



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on October 24, 2011

Analysts Hint at New Civil War in “Liberated” Libya

Western leaders have been demanding that all of the revolutionary groups unify behind the NTC. But widely divergent interests — including remaining pro-Gadhafi forces and [victims of NATO bombings and rebel brutality](#) — would seem to make that a difficult proposition, according to Libyans and outside analysts.



There are many critical and possibly irreconcilable fault lines dividing Libyan society — Islamists, liberals, tribal chiefs, ethnic groups, Gadhafi loyalists, desert nomads, regional factions, and more. The potential for a new explosion of violence, therefore, exists and will persist.

Some of the competing groups and interests were able to unite around deposing the Libyan government. But now that it is [officially ousted](#), the already-tense situation becomes even more complex.

Various self-appointed councils, committees, militias, and brigades continue bickering, with some even producing arrest warrants for leaders of others. And many of the groups and chiefs have so far refused to recognize the NTC as the new legitimate regime.

“With so many armed groups operating in Tripoli and elsewhere in Libya, a peaceful resolution to the question of who should take power is unlikely,” noted an [analysis](#) by Stratfor, a global intelligence firm. “The shape of the new Libya is highly uncertain, but what is clear is that the NTC is not going to simply take control where Gadhafi left off.”

More violence is likely. And tensions are so high that some experts have suggested that another “civil war” is a distinct possibility as the power struggle between different armed coalitions continues to gain strength.

“The unique common goal for all the NTC factions was to defeat Gaddafi and clear the ground for building a new Libyan authority. So in a way Gaddafi continued to keep the country united even during the conflict,” [noted](#) Gabriele Iacovino, a North Africa analyst at the Italy-based International Studies Centre. “Now Gadhafi is dead and who knows what will happen next.”

Countless militiamen still roam the streets answering only to their own local commanders, with more than a few reports of looting, retribution, and violence. Even in Tripoli, where an al Qaeda-linked Islamist who once battled U.S. troops in Afghanistan is [supposed to be in charge](#), disorder is [reportedly](#) running rampant.

The NTC has lost a huge amount of credibility among Libyans and foreigners alike, with self-styled Council spokesmen making often-contradictory statements that have repeatedly been proven false. The group falsely claimed, for example, that it had [captured Gadhafi’s son](#), only to have him appear triumphantly in Tripoli later that day surrounded by cheering supporters.



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More recently, claims of “mass graves” attributed to Gadhafi are questionable at best, according to reporters in Libya. And the lies keep coming: There are at least four different versions of how Gadhafi was killed floating around.

Divisions between the pro- and anti-Gadhafi camps remain strong, too. As rebel forces overtook Gadhafi strongholds, countless suspected supporters of the regime were arrested, tortured, and even executed without trial.

Even with overwhelming assistance from the most powerful military alliance in the world, it took nearly eight months to officially bring down the regime — indicating a strong level of resistance against the new regime that will not be easy to quell. And Gadhafi reportedly distributed huge stockpiles of wealth and arms among loyalists nationwide before his demise in preparation for what his regime [vowed](#) would be a long-lasting insurgency.

Indeed, loyalists are still being urged to keep fighting for the Libyan “Jamahiriya,” a term invented by Gadhafi to describe his system of government that roughly translates to “state of the masses.” One pro-Gadhafi media outlet released a piece after the despot was reportedly killed [saying that the regime still existed and would continue to fight](#).

“Libyans should continue their mass green demonstrations and resistance,” [urged](#) the Mathaba News Network, claiming the “Leader” was actually still alive and that reports of the new regime controlling all of Libya were a myth. “The NTC leaders and their factions are all fighting amongst each other, and are dissatisfied with the spoils, which so far have not been forthcoming due to the armed population putting up a fierce resistance, and the globalist bankers being unable to keep their promises to the Libyan traitors.”

Citing the Secretary General of the “International People’s Conference Organization,” Mathaba said the West was anxious to secure for itself and its regime in Libya the former government’s frozen assets around the world. But, according to the organization, it could not do so as long as the “Jamahiriya” continued to exist.

“And it does continue to exist, because it consists of over 6,000 basic people’s conferences,” the Secretary General [told](#) Mathaba, referring to local citizen committees established by the old regime. “The fact that the basic people’s conferences could not convene at least twice a year as usual this year, has been because of the heavy NATO bombing and lack of security for the public to gather in their conference halls.”

But, he said, the “Jamahiriya” and its existing legislation will remain in force until “the masses” can convene again. The article, however, did not offer any hints about when that date might come.

The NTC and its Western backers, of course, see the situation much differently. As far as the new regime is concerned, one of the first tasks now will be to disarm the population. But even revolutionary fighters who helped topple Gadhafi have not agreed to disarm, let alone loyalist remnants.

“If they try to come by force, I’ll never hand over my weapon,” a “brigade commander” from Misrata named Mohamed al Majog, whose forces occupy part of Tripoli, told McClatchy Newspapers. “They need to negotiate, we’ll listen, and we’ll work something out.”

Tribal chiefs, Taureg nomads, and other groups might be even harder to persuade, especially if they fear retribution for backing the late despot. Another militia “field commander” [told](#) Reuters he was worried that big problems were on the horizon.



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“The fear now is what is going to happen next,” the ex-rebel chieftain explained. “There is going to be regional in-fighting. You have Zintan and Misrata on one side and then Benghazi and the east.... There is in-fighting even inside the army.”

Interim NTC boss Mahmud Jibril also conceded that trouble was brewing, saying that political bickering could sink Libya into chaos before the final [Sharia law-based Constitution](#) was even established. “We are heading toward a political battle, but the rules of the game are not clearly defined,” he told assembled militia chiefs. “We went from a national battle to a political battle, and this should not have happened before the creation of a state.”

Beyond Libyan warlords, the potential for more violence has many foreign governments concerned as well. The regime ruling Sri Lanka, for example, does not even plan to re-open its embassy in Tripoli until things calm down.

“The NTC has suggested that warring factions are still in the country,” Sri Lankan foreign ministry spokesman Sarath Dissanayake told the *Sunday Leader*. “Until the situation improves we will not be sending back the embassy staff.”

Western leaders, on the other hand, have promised to continue showering the new Libyan regime with taxpayer money for as long as necessary. But NATO, which played a crucial role in toppling Gadhafi, [reportedly](#) plans to end its military campaign by the end of the month.

Some national leaders in the alliance, however, want to stay and help the country “transition” to “democracy” — especially after witnessing other nations’ so-called transitions.

After Egypt’s purported “liberation,” for instance, the military junta that seized power from Mubarak has taken to slaughtering Christian protesters and delaying elections. Afghanistan and Iraq are also still in chaos despite securing untold billions of Western taxpayer money.

While U.S. and European officials were busy boasting and [celebrating the brutal killing of their former terror-war ally](#), some analysts warned that further bloodshed in Libya could tarnish the perception of the regime-change mission and its backers. “If there is no stability, that would beg the question if the whole operation was really a success,” [noted](#) Daniel Keohane of the Belgium-based Institute of Security Studies.

Around the world, some experts also noted that the demise of Gadhafi could lead to further global destabilization as rulers learn that acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) may be the only way to prevent a Western takeover of the nations they rule. Consider: Saddam Hussein and Gadhafi were both overthrown after giving up their weapons programs, while the brutal tyrant lording over North Korea remains secure.

Photo of Libyans celebrating Oct. 23 as transitional government declares liberation of Libya: AP Images

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