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Militia Institutionalisation and Security Sector Reform in Libya

Ziad A. Akl

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CONTENTS

Militia Institutionalisation and Security Sector Reform in Libya

*Ziad A. Akh**

INTRODUCTION	6
CONCEPTUALISING MILITIA INSTITUTIONALISATION	10
LIBYA'S MILITIA DILEMMA (A BRIEF HISTORY)	16
The Rule of the National Transitional Council, March 2011-January 2012	17
The Rule of the General National Congress, January 2012-June 2014	20
IN SEARCH OF CRITERIA	22
THE LIBYAN NATIONAL ARMY	26
THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD	32
ENVISIONING A SECURITY STRUCTURE	36
CONCLUSION	40
REFERENCES	44

Introduction

Libya has been an ongoing source of security threats to the MENA region over the course of the past five years. The fall of Gaddafi was both necessary and long overdue but, nonetheless, it was equally problematic and catastrophic. In March 2011, NATO launched a military operation to implement a no-fly zone over Libya and put an end to the threat to international interests in Libya and the lives of the Libyan people posed by Gaddafi's violent response to the protests in Benghazi. While the intervention was in fact necessary, it was poorly orchestrated and lacked an "exit strategy". As a result, as soon as Gaddafi was out of the picture, Libya sank into chaotic military and political conflicts with which it lives today.

The situation Libya is in today is not a mere outcome of a contentious and violent post-revolutionary political transition; it is also a product of years of institutional breakdown and structural dysfunction. Therefore, contemplating political and security reform in Libya must be twofold. On the one hand, it must consider the political reality of Libya since 2011, which has become more acute since Libya entered a multiple sovereignty phase in 2014. On the other hand, it must fully realise the structural and institutional nature of the Libyan state as well as its geopolitical reality. The political situation in Libya is one that has warring factions of more or less equal strength; hence, no one faction is capable of securing victory against the others. Therefore, any process of militia integration will require concessions to be given and compensations made by all parties involved due to the non-hegemonic nature of Libya's current political and military conflict. On the other hand, integrating militias will require institutional and structural adjustments in the Libyan state in general and the security sector in particular due to the inability of the current institutional framework to assimilate the large number of militia members all over the country. Making decisions and designing strategies based on one dimension while ignoring the other will only result in solutions that are very much incomplete.

Within this context, the dilemma of the Libyan militias becomes both very relevant and extremely crucial. The rise of Libyan militias and the growing extent of their influence over the past five years are directly related to the pattern of the Libyan revolution (modes and nature of protest) reflected in the mechanics of Libya's political transition and the structural nature of the Libyan state. The pattern of the Libyan revolution was one that rapidly transcended the phase of a demand-based revolution (making demands and trying to apply pressure on the state to answer them) and moved to a pattern of revolution that directly induces change (through direct armed action). Unlike the cases of Libya's two neighbours, Egypt and Tunisia, branches of the Libyan state did not respond to revolutionary demands. Rather, the revolutionary process in Libya resulted in numerous defections in the state's institutional structure, which led to the rise of a revolutionary

body of authority (The National Transitional Council) that later assumed power after the fall of Gaddafi in August 2011. At the same time, the pre-revolutionary structural nature of the Libyan state did not yield an institutionalised coercive force with any degree of autonomy or military professionalism. Hence, Libyan militias began as a product of pre-revolutionary structural realities and post-revolutionary political interactions; and their ongoing presence remains a function of both dimensions until today.

This research is based on a fundamental assumption that warring Libyan parties will reach a mutual agreement that creates a political framework through which the conflict will be resolved. In early 2016, hopes were vested in the Skhirat Agreement signed under the sponsorship of the United Nations in December 2015. However, a year later, the agreement is still not in effect and the ongoing political and military developments on the ground suggest that the death of the agreement in its current form is a matter of time. Recent efforts exerted by Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria, through communicating with the warring factions in Libya, have managed to create a suitable framework to amend some of the articles in the agreement that are seen as the main reasons why it has not yet been implemented. The two main contentious points are the ones concerned with the leadership of the army and the number of deputies in the presidential council. It is very likely that these points will be amended, and the changes are expected to separate political and military powers by establishing a military council to control the army and reduce the number of deputies in the presidential council to two, which will eventually provide a suitable environment for militia institutionalisation by establishing a legitimate state body that monopolises violence.

However, the manner in which the “political” and the “military” are connected in Libya at the moment suggests that a process of militia institutionalisation and assimilation is well underway, though without proper structuring. After all, the Libyan National Army and the Presidential Guard are examples of such processes. Hence, institutionalising militias is crucial for the Libyan case as well as applicable in it, whether a political agreement is implemented or not.

Although the political dialogue that resulted in the Skhirat Agreement did not include the militias, its implementation requires careful understanding of Libya’s political reality, and that understanding cannot ignore the practical influence of the militias or of the entities in which they have developed. Some regional actors are arguing that a reconciliatory approach towards Libyan militias would be a mistake (mainly Egypt and the UAE who support the House of Representatives and the Libyan National Army and do not want to acknowledge any non-state entity) but for a multitude of reasons that will be thoroughly

examined, the costs of a confrontational approach with all Libyan militias will be dire for the sovereignty of the Presidential Council and its unity government on the one hand, and for Libya's overall political stability, on the other, which is in turn directly related to the regional security of the MENA region.

Therefore, an essential starting point is to make the distinction between Libyan militias that could be institutionalised and assimilated within the state structure, and Libyan militias or armed groups that should be confronted and disarmed. The criteria according to which this distinction is made will be based on the conduct of those militias over the course of the past five years, their willingness to engage in a process of political compliance to a legitimate state body and their ideology and terms of identity. Second, the manner of institutionalisation itself must be diverse. It is practically impossible to rely on the possibility that Libyan militias will surrender their arms to the new unity government. While some militias might do that, the majority of militias will not. This is mainly due to how financially rewarding militia membership is, the social status and the position of power militias offer to members and the uncertainty about any future prospects. Hence, militia institutionalisation must rest on different means that depend on both inclusion and coercion approaches. Third, the structure of interaction between state institutions and militias, which includes militia control over state facilities and state dependence on militia-performed functions, must be dismantled. Finally, institutionalisation of Libyan militias will require a careful prepping process for the different militias that will be institutionalised.

Conceptualising Militia Institutionalisation

As a concept, militia institutionalisation falls under the umbrella of the broader concept known as “security sector reform” (SSR). One of the aspects of SSR is known as “disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration” (DDR), which is the source of conceptualising militia institutionalisation. DDR aims primarily to facilitate the establishment of security and stability in post-conflict environments. DDR could be described as a process of social, economic and political transformations that could offer former militia members and combatants a realistic chance to reintegrate into society (Gleichmann, Odenwald, Steenken & Wilkinson, 2004). Therefore, DDR is not a sequential process but rather a multi-sectoral one that combines overlapping activities that need to be coordinated together. Needless to say, those diverse processes must be executed within a framework of political willingness and commitment. In Libya’s case, the implementation of the National Accord political agreement is imperative for a successful implementation of DDR. As Özerdem writes “without political commitment, reintegration programs, no matter how well planned and implemented, cannot be carried out successfully” (Özerdem, 2010).

The word “militia” itself means a military force that is not part of a regular army and is subject to call for service in an emergency. This is how Webster’s dictionary defines militia. However, in a political context, militia has a more sophisticated meaning than a mere military force that is not a part of a regular army. While the essence of militias are the same everywhere, a military group that is not part of a regular army, the nature of militias is determined by the political context in which a militia operates. The political context dictates the pattern of operation and the manner of institutionalisation. Therefore, while militias are a common phenomenon in conflict zones, what applies in one region does not necessarily work in another. This significantly influential political context is made up of several factors like the local tactical and political situation, the culture as well as the structural nature of the state, the geography of the state, the level of wealth and resources and, most importantly, the level of local autonomy and ethnic, sectarian or religious fragmentation. These factors influence how a militia will be formed, how it will operate and, more importantly, the manner in which it could be institutionalised.¹

It is important to clearly differentiate between the different forms of militia institutionalisation. The various examples of militia institutionalisation in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Peru and Lebanon demonstrate that the institutionalisation process itself is as contextual as militias. The manner of institutionalisation depends primarily on state structure and the overall influence of the central government. If by institutionalisation we mean legitimising the existence of militias as military entities and a coercive force, then there are two main modes of achieving this target. If the state has a solid structure, and if the hold of the central government is somewhat effective, then most likely legitimising or institutionalising militias

¹ For further details on defining militias and how they operate in different contexts, see Krause, K. (2009). Beyond definition: violence in a global perspective. *Global Crime*, 10(4), 337-355. doi: 10.1080/17440570903248270

will be done in the form of direct cooperation between the government and the militias. In this case, militias are used or legitimised by the government for a specific purpose (this was the pattern used in Afghanistan recently). However, in a structurally weak state, with a weak hold of the central government over the state, militia legitimisation is done in the form of assimilating the militia into the state structure and designating it as a state institution. In this case, militias go further than mere legitimisation by adjusting the state structure.

In Libya's present political context, assimilating militias into state structures is the most appropriate approach to the dilemma due to the weak state structure and the absence of a dominant military force capable of defeating militias as a phenomenon. Efforts along that line have been going on in Libya for some time now, starting with the militias of the "Karama battle" under Khalifa Haftar's command, which were later assimilated into the Libyan National Army and ending with the recently established Presidential Guard, which is mainly composed of the former "Fajr Libya" militia alliance. This pattern of institutionalisation raises two crucial questions. First, how will the state attract militia members to cooperation and, second, how can we judge the success of an institutionalisation process?

States need to work out a balanced plan that includes benefits and a mechanism of accountability. At the same time, a government facing a militia dilemma should clearly target the militias that are capable of being institutionalised. Since it is very unlikely that militia members will voluntarily accept conscription into an alliance with the government, this regulatory framework is a necessity. Benefits or motivations usually include professional categorisation, steady income, social benefits, government pardons and perhaps opportunities to participate in official politics. While it could be argued that such incentives may constitute a burden on the government, which will probably be in a critical position due to the ongoing conflict. Undoubtedly, oil revenues could help in that regard. In his work on civil wars, Ross (2004) has demonstrated a close connection between oil revenues and the government's ability to integrate militias. However, the financial cost of assimilating militias into the state structure will always be less than fighting them (Özdemir, 2010). Moreover, the most common model of militia member, specifically in Libya, is one that includes young, uneducated and sometimes ideological men (Glenn, n.d.). Humphreys and Weinstein have demonstrated in their work on militias in Sierra Leone that militia members who are young, male and ideological are most likely to retain strong ties to their factions after a conflict ends (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2007). Therefore, with that type of militia member, Libya requires simultaneous processes of demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration.

The other important question in conceptualising militia institutionalisation is how to judge the success or failure of the process. Expectedly, judging the success or failure of any process depends on the very idea of this process achieving its original purposes. The core purposes of militia institutionalisation are ending or reducing the intensity of conflict, on the one hand, and reintegrating militia members into civil life or professional military corps, on the other. Therefore, judging the success of the process depends on reaching disarmament and reintegration. However, both those targets are highly contextual, and disarmament and reintegration could be reached in various manners depending on the development of the conflict. But, in all cases, a successful militia institutionalisation process is one that sees past disarmament and reintegration, one that does not produce fragmented community-based militias or armed groups with limited geographical influence.

However, it must be realised that a militia institutionalisation process can never please everyone. Therefore, all processes, no matter the manner in which they are operated, will always leave behind militia remnants. Since militias are composed of different interests and motives, the extent of cohesion in decision-making is not necessarily high. Hence, during crucial decisions like institutionalisation militias fragment to create new alliances and entities (Esman, 2007). The intensity and pattern of fragmentation will be influenced by a number of factors. Such factors include ethnicity (the different ethnicities within a militia and the tension within their interactions), the background of members (militias composed of former military men or professional fighters will fragment differently from a militia composed of farmers), religion (if religion is a term of identity for a militia, like Jihadist militias, then it will influence how it will fragment), political affiliations (a militia based on a political ideology will fragment differently from a militia based on momentary narrow interests) and, finally, tribal affiliations (if militias are composed of a majority of members from a specific tribe, then tribal interests will influence how a militia fragments) (Nidiffer, 2012). In Libya's case, tribal and political factors are the ones most likely to influence militia fragmentation.

Since reintegrating and disarming militias will always leave behind some remains that could be threatening to the whole process, militia institutionalisation must be applied within a larger and broader framework of security sector reform. Like militia institutionalisation, security sector reform is also highly contextual. In Libya, conflict over control of the security sector has caused this sector to fragment. Fragmentation was accompanied by an inherent institutional dysfunction within Libya's security sector. Security sector reform in Libya must take into consideration the institutional and professional capacity of state security institutions. Libya is in need of a comprehensive

reintegration and disarmament strategy, one that looks past the conventional security architecture.

As mentioned earlier, militia institutionalisation is one aspect of security sector reform. However, to approach the procedural core of militia institutionalisation, a conceptual framework must be envisioned and used as an exclusive tool of analysis for militia institutionalisation as a process. Although highly contextual, several general founding concepts definitely exist.

Libya's Militia Dilemma (A Brief History)

Militias in Libya were a direct and natural outcome of the armed conflict between the revolutionaries and Gaddafi's remaining forces. But what started first as an operational necessity soon turned into a contentious political reality. The roots of Libya's militia dilemma could be traced back to the period of the National Transitional Council. The National Transitional Council (NTC) was the interim body that was in charge of Libya for a period of ten months from March 2011 to January 2012. The NTC represented the Libyan Revolution and enjoyed massive domestic support as well as international recognition as the legitimate representative of the Libyan state. The council was mainly composed of former Gaddafi regime men who defected with the early days of the revolution, and it was headed by Mostafa Abdel-Jalil, Gaddafi's last Minister of Justice, who was the first minister to defect from the regime and declare his support for the revolution.²

The Rule of the National Transitional Council, March 2011-January 2012

As soon as Gaddafi was captured and executed, and the National Transitional Council became Libya's new interim authority, the council issued a call to revolutionaries and armed groups to surrender their weapons. "The National Transitional Council's attempts to collect weapons have proved fruitless, although it did manage by December 2011 to successfully clear major cities of large artillery such as the media-ubiquitous pickup-mounted rocket launchers" (Kadlec, 2012). The attempts of the National Transitional Council at that time relied on one dimension of DDR, disarmament, which is why the results of those attempts were not significantly successful.

Although the beginnings of Libya's militia dilemma took place during the NTC's rule, it is important to mention that by late 2011 militias were still non-politicised, but some of them were on a fast politicisation track. At that time, militias were still more focused on defence and security of their localities than on participating in political decision-making. Libya's internal politics were still at a formative phase in 2011. The roles played by different militias during the struggle against Gaddafi have instilled some militias as influential political actors. The most significant militias in that category were the Misrata and Zintan militias, both belonging to the cities after which they were named in West Libya. The Misrata militias engaged in a fierce fight against Gaddafi's forces and eventually captured Gaddafi himself. On the other hand, the Zintan militias liberated almost half of Tripoli and controlled vital infrastructure like Tripoli Airport. The aspirations of both militias to participate in decision-making forced the NTC to offer them some rewards. "The National Transitional Council has had to play to a balance in recognition

2 For more on the NTC, see: National Transitional Council – Libya. (n.d). Retrieved from <http://ntclibya.org/>; Gritten, D. (2011). Key figures in Libya's rebel council. *BBC*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12698562>; Talmon, S. (2011). Recognition of the Libyan National Transitional Council. *Insights*, 15(16). Retrieved from <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/15/issue/16/recognition-libyan-national-transitional-council>

of both militias' contributions, reserving leadership of the Ministries of the Interior and Defence to the commanders of the Misrata and Zintan brigades, respectively" (Kadlec, 2012). The concessions given early on to militias were the point of onset for a state-militia system of interaction, one that will draw Libya further away from disarmament and reintegration.

During that time, four types of militias existed in Libya. The first was known or typified as "revolutionary brigades". The revolutionary brigades were formed early on in the war against Gaddafi. They were cohesive with combat experience and an ability to fight as a unit. Revolutionary brigades were built on a geographic/local or ideological basis, an example of such a type could be witnessed in the Martyrs of 17 February militia, which emerged shortly after the beginning of the revolution in Benghazi with an Islamist ideology. The second type is the "post-revolutionary brigades". Unlike revolutionary brigades, post-revolutionary brigades were formed after the fall of Gaddafi to fill the vacuum left by the defeat of the Gaddafi forces, and they were built on either a geographic or interest-oriented basis. The hasty fashion in which the post-revolutionary brigades emerged prevented them from being as cohesive or efficient as the revolutionary brigades. The third type of militias that existed during the transitional phase was the "unregulated brigades". Formed mainly of revolutionary brigades that refused to acknowledge the authority of local military councils legitimised by the National Transitional Council, unregulated brigades are believed to be responsible for numerous human rights abuses ("Libya: Militias Terrorizing Residents", 2011). Unregulated brigades were built on diverse bases, whether political, ideological or geographic, but what was common between those brigades was their strong sentiment towards radicalisation. The kidnapping of Prime Minister Ali Zidan in 2012 was the work of such militias. Finally, the fourth type was criminal militias, which represented a very small faction of the armed groups operating in Libya at that time ("Armed Groups in Libya", 2012). Criminal militias were all built on an interest-oriented basis without ideological, geographic or political content.

Although the types, origins and goals of Libyan militias were not the same, the National Transitional Council proceeded to integrate those militias into state security structures or merely legitimise them by relying on them for provision of security. What might seem to some a short-sighted act by the NTC was actually a crucial necessity that the NTC could not overcome in light of the absence of an institutional coercive force, which in turn made militias the most effective security actor during the transitional period. At that time, militias protected neighbourhoods, offices, the UN compound, oil refineries and Tripoli Airport (Jeursen & van der Borgh, 2014). The reach of the NTC's central security

apparatus was very minimal, let alone how underequipped and undertrained that apparatus was. At the same time, militias had developed a revolutionary repertoire where they were the true representatives of the February Revolution and that their work against the remnants of the Gaddafi regime is still not over. In short, militias were doing their best to justify their existence as illegitimate yet patriotic armed groups. In an attempt to prevent militias from becoming an obstacle to political stability and state building, the NTC developed strong ties with some militia leaders and provided significant benefits to militia members (Jeursen & van der Borgh, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, a quasi-official system of interaction existed between the state and militias, one that started during the National Transitional Council's period and endured for years afterwards. In the security field, this system could be described as "a hybrid security arrangement, where non-state and semi-official armed groups have informally adopted many of the security functions of the state" (Redding, 2014). This system of interaction highlighted more than anything the state's contradictory approach towards militias and the concept of monopoly of violence. While the state supported the militias and relied on them in different instances, it regularly called for their disarmament, dissolution and reintegration. The transitional government recognised that militias have the ability to destabilise the state. Hence, the state enacted the various disarmament and institutionalisation programmes. At the same time, the government was forced to utilise the power of the militias to settle tribal disputes and provide security. The state's benevolence towards militias was the main reason behind the various concessions, compensations and rewards that the state offered to militias. The militias demanded rewards and compensations from the state for their participation in the struggle against Gaddafi. For the aforementioned reasons, the National Transitional Council responded to that demand and rewards were set at 2,400 Libyan Dinar for single men and 4,000 Libyan Dinar for married men. The NTC handed out those rewards to militias and not to individuals, which became an incentive for Libyan citizens to join militias. There are estimates that the struggle against Gaddafi's forces involved almost 20,000 fighters. However, when the NTC started distributing these rewards, approximately 200,000 people received them in return of their efforts ("Divided We Stand", 2012). The other demand was in the form of personal and collective benefits that militias wanted to secure for their entities and their members. The best example to demonstrate this demand was the negotiations with the Zintan militias to relinquish control over Tripoli Airport. The deal between the interim government and the Zintan militias entailed militia members receiving training anywhere in the country or joining a formal security institution. As a result, some Zintan militia members were kept as paid security guards after control of Tripoli Airport was returned to the interim government (Jeursen & van der Borgh, 2014, p. 184).

Therefore, during the rule of the NTC, militias combined revolutionary legitimacy, territorial control and governmental acknowledgment, a formula that established militias as an influential actor in Libyan politics in the period that followed the National Transitional Council.

The Rule of the General National Congress, January 2012-June 2014

The elections held in January 2012 ended the National Transitional Council's rule and brought about the General National Congress (GNC). During the period of the GNC, militias became more consolidated and more involved in controlling various state facilities. The Ali Zedan government, which took office in November 2012,³ was a reflection of the acute political conflicts between different blocks in the GNC, mainly the Alliance of National Powers and the Justice and Construction party. The Ministry of Defence was composed of two representatives from both parties. Both Osama El-Goueli and Khaled El-Sharif, the Minister of Defence and the Ministry's Undersecretary, proceeded to build security institutions on a platform of political and tribal interests. The Minister of Defence supervised the building of the Border Guard Forces, but the majority of members and leaders in these forces were from the city of Zintan, the hometown of the Minister of Defence (Akl, 2015). Similarly, the Libya Shield forces, although formed during the rule of the NTC, was under the control of the Ministry of Defence Undersecretary. Hence, the majority of members in those forces belonged to Islamist political streams, which is the same orientation of the Ministry's Undersecretary (Akl, 2015). At the same time, the GNC in December 2013 issued a law banning the use and possession of weapons and dissolving any illegal organised or quasi-organised armed entities. The law offered a 3 month opportunity to surrender arms, a reward for those who report illegal arms and imprisonment and a USD 16,000 fine for illegal possession and use of weapons. The law also banned the formation of any armed groups outside the framework of the Ministries of Interior and Defence.⁴

The law of course was not implemented due to the pattern of interaction between the state and the militias, which made the state with its institutions depend on militias in various matters. As a result, the grip of militias on security matters in Libya has become much more firm. Violent attacks started taking place more regularly, and armed groups started attacking politicians to influence political decision-making or ensure that the state will not interrupt any illegal economic activities for the militias. It was at that time that Prime Minister Ali Zedan was kidnapped, Libyan oil was sold by individuals and Prime Minister Abdallah Al-Thenni's house was bombed to force him to withdraw his resignation

³ For a chronology of events of the Libyan revolution, see <http://www.almasyalyoum.com/news/details/658981>

⁴ See <https://www.noonpost.net/content/1258>

from the government (Akl, 2015, p.11). By early 2014, the extent of influence of militias was multiplied, and the intensity of political and military tension in the country had peaked. After the elections were held and the GNC no longer existed after the House of Representatives became the new legitimate authority in the country, it was militias that dictated the political situation and the eventual division. Militias started to become integrated into new alliances and gave themselves a de facto crucial role in the political decision-making process. The East/West division, the congestion between Libyan political elites and the inability of the state to monopolise violence made the environment more supportive of the presence of armed entities. At the same time, Khalifa Haftar had launched “Operation Dignity” and started to communicate with the HOR in Tobruk to acknowledge his militia as a representative of the state. Once again, the weak state structure in Libya forced the state to rely on militias, which in turn put militias as an actor within the political decision-making mechanism in both the East and the West.

This brief history of Libya’s militia dilemma demonstrates several points that make up the current security situation in Libya and that must be addressed before any successful process of security sector reform. First, Libyan authorities have proved that they are unable to coerce armed groups to surrender their arms, which was demonstrated by the failure of the GNC to enforce the law that banned armed groups. Second, militia reintegration must be done on an objective platform blind to political and tribal affiliations, which was demonstrated by the forces created through the Ministry of Defence during the rule of the GNC, which only created tribal and regional cleavages within state institutions. Third, the security sector in Libya needs to be restructured in order for more effective security institutions to exist. Finally, an ongoing coordination must exist at all times between the political institutions and the military arm of the state. Those points could be seen as necessary preconditions for any successful process of militia institutionalisation.

In Search of Criteria

As mentioned earlier, not every militia is capable of being reintegrated and assimilated into the state structure. Similarly, security sector reform in Libya has proved a complete failure when it operated on a political, ideological or tribal basis. Therefore, a successful process of militia institutionalisation requires clear objective criteria as a prerequisite. A successful process of militia institutionalisation is one that will eventually integrate with a broader process of security sector reform. In other words, a successful process is one that has a long-term vision for establishing security institutions, not one that rests on a momentary crisis management approach. Hence, militias considered for institutionalisation must obey specific criteria and demonstrate the presence of crucial prerequisites. Once again, criteria must be contextualised according to the case in which security sector reform is required. While there are basic fundamental factors that make up some dimensions of the criteria in all cases, other dimensions are unique to each situation depending on its political, military and socioeconomic context.

In Libya's case, a number of factors make up the criteria. The conduct of the militia since its establishment is an important factor in trying to construct criteria for reintegration. Militias that were involved in acts of terrorism or extreme abuse of human rights or criminal activities cannot be integrated into state structure. The problem with that dimension though is arriving at a concrete definition for those practices. While acts of terrorism and criminal activities could be defined by laws, human rights abuses in conflict dominated countries are harder to define. There is of course a body of documents that explain in detail what human rights are and what acts constitute a violation of them. However, in a contentious and conflict-dominated context like Libya, human rights violations need to be customised. It is impossible to find a militia that did not commit one or more of the violations listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, the legislative body within the state must decide on HR violations that the state is willing to reconcile, if there are any. But the legislative body might agree on reconciling with some violations if they are seen as self-defence or a survival need within an armed conflict. In addition, international categorisation of militias is also a factor used to judge militia conduct. Militias that are labelled "terrorist groups" by some states like "Ansar Al Sharia" will not be a part of any reintegration process.

Ideology is another crucial factor in constructing criteria for institutionalisation. The majority of Libyan militias are formed on a political and geographical basis. Militias formed on an ideological basis are divided into radical and non-radical entities. Libya Dawn and Libya Shield are both militias composed of members that have a clear pro-Islamist orientation. However, both militias are non-Jihadist and do not adhere to a radicalised form of Islamist ideology. On the other hand, militias like the Derna Mujahidin Shura

Council, Ajdabya Revolutionaries Shura Council and the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council are all militant groups affiliated with terrorist organisations like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (“Guide to Key Libyan Militias”, 2016). Such militias cannot be included in any reintegration process. In fact, the state must ensure that those groups will be continuously hunted down and put on trial. While some might argue that members of those militias can revise their ideological alignment and de-radicalise their visions (an experiment done in Egypt in the 1990s with several members of Jihadist organisations). However, such an approach requires a state with a solid security structure and detailed roles for the various security institutions within that structure that will supervise this process. Those necessary prerequisites are not present in Libya’s case.

The third crucial factor that makes up possible criteria for reintegration is the militia’s willingness to comply with the different proceedings requested by the political authority. Measuring the willingness to comply could depend on a number of practices like surrendering arms and membership revision. The latter is a much needed procedure in Libya’s case. In the absence of efficient central security institutions, it is very difficult to verify the status and affiliations of militia members. It is very likely that some militia members could be in contact with terrorist organisations, or affiliated with local radical groups, or a part of a network that conducts illegal activities like human trafficking. Therefore, it is very important that each militia revises its membership. Agreeing to dissolve the militia is indeed a sign of compliance. However, in some cases militias want to be integrated as one cohesive entity and not dismantled and distributed among different security institutions.

Although finding and applying fixed and stable criteria for militia institutionalisation leads to a more structured and efficient reintegration process and security sector reform, at times political necessities will overshadow the need for criteria. Due to unstable power relations and the militarised nature of the conflict in Libya, the need to have an official coercive force in a short period of time will lead to reintegration on the basis of political need rather than on the basis of broader security sector reform. When the Presidential Council reintegrated various militias from the Libya Dawn alliance to form the forces of “Al Bonyan Al Marsous” to fight ISIS in Sirte under the banner of the Presidential Council and the Libyan state, political need and time considerations were the most influential aspect in the reintegration process. There was no thought put into structuring the presence of those militias within the state, which in turn created problems as soon as those forces were back from battle, because they were legitimised but not structured or integrated. Therefore, efficient implementation of militia institutionalisation requires the conflict to be solved before embarking on security sector reform.

The Libyan National Army

Although Libya is still far from a political environment that would allow room for actual security sector reform (mainly due to the absence of a military power capable to establish control over the whole of Libya, and the inability of political elites to reach consensus on the institutional political process), few examples of militia institutionalisation have recently taken place. The Libyan National Army, operating under the leadership of Khalifa Haftar and acknowledged by the Tobruk House of Representatives as the state's legitimate coercive force, is an important case of militia institutionalisation. However, it is important to notice that the manner in which the Libyan National Army was created was entirely political. Turning the militia alliance known as "operation dignity" into the "Libyan National Army" was a political process governed by power relations and conflict development and intensity. The House of Representatives had no cumulative vision for militia reintegration or broader security sector reform, but was rather very much in need of an organised force within the context of the East-West conflict. On the other hand, it is impossible to evaluate the institutionalisation process of the Libyan National Army without careful examination of Khalifa Haftar's role in the conflict as a political and a military actor. Therefore, while the Libyan National Army is a case of reintegrating militias into state structures, the process does not reflect any disarmament, dismantling or rehabilitation strategies.

The Libyan National Army was envisioned by Haftar as an alliance of militias that would help him to play a more influential role in Libyan politics. After the revolution in 2011 and the fall of Gaddafi, many of the symbols that defected from his administration were in charge of reconstructing Libya's security institutions, including Haftar. At that time, Haftar had just returned from the United States where he had been living since 1990. In March 2011 Haftar returned to Libya and announced that he will be leading the anti-Gaddafi rebel army. Although the National Transitional Council did exist at that time, it was neither in full control of the elements fighting under its banner nor possessed the necessary decision-making mechanism. Confusion lasted a few weeks over who was in official control of the army until the National Transitional Council clearly named Abdelfattah Younis, Gaddafi's former Minister of Interior and among the very first symbols to defect from the regime, as Army Chief-of-Staff (Barfi, 2014, p. 6). It would be fair to say that conflicts between Libya's post-revolutionary elites, specifically those who defected from the regime after 17 February and those who were active elements in Libya's diaspora opposition, were one of the causes of the recurrent failure to implement an efficient strategy for security sector reform. Many sources report that Haftar was seen by other former regime symbols as an arrogant power hungry figure. Abdelrahman Shalgam, Libya's former Foreign Minister, wrote that upon Haftar's return he saw himself as the saviour and had repeated clashes with the military leadership (Shalgam, 2014).

Furthermore, the National Transitional Council's Chairman, Mostafa Abdeljalil, sought to empower militias and funnel military aid for them due to his lack of trust in Gaddafi's former military officials (Barfi, 2014, p. 6). These elite tensions were not only reflected in the gains each party managed to secure, they also influenced the manner in which the post-Gaddafi security sector was designed. As a result, Haftar was marginalised from the scene in 2011 after failing to find enough support for himself in the National Transitional Council or among the revolutionaries. Therefore, Haftar's political interactions and military alliances that were formed later on (including operation dignity and the Libyan National Army) were a part of his own political ascent. This is why the institutionalisation process of the Libyan National Army was guided by Haftar's own political goals and interests rather than an actual state strategy of reintegration.

Before launching "operation dignity" in May 2014, Haftar had tried several times to overcome his marginalisation and resurface on the political scene. In 2012 Haftar was roaming the country in search of a revamped army. At the same time, his contentious relationship with the National Transitional Council and later the General National Congress prevented him from taking part in the process of rebuilding the army. Haftar did not give up seeking a central place within the scene, and by September 2012 he announced a plan to reconstruct and reform the army. Haftar's military reform plan revolved around building a 20,000 soldier force to be responsible for restoring security, integrating revolutionaries, reinstating Gaddafi military personnel, establishing an army chain of command, tighter border security and collecting weapons. The reform plan did not gain any popularity and was not implemented; at the same time, Haftar was not chosen as a Minister of Defence, which led him to continued criticism of the General National Congress and the government. This position culminated in February 2014 when Haftar announced via video message a coup plan calling to depose the General National Congress and replace it with an interim government composed of different national forces and headed by the Supreme Judicial Council (Barfi, 2014, p. 7). As the coup plan failed miserably, Haftar relocated in the East and started preparing for operation dignity.

On 16 May 2014, Khalifa Haftar announced the beginning of "operation dignity", which will be carried out by the Libyan National Army (LNA). The announced targets of the operation were fighting radical Islamists and terrorists, and restoring security and stability in Libya. Several authors wrote that "operation dignity" was a response from Kalifa Haftar to the failure of the GNC to orchestrate a smooth political transition and the limited initiatives to disarm and reintegrate armed groups (Orakzai, 2015). But the facts on the ground demonstrate that operation dignity was a tool used by Haftar to emerge on the surface as an essential actor. Operation dignity was launched in Benghazi and it started

with attacks on radical Islamist groups like “Majles shoura thowar Benghazi”, and soon other attacks were launched in Tripoli. Among the main supporters of Haftar and operation dignity in the East are the Saaqa special forces and the forces of the Benina airbase. In the West, operation dignity is supported by the forces of Al-Qaqaa and Al-Sawaeq who follow the military council of Zintan (“Amaleyat el karama fi Libya”, 2014). Although operation dignity did not establish control over significant territory, it signalled the first successful case of militia institutionalisation in Libya. At the same time, the operation legitimised the LNA and resurrected Haftar as an influential actor within the decision-making process in the East.

The brief history of Haftar’s actions since his return in 2011 until the launching of operation dignity in 2014 demonstrates a number of factors that were crucial in establishing and later administering and institutionalising the Libyan National Army. First of all, this history demonstrates that operation dignity was not a spontaneous reaction to a deteriorated state of security and stability, but rather another step in a series of attempts by Haftar to locate himself on top of the Libyan political hierarchy and practise control over a large coercive force. The manner in which that goal finally materialised in 2014 was a product of various political factors that interacted at a specific time. However, the mere vision existed long before the establishment of the Libyan National Army or the launching of operation dignity. Second, there is a striking resemblance between Haftar’s actions, plans and goals and the overall discourse of the Egyptian regime after deposing Mohamed Morsy in July 2013. Haftar’s position from Islamists, his regular accusations of Turkey and Qatar of supporting terrorism in Libya, his focus on rebuilding the army and having it occupy the most influential role in state structure and his statement that he is not seeking a political position but if the people elect him he would welcome it; all these positions were taken by the Egyptian President Abdelfattah Al-Sisi (Haftar’s strongest ally and supporter) over the past two years. Finally, the contentious manner in which Haftar interacted with different players in Libya led to a balance of forces that later shaped the components of Haftar’s army.

The Libyan National Army is composed primarily of members and groups whose interests are aligned with Khalifa Haftar’s goals, whether for tribal, local or political reasons. It is difficult to find a specific term of identity that labels all members of the Libyan National Army. There is no ideological commitment of any kind in Haftar’s forces. Perhaps the only common ground that brings together the different elements is their rejection of Libya’s Islamists as legitimate political actors. There is also no significant influence of a specific tribe over the decision-making mechanism in the army. While there are significant numbers of Zintani brigades among Haftar’s forces, the tribe of Zintan does not dictate

actions in the army and does not represent a tribal identity for the force. When operation Dignity was launched in 2014, the key components of Haftar's forces at that time were mainly disgruntled former military and security officials during Gaddafi's era (Barfi, 2014). Tribes whose influence has waned in the post-Gaddafi era like Warshefana and Warfalla have joined Haftar. Another important element of Haftar's army is the forces from the city of Zintan. Other than their efficiency in fighting, the Zintan forces controlled vital spots like Tripoli Airport, and they provided Haftar with an arm in the West. Once again, despite the presence of tribal components, they do not constitute a basis for mobilisation within the army and do not operate as one cohesive unit due to the lack of hierarchical structures within Libyan tribes.

The institutionalisation process of Haftar's forces began officially when Haftar and 128 other army officers were reinstated into military service by the House of Representatives in Tobruk in January 2015 (Pack, 2014). However, since Abdelrazek Alnazuri (Haftar's deputy) was appointed Army Chief-of-Staff by the Tobruk government in September 2014, the extent of state reliance on Haftar's forces began to increase. In March 2015 Khalifa Haftar was made Commander-in Chief of the Libyan National Army by the House of Representatives. The legitimisation of Haftar's militias was based on the House of Representatives' need to have a strong military arm to be able to maintain its position within the conflict. On the other hand, the achievements made by Haftar's forces during Operation Dignity (like being able to exercise control over a coercive force, launching attacks on radical groups and relinquishing control of some territories from radical Islamist militias) secured him a crucial place within the balance of power in the East. The military successes of Haftar's forces combined with the international recognition of the House of Representatives facilitated the institutionalisation of Haftar's militia alliance. As Jason Pack (2014) puts it: "this rebranding of Haftar and his forces as the Libyan National Army has facilitated their ability to receive training and arms from Egypt, and it has also led to repeated requests by the House of Representatives to the UN to lift the arms embargo in order to tip the balance further in Haftar's favour." The ongoing support by both Egypt and the UAE has allowed the Libyan National Army to gain more legitimacy by empowering and capacitating it, on the one hand, and sharing a political project with it, on the other, which in turn further intensified the professional element in the army as an institutional force (Toaldo & Fitzgerald, n.d.). In addition, the growing influence of the Libyan National Army in the East has led to establishing a military academy in Tobruk with a capacity of 1,000 students and a two year study period. The academy, which was opened in August 2015, is administered and monitored by the Libyan National Army personnel and is expected to have a new branch in the Tawkara region east of Benghazi.⁵

⁵ For more information on the Tobruk military academy, see <http://www.libyaakhbar.com/libya-news/105596.html>

The institutionalisation of the Libyan National Army remains a product of careful political calculations and regional support rather than a comprehensive strategy of security sector reform. However, the very legitimisation of the forces by the House of Representatives has led to some developments within East Libya's security structure. For the first time since the fall of Gaddafi, East Libya enjoys a considerable amount of coordination between political entities and military units. The problems and challenges faced by both the National Transitional Council and the General National Congress with militias, revolutionary brigades and the Pre-Haftar national army did not allow for proper coordination between the political authority and the coercive force on the ground that it supposedly controls. Although the House of Representatives in Tobruk suffered some internal fragmentation over the political dialogue process and later the Skhirat Agreement, the majority of the house remained cohesive in their support of Haftar. The military/political coordination in the East was very evident in the attack launched by the Libyan National Army on the militia known as the Petroleum Facilities Guard in September 2016 (Saleh, 2016). As soon as the Haftar forces gained control of the oil fields that were under the control of the petroleum facilities guard, Haftar declared that the fields will go back to the control of the relevant state institutions. The attack was used politically by the HOR and the LNA to match the attack launched on ISIS in Sirte under the banner of the Presidential Council. At the same time, the legitimisation of the forces allowed for a regional alliance to take place between Egypt, the UAE and Libya's eastern bloc. The fragile border security and the political significance of anti-Islamist sentiments that the Libyan National Army offers to Egypt allowed Egypt to empower, capacitate and internationally strengthen the positions of both Khalifa Haftar and the House of Representatives. Finally, institutionalising the Libyan National Army created more political opportunities for the East, ones that will most likely be used to secure more gains within the political dialogue process.

The Presidential Guard

A very similar institutionalisation process took place recently in West Libya. In May 2016, Fayez Al-Sarraj, Head of the UN backed Government of National Accord (GNA), issued a decree to establish a military force known as the “Presidential Guard”. Al-Sarraj’s decision was the second decision to be taken by the GNA, which reflected the extent of the need for a coercive force under the GNA’s control (“Al Sarraj yosder kararar bi enshaa elharas elreasi”, 2014). Similar to the manner through which the Libyan National Army was established, the Presidential Guard was not part of a security sector reform strategy either. As soon as the GNA materialised as a legitimate political entity in Tripoli, it needed a military force to exercise sovereignty and be able to play a role as an actor within the Libyan conflict. That need was fulfilled by reintegrating militias that were formerly a part of the “Libya Dawn” militia alliance. On the other hand, the Western bloc was searching for international legitimacy and recognition. Since the division took place, the international community has been dealing with the House of Representatives in Tobruk as the sole legitimate political institution in Libya. The absence of international recognition weakened the position of the western bloc within the different political interactions with regional and international actors. Therefore, the General National Congress in Tripoli and its military arm, the Libya Dawn militias, were very welcoming of the Presidential Council and the GNA. The Presidential Guard as a security institution and the forces of Al-Bonyan Al-Marsoos that fought ISIS in Sirte were the product of those momentary mutual interests.

The Libya Dawn militia alliance no longer exists since it was dissolved even before the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement back in December 2015. Libya Dawn was formed in the summer of 2014, primarily in response to Khalifa Haftar’s Operation Dignity. As soon as the Zintan allied militias started to launch attacks in Tripoli, the Libya Dawn alliance was formed to respond to those attacks. Although there were crucial Islamic components, the alliance included Islamist and non-Islamist militias. Formed mainly from the cities of Tripoli and Misrata, the alliance exercised sovereignty over a considerable part of Western Libya (Toaldo & Fitzgerald, n.d). It controlled “virtually all coastal cities, from Misrata to the border with Tunisia as well as cities further south, including Gharyan, Nalut and Jadu in the mainly Berber mountain range of Nafusa” (“Guide to Key Libyan Militias”, 2016). The alliance acted as the military arm of the General National Congress, though without much coordination at times. While the GNC sent envoys and delegations to the negotiations table with the East, the Libya Dawn militia launched attacks on operation dignity allied militias. Perhaps the most noticeable point was how the groups that formed the alliance were flexible in their interactions with political actors, which in turn made alliance formation in the West easier than the East, which was evident in the case of Libya Dawn and later the forces of Al-Bonyan Al-Marsous. Moreover, having the

majority of members from one place, Misrata, helped the overall cohesion of the alliance and reflected on the process of institutionalisation whether in the formation of the Presidential Guard or the forces known as Al-Bunyan Al-Marsous that participated in the Sirte battle against ISIS.

The Presidential Guard is a different pattern of institutionalisation compared to the Libyan National Army. The Libyan National Army was an armed group that operated on the ground before it was recognised and legitimised by the House of Representatives. On the other hand, the Presidential Guard never existed before as a security institution, it was created as a result of the Presidential Council's decision on 9 May 2016. Haftar's forces were legitimised when they already became the de facto coercive arm in the East. The Presidential Guard was created out of political need and not military operational reality. Therefore, the institutionalisation of the Presidential Guard was one from above, based on a state decision that explained the structure and functions of the force. On the other hand, the institutionalisation of the Libyan National Army was one from below, based on the reality created by coercion through Operation Dignity.

According to the Presidential Council's decision, the Presidential Guard follows the Army Commander-in-Chief (Fayez Al-Sarraj according to the Libyan Political Agreement) and enjoys independent administrative and financial identities. The functions enlisted in the decision included securing presidential facilities and state institutions, protecting the members of the Presidential Council and state guests, securing and protecting vital targets including entry and exit ports and power plants, in addition to any other security functions it may be assigned.⁶ Al-Sarraj's decree also included that the Presidential Guard's headquarters are in Tripoli and its commander is an officer with the rank of colonel at least. Article 4 of the decree states that the guard is composed of units from the army and the police, they could be selected by the state or they could apply to join the force. The fifth article states that the commander of the force will propose the different unit locations and the force's needs for weapons and equipment supply. The functions outlined in the decree are too general and default functions of any security institution. The lack of specific duties reflects how the council was after the establishment of the force regardless of its duties or functional capacities.

A somewhat similar institutionalisation process, yet without the same bureaucratic framework, took place when "Al Bunyan Al Marsous" operation was launched in May 2016 to fight ISIS in the city of Sirte. Although Al-Bunyan Al-Marsous (which is an Arabic term meaning "the solid foundation") remains until today a military operation rather than an organised institutional coercive force, but is a good example of militia reintegration

6 For the full text of the decree, see www.alwasat.ly/ar/news/libya/105233 -

and militia compliance with political authority. According to the establishment decision, the force is meant to retake Sirte from the grip of ISIS that has occupied the city since January 2015. However, the speaker of the operation, Colonel Mohamed El-Ghosary, said that the force may advance to the East or to the South in pursuit of ISIS members who might be on the run. The force is composed primarily of militias from Misrata and has been fighting ISIS under the umbrella of American air strikes since August 2016. Needless to say, the American assistance and the magnitude of international support contributed to the empowerment of the force. However, due to the absence of a DDR oriented vision, the militia created a problem upon its return from Sirte due to the vague situation concerning its reintegration within state structure. Until now, Libyan state institutions have legitimised militias to serve political interests without envisioning their future in the state structure.

However, the force's future remains vague, specifically in light of the political blockage between the East and West. Though mutual coordination between the force and the Libyan National Army is highly unlikely at this stage, an efficient institutionalisation process would require coordination in order to avoid functional overlapping and potential tribal or local fragmentation. Since an East/West coordination is unlikely, Al-Bunyan Al-Marsous forces should be kept within the institutional framework in which the Presidential Council works. The momentary mutual interests were used as a foundation for militia reintegration and the international support facilitated the process. Militia institutionalisation in West Libya could be very much incomplete but it certainly has crucial building blocks represented in the Presidential Guard and Al Bunyan Al Marsous forces. Assuring compliance and coordination between military and political entities, the West cannot reach further institutional rebranding or sophistication without negotiating a security structure with the East.

Envisioning a Security Structure

Setting up an internal security structure in Libya is a very paradoxical process. On the one hand, it is very difficult to envision a security structure without minimum coordination and communication between the East and the West. On the other, it is very difficult to convince the warring factions in Libya and the regional actors involved to settle for a political solution without a detailed security structure. Regional actors are of great importance. While Libya has several neighbouring countries, it is Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia that empower Libyan political elites and dictate the political decision-making mechanism in Libya. On the one hand, Egypt openly supports Haftar because he is capable of providing Egypt with the minimal sense of security it requires at the moment. Similarly, Algeria looks at the militias in the West as a provider of a sufficient level of border security and a source of constant pressure on the forces of al-Qaeda in the Arab Maghreb. Manufacturing consensus inside Libyan political institutions, specifically the House of Representatives, will not take place without detailed information of the structuring of security institutions and the hierarchical nature of their leadership. On the other hand, regional actors like Egypt and Algeria will not stop their continuous support for one faction unless they have enough guarantees that the border security provision will not be affected by any political settlement. Finally, envisioning a security structure will undoubtedly be a prerequisite for lifting the arms embargo on the Libyan army.

What could be done at the moment is to lay down basic foundations of a security structure and holding East/West negotiations over the proposed vision. The security arrangements that were included in the Libyan Political Agreement focused mainly on designating the government of national accord as the sole authority responsible for security sector reform. The agreement mentioned a number of procedures like a ceasefire, militia disarmament and establishing military formations. However, the implementation of those procedures requires a functional unity government and a cooperative relationship between security entities in the East and the West. Therefore, the question at this point is how to integrate the forces from the East and the West into one security structure. In the absence of a central political authority (the Presidential Council's authority is still nominal), this reintegration will be specifically difficult.

Therefore, the presence of a security council that encompasses all military and political actors is essential. Recent attempts by both Egypt and Algeria have focused on separating the military leadership from the political one. The regional vision is tilting towards amending the Skhirat Agreement to include a presidential council and a military council, each responsible for a different dimension.⁷ The military council should be responsible for dividing and reintegrating the forces into various specialisations. Since the fall of Gaddafi in 2011, Libya has proved more than once that central security

7 A personal interview with Tamer Al-Rifaai, official spokesman of the Egyptian Armed Forces, Cairo, 26 February 2017.

institutions are ineffective. Hence, decentralising the security structure in Libya is a must. While decentralising the leadership could be risky and a source of potential fragmentation, decentralising the specialisations is not. Special units need to be set up for specific functions, including border security, coastal security, hydrocarbon facilities security, domestic policing and illegal immigration supervision. At the same time, the security structure must not be built on a tribal or local basis. Although armed groups do exist on those bases, reassigning them to spots far away from their home cities or their tribal affiliations is important. Simultaneously, rebuilding the security sector will require a set of benefits for its members, like retirement plans, social security and continued education. It is important that the new security structure works on dissolving the image of the rogue militia man and replaces it with a nationalist perception that would in turn improve the social status of security sector careers. In other words, a comprehensive strategy of security sector reform in Libya needs to look beyond the conventional security architecture and realise the need to contextualise Libya's security sector according to the dimensions of the conflict.

Conclusion

This paper so far has attempted to discuss the possibilities of security sector reform in Libya through the dimensions of militia institutionalisation and reintegration. Despite the ongoing conflict and the absence of sufficient dialogue between the East and the West, militia institutionalisation is well underway in Libya. However, the political conflict has prevented those institutionalisation attempts from turning into comprehensive strategies for security sector reform. So far, the militia institutionalisation procedures have mainly targeted the empowerment of political institutions through exercising authority over an organised coercive force. Political empowerment did not offer a stronger security structure but merely secured more political interests for the warring factions. Therefore, the model of institutionalisation through legitimisation, which was adopted in Libya, will remain incomplete until a stable balance of power materialises between the political institutions and their military entities. Assuming political negotiations or preparing for military escalation will require clear hierarchical structure within each bloc.

Libya's militia dilemma will not end overnight and the state does not possess the sufficient force to monopolise violence without the help of the militias. This fact makes militia institutionalisation a necessity in Libya. However, developing the appropriate criteria for reintegration is crucial. The structural nature of the Libyan state and the developments of the conflict created a unique situation that requires contextualised criteria. However, there are clear dividing lines between militias that could be institutionalised and reintegrated into state structure and militias that will remain illegitimate armed groups that must be arrested or wiped out. Radicalisation, through both ideology and practice, determines whether a militia is qualified for institutionalisation.

Both the Libyan National Army and the Presidential Guard were legitimised according to political needs. However, this does not mean that they cannot be active elements in a comprehensive process of security sector reform. What Libya has right now is not security institutions in the institutional sense of the word, but rather quasi-institutional coercive forces. Rebuilding Libya's security sector from those incomplete institutionalisation processes is possible provided the required resources were available. Therefore, regional and international support are necessary as soon as a unity government is recognised, whether in accordance with the agreement signed in December 2015 or according to a modified version of it. International and regional support should focus on capacity building and re-arming the Libyan military (LNA). In this regard, the role of both Egypt and Algeria will be crucial as the two nations with the most advanced militaries in North Africa and the ones with direct interest in reforming Libya's security sector. However, a political settlement and a peaceful framework need to be reached before security sector reform is implemented. After all, militia

institutionalisation is only one of the dimensions of a security structure. A political agreement needs to be reached and implemented before the security threat of Libya further intensifies.

Recommendations

- International support must be directed towards the Skhirat Agreement and its possible amendments, to ensure that political solutions are both viable and efficient.
- The political reality in Libya right now dictates equal interaction with all warring parties.
- Regional actors (mainly Egypt and Algeria) are of great importance to finding a political settlement to the situation in Libya.
- Libya is in need of a comprehensive DDR strategy, and not just a set of crisis management actions.

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EuroMeSCo

Comprising 106 institutes from 32 European and South Mediterranean countries, the EuroMeSCo (Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission) network was created in 1996 for the joint and coordinated strengthening of research and debate on politics and security in the Mediterranean. These were considered essential aspects for the achievement of the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

EuroMeSCo aims to be a leading forum for the study of Euro-Mediterranean affairs, functioning as a source of analytical expertise. The objectives of the network are to become an instrument for its members to facilitate exchanges, joint initiatives and research activities; to consolidate its influence in policy-making and Euro-Mediterranean policies; and to disseminate the research activities of its institutes amongst specialists on Euro-Mediterranean relations, governments and international organisations.

The EuroMeSCo work plan includes a research programme with four publication lines (EuroMeSCo Joint Policy Studies, EuroMeSCo Papers, EuroMeSCo Briefs and EuroMeSCo Reports), as well as a series of seminars, workshops and presentations on the changing political dynamics of the Mediterranean region. It also includes the organisation of an annual conference and the development of web-based resources to disseminate the work of its institutes and stimulate debate on Euro-Mediterranean affairs.

