



COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN LIBYA

A PEACEBUILDING PERSPECTIVE

Talha Köse & Bilgehan Öztürk



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The Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in Libya Project allowed our team of researchers to investigate Libyan society during a very turbulent period (2018-2020). This period will probably be one of the critical turning points in the country's political history. We have observed both hope and despair during this turbulent time. Our team of researchers was also influenced by developments and was transformed during the research period. Ongoing events and the gradual destabilization of Libya during this time stimulated our team to work in a more dedicated manner. The Bina Program is a very comprehensive effort that aims to bring sustainable peace and stability to Libya. We wanted to be part of an initiative to bring peaceful change to Libya. The CVE team would like to thank Mustafa el Sagezli, Emrah Kekilli, Murad Fayad and SESRIC for allowing us to be part of this constructive effort.

This report is an outcome of a collective endeavor. We had very constructive dialogues with many segments of Libyan society during our two-year research and writing period. The honest and dedicated comments, insights, and contributions of our local partners were key to our understanding of the realities on the ground in Libya. Those resources were also the fundamental pillars of our report. We had opportunities to go to Tripoli, Misrata, Zliten and we had honest conversations with Libyan actors while General Khalifa Haftar lay siege to the country's capital.

We invited many Libyan actors and international experts on Libya to our workshops in Istanbul and Ankara. The dialogues and networks we developed during and after the field research gave us some hope and optimism about the future of Libya. Without the support and the insights of our local partners, research counterparts, and friends in Libya, we would not have been able to comprehend the complexities of post-revolutionary Libyan society. Every conflict has its specifics and its unique features that can both mitigate or exacerbate it. We are especially thankful for our Libyan partners' help understanding the details of the Libyan realities in such a difficult time.

Local and international developments and interventions did not help stabilize Libya after the revolution that toppled Colonel Muammar Qadhafi's 42-year reign. The country has been dragged into a civil war due to internal and external reasons. Unfortunately, most of the international actors and interventions deepened the country's instability rather than helping fix the root causes of the problems that destabilized Libya. As a team of researchers, we passionately focused on stabilizing and stimulating sustainable and inclusive peace in Libya. Struggling to focus on inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding efforts may sound naïve in a time of escalated tensions. However, that is the only formula that can bring peace and reconciliation to the country. The group of experts at SETA, our researchers, and research assistants actively supported our research. We want to thank General Coordinator of SETA Burhanettin Duran, and our team of researchers at SETA, Dr. Murat Yeşiltaş, Can Acun, Bilal Salaymeh, Sibel Koru, and Gizem Gezen for their remarkable contributions.

Lastly, I would like to thank my assistants at Ibn Haldun University Zulkarnein Mohammed and Ahmet Safa Hüdaverdi who helped me during the research process.

We hope that this report and our efforts will inspire the process of a peaceful change in Libya. Our dedication to our Libyan friends' struggle to live in a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous country will

continue. We hope that this project will also contribute to the friendship and strengthen the deep cultural and historical ties of the Libyan and Turkish people.

Associate Professor Talha KÖSE,
Ibn Haldun University/ SETA Brussels
Rapporteur and team leader of the CVE Project

FOREWORD

The Bina Program was established by the Libyan Program for Reintegration and Development (LPRD), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and the Statistical, Economic and Social Research Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC). The Bina Program is a state-building initiative that aims to support Libya and fragile conflict-affected countries in rebuilding their institutions. The Bina program has three important pillars one of which is research development. Research is essential for analyzing the current situation in Libya and providing Libya's decision-makers with recommendations, policies, and solutions to overcome the challenges of state-building. One of the main challenges that the Libyan people face in their endeavor to rebuild Libya's institutions is the security issue. Libya as many other countries in the region has been suffering from violence and terrorism caused by extremist groups such as DAESH. For this reason, Bina has launched its research project on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). The main goal of the CVE research was to analyze the root causes of violent extremism in Libya and recommend solutions for preventing and countering the spread of violent extremism in the country. The research looked into the deep root causes of violent extremism (VE) in Libya and how to overcome these causes. The perspective of the study is based on a peacebuilding approach which aims to strengthen the

involvement of local actors as well as strengthening societal resilience. The CVE approach adopted by the research team was in accordance with the Bina Program's vision of the combination and intersection of peacebuilding, state-building, and "nation-building."

Another important objective of the Bina research project is the transfer of knowledge and international best practices to the Libyan side. Bina chose to partner with SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research seeking to learn from the Turkish and international experiences in tackling VE by dealing with its root causes.

The project team was formed in a unique manner where Libyan, Turkish, and international researchers worked together for months to conduct good quality research that suggests clear policies and solutions. The policies and solutions that are suggested to the challenges of the Libyan case benefitted from the Turkish and international experiences on CVE. Even though the team members were researchers and practitioners from different countries the coordination, enthusiasm, and information sharing amongst them led to a successful research project. I was honored to be a member of the team observing how well the Libyan and Turkish researchers worked together in a harmonious and friendly manner.

After months of hard work, I can confidently claim that Bina has succeeded in providing the Libyan decision-makers with a roadmap that describes the root causes of CVE and provides clear solutions to its root causes. It is a road map that fits well into a wider strategy of peacebuilding and state-building. I must also thank and congratulate the research project's team from SETA and the Libyan side for their noteworthy efforts.

Mustafa Elsagezli
General Manager, LPRD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Extremism and violent extremism are the offspring of Qadhafi's 42-year-long rule.
- Qadhafi's radical and repressive discourse and policies, his practices which ruined Libya's social fabric and traditional institutions, opening space for certain Salafi movements -Madkhali Salafis-, and the periodical crackdown on any organized movement, chiefly Islamists, are among the factors that paved the way for the emergence and spread of violent extremism in Libya.
- Qadhafi's closure of universities and institutions offering religious education deprived generations from sufficient religious education. The religious domain was dominated by foreign fatwas and interpretations of Islam that were distant to Libya's moderate understanding of Islam.
- The eradication of indigenous religious institutions and scholars created a "religious vacuum," snatching the Libyan people away from their own local religious interpretation and exposing them to extraneous religious interpretations.

- The Qadhafi regime intentionally radicalized Islamist movements in order to repress violently the regime's political rivals. This led to the political mobilization of Islamist factions against the Qadhafi regime from 1980s onwards.
- The style and strategy of the Qadhafi regime towards opposition as a way of consolidating power provided a fertile ground for extremist practices. The exclusion and crushing of opponents led to underground mobilization which became launching pads and theaters for the spread of extremist propaganda aided by violent extremist organizations (VEOs).
- The Qadhafi regime instituted a system of exclusion and inclusion which pitched supporters of the regime against opponents. This situation granted a conducive ground for the development of personal and group hatred.
- The regime became unsuccessful in suppressing Salafism in the 1980s and instead decided to promote a specific version of Salafism (Madkhali) to contain Islamists in the 1990s. Since Madkhali Salafis commend an absolute submission to *wali al-amr*, which refers to the ruler who has the legitimacy to rule, the Qadhafi regime paved the way for and invested in them in order to make them an influential and useful actor.
- Violent extremism (VE) is not a problem endemic to Libya, but rather a foreign import mobilized by other regional countries. Certain countries in the region intervened in Libya in order to prevent the objectives of revolution in the country and the entire region. Madkhali Salafism was mainly supported by regional countries

and gradually became an important tool to undermine the supporters of revolutionary politics in Libya.

- The core problem is an endemic lack of state capacity in Libya that has left a void in security, economic opportunities, and education. Conditions worsened following the 2011 uprising, as the state almost collapsed amongst political disputing, and basic services and living condition deteriorated across the country.
- State failure bred insecurity, human rights abuses, abuse of power, corruption, and fostered the emergence of criminal networks among others. The inability of successive regimes to establish credible and effective centralized government machinery capable of governing the entire territory of the country and ensuring security both at the personal and community level bolstered the already polarized system's decline into an extremist quagmire.
- Insufficient access to university education is crucial particularly in the process of participation in violent extremist (VE) activities. The lack of a well-designed education system, of course, limits the number of viable future prospects for youths, and leaves them without the critical thinking skills necessary to effectively see through radical Salafi messaging.
- Teachers must be trained to recognize and deal with potential risks of radicalization and extremism in the school system. Radicalization awareness should be one of the key cornerstones of the teacher training programs. Special counseling teachers may be trained to deal with the cases where students engage in the path of radicalization.

- Teacher training programs should be customized according to local vulnerabilities. Teachers that are equipped to deal with radicalization should be appointed to more vulnerable places facing extremism.
- Special programs and policies should be formulated to attract youth to the secondary and high school education in tribal areas. Special dormitories should be built and sponsored to attract students from the tribal areas to secondary education. This would contribute to the process of building a sense of collective identity.
- Special rehabilitation frameworks should be designed at schools for the children that were exposed to the conducts of VEOs.
- Libyan authorities should target location-specific CVE programming focusing on populations that have a higher probability of being attracted to violence: especially those with links to violent extremist entities during the military conflict. The areas especially dominated by DAESH between 2014-2016 should be the starting phases for CVE programming. International cooperation is especially important to develop a CVE pilot program in these areas. Libyan authorities can do this in a number of ways: through primary and secondary education, technical and vocational education and training as a part of employment programs, and skill training as a component in demobilizing and reintegration programs.
- Basic religious education should be part of the education curriculum so that the youth will not fall prey to channels that are not controlled by officials. More advanced religious training should also be provided under

the official school system on the basis of demand. There may be deeper cooperation between official religious authorities such as the Ministry of Religion and Charity Affairs and the official education authorities for the religious education.

- Libyan adults should also receive religious education through the official education channels such as schools and mosques in order to avoid exposing people to extremist messages through unofficial “schools.”
- The education system should include courses on Islamic knowledge such as *fiqh* and *aqidah* as priority areas. This would equip the students with the knowledge which would make them immune to extremist messaging by divesting extremists of their purported “authority” over religion.
- There is a need for a national law tailored to the disarmament of militias or members of VEOs who want to exit those organizations. This law might allow for, at least in the initial phase, possession of a personal weapon when a member leaves a VEO or a militia.
- Attorneys should be trained in order to deal with the people who engaged in VEOs. They should be trained to separate the extremist actors from the sympathizers and to be able to make clear distinctions in order to protect the rights of the people who engage in those organizations without being involving in violent acts. It is crucial to deradicalize those individuals. Lawyers should be equipped to deal with such cases.
- Libyan authorities should also focus on facilitating the documentation of human rights abuses during the conflict period and the Qadhafi era to support advocacy

and accountability that can prevent potential human rights abuses.

- CVE-related tracks within the CSOs should be prioritized and special funds for such activities should be provided. Functioning CSOs would contribute to nation-building, state-building, and peace-building efforts.
- The CSOs that are working in the field of DDR should be supported by international organizations and NGOs both in the form of funds and know-how. The former should also play a leading role in an incubation framework to breed new CSOs to operate in DDR field. LPRD has valuable experience in the field of DDR, so it could assume the role of tutoring, mentoring, and funding CSOs for this purpose as well as initiating and maintaining the incubation framework.
- DDR (Disarmament, Disengagement and Reintegration) should be implemented to former members of VEOs that take the path of SME development in reverse: reintegration should come first, then demobilization should follow, and disarmament should be the last phase. This is necessary as the former members of VEOs might not be sure of their personal security even after they leave a VEO and start a business. At least until they establish themselves as businessmen and the conflict environment calms down, they might be resistant to return their weapons.
- There should be a general amnesty for the repentant members of VEOs following a political settlement. After the amnesty, loans should be provided to those who want to exit. This was done in Algeria and former mem-

bers of VEOs opened small shops and started businesses thanks to the amnesty and the loans provided to them.

- Women are less educated, but they are more exposed to conventional media. Conventional media can be instrumentalized to raise awareness about VEOs and may be used to spread messages to counter such organizations. Some of those projects and programs may be produced by women.
- Any national dialogue and institutionalization effort should include women. Women should also be trained in the religious field. The predominance of men in religious education and religious activities should be counterbalanced. There should be specific institutions organized by Awqaf to provide religious training for women.
- Women groups should gather to discuss their own recommendations for the national peace process.
- Training women to raise their awareness about the extremist messages and radicalization may be a positive step as a preventive measure. They may also play more active roles voluntarily by joining CSOs that are focused on CVE activities.
- A long-term strategy can be training youth and organizing leadership workshops among the influential youth figures that may have a broader impact among their peers; increasing their awareness about VE and equipping them with the necessary resources to deal with the challenges of their age group; providing social space and resources for those young leaders.
- It is necessary to create safe and legitimate grounds for the organized activities of youth networks. CSOs and political parties may be supported to have special quo-

tas for youth. It is also necessary to generate networks that crosscut across different segments of Libyan society in order to create a sense of common belonging. Youth quotas should not be used for ethnic, tribal, or factional basis.

- It is crucial to counter the extremist message with the more effective use of social media and conventional media. At the same time, it is important to limit the channels of extremist voices as a part of a media strategy. Youth that are interested to contribute to CVE activities may be encouraged to play more active roles in spreading the moderate voices through various channels. Special grants may be allocated to the projects that spread moderate voices and encourage youth to constructive work in various areas.
- International youth programs and youth camps may be instrumentalized to create an environment that is friendly for youth to generate a broader network and discussion environment for the Libyan youth. Institutions such as UN, OIC, and EU may provide special funds to support such networks and activities. Local youth NGOs may be sponsored and supported to take more active and regular roles in such activities.
- Young Libyans who were part of the VEOs may be encouraged to join deradicalization programs by providing employment opportunities after the deradicalization and job training programs. They may be provided some salaries during the training process.
- Within the framework of deradicalization programs, norms of ethics, respect, moderation, and open-mindedness in society might be stimulated.

- Civic awareness and civic education could be provided during the deradicalization process.
- Former members of VEOs should be provided with counseling, and social and psychological therapy during the deradicalization process.
- Participants in the deradicalization or DDR framework should be allowed to resume their former job positions with their skills and capacity increased. Also, those who were unemployed even before joining a VEO, should be empowered and recruited in new public and private sector jobs.
- The participants that enrolled in deradicalization and DDR programs should be monitored along the process of reintegration.
- Special trauma healing projects may be designed to help youth that were involved in the armed conflict, and the ones affected directly or indirectly by it.

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ONE

INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this report is to offer policy guidelines that may have a practical impact in the field of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) specifically in the Libyan context. The policy guidelines and recommendations that are offered in this report are based on our intensive research on Libya in the past two years. The observations and recommendations that are offered in this research may also be useful for dealing with the problem of VE in other fragile states in the region. The structural and contextual vulnerabilities of the post-Revolution Libya are not peculiar to Libya; however, in this study, our efforts and focus are concentrated around Libya's challenges. Our perspective is shaped by the information and the feedback we gathered in the interactions and workshops we conducted with Libyan experts, political and religious leaders, civil society organizations, former military members of the armed groups, Libyan think-tanks and by our field research in Libya. Our local counterparts are closely engaged with the daily realities of the Libyan context.

The main objective of a Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) strategy in this report is to assure a sustainable stability for Libya, which has experienced a devastating civil war and fragmentation in the aftermath of the February 2011 revolution. The maximum involvement of local actors and counterparts, and the increased cooperation and coordination among those actors are among this report's fundamental suggestions. We have a holistic and long-term perspective, which offers a long-term structural transformation for Libya to address the root causes of violent extremism (VE). Our perspective is based on a peacebuilding approach which aims to strengthen the

involvement of local actors and strengthen the societal resilience against destabilizing factors.

Before starting to discuss the outlines of a comprehensive CVE strategy for Libya, we have to bring clarity to the conceptual preferences. The concept of CVE is an ambiguous one, which needs to be clarified and contextualized according to the realities of Libya. There is no consensus on what exactly the CVE denotes, or to what extent CVE efforts are part of Countering Terrorism (CT) or Countering Radicalization/Deradicalization processes. There are no clearly defined boundaries between CVE, CT, or deradicalization processes as all these concepts, and their practical implications have major overlaps. Some approaches deal with the issue with a complete security-oriented agenda which focuses on militaristic approaches, intelligence, and surveillance techniques. Some other approaches try to deal with the problem from a more comprehensive perspective incorporating the social, economic, psychological, legal, and political components. Some perspectives on CVE and deradicalization highlight individual-oriented approaches, whereas some others emphasize the structural components as well as the international context. All of these perspectives have advantages, disadvantages, and deficiencies. The Libyan case is more specific since it involves a state collapse and an ongoing civil war which started after the February 17 revolution that toppled a 42-year-long dictatorship in Libya. Individual and small group-oriented approaches are less useful in comparison to more systemic and structural analyses. Methodologically we will rather focus on *meso* and *macro* levels in this report, without denying the significance of the personal level drivers that lead to radicalization and extremism.

Our perspective is *holistic* rather than focusing on a particular aspect of a CVE. The strategies that are offered in this report are part of a peacebuilding strategy rather than dealing solely with the aspects of direct violence. We are also aware of the limitations that can be faced due to the comprehensiveness of our intervention model. Some of the

interventions can have an impact in the short run, whereas some other interventions such as trust-building between communities and institution building may take a much longer time. Balancing the short-term and long-term goals and balancing the local and external capacity is a delicate equation within the Libyan context. One significant challenge for Libya is to manage short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals in harmonious ways so that they will not impede each other.

A broad range of activities are mentioned as the components of CVE tasks such as “building the capacities of financial, criminal justice, and rule of law institutions; developing media products and messages to challenge extremist narratives and counter their ideologies; training police and frontline officials about CVE; and strengthening engagement with civil society groups working on violence prevention and related development issues; youth engagement and employment projects, educational programs, and the development of TV, radio, and other media programming to showcase alternative narratives to those propagated by extremists.”¹ We tried to adapt our strategy to fit the realities of Libya best.

In this report, we included the structural preventers of VE under the roster of CVE toolkits. In the academic and policy-relevant contexts, there are various explanations for the root causes of VE. These include uncertainty due to the collapse or weakening of state infrastructure²

¹ Holmer, G. (2013). *Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective*. United States Institute of Peace. Washington D.C. pp. 6-7.

² Karen Ballentine. “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Reconsidering the Economic Dynamic of Armed Conflict.” In Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*, (Boulder: Lynne Reiner, 2003), p. 265; Ken Menkhaus, “Constraints and Opportunities in Ungoverned Spaces: The Horn of Africa” in *Denial of Sanctuary: Understanding Terrorist Safe Havens*, edited by Michael Innes, 2007; Lynch, M. (2016). “Failed States and Ungoverned Spaces”. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 668(1), pp. 24-35; Howard, T. (2016). *Failed States and the Origins of Violence: A Comparative Analysis of State Failure as a Root Cause of Terrorism and Political Violence*. Routledge; Halvard Buhaug, “Relative Capability and Rebel Objective in Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 43, No. 6, 2006, pp. 691–708; Denooux, G., & Carter, L. (2009). *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*. USAID, February, p. 41.

or social institutions; poverty and search for economic opportunities;³ humiliation and social stigmatization⁴ of certain segments of society; grievances and problems in the distribution of economic resources and power and political exclusion;⁵ and a long history of hostilities within the society.⁶ Intervention and destructive involvement of some external actors are possible triggers of VE in Libya. In the Libyan case, there are structural problems related to the weakness of state institutions. There are also problems within the civil society, where the civilian actors do not have the capacity and experience to function coherently and fill the gaps that were left by the fragile state. Society is also fragmented due to the authoritarian legacy, which left no space for autonomous, functioning civilian institutions. In Libya, what opened Pandora's box is the collapse of the state infrastructure after the collapse of the Qadhafi regime. The state infrastructure and institutions were purposefully

³ Keefer, P., & Loayza, N. (eds.). (2008). *Terrorism, Economic Development, and Political Openness*. Cambridge University Press; Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler, *On the Incidence of Civil War in Africa*, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, August 16, 2000; Elbadawi, Ibrahim, and Nicholas Sambanis, "Why Are There So Many Civil Wars in Africa?" *Journal of African Economies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2000.

⁴ Fattah, K., & Fierke, K. M. (2009). "A Clash of Emotions: The Politics of Humiliation and Political Violence in the Middle East," *European journal of international relations*, 15(1), 67-93; Lindner, E. G. (2002). "Healing the Cycles of Humiliation: How to Attend to the Emotional Aspects of 'Unsolvable' Conflicts and the Use of 'Humiliation Entrepreneurship.'" *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 8(2), 125-138.

⁵ Gurr, T. R. (2000). *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*. US Institute of Peace Press; Hafez, M. (2003); Cederman, L. E., Wimmer, A., & Min, B. (2010). "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis." *World Politics*, 62(1), 87-119; *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers; Laqueur, W. (1987). *The Age of Terrorism*. Toronto: Little, Brown and Company; Callaway, R. L., & Harrelson-Stephens, J. (2006). "Toward a Theory of Terrorism: Human Security as a Determinant of Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29(8), 773-796; Newman, E. (2006). "Exploring the 'Root Causes' of Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29, 749-772; Dalacoura, K. (2006). "Islamist Terrorism and the Middle East Democratic Deficit: Political Exclusion, Repression and the Causes of Extremism." *Democratization*, 13(3), 508-525; Jennifer Noyon, *Islam, Politics and Pluralism: Theory and Practice in Turkey, Jordan, Tunisia and Algeria* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2003).

⁶ Kaplan, R. D. (2002). *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post-cold War*. Vintage; Volkan, V. D. (1998). *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Basic Books.

kept weak during the Qadhafi regime.⁷ Similarly, formal civil society was also very weak leaving only tribal networks, family networks, and the mosques as informal domains of collaboration.

Reducing the uncertainty and re-integrating the society by building trust from bottom-up and the institutionalization of the mechanism of trust seems to be the appropriate strategy for Libya according to our research. Trying to impose an externally driven straightjacket seems to be unsustainable and can lead to another round of conflict. Investing in the local Libyan capacity may not necessarily seem to be the most efficient approach, but it is the most sustainable one. However, we have to take into account the limitations that emerge due to the ongoing civil war which has polarized Libyan society. The civil war situation allows for external interventions in Libya, which further polarize the various segments of Libyan society. The uncertainty in the field benefits the extremist factions and terrorist organizations.

Challenges to CVE in Libya

Since the revolution that toppled the Qadhafi Regime in 2011, Libya faces a situation of a severe “security dilemma”⁸ environment. Civil war and the collapse of state infrastructure deepened the existing uncertainty in Libya. The most important challenge to address the problem of the security dilemma is the lack of trust, cooperation, and coordination among various local actors, which increases the country’s vulnerability to external interventions. International actors, including states and armed non-state actors exploit Libya’s power vacuum under the conditions of fragility. So far, the involvement of external actors and armed non-state groups boosted the country’s uncertainty. Due to

⁷ Gaub, F. (2014). “A Libyan Recipe for Disaster.” *Survival*, 56(1), 101-120; Interviewee No: 1& 2, 17 August 2018, Ankara.

⁸ Ibid; Bhardwaj, M. (2012). “Development of Conflict in Arab Spring Libya and Syria: From Revolution to Civil War.” *Washington University International Review*, 1(1), 76-97; Posen, Barry. “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict.” *Survival* 35 (1), 27-47, Spring 1993.

this fragmentation and the ongoing civil war, it is very difficult to offer a clear top-down holistic perspective that may bring stability to Libya through a step-by-step sequential approach.

A security-oriented, top-down approach has the potential to escalate further the ongoing civil war or may lead to structural violence, which may eventually trigger further violence if the conditions are suitable for another cycle of confrontation. We rather propose a CVE perspective that is compatible with the fundamental principles of peacebuilding: a focus on the prevention of various forms of violence and oppression, not just a focus on the direct violence; taking the local and contextual dynamics into account and thus remaining flexible; inclusive and based on local ownership; gender-sensitive (i.e. more sensitive about inclusion of women) and a civil society-oriented approach.⁹ Synchronic intervention efforts from a bottom-up perspective will be highlighted according to the principles that are mentioned in this report. Without empowering and equipping the local actors with proper resources and experiences, we can hardly reach the goal of sustainable stabilization in Libya. Domestic and international agencies and actors that would be involved in peacebuilding and CVE work also need to act more harmoniously to avoid cacophony and to allocate resources more efficiently. On the other hand, just focusing on direct violence and creating new structural and cultural inequalities and problems to prevent direct violence is not the right path to finding a sustainable solution for VE.

It is very difficult to prioritize the to-do list to achieve a stable and peaceful Libya. It is rather preferable to have multiple projects working simultaneously to address the complicated challenges and synchronize

⁹ Holmer, G. (2013). *Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective*. United States Institute of Peace. Washington D.C.; Subedi, D. B., & Jenkins, B. (2016). "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Engaging Peacebuilding and Development Actors." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 8(10), 13-19. Weine, S. (2017). *Resilience and Countering Violent Extremism*. *The Routledge International Handbook of Psychosocial Resilience*, 189-201.

the efforts. Coordination of all constructive work and providing communication and cooperation opportunities for the actors at different levels is also a significant concern for the stabilization project in Libya. In this section, we will briefly outline the sources of the current problem of violent extremism (VE) in Libya, and we will offer perspectives and policy guidelines that would address the underlying sources of VE. Prevention, or at least mitigation of the ongoing confrontations, should be the first step towards normalization and CVE in Libya. Ongoing uncertainty leads to or intensifies all other problems.

Until the recent period, the limited human resources and limited financial resources have been mostly spent on the ongoing violent confrontations between fighting factions.¹⁰ External actors only fueled the confrontations between the Libyan fighting factions.¹¹ It is an utmost priority to end fights and armed confrontations between all Libyan factions in the ongoing civil war. Normalization and the emergence of a context that is suitable for broader stability can only emerge after an extended period of ceasefire and the establishment of a state authority. The ceasefire can be local, if a ceasefire or a peace deal is not achievable in the short run.

Dialogue and confidence-building steps should be a pillar of any serious normalization effort in Libya. So far, the local, national, and international dynamics worked in reverse dynamic, deepening the tensions within Libya.

Within the Libyan context, it seems impossible for any single authority to bring order and services to the entire country anytime soon.

¹⁰ According to 2018 estimates of the Libyan Oil Corporation the war has cost the country some \$130 billion due to damage to oil fields and the closures of oil terminals. The total cost of the rebuilding of the country was also estimated around more than \$100 billion (“The Human and Material Cost of the War in Libya”, Al Shahid, May 8 2018 <https://alshahidwitness.com/human-material-cost-libya-war/> (accessed August 1 2019)). These figures increased since 2018. Human costs, internally displaced people, and refugees are the other human costs of the conflict. If we include the opportunity costs and the external capital flow the numbers will be much higher than the estimates.

¹¹ Megeresi, Tarek, (2019), “Libya’s Global Civil War”. *European Council of Foreign Affairs*. Policy Brief, 26 June 2019.

It will take years for the establishment of legitimate political authority in the majority of the country. This fact necessitates partial and local-oriented planning for addressing immediate challenges. It is the responsibility of the local governments and authorities to engage with the people in the local context in order to coordinate their efforts to prevent extremism at the local level. Coordination and collaboration between the local and central authorities should also be a fundamental pillar of CVE efforts in the country.

Any local authority that needs to improve its legitimacy has to deliver people the basic needs. Security, basic services, food, education, and health services should be provided to bring legitimacy to the local authorities. For the time being, the local actors are not equipped with the financial resources or the skills and capacity to deliver those services. International agents who try to improve the authority and legitimacy of the local actors that contribute CVE efforts should deliver those resources to local actors based on conditionality. Any unconditional release of resources may only empower particular actors against others and may lead to further tensions. What is clear at the moment is that without a broader engagement of Libyan society, more specifically, the segments of the civil society, it is very difficult to reach a holistic CVE strategy.

SUMMARY OF OUR FINDINGS OF SOURCES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN LIBYA (PUSH FACTORS)

There are multiple ways to examine the root causes of violent extremism. There is no single cause or pathway to radicalization and violent extremism. There is a wide array of factors on the macro-, meso-, and micro-level of analysis. Historical roots of violent extremism are some of the important causes of violent extremism. The Libyan case is no exception. In the context of the historical background of violent extremism in Libya, four dynamics are crucial to understanding the historical transformation of the root causes of violent extremism in the country.

The first one is *institutional dynamics*, which are the significant factors behind the cause of violent extremism historically. Institutional weakness can be defined as the state suffering from an overwhelming loss of legitimacy across its geographic area; where it is unable or unwilling to provide public goods and services, justice, security, and socioeconomic development. From 1969 to 2011, Libya, under the Qadhafi regime, has suffered the lack of well-designed institutions. More importantly, the reformulation of the state under the Qadhafi rule saw the Libyan state structure gradually become a source of extremism.

The second dynamic is the *religious dynamics*. Respondents provided many valuable insights regarding the fact that religious interpretation is one of the important factors in Libyan politics across history. However, the relationship between religion and violent extremism is complex, and cannot be accounted for direct causation. In some cases of violent extremism, religion is not a primary driver, whereas, in others, it may be more prominent.¹² In the Libyan context, religion cannot be considered as one of the important factors throughout Libya's modern history. However, during the reign of Qadhafi, the religion domain was systemically designed and dominated to justify Qadhafi's rule and politics. During Qadhafi's domination, religion interacted with a wide range of other factors such as facilitating mobilization, providing justification, and sanctifying violent acts.

The third aspect is *sociopolitical dynamics*. The latter intends to understand the root cause of violent extremism by seeking to understand the question of how sociopolitical dynamics have evolved in the modern history of Libya. The dynamic is the legacy of Qadhafi in which all the participants strongly underlined the role of Qadhafi's legacies on the Libyan political landscape, especially in the post-February 17 revolution landscape. Weak social ties between people, especially on

¹² Wilton Park, "Statement: Religion, Radicalization and Countering Violent Extremism," April 29, 2016, www.wiltonpark.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Statement-on-religion-radicalisation-and-countering-violent-extremism.pdf.

the civil society level and weak societal institutions deepen Libya's vulnerabilities.

Specifically, we intend to:

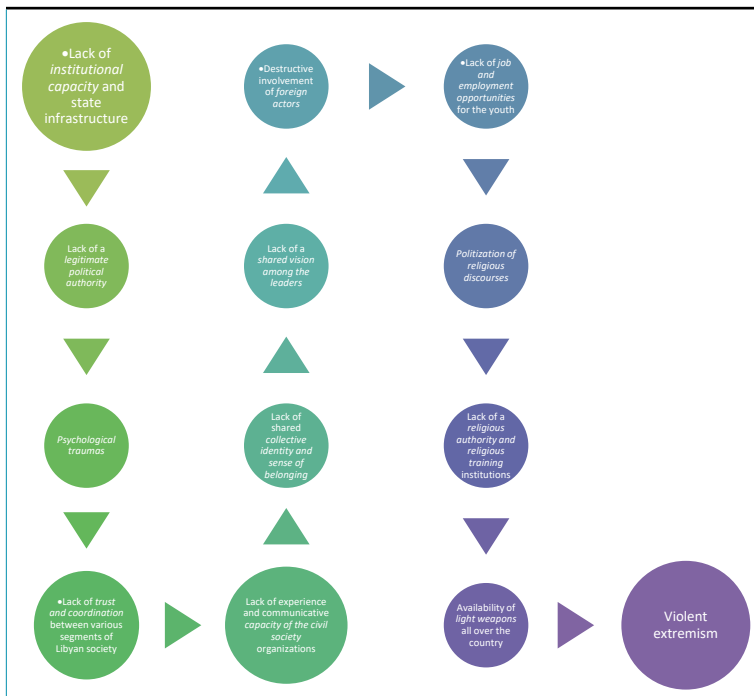
- Determine the major drivers of violent extremist discourse and practices.
- Examine the relative importance of the Libyan state's weak institutional capacity and the lack of strong and well-designed religious institutions across the country as they relate to extremism.
- Examine the historical evolution of the sociopolitical relationship among different social groups to understand the weakness of horizontal ties as a cause of undermining societal resilience.

As a result of intensive readings and debates on the literature on the Libyan conflict, the CVE Research Team (CVE RT) summarizes the findings on the aforementioned main points as follows:

- The root causes of the existing insecurity, instability, violent extremism, and disorder in Libya can be traced back to the Qadhafi era. There are three dimensions that should be taken into consideration to explain the historical background: institutional context, religious context, and the political and personal legacy of Qadhafi.
- The demolition of religious institutions by Qadhafi is one of the main root causes of the radicalization wave in Libya. This dynamic became especially vital in promoting radical views across Libya.
- The postrevolutionary political and security landscape transformed the nature of the conflict in Libya. In this regard, the failure of the state-building process, the fragmentation of the political sphere, and the external

military and political interventions are the main driving factors behind the failure of the political transition in Libya.

- The existing Libyan conflict has many diverse dynamics such as fragmentation of political and armed groups, regional competition over the Libyan political space, and the lack of an international institutional mechanism to overcome the existing disorder. The dynamics of the current conflict in Libya should be classified as internal, regional, and international.
- The radical and violent extremist practices in Libya are the consequence of the disorder which has spread in the postrevolutionary political landscape. It can also be claimed that external intervention and the geopolitical competition among the regional countries over Libya are the main driving factors behind the radicalization of the armed groups.
- The political discourse and ideology of Salafi Medkhalism should be taken into consideration as the main mobilization force in spreading an extremist ideology across Libya. The CVE RT, in this context, will focus, among others, on the group's political strategy in order to understand their impact on the radicalization process in Libya.
- The fact that there is still the presence of the old institutions and their shallow conditions, the destabilized religious institutions caused many troubles in the post-revolution era.

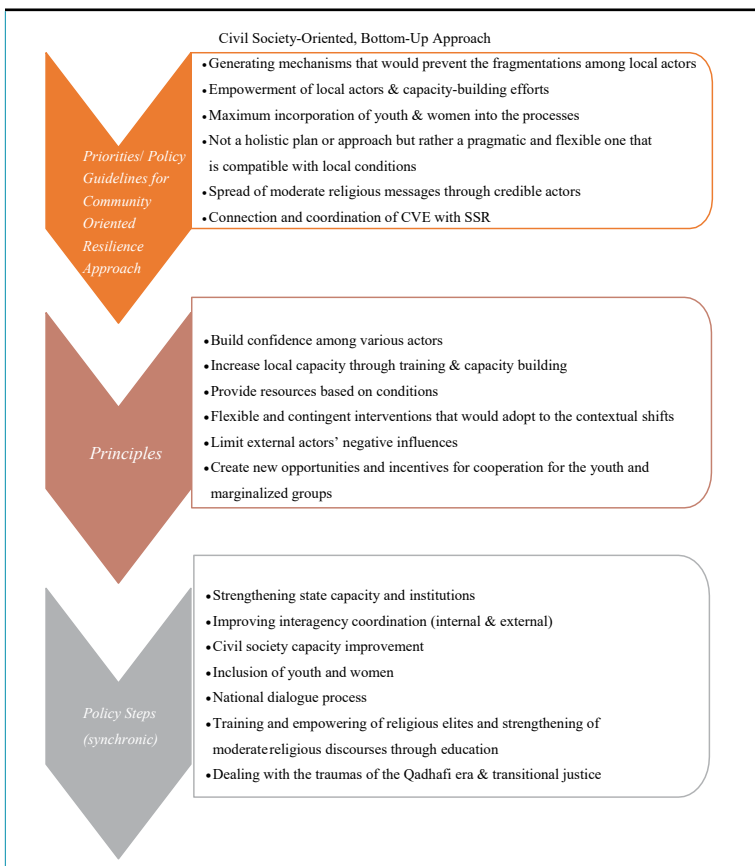


Based on these observations, the main questions that guided the efforts of the CVE team are as follows:

- How can the diverse social and political groups/factions in Libya be managed institutionally without excluding them from the decision-making processes?
- How can a ground for discussion and debate for people with diverse views on critical social, political, and religious issues be provided?
- How can ties and trust be built between people at the horizontal level?
- How can the financial and human resources and the capacity that is necessary for the rebuilding of the entire country be provided and managed?

- How can the local and central efforts be coordinated and harmonized?
- How can the destructive influence and involvement of foreign actors be constrained?

Outline and Principles of the “Community-Oriented Resilience” CVE Model (How to Unite)



OBJECTIVES & THE STEPS OF COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN LIBYA RATIONALE

After the 2011 revolution that toppled Muammar Qadhafi, despair and insecurity have ravaged Libya, planting in its stead a murderous and amorphous state of affairs evocative to a jungle struggle. The real turning point that dragged the country into devastation was the emergence of the civil war that started in May 2014. This state of anarchy culminated with the emergence of multiple power centers further heightening personal and collective security and survival. At its core was the revival of tribal centers of allegiances, which further revived ancient tribal hatred and tensions. The net effect has been the emergence of extremist actions marked by violent extremism, which has consumed numerous lives and valuable properties. As a result of this process, which was characterized by state collapse, winding hopelessness, dwindling economic fortunes, the path of the youth in Libya has become one directed by Jihadists' propaganda clouded in the evil of the state (among others, political corruption, abuse of power, and unemployment). The resultant effect has been the emergence of criminal networks, and heightening personal and community security, producing a spiral of violence and counterviolence actions.

Libya, as it is now, is struggling with the destructive and destabilizing effects of violent extremism (VE). VE not only harms Libya within, but also has a contaminant trait with implications for neighboring regions, not to mention the Mediterranean and Europe, and thus, requires an intervention.

The mission of the CVE Project

- To understand the sources and the dynamics of violent extremism (VE) in Libya so as to develop a comprehensive roadmap for countering VE in the country.

- Identifying the social, political, cultural, and economic sources of VE and understanding how these sources and dynamics interact in a complicated setting.
- To comprehend how regional and global political trends affect VE in Libya, in addition to the domestic sources and dynamics.
- Identifying the historical roots of the existing Libyan crisis in terms of examining the historical root causes of violent extremism.
- Analyzing the role of Qadhafi and his legacy in shaping the nature of the Libyan civil war and the emergence of radicalism/extremism.
- To formulate a comprehensive policy-relevant strategy and action plan that identifies the steps and measures that need to be taken in the short, medium, and long terms as the outcome of this study.
- A comprehensive analysis of the sources and the dynamics of VE in Libya and the development of a concrete outline and steps of a CVE action plan.
- To develop a CVE strategy that would serve the purpose of assuring sustainable stability and peace for Libya with the maximum involvement of local actors.
- Reducing the uncertainty and re-integrating society.
- Prevention of various forms of violence and oppression.
- To formulate a CVE model for Libya in the post-conflict political transition period.

THE VISION OF CVE IN LIBYA

- Identifying and strengthening the local stakeholders that can make constructive contributions to the overall CVE strategy is an important pillar of this project.

- Prevention or at least mitigation of the ongoing confrontations should be the first step towards normalization and CVE in Libya.
- It is an utmost priority to end fights and armed confrontations between all Libyan factions within the ongoing civil war. Normalization and the emergence of a context that is suitable for broader stability can only emerge after an extended period of ceasefire. The ceasefire can be local, if a ceasefire or a peace deal is not achievable in the short run.
- Coordination among domestic actors is another pillar of normalization in Libya. Normalization can only happen after a gradual process of confidence-building among the local leaders.
- Dialogue and confidence-building steps should be a pillar of any serious normalization effort in Libya. Coordination between international and national actors, and coordination between central and local actors are twin pillars of the normalization process. Both domestic leaders and the international community have significant responsibilities to end the fighting and initiate a sustainable peace process for Libyan society.
- Security, basic services, food, education, and health services should be provided to bring legitimacy to the local authorities. International agents who try to improve the authority and legitimacy of the local actors that contribute CVE efforts should deliver those resources to local actors based on conditionality.
- Increasing the resilience of the Libyan society against extremist messages and extremist social and political groups is an essential component of the CVE strategy.

Libyan society already has very important advantages in this regard, maintaining these advantages and moving forward for a more resilient Libyan society is the most important priority at this moment.

- Reducing the uncertainty and re-integrating the society by building trust from the bottom up seems to be the appropriate strategy. Trying to impose an externally driven straightjacket seems to be unsustainable and can lead to another round of conflict.
- We propose a CVE perspective that is compatible with the fundamental principles of peace-building: a focus on the prevention of various forms of violence and oppression, and not just on direct violence; taking the local and contextual dynamics into account, and thus remaining flexible; inclusive and based on local ownership; gender-sensitive (i.e. more sensitive about the inclusion of women); and a civil society-oriented approach.
- It is preferable to have multiple projects working simultaneously to address the complicated challenges and synchronize the efforts. The coordination of all construction work and providing communication and cooperation opportunities for the actors at different levels is also a significant concern for the stabilization project in Libya.
- Partial and local-oriented planning for addressing the immediate challenges would be appropriate. It is the responsibility of the local governments and authorities to engage with the people in the local context in order to coordinate their efforts to stabilize the country. Coordination and collaboration between the local and

central authorities should also be a fundamental pillar of stabilization efforts in the country.

CONDITIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF CVE

- It is necessary to reinforce the actors that struggle against spoilers, who benefit from and have a vested interest in the continuation of instability.
- It is crucial to constrain the influence of international actors that play a destructive role in Libya's security. International actors and domestic actors need to form strong alliances to counter the influence of destructive actors.
- It is necessary to limit the extremist propaganda in various forms of media, both conventional and social. Some authority should oversee the press.
- Radical voices should be silenced, and radical forces should be dismissed from mosques.
- In terms of strengthening CSOs, CVE-related tracks within the CSOs should be prioritized, and they should be provided special funds for such activities.
- Transfer of some of the knowledge and expertise that is available in other contexts to CSOs in Libya should be materialized.
- Tribes and families should be part of any comprehensive national dialogue process in Libya. There should be incentive mechanisms to allow them to play constructive roles.
- Dialogue among the revolutionaries, on the one hand, and between them and the former regime elements, on the other, should be conducted.

- Holistic and comprehensive training programs that cut across different sectors must be periodically provided at the international, regional, national, and community levels.
- The international community must step up their efforts in the provision of financial and logistical support in a timely and proactive manner to the actors assuming responsibility in CVE.
- The regional countries should end their military assistance to armed groups and start to initiate economic and political assistance to consolidate CVE efforts.
- Moderate religious leaders in Libya should be supported and strengthened by regional countries to confront narratives exploiting Libyan religious tradition to promote violence.
- It is necessary to tackle the low capacity of the state to provide public goods in all its forms including general justice, broad security concerns, economic welfare, enforcing authority, building public trust in authority, and so on.
- Structural and institutional changes such as constitutional reforms, judicial reforms, and representative governance structures that promote inclusion among others must accompany a political transition with the Libyan people at the center.
- The composition of the GNA must be reevaluated and perhaps reconstituted to reflect the broad sectional base of Libyan society.
- The security sector's intervention in politics must be limited and brought under the control of civilian rule.

- Youth employment agencies should be established to provide the youth with critical technical and vocational training to reduce their vulnerability to recruitment by violent extremist groups.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF MAIN CONCEPTS

It is worth noting that the definitions adopted in this report are subject to modifications in line with the specific complexities of a given violent situation. It is the view of the researchers that the definitions adopted from various experts in the field would help in eliciting the most significant benchmarks relative to the issue at stake.

Radicalism

In the words of Beck, radicalism is defined “as a contention that is outside the common routines of politics present within a society, oriented towards substantial change in social, cultural, economic, and/or political structures, and undertaken by any actor using extra-institutional means.”¹³ This definition is instructive as it gives more credence to the relativism of the term. In other words, the definition provides room for the varied shapes and scopes that the term is bound to take relative to the environment and circumstances structuring the situation at hand. According to the nineteenth-century *Cyclopaedia of Political Science* (1899), “radicalism is characterized less by its principles than by the manner of their application.”¹⁴

Violent Extremism

The USAID defined violent extremism as an act of “advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated

¹³ Beck, C. J. (2016). *Radicals, Revolutionaries, and Terrorists*. John Wiley & Sons, p. 18.

¹⁴ Lalor, J. J. (Ed.). (1899). *Cyclopaedia of Political Science, Political Economy, and of the Political History of the United States, by the Best American and European Writers* (Vol. 3). Maynard, Merrill, & Company.

or justified violence to further social, economic and political objectives.”¹⁵ This definition covers not just the physical aspect of violent extremism but also includes the psychological aspect, which is usually taken for granted.

Revolution

Compared to violent extremism and radicalism, the term “revolution” does not erupt much controversy among political and social scientists. In its general scope, the term is structured either in a political or social context. The well-known definition of revolution relative to the social sphere is presented by Skocpol. According to Skocpol, social revolutions as she prefers to put it, are “rapid, basic transformations of a society’s state and class structures . . . in part carried through by class-based revolts from below.”¹⁶ The political revolution, notes Goldstone, has two characteristics: “irregular procedures aimed at forcing political change within a society . . . and lasting effects on the political system of the society in which they occurred.”¹⁷

CVE

There are often certain assumptions constituting the causes of terrorism, violent extremism, and radicalization. There is a multiplicity of pull factors and push factors that cause those phenomena. The brief report by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) on CVE outlines the confusion on the concept. The USIP argues that despite all efforts, “there is a lack of clarity or shared understanding among different governments and experts regarding the definition of the term and its implications for programming.”¹⁸ For some governments, CVE is a

¹⁵ Policy, USAID (2011). *The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency*.

¹⁶ Skocpol, T., & Theda, S. (1979). *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁷ Goldstone, J. A. (1998). *Social Movements or Revolutions. On the Evolution and Outcomes of Collective Action*, 125–45.

¹⁸ Holmer, G. (2013). *Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective*. United States Institute of Peace. Washington D.C.

security-related or counterterrorism activity; however, for others “CVE entails a broader range of prevention efforts including initiatives by social workers, educators, and development actors, which traditional security actors may not consider related to counterterrorism.”¹⁹ The USIP report states that CVE approaches seem to be within the portfolio of actions that fall under counterterrorism. CVE activities seem to be more under structural preventers, i.e. parts of conflict prevention and mitigation tasks rather than dealing with the activities that prevent direct violence. CVE, therefore, may have a more significant impact in the medium and long term rather than the short-term measures that focus on the prevention of direct violence.

THE METHODOLOGY OF CVE IN LIBYA

Research Methodology

1. Critical review of the existing literature
2. Design of the research project
3. Field observations in Libya
4. Semi-structured interviews with the local experts
5. Structured interviews with the key stakeholders, civil society actors, and selected experts
6. Expert panel & workshop reports
7. Examination of the key documents and available data on Libya

Critical Review of the Existing Literature

The initial stage of the research started with a review of the literature on the recent developments in Libya, the dynamics of the conflict in Libya, general literature on VE, and a comprehensive review of CVE strategies. Historical dynamics of the instabilities in Libya, as well as

¹⁹ Ibid.

the main stakeholders and their mindset, were elaborated regarding the existing literature. In addition to these, the CVE RT focused on the following themes:

- History and the recent dynamics of the conflict in Libya
- Actors and stakeholders in Libya
- VE & CVE experiences in the world
- Sources and dynamics of VE and terrorism; approaches and methodologies for CVE and peace-building

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

Since our research is qualitative, and we have very limited opportunities to collect quantitative data based on fixed procedures, our research process has been flexible. The main source of data has been structured and semi-structured interviews with the experts and the actors in the field. We adopted our research procedures to the changing context. Our research cycle was designed according to the following figure. While collection of the data and field observations are important, we also spent considerable effort on the interpretation of the findings and the formulation of action-oriented proposals.

Field Observations

Our team had the opportunity to observe some of the facts and problems on the ground. Observations about the social and cultural structure and practices are an important part of the qualitative interpretive research. We took detailed field notes during our stay in Libya.

Field Interviews, Semi-Structured Expert Interviews

After developing semi-structured interviews protocols based on the prevention-centered CVE model, the CVE RT engaged a diverse population of interviewees including government representatives, law enforcement members, community groups, local leaders, army members, security bureaucrats, academics, and news reporters who focus on

public education, religion, etc. Interviews provided the research team with a perspective on violent extremist actors ranging from religiously inspired actors to other groups in Libya. During the research group's fieldwork, it was sought to understand the push and pull factors behind the radicalization dynamics, extremism, and violent extremism, and the terrorism activities in Libya. To understand the very nature of the VE and the model of CVE, the research team used a qualitative and semi-structured interview methodology. The research team also applied the following methods: Discourse Analysis, and Media Content Analysis.

Expert Panels

We conducted workshops in the format of a search conference with the international experts on Libya, CVE, and experts on specific violent actors. Our structured workshops aimed to gather systematic expert views on the subject. We collected the information analytically and formulated research briefs on each subject. Briefs were then incorporated into the final report. We also formed a recommendations list about CVE.

Examination of the Key Documents and Available Data on Libya

Our research team also gathered available data on Libya from open sources. In specific, the size of Libya's young population, employment statistics, educational data, violent attacks, and the geographical spread of violent events are important information for the formulation of policy preferences. We compiled the data that is relevant for the research.

Interviews with International CVE Experts

Our team members also interviewed the international experts on CVE. These experts included academics, policymakers, and journalists. The insights and the sharing of experience by those experts have been beneficial for the formulation of a more accurate action plan. We con-

sidered this information both in our analyses and in our formulation of policy recommendations.


IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGY

1. Strengthening state capacity and institutions
2. Improving inter-agency coordination (internal & external)
3. Civil society capacity improvement
4. Inclusion of youth and women
5. National dialogue process
6. Training and empowering religious elites and the strengthening of moderate religious discourses through education

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TWO

UNDERSTANDING
VIOLENT EXTREMISM
IN LIBYA

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Countering violent extremism, just like any stake of the peacebuilding process, is contingent on proper analyses of the particularities of the situation at hand, namely on identifying key motivators or instigators, and the interconnectedness therein. In a recent study by Khalil and Zeuthen, three broad ways of evaluating and understanding, albeit leveraged on the specific context of the situation, the motivators of violent extremism and radical behavior were presented.¹ The first set of motivators coined *structural motivators* are couched around issues that are held at the structural domain of society. These elements are, in some cases, institutionalized following, among others, from their persistent existence. Issues such as unemployment, corruption, historical hatred, and hostilities, discrimination, social and economic inequality, insecurity, and external threat among others are held as constituting this domain. The second set of motivators are identified at the level of *individual incentives* and consist of the actions and behavior sets of the individual relative to his/her relations with others and/or society in general. Addressing this domain are issues relative to, among others, the sense of identity and belonging, personal insecurity, material enticements, status, and fear. Finally, a set of motivators christened as *enabling factors* were presented. In general, they are referred to as the intervening factors that blend and interweave the structural and individual level motivators. They include access to information on radical issues, availability of radical networks and mentors, state weakness, the proliferation of

¹ Khalil, J., & Zeuthen, M. (2016). Countering Violent Extremism and Risk Reduction: A Guide to Programme Design and Evaluation.

arms and weapons, historical tribal hatred, and lack of immediate family support.²

<i>Structural motivators</i>	<i>Individual incentives</i>	<i>Enabling factors</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployment and lack of employment opportunities • Legacy of violence and oppression • Insecurity and external threat due to civil war and lack of state capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The weakness of a sense of collective identity • Exclusion from mechanisms of social and political participation • Material enticements • Fear of physical attack and oppression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information on radical issues through conventional and new media • Availability of radical networks and mentors • State weakness • Availability of arms and weapons • Historical tribal competition and hostilities

The complexities relating to the most protracted conflict has rendered the structural level analysis more favorable to scholars. Nevertheless, it must be underscored that most analyses of conflict and violent extremism have tended to rope in all three dimensions because that approach provides a better understanding of the situation and consequently better opportunity for designing appropriate remedies. This stream of indicators can be reduced to the understanding of the causes of violent extremism based on two dimensions: the push and pull causes or factors. To be sure, neither the push nor the pull factors operate individually or in isolation. Both streams of factors operate in tandem, and usually, the outcomes of one serve as the ignition for the other.

PUSH FACTORS

With push factors reference is made to elements that propel individuals and groups into violent extremism and that are mostly outside their control. These elements create a favorable atmosphere which aids the emergence and persistence of violent extremism in a given society. They are connected to different dimensions of society, namely the economic, political, cultural, and political, which largely stand outside

² Khalil & Zeuthen (2016).

the direct control of the individual. Thus, they are society-born factors which force the individual to take certain actions that (s)he would have hitherto refrained from.

PRE-QADHAFI PERIOD

When radicalism, extremism, or violent extremism is discussed, it should be noted that those were the seeds that were planted in Libya with the arrival of Muammar Qadhafi in 1969. It is hard to talk about the existence of these phenomena during the rule of King Idris since Libya was a highly traditional nation, newly emerged from an anti-colonial struggle, which had the Sufi Sanussi imprint on it. The anti-colonial struggle itself was spearheaded by the Sufi Sanussi movement and its figures. Adding to the latter and the fact that King Idris himself was also a follower of the Sufi Sanussi tradition formed the bulwark against the emergence of extremism or violent extremism with widespread implications.³ This point, in particular, will be better understood once the impact of Qadhafi rule on the emergence and stiffening of extremism in Libya is elaborated in the following sections.

An elderly interviewee, who witnessed the rule of King Idris, made a comparison between Qadhafi's and King Idris's rules and said,

Although there was poverty then [King Idris's era], there was also stability, and people could at least breathe.

THE QADHAFI PERIOD

All interviewees unanimously agreed that extremism and violent extremism are the offspring of Qadhafi's rule for 42 years. Qadhafi's radical and repressive discourse and policies, his practices which ruined Libya's social fabric and traditional institutions, the opening of space for certain Salafi movements, and the periodical crackdown on any or-

³ This point was unanimously confirmed by all interviewees that were interviewed within the framework of this project.

ganized movement, chiefly Islamists, are among the factors that paved the way for the emergence and spread of violent extremism in Libya.

1. The Shutdown of Institutions and the Religious Vacuum

Respondents underlined that Libya was a closed country during Qadhafi. When Qadhafi seized power in 1969, he immediately closed down the universities and institutions offering religious education, which deprived the next generations of sufficient religious education. Instead this realm was dominated by Saudi fatwas and understanding of Islam. Pre-Qadhafi era in Libya, especially during King Idris rule, Sufism has been promoted through religious institutions and universities to mobilize a new moderate generation in Libya. However, Qadhafi wiped out the possibilities of the emergence of scholars, schools, and institutions. The result is this realm was dominated by Saudi interpretations which attracted the youth.⁴ One of the respondents cited that Qadhafi even attempted to remove more than 350 words from the Quran.⁵ This statement also explains why excessive protectionism against Qadhafi developed during his rule. The lack of religious scholars and authorities resulted in the exploitation of the religious realm by extremist and foreign religious currents.

Qadhafi took over a society whose defining characteristics were moderate Maliki, Ibadî, and Sufi denominations/interpretations of Islam and which had been ruled under a Sufi Sanussi leadership. As a social movement, Sanussis attached importance to education and traditional training institutions that focused on religious education, namely the madrasah. There were also many circles and privately organized training centers that instructed the Holy Qur'an in Libya. Those centers and circles did not have any political agenda; they focused on a better understanding of the Islamic religion and its main sources. When Qadhafi ascended to power, the first thing he did was to shut

⁴ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵ Interviewee No: 11, 27 September 2018, Istanbul.

down these courses and institutions. By 1979, ten years after Qadhafi's coup, all schools that were providing religious education had been closed.⁶ Qadhafi did not tolerate the existence of either an institution or a scholar.⁷ An interviewee emphasized,

In the Qadhafi era, no matter how moderate, all scholars were either imprisoned or killed.

King Idris himself was a follower of a Sufi order, which he sought to propagate. Under his rule, religious institutions and universities were established. The main function of these institutions was to raise a –religiously– moderate generation; however, Qadhafi liquidated them all.⁸ The extent of this “liquidation” was put by an interviewee this way:

Qadhafi shut down all Islamic universities and religious institutions overnight, the most important of which was the traditional Islamic institutions in Bayda. Within a single day, he shut down 136 madrasahs in one *muhafadha* only.⁹

This eradication of religious institutions and scholars created a “religious vacuum,” snatching Libyan people away from an organic religious interpretation of its own and exposed them to extraneous religious interpretations. The new generation that was raised under Qadhafi rule could not find any scholars who dealt with phenomena and issues that were of relevance to the Libyan people. Now fatwas and religious discourse were directly influenced by a Saudi understanding of Islam, which was neither organic nor relevant to Libyan context.¹⁰ The “religious market” was dominated by the works of Saudi scholars, and the youth took them as the sole and authentic understanding of Islam and embraced them.¹¹ The penetration of a radical religious method

⁶ Interviewee No: 4, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

⁷ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

⁸ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

⁹ Interviewee No: 11, 27 September 2018, Istanbul.

¹⁰ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

¹¹ Ibid.

and understanding into Libyan social space was made possible by the eradication of established religious institutions. An interviewee argued,

Religion is like food. If you can't find it in the market, you procure it from the black market. Once Qadhafi plugged the [organic] channels, people tried to procure it from elsewhere. They began to buy religion from Saudi Arabia. They were learning religion from the cassettes of Saudi scholars.¹²

All interviewees agreed that extremism was not a discernable phenomenon until the 1980s, which proves that even under a very destructive rule, it took a decade for certain elements of Libyan society to give in to extremism. Nor was Islamism, Wahhabism, or Salafism familiar elements to the Libyan people. As was reported, people were mainly uninformed about religious issues. An interviewee argued that people began to preoccupy themselves with religious issues and got to know them with the introduction of the translated works of Islamist ideologues in Libya in the 1970s and 1980s.¹³ Another interviewee put the process as follows:

People could not become acquainted with scholars [in Libya]. They stayed away from knowledge. And instead, they became acquainted with this [inorganic and extraneous] type of ideas during the pilgrimage and Umrah visits in Saudi Arabia, and brought the ideas back into Libya.¹⁴

2. Crackdown and Repression of Organized Religious Activity

Since the early 1980s, Libya has been a fertile political landscape for the spread of radicalization and violent resistance to Qadhafi's authoritarian, repressive regime.¹⁵ Respondents strongly un-

¹² Interviewee No: 11, 27 September 2018, Istanbul.

¹³ Interviewee No: 11, 27 September 2018, Istanbul.

¹⁴ Interviewee No: 13, 11 October 2018, Istanbul.

¹⁵ Mustafa El Sagezli, "Violent Extremism in Libya and Its Euro-Mediterranean Implications", *EuroMed Survey*, https://www.iemed.org/publicacions/historic-de-publicacions/enquesta-euromed/euromed-survey-2017/violent_extremism_libya_euromediterranean_implications_Mustafa_EL_Sagezli_EuromedSurvey2017.pdf

derlined that the Qadhafi regime intentionally radicalized Islamist movements to undermine his political rivals' political mobilization against his regime beginning in 1980. Therefore, the root causes of extremism in Libya dated back to the Qadhafi era in which Islamic movements tried many times to figure out how to overthrow the Qadhafi regime.

Most of the participants believe that extremism and violent extremism are products of Qadhafi's political narratives and the practices against Islamists during his rule. In one part, the style and strategy of the Qadhafi regime towards opposition as a way of consolidating power provided a fertile ground for extremist practices. For example, simply expressing dissent against any tenet of the Qadhafi regime could easily land someone faced with the death penalty.¹⁶

A former leader of an extremist organization in Libya argued that radicalization took place to a great extent due to excessive use of force and repression over basic religious practices in Libya during Qadhafi's rule.¹⁷ Another former member of an extremist organization expressed this repression as follows,

Qadhafi arrested anyone right away who was against him. The largest detention campaign was in 1989. We managed to flee the country. After this, the regime arrested Islamic figures. Not only them but also ordinary people who were praying in the mosque were picked up. Between 1989 and 1995, the detention campaign grew much more, and the situation deteriorated. People were subject to torture, hunger, and so on.¹⁸

This interviewee attributes some elements of extremism to Qadhafi's targeting not only ideologically motivated organized groups but also ordinary pious people. For him, extremism was a natural reaction and expression of grievances under Qadhafi's practices. He explains the regime's attitude with the following words,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

¹⁸ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

The regime was adamant that it was capable of solving any issue by the use of force.

This contention held by people with regards to the regime's approach to any social challenge, i.e. viewing the use of force as the only appropriate solution, seems to have fed the feeling that people needed to resort to violence to solve their problems or at least express themselves vis-à-vis the regime. The following statement by a former leader of a former extremist organization bolsters this observation,

Because of what we had been through, I started to believe that we had to oppose the [Qadhafi] regime. We were determined to oppose the regime, but the regime did not tolerate any opposition even if it was done through peaceful means. It did not leave any space for maneuver whatsoever. Political parties and civil society activities were banned. The sanction for being a member of a political party or attempting to found one was a death sentence. Tabligh Jamaah was a movement which viewed dealing with politics as forbidden by religion, but even they were imprisoned by the regime. Hence, there was a general feeling that it was impossible to change something or oppose this repressive regime without the use of force. Many people shared this feeling in 2011 during the revolution, but we felt it earlier. As all channels were plugged, the use of force became a natural reaction.¹⁹

The fact that even those Islamic movements without any political agenda whatsoever were violently suppressed by the regime seems to have served to the consolidation of a widespread feeling: the regime should be fought through armed struggle. For example, the same interviewee stated the goal of his organization back in the 1990s as regime change.

The regime was an absolute dictatorship. It was killing innocent people; it also waged war against Islam. What pushed us towards violence was the anti-Islamic character of the regime and its stiff stance against any attempt to organize. We began to believe that it was more Islamic to resist the regime and resort to violence to this end than obeying it. We were not able to object to any corruption nor could we object to any imposition on the faith. There were barriers in front of expressing what we truly believed. There were even pressures on women wearing

¹⁹ Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Istanbul.

hijab. Between the mid-1980s and early 1990s, the regime blasted away and imprisoned any element in the religious sphere, regardless of they are Sufis or Salafis.²⁰

These statements concur with the statements of other interviewees who were not necessarily former members of any extremist organization. An interviewee argued,

What paved the way for the jihadi movements was the regime cracking down on ordinary worshippers in mosques. These moves generated a youth that viewed the Qadhafi regime as a *kafir*, a heretic one. Therefore, jihadism with takfiri tendencies emerged in that period. It is a fact that these tendencies were fed externally. However, I think the main motivation was constituted by the regime's practices.²¹

A senior religious figure also elucidated his own experience of the regime's repression against religious figures as well as ordinary pious people.

For one thing, people were marked for having a pious look in appearance. Security apparatus hunted down elements indicative of piety such as a beard. As religious functionaries, we expected to be detained and interrogated at any moment. They [the security apparatus] summoned us many times at midnight to testify, and they imprisoned us. Many religious functionaries lost their lives in prison. So, did the armed opponents. Security apparatuses of the regime were so mighty. They treated people with an iron fist.²²

Another religious figure spoke of Qadhafi's inflammatory and exasperating acts with regards to the Islamic faith poking religious sensitivities of people.

Qadhafi tried to weaken the Holy Quran. He interfered with the text and attempted to write a new scripture by reducing the number of words by 350. Plus, he made fun of Sunnah of the Prophet. He consistently attempted to wipe off some elements of Sunnah.²³

He also spoke of his own experience with the security forces at a very young age.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

²² Interviewee No: 11, 27 September 2018, Istanbul.

²³ Ibid.

I was arrested and imprisoned when I was in the first grade of secondary school. I figured out why I was arrested only after many years. A guy had asked me an address in the street, and I had given him the directions. But that guy was on the watch list of the regime. Since I talked to him, they picked me up, too. Arrests were cruel. People were afraid of each other. The regime used to embed spies among religious functionaries like us.²⁴

This level of oppression did not go without retribution. The exclusion and crushing of opponents led to underground mobilization, which became launching pads and theaters for the spread of extremist propaganda aided by violent extremist organizations (VEOs). According to an interviewee, every year or every other year some insurrection took place against Qadhafi. But since the security apparatus was so mighty, it suppressed all of them.²⁵ With the advent of the 1980s, anti-regime movements and organizations came to exist. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) is an example. The LIFG was an extensive organization, and they were armed. They targeted Qadhafi exclusively. Civilians were not their targets. Shuhada al-Islam (Martyrs of Islam), another example, emerged in Benghazi and fought against Qadhafi and the commanders of the security units in the east. Shuhada al-Islam later transformed into a political movement as did the LIFG.²⁶ Another organization that fought against the regime was the National Salvation Front (NSF). Since the regime did not allow for any space for dialogue with the organization, the latter used force against the former. It was also claimed by the interviewee that during its struggle against the regime, the NSF enjoyed logistical support from the United States.²⁷ On the other hand, the LIFG did not engage with external actors and other states. The LIFG was convinced that without the elim-

²⁴ Interviewee No: 12, 27 September 2018, Istanbul.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Interviewee No: 4, 11 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 5, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

²⁷ Ibid.

ination of Qadhafi, it was impossible to liberate fully and attempted to assassinate him many times.²⁸

With the advent of the second half of the 1980s, the remarkable figures of Islamic movements had to flee the country or risk being arrested, or went to Afghanistan, which created a vacuum in Libya. The Muslim Brotherhood was no exception in terms of the crackdown. Three thousand people were arrested during the period.

In 1986, one of the leaders of revolutionary committees [regime loyalists] was kidnapped and killed by a group of nine young persons. They also attempted to attack a Russian military camp in Libya. In return, they were captured and killed by the regime. This was a vicious circle: the insurgents who rebelled against the heavy-handed practices of the regime resorted to violence, and the regime eliminated them by again using violence. Before the great roundup, in 1989, attacks against important headquarters of the regime took place. In 1995, (LIFG) and a stiffer group, Shuhada al-Islam, appeared. Interestingly, the attacks were mainly based in Benghazi. The regime managed to suppress them. However, in 1995, some were able to take refuge in a valley (Khalid and Harsah) close to Darnah. A group of seven people managed to hide out there until 2011. One of them was an important commander. During the crackdown in 1995, they were arrested, killed, or fled the country.²⁹

This point was confirmed by one of the former leaders of a former VEO.

After graduating from university in 1989, we had to flee the country due to Qadhafi's oppression. Then, we went to Afghanistan and joined the Jihad.³⁰

The same interviewee said that he came back to Libya from Afghanistan in 1995. Upon his return, he was arrested and put in the notorious Abu Salim (aka Bouslim) Prison, where he would stay for sixteen years along with other leaders of the LIFG. The outrageous massacre in

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

³⁰ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

June 1996 in prison is a milestone in terms of the regime's excessive use of force and the climax of hatred against the regime in return.

Another interviewee even attributed the revolution in 2011 to the Bouslim massacre and similar practices in the past.

The regime was so powerful, and it did not give any information about the detainees. One thousand two hundred sixty-eight people were massacred in Bouslim Prison. From this perspective, the revolution is, to some extent, a result of this level of violence and massacres. So much so that, Saif al-Islam, Qadhafi's son, announced around 2007-2008 that he would form a commission of investigation for the massacre. This came after a long period of a peaceful sit-in by the families of the detainees in Bouslim on every Saturday. What brought down the regime in 2011 was the social unrest following the massacre and spread of the revulsion in waves across the country.³¹

This particular point was endorsed by another interviewee:

Bouslim Prison in Tripoli was one of the sparks of the revolution. A guy called Fathi Darbal, who had lost his brother in the Bouslim massacre, led one of the first protests and people rallied around him. Another spark of the revolution was the publication of libelous pictures of the Prophet Mohammed by the Italian embassy in 2006. As a reaction to this, Libyan youth broke into and set fire to the Italian consulate in Benghazi. Qadhafi's security forces killed at least 11 people who were involved in this attack. The revolution kicked off on the anniversary of this incident.³²

Among the factors that created the phenomenon of violent extremism (VE) in Libya, the crackdown on even the most moderate and non-political religious movements could arguably be considered the most forceful one. In an environment in which almost no way of expressing dissent was allowed, the regime disturbed even the regular people practicing their daily religious rituals in mosques. Repeated instances of excessive use of force and massacres such as Bouslim, accumulated hatred towards the regime throughout the Qadhafi rule and

³¹ Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Ankara.

³² Interviewee No: 11, 27 September 2018, Istanbul.

guided the people to the conclusion that the regime should be fought through armed struggle.

3. The Preferential Treatment of Madkhali Salafis

On one front, the regime instituted a system of exclusion and inclusion which pitched supporters of the regime against an opponent. This situation granted a conducive ground for the development of personal and group hatred. The exclusion and crushing of opponents led to underground mobilization which became the launching pads and theaters for the spread of extremist propaganda aided by extremist groups. On the other, the historical tribal hatred and insecurity created a sense of security dilemma,³³ a state in which one group harbored a state of suspicion that another group would attack it to enhance its own security.

A respondent underlined that many people in Libya, especially the youth, were moderate in terms of political ideology, and that Wahhabism and the Islamic movement started to influence Libya in the 1980s. One of the participants argued that even though the regime supported the Sufis to contain the spread of Salafism in 1980, it became unsuccessful in suppressing Salafism and decided instead to promote a version of Salafism (Medkhali) to contain the Islamists in the 1990s. In the 1990s, Sadi, Qadhafi's son, became the leader of the Salafis and facilitated the spread of Madkhalism across Libya.

Interviewees argued that the proliferation of Madkhali Salafis as a versatile and powerful group in Libya was not a natural process. It was the product of various deliberate interventions made first by the Qadhafi regime and then by certain regional countries. Since more "Islamization" was an unstoppable social current in the 1980s, which was itself the result of Qadhafi's policies eradicating the organic religious structure in the country and exposing it to stranger Wahhabi teachings, the regime sought to co-opt a certain faction that suited its interests

³³ Ken Booth & Nicholas J. Wheeler, "The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation, and Trust in World Politics", *Ethics & International Affairs*, 2009, 23:1, p. 82.

perfectly. Since Madkhali Salafis commend an absolute submission to *wali al-amr*, which refers to the ruler who has the legitimacy to rule, the Qadhafi regime paved the way and invested in them to make them an influential and useful actor.

The regime met the continuous demands of Islamists for more freedom with more suppression. However, it was unsuccessful in suppressing all these expectations and decided to promote a specific version of Salafism, i.e. Madkhali Salafism to contain Islamists in the 1990s. So much so that, Sâdi, Qadhafi's son, became the leader of Salafis and helped spread Madkhali Salafism throughout the 1990s.³⁴

Although the factors giving rise to Madkhali Salafism are manifold from Qadhafi legacy to external interventions by regional countries, a senior Libyan researcher argues the following:

From the 1990s to the 2000s, a rather more extremist current emerged in Libya; this was Madkhali Salafism. Although many factors fed this current, preferential treatment and implicit protection by the regime were the main reasons for their existence and capacity today.³⁵

Since the environment was quite suitable for the emergence and proliferation of VE in Libya during the Qadhafi rule for many reasons, the injection of an adverse variable into the equation expectedly made the environment more prone to VE. While Qadhafi made use of Madkhali Salafis' loyalty and their *wali al-amr* concept to make his rule unquestionable on religious grounds, he also sowed the seeds of the most widespread and capable VEO in Libya, which still haunts the country.

POST-QADHAFI/REVOLUTION PERIOD

4. External Intervention

Despite the factors mentioned above, respondents believe that violent extremism is not a problem endemic to Libya, but rather an import mobilized by other regional countries. Many respondents, including

³⁴ Interviewee No: 1 & No: 2, 28 August 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

³⁵ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

some religious actors, arrived to the conclusion that the “certain countries in the region were the source of all terrorism and violent extremist mobilization” in Libya. One of the respondents, one of the senior leader of a former armed group that fought against Qadhafi, remarked, “Medkhalis cannot survive without Saudi financial support. Another respondent underlined that there was overt support both in the form of funds and religious legitimacy. Since the office of mufti and the Awqaf Ministry are crucial to fight against extremism, Medkhalis targeted them through semi-official armed groups in Tripoli.”³⁶ Many respondents also believe that the Medkhalis are a threat to Libya because it is claimed that “they are not an armed group but an intelligence organization.” One respondent who is a senior political leader in Libya underlined that “they [Medkhalis] infiltrate all security institutions such as counterterrorism, anti-crime and illegal migration. They are building massive prisons, kidnapping people, torturing them; charge them with terrorism, etc.”³⁷ When they were asked about the reason of this external intervention, respondents claimed that these countries wanted to prevent the objectives of the revolution in Libya and the entire region. One of the respondents working at a university as a professor cited that Medkhalism is mainly supported by regional countries and gradually became an important tool to undermine the supporters of revolutionary politics in Libya. Another respondent in a close meeting cited that 100% of the mosques in Sibratha are under the control of Medkhali groups.³⁸ One respondent, one of the senior leaders of a former armed group, claimed,

Both DAESH and Medkhalis bear the imprint of foreign intelligence services. Continuous intervention and support for influence by foreign intelligence services stand out. This does not ignore the fact that these movements have real supporters and followers.³⁹

³⁶ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

³⁷ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

³⁸ Interviewee No: 5, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

³⁹ Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Ankara.

Even though some of these explanations are conspiratorial, it is essential to understand that foreign powers have extensive influence in Libya. Certain countries in the region have become enmeshed in Libyan society following the February 17 revolution by supporting anti-revolutionary political and military forces. While recognizing the considerable role played by outside regional powers in shaping the Libyan political transition process, anti-revolutionary military forces often tried to associate extremism with foreign entities to deflect blame for the ineffective political transition process.

Global developments and external interventions aggravated the situation further. The contour of external intervention has seen the emergence, reemergence, and flourishing of local and transnational terrorist groups. The global fight against terrorism with its attendant chaos in areas such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, among others, have played into the hands of these terrorist groups. The failed U.S. propaganda in these countries has aided the propaganda of these groups and made their rhetoric somewhat appealing especially to the youth.⁴⁰ It is no wonder that DAESH was able to establish itself officially in Libya in November 2014 and subsequently carried out attacks in Benghazi, Tripoli, and the Al-Ghani oilfields, among others.⁴¹

Almost all interviewees underlined the impact of the intervention by certain regional countries through intelligence, and financial and military tools in paving the way and empowering VEOs in Libya. They even attribute the greatest role in the emergence of VE and VEOs in Libya to foreign actors. They argue that both extremist ideologies and VEOs were not peculiar to Libya; instead, they were imported to Libya from the outside. Those marginal VEOs were sponsored by certain

⁴⁰ Camille Tawil, "Al-Qaeda in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia: Jihadists and Franchises," in *Political Islam: Context versus Ideology* ed. by Klahed Hroub, London: Saqi, 2009, pp. 231-252.

⁴¹ Bryony Jones and Anastasia Beltyukova, "2016 Libya's Chaos, Explained in Five Graphics", CNN, 4 August 2016, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/04/africa/libya-chaos-in-graphics/>.

regional actors, and they were functional in hijacking the revolution in 2011. Here is how it all unfolded according to an interviewee:

After the revolution, skepticism against Islamists was fabricated. There were external efforts to present the Libyan revolutionaries and Islamists as linked to global jihadist networks. Such an alleged link delegitimized and criminalized many Islamist segments of the revolutionaries. Indeed, the existence of some marginal and small groups fueled this skepticism. Plus, certain former regime loyalists infiltrated some Islamist groups, and they terrorized the revolution. As a result, many Islamist leaders and group members were forced to escape from the country. Upon their escape, they were replaced by more radical actors and those hijacked the revolution with the support of certain regional countries. For example, some actors benefitted greatly from such a delegitimization of Islamists, and they suppressed the revolutionaries with the support of those countries. Collective punishment and delegitimization of moderate Islamists helped DAESH spread in Libya.⁴²

Interviewees do not view VEOs, especially DAESH and Madkhali Salafis, as organic organizations that enjoy a natural appeal among Libyans. Hence, their current capacity and sway would be unimaginable without a deliberate strategy tailored and implemented by foreign intelligence services.

What caused and ushered extremism was brought into Libya by intelligence initiatives. What fed Madkhali Salafis and DAESH—as the two prominent VEOs—is the same, i.e. intelligence operations of certain regional countries. If we put aside the intelligence dimension of the issue, DAESH-type extremism had very limited appeal among Libyan youth. There were the ones who returned from DAESH ranks in Iraq and Syria, but they did not control anywhere but Sirte. The limited DAESH presence in Sabratha, however, was due to its being on the passageway from Tunisia. After a two-year presence, an American airstrike killed around 30 Tunisian DAESH fighters in Sabratha. Notwithstanding the exaggerated numbers of DAESH members in Libya, the actual number never exceeded 2,000 even by including the foreigners.⁴³

⁴² Interviewee No: 1 & No: 2, 28 August 2018, Ankara.

⁴³ Interviewee No: 4, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

Given the extent of the power Madkhali Salafis enjoy, it does not make any sense to attribute this power to the robustness of their ideas and religious understanding. They run dozens of private schools and dozens of radio channels apart from their presence in critical security organizations and extensive control over mosques. None of these seem to be the products of the self-competence of Madkhali Salafis according to Libyan experts:

Madkhali Salafi ideas are not merely religious ideas. They are directed by foreign intelligence services. We know these Madkhali Salafi people. They are not capable of even running a local shop if it were not for the support and guidance by foreign intelligence services.⁴⁴

5. Lack of State Capacity and Authority Vacuum

The aftermath of the revolution did not just see the collapse of governance structures but the collapse of the socioeconomic fiber of the Libyan state. Indeed, since 2011, the standard of living has been falling. Economic opportunities both in investment and access to the labor market have shrunk over this period. Worse still is the mismanagement and corruption that has engulfed the entirety of the public service delivery.⁴⁵ The continuous security strives have been detrimental to recovery, putting the Libyan economy at further risk.

Consequently, grievances are likely to grow, and the desperation this endangers is likely to render more people susceptible to criminal and terrorist networks as they strive for a breakthrough. Against this background, it must be underscored that establishing a causal relationship between unemployment and violent extremism is a daunting task. Indeed, it is a complex situation to discern whether unemployment

⁴⁴ Interviewee No: 13, 11 October 2018, Istanbul.

⁴⁵ Preventing Violent Extremism Through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity, *United Nations Development Program: A Development Response to Addressing Radicalization and Violent Extremism*, UN 2016. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/discussion-paper---preventing-violent-extremism-through-inclusiv.html>

is a result of violent extremism or unemployment leads to violent extremism. But be that as it may, the impact of unemployment and the shrinking economic opportunities or the grievances which propel extremist behavior cannot be swept under the carpet.

The findings from this research reinforce the common narrative that the core problem is an endemic lack of state capacity in Libya that has left a void in security, economic opportunities, and education. Since 1969, Libya has been overwhelmed by poor governance and a lack of state resources, which are often allocated only to the capital and areas in the northeast of the country due to widespread corruption and an unstructured state system, while other regions, particularly in the traditional tribal areas, are left to languish. Much of the southern regions where the traditional tribal communities lives have been neglected and remain underdeveloped. These conditions worsened following the 2011 uprising, as the state almost collapsed amongst political disputing and basic services and living conditions deteriorated across the country.

In addition to the lack of state capacity, respondents underlined that the civil society domain in Libya also has many problems. Several civil society organizations, especially since the collapse of the state structure in Libya, have sought to address the structural deficiencies in governance and the provision of social services. Although civil society organizations tried to fill the power vacuum in delivering social services across the country, there were ill-equipped to serve as an alternative to the government. More importantly, as respondents underlined, the power vacuum was exploited by extremist groups since the government failed to deliver social services.⁴⁶

To understand the lack of state capacity in Libya, one should examine the field of jurisdiction, which participants highlighted as an important domain. The Libyan political system is marked not only by ineffective governance but also a staunch resistance to change since

⁴⁶ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 12, 27 September 2018, Istanbul; Interviewee No: 16, 20 December 2018, Ankara.

the ongoing political conflict among different political fractions which have shaped the Libyan political landscape since 2014. The legacy of the Qadhafi regime and the corrupt system of patronage politics undermined the possibility of the establishment of a systemic law enforcement body and political order.⁴⁷ The legacy of corruption and the lack of a comprehensive, inclusive political order in the country were repeatedly cited by respondents as important drivers of violent extremism. Respondents also underlined that the construction of political order under the state authority and the reconstruction of the law enforcement body should be an integral part of countering violent extremism in Libya. A respondent believes that the militarized counterterror approaches are insufficient to address the violent extremist threat in Libya.⁴⁸

Central to this factor is state failure, which breeds insecurity, human rights abuses, abuse of power, corruption, and fosters the emergence of criminal networks, among others. Libya, after the revolution, slipped into a failed state status. The inability of successive regimes to establish credible and effective centralized government machinery capable of governing the entire territory of the country and ensuring security both at the personal and community level bolstered the already polarized system's decline into an extremist quagmire.⁴⁹ Currently, there are several centers of power in Libya. At the national level, two groups have been in a power struggle since the end of the revolution. The Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) formed following a UN-brokered power-sharing agreement in December 2015 and failed to live up to expectation owing to internal wrangling between

⁴⁷ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 11, 27 September 2018, Istanbul.

⁴⁸ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 4, 11 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 5, 11 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

⁴⁹ Kareem Fahim and Suliman Ali Zway, "Libyan's Rival Factions Deal for Unity Government", *The New York Times*, 17 December 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/18/world/africa/libya-unity-government.html?_r=0.

two camps competing for state legitimacy in the country. This created a power vacuum⁵⁰ which Prime Minister Khalifa Ghwell tried to capitalize on. According to this, he attempted a revival of the former Islamist Government of National Salvation (GNS) in October 2016 culminating into an attempted coup.⁵¹ Since then, these two groups have been contending with each other, further aggravating the power vacuum already in existence. The consequence of this zero-sum game has been the creation of an enabling environment for the emergence and progress of extremist groups and criminal networks. As one interviewee stated,

Within the context of the post-revolution authority vacuum and fragmentation, extreme teachings and practices have been inevitably over-represented.⁵²

The political system in Libya is marked not only by ineffective governance and the state system but also a staunch resistance to change over the years, with the legacy of Qadhafi's corrupt system of patronage politics. Because of ongoing conflict and two different power centers in Libya, the election aftermath of the dissolution of the Qadhafi regime has left the same problem in Libyan politics and is gradually eroding the Libyan people's confidence in the democratic political process. Such corruptions were cited repeatedly by respondents as a direct driver of violent extremism, especially with the intensification of the armed conflict post-2014. Extremist groups leveraged this opportunity to gain support, especially among the youth and the regions where the people were experiencing severe circumstances.

When it comes to state institutions, it is hard to talk about a capacity to tackle this -Madkhali Salafi- thought. We are talking about a mere

⁵⁰ Martin Reardon, "Libya, Extremism and the Consequences of Collapse", Al Jazeera, 28 January 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/01/libya-extremism-consequences-collapse-160128054629594.html>.

⁵¹ Libya: Extremism & Counter-Extremism, *Counter Extremism Project*, <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/libya>.

⁵² Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

government in a building in Tripoli. People and provinces are not under the umbrella of the state. What keeps Libya together is the wage mechanism. Some government decisions are not implemented in some provinces. The security apparatus pays homage to some armed groups. The counterterrorism agency is totally under the control of Madkhali Salafis. The intelligence agency is under the control of a person who is not a Madkhali Salafi himself, but it does not have any function. It avoids sharing any information with the head of state. State institutions are nothing more than names. They make and implement decisions in a primitive way. Thus, Madkhali Salafis' organization is more robust than the state organization. Political figures are disconnected from the ground.⁵³

The omnipresence of weapons, light and heavy, especially after the revolution is arguably the most significant enabling factor of VE in Libya. Certain segments of society might have been radicalized regardless, but without the opportunity to obtain weapons easily and greatly, it would not be possible to turn the ideology/ideas into practices.

The use of weapons is very widespread, and weapons are available everywhere. We are talking about an environment where state and judiciary are collapsed.⁵⁴

Another interviewee confirmed,

The prevalence of weapons and the lack of state are the factors that paved the way for VE in Libya. An absolute freedom/anarchy emerged after the revolution. In this atmosphere, the shift from radicalism to extremism occurred.⁵⁵

The availability of weapons did not only combine with extremist ideology and become destructive, but also triggered arbitrary practices by the people who obtained them. In a way, people got the taste of weapons and tended to engage in arbitrary acts thanks to the confidence granted to them by these weapons.

During the revolution, Qadhafi forced people to use weapons; people had to use weapons to defend themselves. However, after a certain point, the use of weapons went beyond the goal of self-defense.⁵⁶

⁵³ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵⁴ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵⁵ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵⁶ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

Prison breaks during the revolution are another factor fueling the chaotic and violent environment following the revolution, which was both a result of the state collapse and the authority vacuum, and an exacerbating factor of the former.

People who were radicalized in prisons ran riots after the revolution. They took up arms and came into the picture.⁵⁷

Once the revolution kicked off, everyone sprang up. Four hundred and fifty people were released from prison. There was a faction of the LIFG, which refused to engage in self-criticism and it was a considerable faction since they were the ones who were in prison. Along with them, another jihadi group, i.e. the Iraq group, was released from prison. Although they were not an organized group, those who had been to Iraq were arrested when they returned to Libya. Leaders of Ansar al-Sharia were among the arrested. Another group is known as the “Manchester Group” and anti-revolutionaries, all of them were released after the revolution. During the revolution, there was absolute freedom. After 2011, anarchy prevailed. Ansar al-Sharia and the LIFG founded military organizations.⁵⁸

Critically, the failure of the post-revolution Libya regime to establish control over the country in the area of security, to secure the provision of basic amenities, and to guarantee basic human rights contributed not only to “growing inequality, it also creates a vacuum that allows non-state actors to take control over state sovereignty and territory.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Istanbul.

⁵⁸ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵⁹ Preventing Violent Extremism through Promoting Inclusive Development, Tolerance and Respect for Diversity. *United Nations Development Program: A Development Response to Addressing Radicalization and Violent Extremism*, UN 2016. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/discussion-paper---preventing-violent-extremism-through-inclusiv.html>

The World Development Report 2011, *Conflict, Security and Development* concluded that the risk of violence is higher when internal and external stresses combine with weak state and societal institutions. The report also stressed that when states or subnational governments do not provide protection and access to justice, markets do not provide employment opportunities, and communities have lost the social cohesion to contain conflict, violent groups can fill these gaps.

6. Ignorance or Restrictions on Education

Education is another critical domain which is underlined by respondents and shows the lack of state capacity in Libya. As a result of the ongoing conflict in Libya, hundreds of schools have shut down or were destroyed by one faction or another. Many participants criticized the low quality of education and the proliferation of religious narratives like Medkhali Salafism particularly throughout the private schools across Libya, while others argued that insufficient access to university education is crucial particularly in the process of the participation in violent extremism activities.⁶⁰ The lack of a well-designed education system, of course, limits the number of viable prospects for youths and leaves them without the critical thinking skills necessary to effectively see through radical Salafi messaging.⁶¹ More importantly, the lack of a well-institutionalized education system provides yet another window of opportunity for Salafi groups to spread their radical narratives. Regardless of whether lack of education in and of itself is a driving factor of extremism, there seems to be general consensus among the participants that education is one of the most important tools to reach young people and which therefore can be used to address some of the push and pull factors that provide an opportunity for the recruitment by the violent extremist groups. It may also drive young people towards violent extremism since they are not able to respond to extremist interpretations and claims with proper and moderate knowledge.

The reason to fall prey to Madkhali Salafi message is not poverty, nor is religion or religious interpretation. The main reason is ignorance. These people - who join VEOs - believe in what they hear.⁶²

Ignorance also translates into people's lack of critical thinking skills when they are exposed to extremist narrative or message.

⁶⁰ Nick Clark, "Education in a Transitional Libya", *WENR*, 1 July 2013, <https://wenr.wes.org/2013/07/education-in-a-transitional-libya>.

⁶¹ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 10, 26 September 2018, Ankara.

⁶² Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

This particular version of Salafism (Madkhali Salafism) is quite shallow and static. Unfortunately, our ignorance as Muslims is in line with this shallowness. The appeal of Salafism among Arab societies is attributable to this shallowness. Elites in the Arab world could not offer novel things. The education level of youth is very low. In this way, youth and societies, in general, lost the instruments of thought.⁶³

Although lack of a proper education opportunity or restrictions on education are parts of the problem of a lack of state capacity in general, because of the importance of education in building the resilience of the society against the message of VE, it was discussed under a separate title. Although ignorance or lack of proper education does not constitute a factor for VE in itself, it was unanimously indicated that it is the foundation on which VEOs build their message, propaganda, and exploitation, since people cannot see through the real intention of the former owing to underdeveloped intellectual skills.

7. Revenge Politics

Revenge politics is another important dynamics that is part of violent extremism in Libya. In particular, subjection to torture in the pre-revolution era fed a burning for revenge. The abuses to which the Qadhafi's opposition was subjected at the time in prisons are believed to have shaped their outlook in very significant ways, particularly in terms of convincing them of the fundamentally cruel nature of the Qadhafi regime. Many Islamists who spend years in prison have traumatic experiences from the Qadhafi regime that transformed them from being a relatively moderate force into violent extremism. In the Libyan context, especially the counterrevolutionary violence adopted by Qadhafi's security forces is another reason for revenge politics. Brutal treatment at the hands of security forces during the first stage of the revolution directly radicalized individuals. Respondents who had been assaulted by Qadhafi's security apparatus were more likely to consider engaging counterviolence as an act of revenge.

⁶³ Interviewee No: 10, 26 September 2018, Ankara.

The destruction of property and life is also a great cause of violent extremism in the context of the Libyan conflict. Some participants mentioned that people who joined defensive counterviolence sought revenge against the Qadhafi regime's brutal violence campaign during the February 17 revolution processes. People's urge for revenge was due to harassment, particularly of female relatives during the revolution. Qadhafi's stance vis-à-vis the revolution compelled the people to resort to weapons and violence. At the beginning of the revolution, people used weapons for defensive purposes. Later, through a learning process, the use of weapons went beyond defensive purposes. These acts were driven by a sense of revenge.⁶⁴ Most of the time, there is an overlap of religious and tribal political and ethnic dynamics in the conflict in Libya. Some extremists took refuge in tribes, and those tribes used them against revolutionaries again to seek revenge.



⁶⁴ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

PULL FACTORS

In the area of pull factors, mention can be made of drivers that make violent extremism an attractive domain for individuals and groups. These factors are mostly held at the individual level and respond to the developments which make violent extremism an attractive and rewarding venture. They include, among others, access to finance, pride, belonging, survival, and security.

THE QUEST FOR SELF-SECURITY

The state of Libya after the revolution heightened fear and the yearning for personal security among its population, rendering them susceptible to violent extremist groups. Due to the consequence of the instability of the postrevolutionary era on individual security, the urge to join groups as a means of enhancing personal and group survival and life security became arresting. Indeed, this desire was given more impetus by the seeming proliferation of arms and light weapons. It is estimated that Libya has the largest number of uncontrolled stockpiles of man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS).⁶⁵ Meanwhile, the number of less sophisticated conventional weapons and artilleries stand between 250,000 and 700,000.⁶⁶ These developments coupled with the failure of successive regimes to arrest the situation and secure an effective and efficient centralized control mechanism to establish a monopoly over the use of force have pulled individuals and communities towards extremist groups for security and survival. Indeed, some communities have welcomed extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and contributed to their operations based on the belief that an alignment with such organizations can prop up their safety and security.

⁶⁵ C.J. Chivers, "How to Control Libya Missiles? Buy Them Up," *The New York Times*, 22 December 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/23/world/africa/us-seeks-program-to-buy-up-missiles-loose-in-Libya.html>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Recruitment

Respondents believe that following the February 17 revolution, the Libyan political landscape became fertile ground for extremist groups such as DAESH, Al-Sharia, and other extremist groups to disseminate their ideology. While the social and conventional media channels and small-community networking became strategically important to recruit members for the organizations, direct engagement with different segments of the society was critical in mobilizing local people into violent extremism. Following the deepening of the political and security crisis in 2014, the recruitment strategy of the extremist organizations started to operationalize, and the organizational structure of the extremist groups became more apparent. Furthermore, owing to dwindling economic opportunities characteristic of the aftermath of the postrevolutionary era, extremist groups with strong financial backgrounds have found it relatively easy passing their recruitment tests. Poor security and the porousness of the Libyan border have aided illegal trade activities such as drug trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, robberies, smuggling, and even the taxation of the local populace which has bolstered the financial muscles of extremist groups.⁶⁷ It is estimated that these illegal networks contribute close to \$371 million annually to the black economy largely controlled by these extremist groups.⁶⁸ With these resources, extremist groups can recruit and fund their operations with ease. Indeed, it is reported that groups such as DAESH and Al-Sharia guarantee monthly salaries of more than \$100 to their fighters.⁶⁹ This

⁶⁷ Mark Shaw and Fiona Mangan, "Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition: Profits and Losses," United States

Institute of Peace, February 2014, accessed 13 January 2017, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libya-Transition.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Samuel Osborne, "Libya's Coastal Cities Are 'Making Millions from People Smuggling,'" *The Independent*, 1 December 2016, accessed 29 June 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/libya-coastal-cities-millions-people-smuggling-migrants-europe-un-a7450156.html>.

⁶⁹ Letta Tayler and Brahim Elansari, "'We Feel We Are Cursed': Life under ISIS in Sirte, Libya," *Human Rights Watch*, May 2016, accessed 29 June 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/05/18/we-feel-we-are-cursed/life-under-isis-sirte-libya#290612>.

package is undeniably attractive given the present state of the Libyan economy and the fact that few legitimate jobs could guarantee financial benefits beyond this threshold.

The search for identity and personal dignity has driven some individuals towards extremist groups and actions. Backed by an appeal to the imminent belonging and providing the route out of the quagmire of identity crisis, it is not surprising that the jihadists' propaganda has become appealing to the youth. Assessing the Salafi-jihadi threat in Libya, L. Sizer underscored that the activities of Salafi jihadists "provide a way for individuals to reclaim their dignity and respect after decades of repression during the Qadhafi regime."⁷⁰ Moreover, owing to the current state of affairs, many have been drawn to their tribal enclaves and render more loyalty there than to the state. Thus, the weakness in national identity has created room for strengthening tribal and local bonds with families, kin, and violent extremist organizations.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The political system in Libya is marked not only by an ineffective governance and state system but also a staunch resistance to change over the years, with the legacy of Qadhafi's corrupt system of patronage politics. Because of ongoing conflict and two different power centers in Libya, the election aftermath of the dissolution of the Qadhafi regime has left the same problem in Libyan politics and gradually eroding the Libyan people's confidence in the democratic political process. Such corruptions were cited repeatedly by respondents as a direct driver of violent extremism, especially with the intensification of the security conflict post-2014. Respondents highlighted that following the 2014 security conflict and because of the two power centers in the country, people were in despair felt themselves incapable of bringing about peaceful change through elections. Extremist groups leveraged this op-

⁷⁰ L. Sizer, "Libya's Terrorism Challenge; Assessing the Salafi-Jihadi Threat, Policy Paper 2017-1," *The Middle East Institute Counterterrorism series*. Washington DC.

portunity to gain support, especially among the youth and the regions where the people were under severe circumstances. Respondents also claimed that the regional countries intensified the conflict between different armed factions that later became one of the important reasons behind the violent conflict across the country. As Libya became more deeply mired with conflict, Salafi messaging such as Madkhalism could effectively gain attraction among people more fragile to violent extremism. Respondents underlined that most people were frustrated with the political, social, judicial, and economic process in their country and therefore were more conflictual. In addition to these feelings and frustration in the sociopolitical domains, many leaders normalized and legitimized an antagonistic and exclusionary narrative to consolidate their power and dehumanize their rivals. Respondents underlined that post-2014, Halifa Haftar strongly embraced antagonistic and exclusionary rhetoric to undermine his “enemies” with the strong assistance of powerful Medkhali networks across Libya. The exclusionary narrative used to legitimize their regional and local system conditioned local people to become more receptive to extremist messaging. This rhetoric also introduced identity division in Libyan society. According to participant meetings, this antagonistic rhetoric was reinforced at the local level by traditional (mostly throughout Medkhali-led mosques) mechanisms and traditional and non-traditional media tools, as well as by religious actors. Respondents underlined that in the most extreme cases, some leaders of armed groups and political figures went beyond mere antagonistic rhetoric to openly condone and sometimes support extremist groups to defeat their rivals. In the case of the emergence of DAESH in Sirte, most of the respondents cited that, it consolidated its power with the support of certain regional countries and their intelligence networks that operated in Libya.⁷¹

⁷¹ Interviewee No: 10, 26 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 4, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

In sum, as amply delineated by the UN plan of action to prevent violent extremism, “nothing can justify violent extremism, but we must also acknowledge that it does not arise in a vacuum. Narratives of grievance, actual or perceived injustice, promised empowerment and sweeping change become attractive where human rights are being violated, good governance is being ignored, and aspirations are being crushed.”⁷² Likewise, VE in Libya did not occur in a vacuum. It arose as a result of a series of push, pull, and enabling factors that were built throughout the history of Libya. The bulk of the push factors were created during and under the rule of Qadhafi, while the pull and enabling factors were predominantly the product of the postrevolutionary period due to the authority vacuum and state collapse. All paved the way for the formation of VEOs such as DAESH, Ansar al-Sharia, and Madkhali Salafis, the destructive effects of which still shadow the stability and peace in the country.

⁷² UN General Assembly. Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. *UN document A/70/674*, 2015, 24.



THREE

VIOLENT EXTREMIST
ORGANIZATIONS
(VEOs) IN LIBYA



The root causes of VE, as discussed in the previous section, paved the way for the formation of certain VEOs in Libya. It is crucial to understand the nature, practices, and the conditions that gave rise to those VEOs in order to develop a strategy to counter their malign activities. When we asked the question, “Which organizations would you categorize as violent extremist organizations (VEOs) in Libya?” to our respondents, all of them unanimously pointed to three VEOs: DAESH, Ansar al-Sharia, and Madkhali Salafis. Although there have been other VEOs throughout the history of Libya such as the LIFG, they were either dismantled during the Qadhafi rule, or they dissolved themselves after the revolution. Thus they are no longer prevalent in Libya. Therefore, in this report, we will focus and elaborate on the three VEOs that have been and still are prevalent in the postrevolutionary period.

DAESH

EMERGENCE OF DAESH IN LIBYA

DAESH was first seen in Derna after its entrance to the city in October 2014. In a further step, it gained strength in Sirte, which had already lost its determinant role during and after the revolution. However, DAESH divided Libya into three so-called administrative states: the Barqa state including Benghazi; the Tripoli state, whose center was Tripoli; and the Fezzan state whose center was Sabha. It was not able to keep its presence in historically important and politically determinant cities such as Tripoli, Benghazi, Misrata, Zliten, and Zintan.

Furthermore, the organization was unable to find a Libyan leader and got help from central DAESH for leadership. In this respect, many senior militants from Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Tunisia took the

lead of the organization. The prominent leaders of DAESH in Libya such as Jalal el-din el-Tunisi, Abu Hudhayfah al-Muhajir, or Abu Talha el-Tunisi show both the Tunisian dominance in the organization's leadership and its inability to have a strong ground in Libya. It should also be noted that the Tunisian leaders' dominance in leadership was related to the large number of Tunisian foreign fighters within DAESH. The emergence of DAESH in Derna in October 2014 caused the Shura Council of Derna Mujahideen to fight against DAESH, and ended with the removal of the organization from the city center in July 2015 and from the rural areas of Derna in November 2015. Around April 2016, DAESH, unable to keep its presence in Derna, headed to Sirte. Appearing in Sirte in 2015, the organization took the absolute control of the city in May 2015. During the time it controlled the city, DAESH acted as if it were a state as it did in Syria and Iraq. During this term, international organizations remarked on the presence of DAESH in Libya, and many different sources claimed that the number of fighters was around 5,000-6,000. Its strength and the attacks in many different areas of Libya with its small units formed a basis for the international coalition forces to be activated in Libya. Air forces led by the U.S. and the Misrata troops under the Government of National Accord initiated an operation against DAESH in April 2016. The operations brought about results after eight months, and on December 2016, DAESH was removed from the city of Sirte. Before this period, though DAESH had attacked the cities and oilfields near Sirte, it did meet with absolute success. Around 2017-2018, there was no city under the control of DAESH. It was observed that the organization downsized, transferred to rural and desert areas, and suffered extensive losses in its operational ability.

IRAQ-SYRIA AND THE ANSAR AL-SHARIA CONNECTION

Following DAESH's split from al-Qaeda Central, many from Ansar al-Sharia ranks joined DAESH. It should not be forgotten that the

unit, Katibat al-Bittar, which constructed DAESH in Libya had global jihadist tendencies and consisted of the people who were in touch with the al-Qaeda leaders in Iraq and Syria, and who then came back to Libya. Both the extent of participation from Ansar al-Sharia to DAESH and DAESH's Iraqi and Syrian connection in Libya were emphasized in interviews. The former phenomenon will be highlighted in the Ansar al-Sharia section. A former leader of a former VEO stated the following about the Iraq and Syria connection of DAESH in Libya:

The ones who joined DAESH from Libya had socialized with the organization in Iraq and Syria. There were experienced militants from Iraq, especially in Sirte.¹

DAESH'S APPEAL

The number of participations increased because the organization had considerable territorial control with its various activities. Many foreign fighters from the region, and particularly from Tunisia, joined the organization. This might be taken as a result of a "caliphate" phenomenon which DAESH brought to the surface all around the world. In this context, it made possible for DAESH's ideology to spread to other organizations in the region and its fractions to become prevalent with the effective use of media. However, the extent of the abundance especially of Tunisian foreign fighters in the ranks of DAESH in Libya has been a recurrent theme during interviews.

US VS. UNBELIEVERS

DAESH's mentality and paradigm were based on declaring opponent military groups unbelievers and engaging in combat to suppress them as it did in Iraq and Syria. The organization which firstly potentiated in Derna did not have pleasant relations with other Salafi-Jihadist organizations in the field. Later it organized itself in Sirte and Benghazi and organized terrorist attacks to attract the attention of its enemies.

¹ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

When the organization lost hold of the cities, it retreated to rural areas and focused its operations on terrorist attacks and raids. Particularly taking oil fields, supply lines, infrastructure, and superstructure as targets, the organization aimed to block a working state system in Libya.² Not only did DAESH have problems with rival Salafi-Jihadist factions but also with revolutionaries and regular inhabitants of the provinces where they operated.

ESCAPE TO THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT AND DEMISE

After their defeat in Iraq and Syria and in their strongholds in Libya, the organization expanded to the Libyan deserts. An interviewee stated the following:

Jufra and its nearby, mountainous areas and southern Libya are escape routes of DAESH militants.³

It could be easily stated that DAESH had lost its capacity after losing its control in the fields and retreating to deserts in the form of cells. However, the organization carried out several guerilla-type attacks throughout 2018. In 2018, 15 attacks were confirmed while 2-3% of the attacks were carried out in Jufrah and Ajdabiya. With the images that appeared via the Amaq Agency on August 9, 2018, DAESH claimed to control the Ajdabiya-Jalu road by creating a checkpoint. It was seen that the controls took place at nights. The organization which had lost its efficiency in Libya, with the help of these images tried to show its ability to have a checkpoint anywhere it wanted when it was needed, and wanted to claim its presence in the field again.⁴ After these images surfaced, the organization claimed to carry out two attacks with one-month breaks in Jufrah, Tripoli, and

² Ibid.

³ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

⁴ Haftalık DAEŞ Raporu 3-9 Ağustos, *Suriye Gündemi*, <http://www.suriyegundemi.com/2018/08/16/haftalik-daes-raporu-3-9-agustos/> (Accessed 22 January 2019).

Barqa. This information was confirmed by the various accounts of the interviewees.

Currently, DAESH militants are hiding out in the mountains in cells.

In the east [eastern Libya] there are sleeper cells of DAESH here and there. However, sometimes they are capable of carrying out attacks in the region.⁵

All interviewees pointed out the current incapacity of DAESH in Libya. In terms of the level of threat it can pose and the extent of the appeal of its ideology on people, interviewees stated the following:

The possibility of the spread of DAESH's ideology again is weak. DAESH received a huge blow both in Sirte and other provinces.⁶

In terms of organizational capacity, DAESH is finished. It exists only in cells. Its existence has transformed into a public order issue rather than a great security threat.⁷

DAESH has been liquidated. There are estimated 400-500 DAESH militants in the hands of Deterrence Forces (Quwwât al-Radâ). Jufra and its surroundings, the mountainous areas and southern Libya are escape routes of DAESH militants. The U.S. is bombarding these areas.⁸

DAESH AS A TOOL

Another important point about DAESH in Libya is the fact that it was inflated to a great extent for political purposes. Although there is a strong perception that the warlord Khalifa Haftar is the primary actor fighting against DAESH or terrorism in general in Libya, what he has been doing is nothing more than instrumentalizing DAESH to advance his interests. Haftar was not interested in eradicating DAESH's presence from any area in Libya as his purported "fight against

⁵ Interviewee No: 5, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

⁶ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

⁷ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

⁸ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

DAESH” allowed him to disguise his criminal activities. Interviewees drew a very different picture than the common perception with regards to DAESH, revolutionaries, and Haftar:

When DAESH militants engaged in some attacks in Derna, local people coalesced and expelled them from Derna. At a point where the militants were encircled, Haftar intervened and opened a corridor for them to go to Sirte. As for Benghazi, Haftar did not want to fight against DAESH only but also aimed at fighting against all revolutionary forces there. In a way, he instrumentalized the struggle against DAESH to wipe out revolutionaries in Benghazi. Likewise, after the clashes in Benghazi, he opened another corridor for DAESH militants and let them flee.⁹

AN ALIEN ORGANIZATION

A recurring theme throughout the interviews was DAESH’s inorganic nature in Libya, which is to say that it could survive in Libya only under certain circumstances. Even when those circumstances were present, regular people and revolutionaries always viewed them as adversaries and fought against them with whatever material capability they had at their disposal.

DAESH used to have a presence somewhere in Sabratha. It was on the passageway from Tunisia. When DAESH militants attempted to control the area, both the residents of Sabratha and the neighboring towns coalesced and drove them out. After that, Al-Bunyan al-Marsoos was formed, and they ejected DAESH from Sirte.¹⁰

DAESH AS A PRODUCT

There is a general feeling among the Libyan people and also our respondents that DAESH was propped up by various intelligence organizations. Conspiratorial as it might sound, developments such as Haftar’s repeated rescue of DAESH from complete wipeout and the

⁹ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

¹⁰ Ibid.

lack of support or even the circumvention of revolutionaries when they tried to fight against DAESH, bolster their convictions.

Al-Bunyan al-Marsoos asked for support to fight against DAESH, but it could not get the support it asked for. As a result, it had to quit fighting.¹¹

All intelligence services have their members in DAESH's top brass.¹²

ANSAR AL-SHARIA

EMERGENCE

Ansar al-Sharia was founded in the period following the Arab Spring in Libya. The date of the foundation remains unknown; however, the organization made their name with the attack on the U.S. diplomatic missions in Benghazi, in 2012. The main areas of operation for the organization were Benghazi and Derna. Together with these cities, the organization was also active in Sirte, Sabratha, and Ajdabiya.

Ansar al-Sharia's presence was felt in Derna, Benghazi, Ajdabiya, and Sirte. These four provinces are the ones where DAESH rose.¹³

ORIGINS AND RADICALIZATION

The Ansar al-Sharia Brigade in Benghazi, led by Mohammed al-Zahawi, and the Ansar al-Sharia Brigade in Derna were founded by former Guantanamo prisoner Abu Sufian bin Qumu. The leaders of the organization consisted of people who attended the war in Afghanistan and had ties with al-Qaeda. The roots of Ansar al-Sharia were described as follows:

It goes back to the Qadhafi era. Qadhafi created a lot of enemies by making certain decisions during his rule. As expected, some groups, which consisted of youth, arose during that period. These groups viewed Qadhafi as *kaafir* (infidel). They formed Ansar al-Sharia together with the ones in prison after the revolution.¹⁴

¹¹ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

¹² Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

¹³ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

¹⁴ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

2003 and post-2003 Iraq created a tremendous impression in terms of jihad in Libya. Some Libyans went to Iraq to join “jihad.” The majority of the returnees from Iraq joined Ansar al-Sharia.¹⁵

Expectedly, members of Ansar al-Sharia or their predecessors radicalized even more in prison, which paved the way for the formation of Ansar al-Sharia.

Qadhafi put those [who were later to join Ansar al-Sharia] in prison. They became even more stiffened and even more intensified there.¹⁶

As the future members of Ansar al-Sharia radicalized considerably in prison, they had contempt for even the previous generation of Salafi-Jihadist movement and were constantly at odds with them.

REVOLUTION EFFECT

Although the circumstances were ripe for the radicalization of future Ansar al-Sharia members, it was the revolution and the subsequent anarchical environment that paved the way for their development.

Before the revolution, Ansar al-Sharia members were in prison or in certain places outside of prison where the security apparatus could not detect them. However, until the revolution, they did not enjoy this much of an impact.¹⁷

DAESH CONNECTION

Ansar al-Sharia is one of the important organizations that can be identified under the Salafi- Jihadist ideology in Libya. Even though the ideological connection between them was officially rejected by Ansar al-Sharia, the former leader of Ansar al-Sharia, Mohammed al-Zahawi officially declared his support towards al-Qaeda. More importantly, it should be underlined that *Dabiq* magazine, the official magazine of DAESH, criticized the strong relationship between Ansar al-Sharia and al-Qaeda.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

¹⁷ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

While Ansar al-Sharia was in Benghazi and Sirte, it was aware that there were certain differences between them and DAESH. But later, the majority of them merged with DAESH.¹⁸

With its rise around the world and the increase in its authority in Syria and Iraq, DAESH's presence also became strengthened in Libya. During that time, there have been many transfers from DAESH from the members of Ansar al-Sharia, especially the members of Ansar al-Sharia in Sirte. Including the head of Ansar al-Sharia in Derna, Abu Sufian bin Qumu,¹⁹ the reality of many high-ranked members' passing to DAESH caused a widespread change among Ansar al-Sharia, and it became more openly engaged with other armed groups in Derna and Benghazi. This merger was confirmed by interviewees.

A large part of them [Ansar al-Sharia] joined DAESH. There is not a big ideational difference between the two. The most distinct difference between them was the fact that Ansar al-Sharia did not pay homage to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. This group [Ansar al-Sharia], in fact, paved the way for DAESH's penetration into Libya.²⁰

It seems like after its merger with DAESH, the resistance by regular people towards them increased.

After merging with DAESH, Ansar al-Sharia had been active in areas such as Benghazi, Derna, and Sirte. After carrying out several attacks in Derna, inhabitants coalesced among themselves and ejected them from there.²¹

IDEOLOGY

Claiming a Sharia state and declaring the democratic elections as unlawful, Ansar al-Sharia, contrary to some other Islamic groups, advocates that elections even with the aim of a sharia state are illicit (*haram*). As an organization belonging to the second generation of Salafi

¹⁸ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

¹⁹ "Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL)", *Counter-Extremism Project*, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/ansar-al-sharia-libya-asl>, (Accessed 30 November 2018)

²⁰ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

²¹ Ibid.

Jihadism in Libya, Ansar al-Sharia took a strong anti-election stance in contrast to the first Salafi Jihadist generation which attended the elections in Libya. The leader of Ansar al-Sharia who died in 2015, in an interview he gave to a local TV, defined the parliamentary elections in the post-Qadhafi period as non-Islamic.²²

...these people [Ansar al-Sharia] subsequently viewed others such as GNC members and revolutionaries as infidels as well.

Ansar al-Sharia rejected the GNC. They wanted to grab power themselves, which was a mistake. They viewed democracy as “haram” (forbidden by religion) and advocated the establishment of Islamic rule and observing Islamic judgments. They got carried away and took action. They diluted the revolution in this manner.²³

The tasks of the organization’s Hisba forces were the pulling down of mausoleums and the innovations (bid’ ah) of Sufism.²⁴

They were ignorant, and they tried to defame other groups on purpose. They defamed some scholars and tried to present them as com-pradors. They presented them as apostates and manipulated the whole environment.²⁵

Method

With the effort of more indoctrination, humanitarian aid, and municipal works, Ansar al-Sharia tried to gain society’s support, and managed to get into Benghazi. And in the third stage, the organization established groups with groups in Derna and Benghazi such as the Shura Council of Mujahideen in Derna and the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries to fight against Haftar forces. The transition between the second and the third stage could be taken to be with the death of the former Ansar al-Sharia leader Mohammed al-Zahawi following an

²² Frederic Wehrey, “The Wrath of Libya’s Salafis”, *Carnegie Endowment International*, 12 September 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/09/12/wrath-of-libya-s-salafis/dtaz>, (Accessed 30 November 2018).

²³ Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Istanbul.

²⁴ “Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL)”, *Counter-Extremism Project*, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/ansar-al-sharia-libya-asl>, (Accessed 30 November 2018)

²⁵ Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Istanbul.

injury at the end of an American airstrike. Losing power after the death of Zahawi, the organization could not recover, and many members passed to DAESH. At the end of the third stage, the group announced it was formally dissolving in May 2017.²⁶

Ansar al-Sharia's recruitment strategy was constructed on "oppressed" rhetoric and culture. Being widely common in Libya, the "oppressed" rhetoric and culture are being used by many armed groups to recruit fighters, and it serves the radicalization process in the country. Following the outbreak of the war, the welfare level in Libya decreased dramatically. Public services and municipalities have struggled in many regions. Ansar al-Sharia tried to recruit members by making use of the vacuum in Benghazi and Derna. It also tried to win the favor of society by offering municipal services and humanitarian aid. Collecting funds via gambling, hostage-taking, collecting taxes, bank robberies, and foreign support, the organization made \$100 monthly payments to fighters. While it asked \$150,000 for Libyan hostages, for foreign hostages it demanded millions of dollars. Ansar al-Sharia earned income, particularly through its good terms with the black market in Libya.²⁷ No matter how hard Ansar al-Sharia tried to gain the favor of people by financial payments, humanitarian aid, and municipal services, it did not succeed in reaching society ideologically and stayed marginalized among the people.

DEMISE

Ansar al-Sharia failed to gain military success against Khalifa Haftar's forces on May 17, and following this, it announced its dissolving. The primary reasons behind this decision are both the deaths of many of its

²⁶ John Pearson, "Libyan Extremists Group Ansar Al Sharia Disbands", *The National*, 28 May 2017, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/libyan-extremist-group-ansar-al-sharia-disbands-1.612687>, (Accessed 30 November 2018).

²⁷ Lydia Sizer, "Libya's Terrorism Challenge Assessing the Salafi-Jihadi Threat", *Middle East Institute*, September 2017, https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/PP1_Sizer_LibyaCT_web_0.pdf, (Accessed 30 November 2018).

leaders and its inability to find support among Libyan society. As of today, their potential to pose a serious threat to Libyan society is viewed as minimal by interviewees.

I think the possibility of the spread of DAESH and Ansar al-Sharia's ideology again in Libya is low. Based on their experience, Ansar al-Sharia is now going through a transformation. This transformation is in terms of practice rather than ideas. This is due especially to the killing of some ideologues of the group.²⁸

Ansar al-Sharia/DAESH members in Derna were liquidated as a result of the Dignity Operation initiated by Haftar. The ones in Sabratha and Sirte were partly eliminated.²⁹

They were substantially liquidated in the east [eastern Libya]. The ones who fled the west [western Libya] were arrested.³⁰

I see no future for Ansar al-Sharia since they are not supported by an intelligence service; they are not manageable, and they do not have an organization.

After merging with DAESH, they dispersed from Benghazi to other provinces.³¹

MADKHALI SALAFIS

The ideational aspect of radicalization into violent extremism in Libya is one of the important domains which participants have underlined during the research. Respondents highlighted that the crux of the conflict in Libya is the power struggle. Ideas are utilized for political ends, not the other way around. One of the respondents who is one of the senior leaders of a former armed group who fought against the Qadhafi regime cited that both DAESH and Madkhali Salafis are the main factors behind the mobilization of violent extremist discourse across

²⁸ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

²⁹ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

Libya. However, since all respondents agree that both DAESH and Ansar al-Sharia are far from being an existential VE threat to Libya, they emphasized mostly the Madkhali Salafis as the most prevalent VEO in Libya at the moment. Although Madkhali Salafis were dormant before the revolution, they took action after the revolution by penetrating armed groups and spreading their ideological narratives. Here is how the process works according to an interviewee:

The most important and effective thing they did was blacklisting the people in the security sector. They shifted from idea to practice after the revolution. They tried to infiltrate all armed groups, and they were the ones who convinced Haftar to take action. The first cause an ideological change on people, and then infiltrate a group and influence the base. They target positions closed to the leader to influence him.³²

COMMONALITIES WITH DAESH AND ANSAR AL-SHARIA

Although Madkhali Salafis are not treated as a threat equal to DAESH or Ansar al-Sharia, the former has a very similar binary mindset with them, which is the basis of many radicalization processes.

DAESH and Ansar al-Sharia used to deem the ones who rejected to join them as unbelievers. As they were unbelievers, it was permissible to claim their lives. As for Madkhali Salafis, those who do not join them are innovators. For them [Madkhali Salafis], it is not permissible to talk to them and to salute them.

Both DAESH and Madkhali Salafis have a common point in declaring those who challenge them as unbelievers.

The ideas of DAESH and Madkhali Salafis are the same. Their religious interpretations, their approach to religion, and politics resemble one another a lot. Madkhalis killed Sheikh Nadir al-Umrani based on a foreign fatwa.³³

The Amazigh community in Libya was oppressed at some point. Madkhali Salafis called them apostates. They declared them unbelievers

³² Interviewee No: 4, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

³³ Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Istanbul.

due to their Ibadî sect. Madkhali Salafi groups declared whoever did not share their views unbelievers.³⁴

Tools and Channels of Influence

One of the important influences of Madkhali Salafis in Libya on the public space is their ability to mobilize their social network among society. Respondents believe that they have two strategic areas. The first is the private-public space, and especially the private schools whose curricula disseminate their message.

Their [Madkhali Salafis] pecuniary resources come from a country in the region. They generate their income from pilgrimage (Hajj and Umrah) and selling Saudi goods in Libya. Recently, they started to open private schools. Misrata's population is 500,000 and they have 20 schools in Misrata only. Last year, they used a building to open a university strictly for Salafis.³⁵

The second strategy is to consolidate their message through conventional and non-conventional social media networks. They disseminate their message through books, booklets, brochures, cassettes, and, lately, YouTube channels. One of the respondents who is one of the political leaders following the February 17 revolution stated,

Madkhalis run a lot of radio channels, they have weapons, and they have their militia forces. Those who might balance them in society do not have any such power. The authority of "fatwa" struggles to inform people correctly though; it is not enough in the face of Madkhalis' powerful message.³⁶

Their books, magazines, TV, and radio programs are a dime a dozen.

Radio Furqan in Libya belongs to them [Madkhali Salafis]. They broadcast sermons by foreign scholars. They have around 40 radio channels in Libya.³⁷

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

³⁶ Ibid.; Interviewee No: 10, 26 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

³⁷ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

They [Madkhali Salafis] are organized in tribes, mosques, and cities. They have powerful propaganda mechanisms and also resources to maintain the propaganda.³⁸

However, they do not only exploit technological and media opportunities to expand their influence. They exploit whatever is available in Libya ranging from ungoverned borders to the disgruntlement of certain social and tribal segments of society. Since there are pro-Qadhafi actors and tribes in Libya, and they aim to seek revenge from revolutionaries, Madkhali Salafis did not hesitate to cooperate with them.

Technological means are an advantage for them [Madkhali Salafis]. Another advantage for them is the fact that the Sudanese, Egyptian, and Tunisian borders of Libya are out of control. Plus, some Qadhafi regime remnants supported them in order to take revenge from the revolutionaries.³⁹

External Support

The Madkhali Salafis enjoy the material and social capacity to have a considerable sway both in private school and media sectors, and as a result no one believes that this would be possible without continuous external support.

The reason for the extent of power the Madkhali Salafis enjoy is the solid support they receive. One of the ways for them to spread their ideas is opening private schools. Due to the weakness of the government, they can implement their curriculum. The second way to spread their ideas in the media, especially the radio. They have effective radio stations in almost all provinces. We think that this has become possible thanks to the financial support they receive.⁴⁰

Madkhali Salafis cannot survive without their external support. A country in the region provides overt support to them [Madkhali Salafis], support in every respect.⁴¹

³⁸ Interviewee No: 13, 11 October 2018, Istanbul.

³⁹ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

⁴⁰ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

⁴¹ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

People's conviction that this group is supported by external actors has merit. They evaluate certain acts of Madkhali Salafis at certain points and link them to their political and strategic outcomes. They detect some patterns between the goals of some regional countries and the acts of Madkhali Salafis.

It is obvious that a certain country is behind this [Madkhali Salafis]. Therefore, it is an instrument of Saudi policies' becoming influential in all Muslim countries. They produce books, leaflets, YouTube videos, etc. thanks to enormous financial support. Madkhali Salafis in Libya do nothing without asking their patrons abroad. When the revolution kicked off, for example, they were instructed, and they decided not to join the revolution. They did not participate in elections, declaring the latter "haram" and thus, Mahmoud Jibril's party came to the forefront.⁴²

Madkhali Salafis aims to transform society in line with their religious conviction. There are 3-4 influential scholars abroad. These scholars are, on the other hand, directed by political figures. They set a story and tell it to people. These 3-4 people are at the center of this social change, and they became successful. They are directed by a foreign intelligence.⁴³

Rabi al-Madkhali is directed by a country's intelligence. He has tens of thousands of followers, and they are uneducated. They are mobilized by fatwas coming from abroad. There was a strict order not to participate in the revolution. They are really powerful at the moment. Certain countries in the region support them to a considerable extent.⁴⁴

Madkhali Salafis came from the outside as a package, and they are directed from outside.⁴⁵

An Alien Organization

Like DAESH and Ansar al-Sharia, Madkhali Salafis are also treated by Libyan people as an alien organization to Libya's social, cultural, and religious fabric.

⁴² Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Interviewee No: 13, 11 October 2018, Istanbul.

⁴⁵ Interviewee No: 13, 11 October 2018, Istanbul.

The ideologies of both Ansar al-Sharia and Madkhali Salafis are outside of Libya. The majority of Ansar al-Sharia's ideologues, especially Maqdisi, do not live in Libya. The ideologues of Madkhali Salafis live in a certain country in the region.⁴⁶

There is the shrine of one of the companions of Prophet Mohammed in Bayda. Madkhali Salafis attempted to bomb that shrine. The people protested the attempt.⁴⁷

Haftar is allied with certain countries in the region, and naturally with Madkhali Salafis. This annoys Libyans greatly. People call them "a foreign diaspora."⁴⁸

Domination of the Religious Realm

More importantly and even effectively, the mosques are the main venues of activity of Madkhali Salafis in Libya. Respondents underlined that they eradicate the moderate line there through their sermons, discourse, and activities. They bring books of their sheiks into mosque libraries. According to many participants, Madkhali Salafis' control of mosques in the west of the country is around 80%, and in the east, they control almost 100% of the mosques.

There is a prime minister and an Awqaf Ministry in the region ruled by Haftar. All mosques are in the hands of Madkhali Salafis there.⁴⁹

Madkhali Salafis have a 100% control over mosques in Sabratha. Although jamaah of the mosques are not sympathetic to Madkhali Salafis, they are under pressure. The percentage [of the mosques controlled by Madkhali Salafis] in the west [western Libya] is approximately 80%.⁵⁰

This vying for control over mosques and the Awqaf Ministry is not based on "fair competition." Rather their attempt to control the religious realm is ensured through material force, repression, and threats.:

⁴⁶ Interviewee No: 11, 27 September 2018, Istanbul.

⁴⁷ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵⁰ Interviewee No: 4, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

When Madkhali Salafis and Deterrence Forces attained power, they started to intervene in the Awqaf Ministry. 95% of the mosques in Tripoli are under their control.⁵¹

They [Madkhali Salafis] blew up a car bomb in front of the Awqaf building in Misrata to threaten Awqaf officials.⁵²

Appeal

When it comes to the pull factors of joining Madkhali Salafis, interviewees reported that they exploit the general public's veneration towards religion and especially Prophet Mohammed. Since the general public cannot see through the real agenda behind the Madkhali Salafis, they judge the latter by their appearance: their look, dress, behaviors, etc. all seem to express authentic religious elements.

Being like Prophet Mohammed, living like him. Trying to observe his "Sunnah" in everything. Of course, they do not put forward the Hanbali denomination. The main emphasis is on Salafism.⁵³

Counter-Message

Although there have been some feeble but sincere attempts to counter their destructive message, the government has not addressed the problem sufficiently, nor has it taken the necessary measures. In addition to this, Madkhali Salafis exploited the following weakness:

The first disciple of Madkhali Salafism in Libya was Sheikh Mahmoud. He drew attention to the dangers of Madkhali Salafism on TV. However, he backed off after receiving serious threats.⁵⁴

It is highly significant to protect and support the voices countering the Madkhali Salafi message and to make people aware of their agenda and conduct. Dar al-Iftâ has been one of those voices.

Initially, society was not aware, until they [Madkhali Salafis] showed

⁵¹ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵² Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵³ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

up with their radio channels. Dar al-Iftâ published a notice targeting them [Madkhali Salafis]. Then people became aware, and a reaction arose in general.⁵⁵

Greatest Challenge: Blurry Lines

Arguably, the greatest problem with Madkhali Salafis is the fact that they are interwoven with official and semi-official structures in Libya. They exploit state legitimacy in many respects.

Madkhali Salafis influenced the GNA and became part of the security units. On the other hand, they are fully integrated with both security and military structures in Haftar's region. There are rumors that they control the Tripoli Airport, sometimes private jets land at the airport, and some Madkhali Salafi leaders came for secret meetings. Also, their regional backers help them become official figures in Libya. For example, Law No. 25 gave them powers above the law.⁵⁶

They [Madkhali Salafis] are under the legitimacy of the state. For instance, Deterrence Forces are under the state authority; they are affiliated with the Ministry of Interior. They act as if the state is their own. If things continue to happen like this, they will get even more important positions in the state.⁵⁷

This group is a major threat to Libya. They are an intelligence organization rather than an armed organization. They have a presence in all security agencies. The fight against crime, counterterrorism, and illegal immigration units are all under the control of them. There is an agency of fight against crime in Misrata. This agency assumed the powers of the counterterrorism unit as well. They built a huge prison there. They opened training centers in Misrata and other places under the name of "guesthouse." Sometimes they also use houses as headquarters and training centers.⁵⁸

Madkhali Salafis occupy official positions in Libya. For instance, local Awqaf offices in the west are controlled by Madkhalis. They represent 30% of the population in Tripoli. There is a Madkhali Salafi imam in the central mosque in Tripoli. The ministry asked me to write a report

⁵⁵ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵⁶ Interviewee No: 5, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵⁷ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵⁸ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

on Madkhali Salafis. However, I refused to conduct fieldwork for that report for fear that Madkhalis would learn about it.⁵⁹

Madkhali Salafis are in alliance with some of the most formidable militias in Tripoli, which enjoy a semi-official legitimacy as well.

Deterrence Forces, Nawasi Forces, etc. are deployed in Tripoli to protect Sarraj. Deterrence Forces also have a presence in Sabratha and Zawiyah. The main request of the people is the withdrawal of Deterrence Forces from the region.⁶⁰

There are two main Madkhali Salafi groups in Tripoli: Nawasi and Deterrence Forces. Another one is Tajouri Group. Although it is not Madkhali, it acts in unison with them for its self-interest. The Nawasi Battalion also contains extremists within itself, but they are not very criminal. They cooperate with Deterrence Forces out of regionalism.⁶¹

Alliance with Haftar

A great deal of their power and influence emanates from their alliance with Haftar.

It is more difficult to struggle with this group [Madkhali Salafis] than DAESH because they are in alliance with Haftar in the east.

The public prosecutor in Libya, for example, cannot arrest them [Madkhali Salafis].

When Ansar al-Sharia and DAESH were liquidated in places like Derna, Sabratha, and Sirte, the ground became available for Madkhali Salafis. For instance, the Tawhid Group is a Madkhali Salafi group that supports Haftar. After the Benghazi Operation was over, this group was abrogated and incorporated into the Battalion 102, Battalion 204, and the Saiqa Battalion with Haftar's pressure. Now they are a part of armed militias, and they have a presence in the fight against crime unit within the police department. They have a presence in both army and security agency.⁶²

⁵⁹ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

⁶⁰ Interviewee No: 5, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

⁶¹ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

⁶² Ibid.

Extreme Violence

All respondents pointed to the excessive use of force and violence by Madkhali Salafis towards whomever they perceive as rivals or simply actors that disagree with them. Their misconduct has been well documented in a lot of accounts.

There is Madkhali Salafi control in western Zawiyah and Sabratha. They tend to invade homes by using excessive force for even simple disagreements.⁶³

Their acts include kidnapping, torture, and so on. Their charge for the kidnapped is ‘terrorism.’ There have been deaths under torture. Mohammed Bakr from the Benghazi revolutionaries was one of those who were killed under torture. There are a lot of people who were kidnapped by this group [Madkhali Salafis] and their fate is now unknown.⁶⁴

A Madkhali Salafi so-called Commander Werfalli in the east has footages of mass executions, in which they made people wear orange jumpsuits as DAESH does in its videos.

Nader al-Umrani was liquidated for being up against Madkhali Salafis on a live broadcast. Why are certain figures in Turkey? A person’s son was kidnapped, and he was released only on the condition of his father leaving Libya. Sufi leader, Mohammed Mushaali’s home, was invaded; his son was kidnapped and killed in Misrata. He was a person training hafizs. Although he did not have any connection to political Islam, he was arrested. You cannot criticize Madkhali Salafis. I cannot criticize Madkhalis openly for example. If I did, I would not be able to go back to Tripoli. Local actors might inculcate youth for not joining Ansar al- Sharia or DAESH, but the same cannot be done for Madkhalis.⁶⁵

They [Madkhali Salafis] hit back their critics mercilessly. For example, the chief editor of a Tripoli-based TV told me that they had 70 people in Tripoli working for their channel. However, if he said anything against Madkhali Salafis, all those people would stop working for the channel. There are 11 TV channels in Libya at the moment, and apart from Tanasub, none of them talks about Madkhali Salafis. It broad-

⁶³ Interviewee No: 5, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

⁶⁴ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara.

⁶⁵ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

casts from Istanbul. All figures who criticize Madkhali Salafis had to move to Istanbul.⁶⁶

When Haftar forces captured Benghazi, Madkhali Salafis captured scores of scholars and hafizs and killed them and even burned them. We have footages of these acts. Madkhalis firstly created competition and small conflicts among tribes. Later Madkhalis presented their opponents or all groups who were against them as unbelievers; hence they called for their murder. After this, violence became widespread. They declared everyone unbelievers as they pleased and attempted to kill or put them under pressure in this way.⁶⁷

They [Madkhali Salafis] force the scholars who do not agree with them to leave the country, threaten them, or killed them (Nader Umrani). They killed some scholars and imprisoned many people. People like me had to flee the country. They became an iron fist against us, revolutionaries and scholars.⁶⁸

Madkhali Salafis are much more dangerous than DAESH and al-Qaeda in terms of extremism.

80 % of the 1,800 prisoners in the Deterrence Forces' prison are the members of Islamist groups who refused to join Madkhali Salafis. Deterrence Forces commit as much violence as Ansar al-Sharia and DAESH. They committed violence based on hadith texts.⁶⁹

VEOs in Libya came into existence as a result of a series of factors, which were discussed in the previous section. Although all VEOs discussed here were either formed or became more influential after the revolution, their predecessors existed before the revolution under different names and their origins were rooted in the Qadhafi era. While DAESH and Ansar al-Sharia could only form under the circumstances of civil war and state collapse, Madkhali Salafis were a favored group even under Qadhafi rule, and they now enjoy strong support from certain countries in the region. As a common point,

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Interviewee No: 13, 11 October 2018, Istanbul.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Interviewee No: 9, 25 September 2018, Ankara.

all are viewed as alien organizations to Libyan society, culture, and religion by the majority of Libyan society. Neither DAESH nor Ansar al-Sharia have ever had a strong societal base in Libya. DAESH attracted an enormous amount of international attention due to its global reach, but DAESH's presence and capacity in Libya had always been an exaggerated and overrated one, which was epitomized by the high numbers of foreign fighters within its ranks. Nevertheless, in terms of the current capacity and the level of extremism, all interviewees pointed to Madkhali Salafis as the most imminent, capable, widespread, and destructive VE threat in Libya.

NARRATIVES & FRAMING OF THE VEOs IN LIBYA

How the preexisting knowledge is framed and instrumentalized for the goals of movements is an important aspect of social movement dynamics. Existing information and the popular knowledge is transferred to other people and other generations in narrative forms. Those narratives also have certain strategic objectives and the actors who frame the narratives do it for particular purposes. There is a constant competition and battle of narratives and counter narratives in the ideational domain. All the organizations including the VEOs in Libya have their own tools of strategic communication. With their strategic communication, narratives, and discourses they try to appeal to diverse groups of people: young activists and foreign nationals who are interested in being part of a cause or a movement. There are some overlapping and crosscutting themes and messages in the particular communication strategies and contents of the different organizations. It is, therefore, important to focus on the themes that differentiate the various organizations.

There are certain elements that make some messages much more influential than others. DAESH, for instance, became much more successful than other VEOs due to its innovative approaches to spreading its discourse. One of the successful elements in DAESH's discourse was to find a way to connect individuals' *local grievances to a global*

narrative. Of course, for any narrative or discourse to be successful on any given audience, there must be a suitable ground, i.e. structural factors must be ripe. Some young people may respond to a radicalizer's message because they feel excluded from their societies, trapped as they are in poverty or hopelessness under authoritarian regimes. However, this is not the case only for authoritarian regimes. In more inclusive and participatory political settings, there are also elements that make the ground suitable for the resonance of extremist messages. Specifically, in the West, the young feel the struggle with issues of belonging and identity, and find that the radical message resonates with their experience and circumstances.⁷⁰ Likewise, there are also audiences that are influenced by other elements in extremist messages. Money and possible respect are other elements in the extremist narrative that allure some people.⁷¹

DAESH

DAESH in Libya, similar to the “original” one in Iraq and Syria, employed a discourse of a necessity of achieving certain objectives—destroying *kufir* or unbelief—in the form of high profile targets.⁷² However, what they meant by *kufir* or unbelief was simply opposition from other actors, not necessarily a religious act. DAESH's mentality and paradigm was based on declaring opponent military groups as unbelievers and engaging in combat to suppress them as it did in Iraq and Syria. In this vein, DAESH did not tolerate even other Salafi-Jihadist formations such as al-Qaeda and Ansar al-Sharia, let alone non-jihadist and moderate military groups. This was visible in the official voice

⁷⁰ Michael Jacobson, “Learning Counter-Narrative Lessons from Cases of Terrorist Dropouts” in *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives*, National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Washington Institute, January 2010.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Inga Kristina Trauthig, “Assessing the Islamic State in Libya”, *ECTC Advisory Network Conference*, EUROPOL, 9-10 April 2019, p. 11.

of DAESH, the *Dabiq* magazine, in which the former criticized the strong relationship between Ansar al-Sharia and al-Qaeda.

DAESH's claim of an Islamic state and the caliphate is the most important characteristic that made it distinct from all other VEOs both in Libya and elsewhere. This probably is the most important element of the organization's discourse that makes it appealing to a broader audience all over the world. This vision and discourse turned into an appealing call especially for the disenfranchised and oppressed Muslims across the world.

Despite the expected commonalities between DAESH in Iraq and Syria, and DAESH in Libya, there were also considerable differences between the two. For example, DAESH in Libya was unable to exploit a narrative that is central to DAESH in Iraq and Syria, namely Islam's sectarian divide. In Iraq and Syria, DAESH framed its fight as a sectarian struggle. It was not a fight solely to advance its own Salafi jihadi interpretation of Sunni Islam, but more importantly, it was a fight to eliminate adherents to Shi'a interpretations of Islam. However, there is no Shi'a in Libya. Consequently, in Libya it was unable to prey upon sectarian divisions in order to rally support. DAESH rather situated itself against Sufi interpretations and practices of Islam, which are widespread throughout Libya. However, Libya's Sufis are Sunni and not a part of Shi'a tradition. Additionally, unlike the Middle East's Shi'a, Libya's Sufis are not supported by any state and cannot be easily depicted as proxies for any other states. As a result, it was more difficult to frame the fight in Libya against Sufism or against Shiism like in the cases of Iraq and Syria.⁷³ Because of the limitations peculiar to Libya, DAESH had to build its fight and discourse on different elements other than sectarianism. Hence, in Libya, DAESH tried to frame its fight as being against injustice.⁷⁴

⁷³ Geoff D. Porter, "How Realistic Is Libya as an Islamic State 'Fallback'?", *CTC Sentinel*, March 2016, Volume 9, Issue 3.

⁷⁴ Porter.

ANSAR AL-SHARIA

Ansar al-Sharia in Libya aimed to implement Sharia law strictly while opposing democracy by claiming its incompatibility with the Holy Qur'an. As mentioned on several occasions, Ansar al-Sharia made a clear statement that they will not halt their mission until a "true Islamic state" is established in Libya.⁷⁵ Claiming a Sharia state and declaring the democratic elections unlawful, Ansar al-Sharia, contrary to some other Islamic groups, claims that even with the aim of a Sharia state, elections are *haram*. As an organization belonging to the second generation of Salafi Jihadism in Libya, Ansar al-Sharia took a strong anti-election stance in contrast to the first Salafi-Jihadist generation which attended the elections in Libya. The leader of Ansar al-Sharia who died in 2015, in an interview to a local TV channel, defined the parliamentary elections in the post-Qadhafi period as non-Islamic.⁷⁶ Due to the same position against democracy and elections:

...these people [Ansar al-Sharia] subsequently viewed others such as GNC members and revolutionaries as infidels as well.

Ansar al-Sharia rejected the GNC...They viewed democracy as "haram" (forbidden by religion) and advocated for establishing an Islamic rule and observing Islamic judgments.⁷⁷

Takfir (declaring someone an unbeliever) and contempt for even other Salafi-Jihadists were also dominant in Ansar al-Sharia's discourse.

There were extremists in places like Benghazi and Sirte even before the revolution. Some of them were in prison like us [LIFG]. We always bickered with them. I am not talking about DAESH; I'm talking about "takfiris." They did not go with the name, Ansar al-Sharia, then, but I'm talking about them.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Gråtrud, Henrik, and Vidar Benjamin Skretting. "Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya: An Enduring Threat." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 1 (2017): 40-53. www.jstor.org/stable/26297736.

⁷⁶ Frederic Wehrey, "The Wrath of Libya's Salafis", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 12 September 2012, <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/49364>.

⁷⁷ Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Istanbul.

⁷⁸ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara.

Ansar al-Sharia was also strongly against mysticism and Sufis both in discourse and practice. It defined Sufism and mausoleums as non-Islamic and pulled down many mausoleums such as, a mausoleum dating back to the 15th century in Zliten, and Sidi Al-Sahab Mosque and its tomb in Tripoli. Of the scope of the task of the organization's Hisba forces their duties were pulling down the mausoleums and the innovations (*bidh'ah*) of Sufism.⁷⁹

They [Ansar al-Sharia] were ignorant, and they tried to defame other groups on purpose. They defamed some scholars and tried to present them as compradors. They presented them as apostates.⁸⁰

The discourse of Ansar al-Sharia did not fully consist of unpleasant elements as mentioned above. There was also an attempt to win hearts and minds of people by the organization. This was mainly through *dawa* and humanitarian activities. For instance, they pursued a social service abroad with remarkable humanitarian aid to Sudan in 2013 after the flood. Their rhetoric on their *dawa* overseas was the "Convoy Campaign of Goodness to Our People in 'X-location."⁸¹ Their activities based on social services gained them an image far from an armed organization, and they expanded their influence to Sudan, Syria, and Gaza. Taking Gaza as an instance, their slogan was "We are over here in Libya and our eyes are on Jerusalem."⁸² These efforts were more part of their PR efforts rather than their broader political agenda.

Their attempt to differentiate themselves from al-Qaeda was also discernable in their discourse. Though they denied their link to al-Qae-

⁷⁹ "Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL)", *Counter-Extremism Project*, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/ansar-al-sharia-libya-asl>.

⁸⁰ Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Istanbul.

⁸¹ Aaron Y. Zelin, "The Rise and Decline of Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya," by Aaron Y. Zelin, accessed November 14, 2019, <https://www.hudson.org/research/11197-the-rise-and-decline-of-ansar-al-sharia-in-libya>

⁸² Aaron Y. Zelin, "When Jihadists Learn How to Help", *The Washington Post*, 7 May 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/05/07/when-jihadists-learn-how-to-help/>.

da, the similarities between the two were revealed in rhetoric and the practices of *dawa*.⁸³

MADKHALI SALAFIS

Madkhali Salafis, expectedly, employ a highly confrontational and conflictual discourse, which is a reflection of their black-and-white mindset. This black-and-white mindset that does not tolerate diversity of views is the basis and starting point of all extremist tendencies, and as a result is prevalent in all VEOs in Libya.

Madkhali Salafis are in conflict with all actors in society. Furthermore, they aim to subjugate all, which is why they use a strong discourse against the ones who do not agree with them, or simply do not join them. They take this disagreement with others to extreme extents by referring to religious categories such as “heretic”, “khawarij”, “disbeliever”, etc. and transform a mundane disagreement into a divine struggle between “good” and “evil”.

They [Madkhali Salafis] accuse opponents [those who oppose Madkhali Salafis] with being deviants and then mobilize the youth [against the latter]. They label both Sayyid Qutb and opponents as affiliated with DAESH. They mobilize the uneducated, the ignorant against opponents.⁸⁴

The Muslim Brotherhood, as one of the most organized social and religious movements, is expectedly viewed as an enemy by the group, since the former is not likely to submit to the latter thanks to its deep-rooted and strong institutional identity. As part of their larger struggle with the Brotherhood, they put up a discursive fight against them as well.

They [Madkhali Salafis] run a stern smear campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood.⁸⁵

⁸³ “Ansar Al-Sharia Libya (ASL),” The Mackenzie Institute, December 29, 2015 <https://mackenzieinstitute.com/2015/12/ansar-al-sharia-libya-asl/>

⁸⁴ Interviewee No: 14, 19 October 2018, Ankara.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

The Muslim Brotherhood is not the only movement that is being targeted by the Madkhali Salafis. Other major movements have also been attacked by the group, since they did not submit to the latter. A former member of the Madkhali Salafis, who used to be one of the most prominent figures of the group, stated the following with regards to the early period of the group:

The ones in Medina [Madkhali Salafi scholars] claimed that the Muslim Brotherhood, Tabligh Jamaah, and other Islamic movements or groups were deviant.⁸⁶

The same former Madkhali Salafi figure clearly puts the “us vs. the rest” mindset of Madkhali Salafis by referring to the group’s early period. The Madkhali Salafis claimed to be the most authentic Muslims and those who did not join them were supposed to be punished.

Whoever joined us [Madkhali Salafis] was a Salafi [something to be lauded]. But we were denigrating those who didn’t join us.⁸⁷

The “us vs. the rest” mindset of Madkhali Salafis is not only a binary one: it is also a hierarchical distinction, in which they put themselves on the top of all social groups, movements, and individuals. This gives them the authority and right to label, stigmatize, categorize, and judge anyone who is not a part of them.

All movements, more or less, tend to think of themselves as the most righteous. But they [Madkhali Salafis] are different. They believe that they have the ultimate authority to classify all movements and individuals and it is a duty with the highest priority upon them.⁸⁸

As a reflection of their extremist mindset, Madkhali Salafis are focused on suppression of all differences in methods, ideas, approaches, and so on. In line with this mindset, their discourse is shaped by violent elements such as elimination and liquidation, not to mention their practice.

⁸⁶ Interviewee No: 15, 13 November 2018, Ankara.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

When they classify a movement or an individual as wrongdoer, they don't believe in correction as a method, they believe in elimination and discipline by force. "Eliminate all other ideas, spread your own idea [Madkhali Salafism], and discipline the individual" is their line of action.⁸⁹

Those who are deemed wrong, opponents, adversaries, etc. by Madkhali Salafis should also be punished and need to pay the cost for their "wrongdoing" - of course in the hands of Madkhali Salafis. Performers of innovation, for example, are one of those who deserve such a treatment. Here again, Madkhali Salafis refer to religious concepts in order to demonize others and, needless to say, what they mean by "performers of innovation" is not the same as in classical Islamic literature. Instead, it is a functional label for Madkhali Salafis to transform others into legitimate targets.

They [Madkhali Salafis] have a conception of punishment of *ahl al-bid'ah* (performers of innovation). By embarking on the implementation of the punishment of *ahl al-bid'ah*, they started to implement this punishment to those who didn't agree with them.⁹⁰

Their discourse has also political implications, both domestic and regional in terms of the alliances of the Madkhali Salafis. Domestically, as they are in alliance with Khalifa Haftar, they recognize him as the *wali al-amr* and they wage war against anyone who rejects his authority. Again, this is done through a religious narrative.

They [Madkhali Salafis] declare those who oppose Haftar as "khawarij."⁹¹

Madkhali Salafis are quite selective in terms of who to recognize as the *wali al-amr* or the righteous ruler. Their criteria to recognize someone as *wali al-amr* is not determined by a religious conclusion, but rather it is determined by political considerations and alliances. Religious discourse is only being instrumentalized in this power struggle.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

They [Madkhali Salafis] label those who talk against *wali al-amr* as “khawarij.” However, they curse Erdoğan and the Emir of Qatar. They argue that revolution is not lawful, but they support the coup against Morsi. They are insistent on not objecting to the ruler, even if he is tyrant, and yet they objected to Morsi’s rule.⁹²

The political implications of the discourse of Madkhali Salafis were also visible in their position against the GNC in Libya. In their opposition to the GNC, they used the ‘specter’ of Muslim Brotherhood, which they constructed in their discourse over time. Although, factually it was not true that the GNC was dominated by the political representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood, Madkhali Salafis claimed that it was so.

They [Madkhali Salafis] opposed the General National Congress (GNC) and they claimed that the GNC was dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood.⁹³

Their animosity towards the GNC did not only emanate from the fact that it was dominated by “non-friendly” elements for Madkhali Salafis, but also from the fact that it was an elected body. Madkhali Salafis are strongly against elections and their rejection of elections is based on religious arguments.

In the wake of GNC elections, they [Madkhali Salafis] warned people not to join elections and the political process. When the GNC started to function, they told people that the GNC was not a legitimate authority, since it was formed as a result of elections and elections are blasphemy. However, they embrace authorities, which ascend to power through coup d’état and explain this as a compulsory case.⁹⁴

For them, elections are *haram* [forbidden by religion].⁹⁵

This animosity towards elections was also applied to the revolutionary moment that toppled Qadhafi in 2011. Again, it was main-

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid,

⁹⁵ Interviewee No: 14, 19 October 2018, Ankara.

tained on religious grounds that revolution is not acceptable within the framework of Islam.

They [Madkhali Salafis] declared the participation in revolution as *haram*.⁹⁶

Madkhali Salafis took a strong position when the revolution erupted and urged everyone not to join it. As expected, this strong position and discourse against both the revolution and the ones who joined it were based on religious premises.

When the revolution erupted, they [Madkhali Salafis] denounced it as *fitna* (unrest) and reminded that the Prophet had also warned against *fitna*. They urged people to stay home and not to join the revolution. Also, they labeled the people who joined the revolution as “khawarij.”⁹⁷

Despite the tactless nature of the discourse of Madkhali Salafis, some elements in their discourse tend to be influential on certain people, as they portray themselves as “anti- DAESH” in their discourse. By labeling anyone “DAESH” and “extremist,” except themselves, Madkhali Salafis justify themselves and their acts.

They [Madkhali Salafis] employ a discourse that they are against DAESH. “We are against extremism. We are peaceful.” They gain sympathy from masses in society by making use of these discourses.⁹⁸

In order to legitimize and bolster their arguments and discursive offensive against others, they refer to the main sources of Islam and make extensive use of them. Those references become weapons against whoever they deem an adversary. Not only rival social movements or actors, but also average people are also targeted by them since they do not follow in their footsteps.

They [Madkhali Salafis] employ a religious discourse and make use of hadiths [of Prophet Mohammed] to make their case. They label average devout people who practice their religious rituals as “deviants.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Interviewee No: 15, 13 November 2018, Ankara.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Interviewee No: 14, 19 October 2018, Ankara.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The same method was and is applied to their arguments about the *wali al-amr*, which is a very central concept for Madkhali Salafis.

In terms of objecting to the *wali al-amr*, some figures in Medina [Madkhali Salafi scholars] used to employ a narrative in which they referred to certain incidents and accounts in the Islamic literature [in order to legitimize and support their argument].¹⁰⁰

Although they try to strengthen their argument by referring to the main sources of Islam, the very definition and interpretation of *wali al-amr* by Madkhali Salafis makes it impossible for other movements, groups, or the general public to agree with it due to its extreme nature.

They [Madkhali Salafis] make an argument based on the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. There are a lot of hadiths about submission to the *wali al-amr* in *Sabih al-Muslim*. But they don't make a distinction between a just and unjust ruler, unlike the distinction in these sources. They argue that whatever the ruler does to the ruled—even unjustified physical violence—it is forbidden to object to him.¹⁰¹

With this definition of *wali al-amr*, it is no wonder that in the early years of the group, the Madkhali Salafis were so obsessed with the figure of Sayyid Qutb, arguably due to his 'revolutionary' disposition.

Sayyid Qutb was the person whom we [Madkhali Salafis] criticized most then. We were claiming that all heresies—in terms of religion—among youth were emanating from the ideas of Sayyid Qutb. For example, we were insistent that we were obliged to fully submit to the *wali al-amr* and the faults of the latter should not be explicitly mentioned. We used to think that the movements, which were objecting to the *wali al-amr* were heretics and the origin of their ideas was Sayyid Qutb. Thus, despot and authoritarian rulers cannot find a more useful tool than Madkhali Salafis. They wage war on all other ideas/movements and they do it for free [on behalf of the ruler].¹⁰²

In line with the extremist character and mindset of Madkhali Salafis, they also have no mercy for “defectors.” A former leader in Madkhali Salafis has been the greatest target of the latter, since he now criticizes

¹⁰⁰ Interviewee No: 15, 13 November 2018, Ankara.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Interviewee No: 15, 13 November 2018, Ankara.

the group and exposes its ills. Since Madkhali Salafis accuse even members of the general public with heresy, this former leader is expectedly being accused with more.

They [Madkhali Salafis] declared me as “the greatest heretic of all,” since I deserted the group and criticized them.¹⁰³

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES OF VEOs IN LIBYA

Recruitment might be regarded as a parallel process going hand in hand with narrative and discourse for VEOs. In material and operational terms, VEOs cannot afford not being able to recruit new militants, since they must mobilize and fight continuously. Almost all VEOs today benefit from technological advances and carry out their recruitment activities predominantly through online platforms. Although online recruitment became the most common method for all VEOs, apart from Ansar al-Sharia, the greater bulk of recruitment processes seem to occur offline. When it comes to online recruitment, the first stage of the process often begins with the mere satisfaction of curiosity of individuals. Impressionable youth or adults log in a terrorist website to read about the organization’s views for themselves. More often, they hear about this kind of media or magazine-related sites or journals from family or friends.¹⁰⁴ In online recruitment, recruiters use many languages to spread their messages and attract the attention of the target, who is the potential recruit.¹⁰⁵ Once the desire is seen in the target, s/he is given access to a wider variety of materials, and recruitment process gets closer to the completion.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Logan Macnair & Richard Frank, “Voices against Extremism: A Case Study of a Community-Based CVE Counter-Narrative Campaign”, *Journal for Deradicalization*, Spring 2017, pp. 147-174.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

DAESH

DAESH gathered its militants from two different sources. The first source consisted of the recruits who had split from Salafi-Jihadist groups such as Ansar al-Sharia, from groups that co-operated with Qadhafi, and other tribes during the revolution in Libya. The second and most crucial one was foreign fighters. For the DAESH sympathizers who were unable to be in Iraq and Syria, Libya was seen as an alternative, and the mobilization was organized by Katibat al-Bittar, which was a prominent group sent to Libya by DAESH.

Because the extent of the appeal of DAESH on Libyan society was very limited, the organization focused and relied on foreign fighters. While the foreign fighters from Syria played crucial roles in the field, there were also mercenary fighters in the ranks of DAESH. It also made use of the refugee influx from Chad, Mali, and Sudan to Libya. DAESH asked people who ran away from their homelands because of poverty to join its and according to claims of Libyan officials, it offered people around \$1,000 as a sign-up fee.¹⁰⁷ The amount of the fee might not be reflect the exact amount; however, it is widely known that DAESH tried to recruit fighters with financial bonuses.¹⁰⁸

According to almost every account, DAESH's main recruitment source in Libya was foreign fighters, rather than Libyan locals. DAESH did not have a strong hold on the Libyan population. The majority of the Libyan population did not support the rise of DAESH. Data from the Soufan Center and Italian diplomatic sources showed that the majority (nearly 80%) of DAESH militants in

¹⁰⁷ Colin Freeman, "Isil Recruiting Migrant 'Army of the Poor' with \$ 1,000 Sign-up Bonuses", *The Telegraph*, 1 February 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/12134806/Isil-recruiting-migrant-army-of-the-poor-with-1000-sign-up-bonuses.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Emily Estelle, "A Strategy for Success in Libya", *Critical Threats*, November 2017, <https://www.criticalthreats.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/A-Strategy-for-Success-in-Libya.pdf>.

Sirte were actually foreign fighters, of which, half appear to be Tunisian nationals.¹⁰⁹

Regarding DAESH's recruitment mechanisms, Libya's advantageous geographical position is very important. That is why DAESH had an interest in Libya.¹¹⁰ Since Libya had a weak government structure especially after 2014, European foreign fighters increasingly favored joining DAESH in Libya in order to avoid government detection.¹¹¹ Libya's proximity to sub-Saharan Africa was also a useful way to recruit fighters and militants from this region.¹¹² Sub-Saharan Africans were very important to DAESH's survival and strength in Libya. DAESH upscaled its recruitment efforts regarding migrants of sub-Saharan origin. DAESH saw them as a main resource for recruitment. Libya was not a transition point regarding only its transition mission between Libya and Europe. It was also a safety zone for fighters fleeing to Syria and Iraq. Libya was defined by recruitment in neighboring countries with an emphasis on its southern neighbors.¹¹³

DAESH released a series of recruitment videos, some aimed directly at Tunisian foreign fighters, calling on them to participate in jihad in Libya as a precursor to jihad at home. DAESH began notably recruiting foreign fighters to Libya in 2015.¹¹⁴ At the beginning of July 2018, DAESH's division in eastern Libya, known as Wilāyat Barqa, published a propaganda video under the name "Mawaqif al-mawt" (Point of Death), featuring noticeably sub-Saharan fighters.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Arturo Varvelli, "Islamic State's Re-Organization in Libya and Potential Connections with Illegal Trafficking", *Program on Extremism*, George Washington University, November 2017, p. 3.

¹¹⁰ Trauthig, "Assessing the Islamic State in Libya", p. 6.

¹¹¹ "Libya: Extremism & Counter-Extremism", *Counter-Extremism Project*, <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/libya>.

¹¹² Trauthig, "Assessing the Islamic State in Libya", p. 14.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Jason Pack, Rhiannon Smith, Karim Mezran, "The Origins and Evolution of ISIS in Libya", *Atlantic Council*, June 2017.

¹¹⁵ Trauthig, "Assessing the Islamic State in Libya", p. 15.

Thanks to the conception and claim of the “caliphate,” DAESH’s ideology could spread to other organizations in the region and its fractions became prevalent with the effective use of media. However, the extent of the abundance of especially Tunisian foreign fighters in the ranks of DAESH in Libya has been a recurrent theme during interviews.

By the way, the number of Libyans who joined DAESH is very few. There were a lot of Tunisians, Chadians, etc. among other nationalities.¹¹⁶

Regarding the enormous level of foreign fighter mobilization in the region surrounding Libya, one of the interviewees went as far as to claim that this mobilization was something abetted by states themselves.

States in the region [Middle East and North Africa] directed [on purpose] their citizens to Libya [as foreign fighters] in order to get rid of their own “radicals.” Plus, the passage of DAESH elements from the Iraq-Syria axis to Libya was winked at. Likewise, radicals from Egypt and Algeria also passed into Libya.¹¹⁷

ANSAR AL-SHARIA

Like DAESH and the Madkhali Salafis, Ansar al-Sharia also carried out certain efforts in order to reach out to people and recruit more militants into its ranks. One should look at Ansar al-Sharia’s activities along two dimensions: the local dimension and the cross-border dimension. In the first place, Ansar al-Sharia draws a picture of itself using positive objectives and activities in both local places and abroad to gain popularity and sympathy by the people. Therefore, their *dawa* should be put under the microscope to comprehend its initial activities and strategy to extend their influence and their attraction policy. *Dawa* refers to their outreach in the way that they sought to lay the foundations for

¹¹⁶ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

¹¹⁷ Interviewee No: 21, 7-15 October 2018, Tunis.

their influence within local community with an extensive social campaign. As was their target, their activities flourished first within the local people due to their aids, health services, and education programs especially in Benghazi. They especially proved their influence by webbing local organizations that helped them gain a powerful support. The most attractive and successful one was their anti-drug campaign conducted as a joint social program with the Rehab Clinic at the Psychiatric Hospital of Benghazi, the Ahli Club, the Libya Company, and the Technical Company.¹¹⁸

With the effort of more indoctrination, humanitarian aids, and municipal works, Ansar al-Sharia tried to get society's support, and managed to get into Benghazi. Later, the organization established groups with groups in Derna and Benghazi such as the Shura Council of Mujahedeen in Derna and the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries to fight against Haftar forces.

It tried to win the favor of society by municipal activities and humanitarian aids. Apart from these activities, it offered material benefits to potential recruits. With gambling, hostage-taking, collecting taxes, bank robberies, and foreign support, the organization became able to make a monthly \$100 payment to its fighters. Hostage-taking and ransom money was a crucial source of Ansar al-Sharia's financial power. While it was asked \$150,000 for Libyan hostages, for foreign hostages millions of dollars were demanded.¹¹⁹

Ansar al-Sharia's recruitment strategy built on an "oppressed" rhetoric and culture. Widely common in Libya, the "oppressed" rhetoric and culture are being used by many armed groups to recruit fighters, and they serve the radicalization process in the country. This rhetoric

¹¹⁸ Aaron Y. Zelin, "The Rise and Decline of Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya," by Aaron Y. Zelin, accessed November 14, 2019, <https://www.hudson.org/research/11197-the-rise-and-decline-of-ansar-al-sharia-in-libya>

¹¹⁹ Lydia Sizer, "Libya's Terrorism Challenge Assessing the Salafi-Jihadi Threat", *Middle East Institute*, October 2017, https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publications/PP1_Sizer_LibyaCT_web_0.pdf.

resonates well especially with people who have experienced physical violence, injustice, torture ,etc. and thus seek revenge. Ansar al-Sharia captured those people, who were especially vulnerable to recruitment, from this particular angle.

Additionally, Ansar al-Sharia operated professionally in social media through al-Raya Media Productions Foundation.¹²⁰ Calling themselves “defenders of Islam,” the organization conducted its propaganda to attract new recruits easily via Facebook, Google Plus, and particularly Twitter.¹²¹ As a result, the number of supporters mounted and diversified in a higher degree due to the popularity acquired in cross-borders. They even managed to train individuals for Syria in the training camps according to a video they posted in 2013.¹²² That is, people from Egypt, Mali, and North Africa were going to Libya to be trained by the Ansar al-Sharia in order to fight against the Assad regime upon their return. The journey for the foreign fighters to and from Libya was even facilitated to some extent by the officials, who were Ansar al-Sharia members, working in the immigration office at the airports. Meanwhile, based on a number of seized passports from Tunisia in the camps, there were fighters from Tunisia, associated with Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia, who came to be trained in the Libyan camps organized by Ansar al-Sharia in Benghazi. According to the Tunisian Center for Research and Studies on Terrorism, with respect to Jihadist-related activism, 70% of Tunisian extremists were trained in Libya.¹²³

¹²⁰ “Al-Qaeda in Libya: A Profile”, *The Library of Congress*, August 2012, <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/aq-libya-loc.pdf>.

¹²¹ “Social Media Jihad: Ansar Al Sharia Libya’s New Twitter Feed,” *FDD’s Long War Journal*, October 30, 2013, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/10/social_media_jihad_ansar_al_sh_1.php

¹²² “New Evidence on Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya Training Camps.” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. Accessed November 15, 2019. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/new-evidence-on-ansar-al-sharia-in-libya-training-camps>.

¹²³ “The Others: Foreign Fighters in Libya,” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, accessed November 15, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-others-foreign-fighters-in-libya-and-the-islamic-state>).

MADKHALI SALAFIS

Madkhali Salafis use a number of different methods in order to expand their social base and increase the number of their members in Libya. Although, some people join the Madkhali Salafis for material benefits, it seems not to be the group's main appeal. The ideology and narrative of Madkhali Salafis seems to be the major element appealing to the people who have a soft spot for religion. In general, Madkhali Salafis target the youth, who are already devout, regularly praying at mosques, and searching to become a "better Muslim." Non-religious youth are not a target for Madkhali Salafis. Also, small social groups are the channels for reaching out to the youth and brainwashing them into becoming Madkhali Salafis.

They [Madkhali Salafis] do not promise material or political benefits [to their potential recruits]. Their appeal is mainly ideological. For example, they pick a youngster who regularly prays at a mosque, and talk to him. They try to convince him [to join]. They also use social circles to reach out to the youth.¹²⁴

The recruitment process is a gradual one. Youth are approached carefully and slowly and they are caught by their sensitivity and respect to piety and religion. Since these youths look for authenticity, Madkhali Salafis emphasize their own authenticity claim in terms of being the "true Muslims."

They [Madkhali Salafis] do not target non-religious youth, but they mostly target devout youth. They approach the youths in a smart way. They involve them gradually in their group. Then they start to indoctrinate them: "This is the way you should grow your beard", "this is what actually the Prophet said", etc. They go to the people [average devout people] and tell them: "We are the ones who perform the actual Islam; we are the actual Muslims."¹²⁵

There are specific reasons why Madkhali Salafis become appealing to certain people and why certain people join them. A low level of

¹²⁴ Interviewee No: 14, 19 October 2018, Ankara.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

education and ignorance seem to be the common characteristics of all who have already joined them. Plus, in Libyan society, there is a great respect towards religion and piety. A religious look on a person makes him/her respectable in the eyes of people. Moreover, an unemployed youngster with no status in society becomes an important person after joining Madkhali Salafis and he is treated like an imam and benefits from all affiliated implications of being an imam.

The youths that join them [Madkhali Salafis] are unschooled. They have either a primary school education or have less. Intellectually speaking, they are ignorant. Also, there is a cultural dimension: when people grow a beard and dress in a certain way, this image becomes appealing to the youth. This image elevates them to an institutional level. Suddenly, those youths with that image acquire the status of an imam. This is appealing to the youth due to the ignorance of the society.¹²⁶

The points of ignorance, lack of critical thinking skills, and the prospect of social status as drivers of recruitment were also expressed by an interviewee as follows:

There are many factors [making recruitment possible] and many sorts of people [among recruits]. First of all, there are the ones who did bad things and sinned in the past, wanting to repent and seem to be devout youth in the eyes of people. They have a high motivation but their religious knowledge is poor. Secondly, there are the ones who are illiterate, they learn only through what they hear. These are unschooled and ignorant in terms of religion. Madkhali Salafis tell them: “You don’t have to think. We give you all knowledge you need.” Lastly, there are the ones who have no idea about what is going on in the world. They are without higher education and they don’t have a sense of the “outer world.” [By joining Madkhali Salafis] those without a social status, gain one after joining.¹²⁷

The feeling of incompetence felt by youth, be it religious or non-religious, is another source of their vulnerability in the face of Madkhali Salafi recruitment. The youth look to compensate their perceived or actual incompetence by becoming a Madkhali Salafi. If they feel that

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Interviewee No: 14, 19 October 2018, Ankara.

they lack religious knowledge, within the group, they make up for their lack of knowledge in a very short time, since the things to be learned in the Madkhali Salafi school are few and simple. Simplicity is the strength of Madkhali Salafis. Furthermore, again due to their ignorance, people in general and certain youth have a respect for the version of Islam in Saudi Arabia, as the birthplace of Islam. Madkhali Salafis' authenticity claim and pretension impresses a lot of people.

Their common characteristic [the ones who join Madkhali Salafis] is the feeling of incompetence. All feel somehow incompetent. Also, there is another issue. The origin of Salafism and Madkhali Salafis is Saudi Arabia. They think, "The true Islam must be in the place where the Prophet was from. The certain version of Islam and the scholars from Saudi Arabia are the right ones."¹²⁸

The large network of radio channels run by Madkhali Salafis is arguably the strongest channel through which they are able to spread their message and narrative. Madkhali Salafi figures and scholars give sermons and propagate their ideology around the clock via these radio channels. Radio broadcasts are listened to in private cars and at homes especially by women.

A great number of people are exposed to the Madkhali Salafi message this way and they either become sympathizers or members of the group. If not, at least they do not realize their dark side, viewing them solely as a religious movement.

They [Madkhali Salafis] broadcast via radio. They run a lot of radio channels.¹²⁹

A former prominent figure of Madkhali Salafis recounted how pilgrimage and Umrah visits of people from around the world were exploited by them in order to reach a large number of people, especially the youth, in order to recruit them.

In the beginning, they [Madkhali Salafis] were active only in Saudi

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Interviewee No: 14, 19 October 2018, Ankara.

Arabia. They were expanding their influence only through the youth who were visiting Saudi Arabia for Umrah. Youth were coming from Libya [as they were from other countries] and we were talking to those youths. We were inviting them to these thoughts, to our cause [Madkhali Salafism].¹³⁰

As mentioned earlier repeatedly, culturally, Libyan people's high respect for piety, religion, and thus religious scholars have been a vulnerability in the face especially of the Madkhali Salafis, who exploited and manipulated the locals' respect and sensitivity for their own cause.

The youth, which came from Libya [to Saudi Arabia], had great respect to us [Madkhali Salafi scholars].¹³¹

Along with the radio channels, other published materials were also used by Madkhali Salafis in order to spread their message and influence and hence recruit greater number of people. Plus, Madkhali Salafis have never faced any financial difficulty since the formation of the group, which kept the wheel of recruitment running.

There was an unlimited support [to Madkhali Salafis] in terms of financial resources [from Saudi Arabia], which were used to publish books, booklets, and other materials in order to spread the message.¹³²

¹³⁰ Interviewee No: 15, 13 November 2018, Ankara.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.



FOUR

A HOLISTIC CVE
STRATEGY FOR LIBYA



THE NEXUS OF STATE FRAGILITY AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Together with the disruptive interventions of international actors and illegal cross-border activities, state fragility and societal fragility are the two structural conditions that make the postrevolutionary Libya vulnerable to violent extremism (VE). The ongoing civil war in the country between the UN-recognized unity government of Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj and Halifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) militia further fueled the tensions between various segments of Libyan society deepening Libya's vulnerability to VE. Ongoing civil war prevented the postrevolutionary transition and normalization process in Libya, but the existing structural problems are at the heart of the civil war. All the push and pull factors (or structural and enabling factors that lead to VE in Libya are somehow related to these three intertwined conditions.¹

We have to differentiate the structural conditions and the situational factors that make Libya more vulnerable to VE. Structural factors are related to the societal structure, which was fragmented during the totalitarian legacy of the Qadhafi era and the lack of functioning gov-

¹ Push factors are the structural causes such as political, ethnic, religious, or tribal marginalization, the absence of justice, a breakdown in governance or the lack of fair access to economic opportunities that may push individuals and groups to radicalization or violent extremism. These drivers may be directly connected to violation of basic human needs such as identity, dignity, sense of fair treatment, and safety/security and physical well-being. "Countering Violent Extremism in Fragile and Conflict Affected States: A Report by Stabilization Unit", Stabilization Unit, UK December 2018, p. 4. Pull factors include the ideological narratives and messages that the VEOs spread to attract new followers. Social and political organizations, groups' activities and routines, and the use of various forms of media may play a role as pull factors.

erning structures. Situational factors are related to the ongoing civil war and the destructive interventions of external actors. A holistic CVE strategy for Libya has to address both structural and situational factors simultaneously, which makes the planning of an effective CVE strategy a more challenging task.

Libyan society needs to improve its capacity and experience to mobilize against the divisive influences in the country. The fragmented social structure of the country along tribal, geographic, and ideological lines allows internal and external actors to form dynamic and shifting alliances with various local actors. Such a complicated and shifting system of alliances further destabilizes Libya. Communities and tribes can adapt themselves to the changing political context and power configurations. This flexibility and survival instinct prevents the formation of a broader and covering identity, and a more holistic vision of interest alignment. Such a holistic and long-term vision should be the basis of strong national sentiment.

The practical Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) strategy should prioritize strengthening the capabilities of the state and increasing the societal resilience at its core. External intervention may have a positive and negative impact on Libya's CVE strategies. Foreign intervention is both the cause and the consequence of state fragility and social fragmentation in the Libyan context. The critical question for the CVE approach that would address Libya's needs is how we can simultaneously achieve the strengthening of state capacity and societal resilience. In other terms, how can we deal with the structural factors, while managing the situational factors at the same time? External actors can play constructive roles only if they contribute to a holistic and a longer-term vision which is agreed by the legitimate representatives of the Libyan people.

In this report, we prioritize the improvement of societal resilience rather than the top-down security-oriented intervention of armed groups and their international sponsors. Destructive interventions of foreign ac-

tors can hardly be maintained in the medium and long term if Libyan society increases its coherence and resilience against such influences. *It is more important to empower the local actors and to improve their capacity to address those challenges.* Turning Libya's local potential and resources into local CVE capacity is the key pillar of a sustainable CVE strategy for Libya. Our comprehensive CVE model aims to generate this potential.

An Ecological Approach to CVE

It is methodologically difficult to propose a causal chain which would tie all the related factors in the three interrelated areas as a sequential or hierarchical order. It is better to adopt an ecologic approach to both understand and to respond to the problem of VE in Libya. In the book titled *The Ecology of Violent Extremism: Perspectives on Peacebuilding and Human Security*, edited by Lisa Schirch, VE is formulated as a complicated system.² Schirch operationalizes an ecological approach as a system-based analysis of the violent environment of a connected set of interrelated parts.³ Interrelationships among humans, the institutions they create, social patterns of relationships, and domestic, regional, and global layers of environments constitute the ecology of violent extremism. There is no predictable "cause" and "effect" chain in the ecological approach. So far, the only factor all our Libya respondents mentioned as the key source of VE in Libya is the destructive intervention of external powers/actors. Lack of societal and political unity is a factor that is mentioned by all our respondents in our field research as the key vulnerability of Libya to VE. The ongoing civil war helps the mobilization of different factions against each other.

The resource-rich country is in the spotlight of regional countries and European powers. Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj and the unity government are struggling against Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA).

² Schirch, L. (ed.). (2018). *The Ecology of Violent Extremism: Perspectives on Peacebuilding and Human Security*. Rowman & Littlefield International.

³ Ibid., p. 5.

France and certain countries in the region sponsor Haftar and his LNA. The recent escalation which was caused by the march of Haftar's LNA to the Libyan capital, Tripoli, helped to mobilize anti-Haftar groups against the forces loyal to Libya's "designated strongman."

Preventing destructive involvement of external actors can only be achieved by strengthening the security sector institutions and reaching a diplomatic deal with the external actors. A consensus or at least a balance between the intervening actors may have the potential to limit the destabilizing efforts of the external actors. So far, the internal and external factors support each other in the direction of the deepening of the instability in Libya. The UN's genuine involvement in the Libyan context, especially among the external powers who have a stake in the Libyan conflict, is a necessity to change the ongoing stalemate. So far, the UN has failed to play the expected constructive role in Libya in dealing with the contextual factors due to the resistance of the regional and global powers that have tried to exploit the unstable situation in Libya. The external actors, including the UN, failed to play constructive roles to stabilize and to deal with the root causes of VE in Libya. Structural factors, addressing the societal fragility and the state fragility, necessitate a long-term and holistic planning which are offered in this report. This report outlines such a holistic CVE strategy based on a peacebuilding approach.

The Spread of VEOs in Fragile States

Fragile states like Libya are suitable grounds for the spread of VEOs such as ISIS, Ansar al-Sharia, and the extremist Madkhali Salafis. According to the *Interim Report from the Task Force on Extremism in the Fragile States* by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), extremist groups have spread to 19 of the 45 countries in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and Sahel regions deepening further the environment of state fragility in those countries.⁴ VEOs either target the fragile

⁴ USIP – United States Institute of Peace (2018) 'Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, Overview' (www.usip.org/programs/task-force-extremism-fragile-states)

states or they emerge more easily in such environments. They prefer to concentrate their activities in environments where there is a lack of security infrastructure and where there are weaknesses in societal cohesion. They specifically target the groups or parts of the society that feel disenfranchised in their local contexts.⁵

VEOs manage to exploit people's grievances and disappointments and mobilize those for their own goals. Some people join such organizations to punish the authorities or other hostile groups in their countries. Others join to avoid the threats and external pressures of those organizations. An effective CVE model should focus on both institutional and relational aspects of strengthening the resilience of society and improving the capabilities of the state. Any approach that avoids building stronger political institutions and security apparatus by concentrating on social and cultural cohesion, and economic stability can only bring partial stability to Libya

There are different levels and stages of fragility in many different contexts. The Libyan case looks much more complicated because of the weak institutional legacy of the Qadhafi era. Qadhafi left behind no social, political, and economic institution, no organized collectivity, or civil society. The advantage of the Libyan case is the lack of deep-rooted hostilities within Libyan society that can be traced back to decades or even centuries before. However, due to the geographical spread of the country and tribal and geographical divisions, the sense of collective belonging and collective identity are relatively weak. Tribes in the southwestern parts of the country always had a low level of allegiance to the rest of Libyan society.⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Especially the Tuareg and Tebu tribes were discriminated and disenfranchised during the Qadhafi era which is why they were reluctant to join the NTC. "They claimed that they did not get the enough weapons and food during the revolution and they were not represented in the council." Tempelhof, S. T., & Omar, M. M. (2012). *Stakeholders of Libya's February 17 Revolution*. US Institute of Peace, pp. 9-10.

There are also communication gaps between the eastern and western parts of the country. It was easier for the Qadhafi regime to rule the country under an authoritarian system due to this geographical and cultural fragmentation. These fragmentations and the weak institutional legacy have now turned into some of the most important obstacles to peace and stability in the country.

Civilians and External Actors in CVE

There is no central government that is capable and willing to take the responsibility to coordinate the CVE efforts in entire Libya. Libyan civil society, civilian actors, and NGOs on the local level should be strengthened to take responsibilities to fulfill the tasks that can be part of a CVE strategy. Civilian actors also need to fulfill tasks in the fields of health, education, and humanitarian aid until the functioning state infrastructure starts to operate in Libya.

The international community, including the international organizations, the regional organizations, and the countries in the region also have responsibilities to play more constructive and cooperative roles to help Libyans deal with the problem of VE. Communication and collaboration between the local and national levels, and between national and the international actors are crucial to strengthen the CVE strategy for Libya. So far, the international actors have failed to play constructive roles that serve the interests of the Libyan people as a whole. Halifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army (LNA), which is loyal to Haftar, try to legitimize their military operations and excessive use of force and garner international support with the pretext of fighting against extremism. Claims to struggle against VEOs are instrumentalized for the political objectives of a fighting faction in Libya's civil war. Some international actors try to change the political landscape of Libya by claims of supporting the CVE efforts, but those efforts further fuel the tensions and political confrontation among the Libyan population.

It is crucial to prevent the instrumentalization of CVE claims by external actors who try to justify their interventions to other states. Authoritarian regimes instrumentalize CVE efforts to legitimize themselves in the international area and within their domestic context. VEOs also benefit from the interventions of external actors. VEOs position themselves as the organizations that try to defend their countries against foreign invaders and the invaders' local collaborators. External interventions with the pretext of the fight against terrorism in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia has led to the legitimization of certain VEOs or resistance organizations that positioned themselves as the defenders of their country against the "foreign invaders." Strengthening the internal cohesion of these countries and creating the local capacity to fight against VEOs could have been a slower but a much more genuine and effective strategy to sustain peace and security. Libya is in a similar situation.

External military interventions and the strengthening of certain authoritarian leaders that are supported and funded by external powers to fight against VEOs can make Libya more vulnerable to such VEOs. The existence of resistance organizations, on the other hand, limits the prospects of the central governments to protect and monopolize the means of violence, and obstruct the formation of strong state infrastructure. External interventions in the security domain may bring temporary stability in the short term, but such interventions may eventually lead to grievances and may be manipulated by VEOs. International aid, on the other hand, and institutions that build capacity may have more constructive and sustainable influence. Those institutions can prolong their impact by collaborating and training local partners.

State Strength or Social Resilience?

Extremist messages and narratives may be more pervasive under the conditions of oppressive political environments and contexts where

people's basic needs of security and economic needs are not served, and where people do not feel that they are treated fairly.⁷ Both state-building and improving the efforts to boost societal resilience are important for dealing with the challenge of violent extremism in Libya. Together with the other components of peacebuilding, the CVE approach for Libya should accomplish the aforementioned goals in order to address the political, economic, legal, cultural, and psychological sources of violent extremism.

We should take into account the fact that the tensions in Libya are not sealed from the rest of the region and the weakness of the Libyan state makes it more vulnerable to external interventions. Both regional actors and other international stakeholders play roles in the ongoing confrontations. Some of the international interventions play constructive roles in the sense of contributing to the stability of Libya, but others are further fueling the tensions and deepening the problems in the country. It is, therefore, necessary to regulate both the constructive and distorting interventions of the international stakeholders. There is a need for a broader consensus among the international stakeholders in Libya, which seems very difficult at the moment.

CVE strategies that may be useful and effective in well-established and functioning states, and in democratically governed systems can be unrealistic in the social and political contexts where there is a lack of a functioning and coordinated state apparatus. Individual factors

⁷ Hafez, M., & Mullins, C. (2015). "The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38(11), pp. 961-962; Walter Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism: A Completely Revised and Expanded Study of National and International Political Violence, Based on the Author's Classic, TERRORISM* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), 5-10; Beckett, Ian F.W., *Insurgency in Iraq: An Historical Perspective*, Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, January 2005; Newman, Edward, "Exploring the 'Root Causes' of Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 29, 2006, pp. 749-772.

and the interaction of micro- and meso-level⁸ explanations may be more useful in dealing with the challenges of radicalism and violent extremism in functioning states and democracies. Fragile states like Libya have deeper structural problems that need to be managed and resolved to create an environment conducive to dealing with the complicated sources of extremism. Coordination between the various local, national, and international actors is key to improving the effectiveness of the CVE strategy. Without reducing the fights between the factions that want to take control of the country, it would be difficult to coordinate efforts.

Maintaining a balance between macro and meso levels of intervention is crucial for the sustainability of a CVE strategy that would also address the needs and the fundamental grievances of Libyan society. David Chandler, one of the proponents of the idea of resilience, proposes the resilience approach as opposed to the idea of top-down peacebuilding. Chandler defines resilience as “the capacity to positively or successfully adapt to external problems or threats.”⁹ The

⁸ The relational analysis of a violent organization and radicalization processes systematically examine the interactions between micro (personal), meso (organizational), and macro (broader contextual regarding regional or global) layers of analysis. The meso level focuses on the organizational level dynamics such as recruitment, leadership, political discourses of the VE groups. Realities and the interactions in those three spheres influence each other and the relational approach to the radicalization and VE examines the processes of dynamic interactions between those layers for understanding social movements, extremist groups, and others. For an extended research on relation analyses of social movements, extremist groups, and terrorist groups see Bloom, Mia. 2005. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Columbia University Press; Bosi, Lorenzo, Chares Demetriou, and Stefan Malthaner. 2014. “A Contentious Politics Approach to the Explanation of Radicalization”. In *Dynamics of Political Violence: A Process-Oriented Perspective on Radicalization and the Escalation of Political Conflict*, ed. Lorenzo Bosi, Chares Demetriou, and Stefan Malthaner, 1–23. Farnham, UK: Ashgate; della Porta, Donatella. 1995. *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. della Porta, Donatella. 2008. “Research on Social Movements and Political Violence”. *Qualitative Sociology* 31:221–30; della Porta, Donatella. 2014. “On Violence and Repression: A Relational Approach”. *Government and Opposition* 49 (2): 159–87. Horgan, John. 2008. “From Profiles to Pathways: The Road to Recruitment”. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618 (July); Malthaner, S. (2017). “Processes of Political Violence and the Dynamics of Situational Interaction”. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 11, 1–10.

⁹ Chandler, D. (2012). “Resilience and Human Security: The Post-interventionist Paradigm”, *Security Dialogue*, 43(3), p. 217.

critical point in the idea of resilience is the efforts to develop endogenous capacity.

The key point highlighted here is that resilience increasingly focused on working with and upon the capacities, capabilities, processes, and practices already “to hand” rather than the external provision of policies or programs.¹⁰

Strengthening local response capacity and local practices is the key underpinning of a resilience approach. Increasing community resilience is not an ideological or doctrinal perspective. Community resilience does not contradict with the idea of state-building if the state-building is not done in a security-oriented top-down fashion. Such a perspective neither tries to institutionalize a liberal state-building nor an authoritarian straightjacket to contain the VE actors.

Outlines of a Peacebuilding-Oriented CVE Strategy

The CVE strategy for Libya should concomitantly aim to strengthen state infrastructure and institutions, and increase the resilience of Libyan society against violent extremist organizations. A multifaceted and multilayered CVE approach that is coordinated by the various national and international actors is key to bringing sustainable stability to Libya. The CVE model offered in this study is a combination of nation-building, state-building, and peacebuilding. Strengthening the ties and the sense of collective belonging among Libyan people and combatting against the divisive factors/practices is at the core of the model.

The overall approach should be a bottom-up and inclusive rather than a top-down arrangement that prioritizes security.

The idea of peacebuilding resembles most the approach we prefer as the underlying approach to the CVE strategy we propose for Libya, but there is no common understanding of peacebuilding. There are also se-

¹⁰ Chandler, David. *Peacebuilding: The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1997-2017*. Springer, 2017, p. 166.

rious criticisms towards the idea of peacebuilding in the last decade due to certain challenges experienced in the practical arena which we need to take into account. In the UN documents and practice, the term “peacebuilding” is defined as practical steps to move a conflict-driven context towards the condition of “positive peace,” meaning moving beyond the idea of lack of violence.¹¹ Establishing social, political, economic, cultural, and psychological foundations for sustainable peace holistically is considered as the right path to reach a positive and sustainable peace.

Peacebuilding is a term [that]... defines activities undertaken on the far side of the conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations, something that is more than just the absence of war. Thus, peacebuilding includes but is not limited to reintegrating former combatants into civilian society, strengthening the rule of law (for example, through training and restructuring of local police, and judicial and penal reform); improving respect for human rights through the monitoring, education and investigation of past and existing abuses; providing technical assistance for democratic development (including electoral assistance and support for free media); and promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques.¹²

Peacebuilding frameworks include a range of tasks related to institution building, capacity building, and improving intersocietal engagements. Due to mistakes/failures in the last 20 years in relation to its practice, the idea of peacebuilding is questioned in academic literature and by a circle of practitioners.¹³ Especially the idea of liberal peacebuilding which emphasizes liberal institutions, civil society, press freedom, checks and balances, human rights, the rule of law, and efficient market economy is presented as an ideal model for con-

¹¹ United Nations (2000b) *Brahimi Report, Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, United Nations General Assembly Security Council, 21 August. New York: United Nations.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 3. For alternative definitions on peacebuilding see Michael Barnett, Hunjoon Kim, Madalene O'Donnell and Laura Sitea, “Peacebuilding: What’s in a Name?” *Global Governance* 13:1 (January-March 2007), pp. 35–58.

¹³ Chandler, *Peacebuilding: The Twenty Years' Crisis*.

flict-driven societies.¹⁴ Critics of the paradigm consider the idea and the practice of liberal peacebuilding as an ideologically-driven missionary agenda to transform non-Western societies.

The idea of liberal peacebuilding is criticized for being unpractical, culturally inappropriate, top-down, Western-centric, ideologically driven, etc.¹⁵ Even in the UN documents and evaluation reports there are criticisms of the idea and practice of mainstream peacebuilding. Critiques of the liberal peacebuilding outline certain recommendations including “more genuine national ownership; greater civil society involvement; better relationships with the main UN bodies and with international financial organizations; more flexibility; stronger regional development; a stronger field identity; more ambition; a more effective communication strategy; improved status; better performance; more empowerment; and a stronger Support Office (par. 174).”¹⁶ These reflections are both important and practical for the improvement of the peacebuilding practice.

Recent mainstream practice and theory in peacebuilding emphasizes the local or “hybrid” forms of peace rather than practices that were planned and executed in international institutions.¹⁷ Roger MacGinty and Oliver Richmond define hybridity in peacebuilding as a condition that occurs contextually as “a constant process of negotiation as mul-

¹⁴ Richmond, Oliver. *A Post-Liberal Peace*. Routledge, 2012; Richmond, Oliver P. *Liberal Peace Transitions: Between Statebuilding and Peacebuilding*. Edinburgh University Press, 2009; Chandler, David. “The Uncritical Critique of ‘Liberal Peace.’” *Review of international studies* 36. S1 (2010): 137-155; Chandler, *Peacebuilding: The Twenty Years’ Crisis*.

¹⁵ Chandler, D. (2010). “The Uncritical Critique of ‘Liberal Peace’”. *Review of international studies*, 36(S1), 137- 155; Paris, R. (2010). “Saving Liberal Peacebuilding”. *Review of international studies*, 36(2), 337-365; Paris and Timothy Sisk (eds.), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁶ Assembly, U. G., & Resolution on the Peace Commission. (2016). Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture. Resolution A/RES/70/262, adopted April 27, New York.

¹⁷ Mac Ginty, R. (2011). *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*; Spriger, Mac Ginty, Roger, and Oliver Richmond. “The Fallacy of Constructing Hybrid Political Orders: A Reappraisal of the Hybrid Turn in Peacebuilding.” *International Peacekeeping*, 23.2 (2016): 219-239.

multiple sources of power in a society compete, coalesce, seep into each other and engage in mimicry, domination or accommodation.”¹⁸ The notion of hybridity moves us from the existing binaries that prevent the formation of more practical approaches towards solutions that can better fit the local context.¹⁹ A significant component of a CVE strategy in fragile states is the governance model. Western governance models that are usually offered in the mainstream intervention models propose top-down designs. A hybrid governance model that is compatible with the contextual realities, and that is flexible can offer an alternative social and political organization.

An alternative to the bottom-up, local peacebuilding approach may be a top-down approach that prioritizes security arrangements. In some cases, security, top-down oriented interventions empowered certain factions, but those figures or groups failed to form inclusive governing models. A strongman or strong factions may eventually lead to the formation of new grievances thwarting the effectiveness CVE strategy.

In Libya, the option of a strongman without a functioning state infrastructure will not help to address the underlying causes behind violent extremism and political fragility. The strongman may be successful in suppressing the opposition groups and may bring some stability with the support of the international actors, but such a formula will increase Libyan society’s vulnerability to violent extremism. The strongman’s international sponsors can inject some financial resources to make local communities feel economically comfortable in the short term, but such a dependency will further close the channels for the local people’s expectations. Since the legitimacy of externally sponsored strongmen will depend on the recognition of the foreign actors, they will further distance themselves from the expectations of the local populations. In time, the strongmen may lose their social and political credibility and run out of

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁹ C. Constantinou, “Aporias of Identity: Bicomunalism, Hybridity and the “Cyprus Problem””, *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol.42, No. 3, 2007, pp. 247–270.

resources leaving behind a system much weaker and much vulnerable than before. Their sponsors may be more demanding after their weakening. If they fail to please their patrons, there are always other strongmen that can fill the gap, but they can only function temporarily.

A top-down state-building approach in Libya that prioritizes the security sector can be effective in the short run, but it may not be effective in addressing the underlying factors and grievances that lead to VE. Such a security-oriented top-down approach may also fail to deal with the underlying structural sources of VE and may fail to serve to long-term peacebuilding goals. A more holistic, inclusive, and gradual approach can be more useful to address the push factors and create an environment of a sustainable peace that will prioritize the strengthening ties between Libyans and emphasize the nation-building²⁰ at the core of state-building²¹ and peacebuilding.²² Andreas Wimmer's operational definition of nation-building is "the extension of political alliances across the terrain of a country (the political-integration aspect); and the emergence of a sense of loyalty to and identification with the institutions of the state, independent of who currently governs (the political-identity aspect)," which is useful in our analysis.²³ Wimmer's approach is a more practical and technical notion of an idea of nation-building but such an approach can be effective in dealing with the problems of fair division

²⁰ Andreas Wimmer practically defines nation-building as political inclusion along ethnic, linguistic, tribal and political lines. Wimmer, A. (2018). "Nation Building: Why Some Countries Come Together While Others Fall Apart", *Survival*, 60(4), 151-164. The provision of certain public goods and services along those lines may also be considered an element of nation building.

²¹ For the relationship of state-building and peacebuilding see Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, eds., *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1-20.

²² As mentioned earlier the peacebuilding approach that is based solely on state-building or the fair division of power based on nation-building and other resources provides a limited prospect for the peacebuilding perspective. The social, psychological, and symbolic aspects as well as the matters of transitional justice are components of a holistic CVE perspective that is compatible with the peacebuilding approach.

²³ Wimmer, "Nation Building: Why Some Countries Come together While Others Fall Apart", pp. 152-153.

of political power and economic resources which may lead to fragmentations and conflicts in any given context. Interest alignments and political alignments along the horizontal lines may be a practical method of nation-building or at least may prevent fragmentations that emerge out of sharing scarce resources. Libyan society, on the other hand, has enough shared values and collective consciousness to form the basis of a strong national sentiment. However, those shared values and consciousness need to be activated by strong narratives and practices.

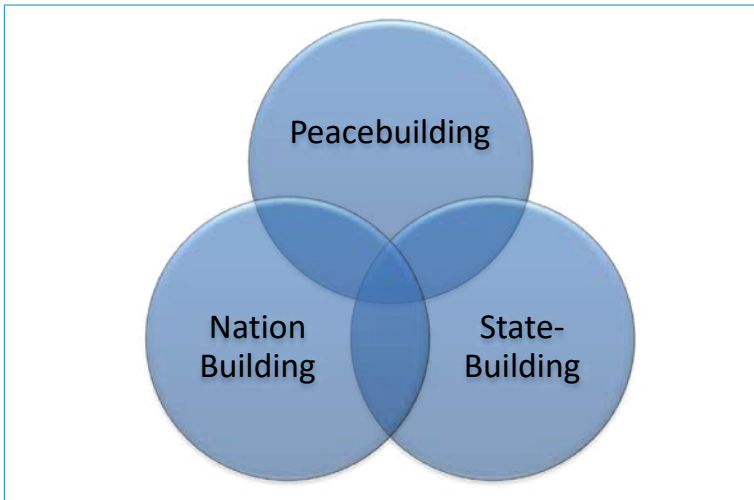
The notion of nation-building does not denote the generation of a new Libyan identity. Rather it denotes the strengthening of the ties between people in the country through institutionalized practices and boosting the sense of collective belonging. Such an approach can boost the trust between people and make them more resilient to external interventions and VE. Strengthening the security sector is an essential component of the CVE strategy for Libya, but an exclusively security-oriented CVE strategy that brings a military/police straightjacket to the country will not reduce the vulnerabilities of the society to VE.

The formula of suppressing VE groups and preventing migration flows solely with the help of a designated strongman rule is a very risky option for Libya and elsewhere in the region. Such a possibility can only work temporarily to suppress the weak and unorganized opposition groups in the short run. Strengthening political, economic and security infrastructure and state capacity; strengthening societal resilience and societal ties; and achieving certain level international cooperation or at least preventing international spoilers should be the elements of a CVE strategy for Libya.

DEFINING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE CVE MODEL: NATION-BUILDING, STATE-BUILDING, AND PEACEBUILDING

The CVE approach that is suitable for Libya should be the combination and intersection of peacebuilding, state-building, and nation-building.

There are significant overlaps between these three approaches. The emphasis, timing, and the sequence in the peacebuilding literature are different than the other approaches. Harmonizing and integrating the tasks of state-building and increasing community resilience with peacebuilding are key principles of an effective and sustainable CVE strategy for Libya. According to Oliver Richmond, state-building approaches offer possibilities of reaching liberal peace, but they prioritize institutional and legal design, and market access.²⁴ State-building approaches are usually less concerned with the normative architecture of peacebuilding.²⁵ In any case, most state-building approaches, either based on security sector arrangements or liberal arrangements, are practically top-down and they usually miss the concerns of the grassroots societies. State-building is an essential component of any CVE strategy in fragile states, but the state-building approach should be compatible with the other elements of peacebuilding and nation-building.



State-building literature has a stronger emphasis on the Security Sector Reform (SSR) and the building of formal Weberian institu-

²⁴ Richmond, Oliver. *A Post-Liberal Peace*, Routledge, 2012, p. 132.

²⁵ *Ibid.*; Chandler, 2010: 15.

tions.²⁶ Design of state-building may either be top-down or in the case of liberal state-building civil society can be market- and democratic institutions-oriented.²⁷ State-building practices in the past have many failures since they were often carried through with international blueprint without engaging with the local social and political realities. The imposition of international norms, institutions, and marketization have often emphasized the pillars of liberal peacebuilding or state-building. Especially liberal peacebuilding or state-building usually turned into an internationally imposed institution-building process which in many cases failed.

Statebuilding is an externalized process focused on the role of external actors, organizations, donors, IFIs, agencies, and INGOs and their key role in building liberal institutions for security, democracy, markets, and creating basic infrastructure. This role rests on international technical expertise and capacity. They also attempt to persuade or force local elites to comply with liberal institutions as they are under construction. It is normally aimed at producing the basic framework of a neoliberal state in a procedural and technocratic sense, and less interested in norms or civil society.²⁸

Failures of the liberal peacebuilding or state-building projects in the past were mainly related to the avoidance of the local realities and local actors. The entire practice of state-building also had an ideological agenda. That agenda was strengthened by arguments of the democratic peace theory, which argued that established democracies do not go to war against each other, and they also produce a more peaceful political system. The entire process of liberal state-building aimed to integrate the post-conflict context to the global economy, providing certain

²⁶ Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: 222A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Charles T. Call and Vanessa Hawkins Wyeth, eds., *Building States to Build Peace* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008); and Francis Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004).

²⁷ Fukuyama, F. (2004). "The Imperative of State-Building". *Journal of democracy*, 15(2), 17-31.

²⁸ Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, p. 136.

mechanisms and institutions that would allow for external checks and balances mechanisms for the post-conflict political context. Mechanisms of external checks and balances did not allow for the formation of a genuine governing mechanism that orients the local actors in both an inclusive and balanced way.

The idea of state-building in the liberal form was predominantly an ideological project, but today, the idea of authoritarian state-building is also an ideological project. State formation may be a more genuine but it is a bloody process where the victorious actor may lay the foundations of the state, or there may be a balance of power after a bloody struggle to end a bloody civil war. Some actors support the idea of betting for a leader, tribe, or a faction that would consolidate power and establish the order for state-building. Such a change of power configuration does not necessarily guarantee an institutional framework or a social and political process that will lead to a peaceful or stable outcome. Instead, it can produce an unbalanced authoritarian rule that suppresses the opposition figures and prevents the formation of political institutions. Authoritarian state-building may further facilitate the formation of VE groups because the actors that are constrained in a social and political domain can choose the path of violence.

In the Libyan case, the authoritarian legacy in the country atomized the society and weakened the social ties between different segments of the society. The idea of nation-building or national identity formation may sound outdated and ring the bell of social engineering in the contemporary era. However, the social ties and sense of collective belonging needs to be strengthened to prevent the social, economic, tribal, and political confrontations and cleavages that may be exploited by VEOs. The basis of state-building should neither be the externally imposed liberal state that can be quite dysfunctional nor the strengthening of dictatorial actors that control the security apparatus in the country. This is probably the paradox of Libyan state-building at the moment. What makes a more inclusive and genuinely local state-build-

ing is the weakness of social ties in the horizontal level and the lack of formal and informal mechanisms that would strengthen those ties. Weak horizontal social ties do not help to form resilient communities against extremism.

The interconnected tasks of state-building and nation-building should be fulfilled simultaneously to create both stronger state infrastructure and a resilient society that would be more resistant to extremist challenges.²⁹ We, therefore, offer an integrated framework as a CVE strategy for Libya. State fragility is also closely linked to societal fragilities. Societal fragilities may be related to ethnic, religious, tribal, political, racial, and other divisions within society, and the lack of overarching ties and mechanisms that would facilitate the formation of a collective sense of belonging. The idea of nation-building in Libya will

²⁹ The concept of resilience is defined as “positive and adaptive outcomes in the presence of some type of risk, stress, adversity, daily life trauma.” [Stewan Weine, (2017), “Resilience and Countering Violent Extremism”, *The Routledge International Handbook of Psychosocial Resilience*, Updesh Kumar (ed.) p. 189] The community-oriented resilience model refers to the mobilization of family, community, organization, and society to increase adaptive capacities to challenge disturbance or adversity. [Weine, 189] “Economic development, social capital, information and communication, and community competence” are listed as the pillars of the community-oriented resilience approach to CVE. [Ibid.] White House’s 2011 report titled *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* emphasized community-based approaches to counter VE in the U.S. as a comprehensive strategy. [White House, *Empowering local partners to prevent violent extremism in the United States*, August 2011] The White House strategy report argued that “CVE efforts are best pursued at the local level, tailored to local dynamics, where local officials continue to build relationships within their communities through established community policing and community outreach mechanisms.” Concrete policy steps for the community oriented-resilience approach in the U.S. case include Establishing platforms throughout the country for including communities that may be targeted by violent extremists for recruitment and radicalization into ongoing federal, state, and local engagement efforts; Supporting that engagement through a task force of senior officials from across the government; Supporting community-led efforts to build resilience to violent extremism; Expanding analysis in depth and relevance and sharing the results with those determined to need it, including governor-appointed homeland security advisors, major cities chiefs, mayors’ offices, and local partners; Training federal, state, tribal, and local government and law enforcement officials on community resilience, CVE, and cultural competence and requiring that training meet rigorous professional standards; and Ensuring local partners, including government officials and community leaders, better understand the threat of violent extremism and how they can work together to prevent it [Cohen, J. D., 2016. “The Next Generation of Government CVE Strategies at Home: Expanding Opportunities for Intervention.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668 (1): 118-128, p. 121]

strengthen the sense of collective identity and sense of “Libyanness” by highlighting certain common values and symbols, and emphasize crosscutting institutions. The policy recommendations that are offered in this report are related to those tasks.

Social, cultural, political, ethnic, and tribal differences may continue to exist within Libyan society; however, despite those differences, Libyan society can live in peace and harmony if the sense of collective interest and collective belonging strengthens. In addition to the strengthening of the security infrastructure and institutional makeup of a state, Libyan society also needs to strengthen social ties, and emphasize the shared collective values and generate new collective narratives that would improve the sense of belonging and the perception of shared collective interests.

Improving Community Resilience

Fragmentations within the societies that experience conflicts impede the process of state-building. State-building is not just a process of building institutions that perform the fundamental functions of the state. Those institutions stand on the consensus of the people who share certain values, norms, and a sense of common interests. VEOs and their efforts to polarize societies make the process of state-building much more complicated. Such groups manage to polarize societies and prevent the formation of overlapping interests. They also try to reduce the credibility of the existing state institutions in the eyes of the people by specifically targeting those institutions and attacking civilians. Extremist groups and their international allies and sponsors are the fundamental beneficiaries of the conditions of fragility. VEOs also manage to deepen the social and identity-related cleavages within societies to sustain their influence. It is crucial to increase community awareness and resilience against the actors that try to polarize and fragment the society. Strengthening the social ties and rebuilding crosscutting relations and institutions within the society may also help to deal with social vulnerabilities.



VEOs and competing political factions exploit the security environments of fragile states. States that fail to provide the basic needs for their people cannot legitimize their existence in the eyes of their people. Political and economic grievances that are generated because of the deep rifts and competitions between the various competing actors who want to be influential in the future of the country also undermine the sense of legitimacy of the state infrastructure. In many such countries, governments are becoming increasingly fragile since the governments lack legitimacy. Failing to provide security, justice, and basic services are important reasons that undermine the legitimacy of political entities. External actors often play destructive roles in undermining the legitimacy of the local political agents by supporting various local actors.

Capacity-building initiatives (including especially equip-and-train approaches to security sector reforms) and massive aid flows designed to win the hearts and minds of people should be properly distributed in Libya to create a sense of collective interest. *The authority, capacity, and legitimacy of states fail if those resources are not distributed properly or are overshadowed due to violent attacks against the civilians.* If aid and

other resources are distributed systematically in an uneven way, this may further polarize the societies and generate new grievances. How those resources and aid are distributed is equally important to their existing in the first place.

The security personnel's capacity and willingness to fight is also crucial for the allegiance of particular groups or regions to the state. If the fragile states fail to protect their people in those attacks or specifically fail to protect certain groups and regions (such as the Iraqi national army's unwillingness to protect Mosul against DAESH), this undermines the legitimacy of the existing state infrastructure. In such cases, the communities either reach a tacit agreement with extremist groups for survival or evacuate their homes for safer places. How the resources are distributed and how the available security infrastructure is activated in the fragile states is crucial for generating legitimacy and trust within societies. There are significant overlaps between the practical steps of state-building and nation-building.

When the state infrastructure weakens, as it did in the Libya case during the civil war, or when states are weak or unable (or unwilling) to deliver essential services, the state itself becomes the prize in a violent interaction among competing social forces. The notion of "fragility has evolved to describe those countries which, through the downward spirals of civil war, state collapse, and social dislocation, face recurrent or repeated cycles of conflict stemming from chronic poverty and inequalities."³⁰ State fragility is not just related to the failure of state institutions but also to the people losing belief and trust in the state. It is not just the state that fails to deliver public goods such as medical and health care, schools and education, railways, harbors, and a transparent and equitable political process. Formulating state-building along these lines highlights a notion of

³⁰ Stewart, F., & Brown, G. (2009). "Fragile States", Center for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, CRISE Working Paper, 51, p. xx)

liberal peace and a liberal state³¹ which may be neither realistic nor possible in Libya's struggle against violent extremism. Instead, an integrated approach should be more practical and compatible with the local context that includes the components of state-building, peace-building, and nation-building without prioritizing a particular ideological outlook.

State-Building

State-building in fragile societies has become a growing concern for the international community owing to the challenges it poses not only to the immediate country but to regional and global stability as well. At the core of this, the awakening has been the ineffectiveness of existing approaches. Consequently, recent efforts have been directed at finding alternative approaches that are effective and flexible enough to account for the peculiarities of each conflict situation with the net results being to improve and enhance the state-society relationship. Fundamentally, according to OECD state-building represents "an endogenous process [developed] to enhance capacity, institutions, and legitimacy of the state-driven by state-society relations primarily a domestic process that involves local actors."³² According to this definition the role of international actors are limited, yet they play increasingly more central roles.

Generally, state-building in fragile states has been spearheaded and directed by international actors such as external develop-

³¹ Chandler, D. (2004). "The Responsibility to Protect? Imposing the 'Liberal Peace'", *International peacekeeping*, 11(1), 59-81.; Mac Ginty, R. (2008). "Indigenous Peace-Making versus the Liberal Peace", *Cooperation and conflict*, 43(2), 139-163; Richmond, O. P. (2006). "The Problem of Peace: Understanding the 'Liberal Peace'", *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6(3), 291-314; Richmond, O. P. (2009). "A Post-Liberal Peace: Eireanism and the Everyday", *Review of international studies*, 35(3), 557-580; Chandler, D. (2010). "The Uncritical Critique of 'Liberal Peace'", *Review of international studies*, 36(S1), 137-155; Richmond, O. P., & Mac Ginty, R. (2015). "Where Now for the Critique of the Liberal Peace?", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50(2), 171-189.

³² OECD Publishing. (2011). *Supporting Statebuilding In Situations of Conflict and Fragility Policy Guidance*. OECD.p.20.

ment partners, and regional and international institutions. Often, state-building “responds to national peace-building agendas, as well as the maintenance of international order at the same time. It is somewhat paradoxical that, for the sake of independence, some independent states ask for external intervention for state-building/peace-building.”³³ Interestingly, despite the awareness that the process must be locally owned, the intervention community continues to impose its architecture of state-building on fragile societies, which is a fundamental barrier to progress. State-building in fragile states has certain paradoxes which can hardly be resolved without a decisive roadmap.³⁴ As discussed above the state-building experience in Libya should be locally owned, but international agencies and actors can contribute to this process with their ideas, resources, and their fair mediation if the local actors have conflicts. Developing and strengthening the capacity and the exercise of the local actors in state-building is one of the fundamental elements of the entire experience and external actors are responsible for the capacity building and training component.

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is practically defined as the set of post-conflict recovery efforts that aim to reach a more manageable peaceful relationship and governing structures that address the root causes of conflicts.³⁵ The peacebuilding approach aims to tackle the causes of conflict without resorting to violence. Peacebuilding efforts include “providing humanitarian relief, protecting human rights,

³³ Shinoda, H. (2018). ‘Peace-Building and State-Building from the Perspective of the Historical Development of International Society’, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 18(1):25-43.

³⁴ Jarstad, A. K. (2008). ‘Dilemmas of War-to-Democracy Transitions: Theories and Concepts’, *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding*, 17-36.

³⁵ United Nations (2010). What Is Peacebuilding? United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPF). Available at <http://www.unpbf.org/application-guidelines/what-is-peacebuilding/#fn-1937-3>

ensuring security, establishing nonviolent modes of resolving conflicts, fostering reconciliation, providing trauma healing services, repatriating refugees and resettling internally displaced persons, supporting broad-based education, and aiding in economic reconstruction.”³⁶

The domain of peacebuilding is large, and there are a wide variety of tasks and steps that need to be coordinated and harmonized according to the specifications of the context. According to Jean-Paul Lederach peacebuilding “encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable, peaceful relationships.”³⁷

The “range of measures reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development.”³⁸ Peacebuilding is not an easy and straightforward process. Akin to conflict situations, peacebuilding is a complicated process involving sometimes overlapping and utterly confusing approaches and strategies, actors, and institutions. This involves the development of “effective national and international rulemaking regimes, dispute resolution mechanisms and cooperative arrangements to meet basic economic, social, cultural and humanitarian needs and to facilitate effective global citizenship.”³⁹

Peacebuilding does not specify any particular form of an intervention model for Libya; it rather gives a broader perspective and set of useful tools that need to be customized according to the available resources. One of the significant constraints of the peacebuilding ap-

³⁶ USIP, p. 40.

³⁷ Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, DC: USIP.

³⁸ United Nations. (2010). *What Is Peacebuilding?* United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPF), 2010.

³⁹ Clements, K. (1997). “Peace Building and Conflict Transformation”, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 4(1), 2.

proach is that it necessitates the involvement of a multiplicity of actors according to their expertise and their resources. Finding all these actors and resources and making them operate all the local and international actors in a coordinated way is often a challenging task. Overall, the process of peacebuilding is a broader goal that aims to transform Libya from its current stage into a peaceful society. Positive changes in social, cultural, political, economic, and psychological domains are all included in the broader agenda of peacebuilding.

Nation-Building

According to S. Dinnen,⁴⁰ “nation-building” refers to an abstract process of developing a shared sense of identity or community among the various groups making up the population of a particular state. It is more concerned with the character of relations between citizens and their state, involving a sociocultural structuring and integration process leading to shared characteristics of identity, values, and goals.⁴¹ Experiences in the nation-building efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan have exposed the complexities of nation-building. Despite the challenges exposed, the experiences also provided an opportunity to guide further efforts both in these societies and beyond.

The most important thing in nation-building is not to achieve a homogeneous society but a society that respects and tolerates differences on the bases of a certain normative/moral consensus and the perception of shared interest. Consensus on the civic institutions and symbols may be the basis of nation-building. Nation-building may also go through a massive scale homogenization and cultural assimilation processes as well. Charles Tilly observed the building blocks of nation-building as “the adoption of state religions, expulsion of minorities, institution of a national language, [and] eventually the organization of mass public

⁴⁰ Dinnen, S. (2006). Nation-Building Concepts Paper, Draft paper for AusAID.

⁴¹ Ibid.

instruction.”⁴² Comprehensive “institutionalization of roles, expectations, and values, and the creation of an infrastructure of social communications—transport, bureaucracy, language, education, the media, political parties, etc. are key to the success of nation-building.”⁴³ The net result is to foster a feeling of common interests and goals among citizens and in that process, inculcate a spirit and feeling of oneness and attachment with the state.⁴⁴

The debates on the origins of the nation demonstrate the differences of opinion on the subject. The perennialist view on the origins of nationalism believes that nations are the basic communities of history, and they are ancient and immemorial.⁴⁵ National sentiments and consciousness are the central elements of historical phenomena and their main explanatory principles according to this view. The modernist approach, which is the predominant one on the subject, does not consider nations immemorial but rather the results of recent historical developments. Planned activities were made possible and necessary by the conditions of nations in the modern era. The instrumentalist approach, on the other hand, believes that “nations are built through techniques such as communications, urbanization, mass education, and political participation.”⁴⁶ It was a question of institutionalization, of getting the necessary norms embodied in appropriate institutions, in order to create good copies of the Western model of the civic participant nation. The variation in nature and definitions of nation-building also reflects

⁴² Tilly, C. (1975). *Reflections on the History of European State-Making BT - The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. In C. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (pp. 3–83). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Tilly, C., Evans, P., Rueschemeyer, D., & Skocpol, T. (1985). *War Making and State Making as Organized Crime. Violence: A Reader*, 35-60; Alesina, A., & Reich, B., (2013). *Nation Building (No. w18839)*, National Bureau of Economic Research.

⁴³ Anthony, and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*. Routledge, 2013, p. 20.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Spencer, P., & Wollman, H. (2002). *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. Sage, p. 27.

⁴⁶ Smith, A. D., & Smith, A. (2013). *Nationalism and modernism*. Routledge. pp: 2-3.

on the practical policies related to nation-building. The instrumentalist notion of nation-building may bring a more practical framework to Libyan realities.

Modernist Project of Nation-Building

The classical modernist nation-building model stressed the political nature of nations and the active role of citizens and leaders in their construction. Modern consensus on nation-building argues that nations may have some historical and cultural origins, but they are predominantly fabricated by nationalist elites. Institutions such as states, education intuitions, social and economic service institutions, economic organizations, and political institutions help facilitate the formation of a national consciousness. For more traditional societies like Libya that have tribal elements, modernist nationalism may not be the ideal model. Having a shared language, a shared a religion, and common cultural ground can facilitate the formation of national attachments. Another significant advantage of Libyan society is that according to the World Bank population estimates almost 80% of Libyans live in urban centers.⁴⁷ The literacy rate, especially among the male population, is very high (96.7%), with an average of 91% (85.6% among women). The high level of urbanization and the high level of literacy are important advantages for the national identity formation in Libya.

In the case of Libya, Libyans have enough cultural, linguistic, and religious common ground, and a sense of shared history to boost their national consciousness and sense of collective belonging. Those ties need to be activated and strengthened through certain institutions and coordinated practices. The real paradox in state-building and nation-building is the question of whether the nations make the state or the states make the nations. If we go to the origins of the modern

⁴⁷ Libya-Urban Population, *Trading Economics*, <https://tradingeconomics.com/libya/urban-population-percent-of-total-wb-data.html>.

European nations after the French Revolution, the trajectory may be from state to nation. Libyan people already have coherence in terms of language, religion, and ethnicity. This coherence may be at the core of the nation-building and the state-building trajectory of Libya. Building on this core, Libya needs to establish institutions of power-sharing and collective-interest formulation.

The situation in Libya allows for a more socially oriented approach as suppressing the civil war by excessive use of force may increase the grievances and fragment and weaken the Libyan society. State-building by force may weaken the nation-building process, leading to further VE. In the Libyan case, the most appropriate form of nation-building practice may be the instrumentalist model. Libyan society already has a shared understanding of history and a notion of a territorial attachment. However, those nominal ties are very weak and vulnerable to external pressures.

The first pillar of Libyan nation-building practice should focus on strengthening the existing social, cultural, and religious ties between the Libyan people. Improving the understanding of the collective past and the historical consciousness through education and formulation and spread of collective narratives is crucial. New history textbooks, collective celebrations, public spectacles, and institutionalization of national days are important to highlight already existing ties among the Libyan people. Emphasis on the national heroes like Omar Mukhtar or the institution of Awqaf, which spreads the moderate Libyan understanding of Islam, is crucial to stimulate a sense of collective belonging and collective consciousness. There should be a consensus among the political and cultural elites of Libya on formulating a practical framework which would determine the elements of nation-building. Such a consensus is not available at the moment, and one of the current project's significant tasks is to formulate such a consensus with workshops.

Intersections of Nation-Building, State-Building, and Peacebuilding

Unlike peacebuilding which has often been held on its own right, state-building and nation-building have commonly been confused and often used interchangeably. According to Scott, “Most theorists agree that a well-functioning state is a requirement of the development of a nation”. Most theorists also argue that state-building is a necessary element of nation-building⁴⁸. Thus, the success of one intervention depends on the success of the others. In the case of Libya, there is already a clearly defined territory and a population that considers itself nominally as Libyan. It is a priority to boost this consciousness, the sense of collective belonging, and shared interest, which would turn the nominal category of Libyans into a group that has national sentiments. Processes of nation-building and state-building can go together and support each other.

In principle terms, state-building is more associated with institutional building and improving the capacity of the state to meet the basic needs/demands of citizens. While nation-building relates more to building a sense of common purpose among citizens through bases such as culture and norms. Institutional practices and state formation, however, may be a fundamental pillar of the nation-building process. Peacebuilding encompasses all the activities above in the broader sense. The most important conclusion is that the three processes also dwell on an effective and productive relationship between the state and society. Without establishing and enhancing this relationship, none of the processes can succeed. That is why the notion of improving community resilience is highlighted in this study.

Fundamental pillars of the comprehensive CVE model for Libya should include the following principles:

⁴⁸ Scott, Z. (2007). Literature review on state-building. *Governance and Social Development*. p. 3.

1. Strengthening social and political cohesion among various segments of Libyan society and improving a sense of identity and collective belonging.
2. Strengthening the state institutions to create a safe environment and provide for the basic needs of (health, education, food, security, justice) the Libyan people.
3. Formation of inclusive political institutions.
4. Improving the capacity and the effectiveness of the civil society sector.
5. Mobilizing civilian actors to contribute efforts that would serve peacebuilding efforts in the local contexts.
6. Countering the extremist religious messages and narratives and promoting the Libyan version of moderate Islam through the religious institutions of Libya.
7. Stimulating the economy and generating jobs by supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and supporting vocational schools to generate economic stability and employment opportunities for the youth.
8. Encouraging international agencies and NGOs to play constructive and cooperative roles for capacity-building.
9. Highlighting certain national symbols as the shared collective narratives to strengthen the sense of collective belonging.
10. Reintegrating the revolutionaries into national institutions and rehabilitating the former combatants and members of VEOs by providing new social, economic, and political prospects.

ACTIONABLE INTERVENTION LIST FOR A CVE MODEL IN LIBYA

1. **Intersections**
 - a. Education reform & peace education
 - b. National dialogue process
 - c. Strengthening religious institutions & promoting moderate religious narratives
2. **Mechanisms for Managing Political/Social Diversity**
 - a. Interest groups, trade/labor unions, chambers
 - b. National human rights commission
 - c. Regulatory institutions
3. **Peacebuilding & Nation-Building**
 - a. Reforming/regulating mass media and information sector
 - b. Reorganizing and strengthening civil society organizations
 - c. National reconciliation process/fact-finding process
 - d. Empowering and including women & youth in CSOs
4. **Nation-Building & State-Building**
 - a. Strengthening Security Sector Institutions (Security Sector Reform, SSR)
 - b. Reforming police & law enforcement (SSR)
 - c. Reforming the legal system
 - d. Strengthening the system of local governance
5. **Peacebuilding Exclusive (Capacity Building)**
 - a. Improving the medical sector
 - b. Promoting SMEs & supporting entrepreneurship

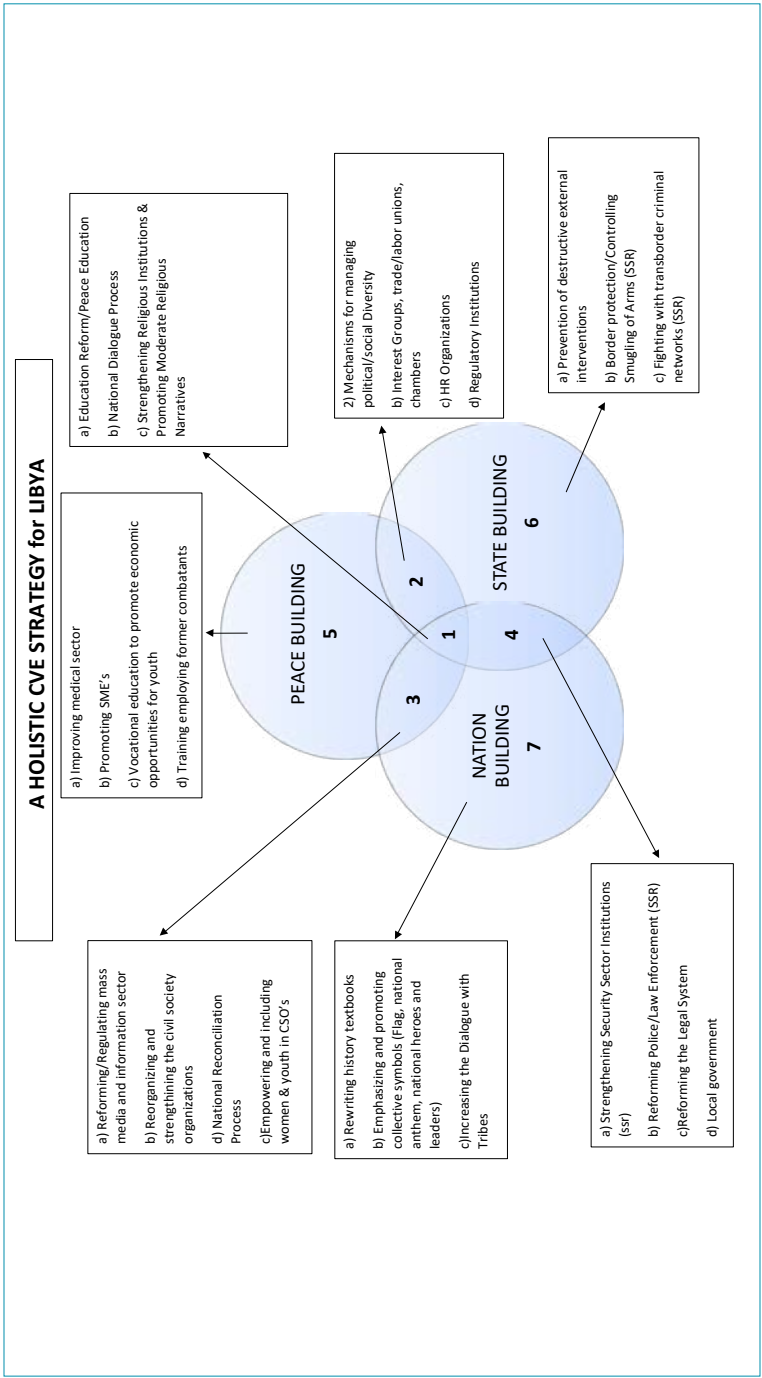
- c. Vocational education to promote economic opportunities for the youth
- d. Retraining and employing former combatants

6. **State-Building Exclusive**

- a. Prevention of destructive external interventions
- b. Border protection/controlling the smuggling of arms (SSR)
- c. Fighting with transborder criminal networks (SSR)

7. **Nation-Building Exclusive**

- a. Rewriting history textbooks
- b. Emphasizing and promoting collective symbols (flag, national anthem, national heroes, and leaders)
- c. Increasing the dialogue and communication with tribes





FIVE

CVE PRACTICE IN SPECIFIC SECTORS



EDUCATION & CVE

Together with security, the rule of law, and health services, education is one of the essential services which is expected to be provided by the capacity of a state in modern contexts. If states cannot provide education or fail to provide education that meets the expectations of ordinary people, then the gap may be filled by alternative actors including civil society, religious communities, ethnic communities/networks, or transnational networks. Education has a stronger potential to raise national consciousness and strengthen or weaken the collective sense of belonging in comparison to health services and the rule of law in a given polity. Education may also be the fundamental ideational cause of VE if it is exploited by extremist organizations. In post-conflict environments, education may have a specific value to facilitate normalization and the rehabilitation process.

There are also certain risks involved in the case of failure to deliver education in conflict environments or fragile states. In conflict environments, if the education opportunities are not provided for a long period, this may affect the normalization process in a negative way and may also constitute the seeds of more complicated new conflicts. The availability of an unemployed young population that lacks education and vocational skills is always a significant risk for VE and civil wars. In the case of fragile states, the taking over of the education by groups that might have an extremist agenda can be as dangerous as the complete lack of education. In each case, the younger generations may be potential candidates for the recruitment of extremist groups. If they lack education and occupational skills, it may be more difficult for them to exit extremist groups. Lack of systematic education can also prevent

the formation of a sense of collective consciousness, which can plant the seeds of the nation-building process. Both the lack of education or the exploitation of education can increase the vulnerability of fragile states against extremism.

The Libyan state that is fragile could not fulfill the necessary reforms in several service areas, including education. By exploiting the political disputes and crises in the country and also thanks to the directions by external actors, VEOs gained ground in various parts of the country.

The fragility in education has become either a pull or a push factor of VE. As a result of the ongoing conflict in Libya, hundreds of schools have been shut down or destroyed by one faction or another. Extremist groups wanted to take over the educational institutions to spread their ideologies and their vision to a broader population.

In an environment where certain power groups partly penetrated the state and where weapons abound, VEOs that served certain interest groups became a source of hope for attaining power. The lack of a well-designed education system, of course, limits the number of viable prospects for youth and leaves them without the critical thinking skills necessary to effectively see through extremist messaging.¹ Students who are not properly educated and equipped with analytical skills are more vulnerable to extremist messages.

Along with certain security problems, since the necessary steps in terms of education were not taken by the political authority and other relevant authorities, VEOs could infiltrate the uncontrollable schools and indoctrinate their ideology. There are some schools in the realm of “unofficial education” and under the administration of the Ministry of Religion and Charity Affairs in Libya. There are no standards in terms of curriculum or an established system, and there are no mechanisms to monitor and evaluate such schools. These schools teach the

¹ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 10, 26 September 2018, Ankara.

Holy Qur'an and other related subjects depending on the availability of teachers. Madkhali Salafis have the freedom to teach their ideology as well as a certain *fiqh* that represents their understanding of Islam at these schools. People send their children to these schools, usually after their official school time to learn the Holy Qur'an. People respect and trust the "sheiks" who teach the Holy Qur'an at these schools, but the former are unaware of the actual features and the agenda of the latter who are mainly Madkhali Salafis and operate without the oversight of the legitimate political authorities.²

Education System & Vocational Training

The lack of a well-institutionalized education system provides yet another window of opportunity for extremist groups to spread their extremist narratives. Even where education in the countryside of Tripoli does exist, it often does not meet the needs of the community. This is valid for other regions of Libya as well. Regardless of whether lack of education in and of itself is a driving factor of extremism, there seems to be general consensus among the participants that education is one of the most important tools to reach young people and therefore can be used to address some of the push and pull factors that provide an opportunity for the recruitment of the violent extremist groups.³ It should certainly be underlined that education is an integral part of state capacity and a CVE strategy. Education is instrumentalized by extremist groups to indoctrinate and radicalize young people. Education should be understood by CVE implementers in Libya as leverage and as a means to deradicalize people.

In this context, while respondents did not view religious understanding throughout the modern history of Libya as a contributing factor to extremism, they did see especially the lack of quality of religious

² Interviewee No: 27, 25 March 2019, Zliten.

³ Interviewee No: 5, 11 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

education as a very significant challenge.⁴ Respondents were highly critical of the corruption of national stakeholders and the expansion of an extremist religious network which is condoning political and identity-based violence in Libya. At the same time, however, some of our respondents complained that extremist ideas are imported to Libya by countries in the region. Those countries sponsored private education institutions that promoted radical ideas.⁵ Families are unaware of the long-term ramifications of schools that are sponsored by the countries referred to above. Having no education is not a better alternative to these schools. Uneducated or undereducated youth are also potential recruits for extremist groups.

Education would play a significant role in constituting a national civil identity based on common values in Libya. A well-founded social and national identity would contract the area of operation of VEOs, which exploits crises. In the Libyan case, education should contribute to both the nation-building process and provide the necessary basic technical skill for the improvement of state capacity. More advanced skills and training can only be provided at the institutes for higher education, but such strong training can only be built based on a strong and credible secondary and high school education.

For Libya, secondary and high school education, religious education, peace education, and conflict resolution skills and vocational training are the four fundamental pillars of a long-term comprehensive CVE strategy. Specific attention should be paid to all four particular areas in addition to forming a national education strategy.

1. Libyan authorities should start recovering the education system from a nationwide perspective and restructure education institutions under the guidance of the Ministry of Education. All the other education institutions

⁴ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

⁵ Interviewee No: 7, 13 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 13, 11 October 2018, Istanbul.

outside of the Ministry of Education should gradually be integrated into the national education system under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

2. Wide-scale teacher training and retraining programs should be promoted and sponsored according to the needs of the time. Teacher training and improvement programs should be supervised by international agencies that have expertise on the subject. PISA evaluation guidelines may be a pillar of the training schemes to make the Libyan education system internationally more competitive.
3. Teachers must be trained to recognize and deal with the potential risks of radicalization and extremism in the school system. Radicalization awareness should be one of the key cornerstones of teacher training programs. Special counseling teachers may be trained to deal with the cases where students engage in the path of radicalization.
4. Teacher training programs should be customized according to local vulnerabilities. Teachers that are equipped to deal with radicalization should be appointed to more vulnerable places facing extremism.
5. Shared national and cultural values should be emphasized and celebrated as part of the curriculum. School textbooks should be revised by expert commissions.
6. The reputation of teaching as a profession should be boosted, and the best practices should be acknowledged province-based and nationally.
7. The education curriculum should be harmonized with internationally credible standards with the supervision of international bodies such as UNICEF.

8. Special programs and policies should be formulated to attract youth to the secondary and high school education in tribal areas. Special dormitories should be built and sponsored to attract students from the tribal areas to secondary education. This would contribute to the process of building a sense of collective identity.
9. The physical conditions of the schools should also be improved to attract students.

PEACE EDUCATION & CONFLICT-RESOLUTION TRAINING

1. Conflict resolution modules could be included in the teacher training curriculum.
2. Peer mediation and dispute-resolution skills can be integral elements of the secondary education curriculum.
3. Civil society organizations that are equipped with a conflict resolution perspective can help integrate extra-curricular and sports activities.
4. Special rehabilitation frameworks should be designed at schools for the children who were exposed to the conducts of VEOs.
5. Libyan authorities should target location-specific CVE programming focusing on populations that have a higher probability of being attracted to violence and especially those with links to violent extremist entities during the military conflict. The areas, especially the areas dominated by DAESH between 2014 and 2016, should be the starting phases for CVE programming. The international cooperation is especially important to develop a CVE pilot program in these areas. Libyan authorities can do this in many ways: through primary

and secondary education, technical and vocational education, and training as a part of employment programs, and skill training as a component in demobilizing and reintegration programs.

6. Civic education and conflict resolution skills, particularly targeting youth, may help counter violent extremism by providing the information and tools necessary to pursue the peaceful resolution of disputes and grievances. Libyan authorities should develop a post-conflict civic education framework. Peace education should be a component of a post-conflict education system. Developing a pilot program with the assistance of international organizations or civil society organizations may help the Libyan government efforts. Such a pilot practice can be extended to the rest of the country.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1. Basic religious education should be part of the education curriculum so that the youth will not fall prey to channels that are not controlled by officials. More advanced religious training should also be provided under the official school system based on demand. There may be deeper cooperation between official religious authorities such as the Ministry of Religion and Charity Affairs and official education authorities for religious education.
2. The following programs could help reconstruct the Libyan education system: Education Global Practice, Social Protection, Jobs and Labor Global Practice as well as the Global Partnership for Education, Multi-Country, and Reintegration Program. The Intergovernmen-

tal Organization, in which Libya is also a party, should also be considered for developing such educational programs. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, for instance, should be integrated to develop education programs to fight extremist ideology.

3. Libyan adults should also receive religious education through the official education channels such as schools and mosques to avoid exposing people to extremist messages via unofficial “schools.”
4. The education system should include courses on Islamic knowledge such as *fiqh* and *aqidah* as priority areas. This would equip the students with the knowledge which would make them immune to extremist messaging by dispossessing the extremists from their purported “authority” over religion.⁶

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Vocational schools are also crucial to provide skilled employees for the labor market. To sustain the needed skills for the rebuilding and development of post-conflict Libya, these should be a systematic plan to establish vocational schools. Vocational training should aim at equipping participants with the right technical abilities to become employable in the job market. The necessary technical abilities could be conveyed at specialized learning centers both in Libya and abroad. These learning centers can provide the participants with both theoretical and practical training through various courses and by imparting vocational skills.

There should also be a mechanism to measure the effectiveness of the delivery of training by a group of consultants and technical advisors.⁷

⁶ Interviewee No: 27, 25 March 2019, Zliten.

⁷ “From Conflict to State Building”, *LPRD Progress Report 2011 to 2015*, p. 22.

1. Qadir Vocational Training Project, which was run under the auspices of LPRD before, should be revitalized or a similar project should be initiated.
2. Strategic sectors (energy, IT, agriculture, and maritime) should be identified, and both vocational and university training should be integrated with those sectors.
3. Special incentive mechanisms should be created for investors that create employment opportunities. Investors should also be encouraged to sponsor vocational education in their areas.
4. The National Investment Office should coordinate and oversee the international investment. The office should also coordinate banking and credit agencies, and identify the areas where newly trained employees are needed.
5. Vocational schools should be coordinated and sponsored by chambers of commerce. International counterparts may guide Libyan chambers.
6. Sectoral coordination meetings should be conducted for designing an investment strategy. For Libya, energy, mining, and maritime, are key sectors that need to be promoted. Agriculture, health, and IT are other strategic sectors that need to be supported for security priorities. Banking/finance and trade also help with the formation of an investment ecosystem. Vocational schools specialized in these sectors should seek partnerships and cooperation with international agencies. The EU, the World Bank, and other countries' chambers and educational institutions can be potential partners in the capacity building of vocational training. Special credit lines can be offered conditionally for the entre-

preneurs who create job opportunities for the graduates of specific vocational schools.

LEGAL SYSTEM & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Lack of a properly functioning justice system and a law enforcement capacity provides opportunities for the emergence of gangs, mafia-style organizations within the official institutions, and violent groups that push citizens towards extremist groups to survive in contexts of uncertainty. In the absence of formal mechanisms of justice and law enforcement, informal mechanisms and actors play broader roles. Traditional loyalties, tribal ties, and tribal protection capacity play more central roles in the context where there is no functioning legal system and law enforcement capacity.

In the postrevolutionary period, especially after 2014, political actors mainly focused on the permanent political crisis and conflicts. Such a crisis-driven political agenda did not allow for taking necessary steps for a radical transformation in terms of a modern legal system by revising or completely transforming the existing one, which was a remnant of Qadhafi's Jamahiriya system. The process of rewriting the constitution did not materialize, either. The legal reforms that were made by the GNA and HR were unable to generate a harmonious picture as they were not made within the framework of a comprehensive legal reform.⁸ Therefore, the Libyan authorities should initiate a new reform process of the current constitutional and law enforcement system not only to combat violent extremist ideology and practice but also to enhance the state capacity and legitimacy. The strengthening of the law enforcement capacity will also reduce the need for intermediary actors. Integrating the legal system into a holistic mechanism is also an essential component of Libya's state-building process.

⁸ Interviewee No: 28, 21 March 2019, Istanbul.

To implement a comprehensive CVE model for Libya, the rule of law interventions should be a fundamental component of the Libyan authorities' efforts seeking to address violent extremism. Extremist groups can only be marginalized and state authority can only be restored if there is a functioning legal system and law enforcement capacity. This should also include an effective and sustainable legal system, which is respectful of fundamental freedoms, civil liberties, and human rights.

The international community and UNSMIL, in particular, have focused on resolving the crisis instead of rebuilding the state in Libya. They embraced a working method that was shaped by the moves of *de facto* actors instead of a basis of law and legitimacy. Since legitimacy was shaped based on power, this increased the radius of action of VEOs. It is the responsibility of legal authorities to maintain their integrity and harmonize their efforts with the relevant political authorities.

Political fragmentations and the non-implementation of international decisions and consensus made different parties question the legitimacy of each other across the country. Rival political, bureaucratic, and security agencies with competing legitimacy claims came to exist. However, the legal system is a fundamental pillar of the fight against VE. The rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants can only be possible with a legal system that functions in a credible and transparent way.

It is not realistic to expect members of VEOs or militia groups to leave their groups and join a reintegration framework, unless there are certain guarantees for their security and prospects. Given their mistrust and fear, they do not trust the state and society in general.⁹ Political actors and international institutions should accept the rule of law in Libya and pave the way for an independent judiciary. Political and security protection measures, which would make the judiciary decide in-

⁹Interviewee No: 28, 21 March 2019, Istanbul.

dependently, should be taken. A functioning legal system will also help build trust between the people, which would deprive VEOs of an element they exploit, especially in recruitment processes. It will also help create a suitable ground for investment and financial predictability.

The crimes that were committed during the revolution and the civil war are another important element of the legal system. Those crimes constitute an obstacle for collective reconciliation and feed the hostilities between the political and social actors. Some of the crimes are of a political nature, and some others are non-political. A specific commission with credibility and international guidance should be formed to investigate the crimes, to establish the facts, and to sort them according to their nature. In addition to the fact-finding mission, there should also be a mechanism of transitional justice which should prioritize the separation of the actors that should be processed by the criminal justice system and the actors that may be reintegrated into the political process. After a political deal, those transitional justice mechanisms can be integrated with a national reconciliation mechanism. A critical issue in the transitional justice system is to create some incentive mechanism for illegal groups or people who committed certain crimes to be integrated to the system in return for their commitment to the new political and legal framework. Such a transitional mechanism may help prevent acts of revenge and strengthen the trust in the new system. Any achievement in the functioning legal system and law enforcement can only be slow and gradual. It is unrealistic to expect a full transformation in the short term.

1. There is a need for a national law tailored to the disarmament of militias or members of VEOs who want to exit the organizations. This law might allow for, at least in the initial phase, possession of a personal weapon when a member leaves a VEO or a militia. As long as former members of VEOs or militia groups do not

amass, keeping a personal weapon might be considered a good/reasonable short-term compromise.¹⁰

2. There is a need for a local governance law which would give elected municipalities in provinces an exclusive budget and encumber them at the same time to solve the problems of resources. This should be a reflection of a wider decentralized approach in the country. In this way, local societies would have a say in issues of development, budget, CSOs, and so forth.¹¹
3. Libyan authorities should scrutinize and adopt, if possible, the international legal framework to curtail the capacity of VEOs across the country.
4. Libyan judicial institutions should strengthen the justice sector by assisting investigators, prosecutors, judges, the defense bar, local authorities, professional institutions, and civil society organizations. Respondents underlined that strong justice institutions, particularly an independent and well-regarded legal profession and judiciary, can be critical to building public confidence in the justice system.¹² During the post-conflict rehabilitation process, all actors in the judicial system should undergo a process of training to be certified as legal authorities under the new system.
5. Libyan authorities should support fair and effective criminal justice to ensure criminal procedural rights for people who engaged in violent activities. Therefore, CVE efforts in the post-conflict period should be built on an effective criminal justice system. Institutions of

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

the judicial system are cornerstones in strengthening the justice sectors to reduce the possibility of political actors using counterterrorism legislation and other criminal justice mechanisms against political opponents.

6. Attorneys should be trained to deal with the people who engaged in VEOs. They should be trained to separate the extremist actors from the sympathizers, and to make clear distinctions to protect the rights of the people who engage in those organizations without being involved in violent acts. It is crucial to deradicalize those individuals. Lawyers should be equipped to deal with such cases.
7. Independent human rights commissions should be established with the assistance of official international human rights organizations. Human rights NGOs should be supported to assist victims of violence and extremism. Also, perpetrators should be provided legal guidance to exit and rehabilitate within the judicial system.
8. Multiple actors should improve the awareness of security institutions and security forces, members of the legal professions, and the public about human rights and other positive rights. Public awareness campaigns through education initiatives, and TV and radio channels should also be developed for a specific audience that is vulnerable to VE.
9. Libyan authorities should also focus on facilitating the documentation of human rights abuses during the conflict period and the Qadhafi era to support advocacy and accountability that can prevent potential human rights abuses. Libyan authorities can also develop a specific human rights education curriculum in the schools.

10. A transitional justice system should be established to sort out the political and non-political crimes that were committed during the revolution and the civil war.
11. Political crimes should be engaged separately, and should be dealt with as the component of a political deal-making process, emphasizing the political reconciliation.
12. For the more personal crimes and crimes related to property, special courts should work within the logic of reconciliation. The courts should allow for an individual appeal. Federal funds may be provided to cover material losses.
13. Local context and culture should be taken into account in the legal system and law enforcement. Localized appeal courts may be trained to deal with locality-specific cases, while not contradicting with the overall logic of the legal system.
14. The legal system should be customized to allow a suitable environment for both domestic and international investment. Trade and investment law should be made compatible with international standards. In the post-revolution period, the necessary legal arrangements for international companies to resume their incomplete projects could not be made. There was also a lack of political will in this respect. This caused a severe stagnation in the Libyan market. This problem was compounded by a liquidity shortage in the market, especially after 2016, which resulted in a heavy economic crisis. Furthermore, a lack of a consensus among the relevant Libyan institutions on the issue of accredita-

tion with regards to international trade deepened the crisis for a while.

15. There should be a court of appeals to offer people the opportunity to claim their rights in case of mischarges, which is quite likely in a highly fragile legal setting.

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY

Civil Society Organizations (CSO) play crucial roles during and after conflicts and civil wars. CSOs are in the form of formal institutions and, in other cases, they function more like informal networks. CSOs are crucial in spreading messages to society and legitimizing the peace-related steps. CSOs play a significant role in peace processes, and they play increasing roles in CVE and deradicalization works as well. Many CSOs have social and cultural legitimacy and credibility due to their activities in the local contexts and their direct involvement with civilians. CSOs can more easily engage with the local actors without cultural barriers while their contributions to CVE work is becoming more important. Libya has a rich legacy of CSOs, but those organizations often do the majority of their work informally. This informal form of organization was due to the totalitarian legacy of the Qadhafi era, which tried to prevent any organized collective activity. In the new era, there is a more central role for Libyan CSOs. In addition to the resources, CSOs need to improve their organizational capacities and experience. Especially during the transitional period where there is still no properly functioning state mechanism, these organizations can play more significant roles in facilitating public conversation and dialogue on critical issues, poverty alleviation, and delivery of certain religious services. Their agenda is usually more humanitarian and civilian than political, which may be a significant advantage for their impartial role within the society.

The Sheik Tahir az-Zâwî Foundation is an example. It is the largest and most potent CSO in Libya due to its history, international en-

gements, number of employees, and wide reach across the country. Although they operate in many areas, ranging from humanitarian work to academic publishing, their efforts, especially in the CVE realm, are quite significant. They are one of the few actors who struggle against Madkhali Salafism in Libya, especially in ideational terms. They actively promote moderate the Maliki denomination as an antidote to extremist Madkhalism both through academic and public channels.

Furthermore, they engage the youth in the Libyan Quran Studies Center through activities and competitions that also include celebrations and awards. These activities and religious courses are important with regards to increasing the level of resilience of the youth against the messaging of VEOs. Moreover, they engage in activities to raise awareness against the ills of VE. They attempt to reach out to youths through annual summits in which they emphasize the threats posed by VEOs.¹³

It is always difficult for CSOs to keep a distance from the official authorities and to find resources to maintain their activities at the same time. The CSO sector flourished rapidly after the revolution in 2011. The number of CSOs after the revolution is estimated to be around 5,000, irrespective of their actual impact and activity.¹⁴ Despite Libya's lack of experience in this field due to the legacy of the authoritarian Qadhafi regime, CSOs spread rapidly all over the country after the revolution, not to mention their concentration in Tripoli and also Misrata to a lesser extent.¹⁵ Developments in the civil society field have slowed drastically, and many CSOs have suspended their activities due to the crisis in 2014. The 2014 crisis also affected CSOs' activities, funding, security, and partnerships with governmental authorities. Since mid-2015, the civil society sector has entered a new phase of transition in which the situation of CSOs has started to improve, and

¹³ Interviewee No: 16, 20 December 2018, Ankara.

¹⁴ Interviewee No: 29, 22 March 2019, Istanbul.

¹⁵ Ibid.; Interviewee No: 30, 29 March 2019, Istanbul.

they have slowly resumed their activities. For instance, Sheikh Tahir az-Zâwî Foundation, which is based in Zawiyah with branches across Libya, carries out a wide variety of activities. Likewise, the Misrata-based Dialogue and Discussion Foundation provides training for youth to improve their dialogue and discussion skills. Also, student unions in Tripoli and Misrata are quite active. They organize competitions in themes like culture, debate, and so on.¹⁶ Due to constraints related to the civil war situation and the lack of resources and expertise, the Libyan CSOs have experienced difficulties in functioning at their best.

The specialization of CSOs in Libya is mostly focused on relief work (aid, humanitarian work), awareness activities, health, maintenance, sports, education, orphans, and children in general, and state-building. In other terms, some CSOs focused on the activities to fulfill the fundamental tasks of the state. Many of those organizations tried to substitute the fragile state. Funding of those organizations was another major issue due to the lack of sustainable resources, capacity, and security. As a result, it was difficult to keep those CSOs active. The main obstacles to the successful implementation of activities [in Libya] are the security situation, the lack of funding, low levels of professionalism, low sustainability and the lack of awareness about the nature and role of civil society.

CSOs are sporadic and unsystematic, and they often do not coordinate their activities to maximize their effectiveness.¹⁷ According to Ibrahim Fraihat rather than having a holistic and sustainable long-term strategy many of the CSOs try to respond to problems, and they are rarely proactive in their intervention strategies.¹⁸ Many members of CSOs do not have long-term strategies and resources, and they can hardly maintain the commitment of their employees/volunteers. CSOs

¹⁶ Interviewee No: 29, 22 March 2019, Istanbul.

¹⁷ Fraihat, I. (2016). *Unfinished Revolutions: Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia after the Arab Spring*. Yale University Press, p. 200.

¹⁸ Ibid.

also do not coordinate their activities with other organizations, which may lead to an inefficient allocation of resources and expertise. Donor-driven activities help to flourish the CSO field and create some opportunities, especially for educated people who can find meaningful occupation in those organizations. Similar to the lack of coordination among the CSOs, there is also a lack of coordination among the donors as well. Donor coordination should also be an important component of the longer-term CSO development strategy for Libya.

How CSOs Can Contribute Better to CVE

CSOs can play significant roles in Libya, but these roles may be different in different stages of the peacebuilding planning. The first stage is the stage where the ongoing conflict is still prevalent. The second stage is the immediate aftermath of the possible peace deal. And the third stage may be the stage where safety and the rule of law have been established. Expertise and the skills that are needed in each stage should be prioritized. In the first stage, CSOs can play roles to accommodate the functions of state infrastructure by providing for the public's basic needs. Their expertise may be more focused on humanitarian relief. In the second stage, the CSO structure should be more focused on generating civilian capacity and expertise to address some of the key areas which are not covered as a part of state-building. So, in the second stage, CSOs may contribute to public opinion formation about legislation, and they may be focused on special areas which necessitate expertise such as a chamber of commerce, legal experts, the environment, and so on. Rather than humanitarian relief, they can focus on improving the quality of health, education, investment opportunities, youth services, workers' rights, and policy fields in this second stage. They can strengthen their ties with their international counterparts. At the third stage, they can function as both institutions overseeing the public interest and strengthening the societal ties at the grassroots level. Raising consciousness and active engagement in specific fields may

also affect the functioning of politics by helping opinion formation in certain areas and putting pressure on politicians and public officials.

1. There is a need for civil society capacity assessment. A comprehensive CSO capacity and inventory assessment are needed since the CSO landscape transformed after the initiation of the civil war. CSO capacity assessment is needed to identify the existing capacity, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the existing organizations; and to identify the needs where there are deficiencies, and to prevent redundancies. Such a comprehensive assessment starting from the cities is needed for the better allocation of human resources and financial resources. The CSO assessment should not just be an inventory list but should also evaluate the capacity, focus areas, and vulnerabilities of the organizations. The UN or EU may provide resources and share their expertise in CSO capacity assessment and evaluation.
2. Communication, coordination, and capacity-building mechanisms among the local CSOs should be supported to assure their activities and resources are managed more efficiently.
3. Communication and coordination among the donors should be improved to allocate resources more efficiently.
4. CVE-related tracks within the CSOs should be prioritized, and special funds for such activities should be provided. Functioning CSOs would contribute to nation-building, state-building, and peacebuilding efforts.
5. Issues of fundraising and sustainability in resources should be addressed to allow for long-term planning.
6. The needs of people should be prioritized, and the tasks that are related to these needs should be coordinated in

an objective assessment rather than based on priorities of the donors.

7. Civil society initiatives and organizations supported in Libya should be diversified.¹⁹
8. Some of the knowledge and expertise that is available in other contexts, i.e. regions and countries, should be transferred. Training and capacity building is key to the strengthening of the CSO sector.
9. Special funds may be allocated to train the civil society personnel.
10. In the earlier stages, CSOs can try to be more coordinated with international humanitarian relief agencies and NGOs. Besides providing the basic needs, those CSOs may also benefit from the expertise of international organizations such as tapping the potential in international networks of NGOs, effective fundraising methods, and so on.
11. A UN-guided international platform with a fund at its disposal can mobilize citizens for civil society activities in Libya. It can provide small funds for the people who serve in civil society projects in the country.
12. A specific fund should be allocated to the CSO activities from the national budget. Some of the budgets may be sponsored by international donors. Those budget allocations can be overseen by an independent agency, and successful practices can be extended. An independent audit institution can evaluate those CSOs and submit the report to international donors and the Libyan Parliament.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

13. CSOs that are working in the field of DDR should be supported by international organizations and NGOs both in the forms of funds and know-how. The former also should play a leading role in an incubation framework to breed new CSOs to operate in DDR field. The LPRD has valuable experience in the field of DDR so that it could assume the role of tutoring, mentoring, and funding CSOs for this purpose as well as initiating and maintaining the incubation framework.
14. CSOs should be mentored to focus their activities on fields such as active citizenship programs and international humanitarian law. They may be provided with international guidelines, publications, pamphlets, and digital media resources. Projects may be funded to produce those resources.
15. CSOs should be encouraged to be members of international CSO consortiums such as the Association of Muslim World CSOs in Istanbul for knowledge transfer and capacity-building.
16. There should be legal frameworks to protect the autonomy of CSOs and a special body that can regulate their budget and their compatibility with their mandates.
17. A stability commission can accredit and support local CSOs that are willing to contribute to the mandate of the commission. Accredited institutions may be provided with budget and training programs.

SMEs & PRIVATE SECTOR

Libya is dealing with a problem of severe unemployment –an interviewee put the figure as 70%- 80% for the youth in Libya.²⁰ Although the

²⁰ Interviewee No: 3, 7 September 2018, Ankara.

Qadhafi era did not have a better track record in terms of unemployment, the post-revolution period was unable to bring about a stable environment in which economic activity would thrive and alleviate the issue of unemployment. Even the existing domestic investors stopped their activity and moved their capital out of the country. Such a vicious cycle further deepens the problem of unemployment and weakens the country's economic prospects. Libya is losing both its investors and the accumulated private capital under the uncertain conditions of the civil war. The country also lacks the investment culture and infrastructure due to the history of the semi-socialist system under the Qadhafi rule. It may take years to bring the institutions that would constitute the investment ecosystem and the entrepreneurial culture in the country. The creation of an investment environment and new employment opportunities are also important pillars of peacebuilding.

In the Libyan context, youth unemployment is closely connected to VE as a push factor. Youth are not only deprived of jobs and employment opportunities but also lack other means of self-fulfillment such as taking active parts in politics, in the non-governmental sector, volunteer or civil society activities through which they could express themselves and have prestigious occupations. Hence, generally speaking, young people do not enjoy significant roles in Libyan society. Furthermore, because of the ongoing crisis and no settlement in sight, the future is ambiguous for people, not to mention the youth, which deprives people of hope. This comes as no surprise since Libya is a fragile country hit by prolonged conflict. All points mentioned above constitute a portion of structural/push factors for the emergence of VE in Libya.

Libya can hardly attract foreign investment under the current conditions, and the existing large-scale investors are concerned about losing their capital and investments due to political instability. Under these conditions, there should be some stimuli to keep the Libyan economy moving forward. There are also intrinsic potentials to be

tapped in Libya to roll back the ills of VE. Fluctuations of the value of Libyan currency against other foreign currencies is also another factor that discourages serious investors from creating new businesses in Libya. Actors that take risks can make a fortune out of the volatile environment, which is not competitive, but they cannot have a long-term investment vision.

One of these potentials is the nature of members of VEOs themselves. People who join the VEOs are risk-takers by nature, given the dangers of the fight, armed conflict, and all other affiliated dangers that come with being a member of a VEO. Entrepreneurship in business socially and psychologically suits these people. Channeling their natural potential, i.e. risk-taking, into entrepreneurship would be the most productive –for both themselves and the society– way of disengaging and reintegrating the former members of VEOs.

Libya was a closed economy for a very long time under the Qadhafi rule. It was and still is a rentier state: oil revenues have been and still are the backbone of the Libyan economy. The underdevelopment of the economy can be partly attributed to the lack of a robust notion of private property and private investment in Libya. This was so because during Qadhafi's rule, apart from a home for the family, no private property ownership was allowed. All private properties were owned by the public sector. Thus, 90% of Libya's GDP was generated by public institutions during the Qadhafi rule. Nevertheless, during the rule of King Idris, 80% of Libya's GDP was generated by the private sector. Due to a long history of economic activity without the private sector being the locomotive of it, it would still be hard to consolidate a strong private sector in Libya even without the conflict-hit environment.

There are structural challenges in Libya's investment infrastructure and without addressing those challenges the capital that the large-scale private Libyan investors have outside of their country will not return. International investors may be interested in investing in Libya if the civil war comes to an end and if there is an accountable

government in Tripoli that would provide a basic rule of law. Some risk-takers may benefit from the existing market conditions, but they will not keep their resources within the country. It is also very difficult to imagine a countrywide investment strategy due to the fragmentations within the country.

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) could be a solution. Among the former members of VEOs who were surveyed for possible future careers, 42% selected the option of initiating a new business as opposed to joining the state's security forces. They also agreed to return their weapons in return for choosing this path.²¹ SMEs can create new employment opportunities and provide the basic needs of the country, reducing its dependency on other countries. The manufacturing sector can necessitate a more stable environment, but trade, services, and the agriculture and energy sectors will attract the attention of the SMEs. The most important challenge in the early stages of the SME infrastructure is capital, know-how, and qualified employees. For skilled labor, vocational schools and chambers of commerce can provide training and paid internship opportunities. For the finance and credit sector, larger-scale structural reforms are needed. International agencies, the World Bank, and other international development agencies can collaborate with the Libyan authorities. Overall, sustainable stability is possible without economic reforms and development. Especially in the transition period, SMEs can play significant roles in stimulating economic growth and can create new employment opportunities. The private sector is more risk-averse, but some financial guarantees based on the generation of new employment opportunities could be provided.

1. Young people should be encouraged to engage in SME start-up frameworks more than other options such as

²¹ See Mustafa Elsavezli, "The Stabilizing Role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Programs in Conflict Affected States (The Libyan Case)", Master Thesis, *University of New York, Tirana*, June 2018.

joining the police, gendarmerie, or military forces since the former is much more of a productive prospect both in terms of individual and social contribution.

2. DDR (Disarmament, Disengagement, and Reintegration) should be implemented to former members of VEOs that take the path of SME development in reverse: reintegration should come first, then demobilization should follow, and disarmament should be the last phase. This should be so as former members of VEOs might not be sure of their security even after they leave a VEO and start a business. At least until they establish themselves as businessmen and the conflict environment calms down, they might be resistant to return their weapons.
3. A new law should be legislated in the parliament for disarmament. This new law should allow former members of VEOs to keep their weapons for a foreseeable period after they leave a VEO. Keeping a personal weapon is not a big concern for its implications on security and VE as long as arms and armed people do not band together.
4. Ways of convincing members of VEOs to exit and join the framework of SMEs should be explored. There should be some incentive mechanisms for those who aspire to exit and start a business.
5. There should be a general amnesty for the repentant members of VEOs following a political settlement. After the amnesty, loans should be provided to those who want to exit. This was done in Algeria, and former members of VEOs opened small shops and started businesses thanks to the amnesty and the loans provided to them.

6. Those who join VEOs feel neglected in the first place. They feel like they do not get their share of the country's resources. This forms a reason for many people to join a VEO. A SME framework has the potential to change this. When they engage in active business and make a profit, they feel they are a part of the state and society.
7. Once the wheel of socioeconomic development starts turning, young people would be attracted to the SME framework rather than the conflict. Business would become a way of achieving their goals instead of VEO and conflict.
8. The Libyan state and society should work on developing policies, legislation, and regulations that would foster and support the implementation of SME framework and make the current laws more business-oriented. Starting, maintaining, and financing of businesses would be easier with amenable laws.
9. An ecosystem should be created for SMEs since, without the ecosystem, even the best businesses cannot survive.
10. There should be an exclusive public fund, which would be used for the continuous financing of entrepreneurship.
11. SME framework is a socioeconomic development project at heart, which aims at job creation for the youth. Every municipality should have an SME and entrepreneurship incubator, and this should be stipulated by law.
12. Regional development agencies should be established in Libya. Countries with a successful track and experience should be consulted in this process. Production and

loans should be provided based on the needs of local and comparative advantages of different regions.

13. The ecosystem for SMEs should include incubators. Incubation entails funds, tax exemptions by relevant ministries (ministry of finance, ministry of economy, etc.), registration in chambers and relevant licenses, and so on. Incubators should be located in and supported by organized industrial zones and technology parks. There should be a proper resource allocation to finance the incubators. Financing should also be customized for SMEs since the financing of SMEs is different than financing other businesses.
14. Entrepreneurship education should be a part of the university curriculum; if not all universities, at least some targeted universities should become the bases of this education.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN PEACEBUILDING & CVE EFFORTS

During the Qadhafi dictatorship, Libyan women experienced an oppressive legacy like the men. There was no specific oppression against women, but they suffered their share of the overarching oppression under Qadhafi's rule. Women were active in the protests in response to the Abu Salim Prison Massacre, as the mothers of the victims. They also played a critical role during the 2011 revolution. Libyan women played critical roles by mobilizing against the Qadhafi era murders. Within the Libyan context, women experience similar problems with the youth. They were relatively more isolated from the public sphere during the Qadhafi era. There were no specific discriminatory policies against them, but especially in rural contexts, they were culturally out of the public sphere. Women's position in the

urban contexts was relatively better, as they were more included in public activities. Due to political instability, women also feel further excluded after the revolution.

Unlike the youth, women are faced with much more limited opportunities to become connected with women outside of Libya. They see limited opportunities in the new social media as well. They are also less educated in comparison to men. They may be a source of change and transformation within the Libyan context, but they should be allowed to be more active in the public sphere. Women's involvement in the normalization process may be a constructive step. Especially in the peacebuilding perspective, which we offer in this report, women's role is much more critical and women's involvement at the grassroots-level activities is an essential component of the inclusive CVE strategy. Since women are relatively freer and less discriminated in Libya in comparison to other countries in the region, women's participation in extremist organizations is more limited. Libyan women can play significant roles in the CVE and deradicalization processes.

Within the process of building a broader national dialogue, there should be specific emphasis on the incorporation of youth and women. Those two groups constitute a more general common ground and can play a constructive role for the future of their country. One specific advantage of the youth and women involvement is that they are less politicized, and they were less involved in violence before and after the revolution. Women in Libya are in a better situation to build ties and develop shared interests with other women in and outside of Libya.

Women have broader shared interests as a group. They can be the collective force for the future of rebuilding Libya. It is, therefore, crucial to organize and incorporate these two forces and increase their standing within the society. Empowering women and youth should be a gradual process that needs to be carefully planned and executed. Any movement and social and political organization that avoids these elements will provide insufficient prospects.

1. Including our research, women are the missing aspect of Libyan society. We need to know more about the opinions and expectations of Libyan women. Libyan women are part of the public sphere, they engage in CSO activities, yet we do not have enough information and evidence about the specific views and concerns of Libyan women.
2. Because of the male-dominated nature of Libyan society, women have a more limited role to play at the frontline of the political institutions. This may also be an opportunity because they are not as polarized as the men who were involved in social and political struggles.
3. Especially since the Salafi groups further marginalize women, any message, and social and political actor that appeals to women and includes them in the political processes may have an impact. Women can be an important element in the struggle against extremist Salafi groups and can be more motivated to contribute to struggling against Salafi VEOs.
4. Women are less educated, but they are more exposed to conventional media. Conventional media can be instrumentalized to raise awareness about VEOs and can be used to spread messages to counter such organizations. Some of those projects and programs can be produced by women.
5. Any national dialogue and institutionalization effort should include women. Women should also be trained in their religious field, and the predominance of men in religious education and religious activities should be counterbalanced. There should be specific institu-

tions organized by Awqaf to provide religious training for women.

6. Women and youth are essential elements of peacebuilding and nation-building efforts. Women groups should gather to discuss their recommendations for the national peace process.
7. There should be specific sessions for women to formulate their expectations in the legal process as well as the post-conflict normalization process.
8. There should be training specifically tailored to women to help them improve their professional career and job prospects. Women in the CSO field can participate in special training programs and can benefit from establishing international connections.
9. Leadership training can be provided for women to help them empower themselves in both bureaucratic and political positions.
10. Women's issues and expectations should specifically be included in the peace settlement.
11. There should be women's shelters for women who have lost their husbands and families, and/or are victims of domestic violence. Those women should be trained to contribute more actively to reconstruction programs.
12. In the post-conflict reconciliation phase, there should be specific emphasis on the physical and emotional victimization of women both during and after the Qadhafi era.
13. Libyan women from both sides of the ongoing civil war can form a dialogue forum to reduce tensions and build confidence.

14. International women's NGOs can develop specific ties with Libyan women for empowering Libyan women, and improving their capacity and influence in both the civil society environment and political circles.
15. Women have opportunities to observe the change within the family more closely. Training women to raise their awareness about the extremist messages and radicalization may be a positive step as a preventive measure. They may also play more active roles voluntarily by joining CSOs that are focused on CVE activities.

STRATEGY FOR THE YOUTH

One of the key observations of the problem of violent extremism in Libya is the political environment's inability to accommodate the young populations²² and women proportionally. Despite the revolution that toppled the Qadhafi regime in 2011, there is limited structural change like power redistribution, which would allow for a more inclusive framework for youth and women, especially in government-related offices. The current status quo constitutes a challenge to the normalization of the political system in Libya because both women and the youth have no incentives to engage actively in political processes. This also created a serious economic crisis and an employment issue, which hit the youth. In this setting, they were exposed to ideological calls of militia groups and VEOs, which were rising in power. They could not become immune to VEOs since the necessary steps were not taken in areas such as education, national dialogue, economy, and so forth.

The youth witnessed the existence of a small group, which was benefiting from the crisis, indulging in prosperity while they were experiencing these difficulties. This process radicalized the youth or pushed them towards militia groups. The state's stricken basis of le-

²² Young and unemployed man are often the most vulnerable population to VE in the Libyan context. Therefore the young in most cases correspond to the young (under 25) man.

gitimacy also undermined the official or civilian initiatives that could be taken. Lack of political incentives for youth and women may have different consequences: while young Libyans may be pushed to become part of extremist networks, Libyan women may decide to stay away from the political scene. A more dynamic political inclusion mechanism is needed to attract youth and keep them in the legitimate decision-making mechanisms.

Younger generations are more aware of the changing global social and political environment than their parents. Younger Libyans participate in the channels of communication with the rest of the world. Their awareness of global trends is higher than was the case with earlier generations. It is much more difficult today to isolate the youth from their peers in other parts of the region and the rest of the world. Youth develop their networks of communication. There may be a duality of discourses among the middle-aged revolutionaries and the young Libyans today. They are part of two different global trends. Early Islamist leaders in Libya joined the global jihadi networks in the 1980s and 1990s predominantly through the Afghan war. Many of them circulated the audiotapes of the important jihadi leaders which they obtained during the pilgrimage (hajj) and Umrah. The fatwa of the respected ulama calling Muslims to join Afghani Jihad was very influential on the Libyan youth of the 1980s. Especially the fatwa by the Palestinian Islamist preacher Abdullah Azam's (1941-1989), who is considered the father of global jihad, mobilized Libyans to join the jihad in Afghanistan.²³

Neither the constructive nor the destructive forces have a comprehensive roadmap that would allow for youth to assume active roles in the process of rebuilding the state. Furthermore, the constructive actors neglect and the destructive actors instrumentalize this issue.

²³ Interviewee No: 6, 12 September 2018, Ankara; Interviewee No: 8, 14 September 2018, Istanbul; Interviewee No: 23, 7-15 October 2018, Tunis.

The youth are following the transformations in the world via media, and they are squeezed between the former and their reality. VEOs, in turn, transform the accumulation caused by this sense of being trapped into energy for their agendas. This is a neglected aspect of the Libyan context which needs to be studied in more detail. We do not have a clear idea of how youth think, act, and become organized. This needs to be further examined and elaborated as a part of another project.

Madkhali Salafis and Jihadi groups have established social networks within Libya and widespread mobilization ideology, but the influence of these ideas will be severely limited in the coming years. The Libyans who imagine a democratic change fail to establish a civil society and other networks to influence youth and mobilize them as a dynamic force for the future of their country. Ideology and the symbolism of extremist groups may be more appealing to the youth at the moment, but this appeal may not last long if they cannot transform it into more concrete programs/projects. There is also a lack of job opportunities and education facilities, which makes the youth more vulnerable to extremist networks. As long as the process of establishing political stability is delayed, the youth will be more involved in violence, and they will fail to gain skills and jobs which they need to re-integrate into regular life. Unemployed, uneducated, and ideologically motivated youth are a significant risk for radicalization. One crucial priority after the stabilization is reached should be to formulate comprehensive policies to establish institutions that attract youth. More clear policies need to be introduced on the situation of youth.

The ties between micro-to-meso and meso-to-macro levels are crucial in the radicalization of the youth. How individuals are attracted to small extremist groups and how those groups are connected to the transnational extremist networks is a critical path that needs to be traced within the local context. Highly politicized social environments or the religious gatherings that have ties with extremist organizations are breeding grounds for extremism. The prevention of

extremism with regards to youth can start by creating alternative social and political spaces at the meso level. Organizing and mobilizing the youth for positive objectives with the right incentives needs to be managed by civil society organizations and officials. To make this process more genuine, the youth themselves should take the initiative to generate their spaces. One important complaint of the youth is the lack of social, recreational, and political environments that they find attractive. This is also partially related to the Qadhafi legacy. In Misrata and other cities in western Libya, we had an opportunity to observe youth groups that are engaged in activities of humanitarian aid and youth cultural associations. During the month of Ramadan, those associations organized some religious activities and they regularly invite speakers. It is crucial to increase the number and scope of the youth cultural associations and social and religious gatherings that attract youth and keep them in sterilized social spaces. Connecting those youth networks with their peers in other countries is also a strategy to improve their network and capacity.

1. Unemployed youths that are exposed to the propaganda and the threats of extremist groups are the most vulnerable sector of the population in terms of the VEOs.
2. Training youth and organizing leadership workshops among the influential youth figures that may have a broader impact among their peers; increasing their awareness about VE and equipping them with the necessary resources to deal with the challenges of youth; providing social space and resources for those young leaders may be a long-term strategy.
3. The oppressive policies of the Qadhafi regime marginalized the youth and persecuted religiously oriented networks. There were no incentives for youth to stay in Libya and try to become part of social and political

networks. It is necessary to create a safe and legitimate ground for the organized activities of youth networks. CSOs and political parties can be supported to have special quotas for youth. It is also necessary to generate networks that crosscut across with different segments of Libyan society to create a sense of common belonging. Youth quotas should not be used on ethnic, tribal, or factional bases.

4. In the 1980s and 1990s “Afghan Jihad” and fatwas of the renowned ulama calling Muslim youth to jihad in Afghanistan were a strong message that found resonance in Libya. The oppressive practices of the regime facilitated the turn of the Libyan youth to VEOs. After the revolution, some Libyan youth joined VEOs. However, this time, VEOs gained ground thanks to external actors, to the extent that VEOs could even be claimed to be external productions. Since religious institutions were weakened during the Qadhafi rule, an institutionalized religious framework could not be constituted. The external actors that deepened the Libyan crisis after the revolution provided the logistical support needed for the spread of VE ideas as well as rendering the symbols and scholars of Maliki-Sufi moderate religious tradition as targets. The attack on the Abd al-Salam Asmar Shrine in Zlitan and the destruction of traditional mosques in Tripoli are examples of this. Also, by making black propaganda about certain moderate religious leaders, the way was paved for VE actors. Keeping the moderate religious figures in the legitimate space and motivating them to serve a constructive agenda should be the priority of youth-specific CVE policies.

5. Religious messages and Jihadi messages were circulated through audiotapes that were produced with the sponsorship of a country in the region in the past. Libyan people were exposed to those messages during Hajj and Umrah. Today, similar messages are spread through social media and the conventional media instruments of the Madkhali Salafis and other VEOs. It is crucial to counter the extremist message with the more effective use of social media and conventional media. At the same time, it is important to limit the channels of extremist voices as a part of a media strategy. Youth that is interested in contributing CVE activities may be encouraged to play more active roles in spreading moderate voices through various channels. Special grants can be allocated to the projects that spread moderate voices and encourage youth to participate in constructive work in various areas.
6. Both constructive and destructive actors have limited influence on the youth, albeit extremist groups are relatively more influential. It is important to investigate why and how youth are attracted to those messages.
7. Despite all limitations and propaganda, youth are abler to connect with their peers out of their country, and they are exposed to all sorts of ideas and ideologies via conventional and new media. It may be an effective strategy to facilitate their regular contact and communication with their moderate peers in other countries. International youth programs and youth camps may be instrumentalized to create an environment friendly for youth to generate a broader network and discussion environment. Institutions such as the UN, OIC,

and the EU can provide special funds to support such networks and activities. Local youth NGOs can be sponsored and supported to take more active and regular roles in such activities.

8. As the civil war continues and the normalization process is delayed, the youth stays out of proper training and job opportunities. This constitutes a significant obstacle for the normalization of Libyan youth. A specific youth employment project and training modules can be designed and implemented. The chamber of commerce in cooperation with their international counterparts can play a role in training and internship opportunities both in Libya and outside of the country. Special vocational training programs can be designed to provide education and training in the strategic sectors and areas that Libya needs to focus in the coming years. The Libyan diaspora can play specific roles in such programs. SMEs that employ former combatants and young Libyans can be provided with special funds. There should also be special quotas in the public sector for young Libyans that were combatants during the civil war.
9. Young Libyans who were part of the VEOs can be encouraged to join deradicalization programs by providing employment opportunities after the deradicalization and job training programs. They can be provided with salaries during the training process.
10. Within the framework of deradicalization programs, norms of ethics, respect, moderation, and open-mindedness in society might be stimulated.
11. Civic awareness and civic education could be provided during the deradicalization process.

12. Former members of VEOs should be provided with counseling, social, and psychological therapy during the deradicalization process.
13. Participants in the deradicalization or DDR framework should be allowed to resume their former job positions with their skills and capacity increased. Also, those who were unemployed before joining a VEO should be empowered and recruited in new public and private sector jobs.
14. The participants who enroll in deradicalization and DDR programs should be monitored along the process of reintegration.
15. Special trauma healing projects should be designed to help the youth that was involved in the armed conflict and the ones who were affected directly or indirectly by it.

STRENGTHENING OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS & PROMOTION OF MODERATE RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

Many of our Libyan informants are from the older generation who experienced the oppressive legacy of the Qadhafi era. Their mindset was conditioned according to the experiences of the Qadhafi dictatorship. Most of our informants were young during the 1980s-1990s when Qadhafi had an oppressive policy against religious practices and religious networks of all sorts. Due to the importance of religion in Libyan society, the most significant resistance to Qadhafi came from the limitations he imposed on the religious domain. These limitations left Libyan people undereducated about religion. They were only allowed to memorize the Qur'an. Qadhafi closed the theology faculties in 1976 and banned Islamic education institutions. The weakening of Islamic

education institutions, disabling the Dar al-Iftâ, the transformation of the Awqaf Ministry into Qadhafi's intelligence network hampered a healthy function of religious institutions in Libya. Libyan people started to get Islamic knowledge from outside sources. They brought the ideas and circulated the texts mainly from Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Ignorance about the religion provided more space for the people who wanted to exploit Libyan people's religious sensitivities. After the February Revolution, like all other areas, necessary steps were not taken to restructure the religious institutions. Especially the foreign-sponsored media outlets attempted to tarnish the reputation of Dar al-Iftâ, while the Awqaf Ministry was under the impact of the tension created by the political conflicts. This strengthened the hand of radical religious ideologies, while Madkhali Salafis and other such extremist groups used mosques, CSOs, and waqfs to spread their ideologies.

People gather and socialize around mosques. Mosques are important venues not only for religious purposes but also for social networking. The regime previously tried to control the mosques strictly and constrained the activities around the mosques. They allowed for the spread of ideas that were preached to maintain the loyalties of the people to the regime. Even the Qadhafi regime wanted to use mosques for maintaining loyalty to the regime, but this policy failed. The effects of Qadhafi's malign legacy continued and deepened as a result of which some mosques were taken over by radical religious ideologies. The political authority, in return, could not find a chance to take the necessary steps to fix this problem, especially in the conflict environment that started from May 2014 onwards.

Religion Can Play a Constructive Role in the Future of Libya

Religion is the most important common ground in Libyan society. The vast majority of Libyan society are devout Muslims and they value their religious practices. Mosques are essential venues for religious practices, but after the revolution the Madkhali Salafis controlled most

mosques. Salafis try to use mosques as a venue for themselves to spread their blended religious ideology. Because of the significance of religion for Libyans, mosques and other religious institutions will continue to be essential places for not just religion but also social networking. It is, therefore, crucial to prevent the mosques and other religious institutions from turning into venues for the spread of extremist, oppressive, and polarizing messages. The religious common ground of Libyan society will play an essential role in the nation-building process. Most of our informants mentioned Libya's moderate interpretation and practice of Sunni Islam as the greatest common ground in Libyan society. Therefore, they highlight the common religious grounds as one of the essences of Libyan identity. Madkhali Salafism or other forms of Islamic understandings, including some forms of Islamist ideologies, are considered as foreign influences, and they are considered as obstacles to the common Libyan identity.

According to our informants, external powers instrumentalize some religious groups and institutions to intervene in the internal affairs of the Libyan society. Restrictions on organized religious activities and organized religious practices were the legacy of the Qadhafi era. Qadhafi closed religious education institutions and humiliated Islamic scholars and imams to reach his ideal Libyan society. Qadhafi's approach did not deter the Libyan population from learning and practicing their religion, but the restrictions moved the religious networks underground. Some actors exploited religious training, whereas others wanted to continue religious training. Traditional Sufi lodges and sheiks were restricted. Such a rupture in the traditional religious understanding and practices set the ground for external influences. Many of the publications related to Islamic teachings were imported from a certain country in the region and other Arab countries.

Religious elites can play a very significant roles in reuniting Libyan society with the proper religious messages. The moderate people who try to avoid going to mosques and other religious institutions will be

able to return after the radical voices are silenced. Together with educational institutions, religious institutions can play a very significant role in creating a shared national consciousness and a sense of unity. Education and mosques also have the potential to play a reverse (polarizing) part. As we observed in our interviews, the mosques and religious institutions are organized by extremist groups that are financially sponsored and ideologically informed by foreign actors. Libyans have a minimal influence on those venues, and their tradition of moderate Islam is excluded from those domains.

The institutionalization and establishment of mechanisms to monitor the religious domain is a pillar of state-building. In the institutional domain, two key issues are the organization of religious education and the process of providing and monitoring the religious services, including the administration of mosques. Religious education during the primary and secondary education can be provided within the national school system whereas there should also be religious training for adults from the Awqaf and private foundations that have certification from the religious authorities. The administration of the mosques is a more complicated issue since many of the extremist religious networks were organized along with the mosques. Those informal networks benefit from the lack of religious authority, or they do not give access to alternative teachings at the mosques they control. Regarding the people's general questions about religion, about the issues of marriage, trade, and religious practices, the Ifta organization can play a more active role and establish itself as the main religious authority. They can use conventional media and new media more actively to spread their message and engage with people in order to deal with their questions.

1. Religion is the broadest common ground in Libyan society. It may be the basis of a broader project of identity building or nation-building. The moderate interpretation of Maliki-Sufi tradition had been the parameter at the epicenter of Libyan national identity

and societal existence. Radical ideologies aimed at undermining Libyan national identity by directly targeting the individuals and institutions that represented the Maliki-Sufi tradition (e.g. shrines were attacked and destroyed). Therefore, religious institutions in Libya should be supported by adhering to the Maliki-Sufi tradition.

2. Mosques are not just religious institutions, they have social functions as well. They were more important during the Qadhafi era because they were the only social gathering spaces which is why they were monitored closely by the regime. After the revolution, the extremist groups and Madkhali Salafis tried to control the mosques to spread their influence.
3. Mosques should be administered and their needs should be covered by either the central government or local authorities. Imams and preachers should attend special training to qualify. Imams and other officials of the religious establishments should be certified and appointed by the Awqaf to prevent infiltration of extremist actors.
4. In the local context, special religious training centers can be established and funded by Awqaf for ordinary Libyans who want to gain deeper knowledge and education about religion. The Awqaf should organize special celebration and commemoration activities all over the country for special religious dates and feasts.
5. Voluntary local imams can be recruited as official imams and provided salaries after going through a training and qualification process. Imams and preachers can have yearly training and gathering retreats for discussing sensitive issues to formulate a common opinion.

6. Libya's moderate Islamic tradition is hijacked by more extremist and Madkhali Salafi/ Wahhabi trends. This is predominantly due to Qadhafi's policy to prohibit religious education and discredit the ulama. In collaboration and cooperation with friendly international partners, Libya can develop a full-fledged religious education system based on its traditional moderate orientation. The head of the ulama council should have a prominent public position during official ceremonies.
7. Madkhali Salafis use mosques as their venues of organization and they spread their message through mosques. Their domination of mosques isolates the more moderate groups. Unregistered mosques and religion training centers should either be closed, registered, or monitored by the religious authorities.
8. Religion can play a significant role in the rebuilding of Libya and nation-building as well. It should be highlighted as an element of the nation-building process.
9. Special religious education academies can be formed to attract women to religious training. This would help women pursue careers as preachers and Holy Qur'an tutors, among others.
10. Libyan religious authorities can publish books and have an official TV and radio channel to inform Libyan society about religion.
11. Dar al-Iftâ can use better communication channels with the Libyan people to answer people's questions on their religious practices. Social media and web-based applications can be used actively to expand the outreach of the Dar al-Iftâ and other religious authorities.

12. A special unit can work with prisoners on the spread of moderate religious understanding. Some deradicalized individuals can also be trained to serve in the deradicalization programs. Some deradicalized sheiks can actively engage with communities to inform people about radical Salafi teachings.
13. Most Libyans during the Qadhafi era gained Salafi teachings during Hajj and Umrah. The Libyan Awqaf can organize its special programs for Hajj and Umrah. Certain imams can be certified to coordinate Hajj and Umrah trips.
14. Libyan religious authorities should have a social media strategy and use social media more effectively. Producing clips or informative videos may be a useful strategy to reach a broader community.
15. The number of CSOs that are trying to satisfy the spiritual and social needs of ordinary people through rituals such as mawlid, dhikr, and recitation of the Holy Qur'an should be increased. The existing ones should be encouraged to enlarge the scope of such activities and their reach in society.
16. Libyan religious authorities should revive their cultural/religious rituals and promote certain symbolic episodes to maintain their moderate religious legacy. Religious feasts or special days can be occasions for such ritualistic displays.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN CVE

The media play a very critical role in the spread of all sorts of ideas. There are certain mechanisms and conventional legal procedures to control conventional media such as television channels, radios, news-

papers, and other printed material. It is more difficult to control and audit social media globally. Many extremist groups and promoters of radical ideas use social media as a venue to spread their views. There are emerging conventions to monitor social media, but it is often more difficult to oversee social media. Social media increased the awareness of the younger generations on global and regional trends and developments. Social media also allowed some activists and opinion-makers to reach a broader audience. Most Libyans are becoming more aware of political change, and they are also observing the cultural transformations all over the world through social media. Libyans are very active on Facebook, which is used by all segments of Libyan society. So far, the social media have been utilized as a venue for competing for political positions and further polarization within the Libyan context. However, social media also have the potential to form a more inclusive social dialogue for Libyans. Social media may be utilized for more constructive purposes, as well.

People in the region are now able to create communication forums on social media and TV channels. New ideas and new debates are more easily communicated along those channels; they create new heroes and villains. Traditional media, TV stations, radios, and satellite channels are more important and influential than new media. People still follow television and radio channels. Digital media allows easier access to those traditional communication channels. Extremist ideas and the views of the Madhali Salafis are also more easily communicated with conventional media. They are heavily funded and sponsored by the countries that try to shape the politics of Libya. Most people that we talked to so far mentioned that the active media channels of the Madhali Salafis are funded and sponsored by certain countries in the region. More moderate ideas are more popular, but they get much more limited coverage in conventional media. The debates on social media do not entirely grasp the essence of the social and political reality in the country, but they do demonstrate the main cleavages of Libyan society.

Credible strategic communications and public diplomacy are needed to provide accurate information and systematic messages to deal with the collective challenges of VE. Meta- narratives of VE are produced and spread through a multiplicity of channels, and those messages often find transnational coverage due to the influence of digital media. Intellectual efforts are needed to produce narratives that counter the extremist messages. Those messages can only be formulated by a group of experts that have a deep sense of understanding of Libyan society, including the specific needs of various segments. Actors in the media and communication sector need to be trained to analyze various target audiences in various regions and groups in Libya. Strategic communication should be formulated based on two-way communication between authorities and the public at large rather than one-way messaging, which runs the risk of growing the sense that the public is exposed to certain propaganda. It is the responsibility of the Libyan authorities to understand the social and political trends within the society and to formulate more accurate and systematic policies to address the country's challenges. Academic and policy-relevant research on public perceptions and public sensitivities is needed.

Stories are poorly produced, so people follow more channels and media outlets of other countries in the region.

1. Like many other societies in the MENA region, Libyan society also uses social media very actively. Especially young Libyans and opinion-makers are very active. The majority of people especially use Facebook and YouTube as social media channels. Like in many other areas, the institutionalization of mass communication and the media sector has its problems. There is a wide variety of TV channels and radio stations, but the content of the publications is relatively weak. Journalism education and training are very weak. Stories are pro-

duced without fitting with the standards of journalism in terms of both quality and media ethics.

2. Journalists should be educated according to international standards. Training should be provided both in journalism and media ethics.
3. The media currently are not a platform for dialogue and discussion. Stories and content are portrayed in a one-sided way. The media should be transformed into a platform where diverse views are presented and debated. The media personnel should be trained according to these standards.
4. Some extremist groups use TV to attack and threaten people, including talking about their private lives. This style of broadcasting should be restricted.
5. Covering conflict is a sensitive matter. There should be a more neutral conflict-sensitive coverage of news. There should be special training for covering controversial issues and a manual for more neutral and constructive coverage should be formed by a group of Libyan journalists and other personnel.
6. Web and mobile networks are widely used especially by young adults and middle-aged adults. Digital content and stories about the sources, dynamics, and countering strategies for extremism can be produced and spread via these channels. It would be relatively cheaper to produce and spread such content. Training can be provided to those who would produce such digital content. Software containing training can be included.
7. There should be talk shows and debate shows by credible people about sensitive issues. Especially popular figures still have a significant impact on the Libyan public.

They can spread the message of CVE and deal with the matters of conflict and violence.

8. Traditional media, TV, and radios are still more influential than social media; especially radio networks are widely listened to by older people. Content that would increase the awareness of VE among elders is also important. Such broadcasts could also be turned into a more interactive medium.
9. Social media is used for spreading all sorts of ideas and information. There should be a regulatory body that will collaborate with global media actors to regulate content that spreads extremist messages or polarizes the people.
10. Libyan media companies can form partnerships and collaborate with international bodies that produce professional content. Training and internship programs can be sponsored by international agencies.
11. Social debates and cleavages are actively represented in social media.
12. Any CVE strategy should have components in both conventional media and new social media to reach the target populations.
13. Moderate religious discourse should find more coverage within the mainstream media.
14. An online non-partisan news and analysis portal should be established. This portal would address the need for a source of verified and reliable information on the dynamic situation in Libya in which new actors emerge, and existing actors disappear swiftly. Crises and challenges appear in Libya, and most of the time they are

accompanied by propaganda and disinformation. This portal would inform the public, state institutions, academia, think tanks, and media on the dynamics and situation in Libya. The portal should be run by a well-informed staff and fed by experts and analysts from different backgrounds.

PREVENTING EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS

According to many Libyans, the current vulnerabilities of Libya are related to the interventions of external actors, including the regional powers and the major international actors. The availability of natural resources in Libya, Libya's strategic location in the Mediterranean Sea and Africa, and its lack of capacity to deter external interventions make the country more vulnerable to external interventions. Political fragmentation and the lack of a defense capacity are also factors that make it easy for external actors to intervene in Libya. External intervention makes both the state-building and peace-building more difficult for Libya.

Since the revolution, the revolutionaries are fragmented, and many of our Libyan counterparts believe that the external actors are responsible for Libya's instability today. Since the revolution, certain regional countries have been supporting armed-political groups which are not an integral part of the national government recognized by the United Nations. There are many different forms of external interventions in international relations including direct involvement of the armed forces or intelligence units; supporting and equipping armed groups; spreading influence and agendas through sponsoring various civil society organizations; supporting certain religious networks; sponsoring certain religious personalities and political leaders; and manipulating people in international agencies or regional forums. Almost all forms of foreign intervention that were mentioned above have occurred in Libya, especially after the revolution. Interviewees explicitly stated that

intelligence organizations were involved in the assassinations in 2013 and 2014 and other such developments; and that certain armed groups were supported by certain countries in the region. All VEOs in Libya that were analyzed in detail in the third part of this report and all the propaganda methods they employ became possible thanks to the support of foreign actors. Interviewees enunciated that all sorts of financial support was granted to the Madkhali Salafi religious network and the way was paved for them.

There are some, among the respondents, who believe that violent extremism is not a problem endemic to Libya, but rather an import. Taking the Maliki-Sufi traditional identity of the Libyan society into consideration, the problem of VE was exported to Libya for certain political goals through the interventions mentioned in the previous paragraph. As this report also highlights, according to participants, one of the most significant factors behind the rise and spread of violent extremism across Libya is the interventions of external actors. All the participants in the study, one way or another, claimed that the regional countries became the source of the rise of radical and extremist discourse in Libya, especially since the February 17 revolution in 2011. Participants also argued that the proliferation of militant groups, including the general level of violence and instability, was the result of the failure of the Arab states to ensure adequate security in Libya. Respondents also underlined on many occasions that certain countries in the region have become enmeshed in Libyan society following decades of direct patronage of key leaders and institutions' religious actors.²⁴ These formal and informal patronage networks are now being mobilized to support the Gulf-led intervention through messaging and force, which contributes to the spread of violent discourse and practice in Libya. While recognizing the considerable role played by outside powers in shaping the Libyan political and security climate especially

²⁴ Interviewee No: 4, 11 September 2018, Ankara.

in domestic politics, respondents also noted that local political and armed leaders often try to associate extremism with foreign entities to undermine the central government's capacity.²⁵

Preventing destructive external interventions is crucial to implementing an effective CVE model. More importantly, outside support and stakeholders on the regional and international levels are the cornerstones to implementing any effective CVE program. The regional rivalry also offers opportunities for extremist organizations' mobilization. Therefore, regional approaches and strategies are important in reflecting the transnational nature of violent extremism and countering the extremist wave in Libya. There are two broad categories in external intervention. The first is *direct military and political interventions* into the Libyan political process in the post-2011 era. The regional and international actors have fundamentally different strategies regarding the political and security crisis in Libya. The process and methods of external intervention are a powerful determinant factor behind the impossibility of establishing a comprehensive state capacity, and it is a fact that violent extremism thrives particularly where state authority is weak. More importantly, Libya's worsening political conflict, fueled in part by regional rivalry, has pushed the country to civil war.²⁶ This disastrous outcome provides yet another opening for extremist groups. The second external intervention is the process of outside support to non-state armed radical groups in Libya, which facilitates the consolidation of the non-state radical groups' material and non-material capacity, recruitment, and societal base. These include financial support to radical groups, sponsoring their violent extremist activity, and using them to undermine adversaries.

Preventing external intervention and transforming violent extremism should be incorporated in the programs of external assistance by

²⁵ Interviewee No: 23, 7-15 July 2018, Tunis.

²⁶ See Wolfram Lacher, "Fault Lines of the Revolution: Political Actors, Camps and Conflicts in the New Libya", *SWP Research Paper*, May 2013.

regional and international actors. In this regard, to prevent violent extremism in Libya requires developing a regional and international initiative to correspond properly to the key drivers of violent extremism. This process of regional and international assistance in preventing violent extremism is the cornerstone of understanding how external support, and the range of resources it brings with it, can impact preventing violent extremism in Libya. External interventions are not categorically a push factor that facilitates VE in any given context. Indeed, if properly designed and coordinated according to the local realities and local necessities, such interventions may help to facilitate peacebuilding efforts. Especially international organizations and NGOs play more critical roles in strengthening peacebuilding and state-building efforts. However, if the external actors, including neighboring states or interested states and illegal groups, try to abuse the authority vacuum and to shape the local context according to their interests and priorities, this can disrupt the process of normalization and make it more difficult for local actors to build peace and stability. Despite the UN's constructive efforts to end the civil war and to facilitate countrywide peace and dialogue, destructive interventions by external actors outweighed the constructive efforts. That is why most Libyans consider external interventions as significant obstacles to the peacebuilding and state-building efforts. Many Libyans consider extremism as an import to the country.

Libya's UN-recognized political authority cannot deter the external interventions to the country. They also need the support of external powers, including the UN, to deal with the challenges of the country. This looks like a paradox, but the only way to deal with the external interventions and to deal with the challenge of VEOs is to collaborate with the actors that will help state-building steps. Broader intelligence cooperation is needed to deal with extremist networks and cross-border interventions. The UN-recognized legitimate government and the institutions that are related to the government need

to be supported by international actors to boost the government's capacity to deal with the VEOs and the external supporters of the VEOs that operate within Libya.

Awareness of Violent Extremism. For countering violent extremism, the regional countries should also make a distinction between DAESH, al-Qaeda, and non-Salafi armed groups across Libya. External actors should focus on countering the radical narrative of the Medkhali Salafi religious understanding of the Libyan religious domain, which is the predominant external influence that affects the spread of extremist narratives. Moderate religious leaders and interfaith networks in Libya should be supported and strengthened by regional countries to confront narratives exploiting Libyan religious tradition to promote violence.

To implement a comprehensive CVE program, Libyan authorities may follow the following steps:

1. To implement an effective CVE model, the regional countries should end their military assistance to armed groups and start to initiate economic and political assistance to consolidate CVE efforts which would be initiated by the Libyan government across the country.
2. The UN or the African Union could deploy peacekeeping troops especially in areas where VEOs can easily operate because of the lack of state authority. However, even in the case of these practices, all processes should be undertaken in line and cooperation with the central authority in Tripoli.
3. The African Union, with the mandate of the UN, can support Libyan authorities on border control, especially against smuggling.
4. Libyan intelligence units can be trained to report the activities of illegal international interventions. Such in-

terventions can be reported and published regularly to create awareness and to shame the interveners.

5. Libyan authorities can request from the African Union or the UN to investigate external destructive interventions that lead to the weakening of Libya's state infrastructure.
6. Countries that have a presence and influence in various parts of Libya can be encouraged to come to a common understanding with the facilitation of neutral actors and agencies.
7. Regional countries should be ready to assist on a broad array of functions, including the restructuring of the security institutions, the already diversified Libyan economy, and supporting civil society organizations in Libya.

ESTABLISHING AN INCLUSIVE NATIONAL DIALOGUE PROCESS

Dialogue is the genuine exchange of views, opinions, and emotions of partners in a process to ensure a deeper level of mutual understanding and to reach some change in their relationship.²⁷ The fundamental prerequisite in a dialogue is the sincerity of the actors to share their views, emotions, and frustrations; to be ready to listen to each other; and to be open to change with the information they receive from each other.²⁸ In cases of conflict, parties' views about the conflict are also a significant element of dialogue. Conflicts do not only change the physical environment and context but also change people's mindsets, and those transformed, and fragmented mindsets may turn into the roots of new conflicts. It is, therefore, necessary to transform the mindsets

²⁷ H. H. Saunders, 2001. *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts*. Palgrave MacMillan; Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London: Routledge, 2002).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.19.

and distorted understandings that produce conflict as a part of the holistic peacebuilding process.

Dialogue aims to broaden the horizon of participants in the conflict by allowing the exchange of diverse views on the conflict in an inclusive environment. National dialogue processes are at the epicenter of post-conflict peacebuilding processes.²⁹ Those national dialogue processes not only try to address the challenges, misunderstandings, and differences that lie at the heart of the conflict but also aim to give new opportunities for the parties to reach a deeper understanding of each other, and allow parties to engage in different and more constructive ways. In this way, they can reach a better understanding of each other's subjective positions, feelings, expectations, and frustrations. Such dialogue processes may also help to transform the complicated and conflict-driven state of mind that emerges out of the conflict by allowing parties to express their views in the presence of their formal rivals or adversaries.

Dialogue is not a particularly outcome-driven activity where parties aim to reach a shared outcome on a particular issue at the end of the process. A successful dialogue achieves a transformation in damaged relationships between the parties and paves the way for a relational condition where parties would be willing and able to engage more constructively and handle their differences in a more practical way if possible. If the dialogue cannot achieve the goal of finding common ground in addressing the matters of difference, it can at least try to maintain their differences without damaging each other's fundamental values and interests. Libyan society was made a party to a conflict to which they did not belong, and a lot of its members fell victim to this conflict on Libyan territory which is a stage for the regional power struggle. This created resentment among the segments of society that can be overcome only through a long dialogue process. VEOs and for-

²⁹ Van Lier, F. A. (2017). *National Dialogue in Libya: The National Dialogue Preparatory Commission; Libya Case Study Report*.

eign actors are in an endeavor to deepen the crisis by exploiting these resentments even further. Hence, without any delay, a dialogue process should be initiated. Narratives and images produced and spread through media and social media during the conflict further deepened the divide within Libyan society.

A holistic dialogue achieves a transformation in the cognitive, relational, and substantive areas. Sometimes the transformation at the cognitive level can help to provide a fresh perspective in which parties deal with their relationships in a much more constructive way. Media organs, which have become tools of the regional countries' interventions, depict the processes that are being experienced in a way that is instrumental in the regional scramble rather than reflecting the Libyan reality. For this reason, a comprehensive dialogue process will contribute greatly to the development of national consciousness. Dialogues first of all aim to change the dehumanized perception of the "other" in the conditions of protracted conflicts. Dialogues transform the enemy image into a more neutral image in the situation of conflict, and build trust and a sense of accountability in the relationships. Dialogues try to achieve the conditions so that the partners understand and engage with conflict differently in a less confrontational and less personalized manner. The power asymmetry between the actors, cognitive biases, and lack of trust between the counterparts constitute the biggest challenges to a genuine dialogue.

The logic underpinning national dialogues is to broaden participation in the peace process through inclusion. In other words, national dialogue processes are internal mechanisms developed by local and national peacemakers as instruments for rallying all parties concerned towards the "creation of joint instruments and supporting peace infrastructures."³⁰ This notwithstanding, "the process of national dialogues

³⁰ Siebert, H. (2014). "National Dialogue and Legitimate Change". *Accord -an international review of peace initiatives*, 25, 36-39.

must be convened, owned and driven by its national stakeholders.”³¹ Since the CVE model that is offered in this study is compatible with the idea of an inclusive form of peacebuilding, national dialogue is a significant pillar of such a design.

Resilient societies that can deal with their challenges such as state failure or violent extremism should incorporate an inclusive national dialogue to mitigate hostilities and to reach a common understanding for a future path. An inclusive national dialogue cannot sustain a satisfactory model for an effective CVE strategy, but it can increase the social consensus at society’s grassroots and can help to isolate the extremist groups and ideas from the rest of society. A meaningful reconciliation can also be achieved after a process of dialogue within the Libyan context.

In the Libyan context, a comprehensive national dialogue process should ideally include the components that are mentioned below. Some of them may be unrealistic at the moment due to ongoing tensions, but a gradual expansion of the inclusiveness of the dialogue’s ground is an essential element for its effectiveness.

- Dialogue between various civil society elements in Libya
- Dialogue among the revolutionaries
- Dialogue between revolutionaries and the former regime elements
- Dialogues among the leaders and possible leaders
- Dialogue among the youth
- Dialogue among the secondary parties that influence the course of the Libyan conflict

The need for a dialogue is a much more complicated and comprehensive one for Libya. The Qadhafi regime managed to atomize the Libyan society entirely and did not allow for the formation of any form

³¹ Giessmann, Hans J. (2016) *Embedded Peace. Infrastructures for Peace: Approaches and Lessons Learned*. New York: UNDP, p. 35.

of collective organizations and institutions. The only existing institutions were family and tribes. People could gather in the mosques due to their belief and practices of religion, but they were not allowed to become organized around the mosques before the revolution. Tribes, essential families, journalists, intellectuals, civil society, politicians, business people, opinion leaders, and all segments of society in Libya can play a significant role in both stabilizing and destabilizing the country. They can play both constructive and destructive roles for countering extremism. They should be part of any comprehensive national dialogue process in Libya. There should be incentive mechanisms to allow them to play constructive roles. Most of our informants mentioned that the nature of Libyan people is reconciliatory and open to dialogue. If a domestic negotiation process is initiated by hampering the intervention of external actors, as mentioned above, it might yield momentous consequences.

A single dialogue process that will include all these elements may be unrealistic. There should be parallel dialogue processes that can complement each other. Dialogue aims to accelerate the normalization process in the country. In the Libyan post-revolutionary context, there were various dialogue efforts, many of which were initiated by the local stakeholders. However, the civil war disables all the major dialogue efforts. In January 2014, to achieve a national reconciliation a dialogue process including the Qadhafi regime officials and the officials that took some responsibilities after the civil war was initiated under the framework of the Libyan National Groups for Civil Democracy.³² Talking to the former regime, loyalists and other elements was criticized by many, but the initiative raised some fruitful outcomes.

Significant problems confronting national dialogue processes, among others, relate to who to include or exclude from the process, the ideal number of participants, structure and form, mandate, and goals.

³² Fraihat, I. (2016). *Unfinished Revolutions: Yemen, Libya, and Tunisia after the Arab Spring*.

Although it is widely accepted that participants should be drawn from wide segments of society including Civil Society Organization (CSO), the business community, political parties, and vulnerable groups such as women and the youth, the problem still lingers on how to balance quantity of participation with the quality of participation and subsequent outcome.³³ Nonetheless, a well-prepared dialogue process encompasses a clear mandate and goal, transparency and clear-cut selection criteria and procedure, a well-structured and authority-garbed decision-making mechanism, well-structured and well-organized communication mechanism, availability of technical and other material support, and a carefully selected facilitator who has leverage with wide segments of the society.³⁴

Given that the myriad of issues that engulfed the post-revolutionary Libyan state worsened by the lack of a decision-making authority and supportive institutions, the international community led by the UN sought a way out through dialogue processes with key players in the conflict. The aim was to bridge the fragmented sphere that has worked to allude any progress towards reconciliation and national unity. To be sure, these processes despite their significance could not be translated to the national level owing to a myriad of issues ranging from suspicions, absence of a political will, and absence of supportive material, and institutional and structural resources among others.³⁵ None of our informants were against the idea of a holistic dialogue, and they mentioned the view that their differences can only be sorted out by such an effort. However, there is no unconditional support for such a process, and some actors expressed their unwillingness to engage with some actors. What matters in the process of a national dialogue is

³³ Paffenholz, T., Zachariassen, A., & Helfer, C. (2017). *What Makes or Breaks National Dialogues*.

³⁴ Stigant, S., & Murray, E., (2015), *National Dialogues: A Tool for Conflict Transformation? United States Institute of Peace*.

³⁵ Van Lier, Felix-Anselm, (2017), *National Dialogue in Libya –The National Dialogue Preparatory Commission. Libya Case Study Report*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

the conditions in which it takes place. The other issue is the prioritization of the segments.

Considering the complexities of Libya, it would be difficult to initiate a multi-segment and multilayer dialogue process at the same time. The practical decision of prioritization is another issue that needs to be tackled with the input of the local actors. There is also a lot to be learned from the earlier dialogue efforts in Libya and elsewhere. Each context may have its specificities but there is a lot to be learned from the successes and failures of the earlier initiatives.

Dialogue Efforts in Postrevolutionary Libya

The first attempt at facilitating a national dialogue named the “Dialogue and the Future of Libya: Hopes and Fears in Libya” was spearheaded by the Libyan National Transition Council (NTC) under the auspices of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) immediately after the revolution. This process “culminated in a conference on the Libyan Constitutional Process with over fifty political actors from across Libya. HD held additional rounds of dialogue on the transitional justice process in 2011 and followed up on this work by facilitating dialogue around Libya’s controversial political isolation law, which excludes those associated with the former regime elements from holding key political and administrative positions.”³⁶ This process, despite its initial promise, failed to live up to expectations chiefly due to security concerns and changes in the political space as well as the suspicions among the key players in the process.

Following from this, between July and December 2013, two attempted national dialogue processes were triggered. The first was by the Office of National Dialogue Consulting launched by the president of parliament, Nouri Bou Sahmain, in July 2013.³⁷ Among other things,

³⁶ “The Libyan National Conference Process Final Report”, *Center for Humanitarian Dialogue*, November, 2018. <https://www.hdcentre.org/activities/libya/>

³⁷ Van Lier, (2017), *National Dialogue in Libya –The National Dialogue Preparatory Commission*.

this process was held as a measure to forestall tensions among the population and within the General National Congress (GNC) from disrupting the elections slated for the constitution-drafting assembly. However, rather than forestalling the tensions within the GNC, the process and particularly the appointment of Mohamed Harari (Prime Minister Zaidan's former contender) as its facilitator aggravated tensions within the GNC. This situation, among others, underpinned the National Dialogue Preparatory Commission (NDPC) launched by Prime Minister Zaidan in August 2013 with the tacit support of the United Nations.³⁸ Despite the circumstances surrounding its emergence, the NDPC was the most viable and visible national dialogue process, possibly through the international support it garnered.

The commission comprised 15 members headed by Fadeel Lameen.³⁹ It was backed by a legal framework known as the Presidential Decree No. 477 (2013), and its mandate included the development of a framework for national dialogue and cohesion through broad engagements with Libyan society on issues ranging from security to socioeconomic and sociopolitical concerns. The work of the commission drew on the energies of varied segments of society. The commission had a 73-member Consultative Team and to ensure that the commission complies with the world's best practices, the UN Technical Assistance and USAID were on board to provide the expertise required to facilitate its work.⁴⁰ In the same vein, the commission also drew on the experiences of ongoing national dialogue processes in Tunisia and Yemen. As a model, the commission adopted a six month-process divided into two three-month-long stages.⁴¹ The first three months were dubbed the "Engagement and Participation Tour" which involved

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "The Libyan National dialogue launched", *OPEMAM*, 16 January 2014, <http://www.opemam.org/node/2110>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

engaging locals in a series of discussions meetings and seminars, a process which took place in 42 cities and towns. The second phase was the “Strategic Issues Driven Dialogue” (SIDD) meant to address contentious issues following the first phase.⁴² As a whole, the process was expected to culminate into a national charter which was to sanction the transition of the country based on transitional justice, the rule of law, and effective democratic institutions.

Why Did the Earlier Dialogue Process Fail in Libya?

An important reason behind the failure of the dialogue initiatives for Libya is related to the involvement of external actors and their discouraging the local actors to engage in a dialogue process. External actors sponsor and support the local actors to act in a particular way, and they do not want their local counterparts to engage in constructive dialogue with the other groups. External actors further deepened the rifts and fragmentations within the Libyan context to extend their influence. The failure of the national dialogues in Libya can be understood in *light of poor comprehension of the local dynamics in Libya* orchestrated by the false belief that the 2011 revolution was a united call and that the Qadhafi regime was a common enemy of the people. The overthrow of the regime was enough to propel united fronts for a new beginning. Concurrently, there was a high expectation that the mere fall of Qadhafi and his regime was enough to usher the society into a new dawn of democratic transition without the need for any significant work. However, the external interventions that started in 2012 dragged the Libyans into a conflict period, which was not the result of endemic factors. The negotiation processes fell victim to the crises directed by external interventions. As rightly observed by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) (2016), high expectations breed “social pressure [which] could also push the authorities into rushed de-

⁴² Van Lier, *National Dialogue in Libya –The National Dialogue Preparatory Commission*.

cisions to ease these demands, as demonstrated, for instance, with the passing of the Political Isolation Law in 2013.”⁴³ Those authorities took for granted the level of divisions in the country and the magnitude of the task before them.

Consequently, they failed to see the relevance of National Dialogue initiatives in the larger spectrum of state-building. To be sure, “there is no clear consensus among Libyans on their national identity, which is a point of contention in itself, especially in the absence (partly due to a deliberate policy of the former regime) of any consensual, unifying figures (whether historical, artistic, political, or else), upon which all Libyans could identify.”⁴⁴ As is seen in these evaluations of UNSMIL, the crises in Libya are explained based for the most part on domestic dynamics. UNSMIL avoids stating the fact that the crises created by external interventions deepened social segregation. Since UNSMIL concentrates on domestic symptoms instead of solving the crisis itself by pointing out its external sources, it could not achieve positive results from the dialogue processes.

Secondly, the security debacle of the country continues to derail efforts for effective national dialogues. Due to the state failure to seize control of the coercion within its borders, the strength of the militias has grown over time. Indeed, the state has relied on some of these militias to instill order in some areas. Some militias even draw their salaries from the state, which has little control over their activities.⁴⁵ These groups have been harnessed by political groupings to enhance their political interests.⁴⁶ What emboldens these militias further is the fragmentation at the center of political power and the breakdown of the Libyan economy. This security situation left a dangerous environment

⁴³ UNSMIL, (2016). *Towards National Reconciliation in Libya*. Tunis, 30 November.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ El Fegjery, M. (2014). *Truth and Reconciliation? Transitional Justice in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia*. FRIDE Policy Brief, (177).

⁴⁶ Ibid

which affected the progress of these dialogue processes as some areas became relatively cut off from these processes. The security situation has been exacerbated by the cancerous polarization in the country in virtually all spheres of life. Indeed, the polarization of life even rears its ugly head in the established structure of the national dialogue.

Third, the success of national dialogues depends on the nature of the mandate and the goals it sets out to achieve. Effective and efficient national dialogues have realistic and clear-cut mandates with specific goals and objectives.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, this appears to be the exception in the Libyan case. Here, the mandates of the national dialogues were vague and overly ambitious. This was because the initiatives were not a product of careful planning and consultations.⁴⁸ Indeed, various national dialogue initiatives were heralded by the parties in the Libyan political arena, largely to shore up their legitimacy in the eyes of the population and the international community. Therefore, the initiatives from the very beginning lacked the necessary foundation, such as political consensus, that would enable its persistence beyond the camp that established it.

Finally, poor coordination and synergy between several national dialogue initiatives and other existing peace processes, both local and national, continue to derail progress. This was mostly due to power politics and competition among various power structures and blocs. The international community, which should have led this coordination effort, also failed to deliver. This eroded their image as potent and sincere brokers and submerged them into the internal power politics of the day. Moreover, it elicited allegations from the locals accusing the international community of imposing solutions on them. Indeed, the Libyan Political Agreement proclaimed in Shikhrat at the close of 2015, which formed the foundation of the Government of Nation-

⁴⁷ Papagianni, K. (2014). *National Dialogue Processes in Political Transitions*. EPLO.

⁴⁸ Berghof Foundation (2017), *National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners*, Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

al Accord (GNA), has continuously been saddled with these allegations.⁴⁹ The international community must, therefore, be circumspect in the kind of national dialogue processes they support. This can be achieved by limiting their sphere to the provision of technical expertise and logistics, leaving the main decision-making to the national and local actors.

Social and political fragmentation and lack of societal consensus lie at the roots of the hardships that Libyan society has been experiencing, including VE. DAESH and all other extremist groups managed to spread their influence thanks to the opportunities based on the crisis that was caused by external interventions. Many national and international actors considered a national dialogue as an appropriate path towards national re-integration in Libya. Earlier failures will be taken into account to design better and more effective models in the future.

1. Dialogue processes, the ones that are initiated and designed mainly by Western institutions, put diaspora actors at. Such dialogue processes do not generate the expected results in the field. Diaspora actors may have strong connections with some influential international actors, they may provide important resources to the processes, but they have limited influence on the local context since they are disconnected from the daily realities. They should be considered as catalysts in the process. The dialogue processes should be designed and convened by the local actors. International actors should provide resources, expertise, and help in coordinating the constructive efforts, but they should leave the design to the local actors.
2. *Processes should be designed flexibly* depending on the changes in the local developments, especially the securi-

⁴⁹ Van Lier, *National Dialogue in Libya –The National Dialogue Preparatory Commission*.

ty situation. Due to the changing political and military dynamics in the field, there should be a readiness to modify the processes, and there should be flexible contingency planning

3. Dialogue processes should be designed in a gradual and contingent form. *The main focus should be confidence-building rather than dealing with difficult issues* that may further polarize the participants of the process. It may be easier to start talking about the matters of consensus and matters of common concern to build some rapport among the participants. Utmost priority should be given to confidence-building and forming a shared language among the participants of the processes.
4. So far, various leaders, including the local level leaders, have played a role in further polarizing the communities. There should be dialogue processes that create a certain level of consensus among the leaders. Dialogue among the local leaders, no matter how different they are, should be incorporated into a broader process.
5. There should be coordination among the various international actors that are conducting different dialogue processes. The processes that are designed by different institutions should not impede each other.

INTERAGENCY INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION

Experiences garnered across several attempts to deal with violent extremism in different contexts point to the fact that CVE measures come in intricate and problematic forms, especially in war-torn and fragile states or environments. As important as top-level interventions

stand, there is the need to draw on an integrated interagency approach as well which brings into the fold micro-, meso-, and macro-level intervention mechanisms. There is also a need for further cooperation between the local and international agencies and actors.

Our approach to the CVE in Libya is a community-oriented resilience approach, which implies that there should be a special emphasis on the mobilization of local and grassroots level resources and actors. Such an approach emphasizes the meso mechanism, but the connections of the meso level with the micro and macro levels are the crucial points of inter-agency coordination and harmonization. Besides, various agencies at the meso level may also have contradictory views and resources, which may thwart each other's efficiency.

Actors that are expected to impact the functioning of the formal state institutions may have different orientations due to the lack of proper guidance under the rule of law. Such agencies and actors can be misguided, or they can act sporadically to hinder each other's effectiveness. A top-level central planning apparatus is not expected in a war-torn civil country that experienced a revolution that toppled the Qadhafi dictatorship; however, better coordination and collaboration between various actors at different levels are expected to make CVE work more efficiently. Gaps between the agencies and the competition between institutions, including civil society, are an important obstacle to peacebuilding efforts. Those competitions and even conflicts are also important drivers in the failure of state-building attempts. Civil society and state ties are also a significant pillar of coordination but neither functions properly within the Libyan context. Gaps in the civil society-state ties may be a normal situation in functioning democracies that have an established rule of law. In contexts like Libya, where civil society and the informal networks play roles to accommodate such functions, the ties between the grassroots-level actors and the official actors become much more important.

The ties between the civilian actors and the official stakeholders are one of the pillars of the inter-agency coordination. Another important pillar of the inter-agency coordination and cooperation is the interaction between various state institutions and ministries. Rival factions or groups control different ministries or official institutions and rather than working harmoniously to contribute to the stabilization efforts those agencies and institutions may hinder each other's work. It is, therefore, crucial to find common ground between official institutions, ministries, economic actors, and security agencies. There may also be a competition between different sectors, the security sector including police, military, and intelligence may obstruct the functioning of the other agencies. Those actors may also pull more financial resources under unfair competition. The third problem in the inter-agency cooperation and coordination is the interaction between the local agencies/institutions and the international agencies. Donors and international agencies may prioritize certain local agencies and instruct local agencies with certain mandates. Those mandates and guidance can lead to conflict between the local and external actors, or the local actors can fail to function efficiently due to the mandates that contradict with the local realities. Two-way information exchange and feedback sharing are crucial to ensure the proper functioning and the harmonization of the local and international agencies.

Empowering the actors at the grassroots and strengthening the horizontal ties between local actors is a priority in Libya's interagency integration. However, in most cases

[t]he failure of the international community to localize, contextualize, and build on local understandings of past experiences and existing cultural norms has hindered reconstruction. It has led to the neglect of local participatory structures, the introduction of inappropriate civil society mechanisms, and the creation of new sources of tension, rivalries, and sites of conflict.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Mertus, J. (2004). "Raising Expectations? Civil Society's Influence on Human Rights and US Foreign Policy", *Journal of Human Rights*, 3(1), 21-40.

The complexities of the Libyan society and the complex and complicated nature of violent extremism in itself have engendered interventions from a myriad of agencies and organizations scattered across the country. The challenges and incompetence these arrangements generate have propelled the relevance for the adoption of interagency integration approaches. In other words, the interagency integration approach has been identified as well situated for complex societal problems such as violent extremism which draws on the energies of several agencies despite its relative invisibility in comparison to other approaches of intervention.⁵¹ The approach is relevant in that it enables the utilization of the comparative advantage of different agencies and in the process helps in building the capacity of particularly weaker agencies such as those at the local level. Furthermore, the interagency approach can boost the development of shared language and vocabulary, which facilitates consensus building in terms of common assessment of problems and the development of far-reaching solutions.⁵² In this way, it enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery and improvements in resource mobilization and utilization by preventing wastage through mechanisms such as enhanced accountability and transparency.⁵³

Despite the undisputed value of interagency integration, its practicality is most problematic. At the superficial level, interagency integration preys on the flexibility and the level of adaptability among different players in the resolution chain. This is mostly a difficult task to achieve because it requires changes to some established and entrenched structures, institutions, and practices of organizations which rarely

⁵¹ Cairns, A. (2015). *Multi-agency Information Sharing in the Public Sector* (Doctoral dissertation, © Ashley Sarah Cairns). Retrieved from <https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/17159>

⁵² Greenhouse, P. M. (2013). "Activity Theory: A Framework for Understanding Multi-agency Working and Engaging Service Users in Change". *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 29(4), 404-415.

⁵³ Kirkland, J., & Baron, E. (2015). "Using a Cognitive Analytic Approach to Formulate a Complex Sexual and Violent Offender to Inform Multi-agency Working: Developing a Shared Understanding". *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 21(3), 394-405.

happens at the rate expected. There is also the problem of interoperability across different systems, policy structures, and operating procedures.⁵⁴ This issue is compounded further owing to the difference in stature, expertise, goals, and objectives of different agencies. It must be underscored that even operating in the same sector does not guarantee that agencies will observe and share the same operational standards and procedures, or objectives about goals. Indeed, in some situations, there must be maneuvering of the headquarters expectation and the representative agency on the ground.

This issue can be addressed when a reputable organization with global clouds within a particular sector takes the lead. This involves setting a broad agenda and goals through broader consultation and brainstorming sessions just like what pertained in the development of global developmental goals, now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For efficiency and effectiveness, the process should proceed with need assessments and the development of typologies of these needs, based on which the structure of integration would subsequently be developed. Taking the peculiarity of the Libyan case into consideration, a three-framework structure leveraging on the areas of education, media, and outreach, and community engagements is proposed.

In this domain, a broader integration framework of counter-extremism can be established with subunit-coordinated structures according to these three areas. The broader framework would extract the exact form of violent extremism and define it, giving credence to risk factors that resonate with various agencies. Against this background, training programs can be designed accordingly. Also, standard operation procedures and broader policy framework can be designed at this level. This could serve as the foundation by which the specific domains mesh their goals and objectives. The specific domain then draws on the

⁵⁴ Charman, S. (2014). "Blue Light Communities: Cultural Interoperability and Shared Learning between Ambulance Staff and Police Officers in Emergency Response". *Policing and Society*, 24(1), 102-119.

energies of different groups such as the women and youth groups in Libya, particularly community-based ones. It must also be underscored that a window of flexibility and adaptability must be opened and that constant engagement is the driver of these setups. By this, the framework of monitoring and evaluation is necessary and must cut across all layers of engagement. This would allow for a timely assessment and evaluation of progress.

Another problem that hampers interagency integration is information sharing heightened by ignorance about the constituents of violent extremism and issues of trust. In many cases there is no clear-cut shared risk factor assessment. The specific roles of each organization and how these roles should be coordinated are not clear. Individual and the organizational goals with the general goals of the “interagency club” are not specified. This problem can best be addressed through creating awareness and building the knowledge base of various players on the issue of violent extremism. Towards this end, framework and structures for knowledge transfer must be created. Besides, holistic and comprehensive training programs which cut across different sectors must be periodically provided at both international, regional, national, and community levels. These programs should be tailored to the specific conditions of Libya and serve as a platform for building interagency networks for onward field activities. Although the absence of a strong civic culture in Libya is seen by many as a negative stroke to fostering interagency integration, this can be seen as an advantage if well utilized. Given this environment, friction relative to entrenched organizational norms, among other things, is said to be low hence there is more room for maneuver. Against the backdrop of the revolution, enthusiasm from the youth and women in terms of civic participation has grown exponentially.⁵⁵ Furthermore, resistance against autocratic structures in Libya provides a supportive environment which permits

⁵⁵ Perroux, J. L. R. (2015). *Libya's Untold Story: Civil Society amid Chaos*, p. 4.

malleability. These are advantages that can support and facilitate efforts toward interagency integration.

Against this background, the international community must step up their efforts in the provision of financial and logistical support in a timely and proactive manner taking into account the specific needs of the local context. Already the international community is taking some steps in this direction through the establishment of the “Stabilization Facility for Libya (SFL) in 2016”⁵⁶ with its stabilization fund component anchored on three layers of economic stabilization, restoration of public services, and security. Efforts such as this must be doubled up and strategically aligned with the arena of interagency integration approach to ensure value for money by avoiding duplications of functions. Incidentally, this scheme is relegated only to the top level. Despite its importance, given the local dimension of extremist violence, it is crucial that similar schemes are developed at the local level drawing on the energies of agencies involved particularly in issues relating to vulnerable groups such as women and children.

In the design of the interagency integrated approach, credence must be given to how to cluster the individual procedures and policy outlines specific to different organizations and agencies. If the agencies lack shared guidelines and cannot coordinate their efforts, they may thwart each other’s policies in the field. Without this, divisions and confusions are bound to emerge, which could hamper the progress.

Finally, in the interest of building stable and resilient structures capable of withstanding future tests relative to VE, the focal point of the interagency approach must be the building of local capacities ready to take over when the curtains finally draw. Among all these efforts to coordinate stabilization initiatives, preventing the conditions of the war economy and limiting the activities of the profiteers of conflict should be prioritized. As long as the ongoing conflict continues to be profit-

⁵⁶ Tarek Megerisi (2018). *Order from Chaos: Stabilising Libya the Local Way*. European Council on Foreign Relations, United Kingdom, p. 7.

able to some local actors and useful for them to extract resources from international actors, they will inhibit cooperation and stabilization efforts. Dealing with such actors and dealing with the spoilers should be a component of integration and coordination efforts.

1. The interagency integration approach brings integrating meso and micro levels to the broader framework of state-building.
2. Empowering the actors at the grassroots and strengthening the horizontal ties between local actors is a priority in interagency integration.
3. Shared language and vocabulary facilitates consensus building in terms of the common assessment of problems and the development of far-reaching solutions. Interagency analysis frameworks and language may help coordinate various efforts.
4. Taking the peculiarity of the Libyan case into consideration, a three-framework structure leveraging on the areas of education, media, and outreach, and community engagements can be the areas where interagency coordination is prioritized. Public officials and CSO actors can be trained to use similar language and analytical frameworks to address similar issues. Those agreements can also be reflected in national and local-level legislation and public policy practices.
5. Training programs which cut across different sectors must be periodically provided at international, regional, national, and community levels. Special modules on conflict and VE could be incorporated into the training curricula.

6. The international community must step up their efforts in the provision of financial and logistical support in a timely and proactive manner to those practices.
7. The language and concerns of CVE must be customized towards individual procedures and policy outlines specific to different organizations and agencies.
8. Medical doctors, teachers, imams, and journalists can be designated as public workers to spread the integrated notion of practice and language strategically since these are the most cross-cutting agencies.
9. Public officials can be appointed to different cities periodically.

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APPENDIX 1: LIBYA PLATFORM

What Is the Libya Platform?

The Libya Platform is a non-profit news analysis portal that aims to deliver political, humanitarian, economic, demographic, and security aspects of the situation in Libya in an objective and neutral manner to the public. The Libya Platform's goal is to document the direction of the country, political developments, the humanitarian situation, and the daily developments in Libya while at the same time providing the public with references and valuable information about the region.

In general, there is a need for a source to publish verified and reliable information about the dynamic situation in Libya where new actors emerge and vanish from presence fast, crises occur, and challenges appear in a ground filled with propaganda and disinformation.

With this project, the main goal is to fill the need for a platform of knowledge about Libya to inform the public, think tanks, academic institutions, state institutions, and media about the situation and dynamics in Libya without being affected by the propaganda of disinformation.

For this purpose, the Libya Platform seeks to form a staff and network that is well informed about the situation in Libya, and comprises experts and analysts from different work fields and who know different languages to inform the public objectively about the political dynamics in Libya. The Libya Platform will follow several sources on the ground, publications, and statements about the country, and will be supplied regularly with special information from its "Citizen Journalists" network inside the country.

The gathered information will be shared with the public in different categories:

- Political Analyses
- Socioeconomic Analyses
- State-Building (SSR, DDR, CVE, Public Administration Reform, Economic Developments, etc.)
- News Analyses
- Opinion Pieces
- Weekly Field Reports
- Special Infographics based on datasets
- History (Libyan Memory)
- Profile Work about important actors inside Libya
- Interviews
- Maps

Audience

The Libya Platform will have two different audiences for its publications. The first will be the general public, and the second will be a variety of institutions, national and international, related to or working on Libya.

THE PUBLIC

The Libya Platform seeks to counterbalance the effect of propaganda and disinformation in the broader public by gaining credibility over time and becoming a main source for the public about Libya. The Libya Platform also aims to inform the public with easy, understandable infographics and maps to highlight different developments and to make difficult dynamics understandable. Also, in this regard, another goal is to become a source for the media and inform the public correctly via mainstream media and other media outlets.

INSTITUTIONS AND EXPERTS

The Libya Platform aims to become a source of information for institutions regarding the case of Libya. As a result of an objective and reliable publication strategy, the Libya Platform should become a reliable and trusted source for institutions and researchers. With various work like field reports, profiles, interviews, and political analyses, the Libya Platform will function as a pool of information for these institutions.

The Libya Platform will separate its production internally in two parts. While the first part of the produced materials will aim to reach and inform the public, the second part will aim to reach institutions and experts by making policy recommendations. Especially opinion and analytical articles will have a policy impact. The Libya Platform also seeks to be used as a source for academic work. By publishing special infographics about datasets and interviews, it aims to be used as a source for academic research.

Another way of reaching institutions and experts will be news analyses. The Libya Platform will not just publish breaking news but will put important news into a greater context. By doing so, the Libya Platform wants to help the understanding process of news.

WRITING FOR THE LIBYA PLATFORM

The Libya Platform aims to publish analyses or opinion pieces about the political, security, humanist, economic, or other dimensions relating to Libya. The Libya Platform will especially seek articles about the methods, moves, capabilities, or objectives of important actors in Libya. The Libya Platform will publish outsider contributions in two separate categories.

Opinion pieces: Short, concise, and attention-drawing arguments and policies on a subject, between 900 and 1,200 words in total.

Analyses: Research on a contemporary subject and/or the results of an analysis, between 900 and 1,200 words in total.

Every piece will undergo 4 stages:

- Preliminary control and return to the author for correction
- Final control and return to the author for correction
- Editing
- Publishing

PUBLISHING PLATFORMS

The Libya Platform will share its productions with the public on its website. The English and Arabic websites will be on one domain, the Turkish on another. The Libya Platform website will include different language sections and will have a professional but simple design. The website of the Libya Platform will be used as the main publishing platform. However, in addition to the website, the Libya Platform will use social media to reach audiences. Social media will be used in a way that will make the Libya Platform popular in these platforms, i.e. the use of eye-catching material will be directly published on social media accounts with a link referring to the website. By doing so, the main information will be directly shared with audiences without the need for them to visit the website. This strategy may decrease the clicks on the website, but it will help the Libya Platform gain popularity. Also, with this strategy, audiences, and especially those with a deeper knowledge of the Libyan case, will become accustomed to going to the website for articles that can't be shared on social media.

APPENDIX 2: NATIONAL DIALOGUE



Establishing an Inclusive National Dialogue Process

Why Do We Need Dialogue?

Dialogue is the genuine exchange of views, opinions, and emotions of partners of a process to ensure a deeper level of mutual understanding and to reach some change in their relationships. The fundamental prerequisite in a dialogue is the sincerity of the actors to share their

views, emotions, and frustrations, and to be ready to listen to each other and be open to change with the information they receive from each other. In cases of conflict, parties' contradictory views about the conflict are a significant obstacle for a genuine dialogue. Conflicts do not only change the physical environment and context but also change people's mindsets, and those transformed, and fragmented mindsets may turn into the roots of the new conflicts. It is, therefore, necessary to transform the mindsets and distorted understandings that produce conflict as a part of the holistic peacebuilding process. A key to changing the mindsets of adversary views is to create a secure and sincere communication ground where the parties express their views and listen to others' views in order to at least understand each other. Building trust between the key stakeholders in a secure communication ground and interaction environment is crucial for a genuine dialogue process. This project aims to form both a secure and sincere environment for interaction and a genuine communicative space which will allow Libyan stakeholders to understand their commonalities and to respect their differences. We believe that with this capacity the Libyan parties will be able to strengthen their ties and to find more constructive ways to address their differences.

The dialogue aims to broaden the horizon of participants on the conflict by allowing the exchange of diverse views on the conflict in an inclusive environment. National dialogue processes are at the epicenter of post-conflict peacebuilding processes. National dialogue processes not only try to address the challenges, misunderstandings, and differences that lie at the heart of the conflict but also aim to give new opportunities for the parties to reach a deeper understanding of each other and allow them to engage in different and more constructive ways. In this way, they can reach a better understanding of each other's subjective positions, feelings, expectations, and frustrations. Such dialogue processes also help to transform the complicated and conflict-driven state of mind that emerges out of the conflict by al-

lowing parties to express their views in the presence of their former rivals or adversaries.

Dialogue is not a particularly outcome-driven activity where parties aim to reach a shared outcome on a particular issue at the end of the process. A successful dialogue achieves a transformation in damaged relationships between the parties and paves the way for a relational condition where parties would be willing and able to engage more constructively and handle their differences in a more practical way if possible. If the dialogue cannot achieve the goal of finding common ground in addressing the matters of difference, it can at least try to maintain the parties' differences without damaging one other's fundamental values and interests. Libyan society was made a party to a conflict to which they did not belong, and a lot of its members fell victim to this conflict on Libyan territory that was a stage of a regional power struggle. This created resentment among the segments of society that can be overcome only through a long dialogue process. VEOs and foreign actors are in an endeavor to deepen the crisis by further exploiting these resentments. Hence, without any delay, a dialogue process should be initiated. Narratives and images produced and spread through media and social media during the conflict further deepened the divide within the Libyan society.

This project aims to provide a comprehensive national dialogue which should ideally include the components that are mentioned below. Some of them may be unrealistic for the moment due to ongoing tensions, but a gradual expansion of inclusiveness of the dialogue ground is an essential element of its effectiveness. We foresee a gradually evolving procedure for national dialogue in Libya.

- Dialogue between various civil society elements in Libya
- Dialogue among the February Forces
- Dialogue between the February Forces and the former regime elements

- Dialogues among the leaders and possible leaders
- Dialogue among the youth
- Dialogue between tribes
- Dialogue among the secondary parties who influence the course of the Libyan conflict

A single dialogue process which may include all these elements may be unrealistic. There should be parallel dialogue processes that will complement one other.

Why Did the Earlier Dialogue Processes Fail in Libya?

An important reason behind the failure of the dialogue initiatives for Libya is related to the involvement of the external actors and their discouraging the local actors to engage in a dialogue process. External actors sponsor and support the local actors to act in a particular way, and they do not want their local counterparts to engage in constructive dialogue with the other groups.

Consequently, they failed to see the relevance of the National Dialogue initiatives in the larger spectrum of state-building. As is seen in these evaluations of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the crises in Libya are examined for the most part based on domestic dynamics. UNSMIL avoids stating the fact that the crises created by external interventions deepened social segregation. Since UNSMIL concentrates on domestic symptoms instead of solving the crisis itself by pointing out its external sources, it could not achieve positive results from the dialogue processes.

Secondly, *the security debacle of the country continues to derail efforts at effective national dialogues*. The security situation has been exacerbated by the cancerous polarization in the country in virtually all spheres of life. Indeed, the polarization of life even rears its ugly head in the established structure of the national dialogue.

Third, the success of national dialogues depends on the nature of the mandate and the goals it sets out to achieve. Effective and efficient national dialogues have realistic and clear-cut mandates with specific goals and objectives. Unfortunately, this appears to be the exception in the Libyan case. *Here, the mandates of the national dialogues were vague and overly ambitious.*

Finally, *poor coordination and synergy between several national dialogue initiatives and other existing peace processes*, both local and national, continue to derail progress. This was mostly due to power politics and competition among various power structures and blocs. The international community, which should have led this coordination effort, also failed to deliver.

A New Approach for Dialogue

In addition to the above elaborated experience of the reasons the dialogue failed in the Libyan context, this proposal is based on three main assumptions.

1. Dialogue processes, the ones that are initiated and designed mainly by Western institutions, put diaspora actors at the center of the dialogue process. The dialogue processes should be designed and convened by the local actors. International actors should provide resources, expertise, and help coordinate the constructive efforts, but they should leave the design to the local actors.
2. *Processes should be designed flexibly* depending on the changes in the local developments, especially the security situation. Due to the changing political and military dynamics in the field, there should be a readiness to modify the processes, and there should be flexible contingency planning.

3. Dialogue processes should be designed in a gradual and contingent form. *The main focus should be confidence-building rather than dealing with difficult issues* that may further polarize the participants in the process. It may be easier to start talking about the matters of consensus and matters of common concern in order to build some rapport among the participants.

A Roadmap for Dialogue

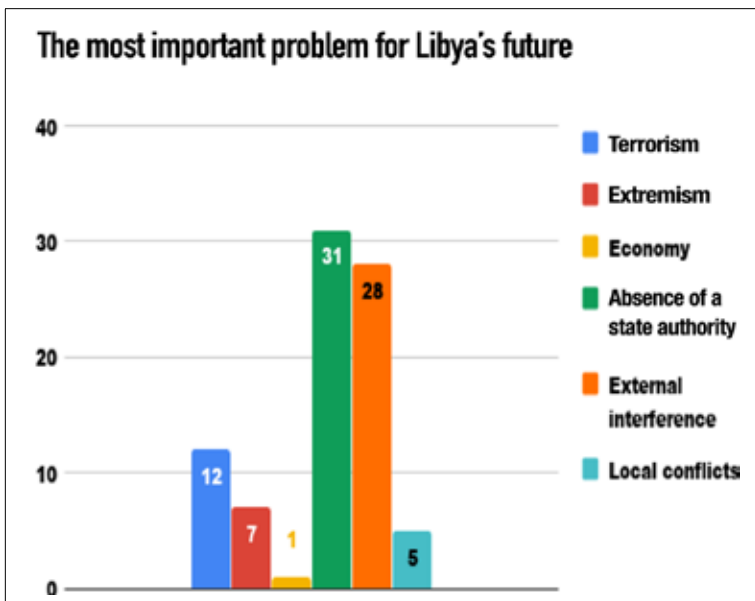
Based on the above reasons, this proposal suggests a gradually improving dialogue process designed as second-track diplomacy. The national dialogue process should not try to solve every issue in Libya, but enable a dialogue to facilitate confidence-building. In this manner, the main goal of this proposal is to enable a dialogue to explore the main ground of consensus. This dialogue process aims to provide a launching ground for future national dialogue processes in the Libyan context that is independent from foreign agendas and is conducted by the Libyans for Libya with actors who have an impact on the ground.

The proposed national dialogue process will be divided in four steps and will last for 9 months. After the first 2 months of preparations, the steps of active dialogue will require 2 months with 2 weeks in between for the preparations for the next step.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN LIBYA

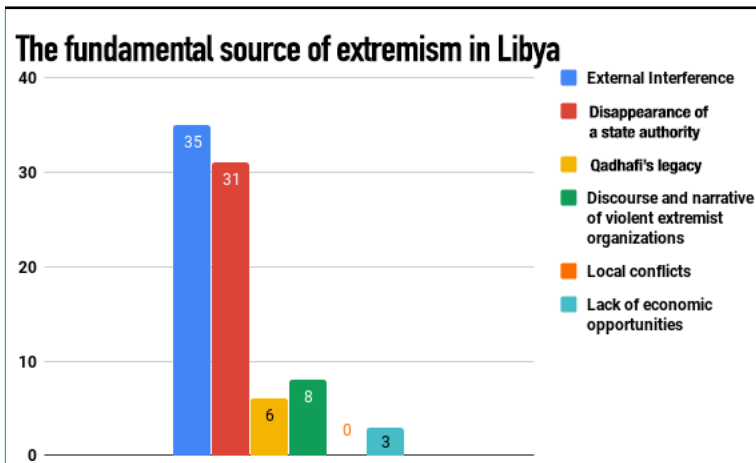
A. Which is the most important problem for Libya's future?

- 1- Terrorism - 12
- 2- Extremism - 7
- 3- Economy - 1
- 4- Absence of a state authority - 31
- 5- External interference - 28
- 6- Local conflicts - 5



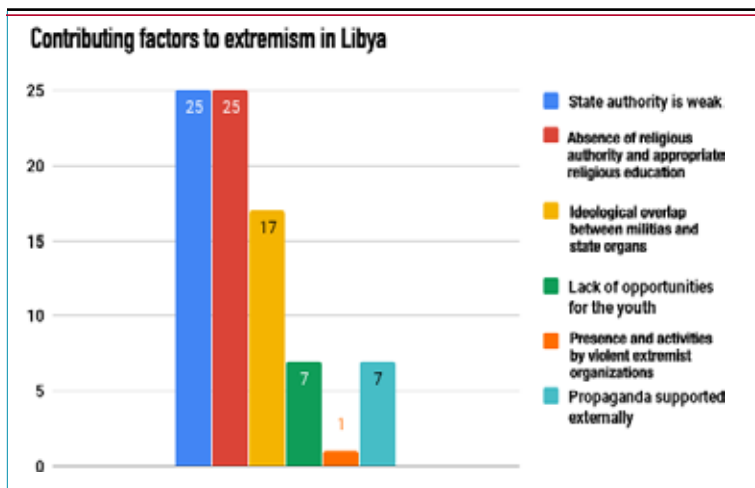
B. The fundamental source of extremism in Libya is:

- 1- External interference (foreign intervention) - 35
- 2- The arance of a state authority - 31
- 3- Qadhafi's legacy - 6
- 4- Discourse and narrative of violent extremist organizations (propaganda) - 8
- 5- Local conflicts - 0
- 6- Lack of economic opportunities - 3



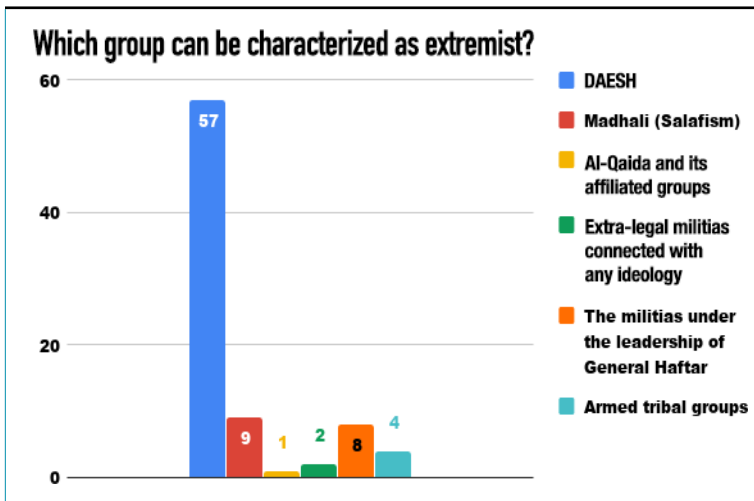
C. Which of the following aggravate or increase extremism in Libya?

- 1- State authority is weak - 25
- 2- Absence of religious authority and appropriate religious education - 25
- 3- There is a considerable overlap between ideological militias and state organs - 17
- 4- Lack of opportunities for the youth - 7
- 5- Presence and activities by violent extremist organizations - 1
- 6- Propaganda supported externally - 7



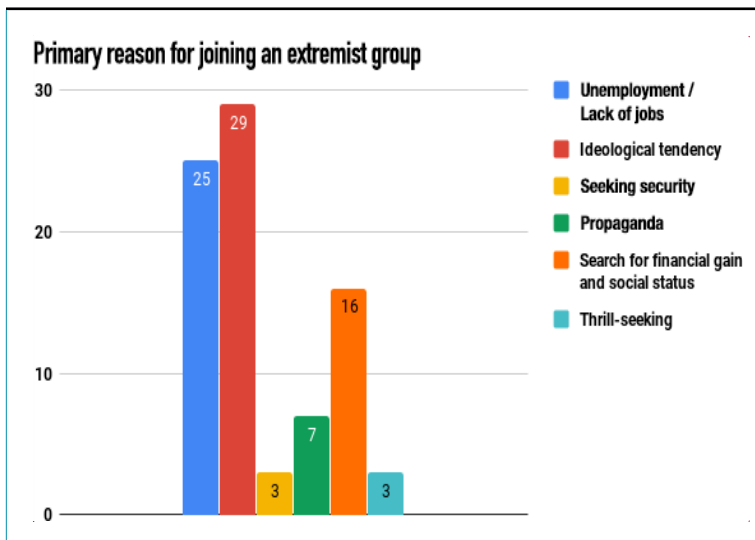
D. Which of the following could be characterized as extremist?

1. DAESH - 57
2. Madkhali (Salafism) - 9
3. Al-Qaida and its affiliated groups - 1
4. Extra-legal militias connected with any ideology - 2
5. The militias under the leadership of General Haftar - 8
6. Armed tribal groups - 4



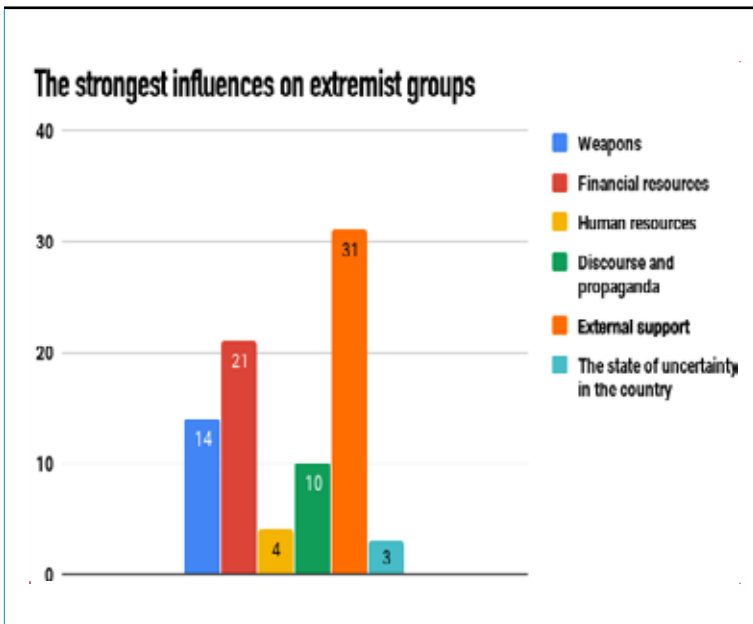
E. Which of the following can be considered a primary reason for joining an extremist group?

1. Unemployment/Lack of jobs - 25
2. Ideological tendency - 29
3. Seeking security - 3
4. Propaganda - 7
5. Search for financial gain and social status - 16
6. Thrill-seeking - 3



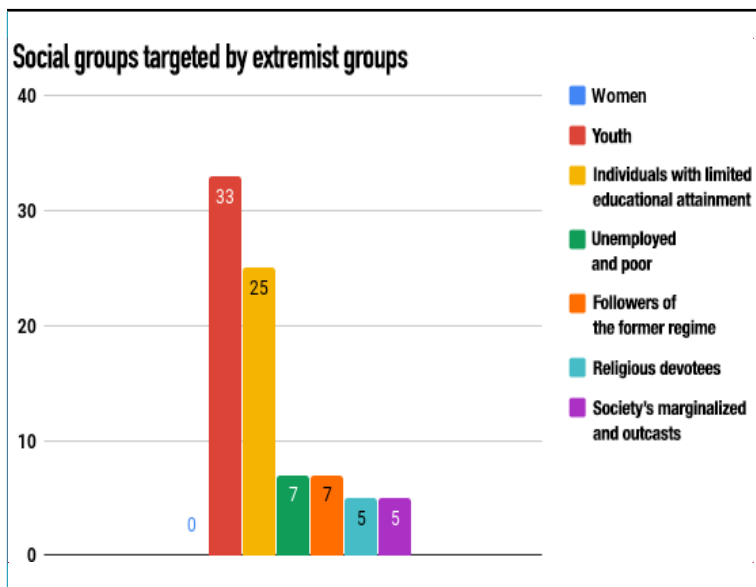
F. Which of the following influence extremist groups the most?

1. Weapons - 14
2. Financial resources - 21
3. Human resources - 4
4. Discourse and propaganda - 10
5. External support - 31
6. The state of uncertainty in the country - 3



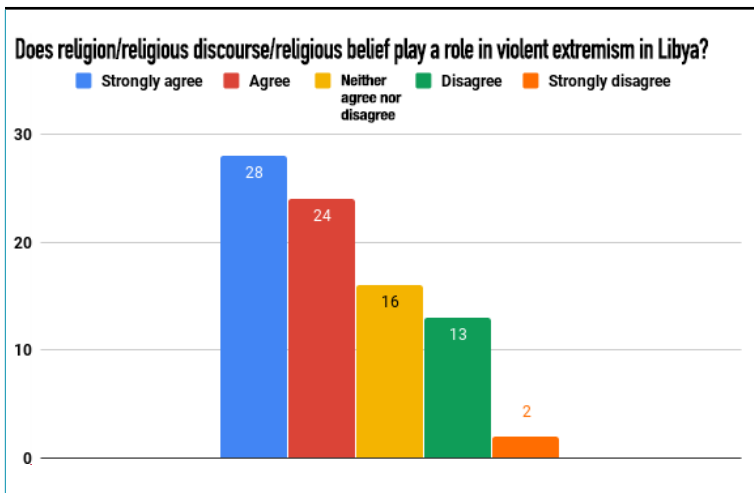
G. Which of the following social groups are targeted by violent extremist groups (in terms of recruitment and propaganda targeting)?

1. Women - 0
2. Youth - 33
3. Individuals with limited educational attainment - 25
4. Unemployed and poor - 7
5. Followers of the former regime - 7
6. Religious devotees - 5
7. Society's marginalized and outcasts - 5



H. Does religion/religious discourse/religious belief play a role in violent extremism in Libya?

1. Strongly agree - 28
2. Agree - 24
3. Neither agree nor disagree - 16
4. Disagree - 13
5. Strongly disagree - 2



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Libya has been experiencing a volatile period since the 2011 revolution that toppled the 42-year-long reign of Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi. Since the revolution, the country has faced state failure, the spread of militias and extremist groups, and interventions of regional and global powers. The civil war in the country and the civil war's internal and external dynamics have further destabilized the country, leading to a regional crisis and the spread of uncertainty. The problem of violent extremism that is tackled in this book is just one of the critical aspects of Libya's broader problems.

Violent Extremism (VE) is a social and security threat that manifests itself across all countries, regions, or societies, and Libya has not been an exception. Although VE is an omnipresent phenomenon, it hits contexts such as failed states, ethnic, sectarian, religious, or tribal fault lines/cleavages, civil wars, and authoritarian regimes especially hard. The cracks, which paved the way for the blossoming of VE's root causes, were created during the reign of Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi and were exposed after his toppling. These causes were further exacerbated by the Libyan Civil War that was instigated by renegade General Khalifa Haftar in 2014.

This book explores violent extremism in Libya in its historical and social context. More importantly, the book formulates a consistent strategy for countering violent extremism (CVE) based on some of the critical principles of bottom-up peacebuilding. The book's recommendations encapsulate a synthesis of nation-building, state-building, and peacebuilding programs to address the problem of VE in a sustainable and locally oriented approach. The objective of the strategies offered in this study is to expose both the individuals and the structural sources that paved the way for the emergence of violent extremism in Libya.

