DCAF Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

The Road to Stability:
Rethinking Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Libya

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Rethinking Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict Libya

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Introduction

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Ten years of turmoil, conflict, internal fragmentation, and foreign meddling have exacted a heavy toll on Libya's social and political fabric, as well as severely impacted its system of governance. Both Libya's authoritarian political past and the immediate aftermath of the 2011 violent overthrow of the Gaddafi regime contributed to the hybridization and fragmentation of the security sector and a lack of political legitimacy, which is normally a key component of successful disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) efforts. In addition, as one of our authors, Frederic Wehrey, highlights in his chapter, the "continued attenuation of the state since 2011, through war and neglect, has hastened this process of hybridization and security pluralism across the country".

The present publication responds to the urgent need to support efforts to stabilize the country given the partial success in establishing a unified executive authority in Tripoli in 2021. Building on recent publications, as well as its own operational experience in Libya, DCAF seeks to offer unique expertise and insights on SSR in Libya and in contexts of fragility, conflict, and violence. In line with its operational objectives, DCAF aims to identify solutions to enable the development of SSR plans for Libya. This edited volume on security sector governance and reform (SSG/R) in Libya features contributions from key experts on Libya and considers the various facets of hybridity in conflict environments and the continuum between SSR and DDR. The publication complements and supports previous outputs and research by DCAF on SSG/R in hybrid and conflict-affected contexts.

In the opening chapter, DCAF's Archibald Gallet and Emadeddin Badi examine the possible prospects for SSR plans and the implications of the ceasefire agreement in Libya and the formation of a unified executive authority in Tripoli, the Government of National Unity (GNU). By looking at security sector stabilization (SSS) as a sub-set of SSR, the chapter aims to spell out the primary aim of SSS in Libya, which is to create the conditions necessary for security and stability by enabling the peace process to take root. By creating synergies between stabilization-centred policy and SSR, SSS can "simultaneously lay the foundation for SSR, reconstruction, and development, and encourage the buy-in of many domestic and international stakeholders, who have diverging policy priorities and incentives".

In his analysis, Frederic Wehrey reminds us of how prospects for successful DDR and SSR remain "clouded by the massive numbers of foreign mercenaries and military forces in the country". So while the current situation in Libya allows for cautious optimism, Wehrey warns that a "decade of internecine conflict, foreign proxy

meddling, and foreign missteps on DDR/SSR will likely take years, if not decades, to overcome". He stresses, however, how the lessons of the past may help, provided that "Libya's hybridized security sector at the local level" is fully taken into account and that reforms are structured "around identifiable and realistic security needs".

While national elections have been planned for the third time since the ouster of Gaddafi, uncertainties persist about the date of the vote, originally scheduled for 24 December 2021. Inga Kristina Trauthig's chapter considers the potential conse-quences of national elections in 2021 for Libya's security sector, and the challenges that Libya's newly elected authorities may face regarding the security sector.

A decade of instability and conflict have caused significant damage to Libya's infra-structure. Tarek Megerisi's contribution examines how the challenges of providing services such as water and electricity "offer insight into broader Libyan cultural and political dynamics". Megerisi concedes that the "end to the civil war and the ascension of a new Government of National Unity has created an opportunity to stabilize these most vital sectors", but stresses that "recognizing the hybrid and local reality of Libya's security sector" is vital to create "strong incentives around the stabilization of vital services".

The concluding chapter focuses on a specific security sector challenge – supporting and reforming the Petroleum Facilities Guard. Matt Herbert details the emergence and evolution of the force, as well as its current structure and deployment pattern, and analyses "reform initiatives underway, and obstacles to reform". In this case, the weakness of the force, which plays a fundamental role in protecting a vital economic sector, appears to be "a direct result of the hybridized recruitment strategies employed by the government in the years immediately after 2011". Hence, while hybridity may offer some solutions for SSG/R, there is still a need for state-centred governance in specific sectors of national importance, such as the oil sector.

This publication strives to contribute to the current debates around SSR/G in conflict-affected and fragile environments. As such, its objective is to stimulate a holistic reflection on how work on SSR and SSG can better incorporate hybridization as well as stabilization imperatives, putting people-centred approaches to security back at the heart of the conversation. We hope you enjoy reading this edited volume.

Security Sector Stabilization:
Defining A Path in the Libyan Context

Authored by
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1

Since the ceasefire agreement signed on 23 October 2020, a precarious peace has prevailed in Libya, which had witnessed its worst and most internationalized conflict in recent years with the launch of Khalifa Haftar's offensive on Tripoli in April 2019. Despite sporadic recurring outbursts of localized violence across the country since the end of the war, the period of fragile stability brought about by the cessation of hostilities also ushered in a renewed interest in security sector reform (SSR) programming. The importance of reforming Libya's security sector came to the fore not solely due to the conflict's aftermath and its dire implications for the North African country's national security, but also due to the importance of harmonizing the sequencing of Libya's political and economic tracks with its military track as part of a three-pronged approach to transition, all three of which were kickstarted after cessation of hostilities.

One of the objectives of the Joint Military Commission – the committee that signed the ceasefire after appointing five career military officers to represent the Government of National Accord (GNA) and five from the Libyan Arab Armed Forces' (LAAF) formerly warring coalitions – was to develop a wide-spanning set of implementable measures to build on the ceasefire agreement and culminate in the unification of Libya's military institutions. These measures encompassed, among other things, devising the modalities of the ceasefire, engaging in trust-building measures such as the exchange of prisoners, establishing a demilitarized zone in central Libya, developing a blueprint for reforming key apparatuses such as Libya's Petroleum Facilities Guard, and expelling all foreign forces and mercenaries from the country. The overarching aim was to curb the extent to which foreign influence could affect the course of the country's political transition, avert a relapse into war, and offset the country's de-facto division by creating a basis upon which to unify Libya's military institutions.

Only months after the signing of the ceasefire, Libya's political process careened over as the 74 members of the UN-led Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) replaced the former UN-recognized authority, the GNA, by electing a three-member Presidency Council and a Prime Minister, Abdelhamid Dabeiba. The new Prime Minister formed a new Government of National Unity (GNU), which was swiftly endorsed by the House of Representatives. In addition to being formally tasked with laying the groundwork for the general parliamentary and presidential elections slated for 24 December 2021, both domestic and international stakeholders expected the GNU to deliver another highly sought-after prize: the stabilization of Libya.

However, the short-lived convergence of political forces that brought about the GNU – as well as the international and national endorsement of the GNU – did not lead to any tangible breakthroughs or significant progress in the military track of Libya's transition. In fact, the alteration of the political and institutional status quo instigated by the LDPF was achieved in part at the expense of a compartmentalization of the Joint Military Committee (JMC) and by avoiding the salient issues of military unification and civilian oversight. In turn, these dynamics dashed the initial momentum for SSR that had surfaced immediately after the conflict. Instead, a laissez-faire policy prevailed, which led to a fragmentation across both former warring coalitions: the GNA-aligned forces and the LAAF. Rifts that had been cast aside by local armed groups and communities as they mobilized to fight on either side of the war – as well as new divides created by the fallout of Haftar's offensive and jockeying over the impending suffrage process – (re) surfaced as security actors sought to entrench their influence after the UN-convened LPDF vote. This fragmentation was also reflected in the international arena as the initial collective impetus to broker a multilateral agreement under UN auspices at the LPDF receded after the GNU's endorsement, with individual foreign powers reverting to their previous practice of pursuing their individual policy agendas in Libya.

The net result of this confluence of factors is the prevalence of a state of negative peace whose maintenance hinges on the sustention of an untenable status quo. Indeed, one of the shortcomings of the JMC's ceasefire agreement is that while it is comprehensive in nature, it lacks concrete modalities that allow its clauses to be translated into security arrangements that enable a transition towards positive peace. In failing to tangibly build on this agreement, the initial momentum for SSR has not been effectively capitalized on because of fears of compromising the political transition. Likewise, hopes that the GNU would deliver the stability sought after by local and international stakeholders have not transpired – a reality in part caused by the GNU's "do-nothing" strategy in the security realm. This dilemma reflects a broader problem in the international peace and state-building continuum, namely whether conventional efforts to strengthen security – adopting a state-centric, top-down approach to SSR and DDR that traditionally emphasizes the monopolization of violence through the rule of law – can be reconciled with the immediate "stabilization" needs of post-conflict settings, particularly in hybrid security settings where ceasefires or the cessation of hostilities have been negotiated.

This chapter will seek to examine – from the standpoint of Libya – the nexus between stabilization, SSR, and post-ceasefire interim security arrangements. Specifically, the chapter focuses on bridging the gaps between these different policy priorities and developing a doctrinal approach centred around "security sector stabilization" (SSS) that amalgamates informal interim stabilization measures with post-ceasefire security arrangements – an approach that would pave the way for longer-term SSR. Without a consideration of this nexus, tailoring approaches to harmonize these three policy priorities and examining the imperatives and perceived gaps between stabilization, conventional SSR, and post-ceasefire security arrangements will lead to a policy paralysis that will increase the likelihood of partition, a relapse into conflict, or directionless or cosmetic measures that impede tangible security sector governance reforms in the long run – if not a combination of all three.

To contextualize the Libyan security sector governance and the doctrinal shift towards reform – along with affiliated instruments – the chapter begins with a brief overview of the modalities upon which Libya's security sector currently operates. By considering the current condition of the country's security sector as well as its desired end-state, it is possible to determine both the sequence and breadth of reforms needed to enable SSR. Adopting a conflict-sensitive approach that tailors interventions based on an analysis of wider circumstances and lessons learned enables the development of a Libyan-based SSG/R blueprint that sets the stabilization of the security sector as a precondition for its eventual reform. While not completely aligned with conventional SSR approaches, this pragmatic, demand-driven, and locally owned approach to engaging Libya's post-conflict environment (notably through the provision of support for interim stabilization measures and SSS) is deemed a suitable approach to facilitate security sector transformation.

The Burden of Libya's Security Sector

In today's Libya, security is primarily handled by hybrid armed groups of various sizes, legitimacy, and affiliations, under the tentative authority of line ministries that struggle to establish effective command and control over them. Despite consistent narratives deployed by armed groups to tout their security provision efforts, most armed actors do not view this service as their raison d'être. Instead, these efforts are predominantly seen as a means to an end, whether to shore up legitimacy, control territory, derive foreign support, or secure economic incentives. This dynamic may partly explain why, despite the flurry of armed actors present in Libya, insecurity has persisted – if not spread – across the country since the state's monopoly on violence fragmented following the revolution. Today, the inflation of security personnel has become one the main factors of instability plaguing the Libyan territory. State-affiliated as well as non-state armed groups perpetuate violence against local communities, a dynamic that has further dislocated state-society relations as impunity became the defining feature of the relationship of citizens and constituencies with the stakeholders and institutions meant to protect them.

The oversized nature of Libya's security apparatus is inimical to effective security sector governance or attempts to reform it, and many of the groups comprising this overstaffed apparatus are also involved in organized crime. State and non-state affiliated armed actors are deeply intertwined with networks that use illegal means to generate revenue, such as money laundering, migrant smuggling, narcotics, or arms trafficking, as well as maritime crime. Given Libya's position as a gateway for Africa into Europe, as well as its adjacence to the volatile crescent stretching west through the Maghreb and south into the Sahel, the security threats that emanate from the country, whether related to transnational organized crime or violent extremism, affect its wider neighbourhood. The impulse to resolve (or contain) these challenges through securitized or "quick-fix" solutions has often led to confounding reforming Libya's security sector with creating "new" security actors to – in theory – "operate with or through them" to address these challenges.

These approaches have often been devised with no assessment of Libya's actual security governance needs. Moreover, they have frequently been architected with little to no focus on enhancing the new forces' accountability to local communities, or the "state's" ability to exercise oversight over them. While estimates vary, the net result is that, as of 2021, more than 400,000 security personnel are operating on the payroll of various Libyan authorities, for a population of just over 6.5 million. This is an excessively high ratio, with some six per cent of the population effectively being enrolled in the security sector. In most advanced democracies, which possess far more secure environments and whose policing and military efforts are far more consistent, around one per cent of the workforce is generally assigned to security tasks. This disparity in ratios reflects the way in which Libya's public sector – including its security sector – is being used to distribute state funds, a rentier-based economic legacy from the Gaddafi era. While it is inconceivable to compare Libya's contemporary security sector to those of developed states, it is important to note that most security-centred efforts sponsored by international stakeholders in the past years have contributed to oversizing – rather than downsizing – Libya's security apparatus.

In other words, Libya is creaking under the weight of its security apparatus, which is oversized and conducive to instability and insecurity and often eludes state oversight – or worse, subdues state authorities. For Libya to stabilize in the medium to long term, the security governance framework must move towards *governing armed groups* rather than being *governed by armed groups*. The hybridity of the Libyan security forces – as it is often described – should be understood as a de facto state rather than a definitive model. As such, hybridity, being intrinsically transactional and unstable, relies on a scheme for service provision that is based on immediate remuneration, in the form of money, favours, or access to symbolic resources. It is a contemporary version of a patronage system that ultimately relates to a feudal society where relations between individuals and entities are defined by subjective factors based on good will, which may be subject to unilateral interpretation or coercion, instead of the objective rule of law guaranteed by independent judicial authorities.

These realities, as well as challenges and previous transactional relationships, must be acknowledged in order to carve a path towards overhauling Libya's security sector governance. In addition, a tailored approach to SSG/R efforts should be based on how things *are*, rather than how they *ought to be.* In Libya's case, this is one of the main causes of the "gap" between the formal end of fighting and the re-establishment and consolidation of the state's capacity to provide effective security and justice.

From Security Sector Stabilization to Security Sector Reform

To relieve the burden of Libya's security sector on the state and society, it is important to expand the scope of conventional security promotion and adopt a broader conceptualization of SSR. Conventional security promotion is premised on the idea of translating security and justice provision into key policy issues and particular public goods; however, the establishment of a transparent, effectively overseen, accountable, and well-managed security sector is a daunting task in most well-developed countries, let alone in states and societies recently gripped by conflict, or worse, over which the shadow of war still looms. As such, blueprints for reforming Libya's security sector

need to move away from conventional approaches towards less generic – but more challenging and multi-faceted – approaches conducive to the re-engineering of power relations among elites while strengthening the role and bargaining capacity of civil society. Focusing on train-and-equip programmes – or an exclusively top-down and security-centric approach that only seeks to enhance the operational effectiveness of security forces such as military, police, or other stakeholders – would ultimately further encumber the state rather than aid the reform of its security and justice sectors.

All in all, in Libya's dynamic landscape, traditional SSR is more of a goal than a method in so far as the present phase is explicitly a transitory one. Currently, SSR still forms part of the dialogue on the "nexus" between the ceasefire and the peace agreement. Acknowledging the need for a shift in doctrine that is conducive to creating an environment where Libya's security sector can eventually be overhauled, the current "early dialogue" on security governance reform, if it is to be effective, should have its own set of objectives. These will be geared towards SSS rather than informed by the traditional ambitious goals of SSR given the contemporary context.

As a sub-set of SSR, SSS can be defined as a holistic approach to political security, incorporating state and non-state elements to improve security and justice provision in order to increase confidence, facilitate political dialogue, and ultimately enable a political settlement.[1] In the Libyan case, the primary aim of SSS would be to create the conditions necessary for security and stability, while enabling the peace process to take root. Moreover, having previously shown how contemporary policy towards Libya has veered from an initial impetus towards a securitized approach to SSR to a rhetoric that emphasizes stabilization but completely neglects the security sector, SSS's overarching merit is its ability to create synergies between stabilization-centred policy and the much-needed momentum to reform the security sector. This approach would simultaneously lay the foundation for SSR, reconstruction, and development, and encourage the buy-in of many domestic and international stakeholders, who have diverging policy priorities and incentives.

SSS, as a doctrine, would nonetheless have its own set of desired outcomes. It would first seek to establish frameworks and processes for immediate and effective violence reduction, with the broader goal of enforcing minimum security and justice. At the same time, it would provide the time and space to direct processes towards a more long-term political resolution. The lack of a sustainable political settlement and a fully legitimate political authority that can assert control over the entirety of Libya's territory not only leads to persisting instability and further fragmentation of the national identity, but also means the approach to establishing a strategic direction for the transformation of the security sector is not pragmatic. SSS would therefore lay the foundation for a longer-term holistic approach to SSR by contributing to the prevention of violence and the transition from a negative peace to a positive peace, and by laying the groundwork for defining the "national interests" of the state.

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1   Stabilisation Unit of the UK Government. 2014. Issues Note: Security Sector Stabilisation, March, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765429/security-sector-stabilisation.pdf.

The added value of mainstreaming SSS as a policy approach to the security sector is its adaptability. By design, the operationalization of this policy is context specific and determined by the broader socio-political situation and dynamics surrounding the post-conflict political settlement. As such, there is no pre-determined approach to devising an SSS plan, save for incorporating lessons learned from other crisis environments – and, in the case of Libya, past setbacks experienced when attempting to conduct SSR or DDR.[2] In a context where a ceasefire has been reached (where the conflict is no longer regarded as active), the security situation nonetheless has a direct impact on the sustainability of the peace process and negotiations around the agreement's modalities. As such, integrating security and political tracks – or at least ensuring a degree of coherence in terms of the speed at which they progress – is key to brokering a sustainable end to hostilities.

More broadly, early decisions on security-related technical arrangements are likely to have a disproportionate impact on the landscape in which subsequent SSR efforts take place. This impact can be positive – for example, sound ceasefire monitoring systems and tailored confidence-building measures constitute opportunities for restoring local ownership and for community oversight – but it can also be detrimental when interim security arrangements enable actors to avoid transitional justice mechanisms, or to secure their political grip on the future regime. The Libyan case is currently characterized by a combination of politically expedient policies and a culture of impunity – a dynamic that is detrimental to stabilizing the security sector in the immediate term, let alone overhauling it in the long run.

Moving the focus of the transition process away from interim security measures and towards the "stabilization" of the security sector is also key, as several case studies across the wider region illustrate.[3] The interim "stabilization" phase would facilitate a successful transition through SSS policies that are developed as part of a process of political normalization and that gradually feed into two distinct processes: DDR – a process that will be contingent on broader economic and social considerations – and longer-term holistic SSR programmes that can build on the foundations of SSS by maximizing security and justice provision capacities. Both DDR and SSR efforts typically take place further down the line, as they require a certain level of political authority that Libya's new legitimate authorities will have to gain progressively over the years. The need for structures inherited by SSS efforts to coexist with DDR processes, while moving towards holistic SSR, will constitute a decisive factor for future security architectures. This further advocates for cautious SSS planning and implementation that takes into account the long-term implications of such an approach – hence the need to cautiously tailor security policy to the contemporary landscape and its contours.

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2   See Frederic Wehrey's chapter on DDR and SSR lessons in Libya since 2011.
3   As cases such as Afghanistan and Iraq illustrate, many stabilization strategies that are expediently executed without proper tailoring to local contexts can exacerbate conflict, enable corruption, and further degrade state-society relations. In the case of Afghanistan, stabilization-oriented programs proliferated, but were often executed in isolation or on compressed timelines, hindering a transition to longer-term development.

Security Sector Stabilization in Libya

In the case of Libya, the ceasefire agreement signed on 23 October 2020 mentions several security provisions to be supervised by the 5+5 JMC.[4] Nearly a year later, the JMC has only partially implemented this mandate, with very few achievements save for the opening of the coastal road and the implementation of minor confidence-building measures that saw parties exchange prisoners and human remains. Arguably, despite sporadic interest from the international community, primarily highlighting the importance of the reopening of the coastal road and the departure of foreign mercenaries (an issue the JMC has little agency over), the military track has made little progress overall. In addition to the opacity surrounding the JMC's workplan, which lacks an actual implementation agenda for the ceasefire, the fragmentation of the coalitions on both sides (namely the LAAF and the Volcano of Rage coalition aligned under the former GNA) has gradually rendered the body ill-suited to take the executive decisions needed to stabilize the security situation. Moreover, impending elections and the prospect of a "reshuffling" of power dynamics are also likely to impact the JMC and the security situation – a dynamic that the military track in its current form is not equipped to withstand.

Advocating for an SSR-centred approach, rather than responding complacently or reactively, would significantly support the political process in the immediate term, averting a relapse into conflict and paving the way for early SSR efforts. The ceasefire monitoring component of the JMC's agreement can be – from the vantage point of SSS – leveraged as a dispute resolution tool through which to reinforce the ceasefire line, and demilitarize the broader central Libyan zone. Moreover, this would also address local grievances – which are currently festering in the city of Sirte despite their obfuscation by larger macro-level divisions between the former warring coalitions. An active ceasefire monitoring mechanism, including liaison, intelligence gathering, and community-based resolution initiatives, could also support violence prevention efforts more efficiently and act as a medium through which to enhance social peace in the city of Sirte, strengthen local ownership and communal oversight, and avert potential flashpoints that could lead to the (re)eruption of conflict.

More broadly, interim security arrangements to secure the city of Sirte can also serve as a prefatory phase for reforming the police sector in Libya as a whole. In order to create the basis for this wider and more long-term process, the neutral force that would be recruited to ensure that security in demined areas should adhere to strict accountability and vetting processes, comply with international humanitarian law (IHL) rules of engagement, and must be professionalized based on its specific functions. Depending on the chosen blueprint for establishing the force, as well as the local socio-political, economic, and security conditions when planning and operationalizing the force, it could also leverage techniques that reinforce trust with local communities, such as community policing. Furthermore, integrating inclusiveness and

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4   The JMC oversees key tasks to consolidate the ceasefire, which include the cantonment of the heavy weaponry of the respective military factions, the formation of a joint policing force that would stabilize the security situation in the coastal city of Sirte, the reform of the Petroleum Facilities Guard, and the opening of the coastal road linking Misrata and Benghazi and its demining – as well as, more broadly, the implementation of yet-to-be defined special security arrangements to reinforce the ceasefire line and gradually demilitarize central Libya.

community oversight into the very design of pre-DDR programmes, such as demining or weapons registration exercises, can help restore confidence between security forces and civil society/civilians, thus creating a more enabling environment for future dialogues on SSR initiatives and debates.

Conclusion

The current political and security situation in Libya is not conducive to designing large-scale holistic SSR initiatives that can be implemented and sustained in the long run. Indeed, as is quite common in conflict- or crisis-affected contexts, foreign-sponsored bilateral train-and-equip programmes, or, at the national level, cosmetic reshufflings within ministries – informed by power struggles rather than a real vision of SSR – obstruct structural reform plans while being deceptively portrayed as SSR. The portrayal of these cosmetic changes and complex political manoeuvrings as conflict-sensitive reforms is far from harmless: misusing the concept of SSR in this way means that no concrete steps are taken on key issues such as accountability, compliance with the rule of law, and formal and informal civilian oversight – all of which are notoriously absent from SSR efforts witnessed to date.

Consequently, acknowledging the need to properly consider the stabilization phase can help to enable sustainable, long-term peacebuilding efforts – particularly those in line with doctrinal approaches such as people-centred security. Providing undue guarantees to armed actors for the sake of immediate violence reduction has in fact proven to merely delay the inevitable increase in problems at best – and to catalyse this process at worst – by allowing these actors to entrench themselves in the new regime, thus also renewing their legitimacy. Lessons learned regarding the scope of SSS and the deployment of such a doctrinal approach can provide valuable insights on how to restrict the scope of security-related interventions and tailor them to key short-term priorities. These would be geared towards ensuring that the foundations for holistic SSR, DDR, and transitional justice programmes are laid in advance, if only to ensure the right political context for their operationalization.

The Lost Decade:
DDR and SSR Lessons in Libya since 2011

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2

Introduction

With the ceasefire that ended Libya's latest round of civil war, the formation of a unified executive authority in Tripoli – the Government of National Unity (GNU) – and progress towards national elections, the imperative for the reform and unification of Libya's security sector is once again receiving attention. Yet the prospects for successful disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) are clouded by the massive numbers of foreign mercenaries and military forces in the country, some of whom are undertaking their own train-and-equip programmes.[1] While this external dimension has rightly drawn scrutiny, the more pertinent and enduring obstacles to DDR/SSR are endogenous – specifically, the political and socio-economic factors that have long inhibited successful security sector reforms since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Understanding these factors and drawing lessons from previously aborted DDR/SSR efforts is therefore crucial to avoid future pitfalls and a possible relapse into conflict.

At the core of Libya's DDR/SSR malaise is a lack of consensus about security sector governance and the legitimate institutions of security reform – illustrating deeper disagreements about the Libyan political order and even the state itself. In light of this crisis of legitimacy, reflected in the prolonged transitional period and the enduring absence of a constitutionally mandated authority to exercise and regulate the use of armed force, DDR/SSR efforts have been instrumentalized and weaponized by competing elites and factions. The result has been the capture and colonization of ministries and other state institutions and the proliferation of "parallel" security bodies nominally tied to the state and often receiving state funds.[2]

The pathologies of Libya's oil-dependent economy – compounded by corruption, the black market economy, and armed groups' predation of financial institutions – create further challenges for DDR/SSR. Most significantly, in the absence of viable private

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1   On Turkish military training in western Libya and an argument for a more holistic approach to security sector governance, see Badi, E., 2021. 'To Advance its Own Interests, Turkey Should Now Help Stabilize Libya', *War on the Rocks*, 24 May. https://warontherocks.com/2021/05/to-advance-its-own-interests-turkey-should-now-help-stabilize-libya/.

2   For background context, see al-Shadeedi, H., van Veen, E., and Harchaoui, J., 2020. 'One thousand and one failings: Security sector stabilization and development in Libya', Clingendael Institute, April, https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/one-thousand-and-one-failings.pdf and Wehrey, F. and Cole, P., 2013. 'Building Libya's Security Sector', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 6 August, https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/08/06/building-libya-s-security-sector-pub-52603.

sector employment, service in the security sector has become a means of livelihood and a massive rent-distribution mechanism for vast numbers of Libyans – a practice that certainly existed under the former regime but was revived and accelerated through a series of fateful decisions by Libya's transitional authorities.

Added to these political and economic afflictions is the problem of weak security governance capacity, stemming in part from the fraught legacy of the Gaddafi era, the dysfunctional and hollowed-out nature of the regular military and police, and more importantly the hybridized nature of the security sector, which is partly a result of the former regime's devolution of power to semi-formal security bodies, such as the revolutionary committees and other paramilitaries.[3] The continued weakening and fragmentation of the state since 2011, through war and neglect, has hastened this process of hybridization and security pluralism across the country.

Confronted with the enormity of these problems, DDR/SSR efforts have defaulted to ill-advised and ineffective initiatives. In many instances, the two distinct functions – DDR and SSR – have been poorly implemented and undertaken in the wrong order, reflecting both a politicization of security sector governance and ill-informed decisions by Libyans and outsiders. DDR programmes were executed before an accurate assessment of Libya's security governance needs, including the requisite personnel levels and force structure, had been carried out. Consequently, armed group leaders have been handed a rationale for keeping vast numbers of young men armed, ostensibly for "policing" duties. More broadly, DDR was treated as a solely technical or economic problem and was often delinked from political dialogue, which often excluded armed group leaders. SSR efforts, meanwhile, have often focused on narrowly defined areas of capacity, such as unit-level train-and-equip programmes, sporadic workshops for security sector personnel, and mapping studies of armed groups. In other instances, efforts to implement DDR/SSR were too grand and ambitious. At best, DDR/SSR initiatives are a waste of outsiders' time and resources. At worst, they sharpen pre-existing political fissures and inadvertently bolster the autonomy of militia leaders.

With these considerations as a backdrop, policymakers and practitioners inside and outside Libya must apply the lessons learned from the past to ensure better integration of the technical, economic, and political dimensions of DDR/SSR initiatives. And they must do so while tailoring these initiatives to an environment of increasing hybridity, localism, and fragmentation.

Embedding Political Legitimacy in DDR/SSR

Early DDR/SSR initiatives after the 2011 revolution fell victim to debates about the legitimacy of the new order and Libya's transitional governments. Libyans and foreigners held unrealistic assumptions that successive milestones in the country's

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3   For background, see Walker-Cousins, J., 2012. 'Background Paper on Libya' for the workshop on Security Sector Transformation in Arab Transitions: Working for Change, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 17-18 December, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Walker_Cousins_-_Libya_-_English.pdf.

post-revolutionary path alone would produce the political legitimacy needed to jumpstart DDR/SSR efforts and ensure successful implementation. These milestones included, first, the fall of the Gaddafi regime in late 2011, which some Libyan elites believed would obviate the need for the continued bearing of arms; the establishment of the National Transition Council, which would purportedly induce disarmament through decree; and, perhaps most importantly, the June 2012 elections for Libya's national legislature, the General National Congress (GNC), which was supposed to enjoy popular support to advance DDR/SSR.[4]

None of this idealistic thinking was borne out by events. At their core, these assumptions placed too much faith in top-down, national-level SSR, devised and executed from the metropole of Tripoli while ignoring the local realities and the disparate post-revolutionary paths of Libya's towns and regions. In tandem, the transitional authorities in 2012 undertook a technical DDR programme, the Warriors Affairs Commission (renamed the Libyan Programme for Reintegration and Development), which involved a drive to encourage armed group members to register in order to provide them with appropriate job training, higher education, or entry into the regular police or army. However, because the programme was delinked from a political consensus about the future of the security sector and broader questions of the sector's purpose and size, as well as the balance between Gaddafi-era personnel and younger revolutionaries, it fell victim to political infighting and was "branded" as a "project" by Muslim Brotherhood figures.[5]

As a result, missed opportunities during the critical first year of Libya's transition had far-reaching effects on future conflict, especially as the country's political divisions widened and the "security dilemma" of disarmament became more acute.[6] The 2012 GNC elections, in particular, proved to be a misguided goalpost, with senior western officials, including the head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) admitting that the UN's steps to reform the security sector, including staffing and programming, had come too late and had been considered a lower priority than preparing for the elections.[7] Moreover, the elected Libyan legislature's lack of capacity to manage SSR – in addition to intense personal and ideological factionalism and the symbiotic and self-serving linkages formed between individual parliamentarians and armed group leaders – contributed to the deterioration of security and popular disenchantment

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4   Author observations in Libya (Benghazi, Misrata, Tripoli) 2012-2013 and telephone conversations with US diplomats working on Libya, 2016 to 2017. On the threat of Libyan militias after the 2012 GNC elections, see Wehrey, F., 2012. 'Libya's Militia Menace: The Challenge After the Elections', *Foreign Affairs*, 12 July, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2012-07-12/libyas-militia-menace.

5   See United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2012. 'Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Scoping Mission in Libya', August.

6   For a good discussion of the security dilemma and the synergies between DDR and SSR, see von Dyck, C., 2018. DDR and SSR in War-to-Peace Transition, SSR Paper 14. Geneva: DCAF, https://www. dcaf.ch/ddr-and-ssr-war-peace-transition. See also McFate, S., 2010. 'The Link Between DDR and SSR in Conflict-Affected Countries', United States Institute for Peace, May, https://static.newamerica.org/attachments/4130-the-link-between-ddr-and-ssr-in-conflict-affected-countries/SR238McFate_DDR_SSR_Conflict.eeed5947b577487bb892e4a782160df6.pdf.

7   According to one former UN official, the UN started coordinating bilateral security assistance efforts from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Turkey, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates. In March 2012 it presented a roadmap for SSR. In July, it elevated SSR within the mission by bringing on a retired Australian military officer to oversee a security sector institutions division. See Bartu, P., 2014. 'Libya's Political Transition: The Challenges of Mediation', International Peace Institute, December, p. 11, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_e_pub_mediation_libya.pdf.

with the GNC. In retrospect, western officials conceded that greater foreign mentoring of the GNC's committees charged with SSR oversight and budgeting could have tempered, if not eliminated completely, the legislature's dysfunctionality.[8]

This pattern of failing to embed DDR/SSR in political frameworks was repeated in late 2015 with the signing of the UN-brokered accord on a new unity government in Skhirat, Morocco. That accord, the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), articulated only "principles" regarding future security sector governance, in what the UN described as a conscious effort to defer the contentious details of DDR/SSR to a later date.[9] Unsurprisingly, the question of "ownership" of the state's monopolization of force, reflected partly in the debate over Article 8 of the agreement that defined the supreme commander of the armed forces, contributed to a relapse into conflict in 2019.[10]

In the current push for national elections, as articulated by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF), the looming risks of detaching SSR from a political track are evident yet again, as is the unwarranted optimism that elections themselves will provide a path forward for SSR. For starters, the Forum's main confidence-building mechanism, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission, is not a sufficient platform for launching a viable SSR strategy; its constituent members do not speak for the plethora of armed group leaders across the country.[11] More ominously, though, as the country races towards elections, militia chiefs are already manoeuvring and jostling to preserve their power and fiefdoms, via alliances with political elites and especially through the creation and preservation of parallel security bodies nominally attached to and receiving funds from the state. It is a tactic that has a long and deleterious history in post-revolutionary Libya.

Avoiding the Pitfalls of Parallelism and Co-option of Armed Groups in SSR

As noted, early efforts to demobilize and reintegrate militia members into Libyan society and economy were thwarted by concomitant countervailing programmes to preserve the cohesion and power of the armed groups through various "registra-tion" and subordination schemes. In such arrangements, militias would be nominally "deputized" or "contracted" by the government – usually the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the Ministry of Defence, or the Chief of Staff – to perform security functions. The dispersal of state funds, usually to the heads of armed groups rather than individual members, helped solidify this affiliation.[12]

At first glance, the rationale of these bodies is appealing. The weak transitional government, faced with the growing disorder and suspicions of the Gaddafi-era security bodies, tried to enlist the "revolutionaries", who have earned the right to participate in the building of the new order, to help provide security. As the security

8   Author interview with an UNSMIL official, Tripoli, Libya, 2013.
9   Author interview with a senior UN official, location undisclosed, 2016.
10   Author interviews in Benghazi and Bayda, May 2017.
11   Author telephone interview with a European diplomat working on Libya, April 2021.
12   See Wehrey and Cole, 'Building Libya's Security Sector'.

situation worsened, especially in southern Libya and in border regions, the problem acquired new urgency. Foreigners often bolstered this narrative, viewing Libya armed groups entirely as "community enforcers" or "peacekeepers", who received organic support in towns and locales.[13]

These assumptions, like others, proved largely misguided. There were indeed instances when some armed groups, enjoying legitimacy in their communities, filled a security vacuum by providing local-level policing, sometimes with a modicum of discipline.[14] In many instances, however, the parallel security bodies were seized by narrow communal, ideological, and political interest groups – often from Misrata, Zintan, Benghazi, certain Tripoli neighbourhoods, or Libya's Islamist currents.[15] As a result, they became "branded" in the eyes of many Libyan citizens because of their highly partisan and often violent behaviour – expressed through episodes like the destruction of Sufi sites, pressure on the GNC's passage of the Political Isolation Law, and crackdowns on protestors.[16]

The names of these bodies have changed over the years – from the Supreme Security Committees, the Libya Shield Forces, the Preventative Security Apparatus, and the National Guard in the early period of the post-Gaddafi transition to more recent mani-festations like the Security Support Apparatus, the Joint Force, the Security Operations Department, and the (revived) National Guard[17] – but the dilemmas they pose to state-building and SSR remain the same. In some cases, the original concept and blueprint for these structures was meant to prevent them from being captured by armed groups – such as plans to integrate individuals rather than entire "brigades" and "battalions" and attempts to pre-emptively resolve potential disputes over lines of authority, mission, and pay with "regular" forces. Yet, in nearly every case, armed group leaders or political elites steered these projects in self-serving directions, increasing mistrust, rivalry, fragmentation, and violence within the security sector. In the process of taking over the state, they absorbed members of the "regular" security sector—like the police and armed forces--into their ranks, blurring the lines between formal and informal.[18]

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13 See, for example, Lawrence, W., 2012. 'Libya's volunteer peacekeepers', *Foreign Policy*, 24 September, https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/24/libyas-volunteer-peacekeepers. Similarly, a 2012 USAID study noted that: "Today, most katibas (brigades or armed groups) continue to provide community-level security. They remain generally well-disciplined and under control of their commanders. As a result, Libya is much more secure than many post-conflict countries." United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2012. 'Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Scoping Mission in Libya', August, p. 7.

14 For Libyan examples, as well as a a broader typology of armed groups, see McQuinn, B., 2012. Armed Groups in Libya: Typology and Roles. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, June, http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-18.pdf.

15 See Lacher, W. and Cole, P., 2014. Politics by Other Means: Conflicting Interests in Libya's Security Sector. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, No. 20, October, http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/F-Working-papers/SAS-SANA-WP20-Libya-Security-Sector.pdf.

16 Author's observations in anti-militia protests following the massacre in Gharghour, Tripoli, November 2013.

17 See Wehrey, F., 2014. 'Ending Libya's Civil War: Reconciling Politics, Rebuilding Security', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 24 September, https://carnegieendowment.org/2014/09/24/ending-libya-s-civil-war-reconciling-politics-rebuilding-security-pub-56741, Lacher and Cole, 'Politics By Other Means', and Badi, E., 2020. Exploring Armed Groups in Libya: Perspectives on SSR in a Hybrid Environment. Geneva: DCAF, November, https://www.dcaf.ch/exploring-armed-groups-libya-perspectives-ssr-hybrid-environment.

18 Author interviews with Libyan MoI officials in Tripoli, Libya, January 2019.

Among the parallel structures, the concept of the National Guard and its variations deserves special attention because it has remained an option for some Libyan elites and armed group leaders, who see it as a means to preserve their power. It has also, at various times, enjoyed a degree of foreign recognition and even support. In 2012, for example, the UN recommended that Libyan authorities should "immediately consider establishing" a "Libyan Territorial Army (LTA)" that "would comprise revolutionary brigades and militias" and provide a "first line of regional and local defence", liaise with regular forces, and "over time" transition to "reserve forces" – a roadmap that was almost identical to the original plan for the Libya Shield Forces.[19] Similarly, in April 2014, after the then Prime Minister Ali Zeidan had endorsed and then reversed a National Guard project, the then US Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns (now the Director of the CIA) wrote in a cable back to Washington during a visit to Tripoli that: "We should also make a priority of reviving the idea of integrating the militias into a 'National Guard' network of local forces, to anchor them in a little more stable role as national security forces are built."[20]

These endorsements highlight the continued allure of this idea, which is fraught with risks to both national cohesion and security sector reunification – namely by setting up a system of competing "dual militaries" that could worsen factional and regional rivalries within the country. That said, if Libyans decide on this option, foreigners should be ready to manage its implementation in a way that incorporates lessons learned from other national contexts to mitigate the risks.[21] More broadly, preventing the more predatory and politicized of these parallel structures from colonizing state institutions and raiding state coffers is a daunting task that requires a mix of economic reforms, technocratic initiatives, and political dialogue.

In the meantime, Libyans and outsiders should also avoid falling into the trap of assuming that training and equipping a brand new national-level and ostensibly non-partisan "regular" security force is the solution to Libya's security sector ills.

Avoiding the Temptation to Prioritize Train-and-Equip SSR Programmes

Confronted with, on the one hand, the unreliable and deeply corrupt armed groups who have preyed upon the state and, on the other, the unreliable, decrepit, and morally compromised remnants of the Gaddafi-era security bodies, Libyan and especially western policymakers have frequently been tempted to create, from scratch, a "new" Libyan army or other centralized security body. Once again, the logic behind such initiatives is compelling at first glance: give the "legitimate" Libyan government a loyal, non-partisan "stick" with which to discipline the militias and enforce public

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19 United Nations Support Mission in Libya, 2012. 'Non-paper on Potential Initiatives for the Libyan Government to Improve the Security Situation', October. On the similarity to the Libya Shield Forces, author interview with Salem Joha, Misrata, Libya, 2013.

20 Burns, W.J., 2014. Email to Secretary of State John F. Kerry, 25 April, https://carnegieendowment.org/pdf/back-channel/2014EmailtoKerry.pdf.

21 Wehrey F. and Ahram, A.I., 2015. 'Taming the Militias: Building National Guards in Fractured Arab States', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 25 May, https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/05/07/taming-militias-building-national-guards-in-fractured-arab-states-pub-60005.

order more generally, thus removing the armed groups' stated purpose of providing security; and deploy this force in a way that insulates civilian politicians and physical governing institutions, such as ministries and the parliament, from coercion from the armed groups, giving "breathing space" to the government. In parallel, induce individual armed group members to join the new force by virtue of its prestige, better pay, and shinier equipment, thus pulling the rug out from under the militia leaders.[22]

However, as with other foreign-backed SSR initiatives, these assumptions disintegrated as soon as they were confronted with Libyan realities. A prime example of this misguided approach is the General Purpose Force (GPF) project – a joint US, UK, Turkish, and Italian initiative to train and equip a 20,000-person strong Libyan conventional infantry force, which ran from 2013 to 2015.[23] Ostensibly the brainchild of then Prime Minister Zeidan, the idea was seized upon by US President Barack Obama in early 2013 as a means to "reboot" US policy in Libya after a period of American retrenchment following the September 2012 killing of the US ambassador and three other US officials in Benghazi. The American desire to "do something" on the security sector front acquired further urgency after the brief kidnapping of Zeidan in the fall of 2013, which reportedly shocked Obama, according to White House officials. Yet the project foundered for a host of technical and political reasons, all of which provide valuable lessons for the train-and-equip programmes currently being carried out by foreigners.[24]

First, the initiative was opposed from the start by seasoned US military personnel, both at the US Defense Attaché Office and at the US Africa Command. These officials pointed to the unrealistic scale of the force given the likely difficulties of in-country vetting of Libyan recruits – for both military suitability and for criminal records – according to US laws, as well as the projected attrition rates of the trainees once they had joined the force.[25] Moreover, the timeline needed to create and field such a force was lengthy, undercutting the rationale that the project would "rescue" beleaguered Zeidan and increasing the likelihood that powerful armed groups would sabotage the force upon its arrival in the country.[26] In addition, the training proceeded without a systematic assessment of whether its personnel numbers and force structure were appropriate for Libya's security needs – some sceptics within the US military argued that what Libya really needed was a leaner, military-style police body rather than a massive "all-purpose" conventional infantry force.[27] The confusion was worsened because Libyans themselves lacked the capacity to plan for or articulate their security force needs. Other technical questions that were never addressed included where the new force would be housed in Libya and where it would source its weapons – since many bases and armouries were in the hands of armed groups.[28]

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22 The allure of new military equipment as an incentive for armed group members to join the regular forces has been cited as a justification for foreign arms transfers in Libya. Author telephone conversation with former US military personnel based in Libya, 2016.

23 For the formal US Department of Defense announcement of the GPF program in January 2014, see: https://www.dsca.mil/press-media/major-arms-sales/libya-general-purpose-force-training.

24 Wehrey, F., 2014. 'Modest Mission: The US Plan to Build a Libyan Army', Foreign Affairs, 4 November, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2013-11-04/modest-mission.

25 Author telephone interviews with former US military personnel based in Libya, 2016.

26 Author telephone interviews with former US military personnel based in Libya, 2016-2017.

27 Author telephone interview with former US military personnel involved with the GPF, 2016.

28 Author telephone interview with US military officer involved in the GPF, 2017.

The more profound reason for the GPF's downfall, however, lay in the political realm. Factional opponents and armed group leaders opposed the project, which they saw as an attempt to build what one figure referred to as "Zeidan's militia", arguing that the prime minister did not have the constitutional or legal authority to solicit foreign training.[29] While some of these arguments are no doubt self-serving posturing by militia leaders, they do speak to the need to better harmonize foreign-backed SSR with political buy-in from major stakeholders. In the absence of a consensus, the obstacles Zeidan faced are unsurprising: in one particularly serious instance, opposition blocs within the GNC refused to release the funds requested by the prime minister to pay for the US part of the training (approximately 8,000 trainees).[30] Poor vetting and misbehaviour by Libyan recruits undermined other countries' training efforts, most notably in the case of the United Kingdom.[31]

The death-knell for the project, however, occurred in mid-2014 with the outbreak of civil war. Libyans who had received GPF training overseas returned to join the armed groups fighting on the warring sides of that factional conflict; in June 2014, Khalifa Haftar himself informed the author that his self-styled Libyan National Army (later renamed the Libyan Arab Armed Forces – LAAF) included recent GPF trainees.[32] Reflecting on this partisanship, and on the collapse of the entire GPF programme, one senior US military officer admitted that the GPF endeavour had simply "trained more militiamen".[33]

Despite this failure, the allure of train-and-equip and particularly the need to stand up a new force to protect the central government persisted, most notably in the case of a training programme for the Libyan "Presidential Guard", which ran from 2016 to 2018 and was intended by its western advocates to shield the fragile, western-backed Government of National Accord from pressure from armed groups.[34] Though it never reached the advanced stage of the GPF, it too failed due to similar problems: unclear lines of authority, sporadic and uneven training, questions about the partisanship and loyalty of its leadership, and rivalries with other security bodies, to name a few.

Elsewhere, foreign train-and-equip initiatives were undertaken for more discrete, mission-specific objectives, most notably related to counter-terrorism and counter-migration efforts.[35] These were also unsuccessful and had deleterious and destabilizing political effects – and often ran counter to broader DDR/SSR objectives. In one

29 Author interview with Abdelraouf Kara, Tripoli, Libya, May 2013. See also Wehrey, F., 2013. 'Libya Doesn't Need More Militias', *The New York Times*, 10 June, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/11/opinion/libya-doesnt-need-more-militias.html.
30 Author interviews with US military personnel involved in the GPF program, 2016-2017.
31 Ryan, M., 2015. 'Libyan force was lesson in limits of U.S. power', The Washington Post, 5 August, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/a-security-force-for-libya-becomes-a-lesson-in-failure/2015/08/05/70a3ba90-1b76-11e5-bd7f-4611a60dd8e5_story.html.
32 Author interview with Khalifa Haftar, Marj, Libya, June 2014.
33 Author discussion with AFRICOM official, Stuttgart, Germany, 2016.
34 See al-Shadeedi, H., van Veen, E., and Harchaoui, J., 2016. 'One thousand and one failings', p. 28. Author discussions with US State Department personnel, Washington, DC, US, 2016.
35 On counterterrorism training, see Schmitt, E., 2014. 'U.S. Training Elite Anti-Terror Troops in Four African Nations', *The New York Times*, 27 May, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/27/world/africa/us-trains-african-commandos-to-fight-terrorism.html. On how Europe's focus on countering irregular migration impedes SSR, see Herbert, M., 2019. 'Less Than the Sum of Its Parts', Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 27 May, https://issafrica.org/research/policy-brief/less-than-the-sum-of-its-parts-europes-fixation-with-libyan-border-security.

notable case, the US started training an 800-strong Libyan counterterrorism unit – the 22nd Libyan Special Operations Force (LSOF) battalion – whose members were drawn almost exclusively from the western town of Zintan, increasing the likelihood that it would embrace a narrowly communalist and ideological vision of what constituted "counterterrorism".[36] At any rate, the initiative collapsed before the trained force could be fielded, after a rival militia raided the camp where the training was being conducted – yet another lesson in the importance of contested real estate as a factor in SSR.[37]

Given the difficulties of training a regular security "core" in Libya, a new narrative evolved in Libya post-2014 identifying Haftar's LAAF as the most viable "regular" force to become, after a political settlement, the nucleus for a broader SSR and DDR effort. This was, of course, the argument pushed by Haftar himself and his foreign backers, especially Egypt. But it was also picked up by nominally neutral observers – many of whom had not been to eastern Libya.[38] Western and UN officials have sometimes parroted this line as well, arguing that, for all its faults, the LAAF was the only security entity undertaking real capacity- and institution-building in Libya.[39]

In contrast, other analysts – adopting a more granular and nuanced lens – pointed out that, while the LAAF had a more centralized command structure than many Tripoli-based armed groups, it was, at its core, an amalgam of co-opted paramilitaries, auxiliaries, and armed groups with narrow tribal, local, communal, or ideological outlooks, including the so-called "support forces" and various Salafi formations.[40] In spreading its influence across eastern Libya and the Fezzan, it too used calculated social violence.[41]

36 In the case of leading factions in Zintan at that time, this meant anti-Islamist and anti-Misratan. Wehrey, F., 2014. 'The Battle for Benghazi', *The Atlantic*, 28 February, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/02/the-battle-for-benghazi/284102/.

37 Wehrey, F., 2018. *The Burning Shores: Inside the Battle for the New Libya.* New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, p. 158-160.

38 See for example, Hellyer, H.A., 2014. 'A Way Out of Libya', *The Atlantic Council*, 13 November, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/a-way-out-for-libya/. The author writes: "All militias should be disarmed or integrated into the Libyan National Army, which should immediately work to establish nationwide security. The Libyan National Army should expel radical forces from Benghazi and Derna, and should implement immediate security sector reform, applicable to all Libyan security forces."

39 Author conversations with UNSMIL personnel, Tripoli, Libya, January 2019. This argument picked up with Haftar's move across the Fezzan and toward the capital, which was presented in his propaganda outlets as a restoration of "order" in contrast to the militia-orchestrated "chaos" in the capital. Author conversation with Pentagon officials, Washington, DC, US, March 2019. On militia control in the capital, see Lacher, W., and al-Idrissi, A., 2018. *Capital of Militias: Tripoli's Armed Group's Capture the State.* Geneva: Small Arms Survey, June, http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-SANA-BP-Tripoli-armed-groups.pdf.

40 Wehrey, F. and Badi, F. 2019. 'Libya's Coming Forever War: Why Backing One Militia Against Another Is Not the Solution', *War on the Rocks*, 15 May, https://warontherocks.com/2019/05/libyas-coming-forever-war-why-backing-one-militia-against-another-is-not-the-solution/. On the support forces fighting with Haftar, see Wehrey, F., 2017. 'Whoever Controls Benghazi Controls Libya', *The Atlantic*, 1 July, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/07/benghazi-libya/532056/. On Salafist motivations in joining the LNA/LAAF in 2014, see Wehrey, F., 2016. 'Quiet No More', *Diwan* blog, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 13 October, https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/64846 and Wehrey, F. 2019. 'Salafism and Libya's State Collapse: The Case of the Madkhalis', in Wehrey, F. and Boukhars, A., *Salafism in the Maghreb: Politics, Piety and Militancy.* New York: Oxford University Press, https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/12/19/salafism-and-libya-s-state-collapse-case-of-madkhalis-pub-81835.

41 Badi, E., 2019. 'General Hifter's southern strategy and the repercussions of the Fezzan campaign', Middle East Institute, 7 March, https://www.mei.edu/publications/general-hifters-southern-strategy-and-repercussions-fezzan-campaign.

Increasingly, it also became dominated by Haftar's family and kin.[42] While this latter analysis has recently gained traction among diplomats and international actors, it is likely that, given the paralysis of SSR in Tripoli and other areas of western Libya, Haftar's attempts to rebound and rebrand in the east, and the difficulties of integrating LAAF units with other militias, the LAAF could once again "brand" itself as an appealing "regular" nucleus for nation-wide SSR or, at the very least, eastern-based security governance.[43]

Focusing on Institutional and Governance Reforms in SSR

A key shortcoming exposed by the repeated failure of unit-level train-and-equip efforts, as well as SSR initiatives disconnected from Libya's security needs or political process, is the dire need for broader reforms at the institutional level in areas such as strategic planning, education, human resource management, budget, procurement, and civil-military relations. Libya has suffered and continues to suffer an acute dearth of capacity in these areas, largely due to the negligent policies of the Gaddafi regime, and therefore lacks the capacity to rationally assess and articulate its security force requirements and to manage functions such as personnel, payroll, and in particular civilian oversight. As a result, these functions have become highly personalized and politicized. Moreover, the successive waves of Libyan security personnel receiving training from foreign programmes, such as the GPF, have no institutional "home" to return to. Similar problems plagued police training initiatives undertaken overseas from 2011 to 2014.[44]

Western defence attaches and visiting delegations from NATO have identified the need for greater assistance on institutional reform;[45] however, post-revolutionary security conditions, particularly after 2013, obstructed the access required to provide this assistance, particularly in the form of embedded advisers. For example, in 2012, the US Department of Defense sent teams of advisers from its Defense Institution Reform Initiative (now called Institutional Capacity Building) for preparatory talks with Libyan defence officials. By the admission of a US military officer in the country at the time, however, these visits were too few and far between to do much good.[46]

Similarly in late 2012, UNSMIL began assisting the Libyan Ministry of Defence and the Chief of Staff through a document titled "Towards a Defence White Paper" that would provide "a strategic assessment of Libya's defence requirements on which long-term development and budget expenditures can be determined". The document was expected to be completed within a year, yet the UN noted that Libya needed

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42 Lacher, W., 2020. 'A Most Irregular Army: The Rise of Khalifa Haftar's Libyan Arab Armed Forces', German Institute for International and Security Affairs, February, https://www.swp-berlin. org/10.18449/2020WP12.

43 For an analysis of the drift toward a "dual-military" structure in Libya, see El-Gomati, A., 2021. 'A Tale of Two Armies' in Sayigh, Y. with Toronto, N. *The Politics of Military Authoritarianism in North Africa.* 17 March, https://carnegie-mec.org/2021/03/17/tale-of-two-armies-pub-84075.

44 Wehrey, F., 2017. 'Policing in Eastern and Southern Libya', paper prepared for the UN Development Programme, 18 October. See also Cole P. and Mangan, F., 2016. 'Policing Libya: Form and Function Since the 2011 Revolution', United States Institute for Peace, August, https://www.usip.org/ publications/2016/08/policing-libya-form-and-function-policing-2011-revolution.

45 Author interviews with AFRICOM and NATO officials, 2018.

46 Author interview with a US military officer based in Libya, Stuttgart, Germany, 2016.

stopgap measures in the interim: "[T]he current security situation […] requires immediate decisions on force structure and capabilities in advance of the completion of a final Defence White Paper."[47] Although the concept seems sound, especially in linking procurement and force structure to a proper assessment of needs, the initiative collapsed due to political factionalism within the Libyan security sector – and the document was never implemented.[48]

The return of foreign embassies to Tripoli and progress on the formation of a new Libya government may present new opportunities to revive advisory efforts to strengthen institutional capacity in strategic planning, budget, procurement, human resource management, and other areas. Pension reform and efforts to rightsize the current and future force structure should be a particular priority: the Gaddafi-era military simply had too many generals and colonels and not enough captains, lieutenants, or senior non-commissioned officers. In tandem, outside assistance should focus on institutional reform and the professionalization of MoI police forces through embedded advisers, executive-level education, and the build-up of local academies. This effort should focus on establishing clear legal frameworks, programmatic goals, practical benchmarks, and rules and regulations that demand oversight and audit processes.[49]

More broadly, when tackling institutional security reforms, Libyan and foreign officials should avoid an excessively materialist and economy-focused approach, which dominated western and especially UN SSR thinking from around mid- to late-2018. While money is certainly a partial driver of conflict – and reducing the attraction of Libya's oil wealth as a zero-sum prize can therefore help to decrease tensions – it is not the only factor. For the young men in these groups, group and individual identity, communal narratives, memory, history, politics, ideology, and religion all play a part in shaping their behaviour.[50] These human factors are, of course, much more difficult to influence through traditional technocratic and policy tools.[51]

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47 United Nations Support Mission in Libya, 2012. 'Non-paper on Potential Initiatives for the Libyan Government to Improve the Security Situation', October. See also Bartu, p. 11.

48 Wehrey, *The Burning Shores*, p. 100-101.

49 A positive start in this direction was a policing initiative launched by the UN in Libya in 2018. See United Nations Support Mission in Libya, 2018. 'Towards Effective and Democratic Governance, the UN Launches Policing and Security Programme for Libya', 7 February, https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/towards-effective-and-democratic-governance-un-launches-policing-and-security-programme.

50 Lacher, W., 2019. 'Think Libya's warring factions are only in it for the money? Think again'. *The Washington Post Monkey Cage Blog*, 10 April, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/04/10/think-libyas-warring-factions-are-only-it-money-think-again/.

51 A critique of an excessively materialist and economy-based approach to conflict analysis and resolution is found in Thurston, A., 2021. 'Five Ways Not to Analyze War', *Foreign Exchanges*, 17 May, https://fx.substack.com/p/five-ways-not-to-analyze-war.

Adapting SSR and DDR Programming to Localism and Hybridity

The failures of train-and-equip programmes and the difficulties of top-down institutional reform underscore the need, at least in the interim, to adopt a more nuanced approach to both SSR and DDR – one that acknowledges and harnesses the localized and hybridized reality of Libya's security sector. In many parts of the country, an array of informal and formal actors have worked together to provide a degree of public security that, while hardly perfect, can serve as a starting point for a bottom-up approach – and as a transitional "bridge" until the formal security sector is unified and bolstered. Moreover, expecting these individuals to voluntarily disarm and demobilize, through a "technical" DDR process, is often impractical given the social embeddedness they enjoy and the policing role they fulfil. A variety of socio-economic and demographic factors affect how well the hybrid model works in different locales; international actors must be aware of these determinants when developing programmes to bolster capacity and improve accountability.

A crucial first step is to take stock of the various landscapes of local security governance. Some towns and locales, usually those with a degree of social homogeneity and cohesion, have managed to deliver limited policingthrough what can best be described as hybrid security arrangements, whereby uniformed police coordinate, often uneasily, with a range of other actors on the provision of security and justice. These partners can include armed groups who are "deputized" by political authorities and social actors such as tribal "wise men" or *hukuma* or civil society who can provide an understanding of armed groups' behaviour that can shape accountability and adherence to community norms. In some instances, these hybrid arrangements fall under the umbrella of the municipal-level MoI policing body, the "security directorate" or *mudiryat al-amn*.[52] In others, these arrangements are structured around "operations rooms" or similarly named coordination centres, which have deep roots in post-revolutionary Libya and whose track record has been mixed.[53] Increasingly, though, the hybrid landscape in many areas is being further reshaped by what one scholar has referred to as "regenerated military forces", whose features include a replication of the government's service delivery functions, de-centralized command, and overlapping policing and military roles.[54]

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52 Wehrey, F., 2018. 'Libya's Policing Sector: The Dilemmas of Hybridity and Security Pluralism', in Project on Middle East Political Science Studies, *The Politics of Post-Conflict Resolution*, September, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/POMEPS_Studies_30.pdf. See also Cole, P. with Mangan, F., 2016. 'Tribe, Security, Justice and Peace in Libya Today', United States Institute of Peace, 2 September, https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/09/tribe-security-justice-and-peace-libya-today.

53 For example, in late 2013, a security operations room in Benghazi attempted to coordinate policing functions from the police, army, and local armed groups, represented, respectively, by Ashur Shuwayal, Muhammad al-Sharif, and Ziad Ballam. The motto of the room was "*Jaysh, Amn, Thuwwar*" or "Army, Security, Revolutionaries." Yet the arrangements collapsed because of provocateurs and radicals on both sides and disputes over territory. Armed group leaders also instrumentalized these rooms; according to one commander of an eastern-based militia: "We want the citizens to accept the *thuwwar* then the *thuwwar* will step back and let the police take over." Author interview with Ziad Ballam, Misrata, Libya, February 2016.

54 See Ardemagni, E., forthcoming. 'Beyond Hybridity: Making Sense of Re-Generated Military Force' in Ardemagni, E. ed. *The Arab Armies in the Security Hybridization Age,* ISPI Dossier.

International and Libyan security practitioners should explore mechanisms to capitalize on these informal and hybrid dynamics, while simultaneously strengthening formal security governance institutions. Key areas of focus include promoting the rule of law and accountability, reducing partisanship, and fostering coordination with regular security bodies. On the latter imperative, the use of "operations rooms" should be considered, but lessons should be learned from past mistakes, to include addressing the need for impartial arbitration, possibly from a foreign observer. The UN-sponsored Tripoli Security Plan is an illustration of the latter. Created in late 2018, the initiative was coordinated by a Joint Operation Centre in the capital, including an EU adviser and a former Lebanese military officer, to oversee standard operating procedures and deconfliction measures among formal and informal security bodies.[55]

Bolstering the role of social actors – such as civil society, women, and tribal notables – as players in hybrid security arrangements, and using financial tools to encourage positive behaviour from informal security providers are other areas for Libyan authorities to explore, with outside support.[56] Underpinning all of these initiatives should be the recognition that hybrid governance is not ideal and constitutes less of an end state and more of a process and continuum towards the spread of formal security institutions.

Conclusion

The security sector has long been one of the most—if not the most—contentious issue in Libya's post-Qadhafi transition. While Libyans themselves are ultimately responsible for negotiating this impasse and devising a way ahead for the unification and reform of their security institutions, outsiders can and should play a role. In shaping their assistance, foreigners may be tempted to fall back onto timeworn habits and conventional thinking on DDR/SSR for a number of reasons, such as the lack of access in Libya, bureaucratic inertia, and personnel turnover. As a result, they may repeat the mistakes of the past, inadvertently exacerbating political tensions or worse prolonging the conflict.

Among the most crucial lessons is recognize the distinct functions of DDR and SSR and develop programs accordingly. Libya's security sector needs must first be properly assessed, and a political consensus must first be reached on how to respond to these needs through training and force development, before beginning the process of DDR. Put differently, technical security assistance must be aligned with political and economic processes. At its core, the creation and control of security institutions is a deeply political act, as is the decision by young armed group members and leaders to disarm and reintegrate.

This fundamental recognition offers a number of other crucial lessons. These include structuring reforms, including projected force structure and size, around identifiable and realistic security needs and avoiding the temptation to co-opt and subsidize

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55 Author interview with an UNSMIL official focused on security institutions, Tripoli, Libya, January 2019.
56 For more recommendations, see Wehrey, 'Libya's Policing Sector' and Badi, 'Exploring Armed Groups in Libya'.

"parallel" security bodies and to train and equip a "regular" force as a counterweight to "militias." Finally, the past ten years in Libya underscore the need to delicately balance an acknowledgement of Libya's hybridized security sector at the local level – and to harness and capitalize on these dynamics – while continuing efforts to bolster formal institutions.

Taken in sum, these guiding principles are hardly a panacea for Libya's herculean security challenges. The damage wrought by the Gaddafi era and over a decade of internecine conflict, foreign proxy meddling, and foreign missteps on DDR/SSR will likely take years, if not decades, to overcome. At the very least, however, learning the lessons of the past will help foreigners adhere to the maxim of "first, do no harm"– a precept that will ensure Libyan-led ownership and also give Libyan citizens the best possible chance for the inclusive, human-centred security they deserve.

SSR and Elections:
What Role for the Security Sector in 2021?

3

Authored by
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Introduction

Libya has undergone a tumultuous and repeatedly violent transformation from a pervasive authoritarian system under Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 to a fragile but national interim government in early 2021, under the influence of outside powers.[1] For the third time since the ouster of Gaddafi, national elections are scheduled for 24 December 2021. While the date has been announced, several unresolved issues stand in the way of successful elections, including the lack of a legal framework, which is an overwhelming hindrance, and the conditions necessary to enable free and fair elections as well as an acceptance of the result by all national and international actors. Still, the pressure is on, and the trajectory is clear in the eyes of most international actors – national elections with the aim of stabilizing Libya's political situation and achieving military unification by producing a legitimate, national Libyan parliament, government, head of state, and supreme commander.[2]

The policy approach pursued by the international community with regard to Libya in 2021 conjures up familiar patterns that political scientists have studied for decades now (particularly since the end of the cold war) – namely democracy-driven post-conflict peacebuilding efforts.[3] After a 14-month offensive on the capital, Tripoli – led by Field Marshall Khalifa Haftar and his affiliated forces subsumed under the so-called "Libyan National Army" (LNA) – failed (and with it the rival government in Libya's west) in June 2020, the country has been experiencing a relatively stable ceasefire since October 2020.[4] The next major development was the formation and endorsement of the Government of National Unity (GNU) as an interim government until the December 2021 elections. Structurally, elections are a key signpost of democratic transitions; however, for a sustainable democratic transformation, these elections must be accompanied by a plethora of previous, subsequent, and concurrent developments, including not only competent state bureaucracies, independent courts, and professionalized media, but also security sector reform (SSR). In addition, and in the aftermath of elections, plans envisioned for SSR programming may be affected as new

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1   Jebnoun, N., Mehrdad, K., and Kirk, M., 2021. *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications, and Crisis.* Routledge: London; Karim Mezran, K. and Elmogrbi, T., 2021. 'The end of Libya's nightmare or the beginning of a new one?', Atlantic Council, 2 April.
2   International Crisis Group, 2021. 'Libya Turns the Page', 21 May.
3   Brancati, D. and Snyder, J.L., 2012. 'Time to Kill: The Impact of Election Timing on Postconflict Stability', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 57, No. 5, pp. 822-853.
4   UN News, 2021. 'Libya: Security Council backs ceasefire mechanism, calls for withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries', 16 April, https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1089992.

office holders take power. Before that, however, security actors have the opportunity to establish election security – a vital ingredient for elections in a relatively insecure country like Libya. While on the one hand, contributing to election security may open a window of opportunity for security actors to increase their influence if they are able to establish election security in their respective spheres of influence and therefore promote themselves as trusted and reliable actors to the newly elected authorities, on the other, the outlook of elections and the establishment of legitimate authorities also pose a threat, particularly to informal or semi-state security actors as they (now) face legitimate oversight.

This chapter argues that a coherent, overarching strategic framework to guide the preparation of elections must include the security sector since SSR and elections are intrinsically linked and must be viewed together to create a more stable, peaceful, and ultimately democratic future for Libya.

Elections, SSR, and Their Relevance for a Stable Libya

Generally speaking, elections and SSR are intimately tied together in this post-conflict agenda as SSR traditionally aims to to realign the security sector(s) of transitional states with western democratic standards.[5] Inherent in this assessment is the conviction that the state and society's understanding and perception of security must be significantly altered to comply with democratic norms such as legitimacy, capturing the holistic vision of SSR.[6] In Libya, both of these policies (a push for elections as well as SSR) have been promoted and supported since the fall of Gaddafi. This chapter will argue, however, that they have not been undertaken in an integrated manner and have lacked mid- to long-term commitment by outside partners, which has played out to the detriment of the country.

The literature is divided on the impact of early elections on post-conflict stability.[7] While some argue that early elections advance democratization and solidify post-conflict stability, others maintain that they undermine genuine democracy and trigger renewed clashes.[8] Proponents of the former are particularly prevalent among American policymakers and rely on conceptual convictions of democratic peace, which affirm that democratic transitions yield peace – and the sooner the better.[9] However, recent troubled transitions to democracy have raised doubts; sceptics argue, for example, that early elections produce electoral irregularities or that or that losers will be less likely to accept the results peacefully if the rule of law is (still) weak.[10] Those who have

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5   Sedra, M., 2006. 'Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan: The Slide Towards Expediency', *International Peacekeeping,* Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 94-110.

6   Egnell R. and Haldén, P., 2009. 'Laudable, ahistorical and overambitious: security sector reform meets state formation theory', *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 27-54.

7   In other words, elections in which the aforementioned preconditions are not fulfilled yet.

8   Brancati and Snyder, 2012.

9   Democracies do not fight each other and tend to settle internal disagreements peacefully. Originating from Immanuel Kant, this theory has proven popular among political scientists in the 20th and 21st century. Diamond, L., 2006. 'Promoting Democracy in Post-conflict and Failed States', *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 93-116.

10 In addition, there is an ongoing debate over national versus subnational elections and their benefits. Paris, R., 2004. *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

followed the situation in Libya closely are likely to fall into the second category of sceptics as they have witnessed and analysed previous elections in the aftermath of Gaddafi and are intimately familiar with the refusal to accept election results, and the perpetuation of difficulties for weak, developing institutions.[11]

Furthermore, another precondition for successful elections, namely election security, is not guaranteed in most parts of Libya in 2021. While this chapter has argued that security actors may benefit from establishing themselves as a trusted security provider in order to guarantee election security in December 2021, recent reports concerning municipal elections call instead for a framework under which these forces would be mandated to contribute to election security.[12] Such a framework should be incorporated into national and international preparations for elections and include international support on the ground shortly before and after election day, thus adding a layer of accountability that is theoretically removed from local jostling for power.

Still, the question remains as to whether even imperfect early elections in 2021 would improve Libya's situation as they could help consolidate democratic structures and procedures and habituate politicians and voters to democratic routines.[13] But what would the potential consequences be for Libya's security sector, and what challenges would Libya's newly elected authorities face with regard to the security sector?

Against the backdrop of Libya's 2014 national elections and the subsequent division of the country, this chapter argues that early elections in 2021 (again) are more likely to reignite conflict than elections held later because early elections take place in an environment in which previously warring factions are the most powerful political actors and continue to mobilize supporters along established constituency lines, which jeopardizes subsequent democratic development.[14] In addition, various studies have demonstrated the social embeddedness of Libyan armed groups and highlighted that Libya's citizens have come to appreciate trust, familiarity, and reliability, as opposed to the failing political structures.[15] This in turn casts doubt on whether Libyan citizens are either particularly motivated to go to the polls (given their lack of trust in politicians and concern about widespread corruption)[16] or the willingness of armed groups

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11 Eltagouri, Y., 2018. 'Libya's Constitution is the Minimum Requirement for Elections', Atlantic Council, 1 February.

12 UN Human Rights Council, 'Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya', https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/FFM_Libya/Pages/Index.aspx.

13 Some also argue that electoral violence is a normal part of most democratic transitions – a price worth paying to crush authoritarian resistance and advance countries toward a more just and effective form of government. Lindberg, S.I., 2003. 'The Democratic Qualities of Competitive Elections: Participation, Competition and Legitimacy in Africa'. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 61-105.

14 "Former combatants, turned politicians, reignite warfare by rejecting the results of unfavorable elections and returning to war in the short term, or by governing in an arbitrary, exclusionary, and exploitative manner, which creates new grievances and provokes renewed fighting in the long term." Brancati and Snyder, 2012.

15 "While local armed groups are often denounced as undisciplined militias at the root of Libya's problems, women interviewed for a Chatham House project said the fact that many armed groups were local and had a close relationship with their community was important to them." Eaton, T. and Ramali, K., 2020. 'How Women are dealing with Libya's armed groups', Chatham House, 19 June.

16 USAID survey results from 2021 show that the sample's biggest concern is government corruption. In addition, the second most frequent response to the question "if you are not likely to participate in elections why" was that a "corrupt candidate will run". The survey captures a 58 per cent willingness to vote – only about half of the population – but this only reflects the intention to vote rather than actual voting participation. In general, the biggest predictors of voting are past voting behaviour and trust in the process – and many Libyans have neither. USAID, 2021. 'Libya Community Pulse: Web Survey Results', https://app.box.com/s/jw7lp254oqj4wzk1tdcu0tunbqpzurdo.

(both state, non-state or something in-between) to retract from established positions of influence and (partial) governance following the elections.[17]

By addressing the interlinkages and corresponding responsibilities between the 2021 Libyan national elections and SSR, this chapter therefore argues that holding elections "early" would generally be detrimental, but that favourable conditions – including demobilization, the removal of foreign forces, power sharing, and strong political, administrative, and judicial institutions – can mitigate this risk.[18] For the security sector, this means that programmes to advance the transparency and democratic accountability of the sector, while situating it within a clear legal framework, need to be prioritized instead of a focus on training and equipping various formal and informal security forces.[19]

As the International Crisis Group emphasized, two remaining hurdles must be overcome to unify Libya, namely establishing a legal framework for elections and providing clarity about who holds supreme command of the armed forces.[20] These two aspects align with the outlined importance of SSR and successful elections highlighted in this chapter. Recommendations for international actors are therefore tied to their commitment to create conditions that mitigate the risk posed by early elections by providing robust peacekeeping, facilitating the demobilization of armed forces, ensuring the removal of foreign forces, backing power-sharing agreements, and helping to build robust political institutions. Thus, this chapter argues that international pressure in favour of early elections strengthens peace when it is accompanied by these stabilizing instruments, but undermines peace without them.

2021 Elections: The Country and the Security Sector at a Crossroads

The context surrounding the 2021 national elections is one of fragility, but it is a partially calculated fragility – one that foreign forces deliberately fuel by supporting different actors, including armed actors, to safeguard their economic interests and/or gain as well as to maintain strategic influence.[21] An example of the former is Turkey, which is deeply invested in the security sector in western Libya and supports some forces affiliated with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) or Ministry of Interior (MoI);[22] an example of the latter is Russia, which relies on mercenaries, such as the Wagner Group, to ensure strategic influence by using them as a bargaining chip on the

17 Badi, E., 2020. *Exploring Armed Groups in Libya: Perspectives on Security Sector Reform in a Hybrid Environment*. Geneva: DCAF.
18 Brancati and Snyder, 2012.
19 Sedra, 2006.
20 International Crisis Group, 2021.
21 Among them state forces under the directive of the MoI like the Special Deterrence Force (SDF), non-state, such as mercenaries or terrorist groups and something in-between such as The Petroleum Facility Guards (PFG), which are on the payroll of the state budget but not under MoD or MoI directive.
22 However, the Special Deterrence Force (SDF) for instance is affiliated with the MoI, under which it still operates, but ideologically opposed to Turkey.

international stage without taking responsibility for directly intervening in another's state's affairs.[23]

Given this situation, the security sector, including forces of both the MoD and MoI, is clearly crucial to Libya's future development. For successful stabilization and eventual democratization, voices pushing for national elections in 2021 need an aligned, overarching strategic framework to guide the preparation of elections, which must include the security sector. The framework's ultimate goals must include the establishment of a security sector (army and police forces) with civilian oversight, the removal of foreign forces, demobilization (and with it the provision of alternatives), and a commitment to serving a unified Libya (along with an understanding of democracy) as intermediary steps.

With this in mind, the next section will assess the potential consequences of national elections in 2021 for Libya's security sector and the challenges that Libya's newly elected authorities may face with regard to the security sector. The analysis follows a normative approach, which includes recommendations but contrasts this ideal with current and past Libyan developments.

The potential consequences of national elections in 2021 for Libya's security sector and the challenges that Libya's newly elected authorities may face regarding the security sector

If the aforementioned organizational challenges are resolved, and free and fair national elections are held that ensure broad participation and lead to an election result that is accepted by current stakeholders in the Libyan system, this would result in the creation of a national Libyan government, including a cabinet with a Minister of Defence and Minister of Interior whose responsibilities are first and foremost to keep the country and its citizens safe. Unlike the current situation in which the office of Minister of Defence is held by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbaiba, as there were apparently no suitable candidates, the new Minister of Defence will have been selected through an electoral process and hence have legitimacy and responsibility for the portfolio of military matters – at least theoretically.[24] In this case, the convoluted state and state-affiliated, as well as non-state, forces are likely to face an overhaul that potentially puts an end to the chain of interim security arrangements that the consecutive transitional Libyan authorities have negotiated, but instead begin the inauguration of a longer term, inclusive vision for Libya's security for both the military and police forces.

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23 This method of relying on mercenaries that have no official ties to the Russian government has often referred to a tactic of keeping "plausible deniability" by Russian head of state, Wladimir Putin. However, given the established evidence of Wagner's ties to the Duma and Russian government this "plausible deniability" is surely implausible and increasingly difficult to even try to deny at this point. BBC Africa, 2020. 'Wagner, shadowy Russian military group, "fighting in Libya"', 7 May, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52571777.

24 While all forces listed under the MoD are allegedly under its control, the reality is very different, which further weakens central authority. While this issue is not new, it is evident today in the communication between the Prime Minister Dbaiba and the PC on the appointment of the Minister of Defence, which comes after Prime Minister Dbaiba took Mohamed Hadad (former deputy chief of staff) with him on several international visits in the capacity of chief of staff – a position that is meant for the PC to appoint and not the government.

Previous studies on the Libyan security sector have emphasized the increased shift of power in this security bargaining process; in other words, instead of armed actors following state directives and being accountable to state bodies, such as the MoD or the judicial sector, many armed actors have heavily increased their influence, autonomy, and (at least partially) impunity with little punitive consequences.[25] Crucially, however, many of these armed groups, for instance in Tripoli's Suq al Juma neighbourhood, have achieved this position not merely by their military posture and hence hard power measures, but also by exhibiting community ties and understanding, and thus gaining at least partial local appreciation.[26] They are able to leverage this soft power, including when bargaining with transitional authorities that are weak in both structure and legitimacy.[27] Structurally, the events of the last few years have also facilitated the rise of security actors that cover both military as well as policing functions, which conse-quently has allowed them to escape the traditional integration into MoD or MoI realms and therefore also has implications for SSR programming.[28]

This in turn poses a double challenge for newly established authorities following the planned 2021 December elections: firstly, they need to establish themselves practically and accumulate the power to govern, and, secondly, they need to earn the trust of the population they aim to govern – because while they might have earned legitimacy in free and fair elections, their credibility must still be proven in the eyes of the electorate. If the planned December elections go ahead, the newly established Libyan authorities will face a difficult time ahead; the international community should therefore commit to post-election programmes to foster the declared aims of a unified political system and a centrally organized, accountable security sector. While some security sector forces may be concerned about their potential loss of autonomy, their track record of ensuring some level of safely or rule of law will still be taken into consid-eration[29] – a track record that the newly established authorities are lacking. Given the lack of incentive for them to give up privileged access to the state budget coupled with varying levels of autonomy, SSR programming needs to follow a strategic approach in Libya.

Counterterrorism (CT) legislation, for instance, is one of the many topics that has been in the pipeline for enactment since the first elections in 2012 and Libya's nascent trajectory towards democracy. Laws 27 and 53 were one of the cornerstones of CT legislation and aimed to dissolve (non-state) militias and integrate armed groups into an emerging body of state security forces. In 2013, the General National Congress (GNC) – at that time Libya's unified and official government – adopted these laws but they were never implemented.[30] Because of this, Libya has lacked a baseline for any subsequent CT legislation. The country has therefore witnessed the arbitrary

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25 Lacher, W., 2018. *Tripoli's Militia Cartel: How Ill-Conceived Stabilisation Blocks Political Progress, and Risks Renewed War.* Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP).

26 Eaton and Ramali, 2020.

27 The Government of National Accord (GNA), for example, has come to be seen as a government enforced on Libya by outside actors, and the Government of National Unity (GNU) has faced severe allegations of bribing their way into power.

28 Badi, 2020.

29 Basic security needs are often met by local armed actors despite certain flaws and disadvantages.

30 US State Department Country Report on Terrorism 2016: Libya.

enforcement of CT measures by various armed actors, as well as a harmful offline and online discourse weaponizing "terrorism".[31]

In recent years in western Libya, a counterintuitive, ambivalent picture has emerged. Despite concentrated efforts to engage in counterterrorism and corresponding high numbers of arrests of terrorist suspects, there have been only a few reported terrorism-related prosecutions.[32] Given the background explained earlier and the troubles of Libya's "state", this is less surprising: in many parts of Libya, militias, loosely connected to the state, act as security providers and take on law enforcement responsibilities, including detaining suspected terrorists. These actors often have their own logic and rationale, and circumvent clear reporting chains and coordination mechanisms with central state authorities.[33] The Special Deterrence Force (SDF or Rada) in Tripoli and the Misratan forces are the most prominent of the Government of National Accord (GNA)-affiliated armed groups with considerable CT capacity.[34] The SDF established a focus on anti-crime and CT early on and ultimately managed to bargain with the GNA to formalize the force as an "independent formal security structure – the Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism".[35] While these are the most prominent groups with a CT focus in western Libya, many militias in the country package their activities with CT rationales, often referencing basic law enforcement responsibilities. In Sebha in southern Libya, for instance, a force related to Tripoli's SDF formed in 2013 and followed the successful precursor in Tripoli by branding itself as an anti-crime and CT force.[36]

In retrospect, the entrenchment of armed groups in Tripoli and the General National Congress (GNC)'s political reform failures paved the way for the outbreak of civil war in 2014, in which the newly elected members of the Parliament (House of Representatives – HoR) mostly relocated to the city of Tobruk in the east of Libya leading to a long-standing polarization of the state.[37] Since then, the division in the Libyan security sector between western Libya – where the western Libyan government continued to be a means to seek legitimacy by armed groups affiliated with the MoD or MoI – and eastern Libya, where the so-called LNA under the command of Field Marshall Khalifa Haftar claimed control of all security dimensions.[38]

31 Fitzgerald, M., 2020. 'Mitigating the Impact of Media Reporting of Terrorism: Libya case study'. *ICCT Strategic Communications Project Report.*

32 US State Department Country Report on Terrorism 2016: Libya.

33 These actors also include other armed groups – depending on the targeted territory (for example, the coordination between the SDF and Janzour knights).

34 SDF (Rada) is nominally integrated into MoI. Badi, 2020.

35   Amnesty International, 2018. 'Libya: Decree integrating Radaa forces into a new security apparatus overlooks need for accountability', 21 June, https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ MDE1986292018ENGLISH.pdf.

36 Wehrey, F., 2017. 'Insecurity and Governance Challenges in Southern Libya'. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. In addition, the SDF, the Al-Wadi Brigade, and the 116 Battalion in Sebha share a similar ideological background, which is usually very helpful in the coordination of operations outside of the jurisdiction or territory of these groups.

37 This was followed by the establishment of both the salvation government in Tripoli, and the interim government relocation to the city of Al-Bayda. This polarization has led to a duplication of and contest over legitimacy between both western- and eastern- based governments, including the existence of an eastern Central Bank of Libya.

38 Eaton, T., 2020. *The Development of Libyan Armed Groups Since 2014: Community Dynamics and Economic Interests.* London: Chatham House, March.

To avoid a repeat of violence after the planned 2021 elections, international powers pushing for "early" elections need to be aware of and anticipate the immense repercussions that the elections, along with the formation of a new government, head of state, Minister of Defence, as well as supreme commander of the armed forces, would have if pursued rigorously along democratic standards. More concretely, if a supreme commander of the armed forces is appointed that is not Haftar, who is currently head of the "LNA", this would effectively lead to the dethronement of a figure who has fought to rule over all of Libya for several years now.[39] The position of the LNA as a whole has proven more significant in its impact on politics, compared to individual armed actors in western Libya, for instance captured in the capacity of the Haftar and his inner circle to ensure support of its international backers, such as Egypt, UAE, or France.[40] In other words, the subordination of Haftar to a civilian-led or democratic authority, such as the elected Minister of Defence, is likely to be opposed vehemently. Haftar therefore finds himself partly on the same side as his traditional enemies, namely armed groups in western Libya that fear losing money and influence as a result of this process.

Unsurprisingly, these dynamics have led to a situation in 2021 where the MoD is unable to control even the armed actors that fall under its umbrella. Part of this inability is also due to forces dictating the use of the MoD's budget and repeatedly leveraging the groups associated with them or their communities.[41] As a consequence, the establishment of functioning political structures after the planned 2021 elections must take into account the complexities and blurred boundaries of "state" security forces and the connected chain of command in Libya. A restricted "political" approach that only focuses on holding elections is therefore as unfitting as an entirely "security-centric" approach that only focuses on reforming the security sector; instead, an integrated approach is needed that factors in economic and factor in economic deliberations due to the overreaching of armed actors into the economic sphere.[42]

More practically, while strategy is key to developing the Libyan MoD's capacity effectively, there is a direct need for technical support that focuses on the local level but also considers the broader objective of security sector unification.[43]

Overall, the preliminary unification of the country offers a significant opportunity. The long-lasting transitional process was a huge factor in destabilizing the security sector and its institutions as various armed actors could exploit renewed rounds of conflict

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39 Nevertheless, Haftar has no mandate or legitimacy apart from having been appointed top military commander by the HoR in 2015.

40 Daou, M., 2016. 'Pro-Haftar powers "looking for alternatives" after opponents seize all of western Libya', France 24, 10 June, https://www.france24.com/en/20200610-pro-haftar-powers-looking-for-alternatives-after-opponents-seize-all-of-western-libya.

41 At times, this contests the hierarchy of the MoD, as seen by the imposition of the three military zones in 2020/21.

42 "Several of Libya's influential armed groups rely on Libya's informal economy, as well as state-disbursed revenues, for their revenue-generation mechanisms. An economic overhaul that tackles avenues of corruption (in formal or informal realms) can therefore lessen their ability to spoil SSR efforts." Badi, 2020.

43 By aiming for departments under the MoD that could have a greater impact, as their mandate dictates. Such as the Military Training Department and the Libya Center for Strategic Studies and Research. Aslan, M., 2020. *Security Sector Reform for Libya: A Crucial Step towards State Building*. Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC).

for their own power entrenchment. Given the current situation and the basic human and societal need for safety, the security forces are perceived as having significant responsibility. Libya therefore needs an overarching strategy that combines SSR and meaningful elections as part of its path to democratization. This strategy must not only guide outside actors but also, crucially, manage to incorporate the local population. In order to achieve this, community initiatives must form part of Libya's pre- and post-2021 election programme.[44] This bottom-up approach should also be employed with regard to SSR. In this way, fostering a dialogue on SSR could potentially contribute to a more resilient society, which would also foster a more inclusive democracy.[45]

Finally, the spotlight is on international actors who intervene in Libya. The ties between international and local actors have grown in shape and variety since 2011 and leave Libya in 2021 at a point where international actors must stop the provision of funds and weapons and the employment of foreign forces in order to facilitate a Libyan democratization.[46] This is a pre-requisite to prepare the country for a system that is run and decided by elected Libyans, and not outside forces.

Once international actors have credibly committed to this approach to Libya, the local Libyan armed actors that are currently working to protect themselves and their constituencies must fall in line and work towards promoting national aims.[47] The pitfalls of international meddling and the dominance of armed actors in Libya are further fuelled by partnerships in the field of terrorism or migration, which allow multiple armed groups to legitimize their overreach into economic spheres as they can claim to be partnering with international actors to address their security goals.[48] A sustainable international engagement in Libya should therefore disregard such unilateral security arrangements and instead provide support through a monitoring mission under the umbrella of the United Nationals Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and a fact-finding mission. These missions should be carried out at the request of national actors and therefore serve as stabilizing forces rather than foreign actors intervening mainly for their own interests and partnering with Libyan actors that fall in line with them politically.[49]

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44 For this bottom-up process, social actors representing the warring coalitions, as well as inclusive civil society organizations, should be included.

45 In addition, since "parliamentary oversight remains elusive in the Libyan context, regulatory frameworks remain unevenly implemented across the country's territory. So long as parliamentary functions remain unexercised on a national scale, smaller-scale initiatives pertaining to regulatory frameworks – such as clearly delineating ministerial mandates, implementing codes of ethics across institutions and targeted legal reforms (for example, revising pre-existing police reform laws and laws governing the provision of security at the level of security directorates) – provide the most viable avenue for the provision of technical support towards greater institutional accountability". Badi, 2020.

46 This would be in line with the October ceasefire agreement as well as the Second Berlin Conference on Libya.

47 As armed actors compete over legitimacy and state recognition, they also tend to portray their opponents as illegitimate, outlaws, and even terrorists. Fitzgerald, M., 2020. *Mitigating the Impact of Media Reporting of Terrorism: Libya case study.* December.

48 Trauthig, I.K., 2021. *Counterterrorism in North Africa: From Police State to Militia Rule and the Quagmire of "CVE".* International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), King's College London, 9 August.

49 https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/FFM_Libya/Pages/Index.aspx

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to consider the potential consequences of national elections in 2021 for Libya's security sector, and the challenges that Libya's newly elected authorities may face regarding the security sector. Both considerations emphasize the potentially huge impact of national elections in 2021 and how this could be a decisive year for post-Gaddafi Libya. The consequences of the planned 2021 elections for Libya's security sector could be significant if the democratic push for elections is accompanied by equally important measures such as SSR and the removal of foreign troops, mercenaries, and outside military meddling in general in Libya. The latter is a prerequisite for Libyan-owned security provision, and the former is a necessity for the accountable provision of security with oversight by civilian institutions. With these two preconditions established, free and fair elections that are accepted by all actors could result in a significantly strengthened MoD and MoI (in terms of legitimacy as well as structure), which could begin to put an end to the blurriness and self-enrichment of the many state, state-affiliated, or non-state forces that belong to the myriad of Libyan security providers.

This ideal development, however, is called into question by current Libyan realities and the cumbersome struggle against armed actors that are focused on securing their standing to such a degree that this dynamic is unlikely to be significantly altered by national elections (similar to other actors within the Libyan apparatus). The hijacking of local election officials or reported threats against political candidates by militia members are harbingers of the obstruction of free and fair elections by armed actors.[50] Some armed actors may also fear the loss of influence and/or revenue, whereas others exhibit an additional layer of adversity by being ideologically opposed to elections.

In terms of the second consideration about the challenges that Libya's newly elected authorities may face regarding the security sector, these difficulties concern both legitimacy and structure. Given the communal embeddedness of (some) armed actors, (some) elected officials would need to play catch-up with regard to their legitimacy and credibility. Structurally, armed actors have also been involved in weakening the central command structure, especially in western Libya, whereas eastern Libya is under the military rule of Haftar, who will present equally difficult challenges, albeit of a different nature, for the newly elected authorities.

In sum, this chapter has argued that Libya needs a coherent, overarching strategic framework to guide the preparation of elections, which must include the security sector since SSR and elections are intrinsically linked and must be approached together to create a more stable, peaceful, and ultimately democratic future for Libya. While holding elections "early" would generally be detrimental, certain favourable conditions – including demobilization, the removal of foreign forces, power sharing, and strong political, administrative, and judicial institutions – can mitigate this risk.[51] For the security sector, this means that programmes to advance the transparency and democratic accountability of the sector, while situating it within a clear legal framework, need to be prioritized instead of a focus on training and equipping various formal and informal security forces.

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50 Alwasat, 2021, "Ajdabiya Red Crescent branch director reported missing", http://en.alwasat.ly/news/libya/322420; https://twitter.com/UNSMILibya/status/1400861247600578567.
51 Brancati and Snyder, 2012.

A Holistic Approach: Restoring Electricity and Water Services in Post-conflict Libya[1]

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4

Introduction

The condition of Libya's services, most notably electricity and water, is a reflection of the Libyan state itself and a focal point of the angst felt by Libyans towards politics; meanwhile, the operational challenges involved in providing these services offer insight into broader Libyan cultural and political dynamics. Today, Libya's power grid is perilously close to complete collapse – the product of years of mismanagement, the predations of various gangs, targeting in wars, and of course the parochialism and corruption that has come to define Libyan governance. The uneasy end to the civil war and the ascension of a new Government of National Unity, however, has created an opportunity to stabilize these vital sectors. Nevertheless, if the situation in Libya is to stabilize let alone enable a longer-term project for restoring vital services, then a holistic approach to securing these vital services must be considered.

Beyond merely protecting physical sites, it is important to recognize that fundamentally changing the way these services are managed, delivered, and consumed is a method of ensuring security in itself. After all, the regular delivery of these vital services dampens insecurities and grievances that drive destabilizing behaviour and creates powerful incentives within local communities to keep the power and water flowing; these dynamics in turn contribute to an improved security environment and reflect the type of engagement needed to effectively grapple with Libya's highly localized security sector.

Gaddafi laid the foundation of Libya's dysfunctional system for providing water and electricity and, despite ten years of revolution, the misbalances of these foundations have widened and led to the disastrous scenarios of today. These fundamental issues are evident across the spectrum from generation to consumption. Corruption, poor management, and inefficient generation methods mean that Libya produces a kilowatt hour (kwh) of electricity for roughly USD 1.20, compared with the United States, which produces power for between 1 and 10 cents a kwh. Meanwhile, this same expensive electricity is sold for a heavily subsidized rate of approximately 3 cents per kwh, and even this meagre amount is rarely collected, leading to billions of dollars of losses each year. This is even more problematic considering that the per capita consumption rate of Libyans is twice that of Egypt, four times that of Tunisia, and roughly on par with Italy – all more developed countries than Libya. This is the lingering damage

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1   The information contained in this chapter was obtained primarily through confidential key informant interviews. For confidentiality purposes, names and affiliations of individuals are not listed by the author.

caused by Gaddafi-era propaganda, which hailed Libya as a land of abundance – a populist gimmick of aggrandizement that encouraged over-consumption and led to a lack of respect for resources or services.

These fundamental problems created an inherently misbalanced and inadequate system. Even in pre-revolutionary days, load-shedding – prearranged partial shutdowns to keep the grid alive – became a necessity, though it was managed under the technical criteria of ensuring that electricity continued to flow wherever Gaddafi was. In 2009, there were regular power shortages of three to four hours in Libya's second city of Benghazi. A lack of development planning and annual increases in demand exacerbated the problems. Then, as with all other areas of the country, the revolution of 2011 aggravated existing dynamics. Infrastructure became a routine target during both the revolution and subsequent conflicts, and where stations and transmission lines were destroyed the load on the remaining infrastructure increased. The 'grid' was neglected as the Libyan state failed and bifurcated while transmission lines and other infrastructure were looted and sold as scrap by predatory militias. The reignition of civil war in 2014 compounded the situation as foreign contractors, upon whom the country relied, fled and would not return for years.

Today, Libya is a fully electrified country, but its national grid is on the verge of collapsing and disintegrating into a patchwork of mini grids. Similarly, Libya's water network, built on Gaddafi's ultimate vanity project – the Great Man-Made River (GMMR) – is slowly decaying. Libya remains seriously lacking in water: of the two aquifers feeding the GMMR, the Murzuq aquifer in Libya's south-west could run out of water in the next ten to fifteen years. Meanwhile, underground reserves in the north have already been contaminated by seawater, and so new communities who were either excluded from the GMMR, such as the Amazigh in Libya's north-west, or who only work on yet do not benefit from the GMMR, such as those in the south, are perilously close to crisis. Concurrently, the system suffers further breakdowns due to power outages, and other solutions such as desalination cannot be feasibly explored until the power grid becomes more reliable.

Restoring Libya's ailing services may seem like a pipe dream while efforts are concentrated on just trying to keep the lights on; however, restoring services and maintaining the system are interconnected problems in a post-conflict country where insecurity remains a reality. A holistic approach to security will be needed for either goal to succeed. Institutional solutions to enhance cooperation between Libyan and international agencies on core issues and technical solutions to safeguard the system from collapse both now and in the future must be reconciled with more traditional security solutions for supporting specialized Ministry of Interior units in protecting vital infrastructure. In this way, it is possible to map out a realistic path towards the stable supply of electricity and water amidst the ruin created by Libya's most recent conflict and years of atomization. As such, these institutional and technical categorizations reflect broader solutions that not only allow vital services to be restored in a sustainable way, but also improve the capacity of Libyan authorities to secure these services. Stimulating community-centric approaches to service management, as well as enhancing general administrative operations such as information sharing, intra-institutional cooperation, and developing communication strategies, are all elements that allow for more robust security provision.

Institutional Solutions

Libya's failure to provide vital services is not just about electricity or water institutions, but also a result of broader failures. As such, it requires a holistic solution that cuts across Libya's governing apparatus. Such changes in security governance start with a culture shift, beginning with the need to improve cooperation and coordination mechanisms through information sharing between key agents of change within ministries, thereby carving out the means for genuine cross-institutional policymaking. This type of change delivers immediate dividends as it connects those who are engaged and invested in the functional side of service delivery, such as control room operators, rather than executives of institutions like the General Electric Company of Libya (GECOL) or ministerial teams, who are overly politicized, unfamiliar with the details, and detached from any long-term resolution. This can be effectively systematized through cross-institutional coordination committees and effective reporting requirements across both GECOL and relevant ministerial teams. As the reform of the services sector becomes ever more internationalized – with key agencies stepping in to support areas where the Libyan state is failing – more efforts are required to coordinate these activities to ensure efficiency and sidestep duplication. The methods established for managing international cooperation here are, of course, replicable and just as applicable to more traditional security sector practices.

National-level policymaking for restoring vital services rests upon two key issues: appropriate budgeting and effective communication policies. GECOL and GMMR run huge deficits because they lack paying customers; as a result, they rely on a regular stream of funding to maintain equipment, repair infrastructure, and pay salaries, thereby avoiding disruptive strike actions and related security costs. Ring-fenced budgets can also help streamline measures to enhance the energy efficiency of existing generation and consumption methods that could significantly ease the load on the system. The forethought required for this approach is at odds with the current dynamic whereby emergency funds are released to deal with preventable emergencies. This is exemplified by the current situation where GECOL's operating budget forms part of a LYD 1.5 billion emergency budget – issued by then President and Prime Minister al-Serraj at the start of 2021 – from which emergency repairs are made when the system fails while other funds for upgrades are used without being effectively documented. A new protected chapter of the budget should instead be created for vital services and provide a reliable and consistent source of funding.

Alongside ensuring a reliable stream of financing, the national government must be responsible for maintaining effective communication with line offices and the general public to ensure compliance with national policy – especially concerning contentious activities such as load-shedding during the summer months. Libya's post-revolutionary fragmentation has exacerbated its administrative parochialism. Load-shedding is disputed by municipalities and local militias who want to prioritize their own communities, often leading to direct interventions to re-open sub-station circuit breakers in order to protect their neighbourhoods; however, these incidents often result in grid-wide failures and prolonged black outs. A mobile application that allows users to view when their municipality is scheduled to receive electricity and when load-shedding is due to occur in other municipalities is a novel means of addressing this problem and an example of how transparency and effective communication

between government and the public may be able to improve compliance. Public service messaging must, however, supplement such solutions and generate true engagement by explaining the necessity of load-shedding and the destructiveness of circumventing the schedule, and trying to build local support for this policy as a short-term necessity. This local support can then be leveraged to prevent local forces from intervening. Given Libya's collapsed legal system and the Government of National Unity's inability to project power, it is vital to have the support of the population – the only effective tool of leverage over what remains a highly localized security sector.

An effective communication strategy extends beyond ensuring compliance to encouraging a change in culture and managing expectations. A broad strategy is required to persuade the public to stop wasteful practices, such as leaving air conditioning systems on all day even when no one is home – air conditioners represent the heaviest load on the system, especially during the summer months when high temperatures also mean power stations are less productive and transmission is more costly. Encouraging more efficient practices could pay significant dividends, ultimately lowering the need for load-shedding. Moreover, the Prime Minister and other political hopefuls should be encouraged to moderate their language when publicly addressing Libya's electricity crisis. Currently, political figures give the impression that a simple solution is available and full power, nationwide, can simply just be returned. Disappointed expectations create popular frustrations. Instead, more realistic short-, medium-, and long-term projections should be provided to cultivate a more understanding public.

Moving beyond the top level of government, solutions to service-related problems also require the support of multiple ministries. The best example of this is the necessity to combat militia raids on existing infrastructure, where transmission lines and substations are dismantled and sold for scrap. If the foreign sale of scrap metals could be regulated, this would remove a major incentive for infrastructure raiding.[2] However, any credible solution would require new regulation from the ministry of economy, enhanced policing of ports, and potentially even engagement with major foreign buyers such as Turkey to garner sale-side support.

Such integrated policies are also required to make the cultural and mechanical changes necessary to build a longer-term mechanism for ensuring the sustainable delivery of services. One of the key goals is to facilitate the integration of renewable energies into the grid. This involves constructing the regulatory framework to allow renewable sources owned and managed by GECOL to be added to the existing grid, as well as residential and local renewable sources to be added by independent power producers (IPPs). Crucially, this could also help reshape the relationship between power producers and consumers. If sufficient systemic advances are made, an environment could be developed to enable local additions to the network, offering the potential to sell back to the grid, which incentivizes customers to adopt better metering. In the right regulatory environment, this can in turn encourage large-scale investments in

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2   In 2019, the Minister of Economy and Trade (Government of National Accord) allowed companies to export scrap metal under certain conditions in Decree No. 407 of 2019. This was however overturned in August 2021 by the Minister of Economy and Trade (Government of National Unity) in Decree No. 300 of 2021. The long-term impact of this change in policy remains to be seen.

renewable power generation methods by IPPs, who can then sell the power to GECOL. This could streamline change and improve service delivery at a time when GECOL is otherwise encumbered, and the national government otherwise occupied.

Underlying all of this is a dire need for functional planning. It is vital to have immediate, medium-, and long-term plans in place in order to develop any institutional solutions. Plans help inform communication strategies, manage expectations, and map out where input from other institutions is needed; they also allow for a holistic approach to what is a nuanced and multi-faceted problem. Most crucially of all, multi-year technical plans that are well communicated help reduce the politicization of issues related to electricity and allow efforts to reconstruct the service sector to avoid corruption. Currently, extra electricity is being generated and added to the system where it is least needed. Improvements to Tobruk power station exemplify this issue; the decision to upgrade this station is widely regarded as a political decision to appease Libya's House of Representatives. Given Tobruk's distance from the main load centres, hundreds of megawatts (MW) of power are lost in transporting the electricity to where it is most needed, particularly in the heat of summer. The absence of any framework has allowed corrupt practices regarding maintenance, repairs, and upgrades to grow freely. Corrupt tendering processes have become infamous; contracting companies have been banned from working with certain types of equipment by the manufacturer – an issue highlighted by a video leaked on 1 July 2021 showing the Prime Minister reprimanding the CEO of GECOL over a USD 40 million contract to a Moroccan company that GECOL was unable to deliver. Professionals complain of warehouses filled with equipment for half-completed projects, which are abandoned once commissions are paid out, and then new tenders are created that replicate the initial project. A highly regulated plan that includes examining tenders and checking that contracts are followed through to completion, as well as organising timelines to properly sequence work given the lead times involved, is needed to rationalize the process of returning services to Libya. Identifying relevant politicians to oversee this cross-institutional technical plan that will span administrations can also help prevent service sector reform from becoming overly politicized.

Another means of reducing institutional corruption is to rationalize the institutional organization of the sector. GECOL is infamous for the number of subsidiary companies it has that contribute nothing other than meaningless complexity, jobs, red tape, and unclear decision-making processes – all while facilitating corruption. Moreover, GECOL's payroll has doubled over the past decade to 42,565, giving it perhaps the largest ratio of employees to power produced of any electricity company in the world. This is just as relevant in the water sector where five institutions are responsible for water policy. Given that the GMMR is only half complete, it is important to streamline the system rather than allow these inefficiencies, which encourage corruption, to be integrated into it. One direct and notable security dividend to reorganizing service delivery in this way and removing corruption is that it in turn removes the incentives and space for criminal armed groups to infiltrate the service delivery process for financial gain.

The culture change necessary to make customers pay for electricity and water is an important part of dismantling the sector's reputation as an endless source of money and ensuring accountability. Novel approaches will have to be considered to encourage

a more efficient system, including introducing IPPs where feasible and perhaps new means of production and transmission upgrades for improved metering services that facilitate different payment types and offer enhanced monitoring potential.

Technical Solutions

Other than the need to reform the approach towards restoring services, there are of course a number of technical solutions that could help stabilize the supply of services and mitigate against short-term failures. Protecting against the destructive effects of outages is important for technical reasons, especially considering that services like water rely on a functioning grid; however, preventing power cuts is also crucial to easing the suffering that comes with prolonged outages in Libya's hot climate and that leads to further negative consequences such as distrust and unilateral interventions by militias, which hamper the ability of authorities to manage their networks – a vicious cycle of deterioration and acrimony that makes any security approach infinitely harder. Overall, the issue can be categorized into three types of problem that need to be addressed: problems related to generating power and plugging the supply gap; problems related to transmission; and, of course, consumer-related problems.

Enabling the water network to become independent in terms of power is an example of an immediately pursuable goal that carries broad dividends. Water pumping stations could be fitted with solar panels, with battery packs, to ensure a consistent supply of electricity. Although this is applicable to other infrastructure nodes, it is especially pertinent to pumping stations where power cuts spoils water supplies. Providing these infrastructure nodes with an independent means of generating power also enables them to deliver power to their local communities. This would reduce feelings of neglect and abandonment in local communities that rarely benefit from their place in the grid. In turn, this would help to prevent these same communities from forcefully shutting down or otherwise holding the infrastructure in their territory to ransom in the hope of receiving some benefit from central government that they're normally deprived of – demonstrating again the security-related benefits of simply improving network management.

Similar, though less effective, solutions are also available for the electricity sector. The supply gap can be at least partially filled through temporary generators. The idea of purchasing power from neighbours has also recently resurfaced[3]; the first manifestation of this was when Libya began buying electricity from Algeria through Tunisia on 19 June 2021.[4] While the former has the advantage of being easier to protect than current power generating infrastructure, these solutions are extremely expensive, and have a limited impact given they cannot transcend limitations caused by transmission-side issues nor are they sufficient to eclipse demand. Moreover, given the

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3   Reuters. 2015. 'Libya to get electricity from Egypt, Tunisia to ease blackouts - Tripoli govt', https://www.reuters.com/article/libya-power-idUKL5N10G10J20150805.

4   The announcement came on 19 June 2021 (Middle East Monitor. 2021. 'Algeria: Sonelgaz to supply Libya with electricity', https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210619-algeria-sonelgaz-to-supply-libya-with-electricity/). A Memorandum of Understanding between GECOL and Algerian company Sonelgaz was signed on 27 December 2020 (Energy Voice. 2020. 'Sonelgaz, Gecol sign power deal', https://www.energyvoice.com/renewables-energy-transition/288487/libya-algeria-gecol-sonelgaz/).

vast distances that electricity will travel from either the borders or the coast (since most temporary generators currently considered are floating units), significant levels of electricity will be lost in transmission; it is also not well suited for responding to spikes in demand. Overall, these are viable options for preventing complete grid failure during the summer months, but they are not long-term solutions; their main practical benefit is in slowing down the rate of decay of Libya's grid.

Ultimately, Libya's primary solution for saving the grid until capacity can be improved is through organized load-shedding, as well as by getting not only communities to comply with it but also armed groups to defend it rather than intervening destructively. Repairs and upgrades should also be prioritized to make it easier to manage the network and allow existing systems to do more; this includes upgrading existing equipment, prioritizing the resolution of transmission problems, and looking for opportunities across the spectrum to benefit from energy efficiency dividends.

The most direct route is to recalibrate how existing power plants function. Electricity professionals have bemoaned the Libyan system's reliance on running turbines on a "simple cycle", which is a function suited for dealing with emergencies or spikes in demand. The simple cycle is more fuel intensive and less efficient than a "combined cycle", which should be the default mode. Moreover, this operational style leads to increased maintenance costs, and increases the time that turbines spend offline being maintained.

A more medium-term solution is to try to introduce an on-grid solar system. This would be the first step to integrating renewable energy into the existing production process. The system is currently too unstable for rooftop solar systems to work as part of the grid. Existing stability systems have degraded, or simply do not work, so grid management is undertaken manually. Large-scale on-grid developments are therefore not only the only way to start introducing renewables to Libya's grid, but can also help power stability systems, thereby enabling further grid development. Nevertheless, given budgetary issues, GECOL's corrupt procurement processes, and the lack of paying customers, it is difficult to identify a means of developing these options through either the government or the private sector. Since Libya's electricity demand peaks after sunset, however, a holistic approach moving forward would be to find a way to balance different methods of generating power to ensure stability and consistency.

Solutions to transmission problems revolve around upgrading power lines to increase efficiency, prevent random downtimes owing to power outages, and return redundancy to the overall system. Transmission lines are currently congested, especially at key load points such as the power plant in Khoms – both the most crucial and the most congested point of the national grid – where the output is so high, and the remaining working lines so low, that what is there is overloaded at 400 kilovolts. The situation is so serious that a former senior official, who was very involved in the process, described "every line as being like a power plant". This dynamic leads to emergency failures as lines give out causing un-expected blackouts, damaging the grid, and crippling attempts to manage load-shedding. This is also relevant to the gas lines that feed the power plants, which are so overloaded that they are beginning to unexpectedly fail. On 30 June 2021, one such failure caused a big drop in pressure on

the western line, which feeds the stations of Zawiya, southern Tripoli, Khoms, and Misrata, resulting in an overall loss of 500 MW leading to sharp and sudden increases in power outage times. If the load on existing lines can be lowered and increased redundancy be brought into transmission systems to provide contingency reserves, then more stability can be returned to the grid. In turn, this makes grid management easier and provides the conditions for local additions, such as rooftop solar systems, thereby also providing benefits for the generation of power.

Ultimately, however, the only way to meaningfully stabilize the system over the short and long term is to engage with the myriad of inefficiencies and destructive dynamics related to consumption. Primarily, the culture of not paying for electricity must change. Failing to pay for services creates not only an attitude of disrespect, including overconsuming and a refusal to acknowledge the scarcity or value of the resource, but also severe economic imbalances that hamper future progress. A former senior official claimed that average commercial losses across electricity companies operating in Libya are 55 per cent, while a recent study states that GECOL's annual losses can amount to several percentage points of Libya's gross domestic product (GDP); as a result, direct subsidies are required to cover operational costs, including LYD 1 billion towards a grossly inflated payroll, hundreds of millions in development spending, and crucially almost USD2 billion annually in fuel costs – sapping Libya's main export and revenue stream. Despite the bevy of institutional problems such as corruption, this issue is evident at the point of consumption, where very few metres are in service as electricians help consumers circumvent official property metres on initial connection. This means that GECOL is unable to adequately monitor the network or usage, or to levy various policies to improve payment rates. Ensuring the proper installation of electricity metres in new developments and reconstruction programmes is vital and can help kick start a wider drive to improve metering. This huge financial misbalance scares off any potential outside investors or IPPs and is unlikely to change until a new relationship can be fixed between supplier and consumer.

The drive to improve energy efficiency is Libya's best hope for reducing short-term demand sufficiently to stabilize the system. This is exemplified by a current joint programme between Libya's government and international organizations to change 30 million lights from incandescent to LED bulbs. This programme would save somewhere between 500-700 MWs of electricity, which is the amount of power that would be generated by a new power station currently under construction. To continue the comparison, the programme costs an estimated USD 200 million whereas the power station costs over USD 2 billion . Similar programmes should also be explored as a means of bridging the supply gap.

This can also be extended to the water sector, where the main challenge is currently to preserve the aquifers for long enough to bring new supplies online. One of the many inefficiencies of the GMMR is the amount of water lost due to evaporation and during the long journey from south to north Libya. Covering the open reservoirs with floating solar panels could be another way to simultaneously resolve two problems, preventing evaporation and helping Libya's water network be power independent using renewables. Unlike GECOL, however, the GMMR group owns its own infrastructure, which gives it the option of issuing corporate bonds to finance its own improvement works. Further studies should also consider how to improve water efficiency within

the agriculture sector, which currently uses roughly 85 per cent of Libya's fresh water supply. Given that Libya will be unable to build additional desalination plants until its budget and electricity grid stabilize, as well as the poor management of existing desalination, improving water efficiency is key to preventing disaster.

Security Solutions

Effectively securing Libya's infrastructure is an impossible task if directly approached. Centralized, forces that can be coordinated effectively are few; Libya is also vast and its infrastructure is spread out across the country. Given the lack of power projection capabilities, security forces will have to use their initiative and adapt operational methods to suit the problem at hand.

Given the ever-increasing value of copper, as well as its prevalence across all electricity and water infrastructure, Libya's relevant services will not be able to cover the necessary ground to prevent raids. Institutional solutions will be required to respond effectively to this problem. However, security efforts can still add tremendous protective value to the grid by identifying and securing more effectively key infrastructural nodes, such as the vital load-bearing point of Khoms. This would help GECOL to execute load-shedding operations better and help prevent emergency power failures due to unilateral interventions by armed groups, or simple theft. Technological solutions can also be deployed to help guard prioritized sites and to spread the reach of these limited forces slightly further. Using observational drones and other early warning systems could help decrease response times and increase success rates in preventing attacks on infrastructure, as well as add a potential deterrence value.

The Hasawna wells represent a critical node of the water network, just as Khoms does for the power grid. GMMR authorities have often lamented that attacks on this infrastructural node threaten the collapse of the entire GMMR, and can have knock-on effects on the water supply to all Libyan towns, cities, and agricultural projects. The same security solutions should be applied here – that is, making it a priority location for the deployment of the GMMR security brigade, and using technology to make their deployments more efficient

Though planning and technology can help enhance the effectiveness of the police responsible for electricity-related security, ultimately savvy politics will be the only way to provide a resilient security system amidst Libya's fragile peace and atomized socio-political and security landscape. This means exploring ways to improve the structure of relationships with local forces that Libya will ultimately be dependent upon to secure local infrastructure. This can be achieved through effectively managing the framework of transactional relationships already put in place by the government or the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) to deal with local organizations and to leverage popular pressure in order to adapt to new realities. Libya's security landscape remains heavily localized; the majority of local groups are formed from communities and not only reflect the popular mood of the community but are also to some extent accountable to it..

The Ministry of Interior should push for a ring-fenced budget to pay for security services of local infrastructure, thereby ensuring regular salary payments. This, combined with the uniform and prestige that comes from aligning with the official ministry, can be used as incentives against raiding infrastructure. Moreover, if salaries are paid, and if realistic improvements in service delivery can be delivered, then much of the incentive for this destructive behaviour is removed. If public service messaging can link attacks on infrastructure to failures in service and delays in restoring consistent service, then it will further help build local public pressure against armed groups engaging in such activities.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, there is considerable overlap in the institutional, technical, and security solutions to the challenges related to restoring services in the fragile aftermath of Libya's recent conflict. This reflects the complexities of the problem at hand and the interconnectivity of the many variables at play. Nevertheless, it remains an effective framework for a holistic approach to security to restore services in the aftermath of Libya's civil war. By recognizing the hybrid and local reality of Libya's security sector – as well as the significant role that grievances, opportunism, and insecurity play in creating the sense of foreboding that hangs over the delivery of Libya's most vital services – this holistic approach addresses the various different threats to security. Although the solutions are broken down into institutional, technical, and direct security measures, these different streams join together to target similar goals: undermining community-based drivers of conflict; leveraging local factors to dissuade local groups from becoming security threats; creating strong incentives around the stabilization of vital services; and finally making it more expensive and harder to attack service delivery infrastructure while reducing the value of doing so.

Corruption combined with long-term dilapidation and damage from conflict, as well as the need to protect resources from the searing heat and preserve running water, require a holistic approach that balances short-term solutions with systematic reform. If, on the other hand, Libya's institutionalized corruption continues to allow the unlimited consumption of electricity, local forces continue to prize parochialism over the wellbeing of the nation and the grid, and Libya's network continues to decay then this will not only lead to a humanitarian crisis with the failure to provide vital resources in the desert, but also act as a new driver for conflict and atomization in a country that has already suffered so much.

Extractive Resource Protection in Libya:
The Challenge of Reforming and Supporting the Petroleum Facilities Guard

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Introduction

The inauguration of a new Government of National Unity (GNU) under Prime Minister Abd al-Hamid Dabaiba in March 2021 has been met with cautious optimism on the part of both Libyans and the international community. Though the Prime Minister is nominally responsible for preparing the country for elections in late 2021, many of his efforts focus on resuscitating Libya's damaged economy and retaining support for his government, including by providing political patronage and government largesse to various individuals and communities.[1]

In this sense, Dabaiba's approach is not radically different from the patronage approach employed by Colonel Muammar Gaddafi during his reign over Libya. Like Gaddafi, Dabaiba's approach is predicated on the effective and uninterrupted extraction of Libya's oil and natural gas wealth.

Libya's recent history, however, has underscored the vulnerability of the infrastructure required for oil and its extraction and export. Communities in hydrocarbon production areas have increasingly sought to assert their agency and right to a greater share of the profit. Combatants in the country's internal conflict have considered the control of oil and natural gas infrastructure as both a means of self-funding and a bargaining chip with the Libyan government and the international community. These dynamics have led to a recurrent cycle of armed groups intermittently occupying production sites and export facilities, costing the country billions of dollars in lost revenue.[2]

The economic and political significance of Libya's oil and gas infrastructure and its evident vulnerability underscore the importance of protecting the sector – a key goal for Dabaiba, the Libyan government, and donors seeking to support the development and professionalization of Libya's security sector.

Nominally, a specialized security force exists to protect this infrastructure: the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG). Similar to other governmental forces, however, the PFG has become heavily hybridized since the 2011 revolution, with former

1   Badi, E., 2021. 'Muhasasa, militias and meddling foreign actors: The challenges facing Libya's new government', The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 26 March, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/libya-new-government/.
2   See International Crisis Group, 2015. 'The Prize: Fighting for Libya's Energy Wealth', *Middle East and North Africa Report,* No. 165, December; International Crisis Group, 2018. 'After the Showdown in Libya's Oil Crescent', *Middle East and North Africa Report,* No. 189, August.

armed groups incorporated into its ranks with little specialized training or reform.[3] Even as the size of the force has ballooned, its capacity and institutional coherence have fragmented, leaving it struggling to effectively fulfil its core mission to protect oil and natural gas infrastructure. In recurrent cases, different units within the PFG have become a part of the problem, acting to block production and exports from the facilities they are officially responsible for protecting.

This chapter analyses the PFG's evolution, structure, and challenges. It begins by detailing the emergence and evolution of the force, and goes on to assess the PFG's current structure and patterns of deployment. It then analyses reform initiatives underway and obstacles to reform. The chapter concludes with a brief reflection on the force and the broader lessons for extractive resource protection in Libya.

This chapter is based on a dozen interviews conducted in Libya by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime between 2020 and 2021. Field research was complemented by an analysis of Libyan laws, UN reports, think tank research, and media articles.

Evolution into Dysfunction

Officially, Libya's PFG is the force responsible for the protection of Libya's oil and natural gas infrastructure, including production fields, pipelines, refineries, and storage and export facilities. The force, however, faces substantial challenges in its ability to fulfil this mandate effectively and cohesively. Many of these are linked to broader challenges in Libya's security and defence sectors that have arisen since the 2011 revolution. This section details the evolution of the PFG, from a small, specialized force under Muammar Gaddafi's regime to a large though fragmented and hybridized entity just a few years later.

Pre-2011 origins

While oil extraction has been a pillar of Libya's economy for over half a century, for much of that time there was little need for a dedicated security force focused on the protection of extraction and export infrastructure. Most production sites were remote, meaning that threats were limited to the facilities, while local communities and tribes were often co-opted by the regime and provided with "titles, salaries and opportunity to participate in oil-sector corruption" in exchange for not interfering in the industry.[4] On Libya's more heavily populated coast, where oil and gas export and storage infra-structure was located, the broader set of security actors operating during most of Gaddafi's time in power were considered sufficient for addressing the limited number of security risks.[5] At least one intelligence unit was specifically focused on the oil sector, but it reportedly focused on labour unrest rather than external security threats to the facilities.[6]

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3   Badi, E., 2020. *Exploring Armed Groups in Libya: Perspectives on Security Sector Reform in a Hybrid Environment.* Geneva: DCAF, p. 18.
4   International Crisis Group, December 2015, p. 6.
5   International Crisis Group, December 2015, p. 6.
6   International Crisis Group, December 2015, p. 6.

This changed in 2007 when Gaddafi decreed the establishment of the Petroleum Facilities Guards organization (*haras al-munshaat al-naftiya*).[7] Based at al-Brega, the size of the force and institutional linkages shifted somewhat between 2007 and 2011, and the force came to be controlled by the interim General Committee for Defence and funded by the National Oil Company (NOC).[8] Throughout the late Gaddafi period, however, the PFG remained relatively small, reportedly totalling around 2,000 men; its mission was discrete, and it enjoyed only limited salience within Libya's broader security architecture.[9]

Post-revolution hybridization
The PFG only began to increase in salience and size in the wake of the 2011 revolution; however, as with Libya's other security and defence forces, the post-2011 changes in the PFG were largely negative. The force became hybridized, localized, and ultimately divided – a situation it is still struggling to recover from.

The mandate and ministerial affiliation of the PFG faced the least amount of change. Its role in protecting the country's oil and natural gas infrastructure was re-affirmed by the National Transitional Council in August 2011.[10] It was headed by Colonel Ali al-Ahrash, who had served in the force under Gaddafi before defecting during the revolution.[11]

The force briefly merged with the Border Guards and Vital Installations Guards in 2012 to become part of a larger organization, before re-emerging as a standalone entity in 2013.[12] After that point, however, the PFG returned to its pre-revolutionary institutional affiliation, existing within the newly established Ministry of Defence (MoD) and funded directly by the NOC.[13]

More detrimentally, after 2011 the force absorbed a large number of former armed group members. This led the PFG to balloon in size, rising to 12,000 personnel in 2012, and reportedly reaching 30,000 by 2014.[14] In a number of instances, individual units of the post-2011 PFG, such as those in the central oil crescent, were substantially larger than the entire pre-revolutionary force.[15]

The integration of armed groups was initially a stopgap solution – effectively a means for political actors to co-opt armed groups by putting them on a government payroll.[16]

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7   General People's Committee Decree No. (186) of 1375 FDP (2007 AD) on establishing the Petroleum Facilities Guard Organisation.

8   General People's Committee Decree No. (34) of 1378 FDP (2010 AD) on transferring the dependency of the Petroleum Facilities Guard Organisation, available from DCAF's Libyan security sector legal database: https://security-legislation.ly/law/34831;
Abou-Khalil, N. and Hargreaves, L., 2015. *Perceptions Of Security In Libya: Institutional And Revolutionary Actors*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, p. 28.

9   Lacher, W. and Cole, P., 2014. *Politics by Other Means: Conflicting Interests in Libya's Security Sector*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, October, p. 84.

10   Abou-Khalil and Hargreaves, 2013, p. 28.

11   Global Initiative Against Transnational Organization Crime (GI-TOC) interview, August 2021; Abou-Khalil and Hargreaves, p. 28.

12   Lacher and Cole, p. 74.

13   International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 8.

14   Lacher and Cole, p. 84; Saleh H., 2013. 'Oil industry left with legacy of violence in Libya after Gaddafi', *The Financial Times*, 29 April.

15   Eljarh, M., 2016. *Security Challenges And Issues In The Sahelo-Saharan Region: The Libya Perspective*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, p. 11.

16   Badi, 2020, p. 18

For former fighters, integration into the PFG offered regular and reasonable pay, opportunities for financial gain via smuggling, and limited oversight and responsibilities.[17] For armed group commanders, control over parts of the country's oil and gas infrastructure offered a means of accruing further influence as well as self-enrichment.[18]

However, functionally, the rapid expansion of the force, as well as the means through which it was accomplished, had two key detrimental effects. First, the incorporation of a significant number of Zintanis into the PFG led the force to be perceived as partially sectarian. Between 2011 and 2013, the influence of Zintani figures over the MoD led thousands of men from the city to be incorporated into the PFG.[19] In some instances, such as at the al-Sharara field, Zintanis integrated local allies into the force – a tactic that sometimes led previously marginalized groups to take control of key fields, sidelining armed groups from rival communities who claimed a stake in the running of the fields.[20]

Owing to the perception of the PFG by other key actors, such as those from Misrata, as dominated by Zintani, the PFG became caught up in broader post-revolutionary political struggles as actors from the two cities fell out in 2013. Efforts to limit the influence of Zintanis within the organization led PFG forces from Zintan to shut down a key pipeline running from the al-Sharara field to the port of Zawiya, while another incident saw Zintani units, irate over salary issues, attack the Tripoli-based headquarters of the force, resulting in a number of deaths during a week-long battle.[21]

In July 2013, efforts to limit Zintani influence led Prime Minister Ali Zeidan to remove Colonel al-Ahrash and several of his deputies.[22] Though the removal proved to be short term – with al-Ahrash reassuming control in 2014 and again in 2016 – Zeidan's decision caused chaos within the PFG, and ultimately led some field units to mutiny and halt oil exports in the areas under their control (as discussed in more detail below).

The second detrimental impact of the PFG's rapid expansion was its "hybridization", as it absorbed a large number of armed groups throughout the country, often with only limited reform, training, or restructuring. Outside of Tripoli, absorption often involved formalizing the operational control of armed groups who had seized oil extraction and export locations during the revolution. Many of these groups were linked to either communities living near the facilities or communities whose territory encompassed part or the entirety of adjacent oil and natural gas fields, and whose interests continued to be represented by the new field PFG units.

This process of "hybridization" should be seen in the context of the times, when communities living near oil infrastructure began to vocally press for more benefits from the resources on their territory. Such pressure for "just" profit sharing was construed as not only a local issue, but also a regional one, with communities in Cyrenaica in particular agitating for a higher share of revenues.[23] Protests and shutdowns affecting

17 Author communication, Libyan security analyst, August 2021.
18 International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 7.
19 International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 8.
20 Murray, R., 2017. *Southern Libya Destabilized: The Case of Ubari.* Geneva: Small Arms Survey, April, p. 10.
21 International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 8.
22 International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 8.
23 International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 3.

oil production or shipments, aimed at putting pressure on the central government, became an increasingly common tactic.[24]

Facing these closures, field-based PFG units had little impact, often opting to either stand aside or side with protesters. In some cases, the PFG personnel themselves became active participants, leveraging their operational control over different parts of Libya's oil infrastructure to demand concessions from the central government.

The most dramatic, and notorious, instance of this came in July 2013, when a 2,500-man PFG unit in the central oil crescent mutinied in the wake of Colonel al-Ahrash's dismissal.[25] Led by Ibrahim Jadran – a commander from the Magharba, the region's main tribe – the unit halted exports from the four main oil export facilities in the region: Brega, Ras Lanuf, Sidra, and Zuwetina.[26] Jadran claimed the shutdown was a response to corruption within the NOC, while simultaneously making demands rooted in local and regional frustrations over the distribution of oil profits (Jadran found support for the latter issue from other eastern leaders, who subsequently halted oil exports from Tobruk).[27]

Attempts by the government of Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni to resolve the crisis lagged.[28] Military efforts by Misratan forces to dislodge Jadran's PFG unit in 2014 proved unsuccessful and, while al-Thinni and Jadran officially reached an agreement to resolve the crisis, the ports functionally remained closed to operations until the autumn of 2016, when forces linked to the eastern-based Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF) ejected Jadran from his position.[29]

Though not apparent at the time, Jadran's rebellion led to the emergence of a functional split within the PFG. Following the LAAF's takeover, a new PFG unit was installed in the oil crescent. This unit, along with those further east in Cyrenaica, continued to be paid as part of the PFG, but largely refused to follow orders from the Tripoli-based government, instead operating under the command and control of the LAAF.

As the LAAF expanded into south-western Libya in 2019, PFG units at key oil fields in that region, including al-Sharara and al-Feel, switched sides and transferred their allegiance to the eastern PFG faction. Hierarchic control over field units in the south-west, however, remained extremely weak, with most units operating largely autonomously and often more motivated by local concerns and issues than national drivers. By the outbreak of the war on Tripoli in April 2019, however, the LAAF-affiliated PFG units controlled most major oil fields and export terminals in the country, enabling the LAAF to impose an eight-month shutdown of most oil exports.[30]

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24 International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 6.

25 International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 9.

26 Lacher, W., 2016. 'Libya's Local Elites and the Politics of Alliance Building', *Mediterranean Politics,* Vol. 21, p. 64-85.

27 International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 11; Lacher, 2016.

28 Laessing, U., al-Warfalli, A., and Bosalum, F., 2014. 'Protest in eastern Libyan oil port town Brega, airport closed', Reuters, 17 June, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-oil-idUSKBN0ES1ZJ20140617.

29 International Crisis Group, 2016. 'The Libyan Political Agreement: Time for a Reset', *Middle East and North Africa Report,* No. 170, November; International Crisis Group, 2018, p.4.

30 al-Warfalli, A., Khalek, H.A., Fahmy, O., and Lewis, A., 2020. 'Libya's Haftar committed to ending oil blockade, U.S. says', Reuters, 15 September, https://www.reuters.com/article/libya-oil-idUSKBN2630W9.

PFG Structure and Operations

The high risks faced by Libya's oil sector have ebbed since the war for Tripoli and the election of Prime Minister Dabaiba, but the PFG remains a weak and heavily divided force that struggles to fulfil its operational mandate. This section details the structure, command and control, and disposition of the force, as well as some of the units involved in protecting key infrastructure.

The PFG's mandate is roughly the same as the one issued in 2011, involving the protection of oil and natural gas infrastructure, including fields, pipelines, export terminals, some storage depots, and administrative buildings (such as the head-quarters of the NOC). They also carry out occasional counter-smuggling missions, though these are focused exclusively on petrol smuggling, typically conducted close to facilities guarded by the force, and often undertaken in conjunction with other defence and security forces.[31]

The force is officially and administratively part of the MoD. It is funded, however, by the NOC. This has resulted in a cumbersome financial structure, which requires, for example, regular salary payments to be transferred first to the MoD and then to PFG staff. This structure has routinely led to delays in salary payments, resulting in recurrent work stoppages and industrial action by PFG personnel.

The current force size of the PFG is unclear, but it is likely that it fluctuates substantially. One interviewee noted that the force was composed of at least 9,000 men, which, if accurate, suggests a decrease in personnel of between half and two-thirds since 2014.[32] Budgetary information further supports a decline in the size of the PFG since 2014, with the salary allocation dropping from LYD 425 million (Euro 141.6 million) in that year to LYD 282 million (Euro 47 million) in a recent draft budget from the GNU.[33] Regardless of the decline in numbers, the force appears to remain substantial, with many of the individual units, even for relatively small facilities such as at the Zawiya complex or the Marsa el-Hariga export terminal, numbering between 1,000 and 1,500 individuals.

The PFG is primarily land based but has some maritime detachments, which are involved in the protection of export facilities and offshore production platforms.[34] The force is officially led by Brigadier General Ali al-Deeb and comprises 11 different departments, including those for operations, training, public relations, and gas and pipeline protection.[35] These departments are based either at the headquarters of the force in Tripoli's Salah el-Din neighborhood or at their financial offices in Janzour.[36]

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31 GI-TOC interview, Libyan oil security analyst, August 2021.

32 GI-TOC interview, Libyan oil security analyst, August 2021.

33 Law No. (13) of 2014 on the adoption of the state budget of 2014, available from DCAF Libyan security sector legal database: https://security-legislation.ly/law/32064; Draft 2021 GNU budget synopsis, leaked in Summer, 2021.

34 'تكتيف الدوريات البحرية بالموانيالنفطية والمنصات البحرية العائمة', Petroleum Facilities Guard, 19 November 2020, https://pfguard.ly/تكتيف-الدوريات-البحرية-بالموانيالنف.

35 'هيكلية الجهاز', Petroleum Facilities Guard, https://pfguard.ly/هيكلية-الجهاز/الفروع.

36 GI-TOC interview, August 2021.

The field components of the PFG are composed of either six or seven different branches (official information on this is contradictory).[37] These include:

1. the Tripoli branch;
2. the western branch, based in Zawiya, which controls the territory from al-Heisha to the border with Tunisia, and from the coast to the southern terminus of the Nafusa mountains and Bani Walid;
3. the eastern branch, based in Benghazi, which covers the area from the Egyptian border westwards to Zuetina on the Gulf of Sidra, and from the south coast to the station of Albu Listar;
4. the al-Wahat branch, based at the Nafoura oil field, which controls the zone from the Egyptian border to Tazirbu and the al-Ahrash field in the west, and from the station of Albu Listar southwards to the country's borders with Sudan and Chad;
5. the central branch, based in Brega, which controls the zone from Zuetina to al-Heisha in the west, stretching southwards from the Gulf of Sidra to the Nigerien and Chadian borders; and
6. the southern branch, based in Zintan, which controls territory from al-Jufra in the east to the Algerian and Tunisian borders, and from the Nafusa mountains and Bani Walid southwards to the border with Niger.

Some information suggests that a south-western branch may exist; however, it is unclear which territory within the broader southern region this entity covers.

Operationally, the PFG remains divided into two factions: the first linked to the GNU and commanded by General al-Deeb, and the second linked to the LAAF and led by Major General Naji Al-Maghribi. PFG forces throughout the country are aligned with one or other of these actors, with the LAAF faction nominally controlling the eastern, al-Wahat, central, and southern branches, leaving them responsible for most of the oil-producing territory – including the Sirte and Murzuq basins – as well as key oil infrastructure such as the export terminals at Brega, Marsa el-Hariga, Ras Lanuf, and Sidra. The Tripoli-based faction nominally controls the Zawiyah and Mellitah oil and gas complexes, offshore oil platforms, and some gas and oil pipelines running through Tripolitania, as well as guarding the PFG administrative headquarters and that of the NOC in Tripoli.

Despite this division, the NOC and Tripoli-based MoD continue to pay the salaries of all PFG forces, including those commanded by Major General al-Maghribi. Payment to eastern forces was curtailed in October 2019 due to the LAAF offensive on Tripoli (and the attendant shutdown by that force of most oil production and export); however, salary payments to southern and eastern forces were reinstated in February 2021.[38]

The alignment described above, however, has only limited operational relevance. Within the zones of influence of both the GNU and LAAF, local PFG units operate with a large degree of autonomy. Because of the hybridization of the force, the distinction between official PFG and local armed groups is often blurred or opaque: in some

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37 'الفروع', Petroleum Facilities Guard, https://pfguard.ly/الفروع/.

38 'استكمال مرتبات الفروع الجنوبية و الشرقية لمنتسبي الجهاز', Petroleum Facilities Guard, 1 March 2021, https://pfguard.ly/استكمال-مرتبات-الفروع-الجنوبية-و-الشر/.

cases specific armed groups form the basis of official PFG units, while in others PFG personnel are simultaneously members of other, non-state armed groups. Centralized command over these forces is weak, and local tribal, sectarian, or economic interests often play a significant role in determining the actions of field units.

Effectively, this means that while financially the PFG is a single, cohesive entity, in the field the force is best understood as a loose collection of individual units, protecting similar types of facility and territory, but only operating to advance broader government or national interests to the extent that they do not substantially impede the individual economic and social needs of units or the communities from which they emanate.

Because of this fractured nature, it is important to understand the components of the PFG, as well as PFG-aligned armed groups, operating in some of the key locales throughout the country. The important units in each of the branches are detailed below the list is intended to be indicative, rather than an exhaustive mapping of oil and natural gas infrastructure protection.

Tripoli Branch

In Tripoli, in addition to the administrative staff at the main headquarters and the financial office, a small PFG force exists and is tasked with the protection of PFG facilities, the NOC headquarters, and storage facilities, such as Bin Jabar and al-Hani in Tripoli. The branch may also be responsible for the Brega facility in Misrata. There is little information on the size and sectarian composition of this force. It has, however, proven operationally proficient, notably driving off several attacks over the last few years on the NOC headquarters.[39]

Western branch

The western branch encompasses two large units, one based at the refinery in Zawiya, and the other at the Mellitah oil and gas complex between Zuwara and Sabratha.

The refinery at Zawiya, which ships oil produced at the al-Sharara field, is guarded by a PFG force drawn from the al-Nasr Brigade. The force, drawn largely from the Awlad Buhmeira tribe, encompasses 1,200 to 1,400 men, with a new batch of 300 recruits inducted in April 2021.[40] The force is led by Mohammed Kushlav, who has been sanctioned by the UN, US, and EU since 2018.[41] Kushlav and the PFG force at the refinery are closely linked to a larger Awlad Buhmeira-based poly-criminal organization, which is deeply involved in fuel and migrant smuggling in western Libya.[42]

The Mellitah complex ships oil produced at the al-Feel field. A small PFG unit operates at the site; however, functional security is provided by the 105 Infantry Brigade,

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39 'المؤسسة الوطنية للنفط في بيان لها صدر ظهر اليوم الاثنين تتقدم بالشكر لجهاز حرس المنشآت النفطية لردعه المجموعة المسلحة',
    Petroleum Facilities Guard, 24 November 2020, https://pfguard.ly/المؤسسة-الوطنية-للنفط-في-بيان-لها-صدر-ظ/.
40 GI-TOC communication, Libya political analyst, August 2021.
41 UN Security Council, 'Mohammed Kachlaf: Sanctions Summary', https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/
    sanctions/1970/materials/summaries/individual/mohammed-kachlaf.
42 Micallef, M., Herbert, M., Horsely, R., Bish, A., Fereday, A., and Tinti, P., 2021. *Conflict Coping and Covid: Changing human smuggling and trafficking dynamics in North Africa and the Sahel in 2019 and 2020*. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, April, p. 15.

drawn from Zuwara.[43] The size of the Zuwaran force fluctuates, with some personnel on short-term contracts, but is generally between 300 and 350.[44]

Eastern branch

At least three large PFG units operate in the eastern branch. The first – Battalion 306 (the Martyr Ahmed al-Sharif Battalion) – is based at the Sarir field and refinery in south-eastern Libya.[45] Officially, the force took over control of the field from the 129 Brigade, a Tebu force led by Ali Sida until his death in March 2020. However, the 129 Brigade remains the primary actor at the field. According to one contact, the head of the PFG force "is just a puppet", and is accepted by the 129 Brigade and other local actors as long as the PFG does not interfere with local smuggling activity.[46]

The second force, further north, is the Hariga protection unit, based at the Marsa el-Hariga export facility in Tobruk. The force, which reportedly numbers around 1,000, has proven problematic in the past; in 2021, for example, a pay dispute led it to shut down exports between January and February.[47]

The third, a large protection unit in the east, is based in Benghazi at the Ras Elmengar storage facility. The size of the force is unclear though, given its mission and location, it is probably smaller than the PFG units at Sarir and Marsa el-Hariga.

Central branch

The central branch of the PFG retains control over some of the key oil infrastructure in the country, with relatively large protection units stationed at Brega, Ras Lanuf, Sidra, and Zuetina. The branch is commanded by Naji Al Moghorbi, who like Jadran is a member of the Maghraba tribe. There is little information on the specific make-up of the forces linked to this branch, though most are believed to be from the Maghraba tribe, with many previously serving under Jadran. The size of the force is also unclear, though it is likely that it remains roughly the same as during Jadran's era, when it encompassed around 2,500 men.[48]

Southern branch

In the south-west, the major PFG forces are based at the region's three main fields: al-Sharara, al-Feel, and the Wafa gas field.

The al-Sharara field is controlled by two Tuareg groups: the PFG 30 Brigade and the 173 Brigade.[49] The former has controlled the field since 2014, when a Tebu force that had controlled the field since 2011 was ejected.[50] The PFG 30 Brigade was uneasily aligned with the Tripoli-based PFG until March 2019, when it realigned with the

43 GI-TOC interview, Libyan security expert, August 2021.
44 GI-TOC interview, Libyan security expert, August 2021.
45 Eaton, T., Rahman Alageli, A., Badi, E., Eljarh, M., and Stocker, V., 2020. *The Development of Libyan Armed Groups Since 2014: Community Dynamics and Economic Interests*. London: Chatham House, March, p. 46.
46 GI-TOC interview, Libya, 2020.
47 Kader Assad, A., 2021. 'Pro-Haftar Petroleum Facilities Guard shuts Hariga oil port in east Libya', *Libya Observer*, 24 January, https://www.libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/pro-haftar-petroleum-facilities-guard-shuts-hariga-oil-port-east-libya.
48 Eljarh, M., 2016. *Security Challenges And Issues In The Sahelo-Saharan Region: The Libya Perspective.* Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, p. 11.
49 Micallef, Herbert, Horsely, Bish, Fereday, and Tinti, 2021, p. 37.
50 Eaton, Alageli, Badi, Eljarh, and Stocker, 2020, p. 46.

LAAF PFG faction. Efforts by the latter to bring Zintani PFG forces to the field at that time led to tension and skirmishing, before the concept was shelved and the 30 Brigade's role reaffirmed. The 173 Brigade is newer and more fully integrated into the LAAF, having been dispatched to the field to ensure control over it.[51] Overall, the PFG forces at al-Sharara have proven highly flexible and adaptive to changing political circumstances. As one interviewee explained: "The PFG in al-Sharara are totally pragmatic. They were part of the GNA [Government of National Accord], then became [the LAAF] in April 2019. They can come and go. Basically, they see the area around al-Sharara as their ancestral land, so they have to control it come what may."[52]

In the far south-west, the al-Feel field has reportedly been secured since 2019 by the Khalid Bin Walid Brigade, a Tebu-led force, incorporating Arab members and based in nearby Um al-Aranib. It is unclear whether the brigade operates alongside more formal PFG elements, or whether the brigade itself is now being paid as part of the PFG.

The Khalid Bin Walid Brigade is the latest in a line of Tebu units linked to the field, either as members of the PFG or affiliated with it.[53] As at other locations, pay disputes have been a recurrent issue for the PFG at al-Feel and, in 2018, led the force to shut down the field for nearly half a year, resulting in losses of over USD 320 million.[54]

Finally, the Wafa gas field, in the Ghadames basin, is guarded by a small force linked to the PFG. Reportedly, this is composed of forces from Zintan.[55] There is little information available on the force, though in the past labour disputes between the field unit and the PFG authority have led to the temporary shutdown of the field.[56]

As underscored throughout this section, the PFG has grown substantially since its creation in 2007, with the force being at least four times larger in 2021 than prior to the revolution. However, the force's rapid growth, along with the process through which that growth occurred, has led to a force that is weak and fragmented, with only limited hierarchic control. The capacity of the force has been further impeded by the emergence of Tripoli-based and Benghazi-based factions, resulting in, effectively, two separate forces linked only by a shared financial structure.

While individual field units have proven capable of rebuffing threats to the areas they protect, their capacity and motivation to act is predicated on tribal and communal dynamics, rather than their nominal allegiance to the PFG. When local and national interests have come into conflict, hierarchical control has repeatedly broken down. The fractured nature of the PFG has undermined the trust that other security actors have in the force, affecting both coordination and their willingness to provide the PFG with

51 Micallef, Herbert, Horsely, Bish, Fereday, and Tinti, 2021, p. 37.
52 GI-TOC interview, Libyan contact, 2020.
53 Tubiana, J., and Gramizzi, C., 2018. '*Lost in Trans-Nation: Tubu and Other Armed Groups and Smugglers along Libya's Southern Border'*. Small Arms Survey, December, p. 32.
54 Kader Assad, A., 2018. 'Libya lost $320 million over Al-Feel oilfield shutdown', *Libya Observer*, 7 May, https://www.libyaobserver.ly/economy/libya-lost-320-million-over-al-feel-oilfield-shutdown.
55 GI-TOC interview, Libya security expert, August 2021.
56 Adel J., 2018. 'After NOC names perpetrators, PFG abandons its extortion closure of Wafa oilfield airport*', Libya Herald*, 21 September, https://www.libyaherald.com/2018/09/21/after-noc-names-perpetrators-pfg-abandons-its-extortion-closure-of-wafa-oilfield-airport/.

weapons and funding.[57] As the next section demonstrates, the limited reform efforts undertaken to date are insufficient, and the force must address numerous internal and external challenges if it is to become more effective, unitary, and professional.

Reform of the PFG and Key Challenges

Efforts to professionalize and reform the PFG are arguably critical to Libya. Repeated partial shutdowns of the country's oil and gas infrastructure have cost the country a substantial amount in foregone revenue – money that is needed for pressing social, economic, and reconstruction needs. It is highly likely that shutdowns will reoccur with frequency while the country lacks an effective protection force.

In mid-2021, when this report was authored, some reform efforts were being carried out or had been planned; however, the force continues to confront a number of internal and external challenges, which must be addressed by future reform efforts. These include both institutional problems within the Libyan government and the force, as well as strategic challenges posed by broader security and economic trends within the country. The following section details the reform initiatives attempted to date, as well as the challenges facing the force.

Reform initiatives

At the time of writing, limited reform efforts to reinforce the capacity and the cohesion of the PFG were being carried out; however, progress has been halting and efforts have had limited reach, lessening their impact on the force as a whole.

As detailed in the previous section, the divide between Tripoli-based and Benghazi-based factions is the most overt challenge facing the force. Libya's oil infrastructure bisects zones of operational control by the LAAF and GNU, with for example the al-Sharara field falling under the nominal control of the Benghazi faction of the PFG while the export terminal for the field in Zawiya follows the Tripoli-based headquarters. Essentially, a system of divided control is perceived as untenable, both for Libya and for international actors whose companies are involved in Libya's oil sector.

The reunification of the two factions is also probably the easiest challenge to accomplish, hinging as it does on political negotiations and agreements on resource sharing and command and control. Rival political power blocks in Libya have recognized the need for this reunification and the feasibility of accomplishing it; the peace agreement signed in Geneva on 23 October 2020 explicitly stated that a new, unified entity, titled the 'Oil Protection Force', would be created. Operationally, the new force is, in part, meant to be based on the reunification of PFG units linked to both factions.[58] The chairman of the NOC, Mustafa Sanalla, also claimed it would be non-tribal – with those who had participated in attacks on oil installations being barred from the new force – and would exist under the administrative control of the NOC.[59]

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57 GI-TOC interview, Libya political analyst, August 2021.
58 al Harathy, S., 2020. 'NOC reveals new security plan for oil facilities', *Libya Observer*, 16 November, https://www.libyaobserver.ly/news/noc-reveals-new-security-plan-oil-facilities.
59 Wintour, P., 2019. 'Libya's oil chief calls for national force to guard petroleum installations', *The Guardian*, 29 January, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/29/libya-oil-chief-calls-for-national-force-to-guard-petroleum-installations-militias.

To this end, in late 2020, Brigadier General al-Deeb and Major General al-Maghribi, along with Sanalla and United Nations personnel, convened in Sirte.[60] Both commanders flagged their support for a reunification process, as well as for a broader effort to equip the new force with advanced equipment.[61] There was further agreement on the initial creation of a 'model' protection force, to be deployed to the south-western Erawin field sometime in 2021.[62] Since then, however, movement towards the re-unification of the force has seemingly stalled. No follow-up meetings have been conducted, nor have there been any known efforts to create the planned 'model' force.

Another area that has witnessed substantial activity over the last 24 months has been training. Similar to other security and defence forces in Libya, the PFG's rapid growth and seemingly ad hoc recruitment pattern have likely outpaced basic training needs and career skills development for its personnel. Gaps in training impede the operational effectiveness of the force and impact the ability of force members to operate within their mandate, in a way that adheres to applicable Libyan laws – a particularly important issue for their counter-smuggling missions.

Since mid-2020, it appears that the PFG has taken steps to address this gap, offering a number of training opportunities. These efforts have not only targeted new recruits but also provided career training to both serving officers and enlisted personnel.[63] While some training activities entail individual lectures or short courses, others, especially those targeting new recruits, can last up to two months. Most of them have taken place at MoD facilities, such as the Misrata Air Defence College and the Omar al-Mukhtar Training Centre in Tripoli, with courses provided on weapons training, administration, military science, and law.[64]

While a promising sign, efforts to improve training for the force are challenged by the magnitude of the issue. With most reported training activities encompassing fewer than 150 individuals – and many targeting just one to two dozen – the current training regime is unlikely to be sufficient to regularly provide career education to PFG forces. Nonetheless, given the need to professionalize the PFG (and also the planned Oil Protection Force), reforming and expanding training efforts, as well as considering how (and how often) to train, is an essential and pressing task going forward.

60 United Nations Support Mission in Libya, 2020. 'ARSG Stephanie Williams attends the first meeting between NOC and the PFG commanders of eastern and western regions, hosted by Breiga's Sirte Oil Company', 16 November, https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/asrsg-stephanie-williams-attends-first-meeting-between-noc-and-pfg-commanders-eastern.

61 Wintour, 2019.

62 UN Support Mission in Libya, 2020.

63 ' مشروع رماية بالذخيرة الحية ضمن التدريبات لمنتسبي الدورة التدريبية المقامة بمقر الثانوية الجوية معيتيقة , Petroleum Facilities Guard, 25 October 2020, https://pfguard.ly/مشروع-رماية-بالذخيرة-الحية-ضمن-التدري; 'اجتماع لمناقشة اقامة دورات تدريبية لمنتسبي الجهاز, Petroleum Facilities Guard, 7 July 2020, https://pfguard.ly/اجتماع-لمناقشة-اقامة-دورات-تدريبية-لم; 'رئيس الجهاز يلتقي بخريجي الدورة التدريبية التي أقيمت بمركز عمر المختار, Petroleum Facilities Guard, 6 December 2020, https://pfguard.ly/رئيس-الجهاز-يلتقي-بخريجي-الدورة-التدر.

64 'رئيس الجهاز يلتقي بخريجي الدورة التدريبية التي أقيمت بمركز عمر المختار, Petroleum Facilities Guard, 6 December 2020, https://pfguard.ly/51رئيس-الجهاز-يلتقي-بخريجي-الدورة-التدر; 'احتفالية_تكريم_الضباط_الخريجين_بالدفعة, Petroleum Facilities Guard, 10 June 2021, https://pfguard.ly/احتفالية_تكريم_الضباط_الخريجين_بالدف.

Institutional and strategic challenges to reforming the PFG

While the reform initiatives undertaken to date represent important steps towards reforming the PFG, a number of institutional and strategic challenges exist that are likely to impede current efforts. The first is the hybridity of the force. As noted previously, most field units are drawn from communities close to the infrastructure they protect and operate largely autonomously. The unification of the Tripoli and Benghazi PFG factions will not alter this dynamic.

Field units and their communities would be likely to strongly oppose efforts to create a truly national force, operating within a hierarchical command system and operating according to national priorities, that exerts operational control over Libya's oil infrastructure. It is also unlikely to be feasible given the lack of political agreement on the equitable sharing of oil revenues among different communities and regions within Libya. This type of dialogue on "resource federalism", though substantially outside of the typical remit of security sector reform, is essential if local communities, and the field units linked to them, are to agree to a full reformation of the force.

A second challenge facing the PFG is that it's success or failure in achieving its mandate is inextricably linked with the capacity of Libya's security and defence institutions. When created, the PFG was not designed to operate as the sole guardian of oil infrastructure in Libya. Rather, it was meant to operate in tandem with other security and defence forces to respond to threats. The PFG has grown since the revolution, but so too have the risks facing oil infrastructure –including attacks by armed groups, protests by local populations, and shutdowns by rogue PFG units. The heightened risks and the vast geographic area that the PFG is mandated to protect mean that it relies even more heavily now on the assistance of other security and defence forces than prior to 2011.

Such forces remain extremely weak and fragmented, mirroring on a larger scale the issues of hybridity and poor command and control that are seen in the PFG. This broader security and defence sector dysfunction in turn impedes and further strains efforts by the PFG to fulfil their mission. Efforts to reform and rebuild the PFG should therefore be conceptualized and executed as part of a broader security and defence sector reform process, with a particular focus on improving coordination to counter threats to the oil infrastructure.

The final challenge involves finances. Delays in the payment of salaries have been a recurrent issue within the PFG. As noted earlier, the relatively complex payment system for the PFG – which sees payments transferred from the NOC to the MoD and only then to PFG personnel – is probably linked to many of these gaps in payment. Though the issue of payment is less visible than other PFG deficiencies, it is an acute problem for the force and can have substantial impacts. Delays in paying salaries have led PFG field units to regularly either halt production and exports at the facilities they protect, or withdraw from protecting the facilities entirely, effectively shutting them down. Though complex, because of the different entities involved, efforts to address the gaps facing the force must consider the multi-faceted nature of the PFG.

Conclusion

The extraction and export of oil is essential for Libya's economy, and hence the key underpinning of Prime Minister Dabaiba's economic and political goals. As detailed in this chapter, however, the PFG has struggled to ensure that extraction and exports continue unthreatened and unimpeded.

This is in part due to the east-west divide within the PFG. However, the force is more profoundly impacted and weakened by field units that are only partially responsive to command hierarchies, instead predicating their actions on local community needs and dynamics. This localization is a direct result of the hybridized recruitment strategies employed by the government in the years immediately after 2011.

The willingness to push back against hierarchies – and to agitate for local needs over national ones – also reflects a broader shift in the Libyan political sphere since 2011. Issues such as "resource federalism" and the fair allocation of profits are no longer subjects of theoretical debate, but motivations for taking direct action. Rather than preventing such actions, PFG units have become partisans in the disputes, often siding with local actors and communities.

Issues of resource sharing and profit allocation are inherently political. They are also inextricably connected to the major weaknesses and problems facing the PFG. For this reason, efforts to technically reform the force must be accompanied by political efforts to seek solutions for such broader societal issues.

Furthermore, the development of a functional PFG, or a similar body focused on oil and gas infrastructure, must be considered as part of a larger programme to strengthen and reform the security and defence sector. For the PFG to function effectively, especially in the face of increased post-revolutionary threats – such as armed groups and terrorist actors – effective coordination with and support from the broader security and defence sectors are essential.

Finally, while this chapter has focused on the PFG, and on oil extraction, it is important to note that many of the issues discussed could well apply to other types of extractive resources, such as water or gold. The latter is already emerging as an important sector, with fields such as Ezri, Kilinje, and Kouri Bougoudi located throughout the southern Fezzan and Cyrenaica.[65] As with the PFG's field units, security in these fields – to the extent that it exists – is provided by local actors, who would likely be loath to cede their control, and the profitability it brings, to the national government. Identifying a means through which this could be accepted is thus a challenge that cannot be faced by security forces alone and must involve broader political discussions around access to resources.

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65 Micallef, Herbert, Horsely, Bish, Fereday, and Tinti, 2021, p. 38.

Concluding Remarks:
Towards Reform?

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This edited volume's analysis of some of the key challenges faced by Libya's security sphere – although by no means exhaustive – shows that the impetus for security sector reform (SSR) in the country exists but is not yet being built upon. The publication was written to respond to a lack of holistic and contextually informed doctrinal approaches to SSR in hybrid environments such as Libya. While each chapter offers specific thematic recommendations, some general recommendations can be drawn from the volume as a whole, notably in terms of doctrinal revisions that are desperately needed at the macro level in order to move beyond traditional (and failure-prone) SSR paradigms in conflict and post-conflict environments.

The chapters for instance reveal that a move away from the blurred implementation of SSR and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) – or in practice disarmament, demobilization, and *integration* (DDI) – doctrines, especially when improperly sequenced, has become a necessity. However, although it is widely agreed that SSR blueprints should be tailored to the Libyan context as well as compatible with security sector stabilization (SSS) measures, neither of these goals are currently being pursued effectively, let alone implemented jointly. Nevertheless, given that early decision-making on security-related technical arrangements has been found to impact the landscape in which subsequent SSR takes place, it is crucial to focus on "stabilizing" the security sector when discussing interim security arrangements.

This volume therefore recommends that doctrinal approaches to SSR in hybrid environments, and in particular Libya, require revision. The question remains, however, as to how this can realistically be achieved. The answer is complex as it depends entirely on the socio-political situation at the time of publication (of this and any other such bodies of work). As a result, it is important to adopt a flexible approach to the subject matter and to develop doctrine that is both aligned with contextual realities but also adaptable to changes on the ground, which occur at warp speed in hybrid and conflict-affected environments.

As volatility and instability are a core part of the problem, there can be no one-size-fits-all process for designing a nationwide SSR blueprint in a given context. It is therefore essential for practitioners, decision-makers, and key stakeholders to invest time and resources in assessing the status quo of the country's security landscape, as well as its political and socio-economic situation, so as to adapt any blueprint to forecasts of likely scenarios. At the time of writing, it is particularly difficult to consider long-term scenarios for Libya given the uncertainty surrounding the electoral timeline. The question of whether elections will happen is extremely relevant for non-security

matters as this pivotal moment will inform how SSR should be approached and more importantly by whom. This is particularly important given that one of the main failures of the Libyan Political Agreement's security track was – beyond its very construction – the legitimacy crisis that affected the institutions meant to implement it, and the lack of a constitutional mandate for its implementation. Nevertheless, the idea that elections underpin successful and holistic SSR is not borne out by lessons of the past in the context of Libya, including the country's past elections in 2012 and 2014. There is much more to SSR than an elected body with a legally valid mandate for implementation; the political will for reform, for example, is crucial – especially in contexts plagued by corruption and nominally governed by weak, divided, and hybrid institutions.

A key trend has emerged in the discourse of development practitioners in Libya, which is to omit fundamental issues that have resulted in the failure of DDR and SSR programmes in the country, and to focus instead on "the one" remaining priority for Libya's political sphere (such as the cessation of hostilities, institutional reunification under a unity government, or elections) that would allow other efforts to succeed. However, few have attempted to revisit the foundation of SSR and what it entails – and thus to reconceptualize the significant elements of SSR (and DDR) programmes implemented in Libya since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi. Indeed, this exercise reveals that the fundamental pillars of holistic SSR are not, at any stage of the process, spelled out in SSR plans or visions developed as part of national strategies and/or peace agreements. For instance, oversight – be it parliamentary or independent – is rarely considered and will not be brought about through elections alone given that the necessary structures for proper civilian oversight of the security sector (or even defence sector oversight structures themselves) do not exist, beyond inactive parliamentary committees within the House of Representatives (HoR) that yield little to no influence. Similarly, while work in the area of security sector management (and the capacity-building efforts made in support of its leadership, focused primarily on change management) encompasses some aspects of state-building efforts, dual legal frameworks and corresponding security sector laws can only hope to be reconciled in the much longer term. In the meantime, however, they will continue to be an obstacle to meaningful institutional reform. This is compounded by the fact that bilateral train-and-equip programmes, disguised as SSR in so far as they relate to security provision, are increasingly being operated in secretive silos, disconnected from all strategic SSR efforts operated on a national scale. This dynamic naturally means that train-and-equip efforts that are pursued outside of the scope of a common vision for SSR based on democratic principles will inevitably cause harm in the long run.

In other words, a clear definition of what SSR is and should be is absent from the security track in Libya – regardless of whether the elections take place. At no point prior to the Libyan Political Agreement, even in the immediate aftermath of electoral cycles, was a comprehensive answer to the question "What does SSR look like in Libya?" provided, nor has significant progress been made on that front since. Indeed, even the contemporary Joint Military Commission (JMC or 5+5), operating within the framework of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF) roadmap, functions more as a box-ticking exercise for the security track than a visionary one, validating its successes by evaluating progress based on a finite list of interim security arrangements.

This has concrete impacts on the very act of service provision, especially when approached through a people-centric and short-term stabilization lens. In fact, this edited volume has brought to light that working on short-term challenges faced by the security sector could yield some almost immediate benefits in the energy and natural resources sectors, which could in turn also bring about a form of stabilization in this realm – which directly affects the livelihood of the Libyan population. In this sense, this volume argues that working on stabilization can have positive effects for long-term SSR – especially when it takes into account human security considerations. Water, electricity, and hydrocarbons infrastructure is indeed a key manifestation of the nexus between short-term stabilization and long-term SSR, and the chapters written on these topics provide numerous examples of complementarity between both doctrines.

Ultimately, both chapters – and the broader volume – show that the short-term framework for SSR needs to move towards a more people-centric and human security approach to stabilization, while ensuring a long-term holistic vision for its future implementation. Thus, this volume's primary recommendation is that while the political and security landscape is not currently conducive to meaningful reform, adaptative SSR blueprints can be designed on the basis of successful small-scale SSS initiatives in the transitional period – so long as all initiatives remain underpinned by a long-term vision of SSR that rests on democratic and human security principles, are fully in line with the Libyan context, and reflect what the Libyan people believe their security sector should look like in the future.

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