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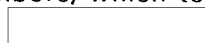
Libya: Tribalism in the Qadhafi Regime



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Summary

Pervasive tribal loyalties have thwarted Libyan leader Mu'ammr al-Qadhafi's goal of creating a nation that owes allegiance to his ideals alone. However, he has exploited those loyalties selectively to create a firm base of support and has used them to weaken rival tribal groupings. He is strongly supported by his own Qadhafa tribe and its neighbors, which together form one of Libya's principal tribal confederations.



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Isolated failures to co-opt alternative tribal power centers have resulted in coup attempts, and tribal loyalties will almost certainly play a role in alignments in any near-term succession scenario. The strongest challenge to Qadhafi's power will probably come from a member of the tribal confederation from the Libyan coastal area that has historically been opposed

This memorandum was prepared by Office of Leadership Analysis. It is based on research done in preparation for a larger study on tribalism and tribal ties as a force of change and stability in Libya. It has been coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, Near East/North Africa Branch, Asia/Near East Division, LDA



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[redacted]

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to his own. We believe exiled leaders of Libya's dissident community, who are not cut from the Bedouin mold, have little chance of garnering support from any important tribal faction. [redacted]

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Tribalism: A Continuing Force

Before Libya became independent in 1951, the country's tribes operated to a large degree as autonomous political, economic, and military entities. According to academic studies, about 85 percent of the country's one million people were then identified as members of a nomadic or seminomadic tribe--true nomads accounted for only about 3 percent of the total. All members were intensely loyal to the tribe, which was the ultimate guarantor of their survival. The loyalties of a small urban population were limited to the extended family. [redacted]

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Nationhood and subsequent modernizing influences have not significantly changed this picture. We believe that on a practical level the average Libyan's loyalty to the tribal unit and its leaders continues to transcend fealty to the state or to national leaders.

[redacted] tribal or clan identity still serves as a useful tool for categorizing people according to their social status and political niche. Since taking power in 1969, Qadhafi has undermined or banned most other traditional means of association in Libyan society, such as religious brotherhoods and lodges, effectively making kinship an informal communication network and an affiliation of last resort. [redacted]

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We have identified over 100 Arabic- and Berber-speaking tribes in Libya, many of which continue along traditional patterns of social and economic organization despite a pronounced trend toward urbanization. [redacted]

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[redacted] rural migrants who flocked to Libya's urban areas during the oil boom of the 1960s have generally maintained tribal customs, congregating in large family and clan groups to ease the rural-urban transition, as well as for protection. Even many part-time government functionaries continue to live in rural areas and divide their work week between city jobs and traditional agricultural labor, further binding rural-urban tribal links. Only among the best educated urbanites--a relatively small segment of the society--do these ties appear to attenuate. [redacted]

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In the countryside, Qadhafi's revolution has halted a move away from tribal land ownership, which began when the economic focus of the country shifted from agriculture to oil. In keeping with his austere socialist revolution, Qadhafi has publicly advocated the formation of communal agricultural and business ventures. As a result, in some cases land tenure has reverted to the tribes after private land title records were destroyed by Qadhafi's radical cadre. [redacted]

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Qadhafi's Use of Tribalism

We believe Qadhafi retains a strong sense of his own tribal identity, even though he has sought to create a new Libyan nation that owes allegiance to his social and political ideals rather than to tribe and family. He is a member of the most prominent clan of the cohesive and traditionally important Qadhafa tribe. The tribe claims descent from a local holy man and therefore is one of the religiously significant tribal classes of North African tribes known as Marabutin. Revered by their neighbors, Marabutin tribes are trusted as an impartial third party to arbitrate tribal disputes. As such, the Qadhafa have enjoyed a special status within a prominent coalition of nomadic tribes in Libya, the saff al-fawqi (interior confederation).¹ [redacted]

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As a leader capable of pragmatism, Qadhafi recognizes the utility of the tribal social order in creating a firm base of support from which he can safely implement his revolutionary domestic policies. We believe he has increasingly behaved like a traditional tribal leader. For example, he has turned to fellow tribesmen and close family members to manage the extensive bureaucracy of the revolutionary committees, which are supposed to instill revolutionary fervor in the populace. Since the early days of his regime, Qadhafi has also used tribal supporters to staff his personal security forces. [redacted]

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[redacted] To our knowledge, he has resorted to this extreme security measure only once before; weapons were distributed to many of these same tribes in 1975, following the fracture of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the body Qadhafi set up to govern Libya after his coup in 1969. He has also rewarded his supporters by locating numerous economic projects in the Qadhafa tribal heartland near the southern Gulf of Sidra coastal area. [redacted]

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Qadhafi has sometimes sought to exploit tribal relations to promote his radical foreign policy initiatives. His public remarks reflect an underlying tribal motivation for the annexation of the Aozou Strip and occupation of northern Chad. He has specifically noted the migration pattern of the saff al-fawqi, whose tribes of reputedly powerful, warring conquerors for the last 150 years have wandered from the Gulf of Sidra to Lake Chad, deep in the Saharan interior. (We believe he also seeks to protect his own tribesmen. [redacted] he has been reluctant to commit Qadhafa tribesmen to taking a combat role in the current fighting to regain the saff's alleged ancient territory, probably to avoid a dangerous depletion in their ranks.) Qadhafi has also

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¹ In the interest of mutual self-preservation, Libyan tribes continue to form tribal confederations. Scholars have identified three primary tribal groupings. Besides the interior confederation, another historically significant tribal confederation is the saff al-bahr (coastal confederation) of northwestern Libya, dominated by the Magarha tribe. The Sa'adi, or noble, tribes of northeastern Cyrenaica, which are dominated by the Bara'sa tribe, have also banded together when faced with extraregional threats to their sovereignty. [redacted]

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used tribesmen from the border areas of neighboring states such as Tunisia and Egypt in past attempts to destabilize those countries. [Redacted]

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Manipulating Tribal Ties

We believe that Qadhafi has worked methodically, to a large degree successfully, at strengthening his own position and weakening rival tribal groupings using Bedouin tactics--arranging marriages and filling some sensitive positions with political eunuchs.

[Redacted] several members of his immediate family have married into other significant tribes and prominent urban families within Libya, in effect amalgamating alternative power centers. [Redacted]

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In 1980, Qadhafi arranged the marriage of his brother-in-law, Mas'ud 'Abd al-Hafiz, to the sister of Chadian faction leader Goukouni Weddeye. The tribally oriented Chadian community almost certainly recognized the direct marriage link between the Chadians and their Libyan sponsors as a politically significant gesture on Qadhafi's part. 'Abd al-Hafiz commanded Libyan forces that occupied northern Chad shortly thereafter. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

Qadhafi has personally used marriage to diffuse opposition. After taking power he was threatened by a strong collection of tribes dominated by the Bara'sa in the eastern Cyrenaican region, an area that has traditionally opposed most forms of extraregional rule. Qadhafi, who had married a local woman of his family's choosing after the coup, apparently divorced her to marry a Bara'sa woman. This second marriage was viewed at the time [Redacted] as an effort to cement relations between Qadhafi's ruling clique and the Cyrenaican tribes over which the Bara'sa act as suzerain. [Redacted]

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While Qadhafi and loyal members of other tribes dominate key regime posts, in some cases Qadhafi has elevated social outcasts to positions of influence. In doing so, he denies increased influence to the Qadhafi's rival tribes. Currently Libya's external intelligence service head, the Armed Forces Commander in Chief, and the commander of Libyan forces in Chad are of black African descent. We believe that in promoting these minorities to command levels, Qadhafi has deliberately filled sensitive posts with men who have little chance of mustering support for a coup. [Redacted]

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The Tribal Threat to Qadhafi

Tribal loyalties will play a role in any near-term succession scenario, we believe. Since taking power Qadhafi has fought off coup attempts led by men who would ultimately have had to draw on tribal networks to consolidate their position. In our view, these

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attempts represent isolated failures on Qadhafi's part to successfully co-opt alternative tribal power centers. [Redacted] he has probably preempted other rebellions by detaining men whose tribal support bases represented a threat to the regime, in effect holding them hostage against such an attempt. [Redacted]

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We believe the greatest potential tribal challenge to Qadhafi's rule could come from members of the saff al-bahr, which represent a close-knit base of support for coup plotters. Led by the Magarha tribe of the nominal number-two man in the Qadhafi regime, 'Abd al-Salam Jallud, this saff is composed of a cross section of Libya's traditional rural and urban communities. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] Several urban components of the saff al-bahr, such as groups from the Misratah area, are heavily engaged in commerce in Libya, and we judge that they are especially dissatisfied with Qadhafi's radical economic policies. This sentiment is shared by their urban, settled relatives in Cyrenaica. Widespread public dissatisfaction with Qadhafi's economic policies and handling of the war in Chad heightens the prospect that a well-placed saff member, drawing on tribal contacts, could build a broad conspiracy against the regime. [Redacted]

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Qadhafi has used his characteristic two-pronged approach in dealing with the potential challenge from the Magarha. On the one hand, he has cultivated the Magarha, as evidenced by his highly public relationship with Jallud and the arranged marriage of a Magarha, 'Abdallah Sanussi, to the sister of Qadhafi's wife. He has also sought to identify and eliminate incipient challenges. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

Although the Magarha tribe, or portions of it, was probably armed along with other loyal tribes earlier this year, we do not see this as signaling any significant change in the Libyan leader's relations with it. In our view, this measure is more a sign of Qadhafi's growing fear and desperation over Libya's failed military venture in Chad than confidence that he has successfully integrated the Magarha into his political sphere. [Redacted]

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[REDACTED] the leaders of Libya's exiled dissident community--including Muhammad al-Maqaryaf and 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Huni--are urban socialites who have little chance of garnering more than nominal tribal support for their cause. With few exceptions, the Bedouins and their first-generation urban cousins remain poorly disposed toward this type of established urban elite. Even though Huni has some supporters [REDACTED] tribally related to him, most of the group's members are professionals currently loyal to Qadhafi and dependent on him for their careers. [REDACTED]

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Appendix A

Glossary of Selected Terms, Tribes, and Tribesmen

'Abid - Sa'adi tribe of Cyrenaica.

'Ailat Fayid - A very small and declining Cyrenaican Sa'adi tribe. Its lands are reportedly being expropriated by the 'Ubaydat and the Hasa.

'Arafa - Sa'adi tribe centered on the Cyrenaican town of al-Marj.

Awlad Abu Sayf - A prominent Marabut tribe, it is allied with Berber elements of the south central Jabal Nafusah to its north but does not involve itself in regional conflicts. Recurrent land disputes with the Warfalla and the Zintan mark the fiercely independent tribe's history.

Awlad Sulayman - The personal prestige of its leaders and warfaring prowess of this small but powerful tribe distinguish it from other interior tribes. Portions of the tribe emigrated to the Lake Chad region after being driven from the Surt basin by Turkish rulers in the 18th century. The tribe, a member of the saff al-fawqi, centers on the Hun/Waddan Oases region. (Notable tribesmen: Prominent regime revolutionary 'Abd al-Salam Zadma.)

'Awaqir - Sa'adi tribe second in size only to the 'Ubaydat. It is strategically centered in and around Banghazi.

Bara'sa - The tribe, whose members held most of the high-level administrative posts under the monarchy, is accepted as the preeminent tribe of the Cyrenaican Sa'adi. It is centered on the religiously significant town of al-Bayda. (Notable tribesmen: Foreign Minister Jadallah 'Azzuz al-Talhi; the Farkash family--Qadhafi's in-laws--whose members have governed the region and commanded its security forces; and nominal security forces head Ahmad Muqassabi.)

Darsa - Cyrenaican Sa'adi tribe.

Farjian - A member of the saff al-bahr situated west of Surt.

Fawaqir - A Marabut tribe of western Cyrenaica.

Hasa - A small, cohesive Sa'adi tribe of Cyrenaica. Its reputation is tainted by its collaboration with Italian occupation authorities.

Hasawna - True nomads of the Fezzan region who have traditionally aligned themselves with the saff al-fawqi in regional conflicts.

Madan - Member of the saff al-bahr located east of Surt.

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Magarba - Strictly classed as a Cyrenaican Sa'adi, the tribe actually is more closely aligned with the saff al-fawqi and is a neighbor of the Qadhafa. Almost all oil wells and terminals are located on their tribal land. (Notable tribesmen: Two men named Muhammad al-Magaryaf--one heads the opposition National Front for the Salvation of Libya; the other, now deceased, was a member of the Revolutionary Command Council.)

Marabut (Pl. Marabutin) - A tribe that claims descent from a holy man and is revered by other tribes as religiously significant. Marabuts are trusted by neighbors as impartial third parties to mediate tribal disputes.

Minifa - A Marabut client tribe of the 'Ubaydat that gained fame resisting the Italian occupation under Libyan national hero 'Umar al-Mukhtar.

Magarha - Forced from the southern Fezzan region by the migrating Aulad Sulayman in the 18th century, the tribe is today located in Mizdah and to the north of Sabha. The tribe tactically allies itself with the saff al-bahr, and in the past fought with Turkish rulers based in Tripoli against regional foes. (Notable tribesmen: Libya's number-two man, 'Abd al-Salam Jallud; Qadhafi's brother-in-law 'Abdallah Sanussi; and regime radicals Sa'id Rashid and 'Izz al-Din al-Hinshari.)

Mujabra - A product of the caravan trade that depended on the oases of eastern Libya, Mujabra members are of black African descent. Tribal fragments are located in Ajdabiya, Awjilah, Jalu, and al-Kufrah. (Notable tribesmen: Armed Forces Commander in Chief Abu Bakr Yunis Jabr and External Security Authority head Ibrahim Bishari.)

Qadhafa - A Marabut tribe claiming descent from a holy man buried in Gharyan, it broke off from the Warfalla, its mother tribe, in the 1700s and moved east to the Surt basin. A member of the saff al-fawqi. (Notable tribesmen: Qadhafi; Surt military region commander Mas'ud 'Abd al-Hafiz; security force head Khalifa Hunaysh; Green Book theorist Ahmad Ibrahim; Revolutionary Committee Bureau Operations Room head 'Ali Kilani; de facto RCB head Muhammad Majdhub; Qadhafi's office manager, Ahmad Ramadhan al-Qadhafi; and key Qadhafi aides Ahmad and Sayid Qadhaf al-Dam.)

Sa'adi - Descendents of the second wave of Arab invaders who entered Libya in the 11th century and settled in the Cyrenaican region, they are the nine noble tribes who own the land by right of conquest. All other tribes in the Cyrenaican region are, in theory if not in practice, client tribes of the Sa'adi.

Saff al-Bahr (the coastal confederation) - The saff and its allies were bonded by a caravan trade stretching from the African interior to distribution points along the Tripolitanian coast. In the past, its members cooperated with Tripoli's Turkish rulers, who sought to extend their authority to the interior.

Saff al-Fawqi (the interior confederation) - The tribes of this saff historically shared grazing land in the upper wadis, or riverbeds, of the southwestern Gulf of Sidra coastal area. Its members, seeking to control the caravan trade in western Libya, fought and were defeated by Turkish authorities in the 18th century.

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'Ubaydat - The largest Cyrenaican Sa'adi tribe in terms of territory and numbers, it tends to behave as several tribes because of its geographic diversity. Tough and bellicose, it pushed the Awlad 'Ali into Egypt's western desert.

Warfalla - Numerically the largest and most powerful tribe of the saff al-fawqi, it is centered on Bani Walid. (Notable tribesmen: Prominent Military Intelligence official 'Ali al-Fayturi and security force head Al-Hadi Imbarish.)

Zintan - As recently as the 1960s it was described as an important warrior tribe and a continual threat to peace in the northwestern Tripolitanian region. It has traditionally aligned with the saff al-fawqi.

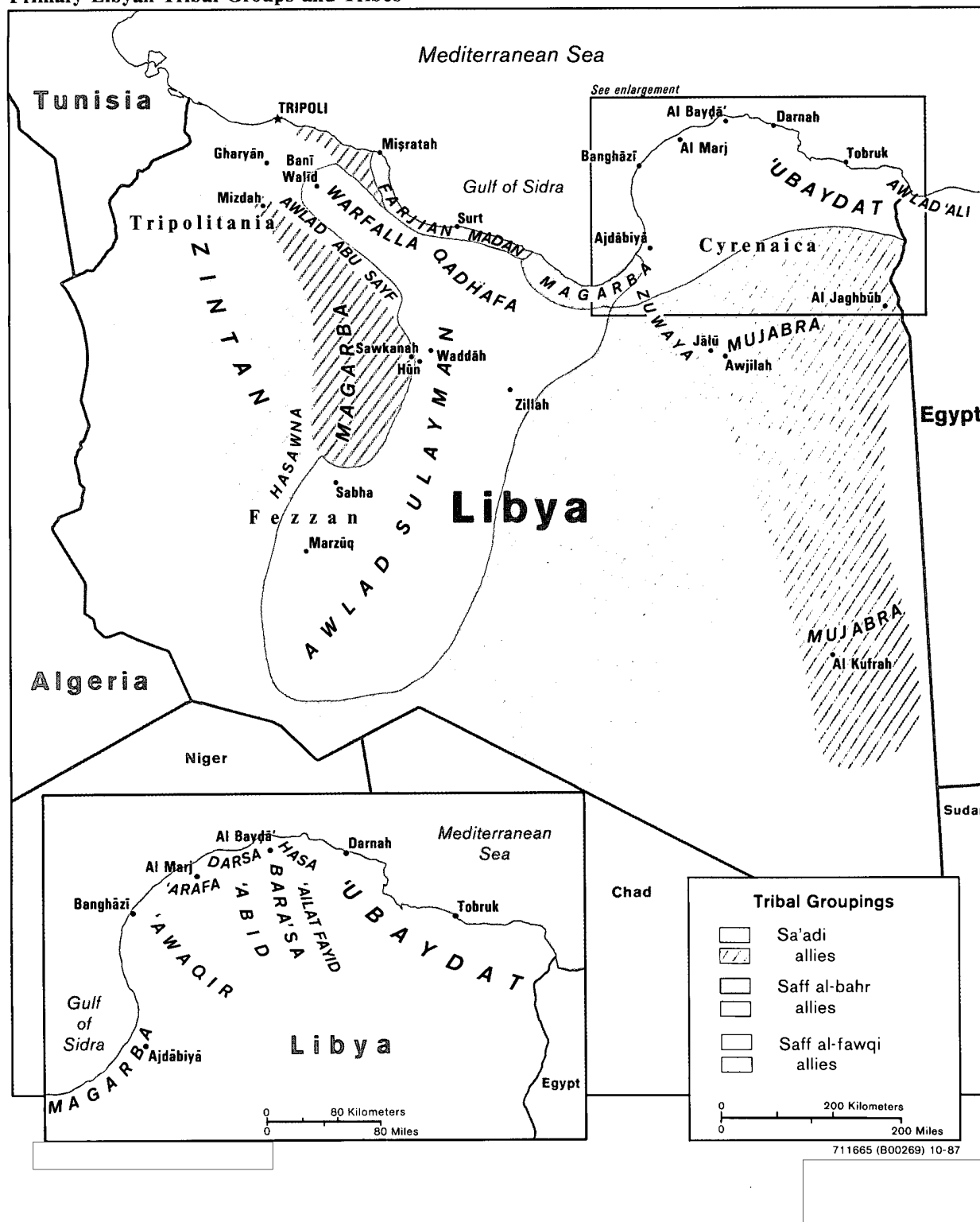
Zuwaya - Numerically larger than its host tribe, the Magarba, it ranges from Ajdabiya to the Jalu oasis.



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Primary Libyan Tribal Groups and Tribes



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LIBYA: TRIBALISM IN THE QADHAFI REGIME

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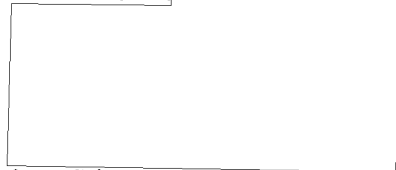
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