UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE www.usip.org

SPECIAL REPORT

2301 Constitution Ave., NW • Washington, DC 20037 • 202.457.1700 • fax 202.429.6063

About the Report

This report provides cultural context and guidance for practitioners and policymakers working in the field of countering violent extremism (CVE) in North Africa. Based on research conducted in 2015 and 2016 in Libya and Tunisia that includes surveys and in-depth interviews with members of the Toubou and Tuareq tribes, it is part of ongoing United States Institute of Peace (USIP) efforts to develop and implement training and capacity-building programs that support CVE objectives.

About the Author

Manal Taha is a Sudanese-born American scholar who as Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at USIP studies violent extremism in Sudan, Libya, Niger, and Chad.

Special Report 416   November 2017

Contents

Manal Taha

Matriarchal and Tribal Identity, Community Resilience, and Vulnerability in South Libya

Summary

- Since the 2011 Libyan revolution and the fall of Muammar Gadhafi's regime, violent extremist organizations (VEOs) have taken advantage of the lack of security and secured a foothold in Libya and the surrounding region.

- Recruitment into Libya-based VEOs has increased since 2011, coastal cities in the north—such as Benghazi, Tripoli, Sabratha, and Derna—experiencing more than the rest of the country.

- Local communities in southern Libya are vulnerable in the face of political and social marginalization, no effective government presence, VEO activity in the region, and few economic opportunities.

- Research suggests that these factors make VEO recruitment more likely, yet among the two dominant tribes in that region—the Toubou and the Tuareq—recruitment is notably low and community resilience notably high.

- Tribal identity plays an important role in building an individual identity, and a well-defined and cohesive tribal identity is a major resilience factor that protects these communities from VEO recruitment.

- The factors that make each of these groups resilient and resistant to VEO recruitment are distinct, but overlap with one another and include commonalities based on social structure.

- Gender norms play a significant role in community resilience. The relative rigidity of gender roles and the level of community resilience are strongly correlated, rigidity in norms being negatively correlated with resilience and thus the likelihood that a community will be resistant to VEO recruitment.

- Gender norms refer to both men and women; the concept of honor for men in these cultures shapes Toubou and Tuareq masculinity to assuage violence and to protect their community by protecting tribal traditions and culture.
- The cultural role of women in these communities counterbalances existing vulnerabilities such as social and political exclusion and strengthens their ethnic and tribal identities in lieu of a national one.

Introduction

Six years after the 2011 revolution and the toppling of the Gadhafi regime, Libya remains a failed state, government capacity is limited, and no army or police are in place to maintain security. This instability has provided space for radical groups and violent extremist organizations (VEOs) to expand their networks and supporters, especially among youth.

In 2012, when Libyans were still celebrating the revolution and enthusiastic about a free and democratic Libya, the extremist group Ansar al-Sharia launched its recruitment program by organizing social and extracurricular events to attract youth. In eastern Libya, youth in upper middle-class neighborhoods began joining. Recruitment took place in local football and social clubs. Young men openly advocated for radicalization in sport clubs, cafés, and even on the main streets of Benghazi through public lectures, charities, and public community activities. Meanwhile, in the southwest of the country, youth from two tribes in that region—the Toubou and the Tuareq—were the rare exception. The question is why they were.

The Toubou and Tuareq are semi-nomadic tribes living in Chad, Mali, Niger, Libya, Algeria, and Sudan. Although not strictly matriarchal, they are matrilineal—that is, they derive their tribal identity from the mothers' family line. They do exhibit many matriarchal characteristics, however, and the cultural norms for women are less rigid than in other tribes in the region, such as the North African Arabs and the Hausa and the Kanuri. In Toubou and Tuareq communities, masculinities are less identified with dominance, aggression, and violence and more with social connectivity, sustained through customary law, resulting in a fulfilling sense of identity and community. This resilience is a strong deterrent to recruitment by violent extremist groups in spite of vulnerabilities such as political, economic, social, and cultural marginalization, and the severely underdeveloped and drought-plagued regions they inhabit.

The primary objective of this report is to understand the local factors that contribute to community vulnerability and resilience to VEO recruitment in southern Libya. A gender perspective lens is useful in studying the power dynamics and analyzing the different needs, experiences, and status of women and men and boys and girls to deepen understanding of resilience and vulnerabilities to violent extremism.[1] This approach helps us understand whether specific cultural norms, practices, or values contribute to resilience and prevent the radicalization of young men and women.

Violent extremism is expanding rapidly in Libya. The self-proclaimed Islamic State in 2014 announced its control of Derna and Sirte. Many young Libyans have joined violent jihadist groups, but research addressing the root causes of this phenomenon is limited. Understanding these local factors is the surest path to developing preventive strategies and peacebuilding approaches to reduce vulnerability in youth and strengthen communities against violent extremism and radicalization, like the kind of resilience seen in Toubou and Tuareq communities.

The Tribes: Location and Cultural Context

The Toubou are a non-Arab tribe in northern Chad, southern Libya, northeastern Niger, and northwestern Sudan. They speak the Tebu language, which is a subfamily of the Nilo-Saharan languages family.

The Toubou are unevenly subdivided in two groups: the Teda and Daza. Most of the Toubou in Libya are Teda. In southeastern Libya, they mainly live in the oases of Kufra and Rebyana, the southwestern region in Qatroon and Murzuq, and in a large area in the valley extending south of Sabha to the Libya-Niger border (see map 1). Semi-nomadic Muslims, they historically centered their social structure on livestock. However, after the droughts of 1984 and 1989 and the Chadian-Libyan war, some gave up their nomadic lifestyle and settled in new urban centers that developed after Libya's economy began to flourish because of the oil industry. Many Toubou, however, use their historical knowledge of the desert to become involved in patrolling both licit and illicit caravans as well as trade between Libya and neighboring countries of Chad, Niger, and Sudan.

The Tuareq are also Muslim and comprise five main groups united by language, shared culture, and land spanning Mali, Libya, Algeria, Niger, and Mauritania. Notably, these groups are not necessarily connected by lineage. Semi-nomadic, they live and trade in a region plagued by drought and desertification. The Tuareq who live in southwestern Libya are mainly concentrated in Ubari, Ghat, and Ghadames (see map 1).

During the droughts, many Tuareq moved to Libya and found work under the Gadhafi regime as soldiers—their main economic opportunity at the time. Historically, they have relied on their knowledge of the desert to work with merchants and buyers in licit and illicit trade. During the revolution, however, the Toubou pitched themselves against Gadhafi and supplanted the Tuareq as the chief smugglers of the region; the Tuareq largely remained allied with the regime until it fell. Gadhafi managed to mobilize the Tuareq based on their military affiliation with the Libyan National Army. He also capitalized on their grievances, promising them national identification documents if they pledged their support. During the revolution, the Toubou situated themselves as guards at the Libyan southern border and patrolled the major oil fields in the region. After Gadhafi died, many Tuareq emigrated from Libya into Mali and Niger. After the revolution, they began to settle again in Libya. Later, in early 2014, they aligned with Misrata, which gave them the responsibility of guarding the Elfeel and al Sharara oil fields, which the Toubou had previously done. This change led to an outbreak of major conflict between the two tribes.

The Toubou pitched themselves against Gadhafi, and the Tuareq largely remained allied with the regime until it fell.

Table 1. Toubou and Tuareq in Libya

Town	Description	Population (Year)
Qatrun	Hometown for the Toubou. The second residents are Murabteen, historically known as the religious Sofi men. Known as a transit hub for immigration.	20,000 (2010)
Ubari	Hometown for the Tuareq. A destination for Nigerien Tuareq migrants. The second majority are El Fezaznat.	86,000 (2012)
Sabha	Multiple tribes, including Awlad Suliman and Toubou. Known as a transit point and destination for many Nigerien Tuareq and immigrants from western Africa.	120,000 (2006)
Ghat	Majority are Tuareq. Known as transit hub for Tuareq immigrants.	22,000 (2011)
Murzuq	Majority are Toubou. Second population are al Ahali (multiple groups descended from African and Arabs). Historically a trade point for trans-Saharan caravans and the slavery trade.	20,000–30,000 (2011)

Source: Libyan Census Publication.

Map 1. Toubou and Tuareq Areas
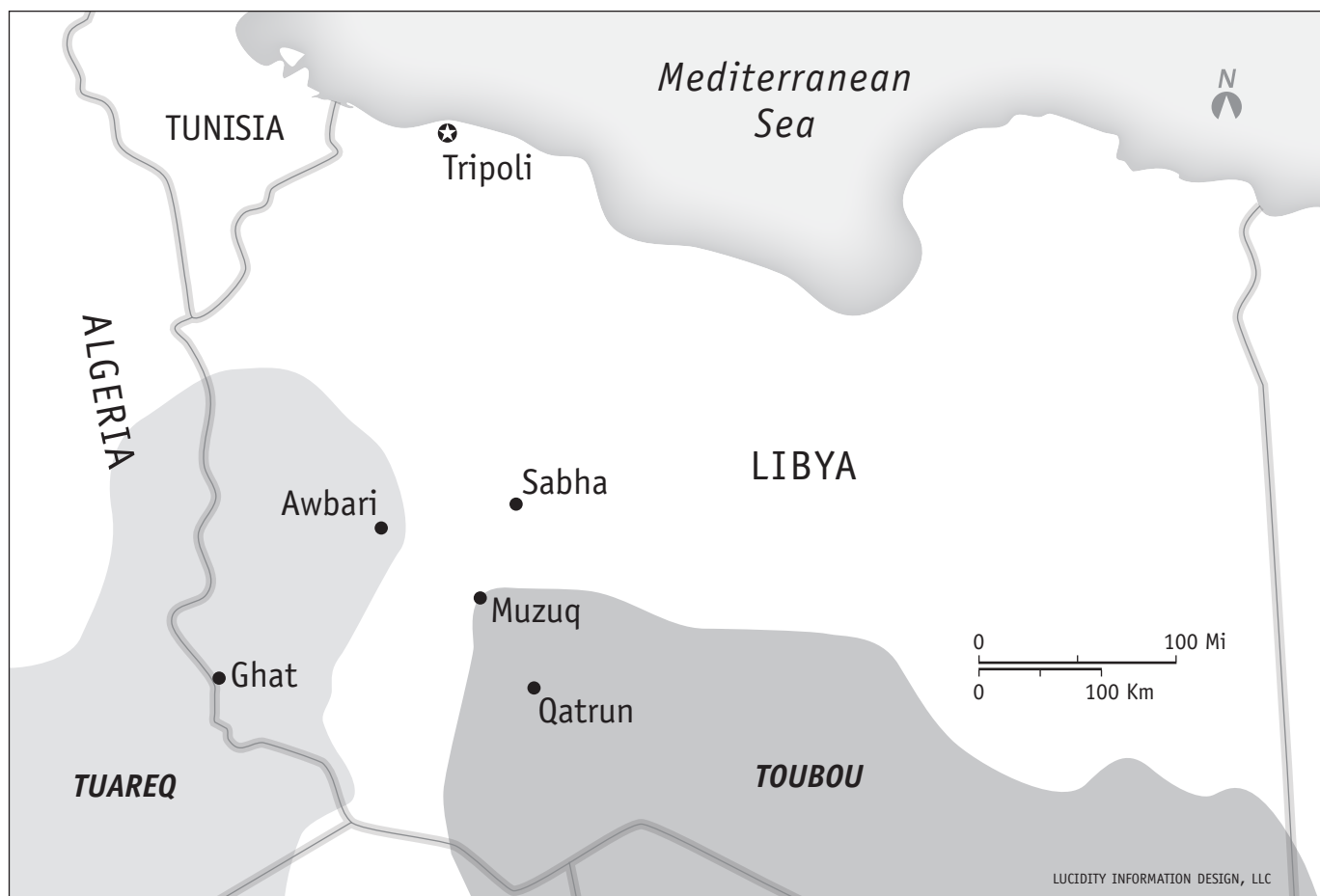
Interrupting a peace that had been in place for more than a hundred years, the conflict erupted in September 2014 between the Toubou and the Tuareq in Ubari, an oasis in the southwest, over intense competition over smuggling routes and incentives to patrol the regional oil fields after the revolution.

VEO Recruitment in Libya

The field of countering violent extremism has gained momentum among scholars, peacebuilding practitioners, and policymakers in recent years. Several studies have contributed to identifying the push and pull factors that help VEOs grow and expand their recruitment of youth. A report presented at the UN Security Council in 2015, for example, outlines conditions that may help move youth away from the path of violent extremism.[2] The report emphasizes the local dynamics and individual factors that push youth to join violent extremism in Iraq. For example, none of the Islamic State fighters interviewed in Iraq had more than primary school education, and had learned of Islam exclusively from al-Qaeda and Islamic State propaganda. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi youth faced a constant guerrilla war, family deaths, and dislocation, which are noted as some examples of local factors. The report argues that violent extremism represents not the reawakening of traditional cultures, but instead their collapse because young people came from traditions that failed to provide a set social identity that confers personal significance and honor. They radicalize, it argued, to find a firm identity in a flattened world. A 2014 article exploring why youth join Boko Haram identifies the push factors of economic hardship, poverty, political exclusion, lack of justice, and prolonged brutal

war, in addition to the socio-psychological factors at an individual level rendering young men more receptive to radicalization and recruitment than others who live in the same community.[3]

The push and pull factors identified in the UN study are not unique to Boko Haram and Islamic State recruitment. They also contribute to the vulnerabilities of groups in Libya, and elsewhere in North Africa. That Libya was ruled by a dictator for forty-two years created a vacuum in the country when it came to social and governmental infrastructure after Gadhafi was removed from power. In the wake of the revolution, the Libyan people were left with fragile governance, endemic corruption, and no system in place to address grievances. Gadhafi's regime had sowed injustice and cultural resentment by favoring certain tribes and ethnic groups over others, and did nothing to quell tribal and community tensions across the country. Many tribes, including the Toubou and Tuareq, have been socially excluded from Libyan society at large and denied basic political rights and civil liberties.

In the aftermath of the revolution, the widespread instability, social exclusion, and marginalization in many communities made them more vulnerable to VEO recruitment. Years of research and observation make it clear that young people from coastal Libyan towns such as Benghazi, Sabratha, and Derna have been joining VEOs since the revolution. Despite local factors that can make communities vulnerable to VEO recruitment, members of the Toubou and Tuareq are notably absent from VEO membership.

Both groups are underemployed and often feel as if they are being excluded from employment opportunities. "We feel that there is only one path for Tuareq young men to find a job, which is to join the army," one young man said in an interview. "We feel there is a hidden plan to block us from finding jobs in other fields." Similarly, the Toubou have found few educational opportunities, especially to attend university. "The few who did had to change their names to Arab names. That is why we were left behind intentionally." This systemic exclusion from Libyan society came as a result of Gadhafi's adopting a pan-Arab national identity in the early years of his regime. Toward the end, he shifted to a pan-African political agenda, which the Toubou and Tuareq saw as an effort to serve his international agenda, and did not affect his domestic policies. Gadhafi's administration did nothing to address the needs of groups like the Toubou and Tuareq. Instead, the historical cycle of marginalization continued, and these groups continued to suffer poverty and social exclusion.

Counterintuitively, the local push and pull factors that increase vulnerability in other groups in the region do not increase recruitment in Toubou and Tuareq communities. In fact, although exclusion suppresses these groups' national and civic identities, their cultural cohesion and sense of ethnic and tribal identity remain intact and are necessarily strengthened in response to their country's negligence.

Although exclusion suppresses these groups' national and civic identities, their cultural cohesion and sense of ethnic and tribal identity remain intact.

Vulnerability to VEO Recruitment

Many factors contribute to a community's vulnerability to VEO recruitment, and many of them are found in Libya's south. The very existence of VEOs in Toubou and Tuareq areas make the tribes vulnerable to VEO influence (see map 2).

Libya became a safe haven for violent extremist groups after 2011. In the eastern part of the country, the Islamic State established a stronghold in the city of Derna, together with other extremist groups such as Ansar al-Sharia, which also has a significant presence along Libya's northwest border with Tunisia. The Islamic State presence extends to Benghazi, the largest city in eastern Libya. In May of 2014, the Islamic State announced its governance in Sirte, on the north coast. It has also established a foothold in Sabratha in western Libya. In southern Libya, training camps for some extremist groups are reported in the desert areas between Algeria, Libya, and Niger.[4]

**Map 2. Violent Extremist Groups in North Africa and Sahel Region**

The vulnerability factors for the Toubou and the Tuareq include poverty, underdevelopment, political disenfranchisement, and the constant cycle of conflict and widespread insecurity. Their illicit economic activities—such as smuggling—and frequent interactions with traffickers in arms, drugs, and people also destabilize these groups. Vulnerability to recruitment is compounded by the significant presence of VEOs where the Toubou and the Tuareq live.

Political and cultural marginalization and exclusion continue to be among the central challenges the Toubou and Tuareq communities face. The regions where they live are among the least developed parts of the country and have no official government institutions or infrastructure. National security forces are minimal at best, borders are open, and local and national governments are largely ineffectual. In addition, most members of these communities have been denied official Libyan citizenship and thus cannot access many educational and economic opportunities and essential social services, including financial support from the state. Represented in the government during the Gadhafi era, they have been severely underrepresented since then. They are also among the least educated groups in Libya, which severely limits their economic opportunities.

National identity was politicized under Gadhafi and these politics extended after the revolution. The Toubou and Tuareq grievances about their national identities paved the way for political leaders to promise national identity cards to gain their political support. This is not a new tactic. In fact, Gadhafi had promised Tuareq men national identity documents as early as the 1980s if they would join his pan-Arab paramilitary force, the Islamic Legion.

**Map 3. Smuggling Routes Controlled by the Toubou and Tuareq**
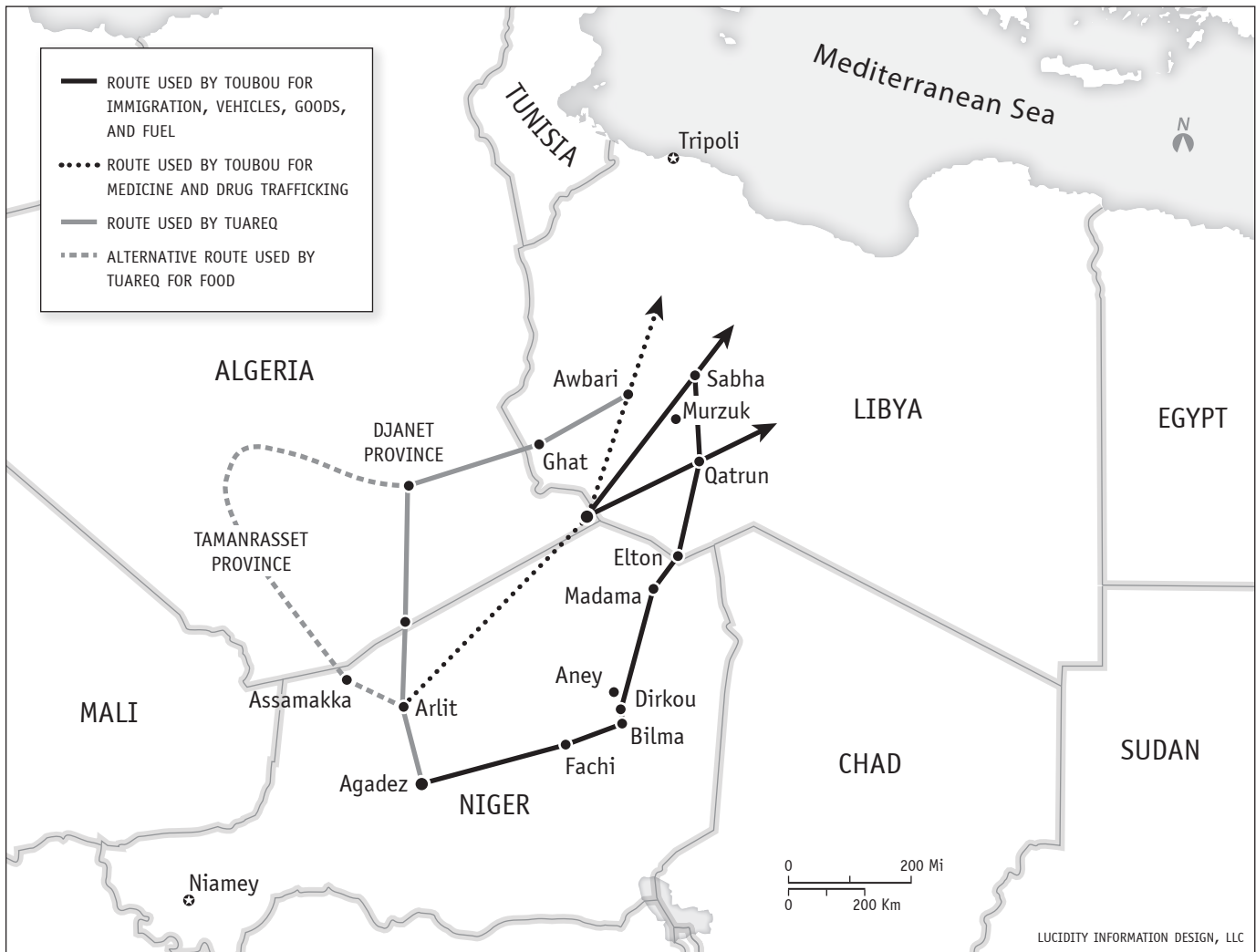
Many Tuareq did join but were never legitimized as documented citizens. Furthermore, the majority of soldiers that served in Gadhafi's army were Tuareq men, and when his regime fell, these men were left unemployed.

Because the Toubou and Tuareq tribes are disenfranchised, and have no access to educational and economic opportunities, some are left with no recourse but illicit and illegal activities. One of the major sources of revenue the Toubou and Tuareq rely on comes from the control of smuggling routes between Libya, Chad, Niger, and Sudan (see map 3). Historically, the Toubou and the Tuareq controlled nearly all smuggling routes in the Sahel desert; they have a rich knowledge of life in the desert and long histories of escorting trans-Saharan caravans. In the past, they collaborated and often used many of the same routes. This changed after the revolution. The Toubou smugglers pushed their Tuareq counterparts from most routes and now control their own routes. The Tuareq were left with limited access to smuggling routes. The two tribes no longer cooperate in smuggling save for trafficking drugs and arms, which are moved only by highly organized criminal networks and cooperation from diverse tribes in the region.

The black lines in map 3 indicate routes controlled by Tuareq smugglers, according to Tuareq interviewees, and wholly in Tuareq territory. Because the Algerian border is heavily guarded, smuggling illegal goods through that country is difficult. The Tuareq do use these routes to move food and other permitted resources and to escort immigrants across borders.

Historically, the Toubou and the Tuareq controlled nearly all smuggling routes in the Sahel desert.

Map 4. Goods and Supplies Smuggled on Toubou Routes
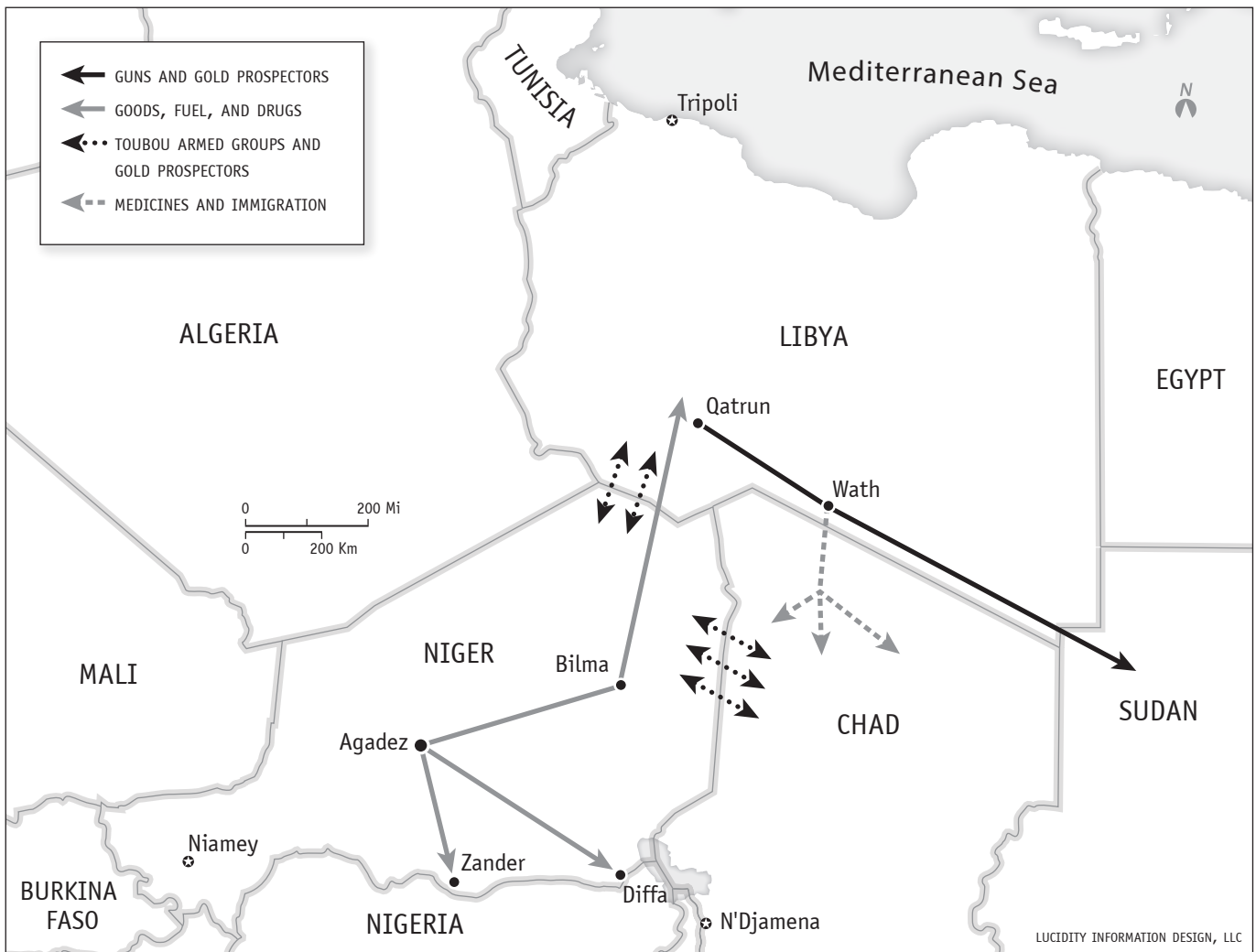
According to interviewees from both tribes, the Toubou smugglers are not as limited in the goods they move across borders; border security is also weaker between Libya and Niger, and government institutions and security forces are notably scarce in the region. The Toubou move illicit materials between the two countries with relative ease. Map 4 presents the routes the Toubou use for various goods, both legal and illegal. Some Toubou are involved in smuggling of subsidized food from Libya into neighboring countries where the price of food is not subsidized by the government. In 2013, they branched out into smuggling vehicles from Libya to Niger, which became a lucrative practice for many; carjacking in Libya was rampant in 2013, and exporting used cars was relatively under-regulated in the region. Some Toubou also smuggle fuel, medicine, and people.

Both Toubou and the Tuareq often interact with groups moving illicit materials such as arms and narcotics, which can put them in direct contact with VEOs using the same remote desert routes to transport weapons. "Sometimes we see that some of these extremist groups are using the same route, we can intersect but we don't interact and talk to them, it is too dangerous to be close to them."

Map 5 traces the various routes used by the Toubou and the Tuareq in cooperation with various extremist groups and local militias to smuggle arms and illicit drugs such as cocaine and heroin. These are among the most highly protected routes given the nature of the products

Map 5. Drug and Arms Trafficking Routes
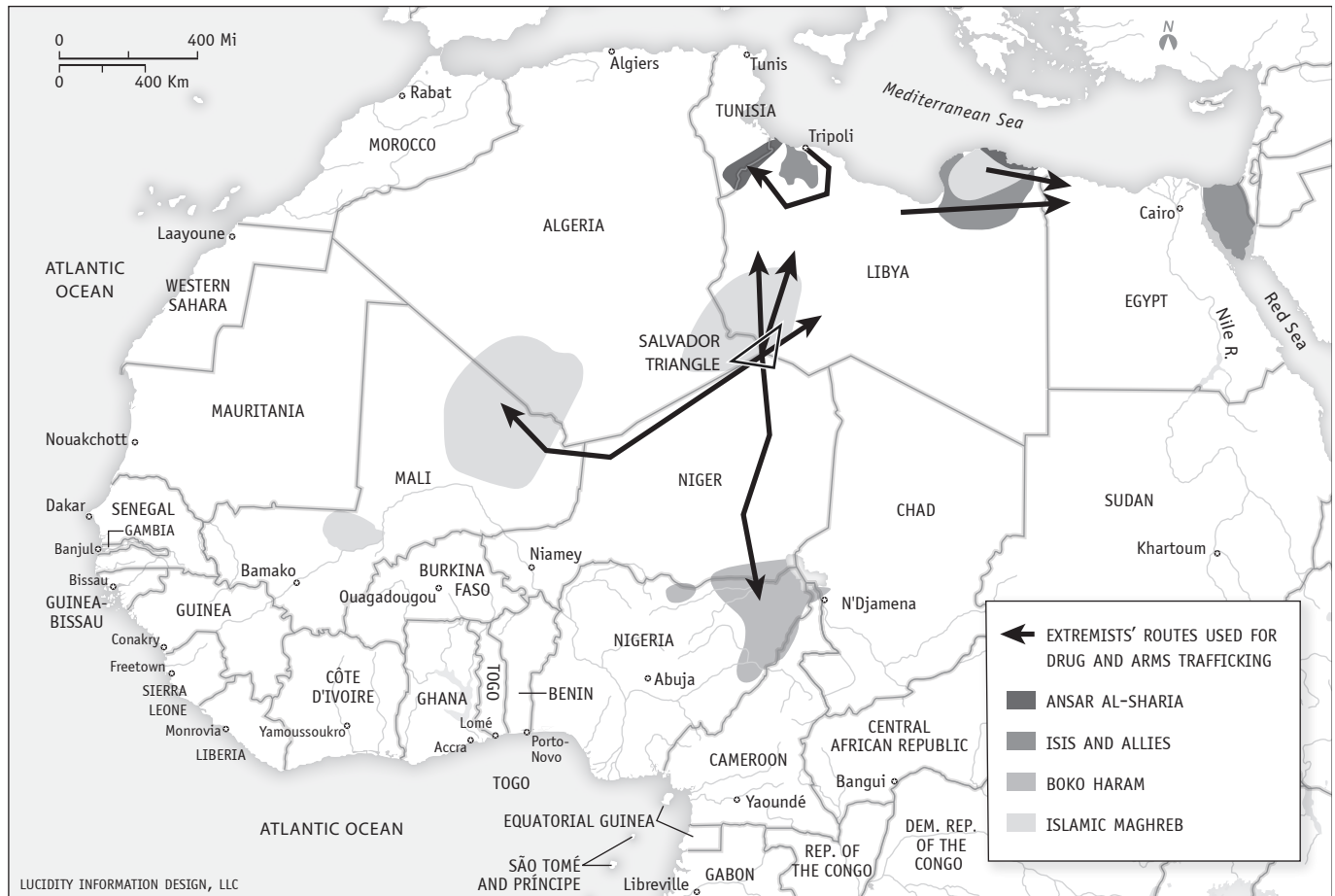
being smuggled. They are also the only routes the Toubou and the Tuareq operate in conjunction with one another, as well as the primary area where they interact with VEOs.

Without access to their previous smuggling routes, the Tuareq's sources of revenue are limited. The two tribes have therefore competed to patrol the two biggest oil fields in southwestern Libya, al Sharara, and El Feel, which are located near Ubari, the homeland of the Tuareq. During the revolution, the Tuareq chose to fight alongside Gadhafi; the Toubou fought against him. After the revolution, the Toubou situated themselves as armed guards of these two oil fields, along with fighters from the Zintan tribe. This proved to be another lucrative endeavor for the Toubou: they were given government salaries and benefits for patrolling the oil fields. The Tuareq also pursued the right to guard the fields because they believe these fields are located on their land. This issue gave rise to considerable tension between the two tribes and manifested in an open fight in Ubari on September 17, 2013, in a gas station between a group of Toubou smugglers and Tuareq residents.

In early 2014, the Toubou lost control of the El Feel and al Sharara oil fields to the Tuareq, but still control the majority of the smuggling routes between Chad, Libya, and Niger. The Tuareq in turn have lost access to many of their more lucrative smuggling routes to the Toubou. This competition contributes to the already widespread instability in the region, which increases vulnerability within the tribes.

Despite the extreme instability, poverty, and political and social exclusion these groups face, however, instances of VEO recruitment among them are surprisingly few, and both tribes are aware of their resistance to recruitment.

For this study, thirty-nine respondents from both tribes, varying in age, education, and gender were surveyed. In response to the question, "To what extent do Toubou and Tuareq communities experience recruitment activities to VEOs?," 75 percent of Toubou responded that they neither noticed nor observed any recruitment activities in their community; the Tuareq response was 64.7 percent. No one reported that their community experienced frequent VEO recruitment. Only 35.3 percent of Tuareq respondents and 8.3 percent of Toubou spoke of occasional VEO recruitment.

Tuareq Cohesion and Resilience

In the context of this report, the term *resilience* refers to the degree to which a community is able to maintain stability and functional relationships in the face of disruptive external factors, absorb the socioeconomic shocks, and continue to function as a cohesive society. The assumption is that it determines a community's resistance to VEO recruitment.

Three major factors contribute to Tuareq (and Toubou) resilience to VEO recruitment: the power and status of women and relative lack of rigidity in gender norms within these communities; the importance of tribal lineage, relationships, and customary law in establishing a tribal identity; and the structure of the religious leadership within these societies.

Power and Status of Women

To better understand resilience in the Tuareq community, it is essential to explore the cultural norms and social relationships that comprise cultural identity and community values. One of the central drivers in Tuareq culture is the social status and power of women and, more broadly, gender roles in society.

In childhood, the sexes are not segregated. Each child born into the Tuareq culture encounters similar customs and traditions. Few cultural norms and restrictions guide individual gender behavior as children grow up. This is in stark contrast to the widespread conservative messaging disseminated by radical and extremist organizations, which dictates that boys and girls be raised separately.

Tuareq women are responsible for teaching children both religion and social and cultural norms in their early years. Male and female children up to the age of ten communicate and interact mostly with their mothers. During this time, male children learn how to cook and do other domestic work, which is often the sole domain of women in other communities in the region. This is to ensure that as an adult, a Tuareq man is capable of properly caring for and serving his wife. In many other Arab communities in southern Libya, young girls are segregated from boys from the age of six onward. In Tuareq culture, the separation begins after the age of ten. At that age, the boys begin to spend more time with their fathers, accompanying them for short distances to be introduced to the lives of men.

A majority of Tuareq (58 percent) believed that their communities prioritize education for girls, only 29.4 percent said that priority is low. This attitude is reflected in the following two responses, in which a majority of Tuareq respondents indicated that women have a significant role in decision making (64 percent), and an important political role within the tribe.

> The tribal leader is the most important cultural figure, and judges are held in high esteem, as justice is one of the chief values extolled by the Tuareq. Wise men, or village elders, are also held in high regard, but wise elder women occupy a special place in the family and the clan, and are even more revered than wise men [because] the Tuareq interpret a wise woman as evoking the quality of kindness as well as wisdom.

> We listen to a wise woman more than a wise man in times of consultation, because a woman has the added value of kindness.

One of the central drivers in Tuareq culture is the social status and power of women and, more broadly, gender roles in society.

The Tuareq culture exhibits several notable matriarchal qualities other than its customs related to raising and educating children. For example, a new bride and her husband are expected to live near the bride's family, and her husband is expected to move away from his family to accomplish this if necessary. Additionally, Tuareq tribal identity is passed down matrilineally; a Tuareq individual gets his Tuareq identity from his mother. This is in stark contrast to other African and Arab tribes in the region, most of which are patrilineal. A man's status is derived in large part by the strength and status of the women in his family. A common Tuareq maxim is "a woman is your mirror"—that is, a man's status is reflected by the women surrounding him. A man's sister is extremely important in advocating for her brother and his bride with regard to social status and pride. Another common Tuareq saying is "the real orphan is a man without a sister."

According to these surveys, Tuareq women enjoy a degree of status and power not commonly seen in the region, especially in Islamic societies. Thus the Tuareq exhibit a degree of gender equality, founded in their cultural norms, unusual to many of the surrounding communities in the region. Gender equality has been found to contribute to stability and community security, features that may underlie the resilience of the Tuareq community.[5]

In fact, the Tuareq overwhelmingly believe that youth growing up in communities in which women hold a more powerful position are less likely to join VEOs, and that their communities are more resilient because of it. This would suggest that the Tuareq recognize and endorse the status and power of women in their community, especially in how they contribute to tribal culture. One example—linked to their roles as mothers and teachers—is their teaching of the Tuareq historical language, Tifinagh. Tuareq children are taught to read, write, and speak Tifinagh by their mothers exclusively. Not part of any officially recognized curriculum in any of the five states in which the Tuareq live, Tifinagh is nonetheless an essential element of Tuareq tribal culture.

Religion and Social Structure

The Tuareq incorporate Islam into their cultural features by way of a tolerant and non-restrictive interpretation of Sufism, and Tuareq religious practices and cultural values exist in harmony with one another.

The main factors that both the Tuareq and the Toubou identified as contributors to their communities' resilience are cultural identity, community values, and moderate religious beliefs. More than 82 percent of Tuareq respondents and 52 percent of Toubou pointed toward cultural identity and community values. Some 47 percent of Tuareq respondents indicated that their moderate religious beliefs were a significant factor as well.

Tuareq religious structure does not incorporate any religious mandates or codes of behavior in regard to the practice of Islam. For example, consuming alcohol is either looked down upon or forbidden in some Islamic societies, but is tolerated among the Tuareq. If a man is seen drinking, he will not be ostracized or vilified, and will remain a member of the community in good standing without having his social status degraded. Demonstrations of religiosity in Tuareq culture are not strictly monitored, and outward affirmations of faith do not enhance social status. The strong tradition of religious tolerance among the Tuareq contrasts sharply with most Islamic cultures, especially those in the Middle East and North Africa.

A Tuareq tribal leader explained the place of Islam in culture this way:

> Tuareq are less educated people. However, historically they have a very specific group that teaches religion to the people. They are called al-Ansar. Throughout the social history of Islam in Tuareq culture, this is the only group that should issue a fatwa or talk about religion. This means that they separate between public life, politics, and religion.

This socialized separation between religious and political life is evident in the segregation of religious power, designating the ability to declare a fatwa to this small ethnic group of nonpolitical leaders called al-Ansar, who do not interfere with laws or politics, but are simply guides to the spiritual lives of Tuareq people. Extremist groups in the region aim to control and govern the regions that they occupy, and one of their most important tools of restriction and control of the people's behaviors and attitudes is fatwa. This is a feature of Tuareq cultural structure that makes them resistant to the religious and ideological influence of VEOs.

Gender Roles in Culture

Findings from the Global Terrorism Database show how numerous cultural dimensions identified in the cultural psychology literature relate to more than eighty thousand terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2007. Controlling for economic and religious variables, this study suggests that fatalistic beliefs, rigid gender roles, and greater tightness are related to an increase in terrorist attacks or fatalities. It also illustrates that, although fatalism and low gender egalitarianism are related to the overall number of terrorist incidents and fatalities, cultural tightness is related to the overall lethality of events, that is, fatalities per incident.[6]

Gender roles in Tuareq society are much less rigid, and the culture as a whole is much more tolerant of women's choices and women's public interaction and movement, than many other Islamic societies and tribes in the surrounding regions. Tuareq society does not overtly or culturally endorse oppression of women but instead allows women a social status that empowers their decisions and allows them to contribute to family and community decision making and then solidarity. According to one Tuareq civil society activist, "A woman in Tuareq culture is free to choose her husband, although this started to cause some problems because they got a lot of divorces, but we can't stop a woman from choosing her own husband. We only have to accept it. Women are free."

Unlike other Muslim communities around them, the Tuareq are tolerant in regard to women's freedom, and women are subject to fewer taboos about their personal interactions and choices. For example, premarital sexual relations, though not encouraged, are not considered a crime. A woman and her family will not be punished or ostracized if she engages in premarital sex, though they may endure some social shaming. If a pregnancy occurs, the woman and her family will take care of the child. Light punishment may be sentenced, but adultery will not lead to banishment or taint the woman socially for life. The woman and her family will remain members of the community in good standing, but the woman is also free to leave the community if she chooses.

Tuareq men, however, face some restrictive social norms and expectations regarding their public appearance and interaction. They are bound to a specific dress code and are expected to cover their faces in public. Additionally, a Tuareq man must be very careful about how he expresses his emotions or needs in public, especially in front of women. A Tuareq man of high status is to keep his face covered, rarely speak, and never emote publicly.

In many surrounding tribal cultures, the concept of honor and justice are central to society, and related crimes often call for an act of vengeance to balance the social order. In Tuareq culture, however, when a man commits a crime, he is compelled by social pressure to run away from his clan. This exemplifies the Tuareq's tendency to eschew violence within their communities. In fact, the Tuareq concept of masculinity is not directly linked to violence or ferocity.

Tuareq communities generally perceive masculinity and manhood in the context of respect for tradition, not simply in regard to a man's ability to fight. When asked to describe a brave man, nearly all Tuareq respondents pointed to the ability to respect traditions and cultural customs. Roughly half (47 percent) of these respondents paired that respect for

tradition with a man's ability to fight and defend his family and tribe. Similarly, when asked to describe a respectable man, nearly all respondents indicated that a respect for tradition and custom was central, and again roughly half (52.8 percent) linked respectability with a man's ability to fight.

Tuareq tribal identity seems to rely partly on its history of nonviolence and noninstigation. "We need to live in an environment that has order," one tribal elder explained. "Order gives us protection. Tuareq men don't kill each other, and we don't invade or attack other tribes. We will only use violence to defend ourselves."

Resilience in the Toubou Community

Although the Toubou are similar to the Tuareq, their cultural resilience is founded on their traditional and social idiosyncrasies. In the Toubou community, resilience is maintained through a number of complex factors, the most notable of which are structural tribal identity, customary law, cultural norms, and tribal and kinship connections.

Resilience in Toubou communities, like that in Tuareq, is evidenced in part by the notable lack of incidents of recruitment into VEOs. The Toubou are fully aware that their community does not experience anywhere near the levels of recruitment as other communities in Libya. Seventy-five percent of all Toubou respondents believed that no VEO recruitment had occurred in their communities, and only 8.3 percent indicated that there was occasional recruitment. No one reported that their community experienced frequent VEO recruitment.

Customary Law and Order

Social structure and power is well established in the Toubou community. Toubou perceive themselves as a nation with stable governance, represented by a sultan who lives in their homeland of the Tibesti region in northern Chad. This sultan is always from a specific clan and has the power to declare and enforce customary law and to mediate Toubou relationships. His power does not extend to political matters, and he does not influence the political or economic decisions of individuals and families. He also does not make any political decisions for the Toubou tribe, though he does have the power to mediate and reconcile between Toubou subclans should a disagreement arise.

Every Toubou clan has representatives, appointed by consensus of the communities, who are responsible for enforcing customary law within their clan. They are called local sultans and work independently of the sultan to resolve minor conflicts. When disputes or crimes are more serious—usually those that involve more than two clans—the sultan in Tibesti will usually step in to enforce customary law. The sultan has the power to change customary law and make amendments where necessary, but does so only rarely. Should a change be necessary, the sultan consults with the representatives and makes changes accordingly. For decades, Toubou customary law remained unchanged, but a recent increase in conflict and problems involving Toubou youth prompted tribal leadership to consider amendments—mostly more severe punishments to deter crime among the youth.

Toubou legal customs are based on restitution, compensation, and retaliation. Conflicts are resolved in several settings. Although theft and assault are rare, any such crime is handled under Toubou customary law. In the case of murder, Toubou honor requires that someone from the victim's family seek vengeance by trying to kill the murderer but not actually doing so; such efforts eventually end with negotiations to settle the matter. A case is reconciled by *blood money* paid to the family of the victim.

Most important is that Toubou customary law dictates that no members of the tribe seek revenge by targeting a perpetrator's family. "If the criminal jumps over the rope, you don't follow him, and you don't take revenge on his family." If a person is the victim of a crime, he can seek vengeance only from the perpetrator. Furthermore, "if the perpetrator runs away or escapes, you should not run after him. Instead, you should wait until you see him again. If the crime has been resolved by customary law, you should respect the decision." This prohibition is unique to Toubou customary law; in many of the surrounding tribes, the opposite is common.

The Toubou rely on customary law to deal with crimes, minor offenses, and issues of social misconduct or misbehavior, and criminal disputes between Toubou members. These crimes can be dealt with by payment of a ransom or other traditional punishment. Customary law is well written, organized, and enforced by the tribal authorities. Other tribes in Libya use the legal system, usually the state, to deal with criminal offenses. Among the Toubou, even if the state intervenes, customary law will remain, and ransoms must be paid despite the involvement of the national judicial system.

Toubou customary law provides order and structure to their communities. It also prevents the cycle of conflict present in so many of the Toubou's neighboring tribes by limiting acts of extreme vengeance and allowing the tribe to hold its own accountable for their actions. This well-established system of justice and governance works to insulate the tribe from external macro-social forces, and state influences, which strongly contributes to resilience of the Toubou culture.

Tribal Identity and Violent Extremism

A major theory in the field of countering violent extremism identifies factors that make youth vulnerable to VEO recruitment.[7] It argues that violent extremism represents not the reawakening of traditional cultures, but their collapse, in that young people came from traditions that failed to provide a set social identity that gives personal significance and glory. Youth radicalize, it argued, to find a firm identity in a transitional world.

Toubou youth have a well-established and deeply embedded sense of tribal and cultural identity, and therefore little incentive to seek further identity outside their tribe. Tribal identity is thus a major resilience factor in Toubou communities. The tribal identity of a Toubou individual is a complex set of kinship relationships, social territories, norms, and customs. It is governed by strong customary law regulations passed from generation to generation through socialization and bonded by kinship and tribal identity. Toubou identity thus survives in territories predominantly populated by Arab cultures in Libya.

To better understand Toubou identity construction and preservation, it is important to consider the gender perspective, specifically power, political participation, and the role of women in protecting Toubou tribal culture.

Toubou women enjoy less power and influence in their clan and community than their Tuareq counterparts. Indeed, the decision-making process in Toubou communities tends to exclude women, with the rare exception of village elders (or *wise women*). No Toubou respondents indicated that women have a significant, or even a limited, role in decision making. For the Toubou, decision making within the tribe and clan is an internal process, and the opinions of women are rarely taken into account.

Decision making within the tribe and clan is an internal process, and the opinions of women are rarely taken into account.

However, with regard to women's political role, many more Toubou respondents indicated an important (16.6 percent) or at least limited (33.3 percent) role for women. This discrepancy is due to Toubou respondents interpreting the term *political role* as referring to women's roles on the national level, and within civil society. Indeed more Toubou women participate in national politics and engage with official government institutions outside

tribal decision-making structures than before the Libyan revolution, and women have more influence outside the tribe than they do within it.

The real cultural power of women in Toubou communities comes from their roles in protecting tribal culture, and, more fundamentally, the matrilineal tribal structure. This role is recognized by the tribe at large. Though many Toubou respondents suggested that their role in protecting tribal culture was linked to women's roles as mothers and teachers, no Toubou respondents indicated an insignificant role for women in this sphere. Similarly, the Toubou surveyed here agreed that women do occupy a significant role in Toubou culture at large, despite their lack of influence in the tribal decision-making process.

Although women do not have significant or dynamic decision-making power in the community, they do have an important cultural power in maintaining tribal and kinship connections through matrilineages, which is fundamental to establishing and maintaining Toubou tribal identity.

A Toubou male grows up surrounded by several layers of social and economic relationships, which include social roles, responsibilities, and expectations (see figure 1). Fulfilling these social and economic obligations is essential to social recognition, protection, and pride for Toubou men. The most important kinship connections in a Toubou man's life are drawn directly from his mother's family. A Toubou man's social position is derived from those of his uncles on his mother's side. Familial connections are stronger with his mother's clan, than his father's. If he is married, then his wife's family comes before his father's family. These relationships are centered and directed in a matrilineal pattern that balances social connectivity matrilineages and patrilineages connections. Toubou men are culturally obligated to support and answer to their mother's family and their wife's family. His mother's family also acts as his primary provider of support and protection. This multilayer tribal identity is best visualized in figure 1.

Figure 1. Identity Construction for Toubou Men

TRIBE
CLAN
FATHER'S FAMILY
WIFE'S FAMILY
MOTHER'S FAMILY
NUCLEAR FAMILY
TOUBOU MAN
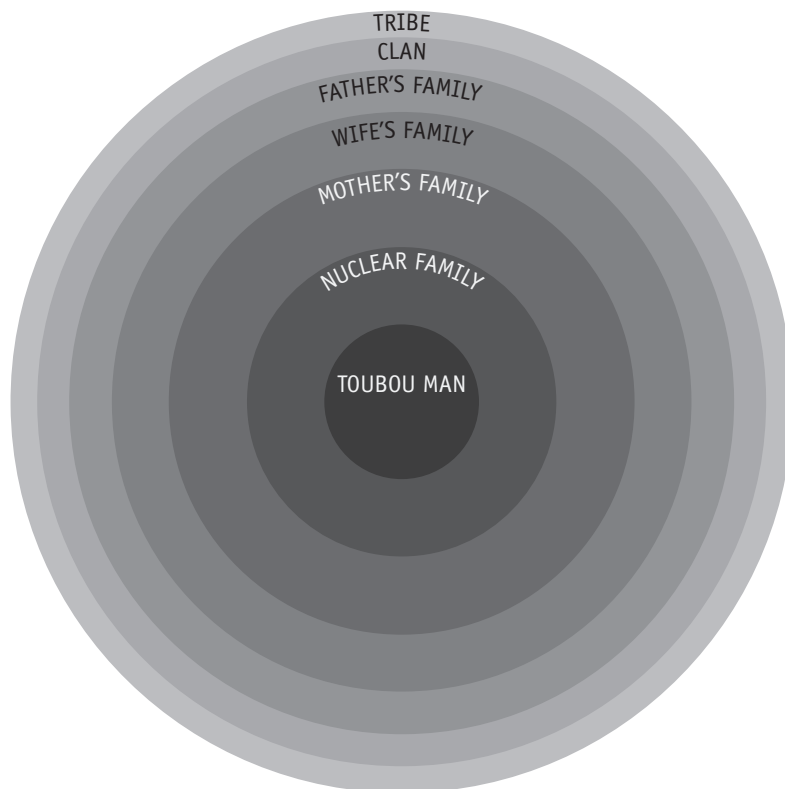
The deeply rooted, well-established Toubou tribal identity may be the most important resilience factor in protecting Toubou communities from VEO recruitment, and the familial and kinship connections within the tribe is evidently central to Toubou identity.

As one Toubou tribal elder explained in an interview,

> Radicalization is connected with identity. There are some values that cannot be destroyed or renewed by being Muslim, which is our identity as Toubou. Toubou identity is so strong that it is not threatened by Muslim identity. They do not feel the need to prove their identity as Muslims. In Toubou culture, matriarchal and patriarchal lineages are equal in terms of closeness to you. We keep close to our mother lineages, tribes, and our father lineages.

Essential Toubou relationships include a comprehensive set of social, psychological, and economic interests for individual status, identity, and sense of belonging. These relationships are governed by strong social norms, traditions, and roles. Social acceptance and recognition is important for a Toubou individual, and community pressures work to ensure that social norms are followed and deviant behavior is discouraged.

For example, in May 2014, a Toubou community came upon a video recorded and distributed online by the Islamic State. The video was a recruitment tool and featured a masked man speaking the Toubou language, Tebu. The masked man called for the Toubou nation to take up jihad and join the Islamic State ranks. In response, Toubou tribal leaders from Qatrun, Murzuq, Kufra, and northern Chad held discussions in an attempt to identify the man in the video. The man was recognized less than twenty-four hours after the video was posted. Tribal leaders reached out to his family in Qatrun, and issued a tribal order compelling them to bring the young man home within three days, or the entire family would be ostracized. Almost immediately, relying on tribal and kinship connections, the young man's family located him in Islamic State–occupied Sirte, and brought him home to Qatrun, forcing him to sever his ties with the Islamic State. This story is emblematic of the type of direct social pressure present in Toubou culture that can prevent VEO recruitment.

Because Toubou customary law dictates that Toubou men and women cannot marry within their clan (or to anyone connected by family going back seven generations), ties with the larger Toubou community are maintained and greater social links constantly created. Since the Libyan revolution, tribal internal connections have begun to play a greater role not only in individual social acceptance but also in many Toubou livelihoods and economic interests, especially for those who are working in (licit and illicit) cross-border trade. Many Toubou practice cross-border trade between Libya, Niger, and Chad. Tribal connections are especially important in protection and facilitation for these traders, who in fact depend on their intratribal connections. As a Toubou man explained in an interview,

> A Toubou man can travel from Sabha till to Kuwar and Bilma in Niger. From Qatroon to Chad and him and his trade will be safe because all this land is a Toubou's land. We are now the kings of the desert. During Ghadafi's time, we didn't have this wealth and power.

Of course, Toubou men perceive manhood and masculinity according to their distinct cultural norms. Like his Tuareq counterparts, a Toubou man's conception of a brave man hinges on that man's ability to respect culture and tradition and not solely on his ability to fight. Additionally, the Toubou's conception of a respectable man also relies heavily on the extent to which that man respects culture and tradition, and therefore less on his propensity for violence.

The combination of resilience factors (established customary law and strong kinship connection) present within Toubou communities create a nearly immutable sense of tribal identity strongly resistant to outside influence. Underlying this identity is the matrilineal oriented kinship connections among the Toubou. Although the Toubou social structure is quite different from that of the Tuareq, these idiosyncratic factors make the Toubou less

susceptible to VEO recruitment efforts, despite the presence of and extensive interaction with such groups in Toubou-occupied regions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

For both the Toubou and the Tuareq, cultural factors and social norms within their communities contribute directly to their resilience. Examining these norms through a gender perspective clarifies how the two tribes remain resilient in the face of overwhelming vulnerability factors in their region and their political and economic situations. Communities like these—that exhibit more matriarchal or matrilineal features—are more likely to be more resistant to VEO recruitment. Their cultural norms and community structures cannot be replicated intentionally because they have developed over many generations. Recommendations for policymakers, peacebuilders, and practitioners in the region therefore focus on supporting the cultural traditions and institutions that foster community solidarity and identity and make these communities resilient.

The first step is critical: identify communities that express matriarchal and matrilineal features, or those that emphasize the role of women in their culture, and support these communities with regard to distribution of resources and democratic involvement.

Next, study sociocultural settings using an anthropological lens to help in understanding resilience and vulnerability factors in local communities. The anthropological perspective lays out connections, foundations, and historical factors that determine the current social phenomena. This context will help practitioners in peacebuilding identify and understand effective approaches to conflict transformation.

Studying power structure through the lens of gender perspective helps identify the influential factors that determine the roles and responsibilities of community members. It also provides consolidated channels and approaches for practitioners and peacebuilders to best influence program outcomes, help sustain peace, and counter violent extremism.

Identifying and understanding gender norms and roles helps peacebuilders and practitioners determine culturally sensitive approaches to peacebuilding and foster community resilience.

Supporting and investing in positive cultural norms and traditions that work to fulfil social and individual identity is critical. This can be done by officially and politically recognizing lifestyles, language, and culture. Practitioners need to be aware of the negative impact of fostering cultural protectionism and separatism, however, and work to integrate diverse cultural elements into national identity formation.

Practitioners in Libya and policymakers need to recognize the cultural diversity of the country and understand the needs of the non-Arab minority groups in Libya. That is, addressing the need for citizenship and national identification documentation is critical, as is social and political recognition for the language and culture heritage of the Toubou and Tuareq minorities. These cultural identities can be used to build community cohesion and fulfil an individual sense of identity and sense of belonging, and thus contribute to resilience and resistance to violent extremism.

An economically and socially sensitive approach to cross-border trade in the region is needed, and should be a long-term process designed to address the illicit cross-border smuggling practices, and include alternative sources of revenue to foster economic stability and empowerment in these communities. Regional government forces and the international community need to work together to address cross-border smuggling, trafficking, and immigration with a full understanding of local factors. The response should also be twofold: addressing the economic needs of local tribes such as the Toubou and Tuareq, and responding rapidly and effectively to illicit trade and trafficking. To reduce instability along the

For both the Toubou and the Tuareq, cultural factors and social norms within their communities contribute directly to their resilience.

borders in the region, the effort needs to be a community-oriented border security program, not simply armed governmental officials at checkpoints.

Practitioners and policymakers should be aware that conceptions of masculinity within a culture are correlated with a propensity for violence, and should work to identify masculine and feminine roles within communities of interest.

Practitioners need to work to empower women in these communities, but to do so through a do-no-harm approach within the tribe's cultural framework. Toubou women, for example, can be empowered through their roles as mothers rather than encouraged to seek education and independent success.

Notes

1. Naureen Chowdhury Fink, Sara Zeiger, and Rafia Bhulai, eds., *A Man's World? Exploring the Roles of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism* (London: Hedeyah and the Global Center for Cooperative Security, 2016).

2. Scott Atran, Address to UN Security Council, "The Role of Youth in Countering Violent Extremism and Promoting Peace," April 23, 2015.

3. Freedom C. Onuaha, "Why do Youth Join Boko Haram?" Special Report no. 348 (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, June 2014).

4. Carlotta Gall, "Jihadists Deepen Collaboration in North Africa," *New York Times,* January 1, 2016, www.nytimes .com/2016/01/02/world/africa/jihadists-deepen-collaboration-in-north-africa.html.

5. Clare Castillejo, "Gender Inequality and State Fragility in the Sahel," Fride Policy Brief, June 2015.

6. Michele Gelfand, Gary LaFree, Susan Fahey, Richard Stockton, and Emily Feinberg, "Culture and Extremism," *Journal of Social Issues* 69, no. 3 (2013): 495–517.

7. Atran, "The Role of Youth."

Of Related Interest

- *Libya's Religious Sector and Peacebuilding Efforts* by Palwasha L. Kakar and Zahra Langhi (Peaceworks, March 2017)
- *Prisons and Detention in Libya* by Fiona Mangan and Rebecca Murray (Peaceworks, September 2016)
- *Tribe, Security, Justice, and Peace in Libya Today* by Peter Cole with Fiona Mangan (Peaceworks, September 2016)
- *Policing Libya: Form and Function of Policing Since the 2011 Revolution* by Peter Cole with Fiona Mangan (Peaceworks, August 2016)
- *Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?* by Freedom C. Onuoha (Special Report, June 2014)