyalty to tribe contributed towards stalling democratization, as different tribal groups clamored for resources and state control. The intensity of tribal politics in Libya, corrupted and even threatened the very foundation of democracy.

Moreover, the balance of power between local and regional actors was undefined, and interest groups that formed at the tribal level competed with one another. The absence of judicial and security institutions only further rendered the transition government powerless, hence the state's dependence on militias as power enforcers.An example of this dysfunction was portrayed when the terms of the constitutional process were amended shortly before polling day, such that the constitutional committee could be voted directly by the people when initially they were to be appointed by the GNC.[8] And because the judicial system was equally as dysfunctional as the state system, the interim government did not have any professional peacekeeping force to ensure security or handover suspects to the courts. Tribal structures became the deciding agents in the north-eastern region of the country, with no central authority.

None of these is to say that Libya is incapable of transitioning, or that tribal ties are entirely to blame for the ongoing instability. Efforts to democratize are being made by the GNA. Following the Skhirat agreement, the GNA was tasked with asserting itself as the sole, legitimate government in Libya with Fayez al-Sarraj as Prime minister.[9] In an attempt to restore peace, Sarraj announced general elections to be held in December 2018.[10]Sarraj's decision to organize elections is the most effective way to create legitimacy in the war-torn country because in the electoral process, "citizens organize themselves according to their various social, economic and political activities, in a multiplicity of groups and associations. It is the existence of these self-activated groups which gives vitality and power to the political institutions on which rests the legitimacy of government" (Kedourie 1992).

Then again, it is impossible for a state to democratize without nationwide recognition and political inclusiveness. Libya is split between the U.N-backed GNA government, which rose to power in Tripoli following the Skhirat Agreement of 2015, General Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) in Benghazi, the Tobruk House of Representatives and (to a small extent) the Sanussi loyalists. Tribalism and the unfortunate security condition of the state has rendered the new government weak and void of legitimacy.[11]The GNA has been unable to provide effective military backing to restrain militias and extremists in the East, leaving the LNA to gain legitimacy and popular support in that region.[12]Nevertheless, media houses like Alaraby and Al-Jazeera report that the U.N-backed prime minister has also called for a national ceasefire and unity of rival groups in Tripoli and Cyrenaica.

The stakes are highest for the government of Sarraj, because failure to restore the Libyan state can potentially result in the end of Sarraj's administration, either by means of a vote of no confidence from within the GNA party or more likely, the government of Sarraj can lose legality and further fail to assert its authority nationwide, particularly in the absence of security. At the very least, a continuation of the civil war is not inevitable given the tribal and militia factions that define the country. Even though a ceasefire was reached between Haftar and Sarraj in July 2017, the leaders of the Tobruk House were absent. To enhance the probabilities of resolving the immense range of problems plaguing the country, the role of tribalism in the Libyan transition needs to be reckoned.

Sweeping analytic statements will not lead me to a complete explanation of the Libyan state. Seeing as my goal is to understand what caused the outbreak of violence that occurred in Libya following the end of Qaddafi's regime, it is paramount that my study analyzes the intricacies of the Libyan transition.

III.   UNDERSTANDING THE LIBYAN TRANSITION

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[8]This amendment was initiated because the GNC suspected a boycott from the north-eastern region.

[9] "The main points of the agreement reiterate the view that the House of Representatives in Tobruk serves as the legislative authority and calls for the formation of a government of national accord. The government-to-be has the daunting task of starting the process of rebuilding national institutions and restoring security in the country." Karim Mezramhttp://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/is-the-skhirat-agreement-libya-s-first-step-to-a-brighter-future

[10] The general election (presidential and parliamentary) was postponed to early 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/libya-election-place-early-2019-envoy-181109073902372.html

[11] In lieu of definitions and classifications, state weakness largely consists of the state providing many, but not all, of the required political goods (public services) to its citizens (Rotberg 2013).

[12] "Tripoli, Benghazi, and other cities have seen large demonstrations in support of "fighting terrorism". In Tripoli, the crowd's demands have focused on the establishment of state security institutions and largely ignored Haftar. In the east, backing for Haftar is more explicit, though Benghazi has also seen mobilization against the campaign. Haftar himself has interpreted these demonstrations as providing him with a popular mandate" (Lacher 2014, p. 2).

1. The (Un)Democratic Concept

How well are existing theories equipped to explain the ongoing trajectories of the Libyan transition? Is Libya inherently undemocratic? Even though Indonesia, Turkey, Mali, Bangladesh, and Senegal have been cited as Islamic democracies by authors like Kubicek (2015) and Ahmad (2008), there exists a wide range of scholars who maintain that democracy is not compatible with Middle Eastern politics, culture and religion. According to Kamrava (2007) scholars who hold this argument often fall into two categories. In the first group are Robert Patai (1983) and Huntington (1993) who see Arabic cultures as an impediment to democratization. While the second category speak of Arabic cultures as innately prone to irrationality and violence (Kedourie 1992a). However, there exists a third category, championed by Jacques Derrida, and he holds that Islam is "the other democracy" (Derrida 2005). Finally, there are others who maintain that the so-called Arabic exceptionalism is the result of certain explicit anti-democratic religious and cultural structures. Not only do these religious and cultural structures render civilization and globalization resilient to democratic ideals and norms, but also to diversity, capitalism, and modernism (Huntington 1996 and Lewis 2002).

The ideal political system is democratic "to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections" (Huntington 1991). However, Huntington does not point out in the *Third Wave of Democratization,* that to go beyond this minimalist definition and label a country democratic only because it guarantees free and fair elections is to turn the notion of democracy into a fragmented noun, rather than a holistic descriptive category. Huntington (1991) treats democracy as an isolated concept separate from other political structures like rule of law and human rights. A successful democracy is reliant on its ability to live up to the democratic ideals that brought it to power. Democratic elections by Huntington's (1991) standard can result in partiality, hence undemocratic governments, if the turnout is poor. The poor turnout at the parliamentary elections in Libya was an indication that democracy was about to be constructed on fragile grounds. Security conditions restricted movement and made it impossible for members of the electoral commission to coordinate elections in all parts of the country.

Huntington (1991) advances a conventional definition of democratic elections as "elections, open, free and fair, are the essence of democracy, the inescapable sine qua non. Governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, shortsighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interests, and incapable of adopting policies demanded by the public good. These qualities make such governments undesirable, but they do not make them undemocratic" (Huntington 1991). By this standard, elections have the obligation to be free and fair to be categorized as a majoritarian democracy. Libya is proof that Huntington's definition of democratic elections is only coherent and will guarantee legitimacy only if elections are open, free, fair and encompassing a majority of the adult population. Libya has had two elections yet failed to reinstate functioning democratic structures and institutions.[13] The election of governing bodies has amounted to little overall growth of the state, as the government of Abdallah al-Thinni (in the Eastern city of Bayda)[14] failed in its duty to exercise firm control of the military forces and corrupt practices continued to thrive under his leadership. Also, a successful democracy requires some degree of freedom of expression and assembly; unfortunately, both variables are still under construction even with the end of Qaddafi's regime.[15]

In addition, Huntington's (1991) democratization process is crafted in three stages, 1) bringing about the end of the nondemocratic regime, 2) the inauguration of the democratic regime, and 3) the consolidation of the democratic system. While the undemocratic regime of Qaddafi was brought to end and replaced with a transitional government, the most important stage–consolidation of the democratic system–has yet to pick up momentum. Electoral institutions are not yet in place, and liberal democracy is chiefly fragile. Inaugurating and consolidating the democratic system has been near impossible not because of Islam or the Arabic culture, but because a large pre-modern state éliteis failing to install itself democratically, resulting in national security problems, the survival of the *Jamahiriya* and economic instability. The Libyan case challenges well-defined theories of democratization because the structural legacy of the old regime that survived are extremely difficult to reform or even reverse.

The absence of a long-term democratic leader coupled with lack of institutions aimed at guiding effective resource distribution has enabled the gradual collapse of the state in the aftermath of Qaddafi's fall. Democratizing Libya will only be possible "when the balance of power begins to tip against the state élites, and a greater parity develops between their powers and those of social actors" (Kamrava 2007). Even though Libya

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[13] The first elections replaced the NTC under Mustafa Abdul Jalil with the GNC in July 2012, under the leadership of Nouri Abusahmain which was later replaced by the House of Representatives (HoR) in June 2014. See results from the 2012 elections http://pomed.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Libyan-Party-List-Results.pdf and https://www.libyaherald.com/2012/07/18/party-results/
[14] Al-Thinni's government was formed by the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) elected in June 2014 (Lacher 2015). However, Libya's supreme court declared the internationally recognized parliament as unconstitutional https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-parliament/libya-faces-chaos-as-top-court-rejects-elected-assembly-idUSKBN0IQ0YF20141106
[15] See "Free Speech in Post-Gaddafi Libya." https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2013/04/freedom-of-speech-in-libya/

is caught in political, economic and military disorganization, this essay demonstrates that society has yet to abandon the quest for democracy.

2. Dynamics of the Libyan Transition

There no doubt exists vast amounts of literature that point to the fragile security structure and struggling economic growth as having hampered the Libyan transition to democracy. Both variables have been instrumental in forming the dynamics of Libyan democratization. However, this section is not a discussion of the activities of militias, extremist groups or the deteriorating security atmosphere in Libya, but a follow-up on the economic and social climate following the collapse of the old order. Changes in the economy of the transitioning nation are important to the democratization process because economic development (among other variables) brings about and sustains democracy. In this light, Przeworski et al. (2000) argue that the probabilities of transitions change depending on developmental levels. The main purpose of this section is to introduce and defend principles of analysis regarding the plausibility of the survival of democracy in post-Qaddafi Libya.

Per scholars like Lipset (1959 and 1960) and Curtwright (1963), the success of every democracy is partly dependent on specific socio-economic stipulations. Economic development per Lipset's (1960) study encompasses urbanization, education, industrialization and wealth. Wealth was evident in Qaddafi's Libya, and industrialization was forthcoming.[16] Huntington (1991) cites Libya among authoritarian governments that ensured economic prosperity, despite the coercive relationship between state and society. Libya was considered wealthy and encompassing of a literate society relative to typical war-torn nations in the developing world. As such, there were expectations for Libya to recover its economy and transition quickly–one of the reasons for the NTC's short-term reconstruction strategy for post-conflict Libya.[17] On paper, Libya was financially capable of covering the cost of post-war reconstruction. Nevertheless, failure to ensure national security adversely affected economic recovery, as militias and extremists seized control of oil production facilities.[18] Fallouts in the security sector eventually resulted in lower oil production and foreign investments, which forced the country into recession in 2016 as noted by the World Bank Group report. Faced with recession, the GNA will require foreign investment and aid, until the state can once more depend on oil production. With increased oil production, the state will still be tasked with industrialization, diversification and privatization (requisites for capitalism).

Another premodern administrative technique that further marred Libyan democratization was corruption. The transitioning Libyan state suffers from distributive capitalism. The end of Qaddafi's regime did not result in the end of corruption in Libya. Corruption is predominantly manifested in the post-revolutionary administration and public sector.[19]Corruption in post-Qaddafi Libya is among the main causes accounting for why the transition regime in Libya has been incapable of accomplishing its socio-economic and developmental objectives (Wijaya 2016). The absence of a modern state structure for a coherent and suitable distribution of state resources and power has created economic and social imbalance. The transition state elite's distributive largesse was adopted from the Qaddafi administration.[20]President Qaddafi was more concerned with spending income generated from the distribution of raw material to quell political discontent, than enforcing socio-economic growth. This system of administration was challenging (then and problematic now) because "if predefined social institutions are founded on weak collective interests when state building commences, their common identities have the likelihood to be easily obliterated through the state's distributive largesse" (Vandewalle 1998).[21]In "distributive states" per Vandewalle's (1998) analysis, state and local domains emerge not as agents to extract wealth but to spend it.

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[16]The Qaddafi regime soon came to the realization that their revolutionary movement had become predisposed to the need for rehabilitation. "It is important to restructure in a way that does not repeat the mistake of concentrating wealth in the hands of a few," Qaddafi said. "The first target in this privatization will be the citizens of Libya and increasing their private ownership." This statement followed an announcement of economic reforms at the World Economic Forum 2005 in Davos. Thomas Crampton, "Qaddafi son sets out economic reforms: Libya plans to shed old and begin a new era", *New York Times,* https://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/28/news/qaddafi-son-sets-out-economic-reforms-libya-plans-to-shed-old-and-begin.html

[17] "A declaration on August 3, 2011, delineated its authorities and outlined a roadmap for transition to elected institutions and constitutional government. The NTC was to hand over power within a year of formally declaring the country liberated from Qaddafi's rule. It would have 90 days to write an electoral law, appoint an electoral commission, and call elections for a national constituent assembly. These elections were to be held within 240 days of liberation…" (Chivvis and Martini 2013, p. 36).

[18]Oil production, which is Libya's main natural resource has remained "low due to insecurity and conflict" (Lacher 2015). State élites and non-state brigades are vying for portions of the nation's natural resources. One of such occasions was when tensions erupted between the GNC and House of Representatives (HoR) because both governments attempted to seize control of the National Oil Corporation (NOC) and the Central Bank.

[19]"Tripoli-based Prime Minister Omar al-Hassi was forced to resign over charges of financial mismanagement" (Murray April 2015). https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/libya-tale-governments-150404075631141.html

[20]"The Qaddafi regime had a policy of usingoil revenues to provide subsidies and wage increases tosuppress popular discontent. Subsequent governmentshave continued with this same strategy of trying to buypeace. In fact, the budget for 2012 increased subsidiesfor fuel, food, and electricity to 11 percent of GDP, andthe 2013 budget further increased these subsidies tonearly 14 percent of GDP" (Khan and Mezran, 2013. p. 5).

[21]Previously cited in my paper "An Examination of the Sierra Leone War" 2017.

Under favorable conditions, state-building efforts are challenging. In the Libyan case, the challenge is further compounded by the inexperience of the new government and minimal western support. Libya has a long road ahead, but basic state-building efforts are required for the completion of the democratization process. While the development of specific solutions is beyond the scope of this paper, I will quickly sketch out one plausible starting point. The post-revolutionary government needs to adopt modern problem-solving skills to target the economics of the country. In this regard, governmental institutions have been installed to ensure that the daily efforts of millions of working civilians are transformed into real growth. There is a newly formed Libyan Audit Bureau aimed at targeting mismanagement of public funds and corruption. However, these efforts are primordial for a state that is dependent on hydrocarbon revenues for socio-economic welfare. There is an urgent need to make allowances for a macro-fiscal strategy with a dependable fiscal statute addressing Libya's economic objectives. Another way to diversity the economic sector, attract foreign direct investment and generate revenue is to expand non-oil industries like tourism, technology and construction. To this end, the government can set-up an investment fund to finance the development and expansion of such industries.

3. The Road to Democracy

The end of the Jamahiriya came with the crippling of state institutions, loss of legitimacy and monopoly over the means of violence and deteriorating administrative capacity. According to Chivvis and Martini (2013), Libyan public administration is weak and capacity building is needed to strengthen the state. Public certainty in the democratic progression of the state has fallen while frustration has risen. In the absence of permanent legitimate national state actors, regional and tribal sub-state actors have reinforced and will likely seek to hold onto their deep-rooted power. State weakness enabled society to instigate replacements of the decapitated structures; institutional replacement has been accompanied by the rise of a new type of organized crime–jihadism. Given the tumultuous atmosphere in Libya, and the absence of Western support, where is Libya to turn for lasting peace?

The Arab uprisings that swept across the Middle East in 2011 caught the world by surprise, and the desire for democratization by Libyans was even more shocking for academic observers. In the recent past, scholars of Middle Eastern affairs associated the failure of democracy in the region to the Arab culture and exceptionalism. Consequently, dominating a field where the whole range of models explain Middle Eastern authoritarian politics as the result of low levels of modernization. Although security and economic stability are fundamental in ensuring the safe passage to democracy, the role of a strong civil society is the ultimate solution to the chaotic Libyan politics. Granting, civil society is distinct from economic reconstruction, the economy conditions the potential of civil society engagement in important ways. The success of a strong civil society is determinant on the existence of a modern government, burgeoning economy (large middle class), and a strong judicial system; all of which are presently missing from the Libya.

Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1971) classifies civil society as a separate institution from the state and market, but through which the state attains approval.[22] Gramsci's definition demonstrates that civil society does not seek power from the state but holds the state accountable. Thereby rendering civil society, a necessary condition for the birth and survival of democracy.

Notwithstanding the sluggish political climate of Libya, civil society and civil society organizations (CSOs) have slowly been picking up momentum.[23]Even though a largely tribal society, political changes motivated by the 2011 revolution and subsequent weakness of the transition elite resulted in the birth of civil society. According to O'Donnell and Schmitter (2013), "The dynamics of the transition from authoritarian rule are not just a matter of elite dispositions, calculations, and pacts. If we have emphasized these aspects up to now, it is because they largely determinewhether or not an opening will occur at all and because they set important perimeters on the extent of possible liberalization and eventual democratization. Once something has happened…a generalized mobilization is likely to occur, which we choose to describe as the resurrection of civil society." (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 2013).

This understanding of civil society as being born out of a widespread mobilization or popular upsurge during transitions is true for the Libyan state. Civic engagement is fairly new in Libyan politics but is important for the growth of liberal democracy. While crucial for democratic transitions, Kamrava (2007) notes that civic engagement and participation is insufficient. He holds that civil society needs to be politicized for a democratic transition to succeed. The main difference between civil society and political society is that the former term is used to refer to a collection of non-governmental organizations with a presence in society. Politicizing civil society should not be taken to mean complete political transformation, like Kamrava (2007) suggests. Rather,

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[22] Both Marx and Gramsci contextualized the term civil society differently. Marx used civil society to mean the amalgamation of all economic activity. For Gramsci, civil society is an independent structure, separate from the market economy and bureaucratic power.
[23]Kamrava (2007) notes that there is "a subtle but important distinction needs to be drawn between "civil society" and civil society organizations (CSOs). CSOs are the constituent members of civil society, what Oxhorn calls "units of civil society" (Kamrava 2007, pp 206-207).

civil society is now tasked with the burden of leading the Libyan transition by promoting democratic ideals and values. "While civil society requires the space that only a democratic political regime can provide in order to fully develop, the emergence of civil society has historically preceded the advent of stable democratic regimes and is therefore to a certain extent independent of the existence of a democratic political regime" (Oxhorn 1995a and 1995b).

CSOs emerged after the 2011 revolution as volunteer groups focused on providing medical supplies, water and food to those civilians in dire need. By 2014, the number of CSOs had grown to at least 2 thousand (Perroux 2015). These CSOs consist of labor unions, political forums, and religious, women, recreational, mutual aid and humanitarian groups.[24] Civil society has been fundamental in educating the populace on their civic and political duty, while also bridging the gap between state and society. For instance, "Eye on the GNC" project was launched by the H2O team and Bokra Youth Organization to publicly provide "unprecedented and systematic information on the discussions and decisions of the legislative body" (Perroux 2015). Another group called "Bridge Libya" helped foster educational development and voter education campaigns. A number of these CSOs have been instrumental in keeping the transition afloat.[25]

In exploring the role of civil society in the socio-political construction of citizens' rights, it becomes evident that the limitation of civil society and CSOs in Libya is both a cause and result of the survival of Libya's status as a bunker state.[26] Citizen participation in the policymaking process is low, even in the GNA era; women, especially, constitute only a small percentage of the workforce, even though the state advocates equal rights between men and women. The success of the Libyan transition partly lies in the relationship between state and society, and failure of civil society and CSOs to influence government, renders social actors inconsequential. Libya will need a civil society model for a complete transition to democracy.

Identity: Identity and civil society are correlated in the democratization discussion because civil society consists of a variety of identities. During democratization, civil society seeks the survival of the state, thus can neither function nor succeed without identifying with robust democratic concepts. Hogg and Abrams (1988) define identity as "people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others." Per the findings of Perroux (2015), the revolution helped foster national spirit as it brought together scores of people loyal to the government against those who wanted to see it overthrown. For the first time, Libyans proudly identified with the revolution and as Libyans. See, Chart 1 below.

Chart 1
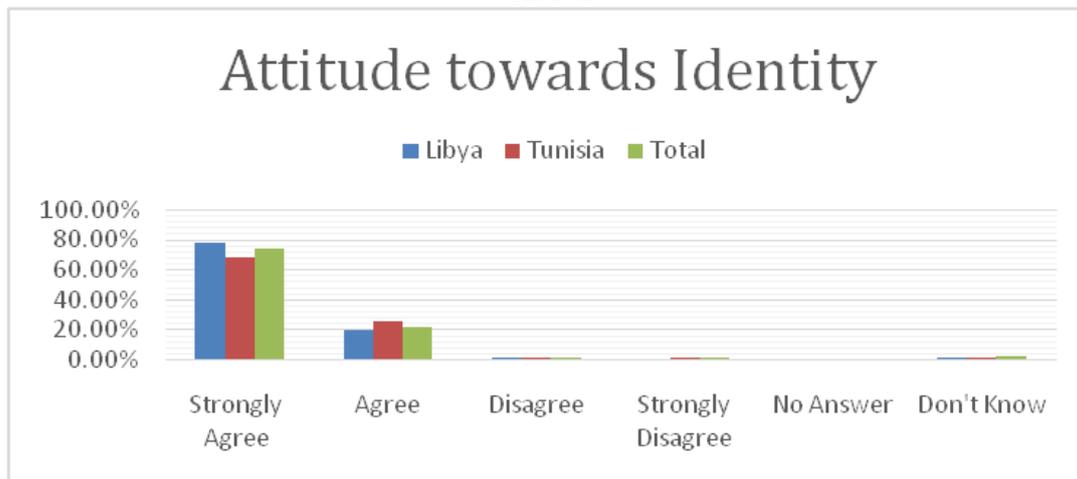
*Selected samples: Libya 2013, Tunisia 2013. Source: World Values Survey
http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp

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[24] A complete list of CSOs can be found at "Libyan Civil Society Organizations - UNDP in Libya"
www.ly.undp.org/content/dam/libya/docs/Libyan%20CSO%20Roster.pdf?download
[25] Even though a policy recommendation is beyond the scope of this essay, I will reiterate Chickering and Haley's (2007) call for the West to formulate two separate policies for Middle Eastern dialogue. One for the state and another that caters to the needs of society.
[26] "Bunker states tend to have highly coercive relationships with their societies and, overall, allow for the least degree of financial autonomy to the forces of the market and the middle classes. As such, they tend to exhibit the greatest hostility toward independent groups and organizations" (Kamrava 2007, pp 208-209). Watch Aljazeera and CCTV's YouTube for reports of social actors and activists that were threatened and/or killed for trying to influence policy.

When asked in a 2013 poll about the extent to which they identify with their country, 77.3% Libyans answered, "Strongly Agree." This percentage was higher than for Tunisia, indicating the success and importance of state identity.

Following the growth of extremism, successive failed transition governments, and a civil war, communal identity grew, and loyalty to the state was replaced with loyalty to tribe, neighborhood and kin. The security crisis unearthed regional and tribal sentiments across the country. Libyan identity is now defined by ethnicity more so than by nation and communal identity is now marred by confusion. Nonetheless, CSOs and musicians work hard to find a balance between national, regional and communal identity by undertaking initiatives like "my city is Libya" and "we are one" campaigns (Perroux 2015). These campaigns aim to promote unity and dialogue at a slow, but certain pace.

IV.   Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the Libyan transition following the end of the Qaddafi era. At the start of this essay is a brief background of post-revolutionary Libya. The background traces the underlying forces impacting the Libyan transition that portray an apparent political vacuum, yet no visible power struggle. The old apparatus collapsed during the 2011 political struggle leaving in its place a transitional government which has tried and failed to construct a permanent constitution and democratic elections. The transitional government has displayed a lack of power, control/legitimacy, and accountability. The purpose of this background is to demonstrate the underlying political problems of the Libyan transition. This essay also embarked on a comprehensive discussion on democratization, depicting the difficulties that have been faced by the Libyan state in its struggle to transition from autocracy to democracy. The overall theoretical argument expounded in this project is that, the Libyan society and culture exhibit a strong aversion to the tenets of liberal democracy, irrespective of the problematic transition and the assumption that Libya has collapsed. Therefore, while the Libyan revolution has failed to meet the transition timeline, the revolution still has potential to succeed due to the prevalent presence of certain modern structures such as civil society and identity formation.

While these arguments are jarringly crucial to the development of this study, of high importance is the question of Libyan security. The fall of the *Jamahiriya* created an economic, legitimacy and security gap.[27] The absence of security is the most glaring and pertinent problem in Libya. International observers and Libyan administration rightfully recognize the need to disarm rebel groups but have yet to implement any disarmament strategy. As such, various rebel militias have grown numerically, and their members control much of the country; while elected government officials administer the state mostly at the mercy of these militias.[28]For democracy to survive, the security structure needs to undergo a complete reconstruction. The first step towards democratization lies in uniting the country.All political, tribal and military units (including the militias fighting extremists in Cyrenaica, the Sanussi family and loyalists, and the GNA government) need to work together to implement security initiatives.[29]

Secondly, tribal political compositions should be abolished, and loyalty should be to nation not tribe. All of Libya should depend on democratic institutions for protection, justice and basic amenities. Only then will the state officially begin the democratization process. The ultimate importance of a strong political structure (government) has long been identified by philosophers, like Hobbes (1651), who maintain that people form governments to rule them, and submission to the state through a social contract gives the state the opportunity to foster its abilities and protect her from attacks. Given that the Libyan road to democracy has been long and chaotic, perhaps the answer for lasting peace in Libya lies in a stable inclusive government only possible through liberal democracy.

The drive towards liberal democracy, as the preferred political system in Libya, was prompted by major social changes. The 2011 revolution was a result of a previously passive society's decision to change the course of their political future. If one is to accept this premise, then it is only justifiable to conclude that, the Libyan society is on the course of socio-political rehabilitation. Therefore, any intentional deterrence of political and civic discourse amounts to a conscious denial of the status quo to adapt to shifting conditions. Refusal to recognize democratization efforts will eventually demoralize societal efforts.

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[27]The democratic transition of Libyan politics has been clouded by intense organized violence and armed clashes between extremist groups (Ansar al-Sharia, ISIS, the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic State and the Derna Mujahidin Shura Council etc.) and KhaliaHaftar (Operation Dignity) (Lacher 2014).

[28] Non-state actors have been accused of being responsible for a "string of violent incidents which have taken place over the last year, including attacks on the American, French and Tunisian diplomatic representations, offices of the Red Cross, police stations, and British and Italian embassy convoys. Further acts of aggression have included the occupation of Tripoli's airport and several oil installations, the siege of government ministries and, more generally, an increase in violent crime ranging from targeted assassinations to robbery - to the extent where a number of European states have called on their citizens to leave the country altogether." (Gaub 2013, p. 1).

[29]Some efforts have been made towards reforming the politics of the country and achieving political inclusiveness. For instance, General Khalifa Haftar was named Libya's army chief in 2017 http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/libya-foreign-minister-names-khalifa-haftar-army-chief-170509154020813.html

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