

Libyan Political Party Baseline Assessment

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Summary edition

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1 Executive summary

The purpose of this study is to ascertain a greater understanding of the political party landscape and the challenges facing the political parties in Libya.

The study has been prepared for the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to inform their program supporting political parties in Libya, and has been designed and implemented by JMW Consulting (represented by Alexander Kjærum, Line Fly Pedersen and Jakob Wichmann) and Ellen Lust (Associate Professor of Political Science at Yale University). NDI has provided extensive input, comments, logistical support and contacts without which the study would not have been possible. The study was funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Framework and Methodology

The analytical framework is designed to evaluate the political parties' basic organizational capacities and structures and to assess their most significant needs. Nineteen of the largest Libyan parties participated in the study; a total of 23 qualitative interviews with party officials were held in Libya during March 2013. The participating parties voluntarily provided financial and membership data, which has not been verified independently.

A history of suppression and exclusion of political parties

The political party history of pre-revolutionary Libya has been one of suppression and exclusion of political party activity. As a result of this, Libya was practically devoid of formal party opposition until the revolution in 2011 and lacked experience with political party organizations and activities.

Following the revolution in August 2011, the newly-formed National Transitional Council (NTC) promulgated a constitutional declaration abolishing restrictions on political party formation. This resulted in the emergence of a large number of entities on the political scene. The NTC drafted an election law for the General National Congress (GNC) in July 2012.

Political parties are focusing on their organizational development

Political parties lack a developed organizational structure, due to their general lack of experience with political party formation and the limited preparation time for the GNC elections.

A key dividing line has emerged among the newly established parties, that is between parties that are broad-based (having local branches in more than one-third of the 22 Libyan districts) and local parties (represented in less than 5 of the districts). The broad-based and local parties vary to a great extent in relation to their organizational structures, resources and abilities to perform various roles.

In general, the broad-based parties have more well-established—albeit still underdeveloped—organizational structures than the local parties. Based on information provided by the political parties, the broad-based parties tend to have more human resources available than the local parties. However, it is important to note that local as well as broad-based parties lack both human and financial resources, one of the primary challenges facing the parties.

Mobilizing citizens is a major challenge for the political parties

The broad-based and local political parties face several challenges in their ability to mobilize Libyans. Parties view mobilization as their most important role, but also believe they are performing poorly in this area. The poor performance relates to challenges in membership recruitment, communication and campaigning.

Parties view membership recruitment as especially difficult due to the historical stigmatization and public distrust of political parties. The political parties in general and local parties in particular tend to recruit their members through social networks, personal relations and social interaction, but lack channels to recruit members from broad segments of Libyan society. The parties have small membership bases of an average of 5,000 members per party, although the broad-based parties have as many as four times as many members as the local parties. The members of the political parties examined in the study are generally younger men, well-educated and located in all three regions of Libya. However, substantial differences exist among parties' memberships.

Lack of resources and know-how make communication and campaigning difficult, and the parties consider themselves to be performing poorly in this area. During the GNC elections, local parties experienced particular difficulties organizing campaigns due to limited human resources. The broad-based as well as the local parties made use of primarily unpaid volunteer workers, but the broad-based parties managed to recruit more than four times as many volunteers for their campaigns than the local parties. The short timeline from the abolishment of the restrictions on political party formation until the registration deadline for the GNC elections posed a challenge as well, especially in terms of planning the campaigns and recruiting volunteers.

The local parties also experience greater obstacles in communicating their message than the broad-based parties. The broad-based political parties generally have relations with the media, including newspapers, radio and TV channels, than the local parties. They also have more developed websites. In addition, the broad-based parties express their views in the media more frequently than the local parties. Only 18% of the local parties express their views in the media (e.g., TV, newspapers, etc) on a daily or weekly, compared to 83% of the broad-based parties.

Policy development is a challenge

Another challenge facing the political parties is assessing and prioritizing the interests of the Libyan people. To formulate public policy, the parties most commonly assess citizens' interests through social networks or public gatherings. The vast majority of the parties do not have a dedicated survey unit within the party nor do they purchase survey data from external suppliers to guide their policy efforts, due largely to their limited financial resources. The parties usually determine their priorities in executive committee meetings. Generally, the parties are open to consulting their members when developing policy, but few of them have formalized ways for the members to propose policies and communicate with the party leaders. Members' opinions and concerns are instead taken into account via direct contact and personal relationships.

Collaborating with other political parties is less of an obstacle

On average both broad-based and local parties tend to perform better in terms of their collaboration with other parties. They express great openness towards collaborating with other parties and view this as a very important role for a political party. The vast majority of the parties do interact with others, typically through personal relationships but also at formal meetings. However, partisan lines can run deep when it comes to parties' positions on major issues debated in the GNC. Such divisions are particularly evident among the major parties, as seen in the passage of Libya's political isolation law.

2 Introduction

On February 17, 2011, Libyans took to the street in a revolt against the regime of Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi, who had ruled Libya since 1969. Following months of internal conflict and a NATO-led intervention, the regime fell and the NTC took power. The NTC developed a road map for Libya's transition that included the election for the GNC in the summer of 2012.

After the road map for a political transition was established, political parties began to emerge on the scene. Parties had been banned under Gaddafi along with civil society organizations, and thus Libyans had little previous experience with building and strengthening party organizations, and grew to largely mistrust parties. Furthermore, many of the parties that emerged were formed by exiled opposition groups based outside of Libya for decades, often with weak ties to Libyan society.

This study seeks to gain an overview and deeper understanding of the complex political party system in Libya.

The study has the following structure:

- Section 1: History and overview of the political system in Libya
- Section 2: Analysis of key political parties' organizational capacities
- Section 3: Analysis of key political parties' needs
- Section 4: Analytical framework and methodology of the study

3 Analytical framework and methodology of the study

The analytical framework and methodology used in this study draws mainly on work by democracy and political party scholars such as Pippa Norris, Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair. The analytical framework aims to:

1. Evaluate the basic organizational capacity and structure of the political parties
2. Assess the needs of the political parties

For a political party to function, it needs to have a certain capacity; that is, a set of attributes that helps or enables the political party to fulfil its mission.¹ In this study we focus on three key categories of organizational capacity:

1. Party resources
2. Party organization
3. Party assistance from outside actors

The needs assessment for political parties focuses on the core functions that political parties perform in democratic societies. This study focuses specifically on three core functions parties should perform in a democratic society:²

1. Mobilizing citizens
2. Formulating public policy
3. Collaborating with other parties

Data was collected from two sources. Semi-structured interviews with political party leaders from 19 different political parties covered the topics of the analytical framework and desk-research also provided basic information about the political parties and the political environment prior to the revolution.

¹ (Eisinger, 2002)

² (Norris, 2005)

4 History and overview of the political system in Libya

This section describes and analyzes the Libyan political landscape by giving a brief history of the political system in Libya, describing the developments after the revolution and analysing the legal framework governing political parties and elections. Libya's history of harsh suppression of political parties affects the challenges and conditions currently facing political parties. Libya suffers from a lack of experience with political party organization and widespread public distrust in political parties.

A history of suppression and exclusion of political parties

Libya has had a long history of oppositional exclusion as well as stigmatization of political opposition. Gaddafi seized power in Libya in a military coup in 1969 and subsequently imposed a law banning the establishment of political parties as well as civil society organizations. A famous Gaddafi quote was extremely popular and widespread in Libyan society: "Men Tahazeeba Khan" meaning whoever joins a party is a traitor. This resulted in suppression of all political opposition and the complete absence of formal party opposition and public involvement in political life during the Gaddafi era. The complete ban of political parties in Libya has resulted in a lack of experience with political party institutions and of formation and mobilization of political organizations. Consequently, this has posed many challenges for the development of Libyan political parties today.³

The National Transitional Council and its Constitutional Declaration lifted the restrictions on political party formation and a fragmented party landscape emerged.

During the early weeks of the revolution, a number of representatives from local councils in rebel cities formed the NTC. The NTC promulgated a Constitutional Declaration in August 2011, providing a roadmap for governance in the transitional period until the approval of a new constitution. In the Constitutional Declaration the NTC abolished the restrictions on political party formation enforced under the Gaddafi regime and called for elections for the GNC. This led to the formation of dozens of parties of varying ideologies, including nationalist, liberal, leftist, Islamist and Salafist as well as parties reflecting local, tribal, or regional power bases.⁴

The party landscape that emerged in the run-up to the GNC election was fragmented, with a total of 142 lists representing a wide range of different platforms and interests. As elections approached, however, most parties were still in the process of developing their party platforms and their positions on different key issues were still opaque.

The electoral system in Libya: A mixture of elements from different electoral systems and a complex system of districting in various constituencies.

The election law for the July 2012 GNC elections was drafted by the NTC and its interim government in coordination with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. The election law was presented to the public for debate in January 2012 and afterwards amended accordingly. A law on the regulation of political parties was issued by the NTC as well in May 2012.⁵

³ (POMED Backgrounder: Previewing Libya's Elections, 2012), (Hatita, 2011), (Zanotti, 2011), (Barger, 1999)

⁴ (POMED Backgrounder: Previewing Libya's Elections, 2012), (Kadlec, 2012)

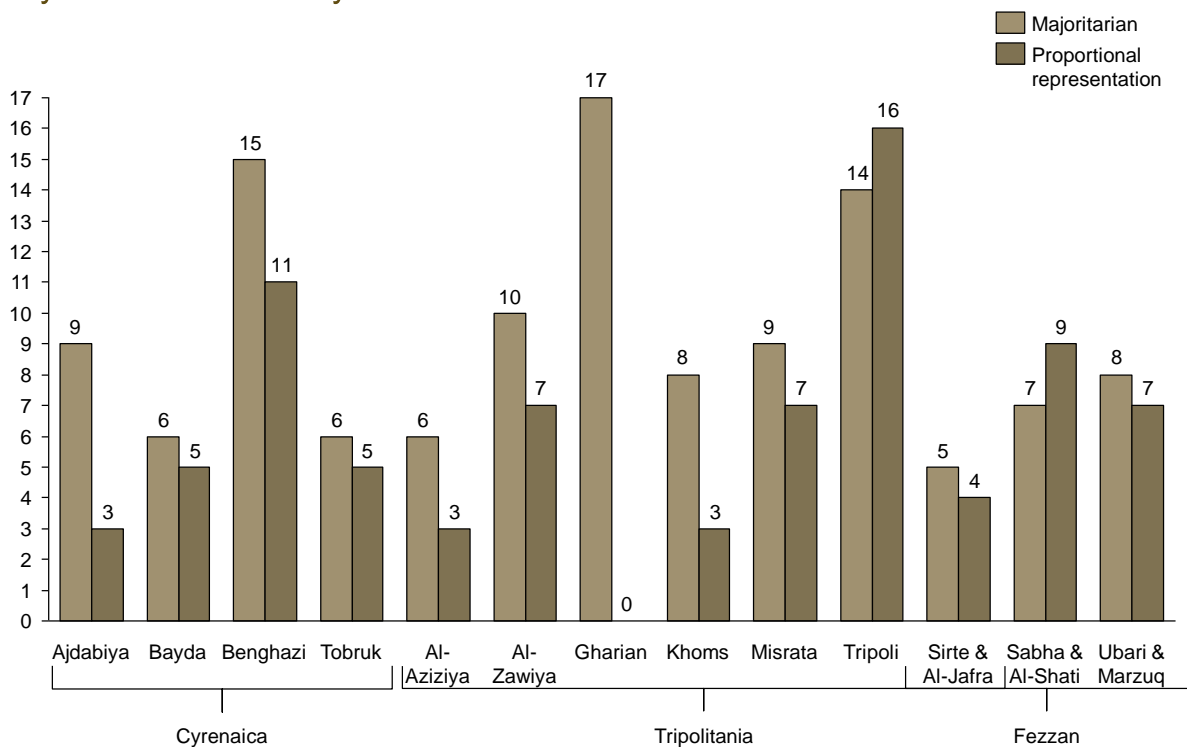
⁵ (Kadlec, 2012)

The electoral law established a parallel electoral system that includes 120 seats elected in majoritarian races (80 first-past-the-post single-member districts and 40 single-non-transferable vote, multimember districts) and 80 seats chosen through a closed-list, proportional representation among competing electoral groups. The electoral law used the largest remainder system to apportion list seats. The 120 seats filled by the majoritarian system were elected in 69 constituencies. Of the 69 constituencies, 40 had one seat amounting to a total of 40 elected representatives, and the other 29 constituencies had more than one seat, based on population figures, for a total of 80 elected representatives. The remaining 80 seats filled by proportional representation were elected in 20 constituencies.⁶

Figure 1: Distribution of individual and party seats across Libya's districts⁷

Uneven distribution of individual and party seats across districts

System breakdown by district



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A total of 21 parties won seats in the GNC. The big winner in the election was the National Forces Alliance (NFA) led by Mahmoud Jibril, which won slightly less than 50% of the votes for list seats and gained 39 seats in the GNC. The runner-up to the NFA was the Justice and Construction Party (JCP), which won 10% of the votes for list seats and gained 17 seats. Other parties gaining more than 3% of the total votes were the Union for Homeland Party, National Centrist Party, National Front Party and Homeland Party. Although it won a sizeable share of the votes, the Homeland Party failed to win a single seat in the GNC. Sixteen of the 21 parties in the GNC gained less than 3 % of the total votes in the election.

⁶ (Jandura, 2012), (POMED Backgrounder: Previewing Libya's Elections, 2012)

⁷ The exact distribution of seats between Fezzan and Tripolitania is unclear, as the Sirte & al-Jafra district covers both Fezzan and Tripolitania. While the 2 of the individual seats in this district were elected in al-Jafra and therefore are Fezzan seats, the 4 party seats were elected in a single district. The distribution of seats is that 3 of the party seats in Sirte & al-Jafra district belong to Tripolitania and 1 party seat belongs to Fezzan.

The resulting GNC is thus a fragmented parliament with a number of smaller parties only gaining one seat in the GNC.

5 The Libyan political parties: organizational capacity

This section analyzes some of the key political parties in Libya through examination of their organizational capacity and a gap analysis of the parties' needs in order to function in a democratic society.

5.1 Local party organization

Libyan political parties are split between broad-based parties and locally based parties

A key dividing line emerging from the data is the degree to which the Libyan parties have established a broad-based or localized organization. While 80% of the political parties define themselves as broad-based movements, only a minority of the parties have been able to establish broad-based organizations defined as having local branches in at least one-third of the 22 geographical districts in Libya. A majority of the parties are better characterized as local parties, as they have not established a broad geographic presence in Libya.

Parties' local branches are mainly responsible for campaigning, mobilizing citizens to vote, and explaining party policies at the local level. Local branches are also responsible for recruiting political candidates and giving input to policy development. Broad-based parties can more capably point to examples of their local branches developing initiatives for the headquarters to further develop and implement.

The majority of the parties indicate that their local and national leaders are in contact with each other on a daily or weekly basis. Many of the parties allow a great deal of autonomy for the local branch offices; some parties' branch offices control their own finances and many of them are self-financed. Several of the parties also allowed their branch offices to select the candidates to run in their districts, with only limited oversight from the central party organization.

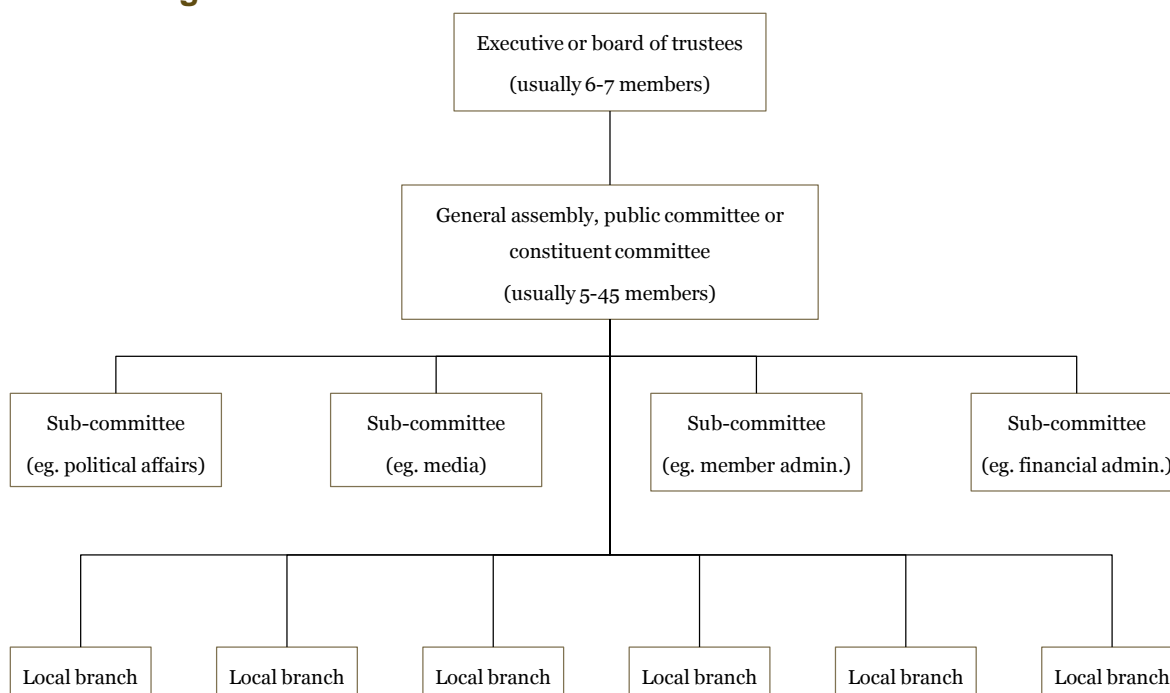
5.2 Party organization

About half of the Libyan political parties are currently in the process of developing or optimizing their organizational structures.

The extent to which the parties have developed organizational structures varies significantly, though broad-based parties tend to be more well-established. About half of the political parties are currently in the process of developing or reforming their organizational structures. Some of the parties mention that their lack of experience in political party formation, largely due to repression in the Gaddafi era, has delayed and hampered the process of establishing their party organization. Parties' organizational structures share several similarities, and are in part inspired by Western democratic parties. Their visions for structuring their parties suggest a focus on promoting internal democracy.

Figure 2: Generic party organizational chart

Generic organizational chart



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5.3 Human and financial resources of the parties

The political parties of Libya have few human resources available, and these are mainly dedicated to administrative assignments.

The human and financial resources of Libyan political parties are generally limited, although there is some variation in capabilities across the parties. In general, broad-based parties have more human resources available than local parties and tend to rely more heavily on individual donations.

Most political parties have few employed staff, and one-third of the parties rely solely on volunteer efforts. This can be a challenge for the development of the political parties as only a few people work for each party on a full-time basis. Parties that do have employed staff are highly centralized. Full-time employees typically work in the party headquarters, while branch offices run primarily on volunteer efforts.

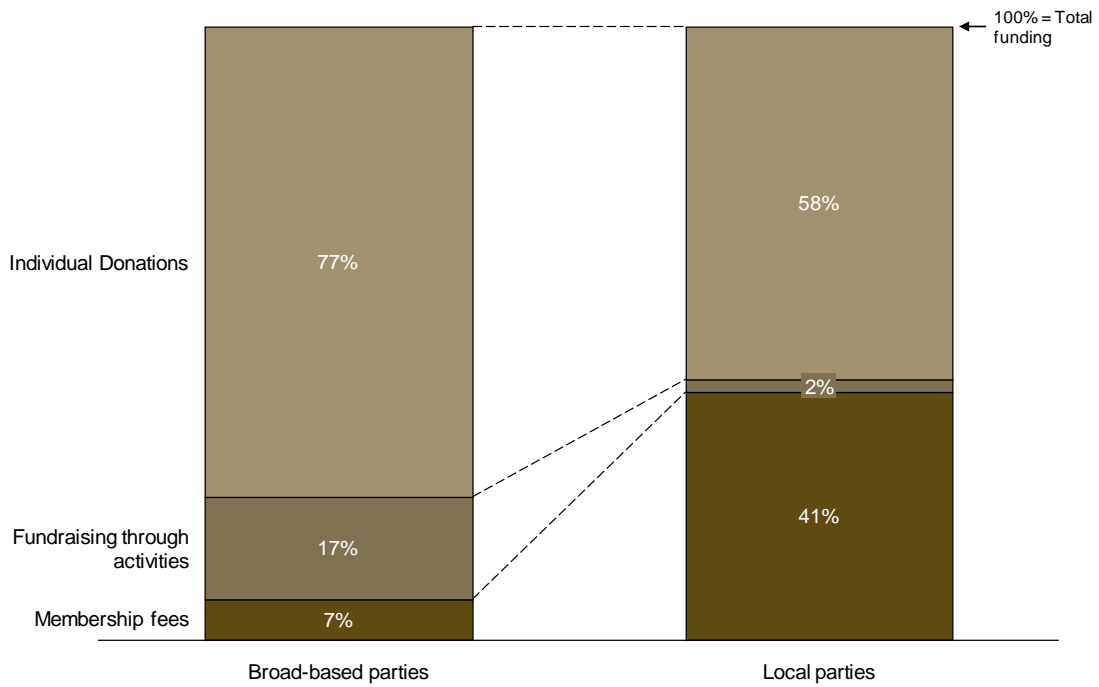
The political parties have few financial resources and are overly reliant on individual donations.

The following information on the political parties' funding levels and sources of funding has been provided by the political parties and has not been independently verified. Two-thirds of the surveyed parties claim to have total funding levels of less than 100,000 USD. The main source of party funding is individual donations, including from the founding members.

Membership fees are another important source of income, accounting for roughly 28% of the funding on average. Other activities such as fundraising or corporate donations do not play an important role in party financing. Broad-based parties rely more heavily on individual donations and also tend to make more use of fundraising activities than the local parties, which are instead more reliant on membership fees.

Figure 3: The political parties' stated sources of funding

The broad-based and local parties' sources of funding



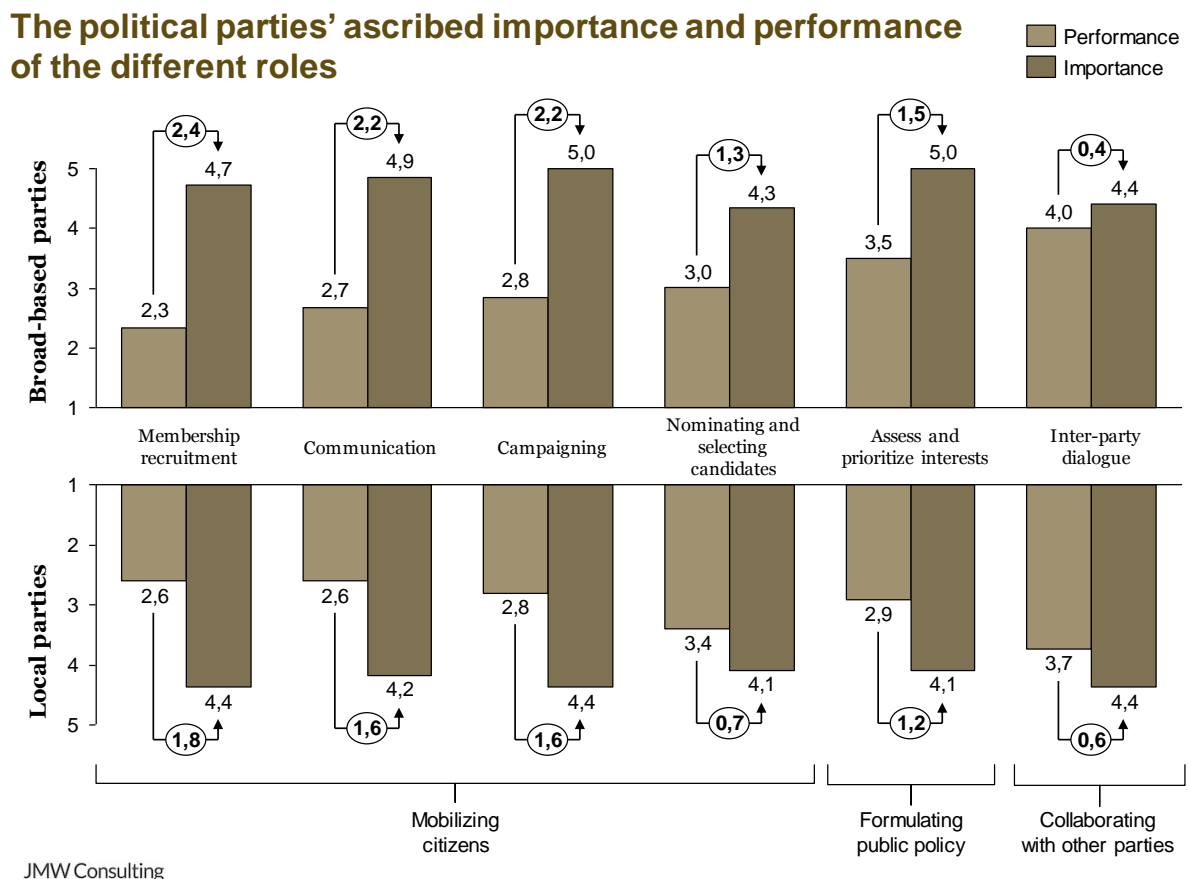
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6 Political parties' performance and needs

This section describes the main trends concerning the parties' identified strengths, the importance they ascribe to different roles, and the key gaps between the ascribed importance of the roles and the parties' perceived performance. The analysis provides a snapshot of the current performance of Libyan political parties, although it should be noted that the political parties are newly founded and therefore in a constant state of change and evolution.

6.1 Importance, performance and gaps in different roles

Figure 4: Overview of the political parties' ascribed importance and performance



The assessment focuses on the three roles political parties play:

- (1) Mobilizing citizens
- (2) Formulating public policy
- (3) Collaborating with other parties

Each of these three roles has been assessed in terms of each party's perception of its performance and of the importance it ascribes to these roles. The figure above shows the political parties' ascribed importance and their perceived performance in each area; the top figure shows the results of broad-based parties and the lower figure the results of local parties.

The political parties consider all roles and their sub-components to be important, but broad-based and local parties differ in regards to which roles are most important.

Broad-based parties tend to view the roles of the political parties as more important than the local parties. They ascribe a higher importance to all of the sub-components except inter-party dialogue, which is equally important according to both the broad-based and local parties.

The political parties are most confident in their performance collaborating with other parties.

Both broad-based and local parties view their collaboration with other parties as their most effective role. Such collaborations refer primarily to interactions between parties rather than coalition-building. The broad-based parties rate their performance in assessing and prioritizing interests as second highest. Their assessment of performance in these areas is higher than for local parties.

Both broad-based and local parties rate their own performance of mobilizing citizens as below average, except for the sub-component of nominating and selecting candidates. The worst performance is attributed to membership recruitment followed by communication and campaigning. Thus, the parties' biggest challenge is the ability to mobilize citizens, something that is further explored in the following section.

Mobilizing citizens is the biggest challenge facing the political parties.

The political parties view their performance in this area as inferior to all other roles and sub-components. The gap between perceived importance and performance across the different roles is largest for mobilizing citizens, followed by formulating public policy and lastly collaborating with other parties. This is the case for both broad-based and local parties.

The gap between the political parties' performance and their assessment of the importance of the role of mobilizing citizens is largest for the sub-component of membership recruitment, for both broad-based and local parties.

The political parties experience challenges regarding communication and campaigning as well. The gap between the parties' perceived performance and ascribed importance of communication and campaigning is almost as large as the gap for membership recruitment. Within the mobilizing citizens role, the sub-component of nominating and selecting candidates has the smallest gap between perceived importance and performance. The following sections examine the various roles and sub-components in greater detail.

6.2 Mobilizing citizens

The biggest challenge facing the political parties is membership recruitment.

The political parties face challenges in mobilizing citizens and especially in recruiting members. Some parties mention that Libyans rather join parties for the prospect of personal gain (e.g., a job, money, a house, access to the GNC, etc.) than because they believe in the party's political platform. Furthermore, some parties believe that the negative image of political parties hinders their ability to recruit members.

Most of the political parties recruit their members through personal contacts, families, friends, social networks and tribes. Some parties also try to reach broader segments by promoting their political programs, being active on the street level and on the Internet, and through participation in public discussions and meetings. Broad-based parties tend to make more use of the media as a way to recruit members than the local parties. Local parties tend to recruit through personal contacts and family members.

The challenges political parties face in recruiting members are confirmed by many of the parties' small membership bases, as described by the parties themselves. The parties assess their memberships at approximately 5,000 members on average, but the numbers differ substantially across the parties. The average membership base of the local parties is as low as 2,100 members per party. The broad-based parties report having more than four times as many members than local parties do. The rules governing membership are similar for all of the political parties. Each party requires an application for membership. In approximately three-quarters of the parties, members need to pay a membership fee as well. The membership fees are generally low, at an average of 19 LYD. A majority of the parties do not require anything from their members except the membership fee.

The tables below summarize the non-weighted distribution of political party memberships on a variety of parameters based on information provided by the parties. The members of the political parties are generally younger men who are well-educated and situated across the three regions of Libya. However, a number of substantial differences in the composition of the parties' membership bases exist.

Table 1: Distribution of the political parties' membership base

Members		Gender		Age		
Active	Passive	Male	Female	30 or younger	30-50	50+
20 %	80 %	71 %	29 %	40 %	41 %	19 %

Educational level			Regional distribution		
Illiterate	Primary to secondary education	Bachelors degree or higher	Tripolitana	Cyrenaica	Fezzan
4 %	32 %	64 %	38 %	30 %	32 %

The vast majority of the members across the political parties are passive members, implying that they participate in party activities on a less than monthly basis. Two out of three members of the parties examined are men. The vast majority of the members are below 50 years of age.

Party members are generally very well educated. Approximately two-thirds of party members has a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 6% in the population at large that holds such degrees, according to the 2006 census data. Very few of the members are illiterate. The high educational level of the members of the parties included in the analysis may be explained by the fact that these political parties mainly recruit their members through friends, families, social networks or tribal affiliations. Members are thus likely to belong to the same social segments as the political elites.

The political parties, especially the local parties, have difficulty accessing the media.

Many of the political parties struggle to access the media; one-third of the parties appear in the news on less than a monthly basis. This problem is more acute among the local parties. The broad-based parties express their views in the media more frequently; some of them as often as daily.

Parties' capacities also vary in terms of newspaper, newsletter, Facebook or social media outreach. All of the parties are represented on Facebook or other social media and the majority of parties have websites. About one-third of the parties have a newspaper and even fewer have newsletters. The broad-based parties have greater media capacities than the local parties.

The broad-based parties generally had more human resources available for their election campaigns in 2012 than the local parties.

In general the parties describe their last campaign as somewhat unorganized due to the short amount of time to prepare for the election. However, most of the parties managed to establish campaign units within their parties. All of the broad-based parties established a campaign unit, while less than half of the local parties managed to do so.

Parties' campaign messages mainly evolved around issues such as "unity" and "building up Libya," tapping into popular, nationalistic sentiments. None of the parties appear to have used religious slogans. According to one party, religion as a political message is not very effective because everyone in Libya is religious. Some voters can at times be offended by parties who brand themselves as religious, as they feel that the parties are using religion to advance their own personal gains and that their agenda is too conservative.

The parties who managed to establish a campaign unit also recruited campaign volunteers, with numbers ranging from 25 to more than 500. The broad-based parties in general had many volunteers (more than 500) working during their campaign. Most of the parties held public meetings and/or rallies during the 2012 campaign, and used posters, social media and flyers. Only about half of the parties used SMS and TV ads.

The political parties generally did not have time to establish clear rules for nominating and selecting their candidates.

Parties had limited time to organize before the election and establish clear rules for nominating and selecting candidates. The parties therefore followed a number of different processes to recruit their candidates. The most common strategy was for local branches to select their own candidates or for the executive to select the candidates. Only two parties had clear and established rules for the nominating process. The vast majority of the political parties plan to establish clear rules for internal elections of political candidates before the next elections.

The political parties attribute the challenges of attracting candidates to the competition between parties as well as potential candidates' aversion to affiliating themselves with a political party. This is one reason why many candidates chose to run as individuals and not on party lists. A small number of the parties surveyed also reported that many qualified individuals do not wish to be a part of the political process at this stage of the Libyan transition.

6.3 Formulating public policy

There is a sizeable gap between the importance the parties ascribe to assessing and prioritizing citizens' interests and their perceived ability to perform this role. The parties have different ways of assessing and prioritizing the interests of the Libyan people. A common method is interaction through social networks or at public meetings. Other parties follow traditional and social media intensely and some parties utilize external survey providers such as private companies or NGOs. Lastly, some of the parties assess citizens' interests through social interaction, be it with families, friends or on the streets.

The vast majority of the political parties do not have a dedicated survey unit within the party, nor do they purchase survey data from external suppliers. The parties also do not conduct their own focus groups, due in large part to limited availability of financial resources.

Parties' policy development processes are usually driven by their executive committees. Here some parties allow for members to propose issues and then vote on whether to include the issues as focus areas. Generally, the parties are very open to including members in the policy development process, but few of them have formalized ways for the members to communicate with party leaders. Outreach to members is instead conducted through direct contact and personal relationships between members and the party officials.

6.4 Collaborating with other parties

Inter-party dialogue

The political parties rate their collaboration with other parties and inter-party dialogue as their area of best performance. Generally, and in particular among smaller parties, there appears to be significant willingness among parties to interact with one another. The political parties generally value inter-party dialogue and are open to collaboration with the other parties. The parties generally interact with each other either through formal meetings or, more frequently, through personal relationships, direct personal meetings and contacts.

6.5 Party weakness assessment

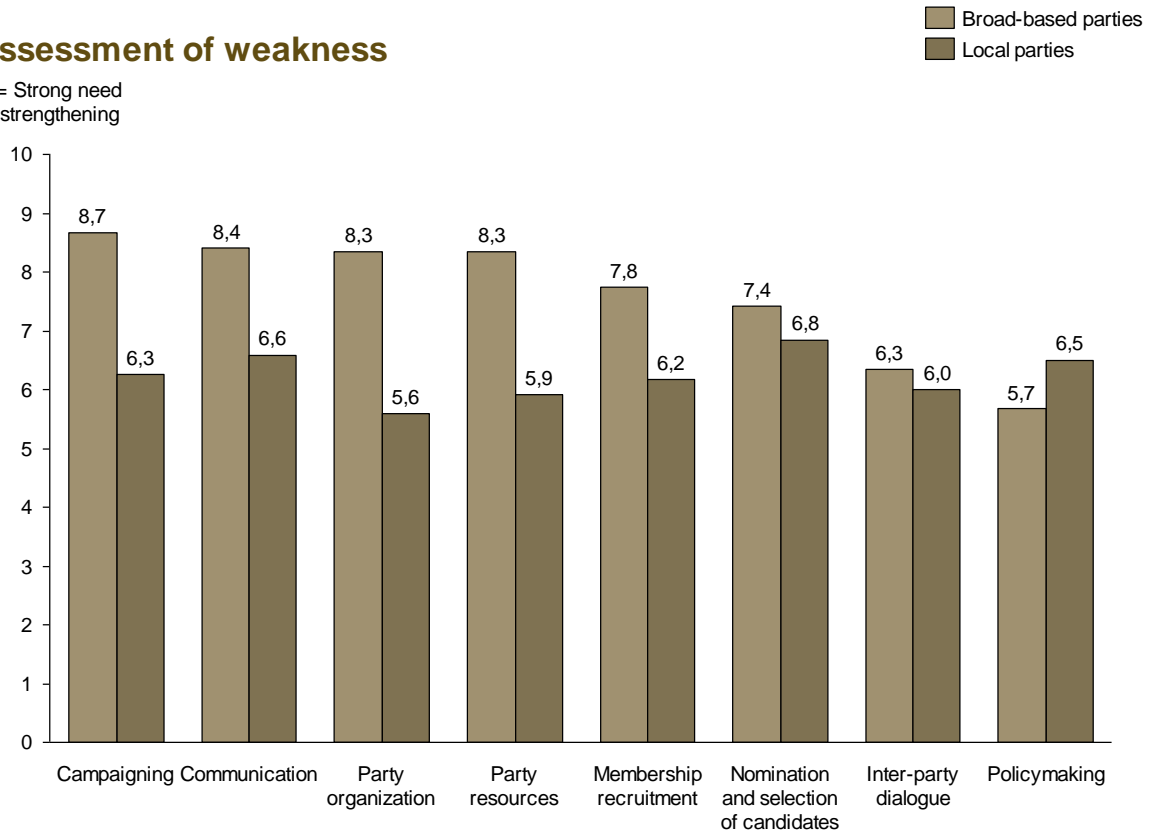
The political parties all generally perceive a need to strengthen various aspects of their parties. These needs correspond to the political parties' few available resources, their lack of electoral and governance experience, and their recent establishment and organizational development.

The parties identify many areas for improvement, including: communication, campaigning, nomination and selection of candidates, party resources, membership recruitment, party organization, formulating public policy and inter-party dialogue.

Figure 5: The political parties' assessment of their weaknesses

Assessment of weakness

10 = Strong need of strengthening



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