

**Reconstructing Statehood Amidst Sub-State Violence: An Analysis of
Political Misorientation and Lack of Collective Consciousness in Post-
Gaddafi Libya (2012-2013)**

**Reconstruire un État au milieu de la violence sous-étatique : une
analyse de la désorientation politique et du manque de conscience
collective dans la Libye post-Kadhafi(2013-2012)**

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to address the case of the building the statehood project in Libya, specifically the concentration is on the years 2012 and 2013, when Libya was entering a new radical transformation. In this era, violence was an essential means to give political parties and sub-state groups what was called in the article a status quo presence in the Libyan political reality. This presence created a lack of collective consciousness, and political misorientation based on the cruciality of this intra-state violence. On this basis, the article uses these concepts substantially in following up on the developments that occurred in the political situation and the process of the state-building in the assigned years.

Keywords: Libya, Collective Consciousness, Political Misorientation, Sub-State Violence, and Imagined Communities

Résumé : L'objectif de cet article est d'aborder le cas du projet de construction d'un État en Libye, en particulier la concentration sur les années ; 2012 et 2013, lorsque la Libye entrait dans une nouvelle transformation radicale. À cette époque, la violence était un moyen essentiel pour donner aux partis politiques et aux groupes infra-étatiques ce que l'on appelait dans l'article une présence de statu quo dans la réalité politique libyenne. Cette présence a créé un manque de conscience collective et une désorientation politique basée sur la crucialité de cette violence intra-étatique. Sur cette base, l'article utilise ces concepts de manière substantielle pour suivre les développements survenus dans la situation politique et le processus de construction de l'État au cours des années données.

Mots clés : Libye, conscience collective, désorientation politique, violence sous-étatique et communautés imaginées

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1. Introduction

This research aims to critically analyze the impact of intra-state violence as a dynamic dimension in the post-Gaddafi era in Libya. Specifically, the investigation is about how this violence, though revolutionary initially, lacked proper commitment in structuring state sovereignty. The political uprising in Libya, particularly following a long undemocratic regime, worsened conditions worse than those witnessed during Gaddafi's era¹. Instability side by side with different signs of fragmentation appeared, such as region-based separationist demands, particularly in the eastern Libyan region of Cyrenaica².

Societal fragmentation existed in Al-Gaddafi's³ time as benignant⁴. However, they were activated after his fall by three factors. First, nonstate armed actors. Second, conflicting ideological perceptions of the statehood project. Third, regionalism as a strategic—constructive element within this project. In other words, armed sub-state actors took control of power to apply violence and to influence the political process of state reconstruction through coercion⁵. Alongside, there were subjective and ideological

¹ See how there were different types of conflicts in the post-Gaddafi era, and how societal fragmentation and political division took a risky position in the Libyan context. Virk, Melissa S. "Airstrikes, Proxy Warfare, and Civilian Casualties in Libya." *New America*, 2020.

² To know about the role of the tribes, for example, in dividing the Libyan society. El-Katiri, Mohammed. "State-Building Challenges in a Post-Revolution Libya." Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2012: 9-10.

³ Muammar Gaddafi treated different groups of people unequally, favoring some while oppressing others. This led the people of Cyrenaica to believe that the regime was unfairly distributing economic resources. The feeling of discrimination was influential among the Amazigh, who were marginalized by the Arab majority and primarily located in Jabal Nafusa.

⁴ Jason Pack. *The 2011 Libyan Uprisings and the Struggle for the Post-Qadhafi Future*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 35-39.

⁵ The claim applies to Salafist groups, Misratan revolutionaries, and other armed groups from Cyrenaica. These groups were even able to assassinate some of the appointed officials in the Libyan transitional government in 2012. Droz-Vincent, Philippe. "Competitive Statehood in Libya: Governing Differently a Specific Setting or Deconstructing its Weak Sovereign State with a Fateful Drift Toward Chaos?" Routledge Taylor & Francis Group (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group) 29, no. 3 (2018), p.440.

conflicting conceptions on the state building in Libya as an imagined community. Furthermore, regionalism as a fragmentation power divided Libya into distinct regions. Subsequently, this situation complicated the process of structuring the post-Gaddafi governance and achieving political support to the state building process.

Fragmentation, rather than being treated as a primary object under study, is instead examined as a facilitating instrument to reveal its connection to the use of violence. This approach sets the stage for exploring why the post Gaddafi era failed to positively respond to Libyan people's needs than Gaddafi's era. In this context, two crucial factors complicated the state-building efforts. These factors are (1) the political misorientation of those regionalist parties and the armed groups that gained political weight in the post-Gaddafi era, as well as (2) their division of the Libyan society to achieve their divergent political agendas. Yet, their intrastate violence was also a critical tool for deepening the impact of these two factors within society. A central research question, therefore, emerges: How does political misorientation and the absence of collective consciousness explain the failure of post-Gaddafi state building?

The primary focus of this research is 2012 and 2013, Within this context, the fragmentation is closely dependent on three elements. (A) Lack of collective consciousness to direct the political uprising toward state building. (B) The revolutionary violence lacked organization and orientation to establish a new Libyan regime in the post-Gaddafi era. (C) The imagined communities within the dominant ideologies of the political uprising manifested as fragmenting entities (i.e., regionalist, Islamist, tribalist, etc.).

Literature Review

1. The Concepts of Violence and Political Orientation in the Marxist Thought

A. What is Revolutionary Violence?

Karl Marx knew violence was crucial in history-making, though he considered its importance "secondary"¹. According to the Marxist

¹ Arendt, Opcit, p.10.

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perspective of the historical materialist development of human societies, violence is a necessary tool for transitioning between situations¹. In Marx's sense, violence, throughout history, allowed the oppressor (the wealthy) to suppress the oppressed (the lower classes), stretching their dominance from "social management into the exploitation of the masses".

Frantz Fanon, Consequently, revolutionary violence can be seen as a reactive response to resist violence created by the oppressing class. This understanding suggests that violence is a significant instrument, crucially linked to two dimensions. First, violence's role in producing radical political shifts. Second, violence's connection to the issue of the political orientation and unity of the revolutionaries, as Fanon discussed in his book. In Libya, it is considerable to note how some of the armed groups used violence to change their focus on "purging Libya of those who served under [Qaddafi's regime]"² instead of using this access to violence to restructure a new political system and feed the state's internal stability. This shift redirected the uprising's purpose from changing Libya's political instability to seeing Libya's political future through the lens of the past of al-Qaddafi's authoritarianism and the strategy of taking revenge. Moreover, the impact of using violence was powerful even to push, many times, the National Transitional Council in Libya to consent to the "militia, regionalist, and Islamist" subjective and narrow-minded requirements³.

Revolutionary Violence and Organization-Based Political Orientation

Highlighting the topic of political orientation is essential as it smooths understanding of how unorganized revolutionary violence causes distorted—unplanned results, such as the uninvested violence in building the state that will make the society under the rule of the armed militias. In this consideration, Vladimir Lenin addressed that the essentiality of the organization is strategic to reach, if not well studied, at least expected outcomes. While Lenin emphasized the political organization of the workers

¹ Streek, Wolfgang. "Engels' Second Theory Technology, Warfare and the Growth of the State." *New Left Review*, 2020, p.78.

² Jason Pack, Opcit, p,08.

³ Jason Pack, Opcit, p,08.

in the form of a political party, his view on political organization can supplement the argument of this paper on violence¹. It aids in explaining how the sub-state violence created political misorientation in Libya's context, which fostered fragmentation. This fragmentation was based on tribal or regional separations, overshadowing the establishment of the political parties required to lead the political uprising to a constructive destination. Moreover, violence inspired by this political misorientation adversely impacted state-building efforts.

2. The Social Contract in the Realist and Liberalist Perspectives

Thomas Hobbes claimed that the social contract grants a sovereign institution/leader the collective and legitimate acknowledgment to represent the entire society. This acknowledgment replaced the sub-state representation, favoring this political body as the representation of the whole. This governance model was referred to as the "commonwealth"². What one may see in this simplification is that Hobbes' conception of the social contract entails collective compromise, allowing the rise of the state as the exclusive governing entity, detached from subgroup biases.

In John Locke's philosophy, the social contract differs from Hobbes' approach. Locke fundamentally uses, in his writings, the ideas of "natural right" and "the right to succession," signifying the transfer of power of the divine to humans. He argues that the social contract "arises from the unanimous agreement of real, historical contractors". Additionally, he discusses the significance of constitution-making as a regular way to organize an order for society. Constitutions even occupy a deep part of Locke's political philosophy. He connects the constitutions to the social contract and the dealings between people, particularly by talking about the "legislative" constitution, how people are the source of it, and the government is the only legitimate power assigned by people. Locke's argument on constitutions supports the discussion on a constitutionally regulated use of violence, legitimized by written laws and employed by state

¹ Lenin, V. *What Is to Be Done: Burning Questions of Our Movement*. London: Martin Lawrence, Limited, pp.102-106.

²Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Hamilton: The McMaster University Archive of the History of Economic Thought, 1963, p.107.

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authority. This argument further opens the door for critiquing the illegal violence produced by Libyan armed groups amid state-building efforts.

Eventually, the social contract, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's viewpoint, is a modern "social pact" between individuals. This pact symbolizes an agreement between citizens and their ruler. Once this agreement is violated, those citizens and their leader no longer share any agreement, and they are "return[ed] to [their] original rights and take back their natural liberty. While losing the conventional liberty for which [they] renounced". One of his key concepts is the concept of "general will. He defines it as an element that allows everyone in the society to participate in the authority of "the whole". Rousseau's perspective emphasizes that the general will necessitates compromise from everyone to create a collective entity (the state). Last but not least, in one way or another, all three philosophers, necessitated a collective compromise to establish the foundation for statehood. This compromise aims to stop the flow of any factional or subgroup influences, promoting state allegiance and preventing the atomization of state sovereignty.

Influenced by Engels' "Anti-Dühring," generated a thorough viewpoint on violence. Fanon saw it as a means not only to liberate the colonized people but also to "restor[e] of nationhood of [them]"¹. He believed that violence could be ended by responding with even greater violence.

3. The Libyan Political Context (Political Misorientation and Revolutionary Violence)

In the wake of the 2010-2011 uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia², the Libyan political situation witnessed a radical shift in 2011 as Al-Gaddafi's regime was demolished. This shift exposed Libya to internal political struggles and societal instability. As a result, significant fragmentation emerged over the next two years, indicating a politically insecure phase.

¹ Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963, p.35.

² Randall, Edward. "After Qadhafi: Development and Democratization in Libya." *The Middle East Journal* 69, no. 2 (2015), p.205.

While some perceived it as a manifestation of an institutionally weak state¹, others viewed it as a part of “the complexity of a reconstruction of Libya’s statehood”².

It is plausible to claim that during this period, the Libyan state experienced “serious institutional weakening” rather than categorizing Libya as a failed state for many reasons. First, it was possible, on many occasions, to attempt to establish agreements to achieve reconciliation or harmony between the post-Gaddafi parties, such as the National Transitional Council and Tuwareg (2011) and Tebu and Twareg (2014, 2015)³, but they failed because some of the important agreements⁴ were often conducted between the politicians and excluded the influential physical powers like militia leaders. Thus, Consequently, constitution-making and state-building efforts overlooked these actors, who instead prioritized their physical influence, i.e., violence.

Second, the National Transitional Council succeeded in 2012 in constituting laws and adding amendments to these laws⁵. However, some observations denote a lack of collective consciousness, and the absence of political allegiance hindered the progress of laws instituted by the National Transitional Council. Additionally, instead of allocating allegiance to the state, political allegiance was divided between subs-state groups, undermining the unified state-building project. This paper seeks to clarify these observations that contributed to Libya's dual governance⁶ emergence

¹ In this period, the absence of a ruling system automatically led to certain actions that affected the post-Gaddafi composition of society, such as taking revenge from supporters of Al-Gaddafi regime and stigmatizing some groups by using certain stereotypes. Ammar, Sahar. *National Reconciliation in Libya: Challenges and Perspectives*. 2020: Swisspeace, n.d.

² Rudzka, Ewa. "Patterns of Libya's Instability in the Aftermath of the Collapse of Gaddafi's Regime." *Księgarnia Akademicka*, 2016.

³ Ammar, Op.cit.

⁴ This happened in the summer of 2013 and caused marginalization against the region-based militias when they saw themselves disregarded by the agreements that created the alliance between the Islamicists and the National Transitional Council. The disregarded militias (e.g., Zintani militias or Ibrahim Jadhra's armed groups) invaded many Libyan oil sites using their arms. See (Droz-Vincent 2018, 441).

⁵ Ammar, Op.cit, pp.2-4.

⁶ Rudzka, Op.cit, p.231.

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of various armed forces, anti-statist powers, and regional separatist demands¹.

The issue of political misorientation existed in the Libyan context, and resulted in an ambiguous project, compounding difficulties in outlining a clear path forward for Libya. The unorganized use of revolutionary violence further blurred the vision of state-building. Thus, the statehood project, according to the argument in this paper, is unclear, but what can be substantial to clarify its way is to have a mode of social consciousness that serves the purpose of having a state apart from any subgrouping tendency. This collective consciousness will promote political allegiance to the state and prevent the atomization of state sovereignty.

Eventually, organization-based political orientation depends on a knowledgeable and expert elite that can manage the challenges of the political context and guide the masses to a stable system away from any classic viewpoint that might not be suitable for organizing a modern state.² Thus, the regularity that the constitution grants the political elite is necessary to know the milestones of the state's path. Moreover, this model of organization ensures that the use of violence cannot be inspired by factionalism or the sub-state tendency. However, this is only a part of the story of the case in Libya. There, politics and the state-building process are influenced, sometimes decisively, by regionalist factionalism, other times by tribalism, Islamism, etc. As a result, this phenomenon required the investigation of the role of the sub-state violence that paved the way for the political uprising to continue and how this violence shaped the form of the political relations and dealings between the Libyan powers.

Khalifa Haftar, who is a general of the so-called "Libyan National Army" aimed to control the Western part of Libya (Tobruk). He started the war on the Islamists through what he called "Operation Dignity (also known as Operation Karama)" in 2014³. This military—political event was one of

¹ Rudzka, Op.cit, p.227.

² For instance, when some leaders try to impose tribal values or thoughts on building the state (a tribe-based state), that will lead to a contradictory or illogical form of the state.

³ Eriksson, Mikael. "A Fratricidal Libya: Making Sense of a Conflict Complex." Routledge Taylor & Francis Group 27, no. 5 (n.d.).

the most apparent indications of the new political stage that Libya is going through. As might be expected, violence needs to be faced with violence by other forces. On this basis, the purpose of the use of violence becomes, on the one hand, to conquer the other (probably the new classified enemy) and restructure the formula of the contemporary power per the political and ideological desires of the vanquisher. On the other hand, the state-building becomes neglected or even a forsaken project. That is how a new political discourse may propose a project not considered or shown on the political map. In this regard, the use of violence produced a more respected name for the fragmentation of Libya, which is the federal Libya. The attempt in this project is to absorb the process of “decentralizing” the center and redistribute power¹ between the three regions: the Eastern Libya (Cyrenaica) led by Haftar, Tripoli in the Northwestern Libya, and Fezzan in the Southwest Libyan part.

In this context, political misorientation and the lack of collective consciousness meet (regarding their negative impact) at one point. Mainly, misorientation from political elites misinforms the masses, necessitating collective consciousness as a unifying force to resist this misorientation. This consciousness legitimizes elite efforts, unifies violent resistance against mutual threats like ISIS,² safeguards societal integrity against self-inflicted violence, and counteracts political instability. This argument paves the way to explicate how political orientation requires a knowledgeable elite capable of managing political challenges and guiding the people toward stability harmoniously with modern state-building norms. However, Libya's context has been dominated by regionalism, tribalism, and Islamism, and other elements influencing political and state-building processes.

The Libyan elections 2012 marked a turning point, introducing a new wave of politicians who impacted Libyan society. However, these variables created conflicts, particularly in the pursuit of control over security apparatuses. General Khalifa Haftar's emergence also reflects a new

¹ For more information about the details of the decentralization from the center to the peripheries in Libya, see *Federalism and Decentralization in the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa*. (Omar M. Dajani 2023, 320-324.).

² See, how ISIS, was in a certain period a threat to many of the parties that owned the tools of violence, and it was even a threat to the process of building the state in Libya. (Eriksson n.d., 826-828).

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evolving political scene and its implications. As expected, violence begets violence, pushing state-building into the background as factions focus on outwitting each other. This phenomenon introduced notions like a federal Libya, which presents a convincing argument for seeking political orientation and collective consciousness¹.

Theoretical Framework

The design of the theory of this research depends on three conceptions. First, the conception of violence will guide the author to notice this violence as an indicator of political misorientation. That violence is terminologically different from other concepts of power and force, as Arendt suggests². Violence, if the thought of it as a serving tool, helps its users to determine their political agenda. It also serves to create “the emphasis on [specific] political or economic continuity [...]”³. According to Arendt, violence in Marxist thought was a substantial tool, but it was not a substance in itself⁴ to start the analysis. In other words, it could be a substantial determinant of the status quo, but it is not the starting point of the status quo, unlike the class conflict.

Violence against Al-Gaddafi’s regime took two forms: demonstrations and armed conflict against the regime’s military forces⁵. What makes the use of this conception (violence) controversial in the Libyan context is that this mode of violence was based on sub-state incentives, such as tribal, regional, ideological, and other non-political elements, instead of being sourced from a political party. Likewise, the use of violence was also influenced by the role of fragmentation in making it more difficult to build the post-Gaddafi regime. This issue, hence, necessitated analyzing distortion and complicatedness the Libyan political context from a critical perspective.

¹ Eriksson, Mikael. "A Fratricidal Libya: Making Sense of a Conflict Complex." Routledge Taylor & Francis Group 27, no. 5, pp.820-821.

² Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1970.

³ Arendt, Op.cit, p.9.

⁴ Arendt, Op.cit, p.10.

⁵ Virk, Op.cit.

Second, in referring to sociologist Durkheim, this discussion attempts to imagine the concept of collective consciousness in the Libyan context and to know how lack of collective consciousness may, to some extent, diagnose a part of the complexity of the Libyan political situation. This collective consciousness, according to Durkheim, is based on societal “solidarity which comes from likenesses”¹. He refers social consciousness back to the phenomenon of division of labor in society and argues that it is “in large part composed of the authority of tradition”².

Durkheim distinguished it from the “individual consciousnesses,” and he has argued that the collective consciousness differs since it contains different formulas from those designed in the individual consciousness. He, while addressing the division of labor, argues that collective consciousness exists in each individual’s consciousness, but this individual consciousness serves only as a participant in the collective consciousness. In other words, the individual consciousness emerges as a portion that contributes to the totality that creates a shared collective consciousness. It functions as “the basis of social order; modern societies exhibit a differentiated structure, greater individual consciousness and ‘organic solidarity’ (increased interdependence between the parts of society)”³.

Collective consciousness is necessary to allow people to have a mutual belonging in society to protect the state from any possible or imminent rupture or being in a status of a permanent ailment. Therefore, considering it is useful and can inform a new path to think of the Libyan context. Empirically claiming, the issue of the collective consciousness to unify the anti-Gaddafi parties under a unified national umbrella to guide this political uprising didn’t exist. That problem left the main goal of the political uprising unachieved, and this made the political project in Libya, in the final analysis, ambiguous and deficient in creating a modern statehood project *that unifies all means of violence and power under the rule of the state*.

¹ Durkheim, Emile. *The Division of Labor in Society*. Illinois: The Macmillan Company, 1933, p.130.

² Ibid., p.291.

³ Jury, David Jury & Julia. *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*. Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1991, p.169.

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Third, Benedict Anderson's conception of imagined communities is sought to be valuable for this research. It is an addition to the theoretical analysis, and it will be used when it is needed to facilitate grasping the argument about political misorientation. The concept is valid because it may describe certain types of mindsets that were influential in the political uprising based on specific ideological imagination, as it is in the regionalist mindset. The conception of imagined communities, according to Anderson, is used to describe nationalism-based relations in society between those who govern and those who are governed. However, it is borrowed here with a little modification to denote a utopian community as a sub-state group sees the factual society through its lens (tribal entity, Islamist imagination - heaven and hell-, etc.); where the imagining group imagines itself living in better conditions and be, if not the dominant group in the imagined community, at least to be a member of the dominant group that will conquer others, or generally to be a promised group to live in more comfortable conditions.

This imagined community is based on a political illusion that cannot clearly guide the rebuild of the post-Gaddafi regime, and it makes the path to build the state troublesome because it separates people from their political reality through their possession of the tools of violence and the turn of this possession into a mental pathology¹ that causes the denial of the other in favor of the I or the we that shape the community from a subjective imagination of reality. This refusal basically raises the denial and the enmity between the different sub-state groups that each of them has a distinct I. For example, that is how Haftar expressed his war against the Islamicists by using a conception that represents a type of virtue (dignity). Fundamentally, the conception indicates that Haftar wants to create a community without the Islamicists. He succeeded in illustrating that, and the sign of his success is that he gained legitimacy from the Libyan Army². The same applies to the Islamicists when they describe the different party from their ideology as

¹ Perhaps a mental pathology is the most suitable description of the status of the imagined community that can inspire a person to act in a way that is subjective and aggressive at once. This personal subjectivity represents a set of ideas, perceptions, norms (individual or social), and other elements, most dangerously, when these norms (for example) connect to violence as a type of force to embody this imagination in the political reality.

² Eriksson, Opcit, p.823.

villainous in order to legitimize their aggression, which may depend on the use of violence, against that described party.

With the passage of time, it becomes clear that society is trapped between diverse imaginations, especially when violence is used to push these imaginations into daily life. In this consideration, the social circumstances and civil relations or dealings will be somehow affected by this sense of enmity, and that is an essential ground for an armed conflict. This sense of enmity is even a soft violence that probably will guide its holders for armed—material violence.

In essence, the analysis of violence, collective consciousness, and imagined communities collectively serves to understand and may also serve to resolve the impediments that thwarted effective state-building efforts in post-Gaddafi Libya. These conceptions shed light on the complex interplay of factors that continue to shape the political context, ultimately guiding the trajectory of this research toward a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced during this critical period.

Methodology: (Qualitative)

In this research, a qualitative methodology is employed to analyze the main novel of post-Gaddafi Libya. The approach consists of structural analysis and critical analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced in state-building. The structural analysis seeks to demonstrate the fundamental relationships and elements that compose the Libyan political structure. Specifically, by an in-depth examination of sub-state violence, the lack of collective consciousness driven by sub-state tendencies, and the concept of imagined communities. By evaluating how these elements interrelate and collectively shape the political scenario, this analysis explores the challenges and opportunities for state-building. First, how there are elements of political misorientation and lack of collective consciousness, which led into a distorted structure forcibly created by the sub-state violence. Second, this structure results in a new more complicated structure, which is described in this research as a political ambiguous project. The role of the structural analysis is to reveal the connections between the two structures, and how comprehending those connections can offer a better understanding of the state-building in Libya.

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Critical analysis acts as a complementary factor, aiming to uncover the underlying complexities within the identified structural components. This part entails a detailed investigation of the theoretical foundations put forth by Liberal, Realist, and Marxist schools of thought. (i) The discussions around revolutionary violence, its role in historical change, and its relationship to political orientation, as presented in the literature review, build the foundation for the structural analysis. They create an approach to examining how sub-state violence is linked to political misorientation in Libya. The Marxist perspective on violence serves as a method to analyze the armed sub-state actors' use of violence and its impact on the state-building process. (ii) The exploration of the social contract theories by Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau facilitates choosing critical analysis as a complementary factor. These theories provide a framework for understanding collective consciousness and the relationship between the state and its citizens. They also demonstrate how the absence of collective consciousness challenged state-building efforts in Libya. (iii) The discussions on the Libyan political context in the literature review feed directly into both structural and critical analysis. Those discussions led to observing, in the Libyan case, the institutional weakness, the failure to consolidate the governance mechanisms, and the impact of regionalism on state-building. They smooth the exploration of sub-state violence, collective consciousness, and their roles in creating a fragmented political environment.

Through these theories, the methodology gains a coherent framework for understanding the ambiguity of the Libyan political project. Critical analysis further anatomizes the complex interactions between armed militias, political factions, and the broader Libyan society. By inquiring about the motivations, agendas, and implications, this stage brings depth to the understanding of the observed structural relations.

The division of the body of the research will be three parts to systematically address the research question: Part I - Fragmentation, Political Misorientation, and Lack of Collective Consciousness in the Libyan Context: This section explains the theoretical framework in the Libyan context. Based on the relevant data and examples, the analysis sheds

light on the multidimensional impact of armed militias on the state-building process. The aim is to clarify the emergence of regionalist conflicts, sub-state factionalism, and other destabilizing factors that challenge the establishment of the state. Through a combination of structural analysis and critical analysis, this part reveals the ways in which sub-state violence influences and undermines state-building efforts. Eventually, Part II - The Ambiguous Project: Building upon the theoretical inquiry, this section engages in a case study of Libya, tangibly applying the framework outlined earlier. By discussing collective consciousness, political misorientation, and imagined communities, this part examines how these components materialize in the Libyan context.

Part I: Fragmentation, Political Misorientation, and the Lack of Collective Consciousness in the Libyan Context

1. Fragmentation and the Status Quo Presences in the Libyan Political Context

As explained before, the post-Gaddafi era witnessed a distinct form of fragmentation, notably regional fragmentation, which contributed to the ambiguity of the political project. The elements that produced this observation are political misorientation, the emergence of sub-state violence, and the lack of collective consciousness. The fragmentation emerged during the transition from the previous political system into the new one. This transition “has faced a fragmentation of political leadership, collapse of internal security, an increase in economic disputes and a legacy of neglect and corrupt”¹. Furthermore, the lack of a shared “ideology” among Libyan revolutionaries, who lacked prior experience in governance, impeded effective leadership². Mistrust among those leading groups in the transitional facilitated “political polarization,” which these groups used to influence citizens through their ideas³. Political polarization also played a crucial role in causing a lack of collective consciousness between people toward the state. It contributed to the creation of an imagined community within the sub-state group’s collective mindset, where they perceived each

¹Randall, Op.cit, p.199.

² Shokr, Anjali Kamat & Ahmad. "Libya's Reformist Revolutionaries." *Economic and Political Weekly* 46, no. 12 (2011), p.11.

³ Ammar, Op.cit, pp.4-6.

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other as enemies. This perception was reinforced by the utilization of violence to impose these viewpoints within the political reality.

The emergence of political polarization is rooted in the broader issue of “political fragmentation.” This phenomenon not only caused the lack of collective consciousness but exposed the presence of “groups [that] don’t see government as acting in their interests, but rather see themselves as defectors with a duty to protect the revolution”¹. These groups will not assert in protecting the revolution without being armed. Being armed, as non-state actors, signifies a lack of constitutional power monopoly by the state², and the structure of the state is, therefore, fragile. Even the narrative of “to protect the revolution” could be used as an influential populist slogan to inspire people, and that will surely result in the lack of a supportive collective consciousness to build the state. Furthermore, this claim of protecting the revolution with access to the tools of violence indicates that this violence is politically misoriented, and it serves the continuity of the status quo of the post-Gaddafi era.

If these groups are solely focused on protecting and achieving the revolution’s goals, their rationality might not reflect a constructive understanding of the post-Gaddafi era. Therefore, the fault is substantial within this rationality itself, but owning the revolutionary violence grants this group the value of being an active member in the Libyan political context the fact that this violence creates a mode of power, and this mode of power can produce pragmatically a status quo character for this group. The status quo character means that this group freely acts as a political entity because owning the tools of violence offers it a sociopolitical space to act in a way that shows the state’s presence seems weak or absent.³ Despite their

¹Randall, Op.cit, p.211.

² Ibid.

³ The status quo character refers here to the group's character that owns the means of violence. This character is immediately created through owning violence and the group's ability to impose certain conditions on the political reality by using this violence. This character will exist even though the group doesn't have a clear political program or a theoretical perception to start from. For example, group X owns the means of violence and belongs to society Z. If X acts as a tribe in politics, then tribalism will be a main political indicator of the political sphere in Z, and it will be always needed to study the violence-based practices that X commits in Z to understand the political sphere of Z.

narrow political perceptions, these armed groups can wield considerable influence by possessing the means of violence.

One may observe that this status quo character is pragmatically established, as the ideology of this revolutionary group is no longer of primary importance. On the contrary, its act of violence is what determines the shape of its policies or the mainstream it tries to follow. However, it may keep following its general ideological form, like if it is a tribal group, it will keep following the tribalist shape of influence. If it is Islamist, it will ensure that it is not out of the Islamist scope of practicing politics, although many deviations from its ideology may happen. That pretension applies to the example of the “Kata’ib (revolutionary brigades)” that were initially established with the sole purpose of overthrowing Al-Gaddafi’s regime. While they were planned to be “dissolved” after achieving this goal, they remained politically active even in the post-Gaddafi era without necessarily adopting a new political character¹. Therefore, one may say that this group had the animus manendi to remain in the political context.

Moving on, in the post-Gaddafi era, various armed forces labeled as “militias” sought to establish themselves in the Libyan context (as Al-Kata’ib group was trying to do). One of the most complicated issues related to these militias and denoting their role in causing political misorientation for building the Libyan state is that these militias were functioning based on “tribal, regional, or religious” affiliations². Consequently, this complicated the creation of a non-biased political body separate from these biases. This complicatedness was fed more by possessing the sub-state violence. Moreover, employing violence based on these biases, such as tribalism, adds further complexity. It is particularly important to note that the use of violence by these militias contributes to political misorientation as they compete for power against the supposedly established authority of the state.

2. Political Misorientation

The incapacity to establish a coherent political framework in Libya that embodies a stronger sense of statehood, driven by intrastate violence,

¹ Rudzka, Op.cit, p.232.

² Rudzka, Op.cit.

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exposes the political misorientation occurring because of different biases. This situation invokes the Leninist jurisprudence to emphasize the connection between political orientation and organization to grasp the path of the revolution and the post-revolution phase. In his political philosophy, Lenin rejects depending on “spontaneous activity” and insists on intensive studying and investigation of the conditions to reach well-realized results; the claim expresses a high level of “conscious[ness] of historical change.”¹ Alongside this, Lenin believed in the centrality of political practices and fought against the random politics and the results of the random politics. He precisely aimed at having a “political program” that was democratic and explained the distribution of the tasks and perspectives to all those who commit to this program and believe in its centrality². Although the case in Libya differs in its political details and content, it necessitates political organization and the one shared political program to guide the formation of one political destiny. The absence of a political program can lead to destructive results against the future of Libya. More clearly, the ongoing struggles and contradictions within various factions in Libya, including Islamists, federalists, minorities, tribal and local forces, rebels, and armed militias, highlight the challenges in establishing a unified system of governance. This situation is expected to prolong the transitional period, potentially leading to a void of power and a struggle for control (Libya's Transition without a Constitutional Map 2013). This scenario can be argued by the Leninist political theory, which emphasizes the need for organized and conscious efforts in orienting the historical change of the end of the Gaddafi's long presence in power.

Additionally, an important aspect to consider is when the change of power dynamics creates the non-expected outcomes. In this context, Arendt addresses the shift in positions where the “oppressed [...] set themselves up in the oppressor's place, that the poor dream of the possessions of the rich,

¹ Revolutionaries must hold 'consciousness of historical change' in high regard. Consequently, they need to recognize the necessity of conducting a constructive investigation to fully comprehend how to orient this change effectively, thereby taking a significant step towards achieving their purpose (of building the new regime) within the context of this historical shift. See (Ehrenberg 1979, 76).

² Ehrenberg, John R. "Lenin and the Politics of Organization." *Science & Society* 43 , no. 1 (1979), p.183.

the persecuted of exchanging”¹. In Libya, after the fall of the regime, it appeared as a historical chance for a leader of an oppressed group to protect and empower his group against a similar (possibly) regime that may rise to power and do again to his group as Al-Gaddafi did. For instance, Al-Gaddafi's violence against Cyrenaica's residents in 1996² may justify regionalist calls for separation from Tripoli's centralized regime.³ Therefore, groups will endeavor to protect themselves from each other's danger even if that required them gaining a de facto position in power, advocating regional separations, or adopting aggressive policies to secure their positions. The possession of the means of violence remains a crucial factor in this pursuit.

This explanation reveals that a part of the Libyan problem is political, rather than exclusively constitutional. This claim can be clarified by noticing how revolutionaries failed to channel their revolutionary violence effectively in state-building, which eliminated the collective consciousness of their political uprising. This, in turn, led to fragmentation rather than a unified effort under a state. Additionally, it led to exchanging the main purpose of the uprising from constructing a new state to establishing small armed—conflicting groups, which were expressed here with owning a status quo character. Considering these complexities, this situation raises the fundamental question of why the Libyan project became ambiguous.

Part II: The Politically Ambiguous Project

It is alarming that the Libyan oppressed are now suffering from the societal division and the incapability to build their statehood after enduring a regime that held power for around 42 years.⁴ This variable is caused by the post-Gaddafi Libyan context, which denoted that Libya suffers from the

¹ Arendt, Opcit, p.20.

² Jason Pack, Opcit, p.42.

³ Al-Ghaddafi used to make Tripoli a center of “historic bureaucracy and financial oil institutions” (Randall 2015, 211). That is why plenty of the forces in Tripoli were consistently supporting Al-Ghaddafi in the time of the political uprising. Ammar, Opcit, p.2.

⁴ Al-Gaddafi rose to power in 1969. (Braut-Hegghammer 2012, 41-42).

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absence of a definitive political character, the prevalence of certain tendencies, such as regionalism, and the presence of other characteristics that contribute to the ambiguity of the political project. Examining this finding is divided into:

A. The Political Complexity of the Libyan Context: No Clear Political Character, the Impact of Regionalism, and Other Defining Non-Statist Characteristics.

In the previous part, one might notice that powerful groups (armed forces) gained status quo political existences after 2011. The group, which was revolutionary during the political uprising against Al-Gaddafi, became devious to define in terms of political principles, hard to agree with, and hard to work with after the end of Al-Ghaddafi's era. This situation highlights the fragmentation and confirms the dominance of it over the Libyan political reality. The presence of fragmentation implies the rule of "Nobody"¹; where there are no legal institutions to be reliable for any serious policy or action in society. As a result, within this scenario, intrastate armed groups operate without accountability for their violations and aggressive policies.² This scenario is particularly explicit in the Libyan context. There, the presence of multiple governments,³ a variety of armed groups, the involvement of mujahid troops, and the emergence of regional groups demanding self-governance⁴, clarify the claimed complexity.

It is suggested that this sophisticated fragmentation is due to the absence of "mechanical solidarity"⁵ between people that is caused by several elements, such as the mistrust between groups, the accumulative pressure that Al-Gaddafi's policies concentrated in some regions (such as

¹ Arendt, Opcit, p.38-39.

² The existent violence in the political reality, with time, normalizes the irregular and the unbearable, such as subjugation, massive violations, etc.

³ Government of Tripoli and Government of Tobruk. (Rudzka 2016, 233).

⁴ Rudzka, Op.cit, p.267.

⁵ Mechanical solidarity as a *societal* element is needed since it is one of the fundamental characteristics of the collective consciousness in society. (Durkheim 1933, 137).

Cyrenaica and Benghazi).¹ The absence of mechanical solidarity between people of the fragmented regions feeds the way each group's shaped dream of power, which is based on the subjective imagination of that group (i.e., the group's imagined community). Consequently, besides the status quo character that an armed group may gain, there is also the political normativity each group uses to define itself and the other. However, this political normativity cannot reflect a constructive perception of society as a whole; conversely, it reflects a political agenda gained by the pragmatism of this group that only considers its narrow-minded interests. In other words, this group doesn't own the essential political values of constitutionalism,² modern political organization of society, and division of power to manage societal change. On the contrary, this group fundamentally considers its "autonomy of [particular] regions"³, and, as a result, it suffers from the absence of the political program as according to the Leninist description of this program. For instance, there was a threat to cause geography-based instability in some of the Libyan territories (i.e., the eastern territory) for the attempt to achieve autonomy in these territories⁴. In such circumstances, there can be no central power to govern society⁵ in the form of a state⁶.

B. The Conflict of the Non-Political Parties to Dominate the Political Power:

The Role of Non-Political in Determining Politics

Following the analysis of regionalism and the impact of intrastate violence, it is claimed that there is an ambiguous nature embodied in the

¹ People of the eastern part of Libya (e.g., Benghazi) are those who protested Al-Ghaddafi's regime in 2011, and they also, in the post-Gaddafi era, endeavored to gain their autonomy. El-Katiri, Op.cit, p.3.

² For instance, the "legalistic approach to reconciliation" created laws in the post-Gaddafi era, and the local realities in Libya could not absorb these laws. It was clear that "there was no contribution of local communities in designing the mandates of the adopted reconciliation mechanisms." Op.cit., p.2.

³ Rudzka, Op.cit, p.241.

⁴ El-Katiri, Op.cit, p.2.

⁵ Rudzka, Op.cit, pp.235-238.

⁶ See the example of the separationist demand in the region of Cyrenaica.

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Libyan political project, the need is now to turn the attention to the conflict involving non-political parties endeavoring for political dominance, although attempting to use a political theory to analyze the behavior of non-political parties (such as tribes or regionalist groups) as they seek to assume political roles could present one of the most complex challenges. When analyzing this case using the political analysis framework, the outcome may inevitably reveal the theory's limitations or the inherent ambiguity of the political project. Within the Libyan political context, this ambiguity within the project emerges as a direct result of the significant influence exerted by non-political elements (such as regionalism or tribalism). These elements are deeply embedded within the social system of Libyan society, and their repercussions can be observed in the political context. Despite owning revolutionary violence since the political uprising against the Al-Gaddafi regime, these non-political parties have led their followers through political misorientation. This shift adds to the structure of the post-Gaddafi Libyan political scenario, which was explored earlier.

The ambiguity of the post-Gaddafi Libyan project connects to the notion of imagined communities and the consequences of political misorientation. As reflected in the preceding discussions, it becomes evident that the various challenges faced by Libya are interconnected, forming a network of complexities that cannot be isolated from one another. In this respect, one may think of this gap between what is imagined and what is really created within the analysis of the conception of the Imagined Communities. If that occurs, it is concluded that the armed groups tried to shape the Libyan political structure according to each one's narrow-minded and subjective imagination instead of shaping their imagination and political beliefs from the political reality. The imagined community and the misorientation appear to be the elements of the created ambiguity, and those elements feed that by the fragmented allegiance to the groups instead of being for the state (which in one way or another indicated the need for the collective consciousness to support one political umbrella for all). The significant tool to impose these results is the existent intrastate violence. Finally, as a first step to change the status quo, this examination should introduce the task of integrating the means of violence (owned by the armed groups) into the formal structure of the state.

Conclusion

Through an examination of the Libyan context, this article has observed how political, ideological (e.g., the projection of armed groups' imagined communities), sociological, and material factors (such as violence) have influenced Libyans' orientations, psychologies, and senses of belonging, whether to the state or to armed groups that wield power on the ground. This discussion has revealed that the dilemma stems from a constructive crisis. However, by narrowing the focus to the lack of collective consciousness, political misorientation, and the pervasive use of violence, we have identified these as some of the most prominent elements of the crisis.

This complexity has established different orbits within the political reality, necessitating various approaches to political therapy. First and foremost, it is crucial to address the pervasive use of violence among the groups discussed throughout the article. Ultimately, this investigation suggests that an effective therapy might require unifying the means of violence under a national, secular, and non-biased doctrine, free from any inter-subjective ideology or local tribal thinking. This approach might necessitate a completely different starting point for further inquiry.

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