

## **The Regional Origins of the Libyan Conflict**

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We explore the effects of Libya's administrative division into Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan on the onset of the Libyan conflict. We argue that Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, in particular, followed two different and distinct paths of political development and socioeconomic transformation. While Tripolitania and its elites are connected to the core of Libyan statehood and the legacies of Italian colonization, Cyrenaica is defined by localized political autonomy and economic autarky with respect to natural resources. Furthermore, the Qadhafi regime marginalized Cyrenaica politically, despite its major significance for the Libyan economy, because of its strong royalist inclinations. By offering an overview of Libya's political evolution and socioeconomic development, we indicate that the current conflict has largely been due to the asymmetric and artificial dominance of Tripolitania over the other two regions, particularly Cyrenaica.