The Role of Non-State Actors in State-Building in the Middle East and North Africa Region: The Case of Armed Groups in Post Qaddhafi Libya

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Abstract

The role of non-state actors in state-building, particularly in conflict-stricken regions, is becoming increasingly important in the field of international relations. The emergence of armed groups in countries such as Libya present an opportunity for these actors to be involved in political engagement and cooperation with other political actors at the domestic level to start the process of re-building after civil war. However, conflict between state and armed groups, inter-militia rivalries and together with the proliferation of weapons, deny the existence of politically legitimate institutions that could govern the country. The study aimed to identify the role that key armed groups have played, and the level of potential that they have to provide stability for state-building in post Qaddhafi Libya. A typological analysis approach based on legitimacy, resources and support was used to establish each groups potential. The research found that the groups that were considered to be the revolutionary brigades who presented with high domestic support, had protective or cooperative relations with civilians and whose resource base was a mix of community-based and capital exchange systems, had a high stability potential level. Groups with high international support and low domestic support had a low state-building potential. Overcoming the post-conflict challenge of Libya’s armed groups who are intertwined in state institutions and challenge them as well engaging them will require compromise, cooperation, incentive and political will amongst all relevant actors in order to reach political settlements and begin the process of inclusive state-building.
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<tr>
<td>AQAP</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRSC</td>
<td>Benghazi Revolutionary Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENP</td>
<td>European Neighbourhood Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSA</td>
<td>Free Syria Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNA</td>
<td>Government of National Accord</td>
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<td>GNC</td>
<td>General National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISIS/IS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria</td>
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<td>JCP</td>
<td>Justice and Construction Party</td>
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<td>LNA</td>
<td>Libyan National Army</td>
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<td>LPA</td>
<td>Libyan Political Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFA</td>
<td>National Forces Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSAG</td>
<td>Non-State Armed Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFG</td>
<td>Petroleum Facilities Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Presidential Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCC</td>
<td>Revolutionary Command Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNSMIL</td>
<td>UN Support Mission in Libya</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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Introduction and Background

The role of non-state actors in state-building, particularly in conflict-stricken regions, is becoming increasingly important in the field of international relations. In order for a state to participate fully within the international system it has to be stable and functional on all levels that is politically, socially and economically. According to Pearlman and Cunningham (2012:3) the leading form of violent conflict today occurs within states rather than between them. The comparative decline of conventional interstate war casts a spotlight on the myriad of conflicts involving non-state actors, be they in conflict with each other or with existing states. The concept of non-state actors can be understood to include entities that are not actually states. This term is often used with reference to armed groups, terrorists, civil society, religious groups, or corporations and can also encompass intergovernmental organisations (Clapham, 2009:1).

International efforts in peace-building and state-building challenge the position of most non-state armed actors in conflicts because they aim to strengthen or reconstruct state structures and institutions. While peacebuilding works towards the resolution of violent conflict and the establishment of a sustainable peace in general, state-building specifically focuses on the construction of a functioning state. More often than not peace-building is followed by state-building efforts in a process of intervention by external actors. In each of these processes, armed actors usually become a factor that needs to be addressed to succeed. However, state-building efforts can also limit the agenda of armed groups in that some of them may have to disarm and/or disband; others may have to change themselves and integrate into the official state structures; and criminals can risk economic profits and face measures under law enforcement. International efforts for state-building therefore tends to threaten these actors who in turn may resist any measures that re-establish the states monopoly on the use of force. (Hofmann and Schneckener, 2011:3)

The legacy of European colonialism was the creation of states (by artificial boundaries) that were weak and who could not control their territory due to the ethnically, religiously and tribally different compositions of their societies. These structurally weakened states are posing a source of instability globally and the Middle East region is no exception. The bipolar structure of the Cold War era provided support in terms of economy and security to the Middle East states but the vanishing of the external support
to the weakening states unveiled loyalties of various identities to subnational actors rather than state actors (Ogun and Aslan, 2013:375). Furthermore, the weakness of the Middle East state has also been shaped by factors such as tribal politics, Islam and oil wealth; and these constitute the backdrop under which wars and rivalries exert their effects on Middle Eastern state-building (Lu and Thies, 2012:241). The Arab uprisings of 2011 saw civil wars erupt in countries such as Syria, Yemen and Libya, leaving these states weakened and vulnerable to newly empowered non-state actors who span across diverse groups from peaceful political and social grassroots movements to violent extremists. These groups can put pressure on fragile states by demanding accountability, justice, revolutionary change, or power (Adebahr, Berti, Eljarh and Kausch, 2016:1).

It is said that the Libyan revolution had all the ingredients of a success story: civic courage, far-reaching international support and widespread popular desire for political freedom, human rights and democracy. Yet today it is far from realising this transition to democracy. Instead it is marred by such occurrences as kidnappings of high ranking officials, attacks on diplomats, mob rule and weak institutions that make it difficult to rebuild the country (Gaub, 2014:101). According to Gilman (2013:175):

Libya remains wracked by deep divisions over how to overcome the legacy of Qadhafi’s 42-year dictatorship. The policy of Jamahiriya meant that there was virtually no development of political and bureaucratic institutions prior to 2011. Political parties were banned and government agencies run primarily as a means of distributing patronage. With the vast majority of Libyans having never experienced competent government, there is no consensus about what it is or how to achieve it. Libya is driven by sharp disagreements over the best way to move forward. While everyone agrees on the need to end militia rule and restore security and effective government services, many people remain suspicious of Tripoli and continue to support “their” militia group. Law and order may be desirable, but exactly how to establish it remains a topic of fierce debate.

The collapse of the Qaddhafi regime left a state vacuum which can be understood to mean a state in which control has disappeared without being replaced. When a state cannot provide its citizens with security, representation, legitimacy, welfare and wealth it can be said to be a failing. However, Gaub (2017:53) says a closer look at the countries currently challenged in the Middle East and North Africa region shows that they have not entirely ceased to provide some of the abovementioned elements of statehood. The Libyan government has managed to continue providing several services irrespective of the turmoil it has undergone since 2011 (ibid). Referencing Reuters
(2015) and Faucon and Morajea (2016) the author notes that the state managed to provide electricity throughout the conflicts (although several difficulties were encountered in 2016) and it has continued to export oil, albeit at a smaller rate than 2011, and to pay Libyan state employees’ salaries (ibid). This may be the case however continued fragmentation amongst, and rivalry between, domestic actors remains which still makes it difficult to establish fully functional state institutions to support state-building efforts.

Schneckener (2009:7) [referencing Stedman (1997); Schneckener (2003); Newman/Richmond (2006); Greenhill/Major (2006)] states that the debate around the role of armed groups is usually two-fold: the first perspective which dominates political discourse and literature on counter-insurgency is that armed groups are a problem not only because they may cause and trigger conflicts but also pose a challenge to ending wars and bringing about peace and stability (ibid). After conflicts they still act as spoilers and can potentially disturb and undermine processes of post-conflict state-building which could lead to violent flare ups. The second perspective doesn’t refer to armed groups as problems but rather questions whether (and under what conditions) these groups can serve as governance actors who are willing and able to provide basic services to the population at large. These services may work as functional equivalents to regular state activities and assure a certain degree of stability in areas of limited statehood and as such a question may arise as to whether or not armed groups can be stabilisers during the re-building process (ibid).

Discourse around the engagement of non-state actors with regards to state-building is usually from a positive perspective in that it’s seen as necessary to involve certain types of actors. However, this is not usually the case with armed groups and according to Perera (2015:16) the role of armed non-state actors in the development process is one which has been largely overlooked. Particularly during periods of civil strife, armed groups can provide much-needed governance in areas of limited statehood. A better understanding of this governance, and the form that it takes, needs to be incorporated into post-conflict political settlements (ibid). In light of this it can be said that the emergence of armed groups in countries such as Libya, after the fall of the Qaddhafi regime, presents an opportunity for these actors to be involved in political engagement and cooperation with other political actors on the domestic level with regards to state-building.
Podder (2014:1616) states that it is fully accepted that non-state actors, institutions and practices will differ in their relevance to society and they will also have different sets of challenges. He notes (and echoes the sentiments of authors such as Schnecker) that some have a negative impact on state-building whilst others can be supportive of this process. Factors that determine whether armed groups are likely to take on governance roles include: the nature of the armed group (its organisation and structure), its political goals, membership, resource base, external support systems and resource-access pathways. If armed groups rely on economic profiteering for survival, governance is less likely to be considered essential (Podder 2014:1621).

The discussion about the role of armed groups in state-building needs to move from a pessimistic to a more optimistic one when considering reconstruction agendas. This research wants to look at the role of armed groups in Libya (post the Qaddhafi regime) with the aim of identifying which key armed groups have the potential for providing stability in support of state-building.

**Problem statement**

The emergence of militia groups in different regions of the world is conceived as a threat to global security. The fall of the Qaddhafi regime in Libya after the 2011 uprisings saw an emergence of armed militia groups and it was commonly accepted that there were up to 1600 militia groups in existence. Although some of the militias have become politically associated with major parties in the country they remain highly autonomous and driven by their own agendas which range from ideological and political to local, individualistic and sometimes criminal (Durac, 2015:38-39).

The problem is that conflict between certain rival armed groups grappling for power, together with the proliferation of weapons, deny the existence of politically legitimate institutions that could govern the country and this continues to plunge Libya further into the abyss.

**Objectives of the study**

1. To identify the relation between armed groups and the state in the MENA region
2. To discuss how armed groups pose a challenge to state-building in post Qaddhafi Libya

3. To establish the level of potential of the key armed groups for offering stability in state-building efforts based on their legitimacy, community support and resource

**Research questions**

1. What is the relation between armed groups and the state in the MENA region?
2. How do armed groups pose a challenge to state-building in post Qaddhafi Libya?
3. What level of potential do key armed groups have to provide stability to state-building efforts based on their legitimacy, community support and resources?

**Aim and significance of the study**

The main aim of the study is to identify and interrogate the role that key armed groups have played post Qaddhafi Libya and establish how they could be influential in shaping peace and state-building efforts in the North African state.

Although research has been done discussing the topic of state-building in fragmented societies, looking at cases such as Afghanistan (Suhrke, 2013) and Iraq (Alshinawi, 2014) no research has been done focusing on Libya and the post-conflict challenge of armed groups, in so far as identifying the potential that key armed groups in the country have, to foster a stable environment for state-building efforts. This research is significant because it aims to fill the identified gap by providing findings about which groups are likely to participate more easily in the rebuilding project, which groups may require more incentive to encourage cooperation, which groups (if any) are not likely to participate in state-building efforts. The researcher will make recommendations about which key groups should be engaged and what steps should be taken to move towards peace and re-building the Libyan state. The findings of the research can also serve as a guideline for strategists or policy makers in this area.
Theoretical framework

The study is premised on the international relations theory of liberalism which has three variants namely: ideational liberalism, commercial liberalism and republican liberalism. One of the strengths of liberal theory is its structural principle which is based on cooperation and interdependence which are concepts that will emerge in this research when discussing armed groups and state-building. For the purposes of this research I will draw on ideational liberalism to understand the research problem. The research will not reflect on commercial and republican liberalism because currently Libya doesn’t have strong enough political or economic institutions in place to understand the topic from these two perspectives.

The research has not used a realist or constructivist lens for the following reasons:

- Realism is concerned with power relations with its structural principle being the security dilemma. It is also concerned with the mitigation of anarchy and cooperation is seen as a zero sum game. In the scope of the research realist thinking would advocate applying force and/or leverage to effect behavioural changes within the key armed groups. Since the research is aiming to discuss the role of armed groups in state-building from a win-win situation, using soft power approaches such as collaboration based on finding common ground of all parties, realism would not be an applicable lens to use.

- Constructivism emphasises that states are constrained by social normative structures. Norms guide actors along certain socially prescribed channels of appropriate or legitimate behaviour. From a constructivist perspective armed actors would be persuaded to accept, respect and internalise norms deemed legitimate which would lead to behaviour conformity and identity change. This research is aiming to establish the key armed groups potential to shape state-building as they are without emphasising change in individual group identity so for this reason a liberal view is perhaps more suitable than a constructivist lens.

Current day Libya has a fragile political order which sees armed militias, more often than not, yielding more power than elected government authorities. It can be said that
this is a result of differences in national interests and power ambitions to name a few.
Liberalism notes that states are important but they are not the only actors that shape
international relations. For this reason, liberalism (ideational liberalism) is best suited
to understand the role of domestic non-state actors (armed groups in this case) and other
actors relevant to state-building post the Libyan civil war.

According to Moravcsik (2010:2) liberal theory is based on the assumption of anarchy
and rationality in that states (or other political actors) exist in an anarchic environment
and generally act in a broadly rational way in making decisions. It elaborates the
insight that state-society relations, the relationship of states to the domestic and
transnational social context in which they are embedded, have a fundamental impact on
state behaviour in world politics.

Liberal theories can be differentiated from other rationalist approaches, such as realism
and institutionalism, by its’ two unique assumptions of world politics: (1) states
represent social groups, whose views constitute state preferences; and (2)
interdependence among state preferences influences state policy (ibid). With regards to
the first assumption of world politics liberals advocate that the state is a representative
institution constantly subject to capture and recapture, construction and reconstruction,
by domestic social coalitions (ibid:2-3). These social coalitions (which can include
non-governmental organisations and other non-state actors) define state preferences
which shape foreign policy. In light of the second assumption liberals want to explain
how preferences vary and what this means for world politics. The precise distribution
and nature of the “stakes” explains differences in state policy and behaviour (ibid). I
will now discuss ideational liberalism as a tool to understand the role of fundamental
actors in international politics.

Ideational liberalism connects the behavior of the state to a variety of conceptions of
desirable forms of cultural, political, socioeconomic order (ibid:2). It states that the
basic determinants of state preferences are based on domestic social identities and
values. Liberals from this school of thought define social values as the set of
preferences held by various individuals and groups in society concerning the proper
scope and nature of legitimate state objectives. Thus states and groups within states
differ in their conceptions of what a legitimate domestic order is—that is, their conception of which social actors belong to the polity and what is owed them (ibid:6).

Currently Libya has a struggling parliamentary democracy which is plagued by the threat of militias, a battle between being a centralised vs federal state and trying to dismantle the old regime. The rivalry between armed groups [associated with either the PC, the Tripoli Government and the LNA] in Libya is primarily based on competing governments, with varying preferences all vying for control of political institutions. Although a power-sharing government was endorsed by the UN it has up to now not come to pass as a result of divergent interests that have seen conflicts flare up. If the assumptions of liberal theory hold true then it can be deduced from the views of ideational liberalism that rival armed groups and other political actors should act rationally and together find common ground where their interests converge (based on national identity, political identity and socioeconomic freedoms) to create the preconditions of coexistence, cooperation and establishing legitimate institutions which could pave the way to re-build the Libyan state.

**Research Methodology**

This section will highlight the scope of the study and its limitation, introduce the research design and provide a description of the methods that will be used for data collection, data analysis and the presentation of the data.

**Scope of the study**

The study is limited to Libya looking at the role of armed groups in state-building in post Qaddhafi Libya. The dependent variable is state-building processes and the independent variable is armed groups. The researcher will collate documents/reports/literature from scholars, researchers and relevant organisations to discuss the topic.

**Limitation of the study**

The research will be limited to the documented works of scholars, researchers and relevant organisations and therefore will not involve a survey on the armed groups in
Libya. Furthermore, the study will be limited because of a lack of primary data collection. The study’s limitation is a result of the difficulty of gaining access to the key armed groups that are in Libya.

**Research design**

This research will use a case study design which entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman, 2016:60). The main criticism of the case study is that findings from it cannot be generalised. However, supporters of case study research argue that the purpose of the research design is not to generalise to other cases or populations beyond the case but rather the aim is to generate an intensive examination of a single case, in relation to which then engage in theoretical analysis (Bryman, 2016: 64).

**Case study and population**

This research is interested in the role of non-state actors in state-building in the MENA therefore Libya is an appropriate case study because it falls within this region and furthermore post the Qaddhafi regime it has not been able to function effectively as a state. Moreover, the units of analysis, which are the armed groups, are also suitable because they fall within the category of non-state actors. The target population is 7 armed groups that have been identified as the key players in Libya.

**Data collection technique**

The study will be done by scrutinising publications that bring to light the role that armed groups have played towards state-building efforts in post Qaddhafi Libya. The researcher will make use of publications such as books, journal articles, official documents, internet sources and media reports touching on non-state actors and state-building in the MENA generally as well as the role of the key armed groups in Libya.

For the purposes of this research I will be applying an approach used by Podder (2013) to establish the key armed groups state-building potential in Libya. The approach is a typology on legitimacy, resources and support. This method will enable me to make credible recommendations based on my findings.
Reliability and external validity

Reliability is concerned with the question of whether or not study results can be repeated. It is used to determine the question of whether the measures that are devised for concepts are consistent (Bryman, 2016:41). To be able to enhance reliability of the data collected the researcher will confine herself to the publications mentioned in data collection techniques section above ensuring that only authentic data is used.

The researcher is aware that the findings of this research will fall short of external validity because it is a single case study however, plausible deductions based on the findings can still be made about the units of analysis with the aim of filling the knowledge gap identified by the researcher specific to this case.

Data analysis

The data collected from the various sources will be analysed in a logical way in order to present findings, draw some conclusions about the level of potential each group has to offer stability in Libya’s state-building and make recommendations.

Thesis structure

There are 3 main chapters of the thesis namely: Chapter 1: The History of Libya and The Key Players in The Conflict Post Qaddafi; Chapter 2: Literature Review; and Chapter 3: The Role of Libya’s Key Armed Groups in State-building. Chapter 3 will also include the discussion of the findings. The last section of the thesis will be the conclusion and recommendations.
Chapter 1: The History of Libya and The Key Players in The Conflict Post Qaddafi

This chapter aims to provide a historical and political background of Libya and identify the key players in the conflict post Qaddafi in order to provide a framework for the study. Although the literature on Libya regarding its history is very limited the study has identified some relevant sources to discuss the topic. The chapter will also discuss Libya’s key players and for the purposes of this study the discussion will focus on the main actors at the international, regional and state level that have shaped the Libyan political landscape on all these levels.

1.1 Historical and Political background of Libya

Libya as we know it today is composed of what was three fairly independent provinces under the Ottoman rule namely Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fazzan. According to Vandewalle (2012:14) the physical and human geography of these territories played an important role in maintaining the isolation of the diversity of its constituent parts, a reality that would continue to haunt its rulers even after independence in 1951.

Vandewalle notes that a sizeable area of Libya is located within the Sahara and during the times of the Ottoman rule less than 1% of this area was suitable for agriculture. Tripolitania had limited agricultural activities which mostly happened in the Western Mountain beyond the coastal strip. Between Tripolitania and Cyrenaica more sustained agriculture took place which could feed the populations of the nearby coastal cities such as Zuwarah, Tripoli and Misrata. Cyrenaica had more settlements which extended into the Green Mountains where cultivation was made possible as a result of high rainfall. Beyond coastline cities such as Benghazi, Tukra and Derna was vast desert which ran into Sudan. To the south of Tripolitania is Fazzan a predominantly sandy depression. Besides being an important transit route for the caravan trade it was of little relevance to its northern neighbours, and physical contact or economic interaction between Fazzan, Tripolitania and Cyrenacia was limited largely due to the huge distances between them (ibid: 14-15).

The three provinces had quite separate histories (which also contributed to the limited interaction between them) and the reason was that each had specific outlooks and inclinations among its citizens historically. Tripolitania’s cultural traditions were
predominantly oriented towards the western part of the Maghreb (North Africa) with whom it shared its Roman history. Cyrenaica’s citizens were largely those of countries east to its border due to Greek colonisation, while Fazzan (small, semi-nomadic and with an economically barely self-sufficient society) mostly interacted with sub-Saharan Africa. The estimated combined population of the three provinces in the 19th century was less than 1 million with Tripolitania housing two-thirds of the population. The main population groups across the provinces were the Berbers and Arabs both belonging to a complex network of families, tribes, and tribal lineages and relied on tribal networks for economic purposes and for identification (ibid:15-16).

1.1.1 The Ottoman Empire

Libya was incorporated into the Ottoman empire in 1551. The Ottoman rule in Libya was characterized by a relationship based on suzerainty. The empire limited itself mostly to the territories of Cyrenaica and Tripoli with occasional incursions into the hinterland to collect taxes. Until the early part of the 19th century, the Sublime Porte (central government of the Ottoman empire), limited its presence and activities as long as the annual tribute and formal allegiance to the Sultan were paid and as a result left the provinces to their own devices in organizing their affairs (ibid:16). Two defining eras of the Ottoman rule will be briefly discussed below namely: the Qaramanli dynasty and the Sanussiya movement.

1.1.1.1 The Qaramanli dynasty

Beginning in 1711, a semi-independent state under Turkish official Ahmed Qaramanli emerged in Tripoli and established control over the Ottoman provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, with Fazzan remaining contested with the approval of Constantinople (known today as Istanbul). The Qaramanli family held on to its power and independent rule until the early 19th century through naval privateers and pirates under its control who were used to collect tribute and ransom from merchant vessels seized in the Mediterranean Sea (Blanchard, 2010:32). The Qaramanli naval forces of Tripoli was made up of one component of a regional grouping commonly referred to as “the Barbary pirates,” which played an essential role in shaping the foreign and military policies of the US (ibid:32). Due to a wave of confrontations, in the late 1780s between US merchant ships and naval raiding parties from Tripoli and other neighboring city-states (which saw the destruction of U.S. maritime cargo and capture of US hostages),
the US and the governments of the Barbary states signed a bilateral treaty which said the US would pay tribute to Tripoli for safe passage of US vessels off the coastline (ibid:32). The Qaramanli dynasty started to lose political power after the confrontation with the US regarding the capturing of the Philadelphia vessel and its crew in 1803.

According to Anderson (1984:326-327) by the 1820s the Ottoman government had begun to recognize new dangers in its traditionally loose suzerainty over its distant provinces. European expansion was increasingly aggressive and not only did it threaten the economic well-being of the Empire but its territorial integrity as well. In the 1830’s civil war broke out between Qaramanli’s heirs which caused havoc in Tripolitania and this concerned Istanbul also because they thought Europe would seize the opportunity to occupy Tripoli as France had done in Algiers (ibid). In 1834 an emissary was sent from Istanbul to Tripoli to assess the situation and a decision was taken by the Ottoman authorities that in order to prevent foreign rule of the province direct rule was required by the empire. In 1835 Tripoli was re-occupied by the Ottoman empire (Cyrenaica was subsequently also taken back) and the following seventy-six years would see Ottoman direct rule in Libya. Furthermore, 1850-1880 was a time of reforms in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica bringing about political change through Ottoman policy (ibid).

1.1.1.2 The Sanusiyya

According to Vandewalle (2012:18-19) the mid-19th century saw Cyrenaica become home to a religious movement called the Sanusiyya named after its founder Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi. The birth place of the Sanusi Order was Mecca in the year 1837. It was a revivalist Islamic movement whose teachings were supposed to remove what al-Sanusi considered to be unacceptable accretions to Islam, and to return its adherents to a more pristine, scriptural form of the religion. In 1843 Sanusi set up the zawiya al-bayda (white monastery) in Cyrenaica and relied on so called ‘brothers’ to spread his vision. The Sanusiyya movement (also known as the Sanusi Order) built up momentum and spread into Tripolitania and surrounding territories but its main support base remained in Cyrenaica among the Bedouin tribes (ibid). Anderson (1984:331-332) notes that:

New religious movements were usually viewed skeptically by political authorities in Islam, no less than in Christian Europe, since such movements are usually accompanied by calls for reform and attacks on political corruption. The Ottoman authorities were no exception, but the tradition of Sufi brotherhoods in the Empire was a venerable one - the Sultans themselves were adherents
of various orders - and, moreover, the Sanusiyyah cooperated in the Ottoman government’s forward policy in Africa during the nineteenth century.

Throughout most of the reform period the Order was left to oversee itself mainly because it encouraged educational and economic development in the province which was aligned with the goals of the Turkish governors.

1.1.1.3 Italian Resistance

Evans-Pritchard (1945:65-66) states that the 1900s signaled the first European advance into Africa when France occupied Baghirmi. In 1902 the French seized Bir Alali (Kanem) and destroyed the Sanusiyya zawiya there. 1906 saw the French taking Kawar and Bilma and in the following year occupying Ain Galacca (Borku), killing Muhammad al-Barrani, the Shaikh of the Sanusiyya lodge there. The French continued to take more territories in the Sahara from 1913 to 1914 and this concerned the Italians also because the British had staked their claim on the Nile. The Sanusi Order tried (with limited success) to regain some of the lost territories but in reality they had lost political control to the French. Ottoman Libya was the only country left after France and Britain had taken their picks in North Africa (ibid).

Italy invaded Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in 1911, and the Ottoman Empire’s subsequent release of its claim to its territory in 1912, meant the beginning of a violent twenty-year period of resistance to Italian rule led by the Sanussi order and local tribes (Blanchard, 2010:33). The Italian occupation authorities tore down what was left of the Ottoman governing structures and disrupted the activities of social and cultural institutions across Libya. Sanussi resistance fighters were defeated during World War I, and the recognition of Italy as the controlling authority over territory was done in 1924 (ibid). A second round of anti-Italian insurgency spurred a violent crackdown by Italian forces under Mussolini, who renamed the territory Libya in 1929. Resistance based in Cyrenaica was worn down and ultimately crushed by 1931. In 1934, Italian peasant colonists began entering the provinces, leading to the displacement of local farmers and the uprooting of established agricultural communities across the country. The population of Cyrenaica remained hostile to Italian rule and its Sanussi leaders allied themselves with British colonial forces in neighboring Egypt (ibid).

It can be deduced from the above that current day Libya’s internal divisions are historically embedded in the country’s dynamic. According to Paoletti (2011:313-314)
the two regions had very distinct political lives, well before the Italo-Turkish war between 1911 and 1912. For example, in Tripolitania family and tribal relations were important determinants of politics. On the other hand, in Cyrenaica institutional affiliation (whether Ottoman or Sanussi) began during Ottoman rule to partially replace tribal support as the basis of political power and economic wealth. It was under the Turks that in Cyrenaica the Sanusi Order began to shape itself as a government (ibid).

1.1.1.4 Italian rule and colonisation

Hock (2017:8) notes that Italy’s territorial expansion into Africa began in 1882 in Eritrea. Italian interests in North Africa (Tripolitania) sharpened after the French established the protectorate in Tunisia in 1881, where some 11,000 Italians had been living compared with 500 French. Beginning in the final decade of the nineteenth century, Italy began to open banks, schools, and publish newspapers in Tripolitania. Furthermore, The Banco di Roma was also a key institution in Italian expansion into Libya. At the head of the bank was Ernesto Pacelli of the papal aristocracy and Romolo Tittoni, the brother of a former Italian foreign minister, both of whom had become interested in Libya around 1905 and by 1907 had begun investing there (ibid).

By 1911 the amount of money that had been invested into Libya by the bank amounted to four of five million dollars. It was the view of the Italian government that the bank’s investments in Libya was an instrument to carry out its policy of ‘peaceful penetration’ (ibid:9). Vandewalle (2012:24) writes that Italy’s resolve to claim Libya (strengthened by its failure to take Ethiopia in 1896) was seen as necessary for it to protect its strategic security in the Mediterranean and its growing shipping trade, and to show off its Great Power ambitions.

Vandewalle continues by saying that 1911 marked the year that Italy annexed Tripolitania and Cyrenaica but the resistance to the Italian invasion was strong in Cyrenaica, centred around the Sanusi Order. In 1912 Sayyid Ahmad al-Shariff assumed leadership of resistance which not only provided a focus for military opposition to the intruders but also turned the Order into an emerging political movement in the province. The Italians framed the war as one of religious fanatics opposing their efforts at colonisation however this was not entirely true and it was by default that the resistance was pushed by a religious Islamic order that had tribal support (ibid:26).
According to Paoletti (2011:314) the Italians in the early 1920s chose to regard al-Sayyid Muhammad Idris, who had succeeded al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif, as head of the Sanusi order, although he also regarded himself as the head of a secular state. The author notes, referencing Pritchard (1946: 843), that from 1917 to 1923 there was an uneasy compromise which was based on two parallel sovereignties and administrations in Cyrenaica, namely the Italian and the Sanusi, and together they were responsible for security in the country. However, this came to an end when the Fascists came into power and saw this situation as dangerous to the Italian prestige. As far as the Fascist commanders were concerned the Sanusi led rebellion had to be done away with to preserve the Italian colony. The Libyan resistance was broken in 1931 and this was followed by Fascist Italian colonisation (ibid).

After the resistance was broken the Italian government (led by Benito Mussolini) could finally put into operation their Fascist colonial programme. Its aims were mixed, but on the whole it may be said that the political, administrative, and economic interests of the colony were subordinated to strategic requirements. In one way or another the best land in the country was taken from the Arabs and granted to concessionaires and settlers (Evans-Pritchard, 1945:74).

According to Vandewalle (2012:32-33) between 1936-1942 Italy invested in Libya on land reclamation and agricultural development. In 1938 Italy undertook a number of grand-scale settlement experiments that saw 20 000 Italians come to prepared family farms in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. Subsequently 12 000 more came in 1939 to the two provinces as they became a fundamental part of metropolitan Italy. By 1940 Libya had a basic modern infrastructure including public utilities and ports, a coastal highway that connected Tunisia and Egypt and about 6 000 Italian families settled on their own farms (ibid).

For the locals however the Italian presence did not bode well for them as they had been isolated and excluded from the country’s progress. Demographic colonisation had only just begun when Italy entered the war, and it is said that there can be no doubt that the Italians intended to systematically drive the Arabs out of every fertile part of the colony and to replace them by their own nationals. This was part of a general Fascist plan to Italianise north-east Africa (Evans-Pritchard, 1945:75).
The social impact of Italian colonisation was felt by the Cyrenaica tribes as a result of the Sanusiyya power being greatly weakened by Fascist policies, which also saw the tribal assemblies on which the Sanusi Order relied being done away with. As a result, many Libyans were in exile in neighbouring countries such as Sudan, Chad and Tunisia (Vandewalle, 2012:33). Italy maintained its colony until the World War 2 allied forces re-captured Cyrenaica in 1942 and Tripolitania in 1943. In 1946 after the creation of the Sanusi-dominated National Congress, Cyrenaica embarked on the task of laying the foundation for self-government. Tripolitania on the other hand had political groupings that were inspired by ideas of Arab nationalism, but were also more progressive and unity inclined as opposed to their Cyrenaican counterparts (ibid: 37). In 1947 Italy eventually lost Libya as a result of the Paris treaty and on 21 November 1949 the resolution of Libyan independence was granted by the UN. Libya eventually gained its independence in 1951.

1.1.2 The Monarchy and discovery of oil

After the creation of an independent Libya in 1949 by the UN the national assembly framed a monarchical institution and offered the throne to Sayyid Idris who was the Emir of Cyrenaica. The emir was the leader of the Sanusiyya movement which ruled the Libyan interior in the last years of the Ottoman empire. Born in 1890 in Cyrenaica Idris got to the top of the order while he was a teenager. He was exiled in Egypt during the Italian regime but returned soon after the Axis powers had been thrown out in 1943. The Kingdoms prospects were not promising as it had no industry, little agriculture, low incomes and high illiteracy rates. Furthermore, the king didn’t have an heir to succeed him (Cavendish, 2011:52-53).

The country adopted a federal system of governance that left powers to the different provinces with Benghazi and Tripoli being the capitals. Tribal politics started to take shape under the system and in looking to reconcile central government with the autonomy of the three provinces King Idris delegated administrative authority to locally powerful families. The religious and family structures characterising the kingdom enhanced a sense of statelessness which would be further deepened under Jamahiriya as a ‘state of the masses’ (Paoletti, 2011:315).

The monarchy greatly restricted the states intervention in the economy to distributing the revenues flowing into the country (Vandewalle, 2012:44). Blanchard (2010:34)
says before marketable oil was discovered in 1959 the Libyan government was highly dependent on economic aid and technical assistance it received from international institutions and through military basing agreements with the United States and United Kingdom (ibid). When oil was discovered the wealth it generated brought about rapid economic growth and greater financial independence to Libya in the 1960s, but the weakness of national institutions and Libyan elites growing identification with the Pan-Arab socialist ideology of Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser contributed to the gradual marginalization of the monarchy under King Idris (ibid).

According to Vandewalle (2012:45) the kingdom become incapable of finding its political bearings between East and West, exacerbated by the discontinuities of rapid economic growth and divided loyalties and soon after the Sanusi movement began to decline. In 1969 the Libyan military from Benghazi toppled the King and Colonel Muammar Qaddhafi came into power (ibid).

1.2. The Qaddhafi Regime

Muammar Qaddhafi was 27 years old, and leader of the RCC, when he came into power in 1969 of the Libyan Arab Republic. He detested the Western-oriented monarchy which he saw as the reason Libya was weak and dependent. He was young, idealistic and inspired by Nasser in Egypt, he blamed the country’s vulnerability on the inadequate sense of national identity (van Genugten, 2011:64). Ronen (2008:10-11) notes that at the onset of Qaddhafi’s rule he emphasised his ambitions to see Libya entirely liberated of Western influence (whether US, Britain, or Italian), which he saw as the epitome of neo-liberalism. Not long after coming into power Colonel Qaddhafi announced his plan to remove the US Wheelus Air Force Base which is a goal he perceived as a ‘main condition for Libya’s freedom’ which along with Islamic socialism and unity were the three ideological foundations for the revolution.

Vandewalle (2012:78-79) says that the new Libyan leaders (Qaddhafi along with other appointed leaders from the RCC) represented a break with the country’s past. They were populist and revolutionaries and this was not a coincidence. They had different backgrounds from the previous leaders of the monarchy in that they generally came from a middle class, and from less prestigious tribes and families than those who had been affiliated with the Sanusi government (ibid). Furthermore, they had all attended the military academy as a result of not qualifying for a university education under the
monarchy. The leaders had their own vision for Libya which was premised on Arab nationalism and opposing western powers and when Nasser died Qaddafi took it upon himself to preserve his legacy and nurture the notion of Arab nationalism and unity as part of the Libyan revolution (ibid). Although the young leaders displayed charisma they had no political or economic know how and limited legitimacy to run the state so essentially they had no clear plan on how to translate their goals into programmes. However, in 1970 they secured the withdrawal of British and US forces from military bases as well as expelling the Italian community in Libya (ibid).

1.2.1 The Green Book and Tribal Politics

In the early years of the 1970’s Qaddafi and his regime undertook drastic and frequent re-organisations of the Libyan political and economic life in line with his “Third Universal Theory.” The theory, which combines Pan-Arab, Islamic, and socialist values, was enshrined in Qaddafi’s three volume Green Book (Blanchard, 2010:2). The economic directives in the book enabled the regime to nationalise the economy and by the late 1970s they had a firm central grip on the economy. The redistribution of land and wealth, the allocation of fluctuating oil revenues, and a near total decentralization of political institutions re-shaped Libya’s social landscape in line with Qaddafi’s principles (ibid). According to the theory Qaddafi himself would never be head of state but just the leader of the revolution because the revolution had said that Libya would be a stateless society without a president or king. Subsequently this led to the creation of the Jamahiriya which is basically a country directly governed by the citizens, without the intervention of intermediaries (Vandewalle, 2012:96). In spite of this idea of a stateless society Qaddafi (through the Green book) unleashed on Libya a wave of contradictory policies that put the state in charge of all economic and social activity, while simultaneously trying to make it irrelevant as a focus for political identity (ibid:97).

According to Smits, Janssen, Briscoe and Beswick (2013:11-12) even though the revolution appealed to bottom-up mobilisation many Libyans expressed little interest in their national political affairs. The General People’s Congress and local committees representing the masses where never actually in charge. From the outset of his rule, Qaddafi remained in complete control over the country- in essence he was the Jamahiriya (ibid). Qaddafi took all the key decisions surrounded by his family, fellow
revolutionaries and members of loyalist tribes. Qaddafi himself was from the al-Qaddadfa tribe in Sirte and as such tribal alliances were always going to be a factor in his politics (ibid). Individuals from his inner circle were placed in key security and military positions such as in the Revolutionary committees. These committees were tasked with ‘safeguarding the revolution’, but also came to control the media and the police system as well as various companies, and was responsible for the culture of intimidation and fear that took hold of Libya (ibid).

In 1977 the territory that Qaddafi governed was referred to as the Socialist People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. The Revolutionary Authority was created in 1979 and is signified the end of one aspect of the Libyan Revolution and the beginning of another:

One the one hand, it constituted an admission that Libyan society was not reforming itself as quickly or as thoroughly as Qadhafi wanted. But it also marked the beginning of what has remained a dominant feature of Libyan politics until today: the persistence of a formal structure of government-centred around the Popular Congresses and Committees-and an informal structure of power and authority. The latter includes a narrow circle of intimates around the Libyan leader (later formalized as the Forum of Companions of Qhadafi), supported and kept in place by a number of security sector institutions (most notably the country’s layers of intelligence organizations) and the Revolutionary Committees (Vandewalle, 2012:117).

Notwithstanding the positioning of regime loyalists in key positions, Qaddafi astutely stopped any institution or social group from creating an independent base for political support. Even the Revolutionary Committees were not allowed to be in contact, and operated as separate cells. Powerful tribal leaders were courted by Qaddafi by handing out privileges, money and influential positions in return for support. The power of the tribes relied on their relations with the leader and this facilitated a situation where the tribes competed for Qaddafi’s favour. The regime oversaw the tribes and in a way Qaddafi was able to counterbalance tribal authority (Smits, Janssen, Briscoe and Beswick, 2013:13). In 1986 the country was re-named again to the Great Socialists People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

1.2.2 The Foreign Policy of Qaddafi

Qaddafi’s foreign policy is one that can be described as hectic. The 1970s was a time of strengthening Pan-Arab Nationalism as a response to western policies in the region and having a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union. Moscow became Libya’s sole foreign support and a counterweight to its enemies in the West, with which Tripoli was
embroiled in a bitter conflict of ideas and interests (Ronen, 2008:81). In 1972 Libya joined the Federation of Arab Republics with Egypt and Syria but it collapsed by 1977 partly because the relations between Sadat and Qaddafi were strained, even more so by the Egyptian-Israeli peace process which Qaddafi saw as a crime against the Arab nation. The Egypt-Libya relations deteriorated further as a result of the Camp David Accords. The 1970s were also characterized by Libya’s cooperation with Third World countries (Szalai, 2018).

Qaddafi’s Foreign Policy after the Cold War had some defining moments. In the late 1980s the US claimed that Libya was manufacturing chemical weapons in the largest chemicals weapons-production plant that had been detected by the CIA, located in Rabta, southwest of Tripoli. Although Libya insisted that the plant was being used for pharmaceuticals production it was evident that the plant had the potential to produce chemical weapons (Ronen, 2008:35). The 21st century saw shifts in Libya’s foreign policy which was now aiming at: reshaping foreign relations, opening up to the West, especially with European countries (participation in ENP). Other things worth mentioning about the 2000s was Qaddafi’s support for the African Union, the lifting of US travel bans and the signing of the Italian-Libyan agreement (Szalai, 2018).

1.3 The Arab Spring in Libya

The Arab uprising commenced in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011 and quickly spilled over into Libya. Libya shared the similar conditions which spurred the uprisings in the other two states which were: soaring food prices, housing shortages, high unemployment, a rapidly growing population coupled with low rates of job creation, corrupt and ossified administrations, brutal security services, the systematic denial of political and civic rights, and autocratic rulers who had clung to power for decades and were looking to pass it down to their progeny (Brahimi, 2011:606). In Libya the protests turned violent as a result of the clashes between security forces (who were loyal to Qaddafi) and protesters. It was reported that armed forces used live fire and warplanes to bomb protesters which led to the deaths of nearly 300 people in the capital and across the country (Abdessadok, 2017).

In March 2011 the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution on the situation in Libya, the resolution was proposed by France, Lebanon and the United Kingdom. The resolution formed a legal basis for the military intervention in the
Libyan civil war. The resolution stipulated an immediate cease fire and authorised the international community to establish a no-fly zone and to use all means necessary to protect civilians. Colonel Qaddafi was later captured and killed in October 2011 in the city of Sirte which formally brought to an end his 42-year rule of Libya. The collapse of the Qaddafi regime fragmented the country and saw the rise of fighting amongst key armed groups who have political allies within the rival governments.

1.3.1 Libya Post Qaddafi

1.3.1.1 Transitional Period (2012-2014)

7 July 2012 saw the first GNC elections being held for the first time in over 40 years and there was an 80% turnout. The GNC is the democratically elected legislative power of Libya. The elections symbolised the beginning of the country’s transition from authoritarian rule to participatory democracy. There were two rival parties namely: the JCP with Islamist inclinations and the NFA which is more secular in nature. The JCP lost the elections however it was gradually able to exert control over Libya (extending their mandate in 2014) partly as a result of the in-fighting in the NFA. They are eventually forced to the polls and again they lose but they don’t except the results. The JCP forms the Libya Dawn Coalition and they conquer Tripoli forcing the secular forces to retreat to Tobruk (Szalai, 2018).

1.3.1.2 The Second Civil War

In May 2014 General Khalifa Haftar (defected officer of the Gaddafi military and current leader of the National Army) launched Operation Dignity in the city of Benghazi. The campaign was aimed at eliminating Islamist factions from eastern Libya. The campaign played on the citizens fears and discontent as violence had been rising in Benghazi and other places because members of security forces were targeted frequently (Gartenstein-Ross and Barr, 2015). Two days after the declaration of the operation Haftar’s forces stormed the parliament in Tripoli and called for the dissolution of the GNC. Islamist politician and revolutionaries saw the offence as a direct attack on its power and as a result of losing the June 2014 elections, formed the Libya Dawn offensive aimed at driving out Haftar’s forces from Tripoli. Since then the Libya Dawn and Haftar’s forces have been embroiled in an on-going battle for control of territory in the Nafusa mountains and the western coast of Libya. On the other side of the country
Haftar’s forces remain in a heated fight with Dawn aligned groups in Benghazi and other parts of eastern Libya (ibid). In December 2015 the LPA (led by the UN) was signed which informed the formation of the GNA. The GNA is led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj but Haftar declines to accept it (Szalai, 2018).

The legacy of Libya’s history has culminated in the situation that we see today, a Libya that is fragmented and fragile. The following section will identify and discuss the actors that have been active in Libya post the uprisings and Qaddafi.

1.4 Key Players in Libya

1.4.1 International actors

A number of international actors have played an important role in Libya’s domestic conflict. After the onset on the uprisings in 2011 the UN approved a NATO military intervention with the aim of removing the Gaddafi regime. Thereafter, the UNSMIL was created as the main international body that would attempt to facilitate the reconciliation between various revolutionary groups (Mezran and Varvelli, 2017:17-18).

In December 2015 the LPA was signed which was based on four principles namely: 1. ensuring the democratic rights of Libyan people; 2. the need for a consensual government based on the principle of the separation of powers; 3. oversight and balance between government institutions; and 4. respect for the Libyan judiciary and its independence (ibid:18). However, the continued intervening by rival countries posed a challenge to the UN initiative as these opportunistic actors sought to promote their own interests. With this said, however, the UN also faulted at this time in the midst of negotiations about a power-sharing arrangement in Libya, it was also organising a lucrative arrangement with the UAE to lead the Emirates diplomatic academy (ibid). This had a negative influence on public opinion in Libya about the UN’s credibility in its negotiation efforts.

The EU, with countries such as France, Italy, UK being at the forefront, has also played a part in shaping the Libyan dynamic post Gaddafi. According to Eljarh (2018:61) whilst these countries support the UN backed government they have also aided opposing power centres in Libya such as General Haftar. They have pursued their respective interests in the country such as prioritising the fight against ISIS, control of
migrant and refugee flows, and energy security (specifically in the case of Italy) (ibid). This has been done to the detriment of supporting or facilitating a real political transition on the country. Italy and UK have partnered with key armed groups to fight ISIS and human trafficking networks, while France has supported Haftar in his fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda linked groups, insisting that Haftar is an important part of any solution in Libya (ibid).

The North Africa region is currently not of major interest to the US and Russia however the US has focused its engagement on counterterrorism in Libya. The US conducted airstrikes on ISIS targets in Libya beginning in 2015. US airstrikes were integral in pushing ISIS out of its stronghold in Sirte (Mezran and Varvelli, 2017:21). During the Obama administration the US played a more active role in Libya however the Trump administration stated that Libya was not a political priority for it and disengaged from the Libyan issue (ibid). On the other hand, the Kremlin seems to have a dual interest in Libya. Historically, from an economic point of view, Libya under the Qaddafi regime was a good buyer: about $10 billion worth of contracts was signed with Qaddafi and included weapons sales and the construction of a rail link between Sirte and Benghazi. Today, from a strategic point of view, Russia sees Libya as an opportunity to expand its influence in the Mediterranean region (ibid:19)

1.4.2 Regional Actors

There are six regional actors with interests in Libya but only four that are influential in post Qaddhafi Libya namely: Egypt, UAE, Turkey and Qatar. The other two actors are Algeria and Tunisia who (although initially reluctant to intervene) have been vocal supporters of reconciliation and a political solution while also working together to curb the spillover from ISIS presence in Libya (Toaldo, 2016).

Egypt supports the UN led political process while supporting Haftar who is seen to be in conflict with the UN backed unity government. According Mezran and Varvelli (2017:18-19) Egypt has strategic reasons to intervene in Libya. Their battle against Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, deemed to be a terrorist organisation by the Cairo government, found its main ally in Haftar. Egypt is interested in exercising some form of control in Cyrenaica, which is an oil rich region in Libya, but also to create a ‘buffer zone’ against ISIS and other Jihadists groups that could threaten its stability (ibid).
Likewise, the UAE also supports the UN process while still supplying weapons to Haftar and the militias of Zintan. For its part, the UAE is also concerned with suppressing Islamist forces throughout the region and this was demonstrated by it conducting airstrikes against these forces that were gearing up to expel Zintan’s forces from Tripoli (Eljarh, 2017:104). However, the intervention backfired and resulted in fueling the anti-Zintan forces which eventually defeated Zintan forces and expelled them from Tripoli (ibid).

On the other hand, Turkey and Qatar’s role in Libya is not that significant however, they have supported the Tripoli government of Khalifa Ghwell. These actors threw their weight behind the revolutionary forces in Libya many of whom are inclined towards Islamist political agendas (Mezran and Varvelli (2017:19). Qatar’s support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya has put it at odds ideologically with the UAE and Egypt. Qatar is a safe haven for members of the Muslim Brotherhood, but providing refuge for these members is on condition that they do not involve themselves in Qatari politics (McGregor, 2017). Turkey focused its support on the powerful city of Misrata also considered to be Libya’s economic powerhouse. It maintains its economic links to the country and Turkish companies supply weapons to the defunct Libya Dawn Alliance (Toaldo, 2016).

1.4.3 Political Actors

According to Toaldo (2016) Libya is one country made up of three governments. The first centre of power is the PC headed by Fayez Al-Sarraj (the Prime Minister and former member of the Tobruk parliament) and which has been based in Tripoli since March 2016. The PC came to be after the signing of the UN-brokered LPA in 2015 and it presides over the GNA which is the executive branch whose members must be approved by the House of Representatives [HoR (legislature)] (ibid). The second centre of power is the rival Government of National Salvation led by Prime Minister Khalifa Ghwell authorised by the GNC which was the parliament originally elected in 2012 (ibid). This government was also based in Tripoli although it no longer controls any relevant institutions. The third centre of power is the authorities based in Tobruk and Bayda and the HoR in Tobruk was supposed to work under the LPA but so far has failed to pass a valid constitutional amendment to include itself as an authoritative institution. The HoR instead supported the rival government of Abdullah al-Thinni
which operates in Bayda. Both the Tobruk and Bayda are aligned to general Khalifa Haftar who is also aligned with Egypt and leads the LNA (ibid).

1.4.4 Armed Groups

According to Clapham (2009:4) referencing Holmqvist (2005a) different types of armed actors have the ability to shape the situation in a state during and after armed conflict in various ways. The author defines armed non-state actors as ‘armed groups that operate beyond state control’, purposely casting the net wide. It includes, but is not limited to, the following groups: 1. rebel opposition groups (groups with a stated incompatibility with the government, generally concerning the control of government or the control of territory); 2. local militias (ethnically, clan, or otherwise based); 3. vigilantes; 4. warlords; 5. civil defence forces and paramilitary groups (when such are clearly beyond state control); and 6. private companies that provide military and security services (ibid). Furthermore, armed groups can be transnational, such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, whereby they profess millennial, religious and other ideological goals, and are networked across different states and territories in their operations (Krause and Milliken, 2009:205).

1.4.4.1 Formation of Armed Groups

This following section will begin by providing insight into how armed groups come to be and then discuss the key armed groups in Libya. Schlichte (2009:246-247) refers to research that was conducted between 2001 and 2007 over 14 countries where a comparison was done among 80 armed groups and as a result three mechanisms were constructed to understand the conditions under which armed groups are likely to be formed.

First is the mechanism of repression whereby violent repression exerted by government forces causes political opposition to evolve into armed action. Leaders of these groups tend not to have military experience but rather are politicians who have acquired their positions through descent, formal education, and long political activity. The second is the ad hoc mechanism which is triggered when neo-patrimonial settings experience crises. Individuals who feel excluded from clientelist networks of a political class begin to organise violent actions against state agencies. Groups established through this
mechanism are new creations that can include older modes of organisation but have difficulty becoming stable due to the unpredictability of war.

The third mechanism is often linked to situations of open political violence. This spin-off mechanism is tied to state policies, but its main characteristic is that the group’s activities become free from state control. Originally, the formation of these groups is a state project. In times of war, governments or single-state agencies often employ informal, non-regular armed forces they can deploy for objectives that regular forces are unwilling or unable to achieve. In many cases, these informal troops are initially under government control but later develop a life of their own. The three mechanisms distinguished share the common feature that these formations often occur in critical situations of post-colonial states, in either a crisis of distribution due to a shortage of resources or in a crisis in which exclusion and political violence already play a role (ibid).

The rise of armed groups in Libya since 2011 has essentially been the product of two main dynamics: regime-led repression on the one hand and warfare and state erosion on the other hand (Boserup and Collombier, 2018:18). According to Combaz (2014:2) in Libya local armed groups have played a principal role, whereas national armed groups do not have significant capacity or legitimacy. The most powerful local armed groups are the revolutionary brigades in the east and west. Other armed groups include unregulated brigades, post-revolutionary brigades (located especially in areas deemed ‘anti-revolution’), and militias (including criminal networks and violent extremists). The most powerful forces (non-state and state) are the ones based on the revolutionary brigades from Misrata, Zintan and Benghazi (ibid).

1.4.4.2 Libya’s Key Armed groups

Fitzgerald (2016) identifies the following armed groups as the key players in post-Gaddafi Libya which this research will focus on:

**Haftar and the LNA**

Haftar’s personalised LNA is a combination of military units and tribal or regional-based armed groups, and is not recognised as a proper army by all military personnel across the East or West of Libya (ibid). The group has different degrees of control in
the area of central and eastern Libya that stretches from Ben Jawad to the border with Egypt. There were senior military persons who refused to join Haftar’s Operation Dignity against Islamists when it launched in May 2014. Some of these individuals have since joined forces with his enemies, whether cooperating with militias that made up the Libya Dawn coalition in western Libya, or have joined with local jihadist-led groups to drive ISIS out from the eastern town of Derna (ibid).

**The Former Libya Dawn**

The Libya Dawn militia alliance that formed partly in response to Haftar’s Operation Dignity in summer 2014, and which drove then Dignity-allied militias from the western town of Zintan from Tripoli, no longer exists. The coalition was made up of both Islamist and non-Islamist militias, armed groups from Tripoli and the port city of Misrata, and fighters from other parts of western Libya, including from the Amazigh minority. It had fractured even before the UN-brokered deal aimed at establishing a unity government was signed in 2015 (ibid).

**Tripoli**

Currently the Tripoli armed groups can be categorised in terms of whether or not they support the Fayez-al-Sarraj unity government that is trying to find its’ feet in the capital (ibid). Some of the groups are explicitly supportive of the government and others have mixed feelings as they wait to see if their interests will be met or not. A key supporter of the government is Abdel Rauf Kara, leader of the Special Deterrent Force (or Rada) which is based in the Maitiga complex, also home to Tripoli’s only operating airport. Kara’s Salafist-leaning forces once sought to present themselves as a type of police force for the city, targeting alcohol and drug sellers in particular (ibid). Their focus has now shifted to tackling ISIS cells and sympathisers in the capital. Armed groups from the Suq al-Jumaa area of Tripoli, including the Nawasi brigade, are also key to securing the unity government (ibid). Another important person in Tripoli is Haitham Tajouri, who is the head of the city’s largest militia, Tajouri, whose forces have threatened and intimidated officials since 2012, is not a particularly political figure. His main aim is to protect the considerable his accumulated interests in the capital, and remains uncertain about the unity government. Tripoli’s Islamist-leaning militias, tend to be the most
sceptical of the unity government, though none have yet translated their scepticism into armed action (ibid).

**Misrata**

Currently this city houses Libya’s largest and most powerful militias. Prominent political and business figures in Misrata support the unity government, which includes the prominent Misratan, Ahmed Maiteeq, as deputy prime minister. This has helped secure the backing of the main armed groups from the city, including the two biggest – the Halbous and the Mahjoub brigades (ibid). Within the Misrata group is Salah Badi (who is considered to be a wild card), a contentious former parliamentarian and militia leader who was a key figure in the Libya Dawn alliance in 2014 and who opposes the UN-backed unity government (ibid). Misratan forces have also tried to apply a containment strategy to prevent ISIS from expanding westwards from its stronghold of Sirte, but they lack the means to eliminate ISIS entirely from the city (ibid).

**Zintan and the tribal Army**

The town of Zintan enjoyed influence in Libya from 2011 to 2014 when they were driven out of Tripoli by the Libya Dawn. They lost control of strategic sites including Tripoli airport and some of them subsequently joined the tribal army to confront the former Libya Dawn factions (ibid). Some of the members later joined with the so-called Tribal Army – made up of fighters from the Warshefana region on Tripoli’s hinterland and other tribal elements from western Libya – to confront Libya Dawn-allied factions (ibid). Later Fighting calmed as a result of ceasefires. A number of Zintani forces have distanced themselves from Haftar, while others remain loyal and supportive of him. Zintan’s militias, in light of the losses they suffered in 2014, are also assessing how they might fit into the changing order (ibid).

**Benghazi (BRSC and ISIS)**

In Benghazi the forces that joined Haftar’s Operation dignity continue to fight with their opponents. An important element of the anti-Dignity camp is the BRSC consisting of a number of Islamists and revolutionary factions, including the UN-backed Ansar al-
Sharia (ibid). The BRSC fights alongside ISIS against Haftar’s forces. Its ranks are occupied by youth radicalised by Haftar’s campaign, which sought not only to eradicate Islamists of all stripes, including the Muslim Brotherhood, but also took on an ethnic character at times, targeting families of western Libyan origin in the city (ibid).

Both the Dignity and anti-Dignity camps in Benghazi have experienced internal rifts. Within the Dignity camp, which comprises army units, militias and armed civilians, the key component is the military special forces unit, known as Saiqa (ibid). The head of this unit is Wanis Bukhamada, a popular figure in the city. Some Dignity commanders in Benghazi have been critical of Haftar’s leadership, including Mahdi al-Barghathi, who was the defence minister of the unity government until July 2018 (ibid). What also concerns many residents are the hardline Salafist fighters that joined Haftar’s coalition in 2014 and have been empowered as a result, taking over mosques and other institutions. Similarly, within the BRSC, tensions have grown over its relationship with ISIS, and some of its backers have pushed for the BRSC to distance itself from the group (ibid).

The PFG

Once present in several regions of Libya, the PFG has fallen apart and the term is now mostly used to refer to the forces in eastern Libya. In 2013 PFG took control of the main oil export terminals in eastern Libya and later attempted to sell oil costing Libya billions in lost revenue (ibid). The PFG forces are under the command of Ibrahim Jadhran, who is said to be a political pragmatist, who had allied himself with the HoR and its opponents in Western Libya (ibid). Initially he was a supporter of Haftar’s Dignity campaign but the relationship has since soured to the point where he has accused Haftar’s sources of trying to kill him. The PFG has also been instrumental in preventing several ISIS attacks on oil infrastructure in eastern Libya (ibid).

1.4.4.3 ISIS in Libya

Although the research will not be focused on a discussion of other actors besides the abovementioned, a short note on ISIS and its activities in Libya will be mentioned. ISIS, also called Tandhim ad-Dawla (the Organisation of the State) by Libyans, had
controlled the central Mediterranean coast of Libya around the city of Sirte until a Misratan-led operation to uproot it began in May (Toaldo, 2016). ISIS has carried out attacks in all major Libyan cities, including the capital Tripoli. The group has also had a presence in other parts of Libya, including Benghazi, where it was largely defeated by Haftar’s LNA. Its affiliates have mostly been driven out from the towns of Derna and Sabratha by anti-Haftar forces (ibid).

1.5 Conclusion

The above indicates that Libya has always been a divided country with distinct provinces that have had a social, political and economic life of their own. Determinants of politics in Libya have been historically based on family or tribal relations and/or institutional affiliations. Again Libya under Qaddafi placed emphasis on tribal politics and his politics was very personalised in nature. I think the idea of the rule of the masses and stateless society further divided the country because there was no formal state to facilitate diversity, manage different groups and steer Libya towards a common national identity. As a result, the fragmentation of Libya’s society and the problems that today come with it can be traced back from the Ottoman rule up to the Qaddafi regime.

A number of different actors (international, regional and domestic) have been active in Libya since the 2011 uprisings and beyond the toppling of the Qaddafi regime, each driven by their own agendas. The emergence of armed groups in Libya has posed a challenge to establishing politically legitimate institutions generally because of the rivalries between opposing factions and the incapacity of the elected government to control groups.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will review the existing literature to discuss the following: 1. the relation between NSAGs and the state in the MENA region; 2. state-building and armed groups; 3. the challenge of armed groups to Libya’s state-building; and 3. reconsidering the role of armed groups in state-building.

2.1 The Relation Between NSAGs and the State in the MENA Region

2.1.1 Non-State Actors in the MENA

Since 2011 non-state actors have assumed increasing significance in social and political life across the Middle East. These actors played an important role in bringing about the demise of autocratic governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen (Durac, 2015:38).

Durac states that in Tunisia the uprisings against the Ben Ali regime were initiated by youth protesters and gained momentum with the support of the trade union association, the bar association, political parties and the Islamists of Al-Nahda. In Egypt the fall of the Mubarak regime became inevitable when youth movements were joined by labour activists’ and the youth wing of political parties of all ideological orientations (ibid). The anti-Qaddhafi movement (in Libya) was rapidly joined by business interests, tribal groups, Islamists and others and, with the support of external actors marked the end of Gaddafi’s rule. In Yemen Saleh’s regime came crumbling down partly when the coalition of youth organisations, who initiated anti-regime protests, was joined by political parties and non-state actors from the north and south of the country wanting greater autonomy from the regime (ibid).

2.1.2 Armed Groups and the State in the MENA

The emergence of diverse armed groups in the MENA has raised concerns from the international community, however it is to be noted that violent non-state actors are not only a problem of this region alone it is a global issue. Berti (2016:2) says that within the MENA region, the actors that fall within the category of ‘non-state armed groups’ are many, with strong variations in the groups local or transitional orientation; in their level of military, political and social capabilities, as well as with respect to their
territorial control and ability to govern. Furthermore, there are wide variations in terms of the different NSAGs’ identities, ideologies and objectives (ibid). The author goes on to say that presently armed groups—particularly the more sophisticated ones involved in rebel governance—play a vital role in the ongoing regional conflicts, and as a result, they are also highly relevant to both local and international humanitarian efforts (ibid).

Although ‘armed force’ is used to differentiate between non-state armed organisations and unarmed ones, the role of armed force should not be seen to overshadow the fact that numerous armed groups are involved in multi-layered activities, extending to the social, political and economic realm (ibid:2-3). This is particularly relevant when analysing organisationally complex groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah or even the Islamic State (IS) that have social, political and economic elements to their activities other than just violence (ibid).

Hamas has over the years stretched its boundaries (developing certain attributes similar to that of the state) as it has de facto been running the Gaza strip since its takeover in 2007 and it has developed a self-standing social welfare network. It presents as a hybrid between state and non-state actor, between social movement and armed group (ibid:5). Hezbollah also functions within the parameters of both state and non-state actor. It’s said to be a rebel ruler that has developed and maintained a parallel social services network located in different areas of Lebanon where it has a strong hold (ibid).

The IS has invested in creating and operating alternative spheres of authority to engage in competitive state-making. In the places where the group has control it has aimed to be the ‘sovereign power’, with its focus on holding a monopoly over the use of force and exercising control over the territory and population (ibid).

In the MENA the post-Arab spring social and political environment has provided the setting for the emergence of an array of armed groups in different states (Durac, 2015:38). Post Qaddafi Libya is plagued with many armed militias which are regionally based and made up of Islamist and non-Islamist actors. Since 2012, militias or coalitions of militias have become increasingly politicised through affiliations with the major political parties in the country. These affiliations draw on kinship, regional, tribal, as well as religious and ideological linkages. A large number of the armed groups have been absorbed into the transitional security forces under the authority of the
Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior, however the groups are still highly autonomous and driven by their own agendas (ibid:38).

In Yemen After President Saleh was ousted from power, the Hadi led government had a difficult time trying to unite the fractious political landscape of the country and fend off threats arising both from AQAP and Houthi militants (affiliated with Zaidi Shia Islam) who are waging a protracted insurgency in the north for years. In 2014, Houthi fighters moved into the capital Sana'a and forced President Hadi to negotiate a unity government with other political factions. Following this, the Houthis declared themselves in control of the government, dissolving parliament and installing an interim Revolutionary Committee. President Hadi relinquished the authority, fled into exile and during these years Yemen has slowly been reduced to a state of anarchy (Amin, 2015:19). In the midst of this chaos AQAP and rival IS groups have seized territory in the south and carried out deadly attacks most notably in Aden where President Hadi resides.

Similar to other Arab states the anti-regime groups in Syria include Islamist and non-Islamist elements. ISIS controls large areas of the north east of the country as well as some areas on the borders with Turkey and Iraq. In late 2013, a number of Islamist militias set up the Islamic Front and moved to evict ISIS from areas of Syria under its control. Another anti-regime group is the FSA, which was established in August 2011 by army defectors who sought the removal of the Assad regime (Durac, 2015:40-41). In Syria the rebel groups quickly started to create new forms and they also fight each other for power as they essentially consider each other as enemies. There was also the Kurds who were not among those who started the protest against the regime but they did have problems with the regime, one of them being the issue of not having citizenship. Nationalist rebel groups saw the Kurds as an enemy, however the Kurds wanted to get away from the problem so they started to fight for their autonomy. The Kurds became closer to the regime as Assad realised that they can create a leverage against the opposing rebel groups especially if they got citizenship (Szalai, 2018).

After the fall of the Iraqi regime in 2003, a plan was formulated by Paul Bremer (US military representative to lead the Iraqi coalition) to reform Iraq under the concept of ethnic power-sharing. From this point onwards Iraq has been divided into three main sects namely: Kurds, Sunni and Shia. The establishment of the Iraqi governing council, which replaced the Saddam Hussein government, saw the Shia majority imposing their
conditions on others. The Shia’s had an agreement with the Kurds regarding senior positions in government (Shia’s to be given Prime Minister position and the Kurds could receive Presidents position) and this resulted in the alienation of the Sunni’s from the political process. Subsequently the majority of the Sunni’s chose to support the rebel groups opposing the coalition forces and the Iraqi government (Rached and Bali, 2018: 46-47).

In 2014 ISIS seized Mosul and the Iraqi government lost the majority of its Sunni cities and population to ISIS. The Iraqi military lost its will to fight ISIS in many of the Sunni areas because the population didn’t consider Shia soldiers as the national army (ibid). Other armed groups have emerged in Iraq in response to ISIS expansion such as the Assyrian Christian group, the Sinjar Resistance Units and Shia militias. Some of the Shia militias have been accused of war crimes and human rights abuses against the Sunnis which, amongst other things, results in further alienation of the Sunnis but this works in favour for ISIS whose support by the Sunnis is deepened (Durac, 2015:40).

2.2 State-building and Armed Groups

2.2.1 State-Building

According to the OECD-DAC (2008) state-building is an endogenous process to enhance capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state driven by state-society relations. Positive state-building processes involve reciprocal relations between a state that delivers services for its people and social and political groups who constructively engage with their state (ibid). Therefore, state building is intimately connected to the political processes through which social/political relations and power relationships between holders of state power and organised groups in society are negotiated and managed. This process can provide the basis for developing state capacity and legitimacy, if the parties involved can identify common interests and negotiate arrangements to pursue them (ibid). Furthermore, it is endogenous in that it’s a process done from within so external actors should not drive the process but rather help facilitate it. In addition to the above state-building also includes establishing legitimate institutions of the state and their relation to society (Call and Cousens, 2007:3).

Fukuyama (2005:1-2) says that the state is an ancient human institution dating back 6000 years to the first agricultural societies that appeared in Mesopotamia. States have
various functions for good and for bad. The coercive power of states allows them to not only protect property rights and provide public safety, but also to confiscate private property and abuse the rights of their citizens. The monopoly of legitimate power that states exercise enables individuals to run away from the Hobbesian state of nature within the state but provides a platform for conflict and war at the international level. Modern politics has tried to subdue the power of the state, directing its activities towards ends regarded as legitimate by its citizens, formalising the exercise of power under a rule of law (ibid).

For Fukuyama state-building is one of the most important issues for the world community because weak or failed states are the source of many of the world’s serious problems (ibid:1). After World War II decolonisation led to a surge of state-building all over the developing world which had few successes, such as in India and China, but occurred only in name in other parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The problem of weak states and the need for state-building has always existed. Although the modern world offers an ideal package, which combines the material prosperity of market economies and the political and cultural freedom of liberal democracy, this modernity is not easy to achieve for many societies around the world (ibid:2-3).

For state-building to be effective it is not simply about building or capacitating state institutions, but it’s about forging a “social contract” between the state and its residents to shape and enforce a set of political, social, and economic rules that govern both society and the state itself (Valent, 2017). Ingram (2010:5-6) identifies the following as the building blocks of state functioning which are: 1. the political settlement, 2. essential capabilities which the state must have to survive and, 3. expected capabilities which citizens look to the state to provide, and which shore up its legitimacy. Referencing (Whaites, 2004:4) and (Brown and Grävingholt, 2009:5) Ingram states that the political settlement is “the forging of a common understanding, usually among elites, that their interests or beliefs are served by a particular way of organising political power” and settlements are represented as spanning the continuum from negotiated peace agreements to long term accommodations, usually enshrined in a constitution. Essentially, the settlement spells out the rules of the game, providing the institutional underpinning for state functioning.

Ingram continues by identifying the essential capabilities of the state as being 1. the maintenance of security across the territory, 2. the establishment and maintenance of the
rule of law (the rule of law is primarily the implementation framework of the social contract) and, 3. the collection of revenue to finance state functions. In the absence of these capabilities the state is unable to establish authority over its territory and cannot fully deliver on its end of the social contract. The expected capabilities of the state, and the extent of their scope and performance, will vary extensively from society to society. Two areas of capability that tend to come up regularly in the literature are: developing and managing the conditions for economic growth; and basic service delivery and livelihood security. The characterisation of capabilities as essential or expected does not imply that the former are paramount or the first priority in state-building. When the expected capabilities are delivered this helps to create the conditions of social and economic wellbeing that contribute to internal stability and resilience in the longer term (ibid).

### 2.2.2 State-building in Fragile States

Many of the new states that were formed after decolonisation had no prior traditions or institutions of statehood and little or no sense of shared national identity, the underpinning social contract for the state was weak or non-existent, and shifting elite alliances were left largely unchecked to govern in their own interests. These factors contributed to the conditions for fragility (ibid:6).

The following can be attributed to fragile states (Ingram, 2010:6-7) [referencing OECD report (2010)]:

- **Fragile states are inclined to have multiple systems functioning alongside each other i.e. the formal, informal and customary.** State-society relations tend to be informed by informal and customary rules and personal relations based on kinship and community provide a foundation for trust and dictate which individuals will have access to political and economic benefits. Furthermore, day to day activities may be framed and negotiated outside of formal systems such as through customary rules.

- **In fragile states the sources of legitimacy manifest themselves differently to that of western states.** There are four main sources of legitimacy namely: input or process legitimacy which goes hand in hand with agreed rules of procedure; output or performance legitimacy which is defined in relation to the effectiveness and quality of public goods and services (in fragile situations
security will play a central role); shared beliefs which encompasses a sense of political community, and beliefs shaped by religion, tradition and “charismatic leaders; and international legitimacy which entails the recognition of the state’s external sovereignty and legitimacy. Although none of these sources of legitimacy exists in isolation, and no state relies solely on one of them, their interaction is crucial to how state-society relations play out in a particular context, and what effect this has on fragility.

- Fragility within states means that these states are generally incapable of establishing themselves as the highest political authority and unable to penetrate and shape society. This can manifest as a very limited territorial reach beyond the national capital and main urban centres, as very limited capacity to take and execute decisions that bind the society as a whole, or as a very limited range of public goods. This can lead to heightened conflict and social contestation, regions of lawlessness, incapacity to raise revenue and provide even a minimum level of public goods, and extreme levels of human insecurity.

According to the OECD report (2010:8) when it comes to state-building the actual processes of state-society interaction is important to frame as this provides an understanding of how state-capacity emerges and how ideas of legitimacy influence people’s willingness to interact with the state. At the initial stages of state-building, perceptions of legitimacy can support or prevent the negotiation of a political settlement. Later on in the process of building state capacity, legitimacy is also fundamental to the establishment of constructive state-society bargaining to achieve positive sum outcomes based on mutual interests, and institutionalised arrangements for managing conflicts, negotiating access to resources and producing and distributing public goods. Capacity and legitimacy are separate but interdependent elements. In situations of fragility the lack of legitimacy undermines the creation of state capacity; and a lack of capacity in turn undermines legitimacy.

Post-conflict state-building engages significantly around the institutions that determine the distribution and exercise of power and authority. The four main elements that tend to feature in peace settlements and associated state-building agendas are: constitutional development; conduct of elections; transitional justice; and decentralisation (Ingram, 2010:13).
2.2.3 The Challenge of Armed Groups on Libya’s State-Building

According to Showaia (2014:62) domestic politics of the Qaddhafi regime created a general weakness of the state infrastructure and fractured the conditions of the country’s political landscape. For more than 40 years Qaddhafi’s regime purposely undermined state institutions, including the military, and heavily manipulated tribal, regional and political groups in order to maintain tyrannical power. The revolution itself allowed for some local groups to become even more empowered, which in turn weakened the capacity of state security. While the transitional authorities have inherited very weak national government institutions, they do have the responsibility to stabilise the country, manage the security services and ensure peaceful, safe and just transition in society (ibid).

The major issues that have given rise to the fragmentation in Libya, which have played out as political and armed struggles, are concerned with the struggle for power and the ever expanding gap of mistrust between Libya’s various political and armed factions. These actors have been caught up in a bitter conflict over the control of Libya’s security and defence sectors. On the other hand, there is a struggle for resources, essentially propelled by the lust to control Libya’s oil wealth on the northern shores of the country, but also the southern parts of Libya’s desert, as well as fighting to control the country’s key financial institutions (Elijarh, 2017:102). The struggle for power and resources however was further complicated by the dispute between political Islamist groups controlled by the Muslim brotherhood and the former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group on the one side, and the National Forces Alliance on the other side. After the 2012 elections these two opposing sides were pitted against each other in the newly elected GNC (ibid).

Another issue that poses a challenge to the rebuilding project in Libya is the proliferation of weapons by armed groups. According to Boserup and Collombier (2018:10) [referencing Cole and McQuinn 2015] in Libya the proliferation of armed groups started soon after the protests against Qaddhafi broke out in February 2011, as the regime attempted to repress dissent and external actors provided military support to Qaddhafi’s opponents. As early as March 2011, the nature of the initially peaceful mobilisation changed. Armed opponents of the regime (essentially armed groups with a local dimension or ideological underpinning) faced not only Qaddhafi’s security
apparatus, but also other civilians who had taken up arms to defend the regime. Militarised contention was therefore coupled with a civil war that cut through Libyan society and contributed to the proliferation of armed groups and weapons across communities and throughout the country (ibid).

For Sawani (2017:175) Libya’s militias have proven unprepared to disarm, demobilise or to be integrated into the ranks of a national-state army or other security institutions. Islamist militias in particular have been keen on maintaining their organisational and military capacity intact in order to pursue their own agendas. This has resulted in the emergence of a curious and peculiar military and security ‘balance’, wherein militias have had the upper hand while the nascent state has lacked any exclusive control over military force and has been obliged to rely on semi-co-opted militias, eventually became hostage to them and their diverse and independent agendas (ibid).

The overarching challenges to state-building in Libya can be summarised as being 1. Security: the new interim government remains fragile, with limited capacity and sovereignty, and the inability to enforce security is still a major problem (El-Katiri, 2012:15-18;19). This makes it difficult for the new regime to build a foundation upon which advances can be made in the political and socio-economic realm; and 2. The challenge of armed militia’s: despite the mitigation of the threat from supporters of the old regime, the interim government has no monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (ibid). The large number of distinct militias arose during the civil war because of the regional and tribal divisions within the country. On-going clashes and fighting between armed factions cause continued disruptions to the lives of ordinary citizens. The security risks of Libya’s uncontrolled armed militias are not restricted to within the country’s national borders. By jeopardising state-building efforts, clashes between militias or between militias and government authorities threaten to undermine the security of neighbouring countries and the international community (ibid).

Elijarh (2017:101-102) states that a shared vision of institution building is the only real path to Libya’s success. Even though there are different localities building some functioning security systems across Libya, they are however not engaged in building national institutions. Only truly national institutions accountable to the elected government can stimulate the economy and administer infrastructural projects that Libya needs (ibid). In order for the nationwide institution-building to be successful it must be driven by a nexus of relationships between the state and local communities. So
far the elected government in Libya has been unable to respond to the needs of local communities and as such the state has been left open to undemocratic forces for e.g. militias, thugs, criminal gangs and extremists, who have exploited the situation by promoting the legitimate needs and demands of local communities. In light of this these groups have been granted a small bit of legitimacy (ibid).

2.3 Reconsidering the role of armed groups in state-building

Podder (2013:16) states that there is a need to re-consider post-counter-terrorism engagement styles that see NSAGs in a negative way but rather realise the opportunities for state-building that these groups can offer. He emphasises that it is vital to distinguish between different NSAGs based on their sources of legitimacy, resources, reliability and partnering potential when engaging about state-building efforts (ibid).

According to Podder (2014:1618) current state-building practices emphasise institutional dimensions of building state capacity, often at the expense of overlooking important societal actors. This is regrettable, considering that non-state actors can provide not only critical linkages between the state and societal realms but are also in a position to determine the outcome of state-building efforts in important ways. In fact, the reform success of state-building engagement is routinely subject to the willingness and cooperation of such non-state and informal actors and networks. The reason for this is that non-state actors are aclimitised with the local environment being aware of and willing to work with existing power dynamics (ibid).

In addition to the above non-state structures and categories extend beyond the state and sub-state levels. Non-state pressures can therefore emerge from different levels such as transnational, sub-state, regional, civil society and multinational sources. This reality has implications for state-building interventions with regards to achieving stable polities that are supported by positive state–society relations and legitimate politics. Unless local non-state groups are part of state-building processes, the latter will remain to a large part externally derived solutions that fail to understand or address local needs and demands [ibid referencing OECD (2011), Nathan (2007) and Raymond (2011)].

For Podder armed groups have to be understood in terms of the diverse roles that they can perform. As opposed to groups that are predatory, abusive and disruptive of peace, certain armed groups have the potential to be positive alternatives to a weak and inefficient government, as the legitimate representative of minority groups. But for the
most part armed groups are seen as spoilers, negative for peace and resistant to democratic principles and good governance norms. The negative perception of armed groups lacks a balanced analysis of their positive roles and contribution to stability in fragile situations (ibid).

Factors that determine whether armed groups are likely to take on governance roles include the nature of the armed group (its organisation and structure), its political goals, membership, resource base, external support systems and resource-access pathways. For e.g. if armed groups turn to economic profiteering for their survival, then governance is not likely to be considered important. When it comes to membership and resources, community based armed groups who rely on the local population for resources are more likely to be protective of them, compared to groups that enjoy transnational support. For their part the civilian communities will be inclined to support rebel state-building efforts under conditions of weak local governance traditions and predatory state behaviour (ibid:1621-1622).

With regards to resource access pathways, if armed groups are able to access readily exploitable resources (diamonds, drugs and external sponsors), they are more likely to create centralised control for tapping into large revenue streams, further contributing to the creation of more cohesive organisations. Ad hoc resource supplies, such as local taxation or diaspora financing, provide variable revenue bases that are less lucrative in nature. Likewise, taxation of humanitarian relief, kidnapping, looting and voluntary contributions or religious donations provide the capacity for mostly low-intensity conflict rather than a more sustained military contest. Some of the roles or state-like functions that armed groups can take on that are positive for state-building include security, welfare and justice which may overlap with that of other non-state actors and could result in collaboration between them. (ibid:1622).

2.4 Discussion of Literature

In so far as the relation between non-state actors and the state in the MENA it can be said that these actors have been instrumental in shaping the politics of the region particularly after the 2011 Arab uprising. Although actors may have had different reasons for pursuing a certain course of action, they were able to mobilise and challenge autocratic regimes in their respective countries. When it comes to the armed actors discussed above one of the distinguishing characteristics amongst the groups is the
divide between Islamist and non-Islamist elements which is indicative of the dynamic of religious politics in the region. This divide ultimately also informs the support by external regional actors for armed groups in conflicted states.

The literature also gives insight into how the weakening of the states by former regimes has left them vulnerable to armed insurgents who want power and control. Armed groups have been instrumental in the conflicts of the MENA and the literature shows how different groups can take on state and non-state roles for example Hamas, and can stabilise or destabilise certain areas such as the IS. We can deduce that the relation between armed groups and states in the MENA ranges from being a volatile one to a somewhat supportive one.

State-building as a political process is very important as emphasised by Fukuyama however the failures of state-building efforts in post-conflict situations today, more often than not, tend be a result of the disconnect between interventions and the local dynamic. Furthermore, what complicates the situation is the ‘democratic’ packaging that state-building interventions tend be delivered in and research has shown that this does not work everywhere particularly in regions such as the Middle East. State-building encompasses not only capacity building and establishing institutions but also creating a social contract. This is a credible idea and I think even in countries such as Libya where there is fragility and fragmentation it could work if the citizens (including armed groups) expectations of the state can be reconciled (and vice versa). These negotiations will not be easy, especially when different factions concerned are vying for power and control of resources in the country, but it is realisable.

The literature also speaks to the challenge of the proliferation of weapons in Libya. The lack of state capacity to monopolise the use of force in the country has proven futile to interventions of DDR further crippling state-building efforts. As Sawani (2017) indicates that the armed groups have up to now shown no desire to disarm and I think the first step in attempting to address this is a national dialogue with key armed groups and a nation-building agenda which runs parallel to state-building efforts. The fragmentation of Libya’s society indicates that there is little or no national identity resulting in no national unity. All parties have different agendas and for the most part their reluctance to disarm can be interpreted as a desire to maintain a power base and have some sort of leverage. The national dialogue would need to be inclusive, using
bargaining tools to encourage disarmament, with the aim of starting a process where individuals can be united in being representatives of the Libyan state, contributing to the security of the country while willingly leaving the use of force within the authority of the state. Again it may not be an easy process initially but it’s not entirely impossible at least to a degree necessary for Libya to function as a state.

As indicated by Podder (2013; 2014) armed groups present an opportunity to provide stability for state-building. Of course this is not the case with all groups, but their potential to support state-building efforts depends on the nature of the group, its legitimacy and support base. The exclusion of these groups in Libya’s state-building would ultimately be to the detriment of the country. In the following chapter the research will establish and discuss the level of potential Libyan key armed groups have to aid the rebuilding project.
Chapter 3: The Role of Libya’s Key Armed Groups in State-building

This chapter aims to identify the level of potential that key armed groups to provide stability for state-building in Libya. The chapter will begin by providing an overview of the factors that influence a group's stabilising potential. In assessing Libya’s key armed groups state-building potential the researcher will apply a typological analysis based on legitimacy, resources and support developed by Podder (2013). The typology identifies characteristics that are most indicative of state-building potential and of local and international legitimacy. The findings will be presented and discussed.

The events of the Arab Spring that took place in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria were indicative of the pressing need for the international community to engage with a range of armed groups during and after conflict. Armed groups have transitioned from being labelled terrorists under the global war on terror to being shown as legitimate recipients of foreign support against undemocratic regimes such as in Libya and Syria. As a result of these developments debates about the engagement with armed groups have been reopened (Podder, 2013:16)

According to Podder a variety of armed groups with no clear hierarchy, affiliation, and command and control structures pose significant policy dilemmas on international engagement beyond humanitarian, conflict resolution, and counter-terrorism concerns (ibid). To understand how to move towards open (as well as covert) military and political support beyond regime change, international governments today are faced with an urgent need for reconsidering three interrelated issues namely: 1. the relation of the criteria for inclusion in peace agreements with the existence of local socio-political legitimacy; 2. the ways in which access and use of international resources contribute towards the state-building potential of armed groups; and 3. which model of state building is best suited to secure a locally owned transition (ibid).

3.1 Libya’s crisis dynamics

According to El Kamouni-Janssen, Shadeedi and Ezzedine (2018:9) currently in Libya, both of its ‘governments’ rely a lot on non-state armed groups to assert their authority and to safeguard their presence. As a result, this has led to a situation in which the authority of government does not go beyond the area controlled by its affiliated armed group(s). In the West, it has become terribly clear that the GNA in Tripoli can only
function at the mercy of the capital’s main militias (ibid). The Tripoli groups have stabilised the city in the sense that they cooperatively prevent the rise of other militias in the capital by swallowing up smaller armed groups and pushing out more powerful ones, like the Misrata militias in 2017. This has allowed them to effectively capture key state functions and resources, posing a clear obstacle to any (future) political settlement (referencing Lacher, 2018) but also triggering resentment among armed groups surrounding the capital (ibid).

The authors add that likewise, there are different armed groups in the east of Libya, although there Khalifa Haftar could consolidate his and the interim government’s positions largely as a result of his self-styled LNA (ibid). Furthermore, the LNA is not a national entity but rather a loose coalition of local armed groups that has a powerful unifying function (ibid). In the absence of this military backing the Tobruk-based government lacks genuine force, as it has no mandate and authority. Out of all of Libya’s ‘national’ actors, the LNA’s area of influence stretches the furthest, covering much of Libya’s east as well as broad areas in northwest Libya and the Fezzan province in the south (ibid). [See Appendix 1: Map 1 and 2]

3.2 Factors influencing armed groups stabilising potential

For Podder armed groups need to be understood in terms of the diversity of roles that they fulfil. Unlike groups that are predatory, abusive, and disruptive for peace, certain groups offer alternatives to a weak and inefficient government as the legitimate representative of minority grievances. In such cases the violence and insurgency may be the basis upon which there is a desire to reshape the foundations of a weak, predatory, or repressive state. From this point of view armed groups can play an important role in the fulfilment of the social contract which becomes warped between the state and its civilians over time. Governance of civilians and the nature of support for insurgent movements during conflict constitute the basis for their post-conflict legitimacy and the transition of armed groups into electoral party politics. The display of commitment to wartime governance and institution building, and adherence to a clear political agenda, offers the strongest indicator of stabilising potential [(Podder, 2013: 19) referencing (OECD, 2011), Mampilly (2010) and Staniland (2012)].
These groups are also proving to be more than just local actors but are increasingly becoming key players in shaping the power relations between major state powers. Kausch (2017: 69) looks at the extent to which states and non-state actors use each other as a means to increase their prospects in a given conflict and/or their broader regional environment. Echoing the sentiments of Gaub (2017) that state weakness can create political vacuums, Kausch goes on to say that this vacuum can attract outsiders. Outsiders who establish mutually beneficial relations with local non-state actors whereby empowerment is traded for influence (ibid).

Non-state groups in the Middle East can be partners and challengers to their governments but the lines are also quite blurred. Non-state actors who take on state-like functions where the state may not be adequately delivering are beneficial to the state. On the other hand, violent non-state challengers are inclined to wanting to weaken state institutions or overthrow incumbent governments by means of direct military confrontation (ibid:70). The immense ability of non-state challengers to seriously oppose their home states central authority make them very attractive partners to outside forces with regional ambitions (ibid).

Looking at the Libyan case the literature says that countries like Italy and France have supported the UN backed government in the one hand and supported Haftar on the other hand who opposes the Tripoli based government. The Russians see Libya as an opportunity of influence and sure enough their presence in Libya would serve to counter any US influence. Egypt and the UAE support the UN process also but also back Haftar in his “fight” against Islamist movements but also to influence oil rich regions in Libya (in the case of Egypt). Qatar and Turkey have thrown their weight behind the Islamist groups (Muslim Brotherhood) pitting themselves up against Egypt and UAE which is an on-going dispute within the region between those countries for and against the Brotherhood. It’s safe to say that proxy battles are being fought on Libyan soil and it is clear that outside actors have divergent interests and this can pose a challenge to stabilising efforts. Although it’s not always clear who supports who we can deduce that the international/regional actors that are likely to yield more influence in Libya, when the dust settles, will be determined by the groups on the ground particularly the victors in the battle currently being waged between Tripoli and Haftar (LNA) if a peace settlement is not reached.
However, not all armed groups offer stability and three conditions under which groups are less likely to contribute to stability are identified by Podder (2013:19-20) as follows: 1. when international state-building approaches confer power into institutions and elected elites without undertaking an analysis of whether the rules and procedures governing institutions are sufficiently transparent and accountable, they are less likely to work; 2. the post-election situation: if rebel governments that win elections continue with extra-constitutional methods of governing or seek to ‘delegitimise’ other groups from power and resources, they are likely to worsen feelings of exclusion and generate local resistance and; 3. state-building approaches that vest international recognition on armed groups without establishing their power base or roots of traditional local legitimacy are likely to falter [(ibid) referencing Call (2011), Clapham (1998), Kriger (2006) and the World Bank Report (2011)].

Another factor to be considered when considering armed groups stability potential include their access to international resources and how this can influence strategic behaviour of the groups towards peace-building and state-building processes. The first element of discussion put forward by Podder is the trans-national and trans-border linkages: conflict financing. The downside of globalisation includes the transnationalised flows of resources that sustain conflict cycles around the world while evading the control of the nation-state. Armed groups flourish within this transnationalised realm because their organisational structure, financing, and patterns of mobilisation are closely interlinked with other global forms of insecurity. Conflict financing sources may range from foreign sponsorship, natural resources extraction, diaspora remittances, and taxation, to looting and kidnapping of civilians and humanitarian workers [(ibid:23) referencing Heine and Thakur (2011) and Wennmann (2017)].

With regards to the natural resources extraction the government in Tripoli manages Libya’s $80bn in oil revenues and foreign reserves but General Khalifa Haftar of the LNA, has seized oil fields in the south and in the east of the country (Aljazeera news, 2019). Although this may be the case the oil and gas industry is overseen by the National Oil Corporation (NOC). According to Baltrop (2019: 6) the collapse of the Qaddafi regime saw major disruptions and difficulties for the sector mainly as a result of insecurity made up of armed conflict and criminal violence. The inability of the interim government and local authorities to demobilise militias and establish unified
security forces gave rise to the insecurity and this led to local struggles for physical control of oil facilities and the NOC amongst opposing factions (ibid). [see Appendix 1: Map 3]

The instability and conflict in Libya has had a significant impact on oil infrastructure, production and exports however in spite of this the NOC and oil industry has stayed afloat, remains unified and protected from the political chaos. Even though local actors and rivals have sought to control oil facilities (usually for financial benefit) they have for the most part cooperated with the NOC in seeking continuation, recommencement of production and exports (ibid:7). It can be said that even though politically Libya is divided the NOC is an economically unifying actor between the rival centres of power.

Podder (2013:24-25) continues referring to the second element which is that of bad neighbourhoods and global communications whereby the sharing of borders with fragile states can result in the spillover of refugees and rebel groups, or encourage illicit trade in arms, minerals or narcotics that may result in regional conflict systems. Transnational insurgencies have an important trans-border dimension. They rely on sanctuaries and supply lines across borders to sustain operations. With regards to communications, the growing use of information technology and global communications that underlie the neoliberal agenda for open markets, democracy, liberalization, and good governance have also created easier access to new resources such as social media for armed groups which they can use for mobilisation purposes [(ibid) referencing Fakuda-Parr (2007)].

The last element is that of International Aid in the form of financial support which has been channeled into peace-building and state-building processes over the years. State building has become the central focus of international engagement by donors and OECD countries in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Podder states that war economies are parasitic, illicit, and predatory. They create a vicious cycle in which aid can be distorted by local actors and may be misappropriated to help insurgents to launch a new war effort. Aid can have different objectives, ranging from emergency relief and short-term stabilisation to long-term development. In most conflict zones, humanitarian aid becomes critical for the survival of displaced populations. The capture of humanitarian aid can provide incentives to armed groups, empowering or disempowering them in relation to their rivals. Insurgents may use aid to support local
services, thereby enhancing their legitimacy and support base [(ibid:25-26) referencing OECD (2009), Ballentine and Sherman (2003) and Anderson (1999)].

3.3 Armed Groups State-Building Potential

In establishing the state-building potential of the key groups in Libya the following typology will be applied.

Table 1: Nature of Support Base, Access to Resources, Relations with Civilians and Non-State Armed Groups’ State-Building Potential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Support Base</th>
<th>Resource Base</th>
<th>Relations with Civilians</th>
<th>Domestic Support</th>
<th>International Support</th>
<th>State-Building Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic/Tribal</td>
<td>Community Taxation/Natural Resources</td>
<td>Protective/Cooperative</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological/Religious</td>
<td>Community Taxation/Natural Resources</td>
<td>Protective/Cooperative</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaspora/Displaced</td>
<td>Remittances/Weapon/Bases/Communications/Capital-Based Exchange Systems</td>
<td>Abusive/Conflicting</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional/International</td>
<td>Cash/Weapon/Bases/Intelligence/Capital-Based Exchange Systems</td>
<td>Abusive/Conflicting</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Population (local as well as Diaspora)</td>
<td>Mix of Community-Based and Capital Exchange Systems</td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Podder (2013:28)

According to Podder the typology explains the ways in which armed groups ability to access different types of resources impact on its socio-political legitimacy and state-building potential. The article develops an ideal-typical typology of NSAGs’ socio-political legitimacy potential. It relates support base and resource access pathways that shape each group’s mobilisation processes and organisational structures with their potential for state building by imporing the legitimacy lens (ibid: 26).

Podder goes on to say such a typological analysis firstly involves grouping together armed groups with respect to their core support base (ethnic/tribal; ideological/religious; diaspora/displaced; and regional/international [state sponsorship]) in order to understand the extent of transnational linkages and external support. This is followed
by an identification of the levels of domestic and international recognition and support (high or low) that can be observed as commonly corresponding with each type. High domestic support is observed in the case of armed groups that enjoy strong community-based and local support premised on ethnic, tribal, ideological, and religious factors. High levels of international support are observed in the case of groups that are recognized as legitimate by diaspora and displaced groups and by regional and international state and non-state actors (ibid:26-27).

Further, Podder states that the types of resources that are accessed by armed groups can vary between community based and capitalist exchange systems. Community-based resource bases create dependency primarily on the local community for a range of support and resources such as food, donations, taxes, natural resources, information, shelter, communication, and manpower. On the other hand, capital-based exchange systems create linkages with transnational and trans-border flows (ibid:27).

External sponsorship and supply of weapons, funding, intelligence, and military training create low dependence on local populations. The type of resource base in turn defines the nature of interaction between armed groups and civilians i.e. whether it is abusive or protective. Community-based armed groups that rely on local populations for resources and support are likely to be protective towards them as opposed to groups that enjoy transnational support and supplies (ibid).

### 3.4 Research Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Groups</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haftar and the LNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Former Libya Dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misrata</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows that of the 7 key armed groups, 5 of them have a high state-building potential and 2 have a low state-building potential.

### 3.5 Discussion of findings

This research aims to establish the potential that Libya’s key armed groups have to provide stability in state-building. The armed groups are divided between east (mainly the LNA and Benghazi groups) and west groups (Tripoli, Zintan and Tribal army, Misrata and the Former Libya Dawn) which is indicative of the political divide in current day Libya because these groups are affiliated with the two opposing centres of power in Tripoli (west) and Tobruk (east). As we know the Libya Dawn was formed as an opposition to Haftar’s attempted coup in Tripoli so it is likely that it may not have come to being otherwise. As stated previously it has since seized to exist. The groups with a low state-building potential is the PFG and the LNA. Similarly, to the former Libya Dawn, the PFG has mostly fractured today and the splintered groups are not likely to be in a position to play an influential role in Libya’s state-building.

The results of the LNA is perhaps not very surprising considering that currently in Libya Haftar does not recognise the UN backed government and is considered to be driven to take over Tripoli and establish a military rule. Haftar and his forces are considered to a destabilising element. According to Laessing (2019) in the past month Western diplomats approached Haftar to try and discourage from launching an offensive against the Tripoli government. He was urged not to plunge the country into civil war, but rather he could be a civilian leader if he committed himself to pursuing a political settlement (ibid). Seemingly the General has not heeded these pleas because on the 4th of April 2019 he is said to have sent his troops from the LNA towards Tripoli (Haftar has since launched an attack on Tripoli), this happened at the same time that UN...
Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was in the city to prepare for a National Reconciliation conference this month which Guterres’ aides thought Haftar supported (ibid).

Laessing continues and states that for world powers, such as France, Italy and Britain, this military campaign is seen as a setback. The international community has over the years tried to co-opt Haftar into a political settlement that would stabilise the major oil and gas producer after almost a decade of conflict that had acted as a breeding ground for Islamist militancy (ibid). Seemingly the UAE and Egypt (who have backed him) have also been blindsided by Haftar’s advance for Tripoli (ibid). Haftar is no newcomer to the Libyan political scene and is seemingly a force to be reckoned with currently, so even though the results show a low stabilising potential I think that he (and his force) can play a crucial role in resolving the East-West conflict especially because Haftar (LNA) now controls about two thirds of the country. Haftar’s ambition to take over Tripoli “to rid Tripoli of the grip of militias as he says” could be seen from the perspective of an attempt at consolidating power and unifying Libya, which is not necessarily a bad thing, if he is willing to be a ‘good sport’ which involves participating in elections, accepting whatever the outcome may be and still participate meaningfully in Libya’s state-building.

The remaining groups results show that they have a high stabilising potential and this seems credible as these groups are considered to be the revolutionary brigades. For Kamouni-Janssen, Shadeedi and Ezzeddine (2018:11) the weakness of the state, and its inability to provide basic services to the citizens, has enabled these groups to take responsibility for providing resources, services and security from the state in areas under their control. This not only expands and consolidates their territorial control, but also contributes to their political recognition by, and in some instances legitimacy from, communities and groups within them (ibid). They have a role in local governance and security provision with an affiliation to the UN backed GNA. Generally, they are not set on undermining the state but also have mixed feelings about it, but they have also benefitted from the weakness of the institutions (ibid) for e.g. the rise of the Tripoli militia cartel which has enabled these groups to tighten their grip over economic assets.

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1 The National Reconciliation conference (UN initiative), which was scheduled to take place in the Libyan town of Ghadames from April 14-16, was aiming at reconciling feuding Libya Factions and paving the way for elections to be held in May.
and state institutions. Although an occurrence like this does not bode well for the state’s ability to fulfil its obligations, all is not lost because by virtue of these groups having taken on ‘state-like’ functions indicates that they have an ability to negotiate some type of order by providing stability. This is an important piece of the conflict resolution puzzle in Libya which has to be balanced with negotiating a stand down and disarmament by these groups.

Resolving Libya’s civil conflict, engaging armed groups, successful DDR and beginning the process of state-building is not going to be an easy undertaking but it’s also not impossible. It will require all parties and actors involved to come to the table and make some compromises for a legitimate government. Revisiting the theoretical framework based on the ideational liberalist thinking we can see that the different armed actors in Libya have conflicting sets of preferences concerning the scope and nature of legitimate state objectives which has given rise to the situation we see today perpetuated by the fragility of the current state. The nature of Libya’s fragmentation has made the state vulnerable to armed groups who have become intertwined in state institutions blurring the legitimacy lines and rendering the state almost incapable of functioning. Navigating through the greed, grievances and hostilities that have fueled inter-militia conflict will be a challenge however it is not insurmountable if a point of convergent interests can be found (by local actors) to move towards re-building the country with support of the international community. In spite of the challenges the results presented above should be seen as promising.
Conclusion

The Arab spring of 2011 will be remembered as a momentous occasion that re-shaped the political dynamics of the affected countries in the MENA region and Libya was no exception. The literature shows how non-state actors played a pivotal role in bringing about some of the regions regime changes. The appearance of more and more armed actors (including Isis) is definitely a global issue as it has implications for international and regional security. With this said, armed groups should not just be looked at from a negative perspective but rather from a point of view of which of them can participate in Libya’s political life legitimately. Key armed groups will play an integral role in the rebuilding project in Libya and this research aimed to show the stabilising potential for state-building that each of the groups have.

History pre-Gaddafi and the legacy of the Gaddafi regime haunts Libya today where political life is divided mostly along tribal/family and ethnic lines and this has been the basis upon which many armed groups have come to be. The fall of this regime left the state vulnerable to infiltration by these groups particularly because the fragmentation lead to the establishment of different centres of power, and the UN-backed government has proven not be strong enough to curb the emergence of armed groups and the proliferation of weapons. Essentially the state has no monopoly over the use of force and this further undermines its legitimacy. It can be said that the affiliation of these groups with state institutions further complicates the dynamics, however it should also be seen as an opportunity to perhaps better engage with these groups for achieving political settlements and participating in inclusive state-building.

Although the process of reaching compromise for peace between the relevant actors, who have different agendas, may be cumbersome it will take effort from all parties particularly the groups that have presented with a higher stabilising potential for state-building, and political will. The groups with a lower potential may need a bit more incentive to cooperate and this could be in the form of particular power-sharing agreements which ideally should not be to the detriment of others. In the end Libyans must decide the type of state that they want and take the necessary steps to build it.
Recommendations

State-building processes ought to be locally driven and should focus on more engagement with armed groups particularly those with a high stability potential. There has to exist a complexity of engagement between governments and all key armed actors in Libya’s conflict resolution.

This study recommends the following: 1. continued negotiations and a joint cooperation between armed groups and government based on establishing politically legitimate institutions to govern the country; 2. a complementary integrated strategy on the political, social and economic level with the aim of working towards a common objective by all parties involved; 3. The leaders of Libya and those that are backing them externally should work to make governing institutions more representative, address the constituents needs, and deliver more and better services; 4. Libyan leaders should work towards rebuilding the security sector in the country and reinstating the states monopoly over the use of force; 5 effective and mutually agreed upon systems should be put in place to curb conflict and in the event where there are incompatibilities, processes and institutions must be established that help to manage disputes. Finally, the study recommends that regional powers refrain from supporting those opposing political settlements but rather to use their influence to help local actors foster an environment that is conducive to finding a political solution that will enable nation, peace and state building in Libya.
Appendix 1: Geographic and Political Maps of Libya

Map 1: Territorial control in Libya

Map 2: Power Distribution

Source: (Bloomberg, 2018)
Map 3: Libya’s oil and gas fields

Source: (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016)
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