RESEARCH PROJECT: MILITIA, LOCAL COUNCILS AND LOCAL RECONCILIATION IN LIBYA
2017
CAIRO INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES - ELEANOR HAISELL

Background
Main Research Question: Under what conditions do local councils broker successfully local reconciliation deals?

The research aims to critically examine the model widely used by donors in conflict zones. This model has been used as a stabilisation tool to prop up state control in fragile states and conflict zones (especially in Afghanistan and Iraq).

In Syria, research has identified the ability of local governance structures to exert influence on armed groups, negotiating truces between them, and negotiating limited truces and ceasefires with government forces and resisting encroachment of extremist armed groups into civilian space.

My research project intended to build on this work by providing a cross-country comparison with Libya.

Process
1. Workshop to Define Auxiliary Research Questions:

Is there a need to define an auxiliary research question that is specific to the case study?

Does building local governmental peace building capacity provide security to communities? And if it does, which section of the community does it benefit most?

If a local approach is the only adequate way to deal with a high tension conflict, are there viable strategies to scale the local up to regional or national level peacebuilding processes?

2. Workshop to Define Case Studies

Az-Zawiyaa: Highly politicised local councils, semi-successful reconciliation between rival local councils, highly developed economy.

Sabha: Highly politicised family-based conflict, largely technocratic local council, had failed reconciliation agreements in the past, currently undergoing a new reconciliation process.

Terwaha and Misrata: Local Council in Falah, which was instrumental in negotiating a successful reconciliation agreement allowing for the return of IDPs.

3. Workshop with Researchers

Produce semi-structured interview questions.

Produce list of key stakeholders to interview.

Results
The local councils in Tawergha and Misrata had been instrumental in negotiating a truce between the two towns.

A reconciliation agreement had been reached (but not implemented) that would allow the population of Tawergha to return to the town, which had been abandoned since 2011.

A key factor in the success of the agreement was the close relationship between the local Council of Misrata, the main MIHA groups, and the strong ties from the local population of Tawergha for their council's negotiating team.

The Misrata council did not have a relationship with the many disparate militia and this threatened the implementation of the deal without outside/external guarantees.

Conclusion
- A major driver of conflict was economic. Rival militias fought for control over oil reserves, refineries and smuggling routes for oil and human trafficking.
- The money from these activities is channelled through political figures as well as militia, and this restricted the ability of local governance to have any real impact on truces and local reconciliation.
- The one exception to this was in Tawergha and Misrata, where the divisions were historical and political, rather than purely economic. In this case local councils were much more instrumental in reaching local agreements.
- Conversely, in Sabha, and Aziziyya, the involvement of smugglers and militia makes them much more difficult areas to research.

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