

Libya's Civil War: Rebuilding the Country from the Ground Up

by [Andrew Engel \(/experts/andrew-engel-0\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Andrew Engel, a former research assistant at The Washington Institute, recently received his master's degree in security studies at Georgetown University and currently works as an Africa analyst.



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The revolution that toppled the regime of Muammar al-Qadhafi has brought Libya the exact opposite of stability. Since November 2014 alone, almost a half-million Libyans have been displaced, some for the fourth or fifth time. The Islamic State has recently entered the country, intensifying the climate of violent extremism. A top UN official warned that Libya is "very close to total chaos."

Today, power in Libya is divided principally between two alliances: Operation Dignity in the east, consisting of traditional Arab nationalists, federalists, anti-Islamists, and former regime elements, and Operation Libya Dawn in the west, a loose coalition of hardline revolutionaries and Islamists. But both sides are strained by internal tensions - and both are threatened by the rise of violent extremist organizations such as the newly coined Islamic State in Libya.

In this study, [Andrew Engel \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/andrew-engel\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/andrew-engel) posits that given Libya's highly precarious situation, UNSMIL should reconsider its current top-down approach to forging a national unity government. Instead, he demonstrates the benefits of a local approach focused on engaging Libya's municipal councils and tribes. Such a road will be painstaking, and painful, but could be the best hope for piecing Libya together.

The Author

[Andrew Engel \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/andrew-engel\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/andrew-engel), a former research assistant at The Washington Institute, received his master's degree in security studies at Georgetown University and currently works as an Africa analyst. He traveled extensively in Libya after its official liberation. He is the author of the Washington Institute Research Note *Libya as a Failed State: Causes, Consequences, Options*. ❖

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