ENDING LIBYA'S CIVIL WAR

Reconciling Politics, Rebuilding Security

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His articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *Atlantic*, *Washington Quarterly*, *Current History*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *Survival*, *Sada*, the *Journal of Democracy*, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Financial Times*, and the *Chicago Journal of International Law*. He has been interviewed by major media outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, PBS *NewsHour*, NPR, BBC, and CNN. He routinely briefs U.S. and European government officials on Middle East affairs and has testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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Summary

More than three years after the fall of strongman Muammar Qaddafi, Libya is in the midst of a bitter civil war rooted in a balance of weakness between the country's political factions and armed groups. With a domestic landscape torn apart by competing claims to power and with interference from regional actors serving to entrench divides, restoring stability in Libya and building a unified security structure will be difficult if not impossible without broad-based political reconciliation.

Polarized Politics, Fractured Security Institutions

- After Qaddafi, Libya's security sector evolved into a hybrid arrangement marked by loose and imbalanced cooperation between locally organized, state-sponsored armed groups and national military and police.

- The system broke down as political and security institutions became increasingly polarized along regional, communal, and ideological fault lines.

- The country is now split between two warring camps: Operation Dignity, a coalition of eastern tribes, federalists, and disaffected military units; and Operation Dawn, an alliance of Islamist forces aligned with armed groups from Misrata. Each camp lays claim to governance and legitimacy, with its own parliament, army, and prime minister.

- Regional backing of the two camps—with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates supporting Dignity and Qatar, Turkey, and Sudan backing Dawn—has deepened these divisions.

- Outside efforts to train and equip Libya's security institutions have failed because of this polarization. There is no effective command structure; trainees have reverted to regional loyalties or are on indefinite leave because there is no military structure for them to join.

Recommendations for Libya's Leaders and Outside Supporters

Implement a ceasefire between Operations Dignity and Dawn and secure the withdrawal of forces taking part in those campaigns. The military units of these coalitions should move out of the major cities, and those that attacked civilians or civilian facilities should be disbanded.

Push for a transitional government that is inclusive of all factions. A face-saving power-sharing formula should encompass all politicians and include

supporters of both Dignity and Dawn—if they renounce support for terrorist groups and attacks on civilian facilities.

Implement a regional pact against military interference in Libya's affairs. Outside powers should stop equipping and funding armed groups and push their allies in Libya toward reconciliation. A September 2014 noninterference pact—including Egypt, the UAE, Qatar, and Turkey—is a promising start.

Support the development of a new Libyan security architecture, national army, and police force by harnessing local security initiatives. After a broad political pact is forged, the United States and its allies should focus on supporting a civilian-controlled defense architecture, municipality-based forces, and local disarmament and demobilization efforts.

Introduction

Libya after strongman Muammar Qaddafi is divided. Since mid-2014, the country has spiraled toward civil war. Rival armed groups are fighting for control of Tripoli's international airport. In the east, a breakaway faction of the Libyan armed forces led by a retired general, Khalifa Hifter, is shelling Islamist armed groups in and around Benghazi. Foreign diplomats, businessmen, employees of the United Nations mission, and the staff of the U.S. embassy have evacuated. The conflict took a dangerous regional turn with air strikes against the positions of Islamist armed groups allied with the city of Misrata by Emirati aircraft flying from Egyptian military bases.

There are effectively two rival governments. One is in Tripoli, where a coalition of armed groups from Misrata and other western towns, together with Islamists, has seized the airport and ministries. The other is in Tobruk, where a newly elected Council of Representatives and a cabinet have convened, dominated by Hifter supporters and federalists. Libya's armed forces—both official and unofficial—are essentially at war with one another, with each faction bolstered by a constellation of tribes and towns.

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Outside observers are often tempted toward a one-dimensional reading of Libya's turmoil. It is easy to explain Libya's breakdown as a political struggle between Islamists and liberals: the Justice and Construction Party affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and more rejectionist, jihadi factions like the Ansar al-Sharia versus the "liberals" under the National Forces Alliance. Another level of conflict seems to be regional: a contest between the towns of Zintan in the east and Misrata for economic power and political leverage in Tripoli or among federalists and their opponents in the long-marginalized east. An additional layer is made up of remnants of the old order—ex-security men, long-serving and retired officers, former Qaddafi-era technocrats—and a newer, younger cadre of self-proclaimed "revolutionaries," often Islamists, who were exiled or imprisoned, or both, during the dictator's rule.

Elements of all these dimensions are at play, but none of them alone has sufficient explanatory power. At its core, Libya's violence is an intensely local affair, stemming from deeply entrenched patronage networks battling for economic resources and political power in a state afflicted by a gaping institutional vacuum and the absence of a central arbiter with a preponderance of force. In essence, the country suffers from a balance of weakness among its political

factions and armed groups: no single entity can compel others to act purely through coercion, but every entity is strong enough to veto the others.

The current landscape of political polarization and the fractured security sector presents the international community with profound dilemmas. A previous approach of supporting state institutions is problematic when those institutions—whether the army, the parliament, or ministries—are effectively split between two warring factions. Similarly, a long-planned effort to train the Libyan army can only proceed after a ceasefire and a political reconciliation that produces a clearly defined road map toward the reform of security institutions.

With this in mind, the ultimate solution for Libya's security woes lies in context-specific security solutions, a broad political pact, a constitution, and a representative government. This is an area where outsiders can lend advice and measured assistance, but where the ultimate burden must be borne by Libyans themselves.

The Armed Groups

Too often, Libya's armed groups are thought to be outside of Libyan society and of the state. In fact, they are deeply interwoven into both.

One of Libya's conundrums is that nearly all the armed groups claim legitimacy from their affiliation with competing organs of the weak and fractured government. Government subsidization of these groups arose from the enfeebled state of the formal army and police. Muammar Qaddafi had marginalized those forces in favor of elite units commanded by his sons, and both the army and police had largely evaporated during the revolution that overthrew Qaddafi. Bereft of a way to project its authority and police the country's periphery and towns, Libya's transitional authority that took power after Qaddafi—the National Transitional Council—put the armed groups on its payroll. The chief of staff of the army, minister of defense, minister of interior, and president of the outgoing General National Congress (GNC; Libya's legislature that succeeded the National Transitional Council) have all at one time "registered" or "deputized" coalitions of armed groups. One result of these subsidies has been a mushrooming of armed groups, well beyond the number that actually fought against Qaddafi.

What has arisen then can best be described as a hybrid security order.[1] The concept is helpful in the Libyan case for describing how the "formal" forces of the army and police work in loose and often suspicious coordination with more powerful "informal" armed groups that fall under the nominal writ of the government, backed by traditional tribal and religious authorities.

The results of this arrangement in Libya have been mixed and highly dependent on location. In some homogenous communities where the armed groups enjoyed organic roots and social ties, the forces played a role akin to a local gendarmerie, performing functions like narcotics interdiction, guarding schools and hospitals, and even street maintenance. But in mixed or strategically

important locales, namely Tripoli and Benghazi, they have evolved into dangerously parasitic and predatory entities, pursuing agendas that are at once criminal, political, and ideological.

Contrary to some assumptions, no one faction is blameless on this front. Islamist, Misratan, Zintani, and federalist armed groups have all used force or the threat of force to pressure the country's elected institutions, capture smuggling, or seize strategic assets like border checkpoints, oil facilities, armories, ports, and, perhaps most importantly, airports.

This is particularly true with the Zintani and Misratan armed groups that are best known for their economic predation on the capital. Take, for instance, the notorious Qaqa Brigade, composed largely of Zintani members but based in Tripoli. Its commander, Uthman Mlegta, is a sturdy, bearded man that I met in his unit's heavily guarded compound in western Tripoli. The hallways of Mlegta's offices displayed a bureaucratic efficiency and formality that exceeded that of the regular defense ministry: there was a waiting room, a protocol office, and a logistics and payroll section, all clearly marked.

"We decided that our goal is to keep the capital safe," Mlegta said in early 2012. "Once everything returns to normal we will give up our arms." What that normalcy will look like is hard to say, especially since the brigade has become a major player in Tripoli's criminal underworld. Officially, the Qaqa Brigade affiliated itself with the army's chief of staff, providing border security along the country's porous southwest frontier and guarding oil installations in the southern fields. But it is widely known as the most predatory and mafia-like of Tripoli's armed groups.

More recently, the Qaqa Brigade became increasingly political, acting in effect as the armed wing for former prime minister Mahmoud Jibril's party, the National Forces Alliance (Mlegta's brother is the head of the alliance's steering committee).[2] In January, Mlegta's men threatened to shut down the elected legislature in response to a move to extend the GNC's mandate by his archrivals, the Misratans. It was one of several near-coup attempts that heralded a dangerous new chapter in Libya's troubled journey.[3]

The de facto division of turf between Zintani and Misratan armed groups, in which local militias allied with each town controlled ministries and strategic sites like airports, preserved a shaky peace marked by episodic clashes. Yet, the arrangement always carried the seeds of greater violence, particularly since the Zintani groups began using their control of Tripoli's international airport to receive weapons from abroad. In the context of growing polarization in the GNC and the launch of General Hifter's Operation Dignity in the east, it escalated into open fighting.

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The Islamist armed groups in the east, meanwhile, reflect that region's longtime alienation from the center and increasing embrace of moral piety and purity. The most powerful of these bodies arose in the early days of the anti-Qaddafi uprising: the February

17 Revolutionary Martyrs' Brigade, the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies, the Zawiya Martyrs' Brigade, the Martyr Omar Mukhtar Brigade, the Abu Slim Martyrs' Brigade, and the Free Libyan Martyrs' Brigade. The restless young men of the east flocked to their ranks, drawn by the promise of an ethical code, camaraderie, adventure, and income. Few had other options. On the roster of recruits for one of these units, the Zawiya Martyrs' Brigade, a number of prerevolutionary employment categories appeared with depressing frequency: day laborer, unemployed, mechanic, or student. Battling loyalist forces, these young men found a new purpose. And when Qaddafi fell, they found it hard to go back to what they were before.

Many now refuse to surrender arms, demobilize, and integrate into the formal security apparatus. They demand that the regular security forces first be "cleansed" of Qaddafi-era personnel. This is not simply a political imperative, but a moral one. The Islamists routinely decry state institutions as being irreparably tainted by ethically bankrupt supporters of the former regime: "Womanizers and drug addicts," as one Islamist leader icily put it. Another precondition is the implementation of a constitution based on sharia law that protects the moral sanctity of the army. "We want an army that defends Islamic law and the people, not the *taghut*," the former commander of the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies, Ismail al-Sallabi, said in November 2013, using the potent Islamic term for "tyrant." Still, despite their distaste for Qaddafi-era institutions, these Islamists do not act entirely beyond the pale of state authority.

The Hybrid Security Sector

Nearly all the armed groups operating in Libya are affiliated with the state in some way, which has led to the establishment of a hybrid arrangement between formal and informal forces. This arrangement stems from a fateful set of policies enacted after Qaddafi's fall, in late 2011 and early 2012, by the country's weak and unelected transitional government, the National Transitional Council.

Bereft of a way to project its weak authority and keep order, the National Transitional Council tried to establish a measure of control over the armed groups by putting them on its payroll. The idea was to harness the manpower and firepower of the revolutionaries to fill the security void left by the nearly nonexistent police and army, the remnants of which were viewed as tainted in the postrevolutionary era by their association with Qaddafi's rule. Most importantly, the intention behind the subsidization of armed groups was to use them to quell the increasingly frequent outbreaks of communal and ethnic fighting that were flaring up in the country.

Over time, most of the armed groups subordinated themselves to the chief of staff and Ministry of Defense. Many joined the Libya Shield Force, which acted as the country's army, and the Preventative Security Apparatus, a counterintelligence and investigative service that arose in the early days of

the revolution to root out Qaddafi loyalists. Others joined the Ministry of Interior's Supreme Security Committee (SSC), which roughly approximated the functions of the police. The SSC was always stronger in Tripoli than in other areas. Because entire armed groups joined the SSC and Shield forces, the new structures essentially preserved the cohesion and parochial outlook of the armed groups, albeit under the cover of the state.

By all accounts, the impact of this hybrid arrangement has been mixed, if not negative for Libya's stability and its fragile democracy. The government subsidized both the Libya Shield and the SSC, which had the undesirable effect of swelling the size of the armed groups that made up the bulk of the forces as young men flocked to their ranks, drawn by the promise of a steady salary that far exceeded that of the police and army.

Effectively deputized by the government and flush with funds, the armed groups were even more emboldened to pursue agendas that were increasingly political and self-serving. At best the Libya Shield and SSC structures were ways for the Libyan government to purchase firepower when needed to quell crises. But the new structures took on a life of their own, stymieing efforts to build up the regular army. Libyans refer to these forces as a shadow security state, a parallel army, and, even worse, a reincarnation of the dreaded "popular" and "revolutionary" committees that terrorized the country under Qaddafi.

Both the regular armed forces and the police have taken a backseat to the Libya Shield, the SSC, and several other paramilitaries—a system that mirrors the arrangement that existed in the twilight years of Qaddafi's rule. Then, the army and police had ceded control of operational tasks to, respectively, the security battalions commanded by Qaddafi's sons and the internal security service that answered directly to Qaddafi's office.

Today, Libya's formal armed forces are extremely ill-equipped, poorly trained, and bloated at the senior ranks. In many parts of the country, it is the armed groups, not the army, that control defense ministries, barracks, bases, and ammunition depots. The police force fares slightly better, but it is still unequipped to handle more difficult and hazardous policing tasks.

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For the most part, the regular forces and the armed groups operate in two parallel tracks. There have been a few instances of truly mixed units in which the members of the armed groups and regular army forces are fully integrated. But in most cases, the relationship between the two sides is marked by ambivalence, hostility, and a lack of coordination. The regular army frequently has hostile relations with the Libya Shield and other paramilitaries. The senior army officers regard the Libya Shield as an ill-disciplined, highly politicized, and Islamist group. Meanwhile, the Libya Shield sees the regular army as a hollow, corrupt, and top-heavy force. The SSC's relationship with the police is marked by similar distrust; the police are seen as incompetent and tainted

by the legacy of affiliation with the Qaddafi regime. For their part, the police see the SSC forces, like the Shield units, as unruly, ideological, and criminal.

These new hybrid security formations, the Libya Shield and the SSC, developed an arsonist-and-fireman approach to Libya's security: they justified their continued utility and existence to the fragile government on the basis of their ability to handle neighborhood security, catch drug smugglers, and quell outbreaks of communal and ethnic fighting in the country's far-flung provinces. But in many cases, the members of these Shield and SSC forces, and other "registered" armed groups were worsening the country's instability by either being directly involved in criminal activity or fighting as partisans in the conflicts they were meant to subdue.

The Libya Shield Force: The Shadow Armies

Many Libyans point to the Libya Shield project as the original sin of the National Transitional Council; a Faustian bargain that sent the country spinning on a downward trajectory. "The Shields are a Frankenstein," lamented one senior official.

Powerful commanders of the revolutionary armed groups undertook the Shield project as a way to resist incorporation into the regular Libyan army, which they loathed for its association with the old regime. Libya's transitional government placed the Shield forces under the authority of the chief of staff of the army, General Yousef Mangoush. Without its own army and police, the government deployed the Libya Shield to quell ethnic and tribal fighting across the country. The Shield forces acted, in the words of one Western adviser, as "Libya's fire brigades."

In the past two years, the Libya Shield has become a shadow army that has rapidly eclipsed the power of the regular forces. The monthly government salary for a Shield member exceeds that of a regular policeman and army recruit, giving the members of the armed groups or would-be recruits little incentive to join the government's formal forces. In other instances, double- and triple-dipping occurs: because of the system of unregulated, direct payments to commanders of armed groups and the absence of an effective registration system, a young man might be a member of a Shield, his local armed group that had been subsumed under the Shield but still operated independently, and the police all at the same time.

Organizationally, there are twelve Shield divisions arrayed across the country. Each Shield division is aligned with a particular region.

On the official organizational charts, the divisions are commanded by a regular Libyan army officer, usually a colonel. In reality, though, the commander of an armed formation whose men comprise the Shield division calls the shots.

The most damning defect of this system is that the Shield preserves the structure and cohesion of the armed groups. The heads of the individual armed formations are free to pursue their own agendas—whether ideological,

regional, or criminal—while operating as a commander in the Libya Shield, using the official writ of the government as cover. This has been particularly destabilizing in the case of the ongoing fighting between Zintani and Misratan armed groups in the capital.

The individual Shield divisions comprise the young men of the towns and provinces where they are garrisoned, and they reflect the parochial agendas and outlooks of those regions. The Center Shield, for example, is largely Misratan, and the Benghazi-based Libya Shield One has an eastern Islamist hue, along with a strong tribal component. In some cases, an entire Shield division is simply an armed group that has changed its affiliation; this is the case of the Libya Shield Seven, which is composed of the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies.[4]

The sizes of the divisions vary, but they usually have no more than 1,000 members—a limit that reflects the neighborhood and municipal origins of the armed formations and their inability, for a variety of personal and turf-related reasons, to merge into larger structures.[5] Disagreements and fissures are common. New Shield divisions have emerged in response to personality conflicts among their commanders.

In mid-2012, a Misrata-based Shield commander, Colonel Salem Joha, put forward a proposal to convert the Libya Shield into a more regular, formal branch of the military. Joha is a legendary figure in Misratan circles. A former artillery officer, he led the defense of the city during its epic siege by Qaddafi forces. After the war, he won plaudits from all factions for being pragmatic and uncommonly nonpartisan about the future path of Libya's security sector.

He spoke optimistically in the summer of 2012 about the ways in which his plan would erode the autonomy of the armed groups. Shield members would act, in effect, as the country's reserve military force, training for one month a year and receiving, in turn, a monthly stipend and medical benefits for themselves and their families. Soldiers would serve in locally garrisoned units close to their hometowns on two-year contracts. Recruits would join as individuals, not as part of an armed formation. Collecting the country's arms was an integral part of the plan: the armed groups would hand over their heavy weaponry—artillery, tanks, Soviet-era GRAD rockets, recoilless rifles—to the Shield forces. The government would buy back medium-sized weaponry like 14.5- and 23-millimeter antiaircraft guns, along with MILAN and KORNET antitank missiles—the staples of the 2011 revolution. Those weapons stores would be kept in regional "military zones" overseen by local Shield commanders.[6]

In all earnestness, Joha intended for the Shield's transition to a reserve force to break up the armed groups and their political backers, the local military councils in Libya's towns that were established during and after the revolution to coordinate the armed groups and advocate for their members at the national level. "There's no need for them anymore," he said. "They were a product of war. Now they are a shadow government and they need to disappear."

But it was hard not to see the plan as a way to preserve the prerogatives of the armed groups and position the Libya Shield as a parallel structure to the national army—and as a hedge against an unfavorable political situation in Tripoli. The fact that the reserve plan originated in Misrata is not surprising, given that town's go-it-alone reputation, powerful armed groups, and claim to the mantle of the revolution. "Misrata will start this initiative," Joha stated, "and we are confident that other cities will follow."

In the end, the plan collapsed due to opposition both in Misrata and across Libya's broader political spectrum. In large part this occurred because Joha's project violated a fundamental tenet of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration canon: it tried to collect the armed groups' weapons before a broad-based political consensus was reached. Joha also faced increasing harassment and threats of violence from Misratan hardliners who opposed his inclusive approach. He departed the country to serve as Libya's defense attaché in the United Arab Emirates. What the Joha episode shows is that deeply engrained political rifts have frustrated even the most promising, nonpartisan plans and perpetuate the parallel, hybrid structure.

The Shield divisions have since taken on their own momentum, presenting themselves as the indispensable pillar of Libya's transition. The Libya Shield Four, for example, cast doubt on the idea that there is a viable alternative to the Libya Shield in the absence of a "strong, respectable army with a clear, true military creed that all Libyans trust."[7] Other statements implied that the Shield forces were protecting the fragile army, with commanders warning they would move against anyone who approaches air force bases, camps, or army headquarters.[8] But critics argue otherwise. "The Shields actually enlarged the gap between rebels and soldiers," noted one observer.

In nearly all cases in which Shield divisions were sent to ease fighting, they were not acting as the neutral arbiters of the state but rather as active partisans. The Libya Shield One sent to the southern oasis town of Kufra to quell fighting between the Zway and the Tabu ended up inflaming tensions even more—its deputy commander Hafiz al-Aghuri was a Zway tribesman. To break the siege of eastern oil facilities by the militant federalist leader Ibrahim al-Jathran, the government dispatched the Center Shield, but that division's Misratan composition caused it to be perceived by easterners as an invading force from Misrata, raising fears of a broader civil war.[9]

The Supreme Security Committee: Revolutionary Enforcers

A similar degree of partisanship informed the Shield's counterpart in the Ministry of Interior, the Supreme Security Committee. The force was formed in October 2011 as an effort to secure Tripoli from postrevolutionary chaos and, allegedly, threats from Qaddafi-era holdouts. A December 2011 decision by the minister of interior provided the SSC with the formal authority for investigations and arrests.[10] It quickly evolved into a national structure,

with branches in major cities. There are reportedly 70 armed groups strewn across Tripoli, with "support companies, forces, and divisions"—Saraya Isnad, Quwwat Isnad, and Firaq Isnad—drawn from Tripoli's diverse neighborhoods and reflecting those areas' political orientation and family structures.

Outside of Tripoli, the balance of control between the SSC divisions, unaffiliated groups, regular police, the army, and the Libya Shield varies tremendously according to locale. In Benghazi, for instance, the SSC is now largely nonexistent, having vacated the city after the September 2012 attack on the U.S. diplomatic outpost.[11]

Despite these differences, like the Libya Shield, the SSC's structure may prove tough to disentangle and disband. Hashim Bishr, the commander of the Tripoli branch of the SSC, illustrated why. An Islamist who originally trained as a librarian and in information sciences, Bishr said he wants nothing more than to see the SSC project terminated and its members integrated into the regular police. "A lot of SSC don't want to work in security," he said in 2013. But there were few opportunities for them, given the absence of a viable police force, the sparse job market, and Libya's unsettled politics.

Although the SSC had been partially dismantled on paper by mid-2014, with roughly 80,000 members having been transferred to the police, in practice it remains deeply entrenched.[12] It is marked by byzantine chains of command and competition between local and national branches. The national branches exert little control over component town and neighborhood units. Bishr angrily recalled several instances in which the Tripoli branch of the SSC had been working at cross-purposes with the national committee on a missing person investigation; the national branch was providing leads to the SSC's Saraya and Firaq units in the city without informing him. Meanwhile, the Saraya and Firaq units do not recognize the national structure's authority.

For most serious tasks—high-risk arrests, counternarcotics operations, or investigations—the poorly staffed and ill-equipped police will call on the SSC to augment the force, if not handle the task completely. But relations with the police are strained by the revolutionaries' perception of the force as a Qaddafi-era institution. Perhaps more importantly, salary discrepancies give the SSC members little incentive to join the police: according to Bishr, SSC members are paid 900 dinars (around $750) a month while the police get 500 (over $400).

The SSC's communication is also problematic. Collaboration between the police and the SSC is personalized and episodic, bereft of any institutional framework. "If a police officer knows a member of the SSC, he will phone him," Bishr said. Coordination between the SSC and the Libya Shield is marginally better. In several instances, according to Bishr, Shield units operating from outside Tripoli gave him advance notice of positions and of the movement of personnel and weapons into the city.

There is also a disconnect between the SSC's mandate and its own view of its role in Libya and the perception many citizens of Tripoli have of the group. Given its origins, the SSC in the capital quickly gained a reputation as

an Islamist stronghold. The force's actual record has been mixed, and is the source of much debate and contention. To many Tripolitans, the SSC divisions became the city's feared morality police, attacking Sufi shrines, enforcing strict Islamic mores on gender relations, and interdicting drugs. From their headquarters at the Matiga Air Force Base on the city's eastern flank, SSC forces aligned with the nearby neighborhood of Suq al-Juma ran their own prisons that were largely free from oversight and were said to house political rivals from Zintan and the Nafusa mountains. SSC clashes with armed groups from Misrata and Nafusa-based towns like Warshafana frequently shut down commerce and traffic on Tripoli's main thoroughfares.

No one embodied the Janus-faced nature of the SSC more than Abdel Raouf Kara, the commander of the Nawasi Brigade, who is at once feared, respected, and ridiculed for his doctrinaire Salafi views and his use of the SSC to enforce them.[13] Local politicians have acknowledged and even praised his work in combating Tripoli's skyrocketing drug problem. But stand-up comics are also known to mock his religious zeal.

When I met him at Matiga Air Base, Kara was forthcoming about his Salafi outlook and its role in informing his police work. But he maintained that the will of the people took precedence. "I personally dislike democracy. But if the majority of people in Libya want it then I have to support it."

Both Kara and Bishr were adamant about the SSC's subservience to the state. Kara frames his fidelity in the classical Salafi imperative to support the ruler, no matter the extent of one's disagreements. Referring to Libya's then prime minister Ali Zeidan, Kara told me, "Zeidan is the *wali al-amr* [the Salafi term for the lawful head of state and the armed forces, to whom obedience is required]; we have to follow him no matter what." When another armed coalition, the Libya Revolutionaries' Operations Room (LROR), kidnapped Zeidan in October 2013, the SSC played a role in resolving the crisis through mediation and the marshaling of men.

Yet, like the Libya Shield divisions, the SSC forces are reflections of the fissures of locale and political outlook that afflicted the armed formations. During October 2013 fighting between the Tripoli neighborhood of Suq al-Juma and Misrata, SSC units as a whole did not intervene. But individual members were involved in the conflict.

As in the case of the Shield, attempts have been made to regularize the SSC by funneling its members into the police force under the Ministry of Interior. But that has been difficult, in part because of institutional weakness and bureaucratic dysfunction in the Ministry of Interior. The ministry "has been working on the SSCs, but in bits and pieces," said a senior United Nations adviser in mid-2013. "There is no strategic vision within the ministry and there is competition between the different directorates."

In the hopes of drawing more recruits, Zeidan issued a directive increasing the salaries of regular police to exceed those of the SSC. And the SSC's Tripoli branch ordered its members to complete the registration process with

the Ministry of Interior so they can either join training courses or receive severance pay in compliance with GNC Resolution 53, which mandated the disarmament of all armed groups. But according to the head of the SSC's Tripoli branch, only 1,154 graduated as of October 2013.[14] By February 2014, the Ministry of Interior had announced the graduation of a new class of 1,500 SSC members; a spokesman put the total figure of graduated SSC officers at 22,000, many of whom received training abroad.[15]

None of these efforts has met with much success, and there is still resistance to integration. Constituent armed groups within the SSC's Saraya and Firaq, who remain organically tied to Tripoli's neighborhoods, see the Ministry of Interior's plan as a political ploy to deprive them of leverage. "I am not optimistic about SSC's transition-to-police plan," noted Kara in November 2013. "The MOI is a dead tree; even if you add water you can't revitalize it." He claimed that even those SSC who joined the police were not actively engaged in police work. In April 2014, Bishr detailed continuing problems of integration, arguing that Tripoli's security sector was still dominated by hybrid security bodies—"special forces, joint operations rooms, and rapid intervention forces"—while foundational police directorates like traffic, emergency medical, criminal investigation, and antidrug units were being neglected.[16]

Yet on social media, SSC leaders have argued for their organization's continued indispensability. They stated that the Ministry of Defense and the prime minister's office asked the SSC's Tripoli branch to put the Saraya and Firaq units in charge of securing the capital because regular police have been absent despite a 50 percent increase in their wages.

Politicization of the Armed Groups

Since 2012, armed groups or coalitions of armed groups have increasingly found common cause with political actors or elected representatives within the GNC. The formality of these associations is not as clear as many suspect.

Libya's key political parties—the Justice and Construction Party (the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood), the National Forces Alliance, and the Loyalty to the Martyrs' Blood bloc (Kutlat al-Wifa li-Damm al-Shuhada)—do not officially have their own armed wings. But they are affiliated with the armed groups, and those affiliations are widely recognized. They are bound together in the same grassroots networks of kin, local, tribal, or political orientation that informed the revolution's trajectory.

Outside observers often characterize these divisions as secularists versus Islamists or Misrata versus Zintan. To some extent this is the case: the powerful Qaqa Brigade has ties to Zintan and the National Forces Alliance. So too does the Sawaiq Brigade, which is linked to another Zintani, former minister of defense Osama al-Juwaili. Meanwhile, the Libya Shield forces in the east and in Misrata are affiliated with Islamist blocs.

But the ties that bind members of armed groups with political actors are ultimately more complex than that. In many cases, they are related to patronage or exclusion under the old regime—a settling of scores, a continuation of the revolution, and a battle for the elusive and ill-defined mantle of "legitimacy." In others, these grievances stem from the absence of the state in people's lives and in provincial alienation from the central government.

The Supreme Revolutionaries' Council and the Libya Revolutionaries' Operations Room

Among the politicized armed groups, none has had a greater impact on the country's trajectory and stability than the Supreme Revolutionaries' Council (SRC), which became the Libya Revolutionaries' Operations Room in May 2013. This structure was yet another parallel military force, with an even more explicit political and parochial agenda than the Libya Shield or the SSC.

The LROR—in its current and previous incarnation—is essentially a coalition of armed formations that was motivated by a desire to pass the Political Isolation Law to exclude Qaddafi-era officials from the government and to oust the prime minister from power. The group can broadly be described as Islamist, Misratan, anti-Zintan, and anti-federalist.[17]

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In mid-2012, the SRC stormed the GNC and later parked armed vehicles in front of the legislature's building and other ministries in an effort to forcibly pass the Political Isolation Law and, later, remove Zeidan. In interviews, its members told me that it was calling for a range of municipal improvements, such as infrastructure funds and the election, rather than the appointment, of provincial governors. The country lacked the institutions or a representative body to address such demands, so these young men felt justified in using the threat of arms as leverage.

Although there was a strong eastern and Misratan component in the SRC and the LROR, the young men that joined the organizations were drawn from across the country and from diverse ethnic groups, ranging from the Tabu in Kufra to the Amazigh (Berbers) in the west. The SRC/LROR also had ties to Misratan politicians such as Abdel Rahman al-Suwayhili, Salafi blocks in the GNC, and the leaders of eastern armed formations with familial roots in Misrata like Wissam bin Humayd.

A crucial challenge presented by the SRC/LROR is that it includes members or entire units of security forces affiliated with the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior. For example, a key leader in the SRC was Wissam bin Humayd, the commander of Libya Shield One. The LROR's Benghazi branch includes the February 17 Revolutionary Martyrs' Brigade, the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies, the Martyr Omar Mukhtar Brigade, and the Free Libyan

Martyrs' Brigade. All of these armed groups are simultaneously affiliated with the Libya Shield Force under the chief of staff.

The LROR emerged on July 24, 2013,[18] and at the end of the month, the GNC appointed the LROR, acting under the authority of GNC President Nuri Ali Abu Sahmain, to defend Tripoli against an anticipated attack by Qaddafi loyalists.[19] In August 2013, Abu Sahmain went one step further, appointing himself as the commander in chief without consulting the GNC. He was forced to hand the role of commander in chief to then minister of defense Abdullah al-Thinni later that month, after GNC members said it was wrong for him to hold two positions of power.[20]

In November, the GNC voted to place the LROR under the chief of staff.[21] This was viewed as a compromise solution between those who wanted to disband it completely and those who wanted it to remain under the authority of Abu Sahmain. For many observers, though, it seemed like this was just another legitimization of armed groups' power under the mandate of the state. "The LROR under the COS [chief of staff] violates the first rule of GNC Resolution 53: whole [armed groups] units cannot join the army as units," noted one adviser to the Libyan government. There was reportedly widespread dissent within the LROR to becoming subordinate to the chief of staff.[22]

The LROR quickly became embroiled in a dispute about whether to extend the GNC's mandate beyond February 2014, when elections for the body were supposed to be held. The LROR opposed efforts by Zintan-based armed groups like the Sawaiq and Qaqa Brigades to close down the GNC. The LROR clashed with SSC units belonging to Haytham Tajuri, and it reportedly stalled the transition programs under way in the Ministry of Interior: The SSC's Hashim Bishr complained in November 2013 that the LROR was offering higher salaries to SSC members, effectively poaching recruits from the nascent police forces.[23] Regular army officers were upset that Zeidan had allocated over 900 million Libyan dinars (nearly $750 million) to the LROR,[24] which far exceeded the budget of the regular forces.

Halting Efforts to Formalize the Security Sector

Over the past two years, there have been multiple efforts to try to disband the hybrid security formations and integrate the members of nonstate armed groups into formal state security institutions. None has succeeded. Although political stalemate and polarization are the principal culprits, Libya's security sector has also suffered from the near-complete absence of an institutional base—the ministries and bureaucracy that are essential to coordinate its efforts and keep it running.

Under Qaddafi, the Ministry of Defense and the chief of staff's office did not have an institutional base and staffing functions. Because of the lack of

such a framework, the functioning of these institutions is now highly dependent on personality politics and backdoor deal making with the various armed groups. There is no system for rationalizing procurement, force development, training, and deployment. At the strong recommendation of Libya's international donors at a 2013 conference in Paris, the Libyans set up a National Security Coordination Committee, but it remains little more than an organizational chart.[25]

Much of the security council's hollowness stems from the fact that setting up a coordinating body would mean addressing the stark political disagreements that pervade the upper reaches of the security sector. And this was something that the embattled Zeidan was unwilling and unable to do. Consequently, decisionmaking was stymied by political rivalries between officials who all control various armed formations across the country—the minister of defense, the chief of staff, and the head of the GNC (who was technically the commander of the armed forces).

The absence of inclusive institutions has fueled the widespread perception that the new government is simply replicating the old habits of the Qaddafi state. Without a clear strategic direction and transparency in resource allocation, the country's armed formations have come to suspect that the defense sector and the Interior Ministry—if not other branches of government such as the Justice Ministry—are perpetuating the interests of those who served Qaddafi's regime. They are loath to surrender their leverage when the country's key political processes and institutions (the constitution and parliament) are either not yet clearly defined or are dysfunctional, delayed, or paralyzed by gridlock.[26]

A key obstacle confronting reintegration and the building of the new army is the military's bloated senior ranks. In essence, the army today resembles an inverted pyramid. No one knows how many soldiers are in the Libyan army: the Qaddafi regime gave out senior officer commissions as rewards, so the ranks of colonel and above are disproportionately heavy when compared to other armies. Reform-minded Libyans and outside advisers have long recommended an early retirement program for many of these senior officers.

But the process of lightening up the senior ranks has proceeded haltingly, partially due to a politically motivated campaign to expel officers suspected of loyalty to the old regime. The Commission for Integrity and Reform of the Libyan Army is part of the problem. It was essentially set up to apply the sweeping Political Isolation Law to the army in a way that is roughly analogous to the de-Baathification campaign against the Iraq Army.[27] Its application of the law is overly broad. Already, the commission has expelled large groups of senior officers at a time—numbering anywhere from 400 to 1,000. But many of them had fought against Qaddafi.[28] As in the case of Iraq, the blanket application of the law could not only deprive the army of much needed operational experience, but it might also provoke widespread social upheaval because many Libyan officers have connections to major tribes.

The government needs to develop a policy that carefully culls the senior ranks to free up promotions, balance the budget, and attract recruits from the ranks of the revolutionaries that overthrew Qaddafi. But perhaps most importantly, the government needs to invest in institutions that recognize and harness the highly localized nature of security in Libya, rather than trying to forcibly institute a top-down approach that for many former revolutionaries smacks of the hypercentralization of the Qaddafi era.

One attempt was made to do this in 2013. But, like so many other security sector initiatives, the national guard project fell victim to political polarization.

Originally conceived in April 2013, the national guard was intended to create a standing military force composed primarily of recruits from the Libya Shield Force and SSC under the control of the GNC president—a sort of gap-filler to carry out nationwide policing functions while the regular army was being trained and equipped. According to the plan, a 30,000–35,000-strong national guard would have transitioned to a reserve force after two years, at which point the regular army and police would presumably be ready to assume primacy. In both scope and function, the force combined elements of a reserve military force and a national gendarmerie, coordinating with the army and police as needed on protecting borders, guarding critical infrastructure outside the cities, and protecting diplomatic facilities.[29] Its planning committee consciously modeled the program after similar structures in the United States (the National Guard) and in Europe (the Home Guard in Denmark and the Army Reserve in the United Kingdom).

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But the Libyan national guard was ultimately hampered by political opposition from nearly all quarters. For critics of Zintani origin in the National Forces Alliance and the army, the national guard smacked of an Islamist and Misratan project to build a parallel army and preserve the armed groups, particularly the Shield forces, but under another name. They pointed to the fact that the national guard committee was formed by technocrats sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists with ties to the constellation of Islamist armed groups under the February 17 Coalition and the Gathering of Revolutionaries' Companies (Tajamuu Saraya al-Thuwwar).

There were other reasons given for its crumbling. The chairman of the national guard committee, Nuri al-Abbar, told me he was mystified by the decision to cancel the national guard program: "I don't know why it failed." But al-Abbar also acknowledged opposition from the Islamists themselves. These figures saw in the guard's mandate to protect facilities, borders, and static sites an attempt to get former revolutionary fighters and armed groups out of the picture by effectively banishing them to Libya's hinterland. Al-Abbar had warned Zeidan to involve the Islamists in the new army's development and recruitment—or risk concerted opposition. Finally, one adviser in the prime minister's office opined

that Zeidan was too consumed by his own political survival to implement the national guard idea—he simply didn't have the bandwidth.

In principle, the national guard aimed to capitalize on preexisting structures at the local level and avoid an overly centralized approach. In that respect, the idea itself is sound and warrants further development.

As of July 2014, Misrata had resurrected the national guard idea (albeit under the name of the Third Force) and submitted for deliberation as part of the United Nations–sponsored National Dialogue. But for the concept to gain traction, the political factions must arrive at an agreement about its command structure, mission, and the mode for integrating former revolutionaries.

The Rise and Fall of Hybrid Security in Benghazi

The attempt at building a hybrid security system had the most far-reaching consequences in Benghazi. By the summer of 2013, a new security landscape had emerged in the eastern city, marked by a tenuous division of labor between "official" forces embodied in the city's main army unit and the semiofficial Islamist armed groups.

To the extent that it existed, security in Benghazi had long hinged on an uneasy partnership between the city's "registered" Islamist armed groups (the Libya Shields One and Seven, the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies, the February 17 Revolutionary Martyrs' Brigade) and the main governmental military force in the area, the local special forces unit known as the Saiqa or Thunderbolt Brigade, headed by a charismatic commander, Colonel Wanis Bukhamada.

The Saiqa was among the first military units to defect from Qaddafi's army in the early days of the uprising. But in the aftermath of the revolution, Bukhamada was reluctant to get it involved in policing activity in Benghazi. After all, as he told me, his special forces were not designed or equipped for urban policing. They lacked an investigative and forensic service, which meant most crimes went unsolved.

But by the summer of 2013, when violence in the city escalated and the regular police proved incapable of addressing it, Bukhamada abandoned his reticence. He mobilized the Saiqa's reserve forces, sent nightly patrols across the city's thoroughfares and later fought running gun battles with the jihadi Ansar al-Sharia. In October, he became the effective military governor of Benghazi, charged with coordinating the efforts of government agencies and disparate "registered" armed groups.

For these Islamists—the commanders of the Libya Shield One, the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies, and the February 17 Revolutionary Martyrs' Brigade—Bukhamada's Saiqa was at once an uneasy partner and an implacable foe. Part of this stems from ideological differences, but this dualism is also rooted in

rival claims to revolutionary legitimacy, tribal tensions, and, especially, historical memory.

The Saiqa was among the elite forces dispatched by Qaddafi to spearhead a ferocious crackdown on an Islamist uprising in the east during the late 1990s. The sons of those who fought, died, and were imprisoned in that uprising found themselves fighting side-by-side with the Saiqa during the 2011 revolution.

Still, the bad blood runs deep. In interviews in 2013, some of these Islamist leaders told me they were dismissive of the Saiqa's capabilities and deeply suspicious of its motivations. The former head of the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies, Ismail al-Sallabi, believes that the Saiqa were little more than rabble ("drug users and womanizers," he said) and castigated Bukhamada for "militarizing" life in Benghazi. Part of this denigration reflects the Islamists' self-identification as ethical and pious, which is meant to set them apart from the Qaddafi era and its remnants. "We are people of values. The Saiqa are people of interests," al-Sallabi said.

But a more serious charge from the Islamists was that the Saiqa force is little more than a tribal armed group made up of and controlled by prominent eastern families. Members of the Ubaydat, Awaqir, and Baraghitha tribes comprise the majority of the Saiqa's rank and file. For instance, during a 2013 protest on the Shield compound, Wissam bin Humayd was reported to have called Bukhamada to plead for the Saiqa to come to the rescue. After all, Humayd argued, it was not just the headquarters of a "militia" that was being assaulted but a legitimate security body subordinate to the chief of staff. The response from the Saiqa, he said, was: "We don't have orders to get involved." But Saiqa soldiers reportedly mingled among the crowd, firing toward the ramparts. "They said they were 'siding with the nation,' but in reality they sided with the Baraghitha," said Humayd.

To an extent, there is some truth to these charges. By many accounts, any success that Bukhamada enjoyed in Benghazi stemmed less from his rank and more from his tribal pedigree. While Bukhamada hails from the prominent Magharba tribe and was raised in Murzuq, a border town far to the south of Benghazi, Benghazi's major tribes have nonetheless welcomed him as one of their own—the quintessential outsider who fights for his adopted home. "He is more of a tribal sheikh rather than a military commander," a fellow special forces officer in the capital, Tripoli, noted with approval in late 2013. This tribal affinity became apparent in late 2013 and early 2014, when major tribes pledged their allegiance to him and swore that if any of their kin were killed by his forces they would not seek retribution in accordance with tribal custom.

In an effort to assist this coordination, the GNC along with a range of local and municipal actors set up the so-called Joint Security Chamber.[30] The body was intended as a sort of command center meant to deconflict and coordinate the efforts of Benghazi's formal security institutions. It reportedly included the marines, the police, the army's Brigade 319, and Bukhamada's Saiqa unit. It held regular meetings with tribes, religious leaders, and civil society.

But the chamber left much of the actual policing to the Islamist armed groups that comprise the Benghazi branch of the LROR. In Benghazi, the LROR's constituent armed groups included the Preventative Security Apparatus, Libya Shields One, Two, and Seven (the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies), and elements of the February 17 Revolutionary Martyrs' Brigade. A member of the LROR told me in 2013 that Ansar al-Sharia coordinated and participated to a limited extent, performing security functions such as guarding the western gate of the city and the Jala Hospital.

Given the power of the LROR, prominent leaders in Benghazi's regular security forces began to question the capabilities of the Joint Security Chamber and the GNC's support for the regular army. Bukhamada himself noted that it was "still in its infancy." For their part, Islamists unabashedly trumpeted their contributions and the corresponding impotence of the regular forces. "The Joint Security Chamber is one-legged," noted Ismail al-Sallabi in a May 2013 interview.

It was in the context of this asymmetry between the regular and Islamist forces that eastern tribes began forming an alliance with frustrated officers in the regular army. The two camps were united by a shared antipathy toward the Muslim Brotherhood, a sense of eastern exclusivity, and a desire for a stronger military. These shifts were the first stirrings of the movement that would later crystallize as Operation Dignity.

The Drift Toward Civil War and Regionalization

On May 16, 2014, military forces belonging to a self-styled Libyan National Army began shelling bases in and around Benghazi belonging to Ansar al-Sharia, the February 17 Revolutionary Martyrs' Brigade, the Libya Shield One, and the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies. Announced as belonging to a nationwide Operation Karama (Dignity), the forces were under the command of retired Brigadier General Khalifa Hifter (a former commander of Libya's ground forces who had led its disastrous war in Chad and then defected to form an opposition front backed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency). Before launching operations, Hifter had spent nearly a year building support among powerful tribal groupings in the east: the Ubaydat, the Awaqir, and the Baraghitha.

A range of military units quickly joined Hifter's forces: the Benghazi-based Saiqa; air force units operating from Gamal Abdul El Nasser Air Base near Tobruk; air force units at Benina, Benghazi's dual-use airport; the Army of Barqa (Jaysh Barqa or Cyrenaica Defense Force); the Baraghitha tribal armed formations under the command of Ibrahim Waqwaq; ethnic Tabu fighters from the southern city of Kufra; and Tuareg in the southwest region of Ubari.[31] In the west, Zintan-based armed groups such as the Qaqa, Madani, and Sawaiq Brigades (many of them reportedly composed of ex-soldiers from Qaddafi's praetorian units) joined Hifter's fight, as did the commander of the military

police, Mukhtar Fernana, and tribal armed groups from Warshafana, an area outside of Tripoli. On the political side, Mahmoud Jibril's National Forces Alliance endorsed the operation along with other Libyan politicians, such as Zeidan and the former National Transitional Council chairman Mustafa Abd al-Jalil.

The roots and goals of Operation Dignity are numerous, embodying a confluence of different grievances that Hifter was able to harness. At one level, it represented a movement by current and former military officers frustrated about an endemic spate of assassinations in Benghazi. In press conferences, Hifter vowed to expel the Islamist armed groups, whom he deemed "terrorists," from a number of areas. But his definition of "terrorism" was notably elastic.

Hifter has included the Muslim Brotherhood and other nonmilitant political actors as his targets. "There are three options for Islamists," he told me in a June 2014 interview: "Death, imprisonment, and expulsion from the country." His language is messianic and almost apocalyptic. He sees the fight in Benghazi as an extension of a broader regional and even global fight against al-Qaeda and its splinter groups and affiliates. "Libya will be the graveyard of terrorism," he told me. "I am fighting the scourge of the world and the world needs to support me."

Aside from such bombast, Hifter's movement was born of a deep disenchantment on the part of ex-Qaddafi military officers, particularly in the east, with the GNC's collusion with Islamist armed groups, whether in the form of the Libya Shield Force or the LROR. Even more pragmatic commanders in the east, such as Wanis Bukhamada, had long complained that the GNC was not providing funding or administrative support to the army in its fight for security in Benghazi. By many accounts, Hifter's rise was enabled by an extremely weak chief of staff, Abdel Salam Jadallah al-Obeidi, who was unable to control the Islamist-dominated Libya Shield Force. Similarly, the chief of staff became a pawn of the LROR, which had been under the command of the GNC president before being transferred to his authority.

Shortly after he launched the operation, Hifter's allied forces from Zintan, the Qaqa Brigade, attacked the GNC, which unsuccessfully tried to solicit help from Misrata. On the evening of the May 18, a group of five military officers led by Hifter announced that the GNC would be suspended and that its work would be carried out by the 60-member Constitutional Drafting Assembly.

By all accounts, even from his supporters, this was a dangerous move against the country's fledgling, if imperfect democracy. A catastrophe was averted with the announcement of elections for a successor to the GNC, a Libyan parliament called the Council of Representatives (Majlis al-Nuwab).

In Benghazi, Operation Dignity has not been able to achieve its goals, with fighting dragging into a stalemate. Hifter admitted in an interview that his forces have not been able to physically dislodge Islamist armed groups from Benghazi. He has not maneuvered ground soldiers to seize territory in the city and its environs but has instead relied on standoff attacks using rockets,

artillery, and aerial bombardment from his air force's aging fleet of Hind attack helicopters and antiquated MiG fighter jets. The Islamists have responded in kind with rocket attacks of their own, and they show no sign of backing down.

Ironically, Operation Dignity ended up swelling the ranks of the militants as moderate Islamists felt increasingly targeted by Hifter's elastic definition of terrorism. On the battlefield, his operation compelled disparate Islamist armed groups in and around Benghazi to harness their respective forces into a coalition known as the Benghazi Revolutionaries' Shura Council, which included the Ansar al-Sharia, the Libya Shield One, the February 17 Revolutionary Martyrs' Brigade, and the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies.[32] By combining their firepower into this umbrella group, the Islamist forces were able to overrun several Saiqa bases in Benghazi—a feat that had been impossible when they battled the special forces individually. Even more worrisome are reports that Libyan jihadists trained by Islamist armed groups in the east and currently fighting in Iraq and Syria are returning home to take on Hifter, bringing with them new skills and tactical expertise.

Despite the grinding stalemate in Benghazi, Hifter pledged in late June 2014 to open a new front in the capital—a pledge that was eventually honored, although not in the way he anticipated.

A Fragile Equilibrium Comes Undone: The Fighting Comes to Tripoli

The Zintani-Misratan rivalry in Tripoli had been marked by a tenuous peace where armed groups from each side controlled key sites. But when Hifter forged an alliance with the Zintanis, this balance was upset, and the city's hybrid security arrangement quickly unraveled.

In tandem with this military threat, the Misratan and Islamist factions lost control of the country's elected body. The election for the GNC's successor, the Council of Representatives, held on June 25, 2014, produced results that by initial counts were unfavorable to the Islamists. For the LROR and its allied armed groups, then, the balance was turning against them. They had suffered at the polls, and the country's two main airports (Tripoli International Airport and Matiga) were in the hands of their opponents, the pro-Hifter forces. Most alarming was the prospect that Hifter's forces in the east would rely on Zintani forces with which he had allied to take over the Tripoli airport and bring the fight to the capital, as he had threatened to do.

On July 13, the Islamist LROR launched operations to drive Zintanis from the Tripoli airport and from strategic installations across the city, with the aim of shifting the balance of power in the capital. Later backed by armed groups from Misrata, other Tripoli neighborhoods, and surrounding western towns,[33] LROR forces began shelling Tripoli International Airport, in what was dubbed Operation Fajr (Dawn)—a direct response to Operation Dignity.[34] Zintani

forces claimed they had met with representatives from Misrata on the night of July 12, and both sides agreed to avoid the fighting, but the Misratans attacked anyway.[35] The fighting soon attracted forces from across Libya, and on July 17, the Misrata-led Center Shield arrived in Tripoli to take part in the airport attack.[36]

An unstated goal of the operation was to shut down the Tripoli airport, thus preventing the pro-Hifter Zintani forces from receiving weapons from either eastern Libya or outside supporters. Air traffic in western Libya would be routed through the nearby Misrata and Matiga airports, which were controlled by pro-Dawn armed groups.

Each side tried to seize the mantle of revolutionary legitimacy in defense of its actions. The Zintanis claimed they had been fighting Islamist extremists, while the Misratans declared they had been trying to destroy the remnants of the Qaddafi regime.[37] But beneath this larger meta-narrative of Islamists versus liberals or Misrata versus Zintan, the Dawn-Dignity fighting reflected long-standing feuds between rival towns, clans, and patronage networks, such as Warshafana versus Zawiya. Adding to the complexity are splits between Ansar al-Sharia in the east and the Dawn forces in the west. Although they are fighting a common enemy and Hifter has grouped them together, Ansar al-Sharia has rejected the Dawn forces, the Brotherhood, and the former members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, accusing them of having deviated from the revolution.

The fighting continued through August, with contradicting reports about who controlled which positions. In reality, the Misratans and their allies were on their way to quickly controlling the airport, which prompted the opening of a dangerous new chapter in the conflict.

Although they are fighting a common enemy and Hifter has grouped them together, Ansar al-Sharia has rejected the Dawn forces, the Brotherhood, and the former members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, accusing them of having deviated from the revolution.

The Regionalization of the War and Two Claims to Governance

Operation Dawn spurred increased regional political and military involvement in Libya in support of Dignity forces, leading indirectly to the rise of two centers of power.

Since launching his operation, Hifter has sought to reinforce connections between events in Egypt and Libya. In so doing, he is tapping into a deep current of Libyan frustration that looks to Egypt's president, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, as an exemplar of a secular strongman who can eliminate the country's Islamist opposition. Many of Hifter's supporters hail from eastern tribes with kin on the Egyptian side, and Hifter has claimed that both he and el-Sisi agree that fighting terrorism is a way to "preserve our Arabic identity."[38] He pledged that he would not permit any anti-Egyptian militants to exploit Libya's eastern

border for safe haven. And he predicted greater cooperation between Egypt and Libya toward the goal of ending "foreign intervention in Libya."[39]

Both the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt have long been alarmed about the turn of events in Libya: Egypt sees Islamist armed groups on the eastern border enabling the movement of money, weapons, and jihadi fighters across its territory and has accused Libya's Islamists of backing the Brotherhood. The UAE is driven in large part by a broader fear about the rise of the Brotherhood. It has military links dating from the 2011 revolution to the Zintani factions that are now allied with Hifter against the Misratan Islamist armed groups and that, until recently, were defending Tripoli's airport against the Islamists.

In the wake of Hifter's campaign, Egypt and the UAE intensified their involvement. Operation Dignity's stalling in Benghazi and the apparent advances of Misratan (Islamist) armed groups in the battle for Tripoli's airport triggered a series of nighttime air strikes in Tripoli by Emirati aircraft launched from Egypt. Taken in sum, the incursions signal a growing convergence between the UAE, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia against Islamists and especially the Muslim Brotherhood across the region.

But the roots of their concerns run deeper.

The intervention represents a dangerous regionalization of Libya's civil war. And it could provoke an escalation by Qatar in the form of military support to the anti-Hifter Islamists, using Sudan and Turkey as middlemen.

What emerged were two parliaments and two rival claims to governance, each backed by regional powers. The Dawn-aligned forces seized government ministries, while the GNC has reconstituted itself in Tripoli and put forward its own prime minister. Qatar and Sudan are purportedly sending arms to the Dawn forces.

In Tobruk, the new Council of Representatives and government have gained the upper hand, both domestically and internationally. The new chief of staff of the armed forces is staunchly pro-Hifter. In mid-September, reports surfaced that the council had signed a defense agreement with Egypt, although it was subsequently denied.[40] Libya's diplomatic corps has also fallen victim the country's fissures: several overseas ambassadors were recently fired by the council for their alleged loyalty to the Tripoli-based GNC. For his part, Prime Minister al-Thinni was opposed in principle to Hifter's operation because of its illegality, but he has nonetheless tilted toward the Dignity camp, traveling to the UAE to solicit military support. That said, he seems to be working toward the inclusion of western and Misratan politicians. Although his first two attempts to forge an eighteen-member cabinet were rejected by the Council of Representatives because of disputes over the Interior, Defense, and Foreign Ministry portfolios, on September 22, 2014, a government was finally approved.

Finally, perhaps the most crucially contested institution is the central bank of Libya, responsible for the dispersal of oil revenues. In principle it has maintained its neutrality. But as of September 2014, there are signs of internal

fissures and a drift toward the Tobruk camp, with reports of illegal fund transfers by its deputy governor to the Council of Representatives.[41]

All of this presents new challenges for outside actors seeking to lend assistance to Libya. A longtime emphasis among U.S. policymakers has been to support "state institutions," but in the midst of warring camps that have each made claims to legitimacy, it is unclear exactly what this means. Although the international community has recognized the Tobruk-based government, building consensus around its decisions and enforcing its authority in the west could be problematic. This is especially so given the growing absenteeism of some Islamist members from Benghazi, Misrata, and some western towns, many of whom were threatened with death if they traveled to Tobruk. As of mid-September, its sitting membership has hovered at 110–145 out of an elected 188.[42]

The quandary of outside assistance is especially stark on the security sector front: in light of the fissures between the Dignity and Dawn camps and competing institutions, building a unified military structure will be problematic, if not impossible without a broad-based political reconciliation.

Challenges of Outside Assistance: The General Purpose Force

Amid the profound factional fissures, a centerpiece of assistance from the United States and Libya's NATO supporters remains the training of the country's security forces. The U.S. military's Africa Command (AFRICOM) and Special Operations Command (SOCOM) have been quietly developing and partially implementing plans for building Libyan military and specialized counterterrorism forces since early 2013. In recent testimony before the U.S. Congress, a senior State Department official reemphasized the U.S. commitment to training the Libyan military. But given the current split between Dawn and Dignity forces, moving forward on the plan carries great risks.[43]

The project originated in a plea during last year's G8 summit by then prime minister Zeidan for outside help in building what would later be known as the general purpose force totaling roughly 19,000 new soldiers. When it became clear in the summer of 2013 that Libya's elected government could not function free of the influence of armed groups, the plan to create a viable, state-controlled alternative gained greater traction in Washington. The United States, Turkey, Britain, and Italy have plans to train and equip the Libyan military at bases overseas. AFRICOM, for its part, will train 6,000 to 8,000 soldiers at a base in Bulgaria. According to a U.S. congressional notification, the Libyan government has committed to pay $600 million for the training and logistical support. But so far, the U.S. portion of the training has been on hold because Libya has not provided payment up front.

AFRICOM officials acknowledge the challenges of the plan, having learned hard lessons in recent years about building armies in shattered states amid a

patchwork of tribal and regional loyalties. "We want to train new units as a whole to ensure that individually trained recruits don't return to Libya and melt back into the armed groups," one AFRICOM official told me. Some officials at the Pentagon expressed concerns about creating factional or tribally based militias or even a praetorian guard that might subvert the country's democratic transition. It is not an entirely implausible scenario, given that the British trained then-captain Muammar Qaddafi in the 1960s.

An important imperative of the effort is to bolster the institutional structure behind the military. One official called it a "whole-of-government" approach that includes ministerial reform, payroll streamlining, base infrastructure, and especially civilian control and oversight.

The most pressing concern, however, is the force's inclusivity. Because it is envisioned to eventually take the place of the Libya Shield Force in quelling ethnic and tribal conflicts, its nonpartisanship and professionalism must be above question. A top priority, then, is vetting recruits and ensuring that they represent a broad swath of tribes and regions, as well as former revolutionaries.

But there is strong opposition to the inclusion of revolutionaries from the old guard, the aging members of the Libyan officer corps, who betray an intense contempt for the young revolutionaries, particularly the Islamists. For them, the prospect of integrating members of armed groups into the army would undermine the army's morale, élan, and proficiency. "I would rather resign than share this army with those bloody idiots," one twenty-year colonel told me last fall in Tripoli.

These officers resent the various efforts to bring the armed groups under the control of the state, seeing the Libya Shield, the Supreme Security Committee, and the Libya Revolutionaries' Operations Room as competition. Even worse, however, is the affront to their status and salary. "Why should a major with nineteen years' experience get 800 Libyan dinars per month, while a member of the Shield gets 1,200?" one colonel asked me. In late 2013, then prime minister Zeidan raised army salaries to exceed those of the SSC and Shield forces, but it is unclear if this alone will help swell the ranks of the regular forces and compel young men to leave the armed groups. An even more bitter insult still is the granting of automatic army ranks to revolutionary commanders, say members of the old cadre. "A lot of officers feel betrayed," one colonel told me. "But Zeidan is thinking only about how to engage the revolutionaries."

A similar ambivalence about the general purpose force emerged from the leaders of the country's Islamist armed groups and their supporters in Benghazi and across Libya. They continued to demand that the bloated senior ranks of the army be purged of Qaddafi-era holdouts before they would agree to join it. But their fiercest criticism was reserved for what they saw as Zeidan's opacity and guile in soliciting foreign assistance to build the army. The SSC commander Abdel Raouf Kara told me that Zeidan "doesn't have the right" to go around foreign capitals asking for help in building the army. Other Islamists in the east worried that the new army would become a political tool for the

more secular-leaning party the National Forces Alliance or—even worse—the United States. A common refrain from these voices is that the despised prime minister had opened the country to an Iraq-like military occupation.

The role of religion in the army is also a concern of many Islamist armed groups. "The army has to be loyal first to Islamic law," the former head of the Rafallah al-Sahati Companies, Ismail al-Sallabi, told me. "If the state goes against Islamic law, then the army should protect Islamic law. We don't want an army that helps foreign powers." Other interlocutors relayed that Islamist armed groups want the new Libyan army to have a "morality committee" to preserve its adherence to Islamic social mores.

Against the backdrop of these criticisms and in the midst of the current factional fighting, the general purpose force program is in disarray. The initial batch of trainees who returned from training in Turkey and Italy has been put on indefinite leave since April 2014 because there are no units for them to join. And there have been reports that many soldiers trained in Italy have gone over to join Hifter's forces, often quitting the training program before they had finished it.[44]

Guiding Principles and Policies for Libya and Its Outsider Supporters

Whether the country can escape from the current round of fighting and deep polarization will depend on the wisdom of Libya's leaders and the foresight of outside supporters. Although Libyans must carry much of the burden, there is still more that the international community can do—particularly in terms of applying lessons learned from other postconflict zones.

To move beyond the impasse, the first step is to accurately assess the nature of the security challenge in Libya. The country's security malaise is typically attributed to the power and autonomy of its revolutionary armed groups and the corresponding weakness of the official army and regular police. But such a division is only part of the story, obscuring complex and fluid relationships between local armed groups, the central government, aggrieved political actors, and hybrid security entities.

The assumption also ignores the fact that the "militia problem" is fundamentally a political one. The framework for understanding the "militias" challenge must move beyond normative questions of "legitimacy" and acknowledge that the armed groups represent certain constituencies and have, for better or for worse, become intimately entrenched in the state's apparatus.

A first step in security sector reform is dismantling the armed coalitions clustered around Operations Dignity and Dawn. Their subordinate units should withdraw from Benghazi and Tripoli, and their members should be demobilized or transferred as individuals to regular armed forces. A similar process should be undertaken for integrating the hybrid coalitions of the Supreme

Security Committee and Libya Shield Force that have fallen under the tenuous authority of the Ministries of Interior and Defense.

Both efforts must be addressed by a parallel track of national dialogue and inclusiveness, rather than an attempt by one of the two rival camps in Tobruk or Tripoli trying to quickly monopolize the use of force.

A third imperative is accommodating and even harnessing the power of municipal security structures that involve the informal coordination between tribes and local leaders, regular police, and local armed groups.

The final task is reforming and bolstering the formal security sector. This will entail reorganizing the defunct defense architecture and training and equipping a new generation of police and army. In doing so, Libya's leaders and outside supporters must ensure that political factions or ambitious personalities do not "capture" the new security entities as their personal armed groups. Similarly, great care must be taken to ensure that the new forces do not dissolve along regional or tribal lines, or subvert the country's democratic process.

Throughout all these efforts, Libyans and their outside supporters must apply the lessons of other postconflict experiences in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform to Libya. The country is commonly thought to be an exceptional case with security sector challenges that defy normal paradigms because of its historic divisions, its weak institutions, the unique pathologies of Qaddafi's rule, the revolution's grassroots trajectory, and outside intervention by NATO. However, it is paralyzing to fall back on the excuse that the Libyan case is sui generis.

A canvassing of DDR and security sector reform experiences in other countries reveals best practices that, although not ready-made for the Libyan case, deserve consideration. The most important is that these efforts are not solely technical processes. They cannot be accomplished by focusing on the control of arms and structure of security forces at the exclusion of a broader political reconciliation and without addressing the complex set of motives behind societal support for the armed groups.

The stakes in this process are enormous. The manner in which the Libyan government proceeds in building an accountable and inclusive security sector will to a large extent determine whether its political future trends toward even greater fragmentation and strife, authoritarian rule, or a healthy civil-military balance that facilitates a democratic transition.

Given these insights, the Libyan government and outside powers should focus on the following key actions over the near and medium term:

Implement a ceasefire between Operations Dignity and Dawn and secure the withdrawal of forces taking part in those campaigns. The United States and the international community should demand the immediate cessation of Operation Dignity and the transfer of forces under Hifter's command to the authority of the chief of staff of

the army. One way to subsume Dignity forces is to incentivize Saiqa commander Wanis Bukhamada, who has reportedly disagreed with Hifter over the conduct of operations and whose troops provide the bulk of Dignity's combat power, to move under the chain of command of the regular armed forces.

Similarly, the forces of Operation Dawn that are in control of Tripoli's airport and ministries as of September 2014 need to withdraw outside the capital, and the Center Shield should be placed under the chief of staff's authority. The fragmented chains of command and fissures within the coalition (between Misratan and Tripolitanian groups) will make this exceedingly difficult, though. International statements and positions should avoid conflating Dawn factions with more radical rejectionists like Ansar al-Sharia. For their part, the leaders of Dawn need to unequivocally distance themselves from U.S.-designated terrorist organizations like Ansar al-Sharia in Derna and Benghazi.

The leaders of armed groups from both factions who have attacked airports or violated international arms embargoes should be subjected to United Nations sanctions. The LROR, Qaqa, and Sawaiq groups should be disbanded completely.

Formulate a road map for an inclusive transitional government. The international community should push for a transitional government that includes supporters of both Dignity and Dawn—provided they renounce support for terrorist groups and attacks on civilian facilities. What is needed is a face-saving formula that can bring the more pragmatic, boycotting politicians from Misrata and the west into the fold.

The new government and cabinet need to be inclusive and avoid an excessively regional bias, offering key portfolios to figures from the west and Misrata. The new special representative and head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Bernardino León, should play a central role in mediating such a compromise, while the special envoys from the United Kingdom and the United States can play supporting roles.

Deploy an international stabilization force with a narrowly defined mandate to protect elected institutions and strategic sites. Although an international stabilization force was once anathema in Libyan political circles, demand for one has gradually increased among diverse political and regional factions. The Council of Representatives issued a broad-based appeal to the United Nations to protect civilians and state institutions in mid-August 2014, and outside observers have made similar calls.[45]

But the force is not the silver bullet that many expect, and before such a body can be deployed, its mission, mandate, composition, and scope must be clarified. First and foremost, the area of the force's deployment must be specified: in private conversations, U.S. State Department officials lamented the ill-defined nature of the Council of Representatives' request. They had hoped that the request would include the protection of specific elected institutions or strategic sites like airports in Tripoli, Tobruk, or Benghazi. But the force's deployment location is unclear because there are multiple front lines in Libya's civil war, and the warring parties have yet to agree on the terms of a ceasefire.

Further, past experience shows that in most problematic regions, including those facing civil wars, intervening countries usually require a force of more than ten soldiers for every thousand civilians to work effectively.[46] Since the combined population of Tripoli and Benghazi adds up to more than 3 million people, a stability operation in the two cities, if it were to secure everything, would likely require more than 30,000 soldiers. As the international community is unlikely to be willing to send such a large force to Libya, the force's mission has to be clear and narrow from the start.

Then there is the question of composition. Ideally, the force would fall under a United Nations Chapter VII mandate, which is invoked to demonstrate political resolve and has typically been applied to the deployment of peacekeepers in postconflict situations. But staffing such a force from contributing nations would take time, and the two most significant Arab contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Egypt and Jordan, would be unacceptable as neutral arbiters in the Libyan case. In conversations with the author in the summer of 2014, members of Misratan local councils, Zintani militias, and Tripoli-based SSC units were amenable to an outside force provided the composition was drawn from neutral countries—Scandinavian nations and Australia were the most commonly cited. The idea of an African Union mission has also been floated, but this multilateral body is stretched thin with deployments in Somalia and elsewhere. One option that deserves further consideration is a force of military contractors overseen by the United Nations that can secure clearly defined locations like the parliament and airports.

Forge and implement a regional political noninterference pact. Much of the recent fighting in Libya has been supported by foreign countries. Without a wider regional agreement, foreign weapons and supplies are likely to perpetuate the conflict, despite United Nations

Security Council calls to end such support. The Egyptian government, the UAE, Qatar, Sudan, and Turkey need to desist from funneling weapons and military support to Libya's armed factions.

The September 22, thirteen-country communiqué against interference in Libya—which included Egypt, the UAE, Qatar, and Turkey—is a promising start; the key now is for signatories to adhere to it. Although Libya's neighbors and other Arab states have often called for a "regional solution" to Libya's crisis—an appeal that is often echoed by some officials in Washington—in practice such an approach by itself is unlikely to produce lasting stability and reconciliation given outside forces' high degree of partisanship toward the warring factions and the general autonomy and fragmentation of Libya's armed factions.

Once a ceasefire and a road map for reconciliation are in place, medium- and long-term steps should focus on building and reforming Libya's security institutions and demobilizing and disarming its armed groups:

Dismantle the hybrid security actors that the Libyan government has so far subsidized. The United States should encourage the Libyan government to cease all payments to armed groups and dismantle the Supreme Security Committees and Libya Shield Forces that have fallen under the loose authority, respectively, of the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense. Efforts should be focused on integrating individual members of these groups into the regular army and police and identifying opportunities for job training or education.

Support the development of a new Libyan national army, police, and a more localized, municipality-based force. Pending payment from the Libyan government and, more importantly, a broad-based political pact that includes the disbanding of Dawn and Dignity, the United States should proceed with the training of the general purpose force while working to ensure that both it and the police are inclusive, controlled by civilians, and guided by clearly defined missions. The United States and Libya's other international supporters should recognize that security sector reform is not simply about training and equipping a new army—it requires a holistic approach that includes ministerial reform, the creation of a national security council–type body (such as the National Security Coordination Committee proposed by UNSMIL), payroll rationalization, and other infrastructural improvements to ensure that the new force does not dissolve along factional or regional lines.

A parallel emphasis must be on establishing a viable police service with an effective forensics capability as well as an internal security service, as demonstrated by Benghazi's spat of assassinations that went unsolved by the ill-equipped police, leading to greater distrust and polarization.

The purpose of the new security forces must be tailored to Libya's unique security needs. The force should be structured to deal with a range of policing and low-intensity challenges rather than as a conventional military with armor and fighter aircraft that has little relevance for Libya's domestic security needs. While the country lacks unified armed forces on the national level, its security problem is fundamentally local: it needs more professional, locally based security services to which ordinary citizens can turn.

The United States and outside actors need to invest in programs that build on local security initiatives already at work in Libya—via municipal councils, tribes, and religious authorities—and avoid an overly centralized approach that could exacerbate existing fault lines. This should include increased outreach to civil society groups and advisory support for municipal governance.

In this sense, the national guard program merits reexamination— whether under a different name such as the "third force" or the Libya Territorial Army, a concept first proposed by UNSMIL in late 2012. According to the territorial army approach, the members of the armed groups and ex-revolutionary fighters would form town- and region-based auxiliaries to a reconstituted national army, denoted as a Libyan Defense Force, with a phased transition to reserve status.

Focus on localized, context-specific DDR solutions that can be scaled up and adapted to the entire country. Many of the initial efforts to demobilize the armed groups failed because they did not take into account local Libyan realities. They assumed that DDR and security sector reform would proceed through a centralized government that is more powerful than competing nonstate actors in blatant disregard of the Libyan reality. Local security reintegration programs in Libya, such as those under way in Misrata, Zawiya, and Bayda, can be scaled up and, with modifications, applied elsewhere. In those cities, local armed groups have been subsumed into coordinating structures that have worked in relative harmony with the police.

Recognize that disarmament should not be a prerequisite for political agreements. Many past DDR experiences suggest that the process should not necessarily proceed in the order suggested by the

acronym, with disarmament coming before reintegration.[47] Indeed, attempts to disarm ex-combatants before reinsertion or reintegration may create a security dilemma that undermines DDR and the peace process. Postconflict environments are usually fraught with mistrust, and in these situations, promises made in initial negotiations do not offer sufficient guarantees for combatants to feel safe unilaterally disarming.

Interim stabilization measures can help prevent the formation of a security vacuum and improve real and perceived security during the process of negotiating peace and planning future security arrangements.[48] These may take various forms and leave room for creative solutions, from civilian service organizations to arrangements for transitional security forces or transitional autonomy.[49]

In Libya, where local and municipal councils have been put forth as bodies with both greater effect and legitimacy than national institutions, transitional security arrangements are particularly relevant. They allow combatants to see the applicability of their wartime skills to peacekeeping (which may already be apparent to some in Libya), in addition to building confidence and social cohesion for a future transition to full civilian status. Moreover, while the Libyan tribal and regional relations—with the resulting competition of parochial interests—have often presented challenges to DDR and security sector reform, they constitute strong networks of trust and cooperation that could prove valuable in establishing local and national transitional institutions.

Focus on the political economy behind DDR. Part of the reason that demobilizing the armed groups in Libya has proven so difficult is that the young men filling their ranks have no other employment options. Whether from state subsidies or the capture of illicit networks, the armed groups are now a lucrative source of income for Libya's youth.

Libya is in difficult economic straits. In 2012, the country experienced a roughly 104 percent GDP growth; in 2013, it suffered a 10 percent GDP contraction as a result of the variances in oil production. The vestiges of the Qaddafi state, particularly subsidies and dysfunctional welfare institutions, need to be overhauled—but there are few signs of that occurring. If anything, public sector salaries and subsidies form a greater proportion of the state budget today than they did under Qaddafi. Nearly 80 percent of all employees are state employees—a great portion of this includes the state-sponsored armed groups. The government devotes 60 percent of the budget to salaries and subsidies and 40 percent to debts and contracts with international firms. Even with the return of oil production and a central bank that acts as a neutral

body, this economic mismanagement combined with the depletion of Libya's reserves suggests a bleak outlook.[50]

Make inclusivity and broad ownership of DDR a priority. Many past experiences with DDR and security sector reform point to the need for broad inclusion, including small nonstate armed groups, remnants of old regimes, and women.[51] The inclusion of women, for example, taps the support of a group that not only constitutes half the population but also often engages in different activities or operates in different spaces than men and thus can contribute information and insights essential to successful DDR and security sector reform.[52] In Libya, the National Dialogue offers an important arena to include Libyan armed groups, tribes, and remaining pro-Qaddafi forces, as well as women and youth, in the DDR and security sector reform processes.

Building an enduring, inclusive institutional framework for Libya's security sector will certainly help roll back the zero-sum politics that afflict the country. There is much that outsiders can do on this front. But such assistance can only bear fruit when Libya's feuding factions agree to move beyond the self-destructive polarization that has cost innocent lives and is ruining the country's economy. No side bears a monopoly on suffering (under Qaddafi or after him), just as no side is blameless from using force to advance its agenda. To ultimately move the country forward, Libyans need to reengage in the politics of recognition and reconciliation.

Notes

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41 The Libya Observer Facebook page, www.facebook.com/lyobserver?fref=photo.

42 There are 200 authorized seats in total, and the body needs a minimum of 101 members present to function. As of this writing, twelve seats were vacant due to security conditions in cities like Derna, Kufra, and elsewhere.

43 "Hearing: Libya's Descent," House Committee on Foreign Affairs, September 10, 2014, http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/hearing-libya-s-descent.

44 Hifter himself acknowledged this in an interview but asserted that he had told the trainees to finish their training.

45 "Libyan Parliament Asks UN for 'Urgent Intervention' Against Militias," Deutsche Welle, August 13, 2014, www.dw.de/libyan-parliament-asks-un-for-urgent-intervention-against-militias/a-17852874.

46 James T. Quinlivan, "Force Requirements in Stability Operations," *Parameters* 25, no. 4 (Winter 1995–1996), 61–63.

47 Melanne A. Civic and Michael Miklaucic, "Introduction" in "The State and the Use of Force: Monopoly and Legitimacy," in *Monopoly of Force: The Nexus of DDR and SSR* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2011), xvii–xviii.

48   Ibid., 12–13.

49   Ibid., 13.

50   World Bank, "Libya Overview," March 20, 2014, www.worldbank.org/en/country/libya/overview.

51   On women, see Jacqueline O'Neill and Jarad Vary, "Allies and Assets: Strengthening DDR and SSR Through Women's Inclusion," in Civic and Miklaucic, *Monopoly of Force: The Nexus of DDR and SSR.*

52   Ibid.

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