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The Impact of the Arab Spring on Africa: Regional Effects of the Libyan Revolution

Brittany T. Gregerson

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Executive Summary

The revolution in Libya has exacerbated long-standing security challenges facing the country's neighbors. In particular, Mali, Chad, and Niger have long dealt with threats from Tuareg and other rebel groups, Islamic extremists, and illicit smuggling – in many cases, since they gained independence. The fallout from the demise of the regime of Mu'amar Qadhafi has, however, aggravated these problems significantly. Moreover, the refugee and migrant flow that has resulted from the conflicts in Libya, and now Mali, is of unprecedented size and complexity for the region and has increased pressures on economies and governments that were fragile even before the events of 2011. Because Qadhafi systematically dismantled the institutions of government in Libya, experts estimate that it will take at least five years for Tripoli to be able to secure its own borders. As a consequence, these nations will be under significant pressure for much of the next decade.

Militant and criminal networks in the region have benefited significantly from the deluge of experienced fighters who left Libya since early 2011. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its allies and offshoots – chief among them Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO/MUJWA) – as well as various Tuareg rebel groups in Mali, Niger, and Chad have been among the chief beneficiaries. Combined with the proceeds from years of lucrative illicit trafficking activities and kidnap for ransom schemes, this influx has allowed these groups to expand their reach and influence. Militias retain significant power within Libya as well, and the prospects for success of the new government's efforts to consolidate power remain unclear.

Although analysis of the scope of weapons leakage is hamstrung by a lack of reliable information on those stockpiles before fighting broke out, in September 2012 Libya's Interior Minister described Qadhafi's weapons supply as simply "tremendous; it cannot be counted." During the conflict in Libya, looting of armaments and ordnance occurred on a massive scale; it continues to the present day. As a consequence, Libyan weapons have saturated the region. Libyan weapons have been found as far afield as Israel, Lebanon, and Somalia, often trafficked there via the centuries-old smuggling routes that radiate across the region. Because the identities, loyalties, and intentions of those who took or purchased Qadhafi's armaments vary and are largely unconfirmed, it will take time to build an effective regional effort against the smuggling of Libya-sourced arms. The history of international efforts to deal with arms left over from other civil conflicts suggests this will be a challenge for decades to come.

The migration crisis sparked by the conflict was "probably unprecedented," according to Brookings Institution international migration expert Khalid Koser, and its economic consequences will continue to be felt for some time. In pre-revolution Libya, more than one-third of the work force comprised migrant workers from other countries. During the conflict, an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 migrant workers in Libya fled home or to third countries. While most of those who left have since returned to Libya, the economic effects of their displacement linger. Interrupted remittance flows have yet to return to their previous levels, and migrant workers in Libya face a less certain future, given continuing Libyan suspicions about their role in the conflict.

The refugee and migrant flows sparked by the conflicts in Libya, and now Mali, are a volatile, complex mix of former combatants, displaced migrant workers, and civilians fleeing violence – many of them nationals of third countries unable to support them, or to which they cannot legally be returned under international law. The combination of unclear governing legal regimes, a pervasive lack of funds, widespread documentation problems, and the transnational nature of the problem threaten to make it an enduring one. There is nothing, however, to indicate these new refugee populations pose more of a threat or a different kind of threat to stability than any other African refugee population of a similar size and composition.

The net result is that in some respects, Libya continues to play the same unhelpful regional role that it did under Qadhafi. His quixotic and toxic tradition of interference in the region is now being carried forward by militias, militant groups, and diverse criminal elements. Nearly a year after the Brother Leader's death, Libya continues to serve as "the arsenal of terrorism," providing support to terrorist, criminal, and rebel groups across the continent and beyond.

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GLOBAL COVERAGE ANALYSES PROGRAM – AFRICA

TRACKING AND ISSUE PAPER

THE IMPACT OF THE ARAB SPRING ON AFRICA

REGIONAL EFFECTS OF THE LIBYAN REVOLUTION

MS. BRITTANY GREGERSON

SEPTEMBER 26, 2012

Contents

Regional Effects of the Libyan Revolution

When the Arab Spring came to Libya in 2011, the nation lacked a robust government infrastructure or civil society after decades of continual undermining by the Brother Leader. In the year since Qadhafi's death, instability and uncertainty have pervaded the country and spread outward to Libya's neighbors. Despite successful elections in July 2012 and replacement of the National Transitional Council (NTC) with an elected government,[1] Libya's revolutionary militias have resisted efforts to disarm and relinquish their battle-won power and stature to an unproven national authority. Identification with one's region or city remains most salient for Libyans[2] – ironically, Qadhafi's perennial refrain of devolved power to "councils everywhere" only became a Libyan reality in the fight to topple his regime.

Opportunistic actors within Libya – and across the Sahel and Sahara – who seek to benefit from the region's prevailing disorder and widespread lack of state capacity have taken advantage of over a million square kilometers of vast deserts[3] and porous, largely uncontrolled borders to bolster their militant and criminal activities, empty Qadhafi's vast arsenals of arms and ordnance, and exploit and inflame the largest refugee crisis in the region since World War II.[4]

The region has been beset with armed criminal and militant groups, trafficking and proliferation networks, and deleterious refugee and migrant flows since long before the start of the Arab Spring[5] – in many cases, dating back to the pre-colonial era.[6] Nonetheless, although the problems facing the region are familiar, the scale and complexity of the region's problems today far exceeds the capacities of governments in the region to address them.

This paper assesses the impact of the 2011 Libyan revolution and fall of Mu'amar Qadhafi on the surrounding region. It focuses, in particular, on the three countries where the effects have been the greatest: Mali, Niger, and Chad. Discussion of internal Libyan dynamics is limited to what is necessary to provide context to the discussion of what is occurring outside the country's borders.

The most significant impact of the Libyan revolution on the region has been intensification of three long-standing trends – the empowerment of militia groups, trafficking of armaments, and spread of transnational refugee and migrant flows.

Rise and Empowerment of Militia Groups within Libya

Throughout his rule, Qadhafi intentionally kept any potential rival institutions weak and used tribe, ethnicity, region, and politics as wedges to divide the country, ensuring his grip on power.[7] When the uprisings that would turn into the revolution began, independent civil society was nearly nonexistent, and there were no institutions powerful enough to take the lead. Even the army was organized as independent brigades under officers Qadhafi trusted; no unified army was allowed to develop.[8]

Into this gap stepped militias that developed and acted largely independently of each other. Some formed out of tribal and family groups;[9] others were tied to neighborhoods or cities, sometimes identifying with specific streets.[10] The militarization of Libyan society can be partially attributed to Qaddafi's reputation for brutality, which incentivized swift and aggressive action. As Qadhafi responded to early peaceful demonstrations with violence, stoking the public's fears, revolutionaries cited a well-known Bedouin proverb: "Me against my brother, my brothers and me against my cousins, my cousins and me against strangers."[11] News of Qadhafi's use of mercenaries against Libyans was instrumental in accelerating the militarization of the population.[12] The revolution benefited from a broad base of support in the general public and the omnipresence of weapons in the country once the revolution began.

Militias in Libya Today

As of September 2012, fewer than 20 Libyan militias retained significant military capability; however, more than 200 still exist, kept afloat by private funding and bolstered by significant caches of arms and other weaponry.[13] Clashes continue across the country among militias as well as between militias and national government forces,[14] and the prospects for success of the new government's efforts to consolidate power and reintegrate militia members into society remain unclear.

Libyan government forces have taken control of many detention facilities formerly run by militias, but some remain in operation.[15] Militias continue to arrest and hold people, mostly those suspected of having been mercenaries in Qadhafi's army. As of February 2012, thousands of detainees were still being held in gray facilities across the country – many of them reportedly suffering torture and inhumane holding conditions.[16]

Militias retain power in Libya today for many reasons:

- The weakness of the Libyan national government, which continues to be undermined by a lack of credibility. Since parliamentary elections are not scheduled until 2013, this problem can be expected to persist for at least two years.
- Libya's history of regional-based identity remains strong.[17] The NTC might have been latched onto by the international community as the face of the rebellion, but

that was never the reality on the ground.[18] Because of the way the revolution unfolded – with "piecemeal and variegated liberation of different parts of the country" – each of the myriad actors involved could legitimately claim a stake of the credit.[19] Those who fought are understandably reluctant to give up the arms that won them their freedom and serve as symbols of the revolution – especially when the new central authority presents a less than compelling alternative to the new status quo.

- The militias have developed vested interests and become more entrenched the longer they have continued to exist.[20] Although the majority of fighters have stated their intention to accept Libya's elected government and return to civilian life, efforts to fold militias into the national military forces have been incomplete and largely unsuccessful.[21] Some observers fear that the new government's refusal to admit the extent of abuses carried out since early 2011 by the militias could be creating a "climate of impunity" that will cause problems going forward.[22]

Militias in the Region

For decades, Qadhafi provided training, arms, and other support to neighboring states as well as militant and rebel groups within them;[23] in his absence, weapons and people have continued to flow from Libya. When the uprisings began, Qadhafi imported many of those he had supported in the past as mercenaries to fight for him. Estimates of the number who were mercenaries vary, but are generally in the thousands.[24] After his death, these fighters left Libya, armed with not only weapons, but also valuable training and experience – and little else in the way of job opportunities or marketable skills.[25]

A varied assortment of militant and criminal networks in neighboring states – some long-standing, some new – have benefited from the influx of experienced fighters with enhanced weaponry. Chief among these are Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its allies, notably Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO/MUJWA), as well as Tuareg rebel groups across the Sahel, including the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), based in northern Mali. The glut of weapons and other fungible assets procured from Libya in the chaos of revolution, combined with funds from ransoms and illicit trafficking activities has allowed AQIM and its affiliates to expand their reach and influence.[26] Criminal networks have grown alongside their militant partners – and associated corrupt government officials – though the relationships between the groups are difficult to track, since they are continually in flux and largely dependent on *ad hoc* tactical alliances.[27]

Observers fear an "Afghanisation" of the region and a shift of al Qaeda's focus "from the Mashreq to the Maghreb" – out of Asia and into the vast deserts of North Africa and the Sahel.[28] Though some communities have pushed back against the

Islamists, a Malian academic argues that Saharan and Sahelian populations' lack of a deep knowledge of Islam – similar to that of rural Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan – makes them susceptible to al Qaeda's teachings on the subject, which they often accept as authoritative.[29]

According to the UN, by June 2012, the situation in Mali had deteriorated so much that AQIM, its affiliates, and associated criminal organizations effectively controlled the entire north of the country.[30] By August 2012, "atrocious war crimes" were being committed against civilians in the north with impunity, and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) reported that AQIM had made significant progress in establishing a safe haven for al Qaeda affiliates in the area.[31] The Algerian, Malian, and Chadian governments have all made similar statements, fearing that AQIM and criminal networks will continue to be able to exploit instability in the desert to their advantage.[32]

The Case of Mali

Tuareg separatists have had tension with the powers that be in Mali since the colonial period. The most recent – MNLA-led – rebellion began in January 2012. In March, the Malian army ousted the democratically elected government in Bamako; Tuaregs, allied with Islamists, then took the northern part of the country, capturing the three most important northern cities within 48 hours. The MNLA announced the independence of Azawad on April 5. By mid-July, however, al Qaeda had hijacked their victory. Mali's north is now controlled by two AQIM affiliates – Ansar Dine and MUJAO – who have acted to impose their interpretation of Sharia law on locals.

In early September 2012, MUJAO took control of Douentza, a town less than 200 kilometers from the closest positions of the Malian armed forces – and the new southernmost point occupied by Islamists in that country. MUJAO is said to have vast regional ambitions that exceed those of many of Mali's Islamist extremists, and drug trafficking is a key source of income – to the point that some allege their ideology is no more than a cover for a profit-making machine. The relationship between AQIM and MUJAO remains unclear, with some sources claiming the two have split over a disagreement concerning sharing of ransom payments.

On September 9, 2012, Oumar Ould Hamaha, speaking for MUJAO, said that his group considered the killing of 16 imams by the Malian army to be equivalent to a declaration of war and that the group intended to continue its push south to Bamako. In an earlier interview, Hamaha threatened the MNLA and ECOWAS, saying they were not welcome in Mali and nothing will prevent MUJAO from taking Bamako in one day when the whim strikes. He also boasted of an arsenal comprising more than 20,000 missiles – and cautioned listeners to "remember the attacks on the USA on 11 September, and if ECOWAS is not careful, we will strike everywhere."

Tuareg Militants

Thousands of returnee Tuareg fighters from Libya, bolstered by a vast cache of arms, helped propel the MNLA to success in Azawad.[33] Though they did not manage to keep control of northern Mali for long, the MNLA still exists, though sidelined, and other Tuareg rebel groups remain active across the Sahel, significantly in Niger.

Tuareg rebels in Niger had long received support from Qadhafi as well.[34] After the MNLA was marginalized in Azawad and thousands of refugees began to leave northern Mali, many observers feared that a similar uprising could be sparked among the Nigerien Tuaregs.[35] That scenario has yet to materialize, perhaps indicating that the transnational linkages between Tuareg groups in different countries are less strong than commonly assumed. Still, the effects of the Libyan revolution continue to destabilize Niger; in September 2011, the Nigerien president credited the Libyan conflict with exacerbating "the menace of criminal organizations, drug traffickers, arms traffickers," and fundamentalist Islam in his country.[36] Despite its best efforts and attempted collaboration with neighboring countries, Niger has been unable to prevent militants from crossing the country's borders.[37]

Chad boasts a similarly volatile combination of Tuareg separatists, AQIM-affiliated militants, and Libyan returnee fighters[38] – as well as a similar history of intervention in its affairs by Qadhafi.[39] For nearly two decades on and off, the Brother Leader supported the government as well as a wide array of ever-shifting anti-regime rebel groups, in an effort he strove to portray within Libya as a valiant proxy fight against French colonialism.[40] Prior to the fall of Qadhafi, AQIM was reportedly already having much success recruiting Chadian youth, who had few other opportunities;[41] in the year since, AQIM has continued to build strategic depth in the region.[42]

Security Implications

Development of a strong Libyan national government is crucial to regional security. If the central government remains unable to establish a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, failing to reign in the country's powerful militias, it will have a difficult time consolidating power sufficient to meet the basic needs of the Libyan people. Reports that some militias within Libya might be aiding transnational terrorist and criminal groups, including AQIM and its affiliates, highlight the urgency with which the authorities must reintegrate fighters into society and take back control of essential state functions.

The more challenging task will be combating the array of militant groups that operate across the region's largely unmonitored borders. Strengthened by the influx of arms and other assets from the Qadhafi regime, bolstered by decades of lucrative trafficking and kidnap for ransom schemes, and steeped in an ideology that speaks to many in their area of operations, these groups are now significantly less likely to be

persuaded to lay down their arms. These new resources will allow them to expand their networks and operations with a far larger margin of error.

Trafficking of Armaments and Ordnance

One of the most significant analytical challenges in assessing the scope of the looting of Qadhafi's arsenals is a lack of reliable information on the size and content of those arsenals before the revolution. It is unclear whether anyone outside his innermost circle knew the details of his weapons stores. In September 2012, Libya's current Interior Minister told an interviewer: "The quantity of weapons that the former regime bought from the Soviet Union and the socialist countries over the years is tremendous; it cannot be counted. They are astronomical figures."[43]

What is known is that during his first decade in power, Qadhafi spent an estimated $22 billion on arms, almost one-fourth of Libya's entire budget – which came out to $890 per Libyan per year, nearly double the per capita weapons expenditures of the next closest country, Israel, which spent $480 per citizen per year.[44] In terms of total spending, only Iran spent more – on a population approximately ten times the size of Libya's at the time.[45] In 2006 and 2007, after the removal of arms embargoes and sanctions by the international community, Libya's military budget was estimated at $1.5 billion.[46]

Only partial data are available on two of the most troubling parts of the Libyan weapons program – MANPADS and chemical weapons. Multiple estimates put Libya's stock of MANPADS in excess of 20,000.[47] By January 2012, joint U.S.-Libyan teams had been able to account for around 5,000 of those systems.[48] According to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, around half of Qadhafi's declared stash of chemical weapons and precursor chemicals, including mustard gas stores, remained unaccounted for as of September 2012.[49]

During the Revolution

Reports indicate that during the revolution, "Libya turned into an 'arms bazaar'"[50] where weapons and ordnance were looted on an unprecedented scale by all sides – and the transfers continue to this day.[51] Experts on the ground since the revolution began have reported "a larger scale and variety of abandoned ordnance" than they had seen in other conflict zones[52] and noted that Qadhafi's arsenal was dispersed across the country, "often in odd locations."[53] Complicating matters further, during the revolution Qadhafi is said to have ordered supporters to disperse weapons and ammunition across the desert in places NATO bombers would be unlikely to target.[54] After the conflict, weapons and ordnance were often abandoned, frequently in unsafe conditions.[55]

Travels, Travails, and Trafficking

Libyan weapons have saturated the region accompanying the churn of fighters through Libya, Mali, Niger, and Chad that escalated in 2011.[56] This area has long been home to some of the world's most heavily trafficked smuggling routes – whether for narcotics, arms, people, or household goods.[57] Smuggling of Libyan weaponry has been reported by the governments of Egypt, Niger, Algeria, Tunisia, Chad, and Israel, among others,[58] and Libyan weapons have been discovered in such far-flung locations as Somalia, Syria, and Gaza.[59] The identities, loyalties, and intentions of those who took or purchased Qadhafi's arms vary and are largely unconfirmed.

Multiple sources indicate that Libyan weapons have made it into the hands of AQIM, Boko Haram, Tuareg mercenaries, Hamas, and other militant groups based in the Sinai.[60] Referring to the weapons surfeit, AQIM leader Mokhtar Belmokthar has stated that AQIM was "one of the main beneficiaries of the revolutions in the Arab world."[61] Belmokhtar has personally led several trips into Libya to procure weapons for the group since early 2011, and shipments continued to arrive to the group's outposts in Mali as late as September 2012.[62] Other unconfirmed reports claim that AQIM has gone as far as to establish "emirates" and training camps in eastern Libya to facilitate the continued trafficking of arms and foreign fighters to the group and its affiliates across the region.[63]

It appears that for many groups, Libyan arms represented a significant qualitative improvement in their arsenals. Though Qadhafi's stockpiles may have been no match for the advanced weaponry of NATO, they were vastly superior to those owned by the Malian army.[64] An academic expert on AQIM claims that before the Libyan conflict, the group had access only to limited explosives and light weapons; since then, they have since gained "several types of rockets and advanced weapons."[65] Similarly, the president of Chad stated in March 2011 that the Libyan conflict had made AQIM into "a genuine army, the best equipped in the region."[66]

The table below displays a sampling of reported discoveries of Libyan armaments and their locations.

The State of Libyan Weapons in Country Today

A large quantity and array of armaments are still being held by Libyan civilians and militias reluctant to surrender the weapons,[67] especially in light of the escalation in violence across the country during summer 2012.[68] Within Libya, militias are known to possess significant quantities of rocket launchers, antiaircraft guns and missiles, surface-to-air missiles, RPGs, Soviet-made tanks, Grad missiles, and mortars.[69] In late August 2012, the Libyan government seized more than 100 tanks and 26 missile launchers from one militia group; concurrently, near Zlitan, a tribal dispute turned violent, aided by 14mm anti-aircraft guns.[70]

Selected Discoveries of Libyan Arms

Country	Libyan Armaments Discovered	Source
Algeria	15 SA-24 and 28 SA-7 missiles;[71] "other weapons;"[72] "218 pieces of weapons… light and heavy machine guns, pistols and sniper rifles, remote explosive devices, tens of thousands of machine gun bullets, as well as RPG rocket launchers and a significant amount of powerful explosives;"[73] MANPADs[74]	Multiple; first in early 2011
Chad	"weapons;"[75] "arms;"[76] SAM surface to air missiles[77]	Multiple; first in mid-2011
Egypt	"138 Grad rockets and some 7,000 rounds of ammunition;"[78] "surface to air missiles… rockets and antiaircraft guns… ammunition, explosives, automatic weapons and caches of heavier arms, including Russian-made Strela-2 and Strela-3 heat-seeking, shoulder-fired antiaircraft missiles… [and] more advanced weapons;"[79] TNT, navigation systems;[80] "hundreds" of "modern sniper rifles;"[81] 40 surface-to-surface missiles, 17 RPG launchers, automatic weapons, mortar rounds, and 10,000 artillery shells;[82] SA-24s[83]	Multiple; first in early 2011
Lebanon	"a ship carrying several containers of Libyan arms;"[84] "a large consignment of Libyan weapons including rocket-propelled grenades and heavy calibre ammunition… [and] fragmentation explosives;"[85] artillery shells[86]	Multiple; first in early 2012
Niger	"ten truckloads of weapons;"[87] "rockets, assault rifles and machine guns;"[88] "antitank rocket launchers;"[89] "more than 600kg of explosives, 435 detonators and tens of thousands of dollars in cash;"[90] weapons, ammunition, and 645kg of Semtex[91]	Multiple; first in early 2011
Nigeria	Semtex to Boko Haram;[92] "weapons;"[93] "surface to air launchers;"[94] "arms and explosives"[95]	Multiple; first in late 2011
Mali	Multiple truck convoys with weapons including RPG-7 anti-tank RPGs, FMPK Kalashnikov heavy machine guns, Kalashnikov rifles, military grade explosives, ammunition, Strela surface-to-air missiles (SAM-7s);[96] "heavy machineguns and multiple rocket-launchers"[97]	Multiple; first in early 2011
Palestinian Territories	"vast numbers" of MANPADS and heavy weaponry;[98] SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles and RPGs;[99] Scud missiles;[100] hundreds of Grad missiles, "shorter-range rockets, guns and ammunition"[101]	Multiple; first in mid-2011
Somalia	Land and ship mines, RPGs, other shoulder-launched projectiles;[102] weapons, including surface to air missiles[103]	Multiple, first in mid-2012
Sudan	M021OF Grad missiles, ammunition, Kalashnikov rifles, 5 mortars, 581 Kalashnikov bullets, DShK machine gun ammunition;[104] "100 truckloads of weapons"[105]	Multiple, first in late 2011
Tunisia	"pistols, rifles, Kalashnikovs and thousands of live bullets;"[106] three trucks full of weapons[107]	Multiple; first in early 2011

The Libyan authorities continue to be unable to secure their borders and have asked the international community for help in doing so.[108] Experts expect it to take at least five years for Libya to put together an army that can adequately monitor the country's borders[109] – and it is in better shape than neighboring Niger and Chad.[110] Given the continued lack of information on Libyan weapons stores pre-revolution and the vastness of the Libyan desert, it is likely that stockpiles will continue to be discovered throughout the country over the next several decades.[111]

The unprecedented scale and complexity of the arms flows from the Libyan revolution make this proliferation event particularly concerning.[112] Less significant incidents have had a persistent impact on regional security in the past – for example, the looting of the Iraqi arms depots in 2003 and fallout from the arming of rebels in Central America and Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s.[113]

The durable and fungible nature of weapons makes the impact of their spread difficult to predict. Especially in light of the volume of these arms flows and the diversity of recipients, anticipating the ways they will be used is nearly impossible. Useful not only for fighting or deterrence, but also for their resale or barter value – and bolstered by near unlimited and global demand – these new arsenals will increase the freedom of action and feasible time horizons of the criminal and extremist groups who now possess them.

Burdensome Transnational Refugee and Returnee Flows

During the revolution, the human migration situation in Libya was extremely complex, comprising many divergent groups, including internally displaced Libyans, Libyans fleeing to neighboring countries, displaced third country national (TCN) migrant workers in Libya, migrants in Libya en route to Europe, and TCNs seeking asylum or refugee status in Libya.[114] While some groups were fleeing, others were entering or re-entering the country.[115] A Brookings expert on migration judged the scale, speed, and number of nationalities affected by the Libyan crisis to be "probably unprecedented," fueled by the high intensity of violence and drawn-out civil war that developed in the country.[116]

Before the revolution, more than 30 percent of the Libyan workforce comprised migrant workers from third countries. Data on migrants vary and can be unreliable, but estimates range from a population of between 1.8 million and 2.5 million migrant workers employed in Libya pre-revolution, 500,000 to 800,000 of whom left during the conflict.[117] The majority of those who left returned to their home countries[118] only to come back to Libya later due to a lack of economic opportunities.[119] As soon as November 2011, returnees to Libya were prevalent,[120] especially from Chad.[121]

Not all TCNs who left Libya returned home, however. Tunisia, Egypt, and Niger in particular took in significant numbers of TCNs,[122] though the first two countries were

widely criticized for imposing more stringent regulations on refugees from sub-Saharan countries than they did on those from Libya.[123] In March 2011, around 1,000 people an hour were entering Egypt and Tunisia from Libya.[124] The Nigerien government reported that, by September 2011, more than 210,000 people had already entered Niger from Libya[125] – a number that would only grow into 2012, as threats from Boko Haram opened up a new stream of returnees – more than 10,000 Nigeriens that fled Nigeria citing threats from the AQIM affiliate.[126]

Detainment and Racism

Significant numbers of migrants and refugees from the varying groups discussed above have been waylaid in their attempts to leave or enter Libya. Unclear and often contradictory policies governing the legal status of migrant workers and refugees[127] combined with the disarray of the Libyan security environment after the fall of Qadhafi have led to the emergence of a series of desert jails and militia-run unofficial prisons and detention centers throughout the country.[128]

One example is Gharyan, a city in the Nafusa Mountains near Libya's border with Tunisia. Its notorious Burashada camp hosts mostly Chadians and Nigeriens, generally on charges that they fought on Qadhafi's side during the revolution.[129] It is unclear whether the camp is under the control of a local militia or the Libyan national army.[130] Detention facilities like Burashada are hardly unique, play largely upon widespread racism in Libya, and often subject those being held to inhumane conditions, including torture.[131]

Impact of Refugees from Mali

Refugee flows into the Sahel from the conflict in Mali have been significant as well, though overshadowed by those from Libya. As of September 2012, more than 435,000 Malians had been displaced due to fighting and food insecurity. More than 266,000 registered as refugees in neighboring countries, and 174,000 were internally displaced in Mali's north.[132] Additionally, around 400 Malian army deserters fled to neighboring Niger in May 2012.[133]

Economic Impact of Displaced Populations

In the Sahel and West Africa, the returnees' plight is exacerbated by the extreme fragility of the states they are returning to, the economies of which depend upon the remittances that stop flowing when the returnees are forced home. Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mali are particularly vulnerable – already suffering from weak economies, overburdened health systems, and tenuous security situations.[134]

- According to IOM estimates, before the revolution, more than a million TCNs in Libya were sending remittances to their home countries.[135] In 2010, those

payments totaled $1 billion.[136] More than 90 percent of migrant workers from North Africa and the Sahel are thought to send remittances home.[137]

- Around 300,000 Chadians worked in Libya, most sending remittances home, and around 100,000 of them returned to Chad due to the revolution. According to the former Chadian Finance Minister, the decrease in remittances and new mouths to feed have had a significant impact on the country's economy.[138] By June 2011, a survey jointly conducted by Oxfam and Action Against Hunger found that remittances to Chad had already fallen by 57 percent and family size in the Bahr el Ghazal region had increased by up to 13 people.[139]

Regional food insecurity has also been exacerbated by the migration crisis. In 2010, before the outbreak of hostilities, around 10 million people in the Sahel region were at risk of hunger, and one in five children suffered from chronic malnutrition.[140] In summer 2012, ECOWAS projected that between 13 million and 16 million people in West Africa were in danger of starvation due to fallout from conflict in Libya and Mali, with Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Senegal, Mauritania, and Chad most affected.[141]

Bottom Line on Displaced Populations

The refugee and migrant flows sparked by the conflicts in Libya and now Mali are a volatile, complex mix of former combatants, displaced migrant workers, and civilians fleeing violence – many of them nationals of third countries unable to support them, or to which they cannot legally be returned under international law. The combination of unclear governing legal regimes, a pervasive lack of funds, widespread documentation problems, and the transnational nature of the problem threaten to make it an enduring one.

Though unprecedented for the region, there is nothing to indicate that these new refugee populations pose more of a threat or a different kind of threat to stability than any other African refugee population of a similar size and composition. Concerns about health and humanitarian issues and fears that these refugee camps could become fertile recruitment grounds for extremist and criminal networks in the area have legitimacy, but the same problems exist in camps across the continent. The factors that contribute to instability in refugee camps have not been systematically assessed, but examples like Kenya's Dadaab camp suggest that camp size, resource strain, rule of law, population composition, and average length of stay are likely relevant.[142] Best practices indicate that finding long-term non-camp solutions for those displaced from the recent conflicts in Libya and Mali should be the goal of the international community.

Notes

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14. ABSTRACT

An assessment of the regional fallout from the 2011 Libyan revolution and the demise of Muammar Qadhafi, with a focus on Mali, Chad and Niger. Three long-standing trends are identified as most affected by the Libyan revolution: the empowerment of militia groups, trafficking of armaments and ordnance, and spread of transnational refugee and migrant flows.

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