



Libya's Unhealthy Focus on Personalities

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What's new? Two events have shaken up Libyan politics: the election of Muslim Brotherhood affiliate Khaled Mishri as president of the Tripoli-based High State Council, replacing Abderrahman Swehli, who had held the post since 2016, and the mid-April hospitalisation of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, general commander of the Libyan National Army.

Why does it matter? Until April, Swehli and Haftar were two of four Libyan personalities whose buy-in was viewed as crucial to securing a peace deal in Libya. But Swehli's removal from power and Haftar's ill health raise questions about the path ahead.

What should be done? These events should remind all concerned that Libyan reconciliation cannot rely solely on individual personalities. To better aid reconciliation, Libyan leaders and their outside backers should work to make governing institutions more representative, address the constituents' needs, and deliver more and better services.

I. Overview

Seven years after the uprising that toppled Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi, Libya remains in turmoil. In the last month, two surprise developments have roiled Libyan politics anew. Each demonstrates how misguided it is to depend entirely on individuals to resolve the conflict ongoing since 2014. Excessive focus on personalities, in fact, can obstruct rather than promote peace efforts.

The first event was the 8 April election of Khaled Mishri as president of the Tripoli-based High State Council, a consultative body established under the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement. He succeeded Abderrahman Swehli, who had headed the State Council since its creation in 2016. Mishri is a member of the Justice and Construction Party, which is close to the Muslim Brotherhood; his affiliation is likely to arouse the suspicion of eastern Libyans who dislike Islamists. Any friction could scuttle or delay the implementation or amendment of the 2015 agreement, which will require a deal between the State Council and its political rival, the Tobruk-based House of Representatives. The Tobruk legislators have yet to officially recognise the agreement's legality.

The second development was the mid-April hospitalisation (in France) of Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, general commander of the Libyan National Army, a coalition that controls most of eastern Libya. Nominally, Haftar answers to the House of Representatives, but he has his own power base, and is a key actor in negotiations to reunite Libya. He appeared well enough upon his return to Benghazi on 26 April, stopping to address his supporters, but it remains unclear why he was hospitalised.¹ According to independent sources close to the coalition, Haftar had a stroke, and also suffers from a chronic illness.² Whether his poor health will allow him to continue leading his men or force him to step down is an open question.

Until these unexpected events, Haftar and Swehli were two of four personalities considered indispensable to the project of reuniting Libya. The other two are Faiez Serraj, the head of the Presidency Council (which heads the internationally recognised government in Tripoli), and Aghela Saleh, president of the House of Representatives. Most international efforts to implement the Libyan Political Agreement focused on securing an understanding among these four men, each of whom has proven he can be a spoiler.³

Swehli's ouster and Haftar's ill health should serve as reminders that a lasting peace agreement cannot be predicated on "dividing the cake" among a few individuals. As long as one person or faction reaps all the benefits of power, others will mobilise against them. This dynamic has been a constant feature of Libyan politics since 2014. It fosters a cycle of counter-narratives and revenge attacks that undermines chances of bridging the country's rifts.

Efforts to reconcile Libyans should instead aim to ensure the inclusivity and representativeness of existing political institutions, take into account the needs of their constituents, and improve their ability to deliver services. As it stands, these institutions mainly serve the interests of the handful of men who lead them.

¹ Haftar's landing in Benghazi, covered live on Libyan television, dispelled speculation that he was dying or even already dead, as many of his detractors claimed when news of his hospitalisation spread. Haftar walked down the steps of his private jet without assistance and told his supporters that his health was "fine". See Haftar's landing footage, video, YouTube, 26 April 2018, <https://bit.ly/2HywFFg> and <https://bit.ly/2Kn9y4I>.

² Crisis Group phone interviews, Benghazi, 15 and 27 April 2018. Commenting on Haftar's return, an independent source close to the Libyan National Army's inner circle said: "Don't be deceived by appearances. He is sick – very sick". Crisis Group phone interview, Benghazi, 27 April 2018.

³ The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and France hosted separate meetings between Serraj and Haftar: the first in the UAE on 2 May 2017 and the second in Paris on 25 July 2017. Italy hosted a meeting between Swehli and Saleh on 21 April 2017. There were no back-channel negotiations prior to these bilateral meetings; nor did either seal a deal. See Claudia Gazzini, "Libya: No Political Deal Yet", Crisis Group, 11 May 2017. Individual consultations between UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ghassan Salamé and these various personalities continued until early 2018. Throughout late 2017 a number of UN member states even attempted to set up a meeting between "the big four", believing it would enable a breakthrough in Libya's impasse. But no such gathering ever took place.

II. Swehli's Defeat

On 8 April Mishri unexpectedly defeated Swehli for the High State Council leadership by a vote of 64 to 45. Swehli's opponents accused him of obstructing a UN-mediated agreement with the House of Representatives in order to secure a seat on a reconstituted three-member Presidency Council.⁴ An opportunistic alliance between the Justice and Construction Party (whose votes had been key to Swehli's election in 2016) and disparate councillors, including former members of the Tahaluf bloc (once the party's main ideological rival in the 2012-2014 parliament), sealed his fate.⁵

Some observers have hailed Mishri's election as a step forward for the stalled political process because, in their eyes, reaching a political agreement with the House of Representatives will be easier without Swehli dictating the pace of talks.⁶ In his first public remarks after the vote, Mishri said he is keen to reopen "direct and quick" negotiations with the Parliament. He invited its president, Aghela Saleh, to a meeting.⁷ Likewise, in early April the Justice and Construction Party went so far as to make overtures to Haftar. The party's chairman, Mohamed Sawan – who had previously considered the Libyan National Army illegitimate – praised its "martyrs" slain in the fight against jihadists.⁸

These gestures are significant considering the ideological divide between the Islamist Justice and Construction Party and the anti-Islamist leadership in Benghazi and Tobruk. Nonetheless, they are unlikely to lead to a breakthrough. First, the party and its new allies in the State Council lack a common political agenda apart from their anti-Swehli feeling. A number of council members, including fierce opponents of the Muslim Brotherhood, allied with Mishri's party against Swehli only with the hope of securing the post of State Council deputy president, partly as a way of containing

⁴ Crisis Group phone interviews, Libyan politicians, Tripoli, 10-12 April 2018. Throughout the UN-led negotiations aimed at agreement between the High State Council and the House of Representatives on the reconstitution of the three-member Presidency Council, most State Council members refused the terms offered in the UN's November 2017 proposal. Ostensibly, they objected because the proposal did not provide the State Council equal standing with the House in the voting mechanism for the Presidency Council. A number of State Council members, however, stated that Swehli drove part of the council's opposition to the formula. They said he sought to secure a seat for himself on the Presidency Council and opposed the UN proposal because it gave no such guarantee. Crisis Group interviews, UN officials and diplomats, December 2017 and January 2018.

⁵ According to a Tripoli-based politician, Swehli took his re-election as a given. He was sure of receiving 45 votes, and believed that another fifteen members would cast empty ballots. A Tripoli-based politician said: "His mistake was to believe that no more than 100 members would take part in the vote. Instead, an extra twenty people who really never participated in High State Council proceedings showed up and cast their votes in favour of Mishri. Even supporters of the other two council candidates – Belghasem Gzeit and Mohamed Imazzeb – who challenged Swehli in the first round of the vote ended up casting their votes for Mishri". Crisis Group phone interview, politician, Tripoli, 12 April 2018. The twenty or so people who were not usual attendees of council proceedings are politicians once part of Tahaluf, the bloc led in 2012 by former Prime Minister Mahmoud Jibril. The coalition has since fragmented; most of its members now consider themselves independents.

⁶ Crisis Group interviews, Western diplomats, Rome, Tunis and Brussels, April 2018.

⁷ Mishri's first remarks to the State Council were broadcast on Libyan television. See Mishri's first remarks to the State Council, video, YouTube, 8 April 2018, <https://bit.ly/2r6u5BE>.

⁸ Crisis Group phone interview, Libyan academic close to the army, Benghazi, 6 April 2018.

the Brotherhood.⁹ As deputy president they chose the person they thought could best counterbalance Mishri, Naji Mukhtar, a council member from southern Libya involved in the fuel sector.¹⁰ Some Libyan politicians doubt that a Mishri-Mukhtar leadership will produce more than a division of spoils. Many fear that tensions between Islamists and anti-Islamists will quickly resurface.¹¹

The second reason for scepticism is that Saleh's openness to talks with Mishri likely hinges on personal interest rather than support from the institution he represents. In recent months, Saleh has made clear through backchannels that, like Swehli, he wants a seat on a reconfigured Presidency Council: this request was unspoken but well understood several times during the UN-led consultations between House of Representatives and State Council members from October 2017 to February 2018. Saleh reiterated this demand as recently as March to a delegation from Misrata that had sought to reach out to easterners, offering to accept the nomination of a Misratan prime minister in exchange for the seat.¹²

Mishri and Saleh met in the Moroccan capital of Rabat on 23 April, and the two appear to have tentatively agreed to resume talks to revise the Libyan Political Agreement and nominate a new Presidency Council.¹³ Saleh invited Mishri to visit Tobruk, where the House of Representatives is seated. While in principle this development is welcome, Saleh's track record suggests he will select a handful of loyalists (rather than a group representing the House as a whole) to take part in negotiations and cooperate only as long as his demands are met. It is already telling that Saleh agreed to meet Mishri without even consulting other House members. Broader buy-in by Libyan National Army leadership will also be key for any deal to be accepted in the east.

Most importantly, even if the two men reach an agreement, it is improbable that many easterners would support it. Mishri is widely viewed as a member of the Brotherhood, a movement regarded with outright hostility in the east. (The House of Representatives designated the Brotherhood a "terrorist" organisation in 2017.) Many in the east remember Mishri's 2014 call on "revolutionary forces" in Benghazi

⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Tripoli-based politicians, Tunis, 13 April 2018.

¹⁰ Mukhtar is the owner of one of Libya's five retail fuel distribution companies and headed the Energy Committee of the General National Congress (the precursor of the House of Representatives) in 2012-2014. Libya has one of the world's highest rates of fuel subsidies (fuel is sold at around \$0.10/litre at the official exchange rate and \$0.02/litre at the black-market rate), encouraging smuggling of subsidised fuel, which is believed to cost the Libyan state about \$750 million per year. Official retailers are also believed to have a hand in the black-market fuel trade. Despite repeated talk since 2013 of reducing fuel subsidies and replacing them with cash handouts, successive Libyan parliaments and governments have failed to tackle the issue head-on, leading many Libyans to believe that politicians are colluding with smuggling rackets. Mukhtar's political elevation is likely to complicate local and international efforts to curtail fuel smuggling. Crisis Group interviews, Libyan oil sector officials, Tripoli and Tunis, 2014-2018.

¹¹ A member of the House of Representatives, commenting on the alliance between the Justice and Construction Party and Tahaluf that allowed Mishri's election, said: "We know all too well that the two parties were sworn enemies until now. This alliance is only dictated by their desire to 'divide the cake' among each other". Crisis Group phone interview, House of Representatives member, Al-Bayda, 24 April 2018.

¹² Crisis Group phone interview, politician, Misrata, 22 April 2018.

¹³ Crisis Group phone interview, politician, Tripoli, 24 April 2018.

and Derna to capture Tripoli; they view these forces (which later evolved into, respectively, the Benghazi Revolutionaries' Shura Council and the Derna Revolutionaries' Shura Council) as pawns of jihadist groups.¹⁴

In the narrative of eastern Libyans who support Haftar's army, opening up to Mishri would be tantamount to admitting that Libyan National Army youth who fought against jihadist groups in 2014-2017 died in vain. Easterners more open to reconciliation with the State Council are also irritated by the false news of Haftar's death. One said the rumour-mongering showed that the Brotherhood and others from western Libya could not to be trusted "despite their sweet words about reconciliation".¹⁵

To build on his election, Mishri should dispel the widespread impression that the council is now dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood and that his party will monopolise decision-making. He should ensure that a cross section of State Council views is represented, bringing the body's deputy presidents with him to talks with other Libyan constituencies and including all council members in decision-making. Such inclusivity is especially important in reaching out to eastern politicians and the House of Representatives. The same considerations apply to Saleh, whose tendency to exclude others from the decision-making process has been equally divisive; he, too, should be reaching out to members of his own institution.

III. Haftar's Illness

The competing narratives that emerged after Haftar's hospitalisation also point to an unhealthy obsession with individuals. When news of Haftar's illness spread, many of his opponents in western Libya crowed that the Libyan National Army's days were numbered. They seemed gleeful discussing how they could exploit its leader's demise to reverse his 2017 victory against the Benghazi Revolutionaries' Shura Council. These opponents unleashed a disinformation campaign to sow chaos within the army's ranks and rally anti-Haftar factions. Tripoli-based, anti-Haftar media channels circulated fake social media postings that carried CNN or *Washington Post* logos, claiming that Haftar had died and his senior commanders were fleeing.¹⁶ Simultaneously, Haftar loyalists fabricated images of their own and peddled false reports that he was not ill.¹⁷

In fact, and somewhat paradoxically, Haftar's uncertain health could have negative and even dangerous consequences for peacemaking. Haftar is a polarising figure who has frequently opposed peace negotiations, and whose forces are accused of serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings.¹⁸ When he departs from the scene, his successors may find it all the more challenging to persuade a divided and unruly east to embrace a nationwide political agreement. The Libyan National Army's official media channels have downplayed his illness, describing his

¹⁴ Crisis Group phone interviews, Benghazi-based political activists close to the army, and House of Representatives member, Benghazi, 16 April 2018.

¹⁵ Crisis Group phone interviews, Libyan political activists, Cairo, 16 April 2018.

¹⁶ Crisis Group phone interviews, Libyan politicians based in western Libya, Tripoli, 16 April 2018.

¹⁷ Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Tunis, 5 May 2018.

¹⁸ "Libya: Mass Extra-judicial Execution", Human Rights Watch, 29 November 2017.

hospitalisation in Paris as a routine check-up.¹⁹ But army insiders are worried and suggest that his health will not allow him to command much longer.²⁰

Unless his succession is carefully managed through an inclusive, consultative process, Haftar's exit could widen rifts between his supporters and opponents, and even within the army. A top-down appointment would be a big mistake. Supporters of Faraj Gheim, a former Haftar ally who in 2017 accepted the role of deputy interior minister in the Tripoli-based government and was subsequently arrested by Haftar's forces in Benghazi, started to mobilise when news of Haftar's illness spread.²¹ His tribe, the Awaghir, which resents the growing influence of Haftar's sons in its territory on the outskirts of Benghazi, is forming its own alliances against Haftar's inner circle.²² Likewise, supporters of Mahmoud Warfalli, another Haftar ally, who was arrested in late January 2018 after army leaders accused him of carrying out public executions of prisoners in Benghazi against their orders, are likely to repeat their call for his rehabilitation.²³

If the power vacuum in the army leadership were to persist, rifts within the east might also encourage anti-Haftar militias from Benghazi displaced in the west to move toward the oil terminals in the Gulf of Sirte before heading home (as they previously tried and failed to do). These groups include a coalition of easterners that until early 2017 operated under the banner of the Benghazi Defence Brigade; loyalists of al-Mahdi al-Barghathi, a commander who in 2016 became defence minister in the Tripoli-based government (in part to weaken Haftar) but has since been sidelined (although he still holds the post); and acolytes of Ibrahim Jadran, the former head of the Petroleum Facilities Guards in the Gulf of Sirte who was ousted by Haftar in 2016. All these groups have scores to settle with Haftar and his sons.²⁴

The uncertainties over the army's leadership succession could also have consequences for Aghela Saleh. By virtue of his position as House of Representatives

¹⁹ Initially, the Libyan National Army spokesperson, Ahmed Mismari, denied the news of Haftar's hospitalisation. His official @LNASpox Twitter account stated on 10 April: "All the news about General commander's health are false, Marshal Hiftar is in excellent health and he is following his daily general command duties and all op rooms specially Omar Moktar ops room". Then on 14 April Mismari stated that during a series of scheduled international visits Haftar fell ill and "visited a hospital in Paris for normal check-ups".

²⁰ According to an army insider, discussions are ongoing about who will succeed Haftar. The main contenders are the head of army military investments, al-Madani al-Fakhiri; army Chief of Staff General Abdelrazek Naduri; and the head of the Operation Dignity operation room, Abdelsalam al-Hasi. A person familiar with the army's internal dynamics said: "Haftar's sons support al-Fakhiri, but he is not an operations guy; he only knows about administration and investments. Naduri has the most popular support [*shaabiya*] in the east and has charisma, but Haftar's sons don't want him. Al-Hasi could be a good compromise: he may not have charisma, but he knows how to run military operations". Crisis Group phone interview, Benghazi, 27 April 2018.

²¹ Crisis Group phone interview, Benghazi resident, Benghazi, 15 April 2018.

²² Haftar has five sons. The eldest, Siddiq, is an adviser to his father; Belghasem has an advisory role and is also involved in army financial investments; two others, Khaled and Saddam, are ranking officers commanding units stationed in the outskirts of Benghazi; and the fifth, Uqba, is a Salafi based in the United States. (Haftar is a U.S. citizen and lived in Virginia for two decades prior to the 2011 Libyan uprising.) Crisis Group phone interview, resident, Benghazi, 1 May 2018.

²³ Crisis Group phone interviews, residents, Benghazi, April 2018.

²⁴ Crisis Group phone interviews, residents and independent sources close to the army, Benghazi, April 2018; Libyan politicians, Tripoli, April 2018.

president, Saleh is supreme commander of the armed forces and appoints its most senior officers. On 12 April, he issued a decree naming the army chief of staff, General Abdelrazek Naduri, as general commander, replacing Haftar. He appears to have made this decision without consulting the army's most senior officers and, most importantly, without asking Haftar's sons, who wield great influence in their father's entourage. Saleh has since denied issuing the decree, while army-controlled media blamed the Muslim Brotherhood for spreading disinformation. Yet, according to individuals close to Naduri, Saleh did tell the chief of staff of his intention to appoint him as army commander.²⁵

This episode could sour already bitter relations between Saleh and Haftar loyalists and sow further discord over the political and military leadership in the east. An 18 April assassination attempt on Naduri is a worrying sign of what may yet come.

These dynamics are real. But the risks can be mitigated if Haftar's eventual succession is promptly and carefully managed by shifting decision-making away from one individual (Haftar himself, one of his sons or Saleh) to a broader consultative process within army ranks. In order to prevent the destabilisation of the east, and ward off the centrifugal forces that Haftar's exit could unleash, the army's decision-making must move beyond the one-man show it has been over the past four years. Consulting the senior officers involved in the Cairo talks – an Egypt-led series of meetings between Haftar-led commanders and a few high-ranking officers from the west who recognise the Presidency Council aimed at reunifying the Libyan army – could be such an avenue. The House of Representatives president should avoid making unilateral decisions on the new appointment and instead take on board the advice of such a broader consultative process.

IV. What Next?

Mishri's election, Haftar's health crisis and Saleh's manoeuvring are signs that Libya has yet to find a way to replace personality-based with institutionalised governance. Libyan actors, their regional allies and other states involved in advancing a negotiated solution should avoid promoting personal agendas that serve narrow interests. In the weeks ahead, it will be important to move away from a negotiating format that relies exclusively on the heads of the State Council and the House of Representatives and toward one more broadly representative of their respective institutions. The same applies to decision-making on Haftar's successor if he is no longer capable of leading the army.

Easterners should grasp the olive branch Mishri and his party have extended, and commit to continuing negotiations between the House of Representatives and the State Council to revise the Libyan Political Agreement and reach a consensus on the appointment of senior officials, an effort the UN is supporting. After all, they once considered Swehli a sworn enemy before engaging with him; now they should seize

²⁵ Crisis Group phone interview, independent source close to the army, Benghazi, 13 April 2018. A House of Representatives member also noted that Saleh's actions and unilateral initiatives, such as his decision to meet Mishri in Rabat, have raised hackles within both the House and the army leadership, prompting calls to replace him. Crisis Group phone interview, House of Representatives member, Al-Bayda, 24 April 2018.

upon Mishri's pledge to continue this approach. But both Mishri and Saleh and their respective loyalist circles must commit to working together toward a constructive agenda that should aim to end debilitating divides, including within economic and financial institutions, and agree on legislation for political steps such as a constitutional referendum and parliamentary and presidential elections. Their rapprochement should not – as many fear it might – serve merely to cement personal and partisan interests.

Regional actors opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood – mainly Egypt and the UAE, who have backed army forces in part because they took on Islamists – should refrain from deepening the polarisation. Instead, they should seek to persuade their allies and broader eastern constituencies over whom they have leverage to build bridges with the new State Council leadership. Likewise, regional powers such as Qatar and Turkey that are closer to factions in western Libya, including the Brotherhood, should call on their allies to stop spreading disinformation and incitement against the east. At present such disparagement risks encouraging anti-Haftar factions located in western Libya to launch an offensive to reverse the status quo in Benghazi, which would undermine efforts to stabilise and pacify the country.

Should Haftar's condition worsen, a power vacuum in the east will present an even greater challenge: a leadership struggle could trigger violent conflict, which in turn could drag in outside powers. Any such fighting would postpone the project of bridging national divides. Considering its outsized influence, Egypt is well positioned to avert this scenario. Egypt has long sought a reliable partner in Libya that can secure the two countries' long desert border; now it has a pressing interest in stopping the emergence of a power vacuum on that boundary's eastern side. Along with the Libyan National Army's other international backers, Egypt should encourage its partners to address Haftar's succession through the most inclusive consultations possible and to avoid a top-down appointment that could bring the rifts to the surface. If his succession is managed carefully, Haftar's ill health could provide an opportunity to ease tensions in the east and build bridges between east and west. It need not be the trigger of dissension that many fear (and some hope) it will be.

The temptation Haftar's enemies felt to stir up trouble in Benghazi and elsewhere also serves as a reminder that the city carries many open wounds. Some, such as the extensive destruction wrought by three years of street-to-street fighting, are immediately visible. Others are concealed, borne by the many residents who were forced to flee Haftar's forces' slow advance between 2014 and 2017. Over 100,000 Benghazi residents escaped to Tripoli, Misrata and other western towns; they want to return, even if their homes are rubble. Some might be tempted to use this moment of uncertainty to fight their way back to the east. Such an offensive would only rekindle the conflict that raged in Benghazi and likely make things far worse for the city's traumatised residents. The plight of Benghazi's displaced must be recognised as a legitimate grievance and addressed urgently by encouraging their return through reconciliation between the displaced families (who tend to be anti-army) and current Benghazi residents (who for the most part are army supporters). This step is essential for the success of a national reconciliation process, given also the symbolic significance of Benghazi, Libya's second-largest city, as the cradle of the 2011 uprising against Qadhafi. The Libyan National Army leadership, its tribal allies and international backers should be open to such a process.

More broadly, these developments suggest that the time has come for the House of Representatives and High State Council to move beyond narrow negotiations based on pleasing individual personalities and focus instead on enhancing the governance capacity of the country's institutions and their ability to address Libyans' economic plight. No matter who heads them, the two institutions remain key to drawing up a roadmap to a united government and lasting peace, as the Libyan Political Agreement envisions. Securing a bottom-up consensus, which the UN is seeking through its National Conference process, is also essential. Both Libyans and the international community should work to ensure that these state institutions become more effective and their decision-making more representative. Any future negotiations between these institutions should include a cross section of their members; the UN and other international stakeholders should provide more targeted advice on steps required to prioritise service delivery. The focus in UN-led peace talks should be less on the handful of people who will come out on top and more on building a lasting framework for peace in which inclusive political negotiations are supported by better economic governance (for example, by implementing macroeconomic reforms and improving service provision).

V. Conclusion

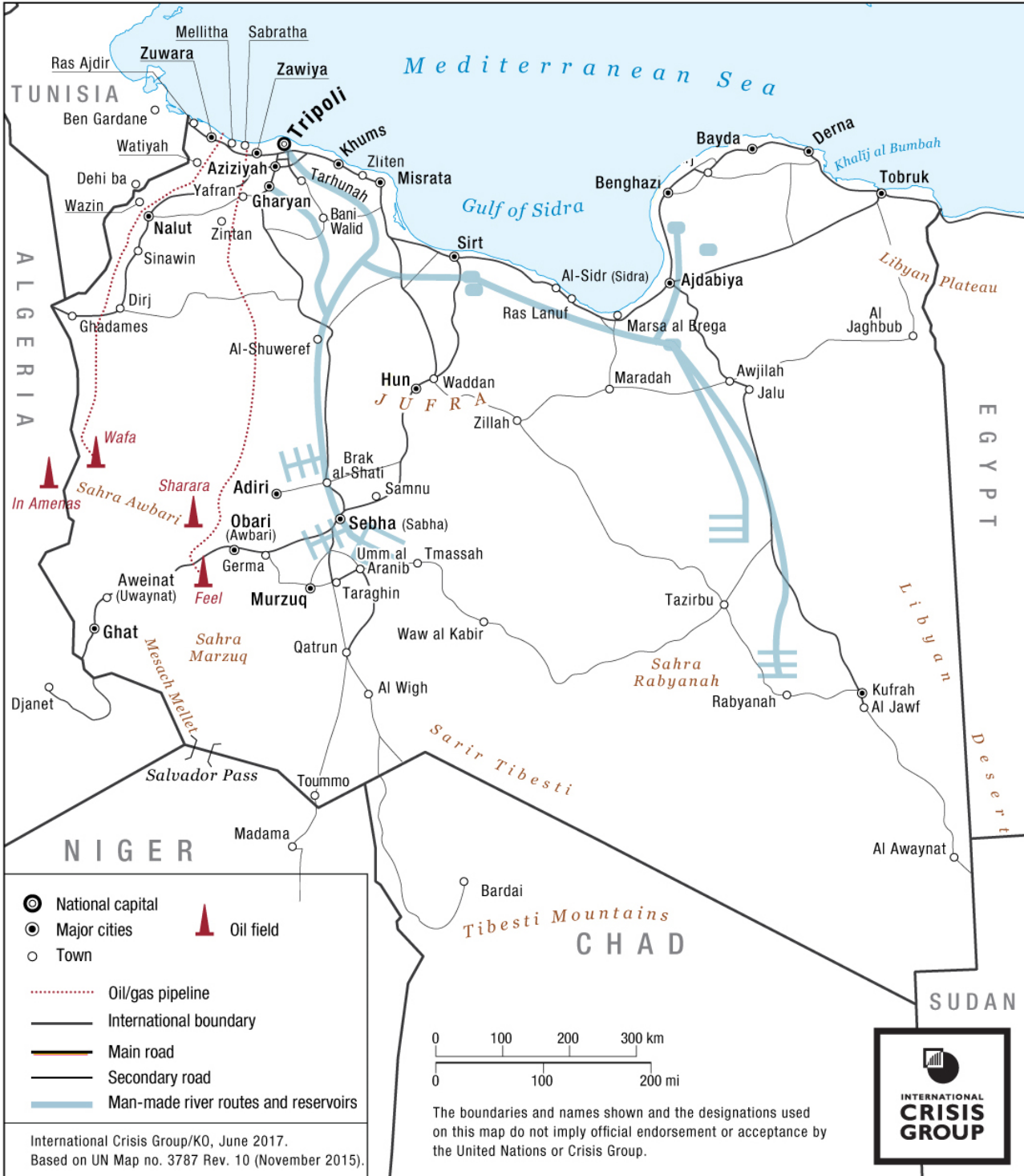
April's turn of events in Libyan politics should show conclusively that deals aimed at securing individual or partisan interests risk being short-lived. Personalities considered essential to peace can exit the scene suddenly, ruining months of painstaking shuttle diplomacy. Allowing one person or faction to enjoy the fruits of power also pushes those on the margins to mobilise against the status quo. All the while, as the institutional divides endure and Libya's low-intensity conflict simmers, it is ordinary Libyans who suffer the most.

At the current juncture, with tensions running high between the constituencies represented in the House of Representatives and the High State Council, it will be critical that these two institutions' presidents banish fears that they are pursuing self-serving agendas. Instead, they and their international backers should focus on ensuring that the institutions they represent work to improve governance and prioritise service delivery for all citizens. Army leaders have a responsibility to prevent the mobilisation of various anti-army groups and splinters formerly allied with the army that wish to capitalise on Haftar's illness to reverse the status quo in the east.

They could do so by agreeing to open talks with displaced Benghazi families, at the very least with those who were not directly involved in the fighting but still suffered its consequences. Tensions could also be mitigated by addressing openly the issue of Haftar's succession as army general commander, through a broad consultation among high-ranking officers, and by moving away from the personality cult that brooks no public admission of Haftar's frailty. Libyans would be better served by improved governance and accountability in their governing institutions than by the jockeying for position of a handful of powerful men.

Tunis/Brussels, 8 May 2018

Appendix A: Map of Libya



Appendix B: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

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