



Research Article

Analysis of Libya's Insecurity: The Examination of Violence in Five Libyan Cities

Abdelsalam Elhudairi ^{1*}, Hüseyin Işıksal ¹

¹University of Benghazi, Faculty of Economics, Department of political Science, Benghazi, Libya

²Department of political Science and international relations, Girne, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Article Information

Received: 20 March 2023

Revised version received: 22 April 2023

Accepted: 25 April 2023

Published: 28 April 2023

Cite this article as:

A. Elhudairi and H. Isiksal (2023) *Int. J. Soc. Sc. Manage.* 10(2): 36-46.

DOI: [10.3126/ijssm.v10i2.54484](https://doi.org/10.3126/ijssm.v10i2.54484)

*Corresponding author

Abdelsalam Elhudairi,

University of Benghazi, Faculty of Economics,
Department of political Science, Benghazi, Libya.

Email: Elhudyre@gmail.com

Peer reviewed under authority of IJSSM

©2023 IJSSM, Permits unrestricted use under the
CC-BY-NC license.

OPEN ACCESS



This is an open access article & it is licensed under a
[Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

[International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

Keywords: Libyan insecurity; Post-Gaddafi challenges; Airstrikes in Libya, Instability, power-struggle

Abstract

Stability remains a pursuit of the post-Gaddafi regime since no accord has achieved its aim of establishing a legitimate government in Libya. The challenges in implementing Skhirat's agreement coupled with the government rivalry between Tripoli and Tobruk have resulted in the unabating state of insecurity in Libya. The relationship between the implementation of agreements and the complexity of the insecurity in Libya has an impact on the establishment of a legitimate government. Unlike the common analysis of Libya's state of insecurity in Northeastern and Western dichotomy or political, economic, and social analysis, this article presents an analysis of insecurity issues using a smaller scale that reflects insecurity in different neighborhoods. The unit of insecurity, therefore, is explained based on smaller units of insecurity by examining neighborhoods in five cities, namely Benghazi, Sirte, Jurfa, Sabha, and Tripoli, which have witnessed extreme attacks in the post-Gaddafi era. The emphasis is on how the Libyan National Army under General Haftar and the Libyan Army of Government National Accord have tried to capitalize on the control of strategic neighborhoods of the cities and how this contributes to the further fragmentation of insecurity and control that determine the future of Libya.

Introduction

Over three years after the Morocco agreement that brought Libya a possible arrangement that could lead to a state of stability, at least in writing, no other pact has emerged that gives such hope to the people of Libya. In December 2015, the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) signed in Skhirat, Morocco under the auspices of the United Nations gathered the members of the competing coalitions to establish a new

inclusive Government of National Coalition (GNC) (Blanchard 2016). The new institutional settings provide that the Government of National Accord (GNA) should be composed of members of opposing groups and rival post-Gaddafi elected bodies. The agreement provides that nine members of the GNA presidency council encompassing heads of Libyan ministries such as defense, finance, labor etc. will assume national security and economic decision-

making power, while the House of Representative (HoR) and the new state council composed of former GNC members retain the legislative power. The changing perception of the agreement from the viewpoints of the political councils and local militias, which resulted in reactions to the General National Congress' (GNC) attempts to implement the agreement, has subsequently defined Libyan politics (Lacher 2015). Although the HoR had approved the agreement by the end of January 2016, HoR leadership hampered the wider body from adopting the GNA proposed cabinet by imposing a procedural vote and constitutional modification procedure. HoR members who supported the Libyan National Army of General Khalifa Haftar in Eastern Libya have contested the terms of an annex of the agreement, which provided that the command of the military should be transferred to the GNA's presidency council after the ratification of the agreement. After the position of the military commander was established in 2015, the HoR leader nominated General Haftar for this position (BBC 2019). Hence, the GNA supported a new faction of the military, the Libyan Army that had decamped from the LNA. The result was two major military factions: the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Libyan Army backed by two major governments, namely the HoR and the GNA, respectively.

In the light of these events, attacks have been carried out on several cities by these two military groups, thereby escalating Libya's war and causing more insecurity. This is because whoever controls the major cities would have the advantage if any negotiation for agreement takes place to establish a new and stable government in Libya. Therefore, their goal is to determine the direction of the new Libya by pushing into every city to establish control, which would allow them to take control of the country or at least be a significant determiner of the direction of Libya.

Hence, this study begins with two common analyses of insecurity in Libya: Northeast and Western Libya dichotomy and sectorial analysis. Thereafter, it presents an analysis of insecurity based on an examination of the interconnectedness of neighborhoods in the cities with extreme cases of violence. It begins with a brief consideration of the power struggle in the northeastern and western regions of Libya, proceeds to the conventional sectorial analysis and finally analyses the violence in strategic neighborhoods in the cities as smaller sub-unit analyses of Libya's insecurity to further reveal how the insecurity of Libya is fragmented and used as a strategy to take full control of the country. The study concludes by referring to the security framework of the Copenhagen School, which argues that sectors are different lenses used to perceive the state of insecurity; similarly, cities represent a smaller unit of insecurity categorization which is significant in unveiling the insecurity that affects the future of Libya.

Northeastern and Western Dichotomy

Maintaining security over northeastern Libya is mostly ensured by the pro-Haftar forces and since September 2016, they have overseen the important oil facilities in the Sirte basin. The fact that he allows the exploitation of important oil facilities by some members of friendly petroleum forces not only allows to continue claiming a certain legitimacy as the leader of the Libyan armed forces but also increases the willingness of his allies to reject the GNA presidency. Also, the fact that Libyan National Army (LNA) leaders continually distance themselves from involvement with what they consider to be militias or extremists is perceived as a means of excluding some pro-GNA factions that reflects allies that the HoR should be regarded as the legitimate government. Meanwhile, the GNA is pursuing the goal of bringing all oil facilities under its control, which continues to escalate the conflict between GNA's Libyan Army and HoR's LNA under Haftar (AFP 2019).

In western Libya, some members of the former GNC and some militia forces working with the Libya Dawn group have decided to support the GNA and henceforth backed the GNA presidency council, whose presence is limited in western Libya. This has therefore resulted in a coalition of the General National Congress (GNC), Libya Dawn group, and the Government of National Accord (GNA) which was conceived after the Morocco agreement. At the beginning of the GNA administration, some Western supporters including the USA requested that General Haftar be sidelined from the security forces of the future government. Some militia supporting the GNA in western Libya, as well as those who fought with US forces in the battle to retake Sirte from ISIS, were reluctant to play a role in the security sector for fear of triggering new clashes. The Eastern defense brigades were driven out from Benghazi by Haftar forces who had taken control of the main Libyan oil facilities from the Haftar forces in March 2017. According to many observers, even if the GNA and the political agreement come through this challenging contest, Libyan authorities will still have to cope with resistance coming from Islamist insurgent groups and particularly the Libyan branch of the surviving members of the Islamic State, who have threatened all those who are against their ideology and project. Subsequently, Haftar has gained the support of the Western countries based on claims that he is eliminating all forms of Islamic groups in Libya while sparing the Salafi in order to gain support from the various military groups. In return, the Salafi would, therefore, be the sole religious body that controls all religious affairs. Haftar aims to eliminate groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, Mujahideen Shura groups, and Ansar-al-Sharia.

The National Dialogue Authority's 2015 statistics based on a public opinion survey showed that the majority of Libyans remain convinced that the February 17 uprising was aimed at bringing good governance and that the ideas driving the

revolution should be sustained. Over 80 percent had positive views about the future, rejected violence, and also supported the idea that a national unity government that will be rotated at regular intervals should be established. However, there was a significant level of disagreement regarding how the government should be run, with 60 percent expressing support for the decentralized government and 44 percent in favor of the presidential system of government, while less than 40 percent supported the authoritarian regime (Libya Herald, 2015). Clarity is absent regarding the role that Islam should play in the Libyan government and among the people. The partnership between Haftar and Salafi shows that Islam cannot be completely eliminated from Libya.

Sectorial Classification of Insecurity in Libya

Analysis of the northeastern and western regions is not common among scholars of Libya as they generally focus on sectorial analysis. Many studies have emphasized the sectorial analysis of Libyan problems with references to historical causes, i.e. academic articles that have the subheading of political, economic, and social challenges of Libya. These studies mainly focused on the historical causes of the sectorial-based insecurity in Libya between 2015 and 2019. However, the failure of the Skhirat Agreement increased the significance of the smaller units of security.

The overthrow of Gaddafi's regime was part of the revolutionary movement called the "Arab Spring" that swept across the Middle East and the North Africa (MENA) region in 2011. Despite the fact that the regional revolutions triggered the ousting of some authoritarian regimes, there is not a consensus among scholars regarding the root causes of the upheavals. Although both people of Tunisia and Libya demanded regime change, democracy and the rule of law, unlike the Tunisian Revolution, the Libyan Revolution delved into a bloody civil war where not only rebel forces are fighting against each other, but also the evolution towards political and social normality has been shattered by terrorist attacks (Esfandiari and Heideman, 2015). Nevertheless, a brief analysis of the varying root causes that gave rise to the grievances against the Gaddafi regime is conducted to generate an understanding of the post-conflict security instability as well as the nature of challenges related to the future of a new Libyan state. (El-Katiri 2012). These challenges could be categorized as political fractionalization, socioeconomic problems, and security-related problems.

Political Insecurity

At the political level, the middle-class in Libya represented by academicians, professionals, businessmen, and women had become tired of the political state and therefore began to express a specific concern. This pertained to the promises of the regime to introduce democratic reforms, which remained unfulfilled. However, these concerns clashed with

the interests of the hardliners who were suspicious about the consequences of rapid changes that could not only undermine the political stability, but also their socio-political privileges. Another focal point was that ordinary people and former revolutionaries were upset about the unwillingness of Gaddafi to change the political system. Furthermore, the rise of his son Saif al-Islam to the head of the popular social leadership Committee, a position which provided him legislative and executive power, frustrated former revolutionary allies of Gaddafi as they were expecting to be given that position. Besides, the uncertainty about the succession of power created repelling attitudes among both collaborators and ordinary citizens (El-Katiri 2012).

Internal instability is caused by the breakdown of institutions, whether they are authoritarian or democratic institutions (Acemoglu and Robinson 2013). This is because institutions are a mechanism that produce the desired behavior of individuals and groups in a polity. The evidence of such authoritarian institutional collapse can be seen the end of Gaddafi's regime; tribalism and localisms emerged as the main dynamics of the society, the rentier nature of the state, which weakened the institutions of the state creating networks of clientelism and patronage, and by the competition between domestic factions and their international supporters (Varvelli 2017). Also, acceptance of the militias linked to terrorist organizations have an undeniable impact on the shape and conduct of politics, economics, and the social life. In consequence, the country has been signaling characteristics of a failed state and has become a safe haven for armed and terrorist groups. Libyans were fighting for their individual rights to be respected and for improved security, but the revolution resulted in restrictions on human rights and the establishment of an insecure environment worse than that which prevailed during the Gaddafi era.

Economic Insecurity

The economy of Libya under Gaddafi experienced growth at the beginning of his reign as a result of popular policies that promoted the living standards of Libyans. An example of such a policy is the Green Revolution that promoted increased agricultural production. This was marked by the land reforms that mandated the use of all lands and the transfer of ownership from Italian settlers to Libyans. Government subsidies supported the Green Revolution to reduce the production cost of agricultural products. In the oil production sector, there was an increase in the oil price as a result of unfair terms expressed by the government. Besides, the state-controlled the oil sector through policies that mandated the foreign oil producers to nationalize 51 percent of the ownership and operations of the companies. An example is the significant proportion of British Petroleum that was taken over by Libyans in the mid-1970s – 1990. All these reforms were aimed at implementing a

social system based on Sharia. This led to an increase in the minimum wage and a reduction in prices of basic needs such as housing and food. However, a sharp decline was experienced during the second phase of economic reforms that took place in the 1990s. This was characterized by the increased privatization of consumer goods to be produced within the country. The drastic import substitution strategy caused the distribution system to collapse since most consumer goods had always been imported. This led to several protests as a result of lack of transparency on the licensing of most of the local companies, reflecting a clandestine strategy. Therefore, Libyans were pessimistic about the distribution of returns generated by such market economic reforms implemented in the 1990s, which only benefited Gaddafi loyalists. The result was a high rate of youth unemployment of 27%. Furthermore, the high rate of inflation, the increase in food and housing prices, and the uneven distribution of income only deepened the gap between the privileged and the poor. This was, therefore, a reversal of the popular economic policies that had promoted the growth of the Libyan economy (Sawani 2012).

Administrative Challenges

The immediate challenge faced by the Transitional National Council (TNC) after the fall of Gaddafi was to define a political system to draft the constitution and to form a constitutional and legitimate government in a context where the transition had devolved into a bloody civil war. As stressed by Sawani (Richtarechova et al 2017), the decadent political and administrative structure after the fall of Gaddafi was partly due to the weakening of the concept and organization of Jamahiriya that had sustained the country. Jamahiriya was defined as the government of the popular masses by themselves and for themselves without any external forces determining the course of action for the people of Libya (Imam et al. 2014). The formation and maintenance of credible state institutions that could represent and serve the will of masses have consistently been a problem in Libya. The anti-imperialist rhetoric of Gaddafi did not meet its promises to establish national institutions whereby the masses, i.e. the people, could be sovereign; instead, a reportedly unbreakable authoritarian regime was put into place.

Scholars acknowledge that the centralization and personality characteristics of Gaddafi not only did not help to establish administrative and bureaucratic structures, but also thwarted the presence of a united opposition and a strong civil society necessary for the establishment of democracy. Therefore, it is arguable that one of the major challenges of the post-Gaddafi era is the reformation of those institutions, as well as the strengthening of a vibrant civil society to implement a democratic transition (Van Genugten 2011).

However, some scholars postulate that the understanding of this predicament not only requires analysis of the days after the fall of Gaddafi, but can also be traced back to the 42 years of authoritarianism during which Libya's political institutions evolved under the shadow of Gaddafi's ideology and worldview and his conception of governance. The rational basis of such a perspective is questionable since it is subjected to his personal assumptions of oil, religion, and tribalism, which refers to varying cultural practices and institutions within different regions in Libya (Sawani 2012). These are the common features of the rentier state that define the relationship between society and the central authority, thus hampering the development of a modern bureaucracy. The reality is that in those states, rent from oil revenues gives the state the power necessary to subjugate the population and it does not need the society to function. The state is autonomous and independent of taxes collected from society. In this respect, Norton assumes that as long as oil flows, the state does not have the incentive to become liberalized. Therefore, bureaucracy rests on the co-opting, clientelist relationship.

Another challenge that constitutes a problem in the administration is the necessary detribalization of the political and administrative structure, which involves the reduction in the domination of regional cultural practices; for example, 80% of the rural areas define themselves according to their tribal identity (Sawani 2017). It is important to highlight that in the period of Gaddafi and King Idris, tribal alliances played a significant role in the administration. According to Sawani (2012), this fact impeded the functioning of the political structure and risks the future functioning of the news institutions.

It is important to underscore that the definition of identity along ethnic lines was linked to the ethnic-related specific remuneration, specifically with regard to privileged ethnic groups. In this regard, Libyan academicians have underlined that among the more than 100 tribes scattered across the country, only a few of them dominated the socio-political and economic sphere (Ibid 14). Therefore, the allocation of socioeconomic resources along ethnic lines jeopardized the idea of the nation as a whole and the state after the civil war. Another major point is that Gaddafi loyalists and allied tribes have been able to infiltrate the public administration system and assume positions in senior security offices, which fosters nepotism, favoritism, and corruption. Therefore, it is necessary to create checks and balances within the political system and to ensure the depoliticization of ethnic groups and tribes. Specifically, it refers to the creation of a political system with no racial, tribal, or religious domination that is rather based only on the rule of law and merit.

After the revolutionary coup in 1969, Gaddafi replaced the existing institutions and bodies with revolutionary

committees responsible for controlling corruption and reporting all those considered as dissidents (Van Genugten 2011). These revolutionary committees were, in fact, mechanisms of control, whereby civil servants could be shifted from one administrative or executive structure according to his will to prevent the solidification of interest groups and particular interests.

In the political arena, there is a power competition between different political factions. This tribalism fosters factionalization of the political sphere backed up by militia in the post-Gaddafi era, where two governments have been established and claim a certain legitimacy (Imam 2014). Each political establishment has its own government, parliament, and army. Islamist allied militia controls the capital Tripoli and other parts of the country. The militia in the eastern part, which is anti-Islamist, was exiled 1,200 kilometers away in Tobruk (Ansmad 2019). There is a third government led by General Khalifa Haftar, whose influence has grown from being a coup supporter under Gaddafi to a revolutionary leader against the Gaddafi regime. After several years in self-exile, his return in the post-Gaddafi era reflects that he has had contacts with the CIA and secured its support in deposing Gaddafi (Blanchard, 2016).

Socioeconomic Challenges

The Libyan civil war has considerably affected the socio-economic situation of the population, which has always been assisted by the welfare state system. It is evident that the fall in the production of oil, which is considered as the main contributor to the GDP, will be a great loss for the Libyan government. Indeed, it was evident that in 2010, oil contributed to “54%” of the total GDP and “83%” of the government revenues (Echevarría and García-Enríquez 2019). This enabled the Ghaddafi administration to offer Libyans a living standard that it is similar to that of some Western countries. As a result of the oil revenues, Libya was considered as the richest country in North Africa with a GDP per capita of 29,173, a human development index of 0.76, and a life expectancy at birth of 71.74. It was similarly observed that the per capita income before the war was high with a value of 15,000 dollars in 2010 (World Bank 2018).

Thus, the welfare system that allowed people to access free education, free health care, and financial aid for housing collapsed with the end of the Gaddafi regime (Imam 2014). The ongoing insecurity environment is leading to further polarization within the society. Haasz ascertained that many children do not have access to education because schools have been destroyed, schoolbooks are lacking and displaced children cannot go to school (Hassz 2017). Additionally, many universities have closed down in the eastern part of the country. Nevertheless, it appears that the challenges in this sector not only include the access to education, but are also related to the process of reforming and rewriting the whole education curriculum by a team of 160 Libyan

experts, to replace Gaddafi’s educational system (Imam 2014).

Mohammed Sawi, the Director of the National Curriculum, assumes that this task requires the eradication of the subjects such as Al-Mujtama Al-Jamahariya, which is the learning from the Gaddafi’s ‘Green Book’. According to one of the experts, Hatem Mhenni, the geographical maps were deemed to be confusing rather than informative for the students, and history was written to glorify the Gaddafi regime. Concerning the gender issue, limitations on women's rights, and gender equality that were promoted by Gaddafi have started to fade away. During the Gaddafi era, women started to have access to education like men; they were also granted to right to divorce and hold property. However, on the one hand, the insecurity environment has given room for Islamist extremist groups that perceive gender equality as a Western perversion and on the other hand, the establishment of a strong patriarchal new ruling elite jeopardizes women's rights (Etzioni 2012).

In the sector of health, there is a need to secure medical staff and health infrastructures. A report by the UNSMIL documented that in Tripoli and Benghazi armed groups are launching attacks. Examples include the attack on an orthopedic consultant in the Sabha Medical Hospital on 3 November 2018 and the attack on the Al-Jalaa Hospital for Women and Childbirth in Tripoli on the 4 November 2018, where attackers shot and injured a doctor and threatened the safety of the medical staff. Also, a fire was started in the Intensive Care Unit of Jalla Hospital in Benghazi by armed men on 26 December, which caused fear among medical personnel (UNSMIL 2019).

Methodology: Smaller Units of Insecurity

This study utilized the Gering pathway methodology for furthering the case of Libya’s insecurity through an investigation into the extreme cases that can account for the fragmented insecurity issue (Gering 2006); therefore, rather than the conventional categorization into political, economic and social insecurity, the study takes a step further to examine neighborhoods in cities as smaller units of analysis. Hence, in order to analyze the smaller units of insecurity challenges, this study examines the statistics and reports from media on violence carried out in strategic neighborhoods in Benghazi, Sirte, Jurfa, Sabha, and Tripoli. The study begins with a particular focus on Benghazi and then research proceeds to other cities. These are the cities with the highest number of airstrikes according to secondary data collected from Sims and Bergen’s Airstrikes and Civilian casualties in Libya (Sims and Bergen 2018). The goal is to identify the reasons why these cities have experienced intense violence and how this connects to the insecurity in Libya. It is proposed that a decline in violence in these five cities reflects a relative peace in Libya whereas an increase in violence in these cities heightens instability

in Libya, irrespective of peace in other regions of the country.

Benghazi

Benghazi constitutes only one front among many fronts of the conflict in which the struggle for control is taking place and provides more strategic advantages for any faction that controls it in determining the future of Libya. According to Sims and Bergen's data, Benghazi has experienced about 222 airstrikes since the revolution started in 2011. Backed by Resolution 1973, France, Great Britain, and the USA launched airstrikes on government forces to stop their progress in Benghazi. Before NATO became fully involved in the revolution, the protection of the civilians in Benghazi was ensured by the joint efforts of the US, UK, and France, which prevented the government forces from taking control of Benghazi (Dunne and Gifkins 2011). Afterward, the NATO mission went beyond its assigned objectives of protecting the security of the civilians and targeted Gaddafi's forces. The control of Benghazi by Gaddafi forces resulted in increased arrests, torture, and revenge killings. Observers believed that if Benghazi was taken over by Ghaddafi forces, this could have brought about mass killings. The high level of grievance in the east was due to the fact the eastern region in general and Benghazi in particular, was marginalized during the Gaddafi regime. Likewise, Benghazi inhabitants were fearful of retaliation if Gaddafi forces took control of the city in March 2011. Hence the control of Benghazi and the marginalization that took place under Gaddafi were the primary reasons for the violence (Kuperman 2013).

It has been more than a year that General Haftar, supporting the legitimate government, has been fighting against the alliance of Islamist fighters and ex-rebels for control of the Eastern city. The progress of Haftar's forces led to the return to normality in some cities, as some restaurants and banks restarted their business. However, the battles were characterized by bombs and air raid continued causing many casualties in the residential neighborhoods as well as in the military barracks in Benghazi. The city is comprised of various parts that fall under the authority of either Haftar's forces or their counterpart, which is an alliance called Majlis al-Shura. Furthermore, Islamist militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) took advantage of the lack of security to bring foreign jihadists to the country. Only with the help of the airstrikes were Haftar's Libyan National forces able to regain territory from the Islamists militants such as the airport, eastern districts, and neighborhoods that have been invaded in Benghazi. Some in the East consider Haftar as their liberator because they are discontent with the militant control and checkpoints. Others in Tripoli are fighting him in a bloody war because they consider him as someone who is struggling to gain power for his personal interests. According to Abdullah Mohammed, half of Benghazi is not under the control of

militants as a result of the intervention of the Libyan National Army. However, despite the fact that some Benghazi districts are still occupied, most areas have returned to normality under the pro-Haftar forces (Kotan 2019).

The fight between the LNA and the ISIS and Shura Council of Benghazi revolutionaries along with the strength of the pro-Gaddafi and the anti-American forces also account for violence in the city. Gaddafi forces have been divided into several militia factions with very limited coordination in Benghazi, which became a ground for attacks. Since it is the second-largest city that offers strategic control in terms of business and finances as well as resources that are within its geographical location, Benghazi provides strength for any faction that controls it. Another reason for the struggle for this location is not just that it is a significant starting point of the struggle, but most of the rebels are also from Benghazi and its communities.

Furthermore, Anti-American groups began to grow in Benghazi in greater numbers after the US Consulate attack. Most Libyans in Benghazi retain the perception that the invasion of the consulate symbolized the start of the city's descent into violence. As Jamal al-Fallah, a local activist, reminded with regard to the 2012 attack, the bombing was evidence that terrorism effectively exists in Benghazi, in the sense that it sows fear and confusion in the city and other places in Libya. If the U.S Consulate in Benghazi could be bombed, nowhere else in Libya could be perceived to be safe. Benghazi, which formerly symbolized hope after successive visits by British Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, transformed into a scene of insecurity because of terrorism and protracted struggle. Statements by legal personnel reveal that it is the aggression of the US consulate in Benghazi that worsened the situation in Libya. Benghazi is the focus because it is the city that triggered the rebellion against the regime (E Judy 2014).

Sirte

Another front of the battle is Sirte, located between Tripoli and Benghazi; it is a land-locked city to the east of Tripoli and west of Benghazi. Sirte experienced about 126 airstrikes according to Sims and Bergen. Gaddafi's vision of Africa positioned Sirte as an administrative center. It was the interim capital of Libya at the start of the revolution in 2011. As a result, it possesses features of a seat of power. Therefore, this justifies the struggle that took place to gain control of Sirte. Unlike Benghazi, Sirte enjoyed significant attention from the Gaddafi regime since he had posited it to be the showroom of his new confederation in Africa. As the toppling of the regime was taking place, a quick move by rebels to capture the city turned it into a battleground between Gaddafi forces, rebels, and in subsequent years, ISIL. The different parties struggling to capture Sirte

understood its strategic location in terms of its geography and the middle point between Tripoli and Benghazi, the de-jure, and de facto capitals, respectively (whereas Sirte was the Interim capital). The intensified struggle caused the development of Gaddafi's intended showroom to be damaged beyond recognition. The National Transitional Council's (NTC) plan to rebuild the city was jeopardized as ISIL look to strengthen its strategic position in Libya by capturing Sirte (Engell 2014).

As a result of the subsequent power vacuum, ISIS increased its presence, invaded Sirte and more foreign fighters joined the organization, while many people used this opportunity to transport their cargoes through the Mediterranean, reflecting the economic advantage that Sirte provides for anyone in control of this region. The evolution of ISIS in Libya, which arrived in the Libyan political scene relatively late in 2014, distinguished itself by the relationship of the organization with the local population characterized by ethno-religious diversity and the complexity of the political situation involving different warring factions composed of militias and tribal forces. Therefore, ISIS is considered a latecomer in the Libya political scene where the décor had already been set up (Beccaro 2018).

However, in Libya, jihadism is not a new phenomenon and its emergence and development can be traced across three generations. It can be initially traced back to the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s, which led to the creation of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group in 1995. This group focused their activities on the cities of Benghazi and Derna, where they fought against Gaddafi security forces who wanted to suppress them. The next generation originates from the US war in Iraq, whereby the suicide bomber recruits came mostly from Derna. The last generation stems from the 2011 uprising and was mostly from Benghazi (Beccaro 2018).

Although ISIS was able to take advantage of the dissatisfaction and marginalization created by the Gaddafi regime in the Sirte region (similar to Benghazi), it can be observed that disconnection still existed between ISIS and local population persist in the sense that they were still considered as aliens and competitors by the local militias. This prompted ISIS to drive out other militias and forced them to pledge allegiance to al-Baghdadi by killing tribal leaders.

In the Sirte region, ISIS tried to gain the support of the local leaders and to enlist fighters who had defected from Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL), which had already established built strong ties and support of the local leaders. This enabled ISIS to have contact with former Gaddafi officers to develop a vast network of intelligence and consequently to enhance its political and military capabilities. Thus, in summary, ISIS used a three-pronged approach that included the local collection of information and the formation of a local militants, local military operations, and governance

(Zelin 2015). The activities of the first two focused on propaganda and indoctrination which enabled ISIS to deal with the complexity of the local population. Thus, the Dawa activities focused on communication and the delivery of messages using tools such as leaflets and billboards, whereas Hisba activities were mostly religious and thereby placed emphasis on the interpretation of Sharia. The military campaign was targeted at the periphery of the city, local radio, TV stations, and governmental infrastructures. However, ISIS' attempt to take over the city did not go smoothly in the sense that they met some difficulties, which included the limited reach and control of the population because they could not penetrate the hinterland, and the limited capacity to carry out public services although they set up symbols demonstrating its rule such as black flags in different corners of Sirte, as well as its own police and sharia court (Zelin 2015). Thus, ISIS was not successful at presenting itself as a reliable government capable of responding to the needs of the local population. Besides, ISIS could not present itself as a legitimate force in Sirte, given that the local militias who fought during the revolution period satisfactorily performed this role. Moreover, in terms of military capabilities, ISIS could not resort to heavy weaponry, thus limiting itself to the use of the teleoperated sniper rifles and guerrilla tactics. The end of ISIS/ISIL occurred at the battle for Sirte, when the GNA received support from the US to recapture Sirte between 2016 and 2017 (Park et al 2017).

Jufra

Jufra has been battered by at least 28 airstrikes since the beginning of the revolution, as seen from data collected from Sims and Bergen. Although there is a significant difference in the level of violence experienced in Jufra compared to Benghazi and Sirte, Jufra is considered a strategic city because of its location. In the past 2 years, the control of Jufra has been contested because of the advantages it provides in terms of the capacity to attack and take control of the capitals. Jufra is located in the center of Libya to the south of Sirte, and is about 500km from Benghazi and a similar distance to Tripoli. Jufra also shares a border with Sabha. Jufra is at the geographical center of the five cities. Jufra has an airbase. Jufra has not only been struck by internal factions such as Haftar's loyalists or pro-Gadafi forces, but also by the UN-backed France intervention, Egypt as well as NATO (Pack 2017). In 2017, Haftar's forces, Libya National Army (LNA) took Jufra. Since Haftar's force rejected the government in Tripoli that had been backed by the UN, the LNA's goals were to take over the major cities to reach the capital (Libya Analysis 2017). Hence, this resulted in the climax of violence in the five cities. Although Haftar held talks with the UN-supported Government of National Accord (GNA) and promised to keep the southern region stable without violence, Jufra and Sabha experienced an escalation of

violence between LNA and GNA members. The Benghazi Defense Brigade, who supported the GNA clashed with Haftar's force, who supported the LNA. Both the GNA and LNA launched airstrikes on Jufra. ISIS also carried out several attacks including killings, kidnappings, and the burning of residential buildings in Fuqaha, an area of Jufra.

Sabha

Sabha has experienced around 21 airstrikes that put the city at the forefront of the examination of the violence and security in Libya. The fighting in Sabha was not only part of the civil war, but it was also a fight for the control of the desert oasis of Sabha between the forces loyal to Gaddafi and the rebel forces (Mauricio 2015). With the support of other troops, forces loyal to Gaddafi controlled the city, whereas the rebels were lacking weapons and other materials. Rebels progressively entered the city stating that they were waging war in Sabha with weapons that they did not possess. Meanwhile, the British declared that they had carried air raids on Gaddafi loyalists across the city of Sabha, striking armored cars and six tanks. The claims were made in a manner aimed at portraying that they had taken over the city in order to demoralize the rival and show that one party had gained control over the people of Sabha and Libya as a whole. For example, the spokesman of the NTC ministry of defense heralded that NTC forces had succeeded in taking over Sabha Airport and fort. Meanwhile, when the NTC was taking over the city of Sabha, they did not meet major resistance. Other reports revealed that fighting had not ceased in the city itself; for instance, according to Al-Manshiya newspaper, Sabha airport was controlled by anti-Gaddafi forces (Aljazeera 2011).

Although Sabha was supposed to be one Ghaddafi's bastions, the entry of NTC forces was applauded by the majority of the local population as well as those who supported the revolution but whose endeavors were constrained by the presence of pro-Gaddafi forces. The NTC declared that they nearly had full control of the city Sabha, aided by some Gaddafi soldiers who had defected. Thus, the only problem remaining was some light beds of resistance comprised of a few individuals. However, in Al Manshiya district, the rebellion persisted. The last resisting faction in the city was defeated, but individual snipers remained active (Lacher 2013).

NTC forces found two storage depots near Sabha containing thousands of blue barrels with the label "radioactive and plastic bags of yellow powder closed the same way is confirmed by the statement of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (Arms-control, US). However, the IAEA had planner organize control missions in this area after the country had returned to stability. Gaddafi reportedly tried to escape from the country before he was arrested by the rebels. According to a military spokesman,

the NTC was carrying out investigations to determine the accuracy of the statements.

Tripoli

Tripoli experienced around 13 airstrikes by June 2018; however, since then, there have been more airstrikes and hundreds of casualties. Currently, Tripoli is the battleground of the war in Libya and over 200 have been killed in ground battles (DW 2019). Therefore, the capital is among the cities where the conflict is escalating. This not only symbolizes the struggle for power but reflects the same patterns of insecurity that have been seen in the other cities in terms of a strategic location from which to operate. The bombings and shooting in Tripoli have taken place within residential areas. Even the suburbs of Tripoli have witnessed gunshots, with police trying to warn civilians of the impending military attacks while military tanks move around the city. There has been a continued struggle between Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army and the Government of National Accord to control Tripoli as they try to operate from Sirte and Jufra. The LNA has carried out airstrikes to overpower the GNA in the Yarmouk part of Tripoli; however, the GNA counteracted with its antimissiles and took the region back (De Bruijine 2017).

The reason for the escalation of violence in Tripoli was the continued successful military ventures of Haftar encouraged to push into other places like Tripoli. The fragmentation of the military groups in the city granted Haftar the opportunity to strike, leading to the escalation of the conflict. Haftar was able to secure an alliance within Tripoli that enabled different logistical preparation to aid Haftar's strike.

The possibility of negotiations taking place in certain locations to sideline some parties caused such parties to carry out airstrikes to disrupt the process. A UN peace conference was scheduled to take place in Tripoli in April 2019 but both Haftar and Serraj backed out from the talks. Hence, Haftar moved to reposition himself in an advantageous position in the peace conference since some opposed him being a part of the future governmental arrangement of Libya. The perception of other factions is that Haftar is another form of Gaddafi who should be curtailed and that his presence in Libya's future administration will lead to a reinstatement of the old regime (UNSMIL 2019).

Conclusion

Since the uprising started in 2011, the Skhirat Agreement stands as one of the possibilities of reintroducing stability to Libya. The power-sharing that was provided in the agreement tried to share the power between the GNA and HoR, whereby the GNA would be given security and economic power, while the HoR would legislative power. However, the inability to implement this has resulted in the escalation of violence in Libya. The changing views among

parties and the ability of one power faction to control and implement the accord have led to continued insecurity (Lacher 2015).

This article attempted to examine two types of analysis of insecurity in Libya; it briefly considered the analysis of insecurity via Libya's northeastern and western region lenses, with a focus on access to facilities and the rejection of the GNA in the Northeast. Meanwhile, in the Western region, the GNA has been strategizing to exclude Haftar's LNA from future agreements and arrangements in Libya, while Haftar has been attempting to distance himself from the militia in the Northeast to gain legitimacy (AFP 2019).

The second type of analysis is the sectorial analysis that is focused on political-economic administrative and socio-economic fragmentation causes of insecurity and instability in Libya. Gaddafi's refusal to meet such needs led to insecurity and even after the collapse of his regime the manner in which change should take place and what form of government would be effective were questions to which rival parties could not agree on a common answer.

Economic insecurity can be seen in the rising unemployment and high schooling dropout rates while the country's resources were exploited for personal use by Gaddafi and his family along with his loyalists. Administrative issues emerged after the toppling of the Gaddafi government where the transitional government was unable to establish a government that placed the people as sovereign, and nor has it been possible to establish democratic institutions or a vibrant civil society. The management of resources such as oil has been lost to rebel groups who have taken control of the oil-rich regions. Detribalization of the administration was impossible as administrators positioned themselves along tribal lines. Socio-economically, the standard of living of the people has fallen over the years since there has been a decline in the production of oil, which was the main strength of Libya's GDP. The welfare that was provided by the previous administration has declined accordingly. Hence, access to education, free health, and financial aid for businesses or housing has disappeared. Poverty and the refugee crisis have also entered the equations, forcing citizens to either join the militia or migrate from the country to survive. Therefore, this article reveals an analysis of the Libyan insecurity based on the examination of five cities as smaller sub-units.

According to the Copenhagen school, the sectorial analysis provides perspectives on a particular event (Buzan 1998), which in this case is the insecurity of Libya. The sectors explain from different dimensions and perspectives what Libya is going through. This article used the same principle of multiple lenses to insecurity by examining the extreme violence in five strategic Libyan cities (Benghazi, Sirte, Jufra, Sabha, and Tripoli) to explain the insecurity in Libya.

Benghazi is strategic because of its development and size, and is not only composed of ordinary people, but a diverse class of political power, which accounts for the growth or emergence of several militias from this city. It has also played the role of a de facto capital since the toppling of the Gaddafi regime. Anti-American sentiment has also continued to grow after the 2012 Benghazi attack and this symbolizes the growth of terrorists in Benghazi. The fact that the US consulate was bombed made Libyans realize the level of insecurity in the country and therefore forced them to join factions or migrate.

Sirte is a district buffering Tripoli and Benghazi, an interim capital with access to both cities. Its potential as an administrative unit, not just for Libya but for Africa, makes it a target of multiple factions. Sirte was a showroom of Gaddafi's vision. Hence, the post-Gaddafi period was characterized by attempts to capture the city to take advantage of the development that had already taken place. Unfortunately, neither rebels, ISIS, or the government of NTC could capitalize on the facilities even after GNA took control because its facilities had been destroyed.

Jufra, located to the south of Sirte, offers the same significance to factions, as Tripoli and Benghazi can be easily reached from Jufra. It also borders Sabha. The LNA took over Jufra in 2017 and agreed to maintain stability in the South with the UN and GNA. However, attacks were launched from Jufra after the death of LNA members. This changed the direction of stability to insecurity and the conflict continued to escalate.

Sabha also possesses a strategic location, as it is a desert oasis located close to the South. The pro-Gaddafi and rebel forces are fighting to have control of this area. The British army forms part of those who carried out airstrikes in Sabha. Sabha was used as means of propaganda by the pro-Gaddafi forces to demoralize the rebels by claiming control of the city. However, the pro-Gaddafi forces were defeated in Sabha by the British forces.

Tripoli is the capital of Libya; therefore, it is another seat of power and has become a battleground just like Benghazi and Sirte. Tripoli became the next target after the success of Haftar's operations in other cities. The division among factions regarding how the order should be created in Tripoli allowed Haftar's forces to penetrate into the city. Haftar's forces formed an alliance with certain sects in Tripoli, which provided them easy access to the city. The argument is that Tripoli's location, disorder, alliance, and formation allowed for such attacks. The conference that was scheduled to take place in Tripoli to sideline Haftar from future Libya was also a provocative move that led to the escalation of the conflict in Tripoli.

The degree to which each of these locations is strategic makes them targets for the GNA, LNA, rebels, and ISIS. All

of the cities have characteristics that could serve as an advantage to a rival party, thus making them battlegrounds. The characteristics include being a seat of power, location for a peace conference, natural resources like oil, and geographical advantage such as the interconnectedness of the cities to one another as they all share borders. All these themes are significant in analyzing the insecurity in Libya because they serve as points to be considered in creating future accords in the country to bring about lasting peace.

Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally at all stages of research and manuscript preparation. Final form of manuscript is approved by both.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest with the present work.

References

- Acemoglu D and Robinson JA (2013) *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. Crown Books.
- AFP (2019) Three things to know about Libyan oil. June 26. <<https://www.france24.com/en/20180626-three-things-know-about-libyan-oil>>
- Ansmed. (2019) Tobruk and militias still a problem for Libya. July 28. <http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/analysis/2017/07/28/tobruk-and-militias-still-a-problem-for-libya_176bb1c6-b1d9-489e-a628-d9dc4c4d24d8.html>
- BBC News (2019) *Khalifa Haftar: Libya's military strongman*. BBC News, April 8. <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27492354>>
- Beccaro A (2018) ISIS in Mosul and Sirte: Differences and similarities. *Mediterranean Politics* 23(3): 410-417.
- Blanchard CM (2016) *Libya: Transition and US policy (No. CRS-RL33142)*. Congressional Research Service Washington United States.
- Buzan B, Wæver O, Wæver O and De Wilde J (1998) *Security: A new framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Dunne T and Gifkins J (2011) Libya and the State of Intervention. *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65(5): 515-529.
- DW (2019) Libya: 'New phase' in fight for Tripoli. 20 April. <<https://www.dw.com/en/libya-new-phase-in-fight-for-tripoli/a-48418839>><<https://www.dw.com/en/libya-new-phase-in-fight-for-tripoli/a-48418839>>
- E Judy M (2014) Benghazi: Deception, Denial and Fatal Diplomacy. *Global Security Studies* 5(4).
- Echevarría CA and García-Enríquez J (2019) The economic consequences of the Libyan Spring: A synthetic control analysis. *Defence and Peace Economics* 30(5): 592-608.
- El-Katiri M (2012) *State-building Challenges in a Post-revolution Libya*. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute Carlisle Barracks Pa.
- Esfandiari H & Heideman K (2015) *The Role and Status of Women after the Arab Uprisings*. IEMED. Mediterranean Yearbook.
- Etzioni A (2012) The lessons of Libya. *Military Review* 92(1): 45-54.
- Imam M, Abba S and Wader M (2014) Libya in the post Ghadaffi era. *The International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention*. 2(2): 1150-1167.
- Jason P (2017) Libya Analysis. Egypt Uses Airstrikes in Libya to Tip Power towards Haftar. <<http://www.libya-analysis.com/category/egypt/>>
- Kuperman AJ (2013) NATO's Intervention in Libya: A Humanitarian Success?. In *Libya, the Responsibility to Protect and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention* (pp. 191-221). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Lacher W (2013) Fault lines of the revolution: political actors, camps and conflicts in the new Libya.
- Lacher W (2015) Supporting stabilization in Libya: the challenges of finalizing and implementing the Skhirat agreement.
- Libya Analysis (2017) Egypt Uses Airstrikes in Libya to Tip Power Towards Haftar. <<http://www.libya-analysis.com/category/egypt/>>
- Libya Herald (2015) Opinion survey across 22 cities shows Libyans optimistic, reject violence and for unity and peaceful rotation of government. <<https://www.libyaherald.com/2015/05/31/opinion-survey-across-22-cities-shows-libyans-optimistic-reject-violence-and-for-unity-and-peaceful-rotation-of-government/>>
- Mauricio M (2015) Power struggle rages in Libyan oasis town. <<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2015/05/power-struggle-rages-libyan-oasis-town-150522105925445.html>>
- Pack J, Smith R and Mezran K. (2017) *The Origins and Evolution of ISIS in Libya*. Atlantic Council
- Richtarechova K, Aoun E and de Wilde T (2017) How coherent are the EU's peace-building efforts in Libyan crisis after the fall of Gaddafi?
- Sawani YM (2012) The 'end of pan-Arabism' revisited: reflections on the Arab Spring. *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 5(3): 382-397.
- Sawani YM (2017) Security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of militias: the challenges for state building in Libya. *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 10(2): 171-186.
- Sims A and Bergen P (2018) *Airstrikes and Civilian Casualties in Libya*.
- UNSMIL (2019) *Human Rights Report On Civilian Casualties 1 November through 31 December 2018*. <<https://unsmil.unmissions.org/human-rights-report->

- [civilian-casualties-1-november-through-31-december-2018](#)>.
- Van Genugten S (2011) Libya after Gaddafi. *Survival* **53**(3): 61-74.
- Varvelli A (2017) Islamic State's Re-organization in Libya and Potential Connections with Illegal Trafficking. Program on Extremism, The George Washington University.
- World Bank (2018) GNI per capita in PPP dollars. July 6. <[https://www.google.com/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bnpcpjof8f9 &met_y=ny_gnp_pcap_pp_cd&idim=country:LY:DZA:VEN&hl=en&dl=en](https://www.google.com/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bnpcpjof8f9&met_y=ny_gnp_pcap_pp_cd&idim=country:LY:DZA:VEN&hl=en&dl=en)>
- Zelin AY (2015) The rise and decline of Ansar al-Sharia in Libya. *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* **18**: 104.