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THE ROLE OF TRIBAL DYNAMICS IN LIBYA'S POST-2011 ARMED FRAGMENTATION

FINAL DEGREE PROJECT

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Abstract

The Libyan Crisis has been one of the most protracted and convoluted civil conflicts of the last decade. Seeking to add complexity to the conflict's mainstream narratives of geopolitical determinism, this project analyzes the role of one of the most relevant social structures of the country: tribes. In order to do so, this research studies a variety of subjects, from tribal participation in the foundation of early and modern forms of the Libyan state, Muammar Gaddafi's manipulation of tribal dynamics and to the role of tribalism in Libya's 1st and 2nd Civil Wars and its subsequent peacebuilding efforts. Throughout this project, the role of tribalism in the Libyan Crisis is decisively stated as an instrumental contributive factor, albeit not in an exclusive fashion, to the country ongoing armed fragmentation, producing new conceptual approaches to the history, motives, outcomes and prospects of such contribution.

Cover Image
(Bensemra, 2012)

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Literature Review	4
3. Theoretical Framework	6
4. Conceptual Framework & Contextual Foundation	7
4.1 The Libyan Crisis	7
4.2 Tribes and Tribalism	9
4.2.1 Definitions.....	10
4.2.2 Libyan Tribal System.....	10
5. Research & Analysis	12
5.1 Tribalism: Foundational element of the Libyan state?.....	12
5.1.1 Tribalism and Libya’s Colonial Legacy.....	13
5.1.2 Tribalism and the Libyan State	14
5.2 Tribalism under Gaddafi	15
5.3 Tribalism during the 2011 Libyan Civil War.....	16
5.4 The Role of Tribalism in Libyan post-2011 armed fragmentation.....	20
5.4.1 Tribes and the logics of localism.....	22
5.4.2 Tribes and the logics of revenge	23
5.4.3 Tribes and the logics of clientelism.....	24
5.5 Tribes and tribalism in Libyan peacebuilding.....	25
5.6 Conclusions and Analytical Results.....	27
6. Project Conclusions	28
7. Bibliography	30

1. Introduction

The Libyan Crisis has been one of the preeminent conflicts of this last decade. Remarkably detached from the public eye, Libya has become a paradigm for the phenomena of the failed state. From 2011 onwards, the country has been overwhelmed by the breakdown of state structures, a succession of violent political quarrels for the control of the remainders of that state and, most notably, the convergence of external geopolitical ambitions. While all of these are certainly critical factors contributing to the Crisis, this project seeks to advance the research on another layer of analysis and facet of the conflict: the Libyan societal fragmentation.

I first became aware of what Libya is and was during the summer of 2017. Throughout that summer I had been volunteering in the small island of Samos, Greece, where an overcrowded refugee camp had been functioning since 2015. There, I had the chance to speak to several Libyan men and to listen to their discussions about their country. By that time, I had only a vague recollection of who Gaddafi was, but I surely was oblivious that, for these men, the Libyan Crisis was much more than an administrative and political failure. For the Libyan men of the camp, an utterly fragmented society was both causal and symptomatic to the conflict.

Intrigued by that idea of societal fragmentation in Libya as a driver and outcome of conflict, my preliminary research on the matter conduced me to the severely understudied notion of tribes and tribalism. Again, fascinated by these social structures and the involvement of the such in the overall Libyan Crisis, I vowed to develop a research able to explain and analyze the prominence of tribes in the Libyan Crisis. In essence, thus, this project focuses on these institutions and the extent of its role in Libya's post-2011 armed fragmentation.

To do so in a holistic and substantial manner, this project reviews the historical relevance of tribes and tribal dynamics in Libya's governance, its status and prominence during Muammar Gaddafi's regime, while placing the bulk of the research, of course, in the role of tribal dynamics during Libya's post-2011 fragmented scenario. Conclusively, the research also reviews the absence of tribes in Libya's peace processes.

2. Literature Review

To commence, it is firstly needed to explore how the concept of tribes has been featured in scholarly discussions, especially considering its orientalist connotations. Tribes have been described extensively in social anthropology as a social division consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic or blood ties (Mafeje, 1971). This meaning has been replicated in Libya, where tribes are understood as dynamic social structures based on a common ideological line of belonging and, very often, of common descent (Lacher, 2022). In the country, tribes can be divided, initially, through their ethnic origin, namely Arabs, Berber, Tuareg and Tubou, and usually encompass sub-tribes, clans, sub-clans and families (Cherstich et al., 2020). The actual meaning of the term has been subjected to academic deliberation, especially due to the range of the term tribe (Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Apthorpe, 1968; Boutaleb, 2012).

In many historical contexts, tribes have coexisted, cooperated and competed with other forms of political and social organization, such as states, religious authorities or other tribes. These tribes have, along this relational process, become political actors (Ammar, 2022; Ben Lamma, 2017; Mafeje, 1971). In anthropology and political science, this phenomenon of tribal politicisation is commonly understood as tribalism (Apthorpe, 1968; Fraihat, 2016; Hweio, 2012; Varvelli, n.d.). Tribalism is, hence, described as a system of social organisation which places an important element of political authority on tribes (Ekeh, 1990; Mafeje, 1971).

Tribes and the system of tribalism have been regarded by some as foundational elements of the Libyan state (Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Boutaleb, 2012; Serwer, 2011). When analysing the relationship between these conceptual forms of organisation and administration, different narratives have arisen in academia (Fasanotti, 2017; Lacher, 2011; Lavrilleux, 2020). Most scholars agree in the notion that Libya as a state cannot be understood without the compliance of tribes, yet, there are different interpretations on their role and history vis-à-vis the state (Ben Lamma, 2017; Laessing, 2020).

For instance, in post-colonial studies it is argued that, while tribes had been relevant in public affairs for centuries, its coexistence with a modern state served to legitimise an abrupt change in the country's internal affairs (Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017).

Additionally, post-colonial scholars have argued that tribes were merely elements for the legitimacy of the colonizers, who sought to co-opt them, additionally granting them some degree of political autonomy in exchange for territorial control (Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ammar, 2022). In contrast, realist interpretations of the matter have argued that tribes have coexisted with the state for its own gain, even when the state unsuccessfully tried to suppress them (Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020). In these sorts of narratives, tribes appear as outlier actors to a state-centric system, and doubts have arisen on to the identity compatibility of tribespeople and the unified Libyan nation (Collombier, 2018; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020). Other schools of thought, such as constructivism or peace studies, characterise tribes as foundational elements of the Libyan state, especially due to their pivotal role in the Libyan social and political construction (Cherstich et al., 2020; Chivvis et al., 2012; Kekili, 2017). Moreover, tribes are understood not as a competition to the state but as a complimentary pole of authority (Ben Lamma, 2017; Cherstich et al., 2020; Hweio, 2012).

In order to understand tribalism both with regards to the state and in relation to the armed fragmentation of Libya in the post-2011, a considerable amount literature has put the spotlight on the status of tribes during the Gaddafi regime (Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020; Pargeter, 2012). In fact, when analysing tribalism within Libya's current conflict dynamics, several authors point out the importance of Gaddafi's "divide and rule" tactics, based on the fragmentation of the pre-existing tribal status quo (Ben Lamma, 2017; El-Katiri, 2012; Laessing, 2020). This fragmentation-based approach was an important causal base for many of the revenge-based tribal dynamics during the Libyan Crisis (Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Nouredine Jebnoun, Mehrdad Kia, Mimi Kirk, 2015; Serwer, 2011).

During the 2011 First Libyan Civil War, the rise of tribes as contemporary armed actors became a nation-wide trend. Initially, many authors emphasised the dynamics of competition for resources and power as a driver for tribes to organise themselves as armed actors in such an unstable scenario. Some authors have also mentioned the adherence to an ideology as a differentiating factor for armed tribes seeking adepts or external financing (Boutaleb, 2012; Lavrilleux, 2020; Serwer, 2011). Nonetheless, other authors have addressed the tribal armed fragmentation as a self-protection resort, highlighting the lack of reliable state structures. (Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Fasanotti, 2017; Lacher, 2022). Another prominent discussion

on this has encompassed the phenomenon of localism. In international relations and, particularly, in conflict and peace studies, localism can be understood as the political preference or prioritization for those village, town or city authorities over other regional or national authorities, even to the point of creating a conflictive dynamic between poles of authority (Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020). In Libya, there are many instances of localism overlapping with tribalism, as mono-tribal towns and cities are not uncommon (Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2011; Pargeter, 2009).

The last grand topic with some degree of academic production concerns the role of tribes in peacebuilding. Scholars generally agree that Libyan tribes have been left out in a cautionary fashion, as national or international actors have traditionally feared giving these undemocratic or local actors leverage on nation-wide processes (Ammar, 2022; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018). Nonetheless, some have also written on the potential benefits of including tribes in state-building, considering positive precedents at a local level and aiming at a social-peace based approach. (Ammar, 2022; El-Katiri, 2012; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018).

3. Theoretical Framework

This Final Degree Project has been conducted under the framework of peace studies, an interdisciplinary and multilevel theory which combines notion from political science, international relations, history or sociology while using a decentralized and multi-actor approach.

Researching under the umbrella of peace studies means widely challenging strictly liberal or realist approaches in favor of other comprehensive concepts and theoretical models. For instance, when studying the development of tribes into armed actors, this project has utilized Regality Theory, an approach which argues that collective danger serves as a trigger for tribal identification to arise and expand into the political confrontational arena (Bagheri, 2019).

Moreover, when analyzing tribal motives throughout the Libyan Crisis, this research has made use of patterns such as the Greed versus Grievance Model, which rationalises violent action during civil wars as a result of depravation. This depravation can either be economic, in which case violence will be the development of greed, or identity-based, in which case violence will be a product of grievances (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In this section, the Model is also

complemented with the Realistic Conflict Theory, which studies inter-group hostility as a result of limited political and natural resources (Brief et al., 2005). Additionally, this research has included other concepts such as the Logic or Rational Violence Model, which, as the name states, proposes that violence during civil wars is a rational which varies depending on political and social conditions (Kalyvas, 2006).

Additionally, and particularly when studying the integration or exclusion of tribes into state-building and peace-building processes, this research has used the models of Social or Anthropocentric Peace (Galtung, 1969). This approach, foundational to peace studies, is structured around the criticism of security-based and externally-led pre-existing peace processes.

It is equally relevant to mention that chapters concerning the historical analysis of tribalism vis-à-vis the Libyan state and the setting of the pre-2011 stage has included specific concepts or approaches belonging to Post-Colonial Theory, especially with regards to political inertia and colonial heritage (Colonialism and Its Legacies, n.d.; Postcolonial Political Theory, n.d.).

This research has been conducted under a framework of methodological individualism, an approach first postulated by Stathis N. Kalyvas, a Greek political scientist. This approach emphasizes and bridges micro identity-based and social factors with macro political considerations, in our case, in the context of the Libyan Crisis, while disputing more mainstream state-centric approaches (Kalyvas, 2006).

4. Conceptual Framework & Contextual Foundation

4.1 The Libyan Crisis

The Libyan Crisis has been, since its commencement in February 2011, one of the most complex conflicts in the region (Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020). Sourcing from nationwide protests embedded in the momentum of the Arab Spring and a posterior militarization of the such, the Crisis began, firstly, as an all-out confrontation between the preceding regime, led by Muammar Gaddafi, and its opponents, organized around the National Transitional Council (NTC). These strives, which in its course also involved a NATO foreign military intervention, became known as the First Libyan Civil War or the Libyan Revolution (Teiner, 2022). As much as the main purpose of the opposition's armed contend, the deposition of Gaddafi and his

Jamahiriya state, was realized in barely eight months, the instability did not cease to exist. In fact, after more than forty years in power, the sudden oust of Gaddafi entailed a breakdown of virtually all state structures, leading to a scenario of protracted insecurity, economic distress and political showdown. (Serwer, 2011) The NTC, which was ultimately a compilation of a variety of rebel groups, disintegrated into factions, deepening the political fragmentation and finally transferring power, by August 2012, to the General National Congress (GNC), a new legislative authority tasked with the drafting of a constitution (Ben Lamma, 2017; Pargeter, 2012).

Failure to comply with its mandate and divisions within the GNC forced the institution to organize elections to yet another legislative authority, the House of Representatives (HoR), in 2014. As much as, according to the electoral process, the House of Representatives ought to be the primary legislative institution, members of the GNC continued to meet in opposition. From then on, the institutional confrontation also encompassed an ideological contend, with the House of Representatives coming to embody the interests of liberal politicians and the GNC those of the Islamist factions (Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020). In this context, Islamists politicians of the loosing factions of the GNC with links to the Muslim Brotherhood formed the National Salvation Government (NSG), in 2014, in opposition to both the HoR and the GNC (Lacher, 2022). It is precisely in this scenario that Libya would immerse into a Second Civil War. Due to security concerns, the HoR relocated to Tobruk, in Cyrenaica, while the NSG took the capital, Tripoli. During all these events, the HoR organized an armed force led by Gen. Khalifa Haftar, the Libyan National Army (LNA), while the NSG and the GNC relied on militias from Western and Central Libya (Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020).

The rivalry between the GNC and HoR parliaments was attempted to settle with the UN-led Libyan Political Agreement in 2015, which established a Presidential Council, a body akin to a head of state, a Government of National Accord (GNA), which would serve as the executive, and a High Council of State, an advisory body with binding legal personality that was formed out of members of the GNC (Chivvis et al., 2012). After its establishment, the GNA marched on Tripoli in 2016 and defeated the remaining NSG, which would, cease its operations a few weeks later. Nonetheless, the Libyan Political Agreement did not refrain the newly formed

GNA, with its former GNC-supporters and Western Libyan militias, and the HoR, with Haftar's LNA, from continuing the war (Kekili, 2017).¹

After virtually a decade of infighting, in October 2020, a ceasefire was ratified. Although no peace agreement was reached, the two sides agreed to form a Government of National Unity (GNU), which was established in March 2021. The GNU was quickly dismissed by the HoR as being pro-GNC/GNA (Ammar, 2022; Hweio, 2012). To counter the GNU, the HoR, aided by Gen. Haftar formed a Government of National Stability (GNS) in March 2022. As of April 2023, both governments have been functioning simultaneously, leading to a dual power situation where clashes between the two are not unusual (Ben Lamma, 2017; Lacher, 2022).

It is critical to understand the Libyan Civil Wars as wars between blocs rather than singular actors (Chivvis et al., 2012; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020). This is especially important as the blocs, such as GNC, the HoR, the NSG, the GNA or the current rival governments of the Government of National Unity and the Government of National Stability were established progressively through a compilation of regional, local or tribal militias, armed groups organized along ideological lines, foreign mercenaries and external armed support (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Lacher, 2022).²

4.2 Tribes and Tribalism

The Libyan Crisis oversaw a massive breakdown of state structures and an overarching fragmentation, in many layers, of the Libyan society (Ammar, 2022; Mühlberger, 2012). In many ways, this breakdown forced Libyans to resort to other remaining traditional structures or networks of organization such as tribes, raising discussions on whether post-Gaddafian Libya was, to some extent, characterized by a system of tribalism (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Serwer, 2011).

¹ Both the GNA and the HoR also fought against minor jihadist militias such as the Islamic State or Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb.

² In this scenario of confrontation, the GNA was supported by states such as Turkey, Qatar or Italy, while also receiving support from the EU and the UN. In turn, the HoR was mainly supported by the UAE, Russia and France.

4.2.1 Definitions

The concept and meaning of a tribe has been analyzed thoroughly in this Final Degree Project's Literature Review. Nonetheless, in this conceptual framework, it is crucial to articulate the working definitions that will be used for both tribes and tribalism throughout the research. On the one hand, in the Libyan context, tribes are generally understood as dynamic social structures based on a shared idea of belonging and of common descent, often with additional intertwining social and economic ties (Lacher, 2011; Varvelli, n.d.). Tribes are not monolithic structures, as they can be dispersed and/or concentrated, and encompass sub-tribes, clans, sub-clans and families (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019). On the other hand, for this research, tribalism will be commonly understood as a system of social organization with places an important element of political authority and identity on tribes (Apthorpe, 1968; Mafeje, 1971). In peace studies, tribalism, as other social structures, is not an exclusive form of political and social organization, regularly coexisting with states and religions, for instance (Ekeh, 1990).

4.2.2 Libyan Tribal System

The Libyan tribal system is, primarily, classified through ethnic groups: Arabs, Amazighs (also called Berbers), Touaregs and Toubous (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019). Although in Libya there are also populations of Circassians and Turks, these do not tend to have a separated tribal affiliation (Ben Lamma, 2017). Arab tribes, which make up for almost 90% of the population³, can be encountered throughout the country, while Amazigh ones are concentrated especially in and around the Nafusa Mountains, a mountain range in Western Libya (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Lavrilleux, 2020). Touareg and Toubou tribes are native of the Fezzan, the desertic southern region of Libya (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019).

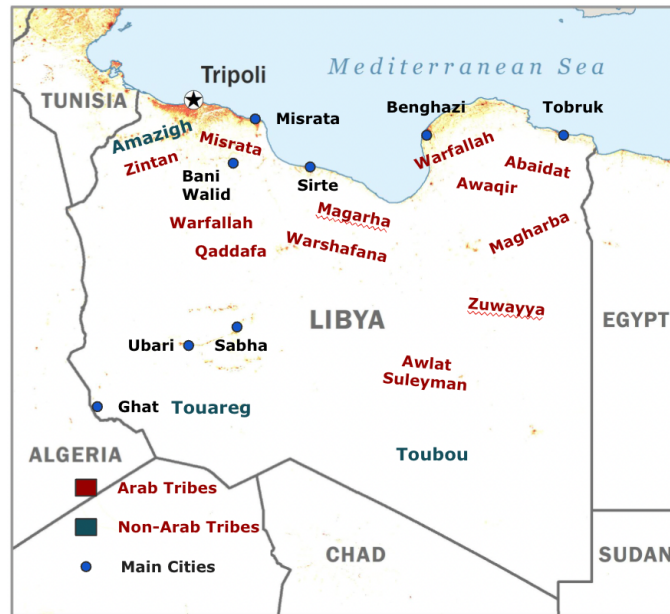
Among the Arab tribes, the most relevant can be divided territorially. In Western Libya (Tripolitania), these ones are the Warfallah, consisting of approximately one million affiliates, originally from Bani Walid but currently dispersed all over the country, the Qaddafi, a

³ The other 10% belongs usually to Turks or Circassians of urban centres in Northern Libya (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019).

historically secondary tribe that rose to power with his affiliate Muhammad Gaddafi, the Misratan, descendant from the Ottomans, or the Zintan tribes, both settled in the city of their own name and two of the primary actors of post-Gaddafi armed fragmentation (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Serwer, 2011). In Central Libya, the Magarha, originally from the interior but currently also numerous in the Central coast, and the Warshafana tribes have been particularly relevant in controlling the strategic stretch of coast in the region, while in the Eastern parts of Libya (Cyrenaica), the most relevant tribe is the Magharba, which has been a fervent supporter of Khalifa Haftar's LNA, although other tribes such as the Abaidat tribe, critical supporter of the House of Representatives, and the Awaqir, particularly relevant in the armed clashes against jihadist groups (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Kekili, 2017; Lacher, 2022). In Southern Libya (Fezzan), the most active and numerous tribes are the Zuwayya tribe and the Awlad Suleyman tribe (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017).

Besides the Arab tribes, there are also the Amazigh tribes from the Nafussa Mountains, which were instrumental in mounting an armed campaign against Gaddafi in 2011, the Touareg tribes, which have been organized in militias headquartered in the Fezzan city of Ghat and have been active in many of the cross-border conflicts there, and Toubou tribes, which have especially been active through the Toubou Front for the Salvation of Libya, a belligerent secessionist tribal militia that hostile to both Touaregs and Arabs (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Kekili, 2017; Lacher, 2022).

Libyan tribes are not static nor monolithic, meaning that diversity within a tribe is usual and, while tribal affiliations may be a facilitator for jobs or administrative positions and serve, as will be analyzed later, as a security guarantor, identification with a tribe does not entail regularly following tribal leader or their political positions (Boutaleb, 2012; Lacher, 2022; Mafeje, 1971).



Own Production with data of CIA World Factbook (2022)

5. Research & Analysis

5.1 Tribalism: Foundational element of the Libyan state?

Tribalism is one of the oldest prevailing institutions in Libya, which is itself named after the millenary “Libu” tribe (Fraihat, 2016; Laessing, 2020).⁴ Libyan tribes (or *qabila*) have been, throughout history, a constant source of identification, social organization and political authority (Chivvis et al., 2012; Lacher, 2022). These, however, have never been static nor monolithic, being regularly impacted by political developments around them (Apthorpe, 1968).⁵ While the territory had been an outpost of many empires, among them the Greek, the Roman or the Umayyad Caliphate, it was not until the colonization of the Ottoman Empire in 1551 that a joint political conceptualization of Libya arose (Laessing, 2020; Pargeter, 2012). Until then, Libyan tribes were mostly local, self-governing elements, occasionally organizing between them in confederacies to protect their interests at a mid-regional level, but hardly

⁴ The name was given by Pharaoh Ramesses II around 1280 BCE after the Libu tribe confederacy.

⁵ One major impact was the Arab invasion of the 7th century, which progressively led to the substitution of the Berber populations into Arab majorities and the Islamization of many tribes.

forming co-governance networks with external powers (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017). With the arrival of the Ottomans, tribalism would undergo a process of transition whose effects still remain (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022).

5.1.1 Tribalism and Libya's Colonial Legacy

After their arrival in Libya in 1551, the Ottomans quickly realized the difficulties of forging a stable colony in a territory so accustomed and reliant on local self-governance through tribal identification (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Hweio, 2012). In order to control these potentially conflictive elements, especially in rural and desertic areas, the Ottoman administration institutionalized the relation between the state (in this case the colonial province) and the tribes. This process of institutionalization transpired through the forming of patronage networks, which entailed that the Ottomans granted a certain extent of political autonomy and preferential social and economic status to certain tribes, which became local elites, in return for the protection of trade routes, military aid and taxes (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Boutaleb, 2012). This system also procured the integration of local tribal elites into the ranks of the Ottoman provincial administration, easing the implementation and legitimacy of policies (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017). Without tribal collaboration, the Ottomans would not have been able to expand into all of Libya and form a functioning modern state in its territory (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ekeh, 1990; Lacher, 2011). This co-governance system, however, was ultimately withdrawn with the implementation of the empire-wide Tanzimat reforms in the 19th century. The reformists saw tribal autonomy as a threat to the political authority of the Sultans, and centralized the power in Northern Libya's administrative centers, especially Tripoli and Benghazi (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017). The reforms were met with strong opposition from the tribes, which by then had amassed considerable amounts of money and weaponry and had been transformed from local to regional and national political actors (Boutaleb, 2012; Lacher, 2022).

The discontent of the tribes with the Ottoman empire was instrumentalized by a new power seeking a foothold in Northern Africa: the Italians. The Italians, which invaded Libya in 1911, reintroduced the tribal system as a way of gaining legitimacy and forging alliances with local actors (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019). With this system, tribes became the rulers of

their own towns until 1935, when the Italians re-centralized all the political power in their own colonial administration. From then to the expulsion of Italy from Libya in 1943, tribes, especially those in Cyrenaica and the Touaregs, engaged in insurgency campaigns under the Senussi clan⁶ aimed at the recapturing of local and national political power (Cherstich et al., 2020).

5.1.2 Tribalism and the Libyan State

After centuries of colonialism, the first Libyan state was established in 1951, under the name of Kingdom of Libya, after a period of Allied occupation following World War II (Laessing, 2020; Serwer, 2011). The Kingdom was led by former insurgency leader and politico-religious tribal leader Idris as-Senussi. King Idris relied heavily on tribes to establish a functioning post-colonial state. However, he did so by using the same old patronage systems that had been used already by both Ottomans and Italians (Ben Lamma, 2017; Varvelli, n.d.). Idris furthered this system by integrating preferential tribal leaders into important bureaucratic positions, maintaining, as his predecessors, longstanding tribal rivalries. This was one of the most important factors leading to his deposition, in 1969, by Col. Muḥammad Gaddafi (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012).

The historical review on the relation between tribalism and the different states, both colonial and national, that have been implemented in Libya lead towards two conclusions. First, that tribes were largely responsible for the establishment of a Libyan state administration, united and expanded into its current borders through co-governance systems with foreign actors (i.e. Ottomans and Italians), rendering them as foundational elements of the Libyan state (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Boutaleb, 2012; Ekeh, 1990; Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012). This is particularly relevant as this research, under the peace studies framework, will not position tribes in competition to the state, but rather as cooperating or complementing political and social structures (Apthorpe, 1968; Galtung, 1969; Mafeje, 1971). Second, that all administrations in Libya depended on the support of the tribal system for their effective survival (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Boutaleb, 2012; Ekeh, 1990; Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012).

⁶ The Senussi are a politico-religious Sufi order and clan originally from Cyrenaica.

5.2 Tribalism under Gaddafi

The management of tribalism in Gaddafi's Libya, from 1969 to 2011, is one of the critical explanatory elements for post-2011 political and armed fragmentation (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Cherstich et al., 2020; Chivvis et al., 2012; Lacher, 2022; Mühlberger, 2012; Pargeter, 2012). When Colonel Gaddafi first ousted King Idris in 1969, one of the first statements made by his military junta vowed to dismantle the old patronage networks of tribal favoritisms (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020). This was especially important, as it hinted at a clearance of traditionally privileged tribes from important bureaucratic posts (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019).⁷ During his initial years in power, Gaddafi tried to decrease tribal influence by pushing for a pan-Arab⁸ ideology, which placed great emphasis on the unity of nations, also helping him forming alliances throughout the Arab world (Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020; Pargeter, 2012).⁹ He gradually implemented socialist economic policies aimed at, precisely, reducing an inequality that had much to do with previous favoritisms (Ben Lamma, 2017; Boutaleb, 2012). Although his policies did diminish inequality, especially thanks to the establishment of an oil rentier state aimed at subsidizing social peace, there was a considerable opposition to his methods (Pargeter, 2012). In this context, Gaddafi turned to tribal leaders for support (Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012). While he also established patronage networks that resulted in favoritisms and tribal inequalities, his rationale in doing so was distinct to that of former rulers in two distinct points.

Firstly, Gaddafi's approach to tribal allegiances was not entirely focused on ensuring their support as a co-opting yet governing mechanism, as it had been the case with the Ottomans and Italians, but rather on ensuring that these tribes would never be able to unite and pose a threat at a national or regional level (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020; Lavrilleux, 2020). To guarantee this, Gaddafi implemented a "divide-and-rule" system in which he planted disputes and created disagreements among and within tribes. He did so by arbitrarily reassigning tribal lands, imposing financial troubles without reason, etc.; if tribes

⁷ His own tribe, the Qaddafi, had not been a particularly powerful tribe during the Ottoman and Italian administrations.

⁸ For Gaddafi, pan-Arabism could not include Berebers, Touaregs nor Toubous (Laessing, 2020).

⁹ Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt or Hafez Al-Assad of Syria were some of the most notorious allies.

were clashing between themselves, they would pose less of a challenge to Gaddafi (Ben Lamma, 2017; Cherstich et al., 2020; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020).

Secondly, he offered preferential treatment to traditionally non-elite tribes¹⁰, which were often from Cyrenaica, instead overseeing the rise of the Warfallah, the Magarha and his own Qaddafa, all from Tripolitania (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012). This was meant with contempt in Cyrenaica. The motives, again, were to fragment the tribal composition of the security apparatus and other bureaucratic posts, diminishing the possibilities of an internal coup and solidifying his position (Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012). In practice, this rendered the administration fractured, with only Gaddafi preventing its collapse, and with political posts only available for those tribes favored by himself. Effectively, Gaddafi enforced a scenario of perpetual negative peace and structural violence through this tribal manipulation strategy (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020; Pargeter, 2012).

While Gaddafi did not intend on increasing tribal sentiment, quite the contrary, he ended up obsessing over the issue (Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012). His obsession with tribes was furthered after the 1993 coup d'état. The coup, which was staged by senior Warfallah officials, failed, but did set a precedent of tribal resistance. A year later, in 1994, Gaddafi established the Popular Social Leadership Committees, in which loyal tribesmen were granted important administrative positions. To counter opposition, he created the figure of the Tribe Coordinator, which was tasked with ensuring Gaddafi support in their communities, and, in 1996, established the Certificate of Honor, in which he forced tribal leaders to sign complete loyalty (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Lacher, 2022). His instrumentalization of tribes left the country utterly divided, with no real functioning administration and a set of tribal rivalries waiting to be settled or avenged (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Boutaleb, 2012; Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012).

5.3 Tribalism during the 2011 Libyan Civil War

¹⁰ In the 90s, Gaddafi would embrace pan-Africanism and offer preferential treatment to Touabous over Arab tribes, planting the inter-tribal and inter-ethnic conflict that still lasts as of today.

The abovementioned instrumentalization of the tribal system of the Gaddafi regime was not the only, nor possibly the most relevant, element leading up to the events that transpired in 2011 (Chivvis et al., 2012; Mühlberger, 2012). After all, the Libyan political system under Gaddafi was already a dictatorship in which economic elitism, aided by international sanctions, and a poor human rights record coexisted (Pargeter, 2012; Serwer, 2011). In the context of a wave region-wide protests, also known as Arab Spring, protesters did primarily seek to improve democracy and equality standards. However, tribalism did play an extensive role in both in the extraordinary mobilization, and militarization, of anti-Gaddafi militants and in the disintegration and breakdown of the state when faced by internal and external threats (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Fasanotti, 2017; Mühlberger, 2012; Serwer, 2011).

The protests upon which the rebellion that would eventually topple Gaddafi was built started in January 2011, being initiated in Cyrenaica¹¹, and quickly spread to the whole of Libya (Hweio, 2012; Laessing, 2020). Essentially, the protesters claimed for democracy and freedom, although many groups, such as migrant workers or Amazigh, also led protests concerning economic and labor conditions and minority rights, respectively (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019). The desire to put an end to more than forty years of dictatorship, economic inequality and human rights violations was civil and inter-tribal in nature, and claims of the 2011 uprising being exclusively tribal should be dismissed as selective and simplistic (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; El-Katiri, 2012). While the grounds of the rebellion were civil, as evidenced by the formation of the inter-tribal and cross-regional National Transitional Council¹², the institution that would lead the military efforts against the Gaddafi regime and an important supporter of the united Libyan nation, there was a critical tribal component affecting both its outcome and its scale (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Fasanotti, 2017; Mühlberger, 2012; Serwer, 2011).

On the one hand, tribal networks served as an important mobilization factor for anti-Gaddafi militants under the National Transitional Council (NTC) (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine,

¹¹ It has been argued that tribal marginalization of Cyrenaica tribes by Gaddafi was an important factor to kickstart the protests.

¹² The National Transitional Council was a transitional body converging military and political efforts to topple Gaddafi and establish a parliamentary democracy in Libya from 2011 to 2012. See “Conceptual Framework, Chapter 1” for further information.

2019; Cherstich et al., 2020; Serwer, 2011). In this sense, it is essential to understand that the escalation into the First Libyan Civil War did not occur in a centralized manner. While the National Transitional Council organized military operations and became the political face of the uprising, local and tribal anti-Gaddafi militias were encouraged to bring the revolution in their own hometowns (Ben Lamma, 2017; Boutaleb, 2012). The reliance of the National Transitional Council in local actors was not rare, as local tribal councils had already played a prominent role in decision-making, particularly with the regards to the legitimization of political postulates (Fasanotti, 2017; Lavrilleux, 2020; Pargeter, 2012). This, nonetheless, did not mean that all tribesmen would follow their leaders' declarations, nor it entails that the bulk of the militants were fervent tribal fighters. However, tribal mobilization was instrumental in defeating pro-Gaddafi forces (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020).

In Cyrenaica, for instance, tribes such as the Magharba or the Abaidat¹³ were critical in supporting the NTC with hundreds of fighters, leading to the extraordinarily fast regional victory (Ben Lamma, 2017; Mühlberger, 2012; Serwer, 2011)¹⁴. Other examples of tribal mobilization occurred in Tripolitania. There, the Zintan tribe, through its tribal council, was the first one in the region to come out as anti-Gaddafi, organized the 2000-strong Zintan Brigades (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012; Serwer, 2011). Non-Arab tribes also mobilized vast amounts of tribesmen. The Amazigh tribes from the Nafussa Mountains, moved by decades of marginalization and oppression¹⁵, joined the NTC in its Western Libya campaign alongside the Zintan Brigades (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lavrilleux, 2020; Mühlberger, 2012). It is mentionable that both the NTC and external powers such as France or the United Kingdom¹⁶ shipped arms regularly to local and tribal actors during this period (Jolly, 2011). This was particularly relevant as it planted the seed for the establishment of the semi-autonomous armed groups, that would later on play a critical role in post-2011 armed fragmentation (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Chivvis et al., 2012; Lacher, 2011). This phenomenon of tribal actors becoming armed groups is not new, and, in

¹³ Both tribes had been previously marginalized by Gaddafi's "divide-and-rule" strategy.

¹⁴ The Cyrenaica was held by the NTC even before NATO's air campaigns.

¹⁵ The Tamazight language was prohibited in 2008 and other cultural expressions were banned in the 90s.

¹⁶ France, the United Kingdom, the US and Qatar were some of the main distributors of arm shipments to the National Transitional Council.

fact, had already been explained by Agner Fog's regality theory, which identifies collective insecurity as a the trigger for identity sentiments to intensify, often resulting in conflictual developments (Bagheri, 2019).

On the other hand, besides the mobilization and militarization of tribal elements during the 2011 First Libyan Civil War, the existing tribalism ingrained in the regime's administration was also detrimental in containing the rebellion (Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020; Pargeter, 2012). After years of manipulating tribal dynamics to become the sole leader of the regime, the refrained but accumulated tensions and grievances between members of the security and bureaucratic apparatuses finally exploded during the rebellion. Far from establishing a united administration, his "divide-and-rule" tactics rendered a system where Gaddafi was the only converging element (Baxley, 2011; Cherstich et al., 2020; Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2012). In the context of nation-wide opposition, many middle and high ranks began to deflect in protests of Gaddafi's actions vis-à-vis the violence on civilians, but also due to past grudges having to do with tribal underrepresentation and enmity (El-Katiri, 2012; Nouredine Jebnoun, Mehrdad Kia, Mimi Kirk, 2015; Pargeter, 2012). This was best evidenced by Cyrenaica tribes, deepening the regional divide, but it also occurred notably with the Tripolitania tribes such as the Misrata or the Zintan tribes (Ben Lamma, 2017). Of course, the defections not entirely owe its reasons to tribalism, as opportunism was a key factor, but they certainly demonstrated that his manipulation of tribal dynamics had an important effect in the disintegration of his administration (Fasanotti, 2017; Lacher, 2011; Pargeter, 2012).

Along this Chapter 3, it has been explained how the tribal system aided the rebellion of 2011 to succeed in its aims of toppling Gaddafi. However, there were also tribes that closed ranks in support of Gaddafi, such as the Qaddafa or the Magarha, while others, such as the Warfallah, the biggest tribe in Libya, fractured in internal divisions (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Boutaleb, 2012; Pargeter, 2012). Traditionally the most important tribe in Libya, during the 2011 Civil War they embarked in a turbulent dispute that owed more to regional and local interests than to tribal allegiance per se. The Warfallah of Tripolitania, especially those centered around Bani Walid¹⁷ supported the regime, while those tribesmen in Cyrenaica sought to topple it (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Cherstich et al., 2020; Serwer, 2011). This

¹⁷ Bani Walid is a small city in the interior of Tripolitania, traditionally known as the headquarters of the Warfallah.

was particularly important as it portrayed the heavy regional divide that exists between Cyrenaica and Tripolitania Libyans, even within the same tribe.

5.4 The Role of Tribalism in Libyan post-2011 armed fragmentation

Three days after the execution of Muhammad Gaddafi the 20th of October of 2011, the National Transitional Council declared the liberation of Libya and the end of the war (Laessing, 2020). However, as seen in the Chapter above, the decentralized militarization of the protests through local and tribal actors and the disintegration and breakdown of state structures, only held up by Gaddafi, would not be resolved merely with the cessation of hostilities. In fact, the First Libyan Civil War planted the seeds for a much protracted, complex and disorganized conflict: the post-2011 armed fragmentation (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Boutaleb, 2012). Usually, the main narratives in academia analyze factional violence and the Second Libyan Civil War (2014-2020) in light of geopolitical competition (Farmer, 2004; Lacher, 2022). While it is true that geopolitics has been a relevant escalating factor for the extension of the conflict, especially due to the use of proxy actors such as the Government of National Accord and the House of Representatives' Libyan National Army by the UAE and Egypt and Turkey and Qatar respectively¹⁸, this research, under the intra-societal framework of peace studies, will try to focus on the role of tribes and tribalism in this same scenario (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Laessing, 2020).

After the catharsis of 2011 the NTC consistently failed to establish new democratic institutions, while also failing to convene and converge all the actors that participated in the rebellion (H. Al-Shadeedi et al., 2020; Lacher, 2011; Serwer, 2011). This essentially was translated into a context of a failed state with rampant lawlessness and a compilation of armed actors unwilling to disarm (Chivvis et al., 2012; Mühlberger, 2012). The lack of a central authority empowered many actors to pursue their own interests through armed action, which in turn prompted local and tribal militias to keep their arms, mainly for self-defense (Hweio, 2012; Laessing, 2020; Varvelli, n.d.). In these circumstances, many Libyans, especially outside urban centers, resorted to the only reliable and remaining institutions: tribes. Tribes, which had long served as a source of employment or legitimacy were suddenly entitled, by their own members, to the protection of the community and, in some cases, to the pursuit of their interests (A.-H. Al-

¹⁸ Please read the "Conceptual Framework Chapter 1: The Libyan Crisis" for further explanation.

Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; Hweio, 2012; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020; Mühlberger, 2012).

Influenced by Kalyvas's¹⁹ rational violence theory, which argues that inter-societal violence is not only rational but logical by nature (Kalyvas, 2006), Fog's²⁰ regality theory, which explains the tribalization of violence as a result of collective insecurity (Bagheri, 2019), and Collier²¹ and Hoeffler's²² greed versus grievance model, which identifies civil violence as an outcome of deprivation, either economic, in which case there would be greed-based conflict, or identitarian and cultural, in which case there would be a grievance-based conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004), this research now enters its most critical and innovative pages. Having previously analyzed thoroughly the role of tribes during Libya's post-2011 armed fragmentation, this research has classified the rationale of such actors carried out by such tribes in three logics of action. The logics, hence, seek to explain and produce unprecedented knowledge on the reasons and dynamics of tribal armed actors in the given context of this research. These logics are an integral part of our research's analysis, but also a result of the same by its own right. Additionally, it is remarkable to state that these logics are not mutually exclusive, meaning that they can intertwine upon circumstances.

Having justified this, the logics of tribes as participant actors in the Libyan post-2011 armed fragmentation are three: the logics of localism, the logics of revenge and the logics of clientelism. Firstly, actions under the logics of localism are essentially characterized by the pursuit, in a conflictive or exclusionary fashion, of local political preference and authority over regional or national actors. Secondly, actions under the logics of revenge are fundamentally based on the aim of settling or avenging past grievances. Lastly, the logics of clientelism serves to designate those tribal actions carried out as a result of a transaction between political or armed support and privileges, goods or services.

¹⁹ Stathis N. Kalyvas (1964) is a Greek political scientist who is the Gladstone Professor of Government, at the University of Oxford and a University Academic Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford.

²⁰ Agner Fog is a Danish evolutionary anthropologist and computer scientist. He is currently an Associate Professor of computer science at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU).

²¹ Paul Collier (1949) is a British development economist who serves as the Professor of Economics and Public Policy in the Blavatnik School of Government and the director of the International Growth Centre.

²² Anke Hoeffler is a German economist and political scientist who is known for her work on social causes of morbidity and mortality.

5.4.1 Tribes and the logics of localism

The Libyan is, historically, a tribe-based society where, mostly in rural areas, tribes may live in mono-tribal towns (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Fasanotti, 2017; Parkinson, 2007). This is particularly interesting as there it a conjunction of meanings between a tribe and a village, a town or a small city, which in practice may mean that tribal interests and town interests (Pargeter, 2009; Parkinson, 2007; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018). The phenomena of territorial mono-tribalism is not rare in Libya, and, in the context of post-2011 fragmentation, this phenomena became a relevant factor (Chivvis et al., 2012; Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2009; Stokke & Mohan, 2001). Before advancing into examples, it is equally relevant to define the concept of localism. In sociology and political science, localism is understood as a range of postulates prioritizing the local over the national or the external (Stokke & Mohan, 2001). In peace studies, however, localism is the political preference or prioritization for those village, town or city authorities over other regional or national authorities, even to the point of creating a conflictive dynamic between poles of authority (Pargeter, 2009; Parkinson, 2007). This conflictive dynamic has been quite relevant when studying the behavior of tribes in post-2011 armed fragmentation, especially taking into account the lack of a reliable national administration (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2011; Pargeter, 2009).

The Bani Walid Uprising of 2012

The Bani Walid uprising of 2012 was one of the most emblematic instances of tribal behavior within the logics of localism (Kekili, 2017; Lacher, 2022). Bani Walid, a Tripolitanian city of est. 85000 inhabitants that serves as the Warfallah tribe headquarters, had been, throughout the 2011 Libyan Civil War, a focal point for pro-Gaddafi and anti-Gaddafi confrontation (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019). Its residents are all Warfallahs traditionally aligned with the regime and had formed a tribal resistance to the NTC during the war, even though its outcome was accepted (Lavrilleux, 2020; Mühlberger, 2012). However, months after the war finished, the NTC, acting as the *de facto* government, started mobilizing units to patrol the city and appointed a local council to govern the city in substitution of the anterior tribal council. The tensions escalated when an NTC soldier killed a Warfallah tribesman in a minor dispute. Then, the tribal council of elders organized an armed resistance to expel the non-Warfallah of the

city, with the armed conflict going on for two days (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017). Finally, the Libyan Minister of Defense, Osama al-Juwaili, met with the tribal council and agreed to reconstitute the tribal council as the political authority of Bani Walid, while also agreeing to retreat the majority of NTC fighters from the city (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Boutaleb, 2012; Laessing, 2020). The Bani Walid Uprising was significant in its meaning: a tribe had, through armed action and a logic of localism, had established its own authority through a tribal council, effectively decoupling from the political system of the rest of the country (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Fasanotti, 2017; Lacher, 2022).

5.4.2 Tribes and the logics of revenge

For forty years, Gaddafi's "divide-and-rule" strategy had caused many inter-tribal conflicts to appear and, due to the dictatorial conditions of the regime, to freeze its escalations. Gaddafi arbitrarily took lands from tribes to reward others, imposed financial troubles and publicly humiliated tribal leaders as pleased (Anderson, 2017; Ben Lamma, 2017; Lacher, 2022). The vigilante eco-system that was created around tribal dynamics encouraged tribes to accuse rivals for higher bureaucratic positions, land redistribution, etc. This system forced resentments between tribes to arise regularly, but disputes could not be settled as Gaddafi himself created them (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lavrilleux, 2020; Pargeter, 2012). In addition to all these Gaddafi-era resentments, the 2011 rebellion also oversaw the division of pro-Gaddafi and anti-Gaddafi tribes. Once the war ended, certain tribes, profiting from the lawlessness that ruled the country, took advantage of the situation to settle disputes (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022; Pargeter, 2009, 2012). The logic of revenge in armed tribalism was exemplified by the actions of the Zintan tribe from 2014 to 2020 in which they used the Second Libyan Civil War to regain lands and engage in tribal disputes with the Misrata²³ tribe, for instance, or the inter-tribal disputes between the Zawiya and the Warshafana tribes in Western Libya (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Ben Lamma, 2017; El-Katiri, 2012; Serwer, 2011).²⁴

²³ The Zintan and Misratan tribes have a long rivalry that sources from the Gaddafi era. Both tribes have aligned with different sides, HoR and GNA respectively, in the Second Libyan Civil War.

²⁴ The Zawiya and Warshafana tribes have been engaging in disputes from late 2012 until 2020. The disputes revolve around land disagreements and revenge killings.

5.4.3 Tribes and the logics of clientelism

The last of the logics of armed tribalism in Libya's post-2011 armed fragmentation is the logic of clientelism. By clientelist action we understand those actions, in this case violent actions, as being carried out as a result of an exchange between political or armed support and privileges, goods or services (Noureddine Jebnoun, Mehrdad Kia, Mimi Kirk, 2015). In Libya, the logics of clientelism have been operationalized mainly through tribal proxy action, that is to say, through action carried out on behalf of third actors. In Libya, armed tribes have been lured by two different kinds of actors to act according to this logic. First and foremost, as it has been the most recurrent case, some tribes have been acting on behalf of national actors in exchange for potential land rights, money, status or political autonomy (Boutaleb, 2012; Laessing, 2020). This has happened mostly with tribes of Southern Libya, especially Touaregs and Toubous. Secondly, tribes have also been convinced to act for international actors, such as Egypt, for strategic and security purposes, such as oil pipeline securing or border protection (St John, 2020)²⁵.

Ubari Conflict (2014-2017)

The Ubari Conflict is one of the clearest instances of the clientelist logic of armed tribal actors in Libya's post-2011 armed fragmentation. For virtually three years (2014-2017), the oasis town of Ubari, located in the Libyan Southern region of Fezzan, became the center of inter-tribal armed fighting (Murray, n.d.). The town was considered strategic, as its position in a bed of natural resources, namely oil, and was on the route between Ghat and Sabha, the two most relevant cities in Southern Libya. Both the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Libyan National Army (LNA) made use of the pre-existing rivalry²⁶ between the Touareg, also aided by the Awlat Suleyman Arab tribe, and the Toubou tribes, respectively, in order to gain control of the oil-rich town (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Murray, n.d.). The Ubari Conflict quickly stagnated, and neither of the parties achieved to get a breakthrough. After more than three years of fighting on behalf of the two competing governments, with more than four-hundred deaths and thousands of IDPs, the Touareg, Toubou and Awlat Suleyman tribal leaderships met in Rome, Italy, to sign a peace deal brokered by the Community of Sant'Egidio²⁷ in March 2017 (Ash, 2017).

²⁵ Egypt has been one of the most active users of Libyan tribes, especially the Magharba in Cyrenaica.

²⁶ The Touaregs and the Toubous had been, since the Gaddafi-era, conflicting parties over Touareg cooperation with the regime and Toubou expansionist ambitions.

5.5 Tribes and tribalism in Libyan peacebuilding

Up to 2023, peacebuilding efforts in Libya have not produced positive results. Starting with the Skhirat Agreement in 2015²⁸, the Palermo Conference of 2018²⁹ or Ghassan Salamé's UN Security Council peace proposal of 2019, which included the 5+5 Joint Military Commission and the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum³⁰, UN-led or externally brokered deals have not been upheld by Libyans (Ammar, 2022; Chivvis et al., 2012; Lacher, 2022; Laessing, 2020). Most literature of the peace studies approach attribute these failures to the liberal ideological regime upon which these processes have been conducted (Farmer, 2004; Kuperman, 2013; Mühlberger, 2012; Parkinson, 2007; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018). Many authors state that, while the efforts ought not to be belittled, state-building has overwhelmingly focused in the holding of elections with insufficient address to intra-societal structural issues (A.-H. Al-Shadeedi & Ezzeddine, 2019; Lacher, 2022; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018).

In this sense, several peace scholars have added valuable contributions to the issue. Firstly, peace experts highlight the dangers of exclusiveness in state-building. In a wide critique to the whole peace-building and state-building regimes, these authors expose the usefulness of multi-

²⁷ The Community of Sant'Egidio is a lay Catholic foundation based in Rome. The Community is internationally known for their efforts in peace-building matters, having been a negotiation facilitator in Kosovo, Mozambique, Guatemala or Burundi.

²⁸ The Skhirat Agreement of 2015 was a UN-brokered peace deal between the GNC and the HoR. Although the initial terms of the Agreement were not agreed, the talks sparked subsequent proposals which were convened under the guidance of Presidential Council Chairman, Fayed al-Sarraj, and ultimately culminated in the establishment of the Government of National Accord. The Agreement later on was broken by Haftar's LNA.

²⁹ International Conference attended by more than 38 countries, key players in the Libyan Crisis (such as Haftar and al-Sarraj) and international organizations such the EU and the UN. The Conference did not produce any breakthrough, but it did suppose a legitimizing step for parties to convene.

³⁰ Ghassan Salamé, the head of the UN Support Mission in Libya from 2017 to 2020, proposed a Libyan Peace Process consisting of three state-building oriented tracks: the political, which would oversee the convergence of intra-Libyan dialogue in the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, the economic, which would be conducted by the Libyan Expert Economic Commission and aided by the UNDP and the World Bank, and the military, under the auspices of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission. The meeting were held in Geneve and Berlin in 2020 and 2021.

level and multi-actor platforms including minor actors instead of externally-led and exclusively national processes (Chivvis et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2016; *Tribe, Security, Justice and Peace in Libya Today*, n.d.). In essence, what these authors are arguing is akin to Johan Galtung's³¹ notion of anthropocentric peace, a bottom-up peace approach centered in human societies (Galtung, 1969). In Libya, where these kinds of procedures, focusing on national actors, have been the rule, the inclusion of local and tribal actors would suppose a change of paradigms. Sub-national and tribal mediation and peace processes have already had a positive impact, such as bilateral inter-tribal settlements with the Zintan and Misrata tribes in 2018³², and should either be translated into national and international negotiations or given enough legitimacy to carry on in a higher regional basis (Chivvis et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2016; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018). The inclusion of local actors would also mean the start of re-focusing conflict ownership to Libyans and a gradual break away from international external interests and positions (Lee et al., 2016; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018).

Secondly, state-building in Libya has also lacked a necessary address in local distrust and mobilization reasons (El-Katiri, 2012; Lee et al., 2016; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018; Vorobej, 2008). This point is particularly interesting, as many tribal actors have mobilized for self-defense reasons, which have granted them even more popular legitimacy from their fellow tribesmen. Mobilization for self-defense reasons inherently relates to the lack of trust in national actors as providers of security. Hence, to advance into a comprehensive disarmament process of all non-state actors and a return to a legitimate monopoly of military force, Libya, a country without a reliable national peacekeeping force, can walk two different paths. The first path would see the signing of a national peace agreement upheld by external powers, which is simply not possible. The second path would focus on the establishment of local and regional power-sharing schemes between tribes or militias (Chivvis et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2016; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018). If these power-sharing schemes succeed, national actors, highly dependent on tribal non-state actors for territorial control, would see their influence diminished, while

³¹ Johan Galtung is a Norwegian sociologist who is the principal founder of the discipline of peace and conflict studies.

³² In 2018, tribal leaders from the warring Zintan and Misrata tribes met in Misrata to negotiate peace provisions. The negotiations were highly successful, as the tribes agreed to set up an inter-tribal committee to address regional issues and advance into the exchanges of prisoners.

these exact local actors would be enabled to pressure national armed groups to the negotiation table (Lee et al., 2016).

Although the Libyan Crisis is far from being a one-on-one conflict, meaning that complexity is norm, exclusive and election-focused peace processes in Libya have consistently left out some of the most important actors and issues (H. Al-Shadeedi et al., 2020; Chivvis et al., 2012; Tribe, Security, Justice and Peace in Libya Today, n.d.; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018). Armed tribal fragmentation is still an overwhelming reality on the ground, and relegating it to a local level without exploring regional or even national comprehensive multi-tribal agreements constitutes, certainly, a missed opportunity (Lee et al., 2016; Vericat & Hobrara, 2018).

5.6 Analytical Results

Each research ultimately seeks to either produce, verify, or debunk notions of knowledge. In this sense, and seeking to prove, amend or reject the thesis of tribal participation in Libya's post-2011 armed fragmentation, this research has established several relevant results.

In order to carry out a holistic and comprehensive analysis about tribalism in Libya, it was firstly needed to go to the foundations of tribalism within the early and modern forms of the Libyan state. In this line of research, this analysis has demonstrated that, throughout history, Libyan tribes not only served as social organizational structures, but also as key political actors which, through co-governance networks with external and non-tribal internal actors, greatly contributed to the foundation and progress of the Libyan state in both its early and modern forms.

Having reviewed that, it was imperative to see how Gaddafi's regime dealt with tribal dynamics. In this line of research, the main analytical results concerned his use of a "divide-and-rule" strategy, a change of paradigm in what tribal-governmental relations concerned. Essentially, Gaddafi's regime manipulated to a remarkable extent tribal dynamics by planting well-planned conflicts in sensitive tribal relations, arbitrarily re-distributing tribal ancestral lands, or granting and retiring preferential status to tribes to create inter-tribal grievances. These grievances would later prove critical in the downfall of his own regime, especially due to

tribal legitimization of the Arab Spring protests, at first, and its subsequent insurgency and mobilization power during the first instances of the 1st Civil War in 2011.

Gaddafi's manipulation of tribal dynamics exacerbated grievances and disparities which, among other factors, contributed extensively to a nation-wide inability to form a functioning state and to the instability that this derived in after 2011. In the study of this post-2011 scenario, this research has analyzed a plurality of inter-tribal clashes and events to come up with an original assessment and classification of tribal armed action. This compilation has produced three qualitative different logics explaining the motives and rationale behind these actions. Firstly, the logic of localism, which includes those actions aimed at pursuing local tribal interests and local political autonomy over perceived unreliable national actors. Secondly, the logic of revenge, which encompasses those actions stemming directly of past grievances and attempt to avenge or settle them through violent means. Thirdly, the logic of clientelism, which consists of those actions carried out as a result of an exchange between privileges, good or services for political or armed support, often resulting in proxy actions.

Conclusively, this research has concluded with a critique on Libya's peacebuilding efforts. In this aspect, the analytical outcomes fundamentally concern the exclusiveness of liberal, election-based and externally-led peace processes carried out, unsuccessfully, in Libya. This is quite frustrating, as even with precedents of inter-tribal peace negotiations, the failure to comprehend the Libyan Crisis as a dynamic and multi-faceted conflict hinders the establishment of an inter-Libyan and multi-level approach to peacebuilding.

6. Conclusions

Throughout this project, the aim of completing a fully-fledged research that enables readers to further comprehend the tribal armed fragmentation aspects of the Libyan Crisis has been coupled with an exhilarating drive to contribute to the wider yet limited literature of both the Libyan Crisis and of the behavior of identity-based actors in conflict settings. In this sense, this research has contributed to the overall field of study in several points.

Firstly, this project has been conducted under a framework of methodological individualism, which, by placing an emphasis on non-statal structures -tribes in this case- has aided in structuring a new way of research that, from an analytical standpoint, allows to challenge the mainstream narratives of geopolitical contention and merely political or economic quarrel. This methodology has been placed under the wider framework of peace studies, a theoretical approach previously used in peace research, but barely used for conflict analysis. By using these approaches, hence, this research contributes to the establishment and development of a critical analytical manner of conducting research, further amplified by the hitherto minimal academic production and potential transposable effects to other non-state groups in other conflict settings.

Secondly, besides confirming our thesis of tribal participation in Libya's post-2011 armed fragmentation, this research has improved previous knowledge on a wider set of concepts. On the one hand, by focusing on tribal dynamics, this research has added another layer of complexity to the often-simplified reality of the Libyan Crisis, thus expanding the overall understanding on the conflict. On the other hand, by carrying out an in-depth study of the rationales of identity-based actors in war scenarios, this research contributes to the establishing an analytical classification method for violent identity-based action. This classification, through the logics of localism, revenge and clientelism, intrinsically offer a theoretical model that could well be applied in other conflict arenas.

Conclusively, an acknowledgment on the limitations of this research ought to be done. This project has struggled with a significant deficiency of reliable and un-biased sources. Even if this has been solved through thorough assessments on the accuracy of each of the sources, it has constituted an inherent shortage of disposable information, both factual and analytical. Additionally, the extension and focus of the research, while allowing the production of relevant results, has resulted in the impossibility of providing a more extensive contextual geopolitical consideration to the whole of the conflict.

Even with its faults, this research has articulated a cogent research on the severely understudied yet fascinating role of tribal dynamics in Libya. Proudly, this project has not only confirmed our analytical target of post-2011 tribal armed fragmentation, but has also produced pioneering analytical results, such as the logics of tribal armed action, and has offered a comprehensive and holistic regard of tribalism in Libya with the potential of cementing further, compelling and certainly needed research.

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