# EMPOWERED DECENTRALIZATION: A CITY-BASED STRATEGY FOR REBUILDING LIBYA

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*Libya is not, in and of itself, a top-tier foreign policy concern or vital interest of the United States. It is, however, an important interest, because of its key role in the dangerous crescent of land stretching west through the Maghreb and south into the Sahel regions of North Africa, to the Middle East and South Asia. This overall region, whether Washington likes it or not, remains crucial to American and Western security—if not quite on a par with great-power threats, then close to them in importance.*

*Libya has been a major source of foreign fighters and terrorists in Iraq and Syria since 2003, with total numbers of its jihadists reaching well into the thousands—contributing to the highly unstable state of much of the Levant today. Libya has also been a source of hundreds of thousands of migrants to Europe from or through its territory, especially after the overthrow of Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. The vast preponderance of these migrants simply seek a better, safer life. But they include the occasional criminal or terrorist, contributing to European insecurities in recent years, and producing political backlash in many key NATO nations as well as other U.S. and European partners. Thus, Libya has become a significant indirect threat to America's allies in Europe and to its security partners in the broader Middle East, and its continued instability will only exacerbate that threat.*

*Since the death of four Americans in Benghazi in September 2012, the United States has been generally absent from the Libya file, except for occasional and limited counterterrorist actions. Building on a recent meeting between the Libyan prime minister and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, there is now an opportunity for American leadership, involving only limited cost and risk, to make a substantial difference in Libya. If effective, such a reinvigorated U.S. effort could help stabilize the North African pillar in a broader strategy to combat violent extremism. Additional key pillars in that strategy must also be sustained in the Levant, in the Arabian Peninsula down to the Horn of Africa as well as the Sahel, and in South Asia. Despite recent progress, there remain tens of thousands of Islamist extremists in the broader Middle East who seek*

*to do harm to their region as well as in some cases the West. The United States and allies therefore need a durable overall strategy to address these risks even after the big battles in places like Iraq and Syria are over. Libya policy can and should be seen in this strategic context, not simply on its own terms.*

*As part of a new initiative, the United States should restore an on-the-ground diplomatic and development presence in Libya. The U.N. mission there is helping establish some hopeful trends and merits strong American support. As the major power that is least mistrusted by Libyans, the United States can also try to deconflict the roles of a half dozen or so external players that have engaged in proxy competition within Libya. Libya's population is small, ethnically mostly homogeneous, and generally urban and coastal, making the stabilization problem there somewhat less daunting than in places such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan. Also, the United States should promote creation of an oversight board and a financial mechanism that would further empower localities in Libya, while also providing incentives to militias as well as other actors to improve their behavior.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Libya has floundered since the overthrow of Moammar Gadhafi in 2011, and continues to struggle now. There are elements of a functional economy and governance, but otherwise only a hodgepodge of very weak central institutions and improvised local arrangements, as militias and other actors compete for the spoils of the state. As a result, Libya remains in disarray, representing a potential source of terrorism. It also constitutes a clear and present danger in terms of unregulated flows of people to Europe, originating from within its own borders as well as neighboring African nations. The risk of greater Russian influence is growing with time, as well. There may now be a glimmer of hope, however, as a U.N.-led effort in Libya starts to gain more traction. Encouraging, if fledgling, economic reforms in late 2018 add further promise.

We propose a new U.S. approach to Libya that centers on the concept of reinvigorated American engagement. For years, U.S. support for the U.N. mission has been passive, consisting largely of positive words in the Security Council. More sustained and assertive U.S. leadership can make the difference as to whether, this time, the U.N. approach succeeds in uniting Libyans and their international partners, including with an important national conference that may take place in Libya in 2019.

As an essential element of this leadership, the United States should return Americans, and a U.S. Embassy and ambassador, to Libya. It is important that the embassy presence be conducive to interaction with Libyans from many regions and tribes, and that it include numerous political and economic/development officers (as well as security personnel), too.

Consistent with existing approaches endorsed by the United Nations, numerous foreign countries, and many Libyans themselves, the United States and other outside actors should also focus on empowering individual municipalities. National-level efforts would continue as well, of course. They could build up institutions including the coast guard and perhaps elite security forces to guard key national assets and personnel; they could also continue to promote economic reforms. But much of the emphasis should shift to local actors—elected municipal governments, supportive militias that are willing to abide by higher standards of behavior and cease criminal misconduct, and civil society groups.

Washington should also use more senior-level diplomacy to forge a regional and international consensus behind the U.N. process and reduce unhelpful and competitive external meddling in Libya's domestic politics. Because of its distance from Libya, its relative disengagement from the country in recent times, and its relationships with European allies as well as Persian Gulf partners, the United States is the only power that can credibly deconflict, at least partially, the roles of foreign actors.

We propose a city-first paradigm that would not be a radical departure relative to realities on the ground today, or to the expressed wishes of many Libyans. Rather, it would constitute a significant shift in formal strategy and in political horizon or vision. It would only make sense if and when most major Libyan actors—current government officials, major militia leaders, technocrats in the current government, and other individuals committed to the country's future—would endorse such a shift in approach.

Significant economic, political, and security activity would then center on the country's dozen to 15 major cities. Criteria would be established for how local entities could qualify for their fair-share allotment of oil revenues and international aid. An oversight board composed of Libyan technocrats and foreign experts would assess eligibility based on the actual behavior of the local actors. They would have the power to dock militias and other local actors a percentage of their monthly allocation of funds in the event of serious misbehavior such as abuse of human rights, interference with normal economic activity, theft, or violence. Libyan militias and political actors do sometimes have tribal proclivities, but they generally lack the kind of toxic ideological or sectarian motivations that worsen cycles of violence in much of the region. They are driven more by competition for their share of the state's wealth, as well as control of the neighborhoods and cities that matter most to them. Our hope is that many can therefore be induced to change their behavior for the better. Such a process could start slowly but then accelerate, as militias and other actors witness how the dynamics work, and decide not to be left out of the new system.

National-level institutions would someday be constructed out of those metropolitan entities. They would include, ultimately, a new parliament, a gendarmerie, and/or an army. But national elections, while still important to keep on the political horizon since there is no real alternative method to establish a national government that could be widely seen by Libyans as fair and legitimate, would not be rushed.

Counterterrorism would remain a top priority for the United States and other countries under the new approach. However, it would be pursued in a more nuanced way, with tighter standards about which local actors to choose as partners. Because the threat of terrorism appears relatively constrained, there is less need to create potentially unsavory relationships with local actors who can help with the counterterrorism mission, but often at the expense of trying to create a more stable state. Libya may now be in a position where the balance of these two priorities—immediate counterterrorism and stabilization (itself needed for successful long-term counterterrorism efforts)—can shift somewhat in favor of the latter.

Several in our group of authors, while endorsing all of the above ideas, also believe that the prospects for a new strategy in Libya would be very significantly enhanced by the authorization and deployment of a U.N.-sanctioned security force, assuming a request for such a force had been issued by key Libyan actors. Given Libyan national pride and patriotism, that force should have a narrow mandate focused on protection of specific assets, institutions, and locations. But it would have to be granted robust rules of engagement for self-defense, in order to be effective.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Libya has struggled severely since the U.N.-blessed and NATO-assisted campaign to protect Libyan civilians that led to the overthrow and death of Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. It has teetered on the brink of becoming a failed state. Its hydrocarbon-based wealth, relatively small and mostly homogenous population of 6 million, and the relative weakness of its militias in areas beyond their immediate localities, have prevented the kind of complete humanitarian debacles witnessed in the current civil wars in Yemen and Syria. Indeed, the violence in Libya since 2011, while tragic, has not been as unconstrained as in many other countries experiencing a breakdown of the state. But seven years after the death of Gadhafi, it is hard to detect any favorable forward movement toward stability—though there may now be a fresh opportunity, based on developments in recent months, as we discuss further below.

Libya matters to the United States, European countries, and the region for several reasons. The old adage that "what happens in Libya, stays in Libya" could hardly be further from the truth. Libya has been among the greatest sources of foreign fighters in the wars of the Levant this century. It has been a major launching pad for cross-Mediterranean migration and human trafficking in recent years, as well. Its instability can cause trouble for neighboring Tunisia, Mali, and Egypt (and vice versa). Its chaos has, and could again, allow possible sanctuaries and staging bases for terrorists who would strike the West. And now, it may also provide Russia opportunities for greater regional influence, including access to port facilities in the strategically vital Mediterranean Sea.

Within Libya today, the basic situation on the ground remains grim. There are two competing governments. They are dominated by at least four major political personalities, including Fayez Serraj, the head of the U.N.-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli; Khalifa Hiftar, the leader of the "Libyan National Army" in Benghazi in the east; Aguila Saleh, the head of the House of Representatives, which does not recognize the Tripoli government; and Khalid al-Mishri, the head of the High Council of State (an advisory body to the main government in Tripoli). Dozens of powerful militias control chunks of territory while competing for the spoils of the state—namely its oil wealth, critical infrastructure, and the smuggling opportunities provided by the black market, including human trafficking. Fighting among these militias, and groupings of them sometimes called "super militias," has intensified in recent months.[1] There have been some ISIS and al-Qaida elements in Libya in recent years, too.

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1  Sudarsan Raghavan, "Surge in Fighting Among Libya's 'Super Militias' Imperils Western Peace Efforts," *The Washington Post*, October 2, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/surge-in-fighting-among-libyas-super-militias-imperils-western-peace-efforts/2018/10/01/54969c5c-c0d0-11e8-9f4f-a1b7af255aa5_story.html?utm_term=.10d1bd9fd8b8.

# BREAKING DOWN THE CONFLICT IN LIBYA
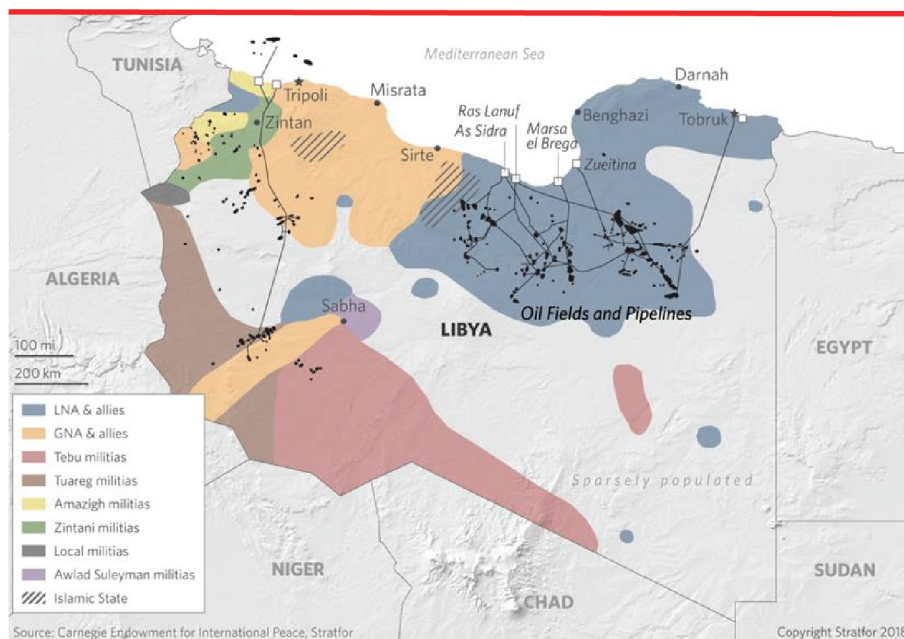


Courtesy of Stratfor Worldview, a geopolitical intelligence firm.

## KEY POLITICAL FIGURES

**FAIEZ SERRAJ**
Head of the U.N.-backed Government of National Accord in Tripoli

**KHALID AL-MISHRI**
Head of the High Council of State in Tripoli

**KHALIFA HIFTAR**
Head of the Libyan National Army

**AGUILA SALEH**
President of the Libyan House of Representatives

## MILITARY CAPABILITY

| GROUP | CAPABILITIES |
|---|---|
| Libyan National Army (LNA)[1] | 27 fighter-bombers (18 MiG-23s, three Su-22s, two Mirage F1s) |
| | Seven Mi-24/35 gunships, 14 various Mi-8/14/17 transport helicopters |
| | Transport cargos (an Il-76 and a C-130) |
| | 25,000 men (regular army and auxiliary militia) |
| Zintani militias | 2,500 soldiers[1] |
| | 3,500 - 4,000 core fighters[2] |
| GNA | 6,000 troops[3] |
| Tuareg* | Estimates of the Tuareg population in Libya range from 10,000 to 100,000[4] |
| Tebu* | An estimated 50,000 Tebu live in Libya[4] |
| Amazigh* | Numbers are difficult to come by, but there are approx. 600,000 Ibadi Muslims in Libya[4] |

## REGIONAL ACTORS

Egypt        Qatar
UAE          Algeria
Turkey       Tunisia

*Based on the approximate population, it may be possible to estimate possible ranges of militia sizes.*
*Sources:*

1. https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/forces-libyan-ground-who-who-20640
2. https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/armed-groups-libya-after-elections-what-can-be-expected-10720
3. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/sirte-isis-libya-de-mine-and-clear-after-liberation-from-militants-a7185341.html
4. https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/country-information-report-libya.pdf

A U.N. mission headed by Lebanese statesman and Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Ghassan Salamé, with the American diplomat Stephanie Williams as his deputy, is attempting to break the impasse by fostering national reconciliation and supporting Libyan efforts to devise a new governing formula. A number of other countries play important but sometimes unhelpful roles as well. Neighboring Egypt worries about the security of its western border and, to a degree, still fears Muslim Brotherhood dominance in Libya. The UAE is motivated primarily by a desire to counter political Islamists and to block any inroads into Libya by its regional rival Qatar. For its part, Qatar has economic interests in Libya and has been sympathetic to Libyan Islamists for both pragmatic and ideological reasons. Turkey has also had long-standing economic ties in Libya, particularly to the port city of Misrata. Italy and France cooperate and compete with each other in Libya. Both are interested in stemming refugee flows and ensuring access to oil. The former has a history of brutal colonial rule that continues to color Libyan perceptions. The latter has special interests, including counterterrorism, in a region that also includes several of its own former colonies. Russia is engaging in Libya now as well, through outreach to Hiftar elements, among other activities.[2] For all the complications that these foreign actors cause, it should, however, be noted that none plays the kind of deeply malevolent role that Iran has played in Iraq since 2003, or that Pakistan has played within Afghanistan over a similar time period. Thus, there is a challenge, but there is also hope.

Libya was formed out of three major regions about a century ago. Later, Gadhafi deposed the nominal King Idris, who hailed from the eastern region previously known as Cyrenaica, and then ran a weak state for decades. Gadhafi, from the city of Sirte (in the former Tripolitania region), played off different groups against each other and maintained enough combat power in a central army to mete out punishment and thereby enforce discipline when needed. Yet he kept most institutions underdeveloped, and other political actors weak, such that when he fell, little was left standing.

Multiple smuggling economies also characterized Gadhafi's rule, with Libya's southern border largely uncontrolled—even if the harshness of the terrain meant that only professional smugglers could be successful. These included networks involved in the extensive smuggling of migrants from other African countries needed to perform jobs that oil-rich Libyans would not take. Tens of thousands of migrants entered Libya yearly, with some 2.5 million living and working there as of 2011, often subject to exploitation and state punishment. Prisons sometimes served as lucrative sources of rented, forced labor. Such exploitation of migrants as well as other smuggling economies became widely normalized and entrenched in local communities.

After Gadhafi's overthrow, revolutionaries constructed a glamorized and incomplete narrative of having led a successful indigenous revolt against an evil dictator. The narrative neglected NATO's key role, ignored the rivalries between various competing tribal groups and militias, and in general created a false sense of confidence among Libyans that they could handle their own problems going forward. These views, along with traditional Libyan suspicions toward outsiders, produced a general unwillingness among Libyans to request or accept outside help—a problem reinforced by the West's unwillingness to offer much support at that moment in any event. Indeed, Western nations ignored the hard-learned lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan: Toppling governments

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2  James Marson, "After Military Push in Syria, Russia Plays Both Sides in Libya," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 7, 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/12/food-fight-illegal-fishing-conflict.

is relatively easy, but standing up functional and acceptable governance is excruciatingly hard, especially in states where earlier periods of autocracy prevented the development of strong institutions or traditions of self-rule.

Other key mistakes were baked into post-Gadhafi Libya. Municipal and parliamentary elections were organized in 2012, but they only served to sharpen divisions rather than unite the nation. The resulting parliament quickly fell prey to militia pressure and many Libyans viewed it as dysfunctional. The tragic murder of the U.S. ambassador and other Americans in Benghazi in September 2012 led to a further reduction in any meaningful American engagement in Libya. Differing views among key European and Middle East powers over which groups to favor exacerbated rivalries. An attempt to create a national army in 2013, the General Purpose Force, collapsed because of political divisions, opposition from militias, and inadequate institutional structures to absorb and retain new recruits. Most training and arms wound up reinforcing the militias rather than national institutions.

Over the last five years, a strong actor, Khalifa Hiftar, has emerged in the country's east. But even there, his rule is not universally accepted, and in general throughout the country, anarchy has reigned as before. In Tripoli, a conglomerate of militias has effectively captured the state, enriching themselves through black markets in currency and consumer goods. Through a U.N.-brokered process, a new Government of National Accord in Tripoli was created in late 2015 that was supposed to bridge the divisions between Hiftar's camp and his opponents. Yet that government has failed to gain minimal legitimacy, even in western Libya, and Hiftar and his allies have opposed it.

Outsiders certainly share in the blame. Beyond the general disinterest in helping to build a post-Gadhafi Libya, the international community—including the United Nations, until Ghassan Salamé's arrival as SRSG in mid-2017—has in general focused excessively upon the Libyan political process at the expense of other issues. It has done so in the belief that if Libya's civilian leaders reached a political agreement, the country could be stitched back together again.

However, this assumption ignores two important realities that need to be addressed. First, all of the current political leaders have vested financial interests in the status quo. Any one of the "big four" (Hiftar, Serraj, Saleh, al-Mishri) will become a spoiler to a potential political agreement if he sees his interests at risk. Second, the focus on the political process assumes that an agreement among civilian leaders would lead to compliance by militia leaders, when the balance of power is in the favor of the latter. The militia leaders are not only more powerful, in many cases they are seen by local constituents as more legitimate. Those militia leaders, too, are profiting from the status quo financially, making them unlikely to be agents for change. Yet they also may not be dogged opponents of change, if a new system of economic and other incentives addresses their core interests. Unlike most malevolent actors in other parts of the broader Middle East, they generally do not have intensely ideological, sectarian, or revolutionary motivations. At the same time, it is important not to legitimate violence, or whitewash the past criminal behavior of groups only paying lip service to the idea of reform. Close vigilance is required, and the oversight board discussed above needs real independence, teeth, and the courage to act.

In terms of counterterrorism, the United States and its partners have improvised, with some success. They have made progress against the Islamic State "province" in Libya, forcing it to relinquish the territory it once controlled in and around Sirte. In addition,

often with U.S. support, Libyans ejected Islamic State fighters from Derna, Sirte, Benghazi, Tripoli, and other parts of Libya, forcing the Islamic State underground. At times, the United States conducted unilateral operations; at others, it worked with the recognized government of Libya. In additional cases, rival forces (often working with U.S. partners such as the UAE or Saudi Arabia) took on the jihadists. In still others, the United States worked with groups like Bunyan al-Marsous that are notionally "aligned" with the recognized government but operate independently. Similarly, in Tripoli, the Salafist-oriented but government-aligned Special Deterrence Force has aggressively gone after the Islamic State presence, while at the same time expanding its own political and economic power.[3]

Open source data on the level of training, financial aid, and other assistance given to anti-Islamic State militias in Libya is scarce. However, as the above litany underscores, this rather opportunistic approach to counterterrorism risks making the militias stronger relative to the central government. In addition, it further delegitimizes the recognized government, showing yet again that it does not control its own territory and that outside powers will simply bypass the government when convenient. And to the extent that the militias engage in abusive, predatory, rapacious, and discriminatory activity, they delegitimize the political process even as they entrap local populations in narrow patronage networks. Over time, such grievances could become sources of renewed violent conflict.

Despite it all, there is now a moment of hopefulness and possible opportunity in Libya.

The outbreak of militia fighting over Tripoli in September 2018 illustrates both the fragility of the current situation and the potential for international leadership to help the Libyans move forward. Seizing the September 2018 security crisis as an opportunity, SRSG Salamé built a consensus around agreements to establish a cease-fire, began to adjust security arrangements for Tripoli, and wrested at least a verbal commitment from all but one of the militias to withdraw from key national facilities (and, at least in principle, eventually to disband). While implementation has been slow to date, and is far from assured, the alacrity with which most political and military leaders in Tripoli accepted Salamé's proposals demonstrates the Libyan understanding that the status quo is unsustainable—as well as increased willingness for international involvement.

In addition, prodded by Salamé, Serraj and Central Bank Governor Sadiq al-Kabir transcended their differences to agree on exchange rate reforms and a modest reduction in fuel subsidies. As a result, the cost of commodities went down substantially in ensuing weeks. The dinar strengthened against the dollar from roughly 7:1 to 5:1. Letters of credit worth more than $1 billion were soon issued, with commodities beginning to flow in. The market is now operating more freely and the militias have shrinking access to the parallel currency market. These steps could reduce the ability of militias to exploit certain black markets to entrench their positions.

Serraj also reshuffled his cabinet. While the national political stalemate persists, what happened in Tripoli in September 2018 demonstrates that with international engagement, improvements in the situation are possible. A national conference to

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3  In May 2018, Prime Minister Serraj dissolved the Special Deterrence Force and renamed it the Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism. This rebranding was accompanied by a controversial decision to expand its powers, which contributed to the inter-militia fighting later that summer. See PM Sarraj accused of empowering a Tripoli-based militia," *Libya Times*, May 9, 2018, http://www.libyatimes.net/news/136-sarraj-gives-the-special-deterrence-force-a-wider-mandate.

be held in Libya in 2019 could provide general guidance on everything from a new constitution for the country to eventual countrywide elections and other matters. Much of this is promising as well.

## A LIBYA MODEL BY AND FOR LIBYANS

Libya today is too atomized to be run by a strong central government. Indeed, historically it has always been something of an enigma in the broader Middle East and North Africa region, in that its origins and traditions are largely oriented around its cities, and to an extent its regions, more than a strong capital. Much of what happens in Libya today recognizes and reflects this reality. Except for the oil sector, and the revenue it generates for the nation as a whole, the cities and various groups within them including militias are effectively running the country. But formal strategy, including by the international community, still focuses on Tripoli and, to an extent, a competing nexus of power in the east. If Libyans themselves agree, a new strategy might return the country to its roots, and build the state from the grassroots up, rather than from the top down. A major national conference, anticipated in 2019, could set the principles and parameters for pursuing this vision, while leaving some key details, such as when future nationwide elections might be held and what size and shape the country's central security forces might adopt, for later. National elections, and perhaps a referendum on a new constitution, should be part of the long-term political vision for Libya, for the simple reason that, to paraphrase Churchill, democracy is the worst form of government except all the others. There is no alternative way to create long-term legitimate rule that all major players in Libya could accept. But the process need not be rushed.

To underscore the complexity of Libya, consider that according to recent estimates, some 150 militias roam the land, with most including 50 to 200 fighters and only a few possessing more than 500. They can generally be categorized as pro-GNA, anti-GNA, or pro-Hiftar. That said, loyalties can shift, especially when they are usually based on interest more than ideology. A further breakdown of militias could code them in regard to the strength and centralization of their leadership, the sources of their licit and illicit revenues, and the support they receive within their own communities (often neighborhoods or quarters of a given city). In terms of power and influence, the most important militias operate in perhaps six key cities or regions: Tripoli, Zintan (close to Tripoli, on its western flank), Misrata, central Libya (including Sirte and Jufra), southern Libya, and eastern Libya (including Benghazi, Marj, Sukna, Tobruk, Ajdabiya, and Derna). That is just the militias; it says nothing of the myriad mayors, local commissioners, tribal leaders, and community associations that make up the complex landscape of Libya today.

We believe that it is time for the United States to engage seriously in Libya. Such engagement has been episodic at best since 2011, and almost completely lacking since the murder of four Americans in Libya in September 2012. Washington and the international community might adopt "outside-in" and "inside-out" approaches. The "outside-in" concept would seek to deconflict the roles of various outside actors. At present, some of them verge on waging proxy war inside Libya. This must stop, if there is to be any realistic hope of stability. Washington will not be completely successful in any effort to achieve such deconfliction, but even partial progress will help—and there is no viable alternative to Washington to play this role. In attempting this task, the United States can take heart from the fact that, while there is proxy competition within Libya by outside actors, there is no foreign power playing a highly malevolent role.

The complementary, "inside-out" aspect of this strategy would seek to empower the special representative of the U.N. secretary-general, Ghassam Salamé, and general United Nations efforts within the country. A central mechanism to pursue this vision would be a means of deciding when and how to allocate funds to individual localities (or even neighborhoods), in order to incentivize good behavior on the part of militias and other actors. Militias that provide local security, and accept oversight and control by elected political authorities at both the national and local levels, could receive funds including security aid. Other organizations and municipal governments could be given resources to work on health, education, water, and sanitation, among other endeavors. Payments would however be made in frequent installments. That would allow scrutiny of recent behavior, and the possibility of reductions in a given month's allocation, if the performance or behavior of a given militia or other type of group had not been up to par in the preceding period. Today, payments to militias already happen, but they are often haphazard, duplicative, and inadequately conditioned on the militias' behavior. Our hope is that a system of payments like this would find some initial takers among local actors. Once word gets out that the system works, others would follow, and there could ideally develop something of a virtuous cycle or snowballing effect. Of course, this theory would need to be tested, but even if it worked only imperfectly, it could constitute a marked improvement relative to current dynamics.

### Washington's unique role

While many external actors have important contributions to make toward stabilizing Libya, the United States has a special position and is arguably indispensable to the success of any future initiative. That does not mean that it should or must do the lion's share of the heavy lifting. Nor does it rule out an expanded role for other outside actors—for example, the European Union.[4] But the effective disengagement of the United States since the killing of Gadhafi in 2011, and even more so since the Benghazi tragedy of 2012, leaves other outside actors to compete with each other, often in destructive ways. A country capable of playing the role of leader, and to some extent honest broker, is needed.

Washington is well placed to exercise leadership to reduce the French-Italian competition for pre-eminence among European powers, with echoes still resonating from the colonial past. It could also help defuse the competitive dynamics between the Qatar-Turkey axis versus the UAE-Egypt axis. For example, while Egypt has done good work in bringing together various security actors through its Cairo process, it is often seen as favoring eastern groups, particularly Hiftar's. Help from a different nation is needed to get the Cairo process to a more comprehensive and inclusive level. Despite the complicated U.S.-Libyan history, the United States is perceived by most Libyans to be the most neutral of the powerful outside actors. We also have witnessed a recent example of how effective U.S. leadership can be, in its efforts to solve the oil crescent crisis in mid-2018: Everyone fell in line behind Washington in resolving the crisis and reopening the oil spigots so that Libya could again access to foreign-currency earnings.

In this next stage of Libya's evolution, the United States should consider re-establishing a formal and ongoing presence in the country, to complement the counterterrorism activities it has undertaken episodically in recent years. That means an embassy of

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4  See Tarek Megerisi, "The Promise of Palermo: Uniting the Strands of Europe's Libya Policy," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, November 8, 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_promise_of_palermo_uniting_strands_of_europes_libya_policy.

some kind—be it akin to the fortified and remote facility established in Lebanon or the airport-based facility established in Somalia, or a more classic setting and structure—provided that it were accessible to Libyans from many regions and tribal loyalties. It could also involve, along with other donors and external actors, American development personnel working in some of the country's cities.

It should be acknowledged that the United States would incur certain risks if it follows the approach we recommend. The history of U.S. involvement in the Middle East and nearby regions—including debacles such as the Marine barracks bombing in Beirut in 1983 and subsequent withdrawal of U.S. forces, "Black Hawk Down" in Somalia in 1993, the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania by al-Qaida in 1998, and the Benghazi tragedy of 2012—underscores the risks. American men and women can suffer personal tragedy as a result. The credibility of the United States can also suffer, when the nation is not committed firmly to a workable strategy. Thus, the United States should only pursue the path that we advocate if it is prepared to be resolute when tested by one or more actors—be they ISIS or al-Qaida elements, or simply spoiler militias concerned more with power and money than ideology. The United States accepts such risks in other parts of the broader Middle East and the world in general; we believe it can do so in Libya.

### *A city-based model of politics*

Today, the prevalent vision for Libyan politics focuses too much on national elections. Even though they did not occur in 2018, as had once been considered, countrywide elections and the creation of a new national government are generally seen as the ultimate prize. This tendency is perhaps inevitable in a world in which nation-states deal with each other principally through national governments and capital cities. But it is not the way that nongovernmental actors often operate in today's world, where direct connections between cities, companies, and other organizations often cross borders while bypassing central governments. And it is also not how Libya has operated historically.

National elections, while ultimately essential, are not equivalent to the establishment of democracy, in Libya or anywhere else. Just as central are a system of checks and balances, functioning courts, protection of individual rights, guarantees of free speech, and a free and credible media. Without these elements, hasty national elections, rather than improving governance or political legitimacy in Libya, are more likely to bolster the influence of current and often nefarious actors. For the foreseeable future, a combination of local elections of the type that have been happening, as well as other means of establishing accountability and local ownership and legitimacy, can be considered. In some cities, it may even be preferable to use something more akin to a caucus system rather than a classic ballot election, including a strong role for women, to ensure representation from each of several powerful groups rather than to rely on a winner-take-all mechanism that could create immediate resentments.

With all of Libya's current institutions seen as having questionable legitimacy and effectiveness at best, including even those deriving from the Libyan Political Agreement of 2015, the type of outreach and thinking that SRSG Salamé is doing is much needed. He has outsourced some diplomatic activity to non-U.N. actors (such as the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva, the Dialogue Advisory Group in Amsterdam, and the Conflict Management Initiative in Helsinki) to be able to test ideas and gather input in ways that would be difficult to do more officially, given Libyan expectations of the United Nations as well as U.N. security requirements for travel.

The United States can help. If the Libyans see that Salamé is regularly being received in Washington at high levels, as he already is in Cairo, Abu Dhabi, Paris, and Rome, that fact alone would automatically increase his importance in their eyes. With his U.N. hat, Salamé can pitch ideas and promote consensus in ways that the rest of the international community can rally behind more easily. Salamé is able to live in Tripoli and fly elsewhere in Libya, giving him access to Libyan leaders on their own turf and in their own language.

Salamé should be encouraged to seek short-term political processes that build on Libya's often vibrant existing local politics to broaden representation at the national level. Parliament could be a mix of existing MPs with additional officials, chosen city-by-city in whatever means a given locality wished—provided that basic criteria for human rights and inclusivity were met.

A city-centric political model would cede substantial autonomy to municipalities, lessening the political salience of the national government in most matters affecting Libyans' daily lives. Municipalities would have control over most laws and law enforcement, resourcing and budgets, local services, and even local governance structures. U.S. diplomacy and assistance would be focused on this level of government, building capacity and bolstering authority where possible.

Ultimately, a modified constitution could establish permanent arrangements and nationally coordinated elections. But there is no hurry even to decide on dates for national elections. Improvised procedures may work best for the foreseeable future. Empowering localities, and building national institutions increasingly from the local level on up, should be the current watchwords and goals.

### A (largely) city-based model of economics

On economics, two main efforts are needed. First, basic structural reforms must continue. This process will require continued work with central institutions, as well as a focus on nationwide policy issues such as exchange rate and subsidy reform.

Second, the allocation of resources should be focused more transparently and methodically on cities and other local structures.[5] Militias can be among the beneficiaries of such allocation algorithms when they comport with basic standards of human rights, avoid discrimination against local population subgroups as well as economic market monopolization, and provide public safety.

Economic reforms should continue to reduce the subsidies, artificial exchange rates, and resulting black market opportunities that drain national coffers while allowing militias to enrich and empower themselves illicitly.[6] Consistent with the recent success regarding the "oil crescent" in Libya, in which Washington and other actors persuaded a Libyan militia to ease its stranglehold on hydrocarbon revenues, the United States could continue to promote good decisions by and for Libyans. Notably, it could promote the elimination of the parallel exchange market by encouraging devaluation of the Libyan currency. There were encouraging policy moves in this direction in the fall of 2018 that need to be sustained. The elimination of this particular black market would reduce the

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5  See "The Libyan National Conference Process: Final Report," (Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, November 2018), 72-73, https://unsmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/ncp-report_english.pdf.
6  On this issue, see as well, "After the Showdown in Libya's Oil Crescent," (Brussels: International Crisis Group, August 2018), https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/libya/189-after-showdown-libyas-oil-crescent.

ability of militias (and some civilian leaders) to sustain their wealth and power through illegal means, encouraging them to play constructive roles in providing security to gain their share of national revenues instead.

Another element of economic reform should be to reduce gradually various consumer subsidies, especially on petroleum products. Gasoline in Libya is currently cheaper than water! The militias smuggle subsidized goods out of Libya to sell at profit in Tunisia and Egypt, so eliminating petroleum subsidies, too, would reduce the power of the militias (but with a cost to consumers as well, and thus creating the possibility of unrest, unless done gradually and carefully).

Some militias are paid "salaries" by four or five separate ministries, a protection racket that harms the country. The international community may be able to help here in a technical way, using biometric indicators and improved computer databases, for example, to avoid the likelihood of multiple payments to the same recipient. Saving national funds in this way can then help resource small, professional security forces—the coast guard, and an elite protection force for key areas of the capital, the oil and gas fields, key institutions, and key infrastructure.

It is important to recognize that even if such a strategy were to succeed, the various militia and political actors will still retain their access to, and possibly increase their dependence on, other illegal economies, such as migrant smuggling and drug trafficking.[7] Hence the importance of a stronger and larger coast guard.

To encourage compliance with agreed standards by the militias and other local actors, central state revenues would have to be allocated on a formula that is essentially mechanical and automatic—provided that basic standards on human rights, governance, and the use of violence are respected. In the case of systematic and egregious violations, a militia could be completely cut off from such funding, and perhaps subject to other punitive measures, such as visa restrictions.

But how to assess compliance? It might not be conducive to internal Libyan cohesion to have one group of Libyans reach a compliance assessment about other groups, unless the oversight board could quickly establish complete credibility as a nonpartisan and objective body. Otherwise, asking Libyans to have primary responsibility for allocating resources to other Libyans could risk pitting some groups against others, squandering the chance to build a greater sense of national cohesion and purpose. Some kind of international supervisory board under the auspices of a trusted chief player, like SRSG Salamé, could be a better choice. At the early 2019 national conference, Libyan officials could choose to delegate the authority to evaluate the behavior of various militias to a neutral body, which would then confirm their eligibility for monthly (or quarterly) payments out of national coffers based on their assessed behavior. Libyan technocrats could help advise such a body, if desired. To make its decisions seem more understandable and legitimate, and to compete with the often nefarious and tendentious use of social media to spread misinformation in Libya, the group should publish and explain its decisions, using an easily accessed website as well as various forms of social media.

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7  Tuesday Reitano, Samantha McCormack, Mark Shaw, and Mark Micallef, "Human Trafficking-Smuggling Nexus in Libya," (Geneva: Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, July 16, 2018), http://globalinitiative.net/human-trafficking-smuggling-nexus-in-libya.

The above concerns how Libyans can allocate their own resources, chiefly from oil revenue. In addition, a modest but replenishing international assistance fund could also be set up. It would be important not just for the resources it could provide, but also for the role it could play in legitimating and strengthening the role of the evaluation body that would also allocate Libyan funds to local actors as described above. Donors could defer to that same evaluation board in allocating resources.

For this strategy to work, reliable and reasonably accurate information would be needed about the behavior of the various militias and local actors. Otherwise, decisions about resource eligibility might be made capriciously and unfairly—on the basis of headline-grabbing individual incidents, for example, or even the deliberate efforts of one group to frame or mis-portray the behavior of another. As such, this strategy can only work with at least a modicum of international presence in Libya's main cities. Some of the necessary information can be provided by remote surveillance, but a modest human presence will also be necessary in order to make sure that information is dependable. Some of the presence would result naturally from working with local structures—mayors, hospitals, schools, militias—as they began to receive more direct Western aid under the city-first approach we recommend.

None of the above is completely new. Libyan decentralization has already been taking place. To date, this has not been a move toward federalism, or the return of the three historical regions. In the Libyan context, federalism is a politically loaded term (that is seen rightly or wrongly as favoring the less populated but long neglected east over the west). Rather, what has been happening—and what we propose reinforcing and gradually formalizing—is primarily the empowerment of municipalities. Municipal governments have in many cases stepped in to fill the vacuum where the Gadhafi state used to be. And donors have acted accordingly. For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and some European donors have done some very good work with municipalities, reaching perhaps as much as 75 percent of the population to some extent. This work should continue and become more systematic where the quality and integrity of local officials as well as local security conditions permit.

As one manifestation of such a new localism that also responds to a major human need, Libya could, with the help of major donors, rebuild what was once a fairly good school system, city by city. Of course, a broader development and reconstruction agenda is needed for the country overall. Electricity cries out as another crucial sector in need of attention. But the education sector illustrates the possibilities. This approach would simultaneously start to prepare the next generation of Libyan youth for future employment, keep would-be recruits for militias busy with more productive pursuits (at least for many of their teenage years), and make localism a meaningful concept, to build confidence that it could succeed in other issue areas as well.

Historically, Libya's school enrollment and literacy rates increased rapidly under Gadhafi, who invested heavily in education. The World Bank estimated Libya's secondary enrollment rates to be nearly 100 percent in 2003, in fact. As of June 2007, Libya's population of approximately 5.9 million included 1.7 million students, over 270,000 of whom were studying beyond the secondary level, including in technical and vocational sectors. Illiteracy rates fell to as low as 9 percent. Gender parity was impressive as well.

Alas, much of this has fallen apart since 2011. Many schools have been damaged and teacher pay has been interrupted. Many children do not attend school any longer.[8]

Any international support to repair the education system could be channeled through local governance structures. Already, due to the political deadlock at a national level, the UNDP's work has focused on working with stakeholders at municipal levels, and has included representatives from civil society. As decentralization unfolds, municipalities should be empowered to manage local schooling systems and infrastructure, but to follow a unified national curriculum, with focus on traditional academic subjects and vocational training as well. Ensuring the education of girls should also be among the international priorities.[9]

## *A city-based model for security*

Because efforts to build a Libyan national security force have failed and remain unpromising in the near term at least, a more viable approach may be to encourage militias to respect certain rules and standards. Ultimately, they could be welcomed into regional or national coalitions of forces that would gradually begin to resemble more of an army. Any more immediate efforts to build national-level security institutions might, for example, begin instead with an expanded coast guard, a small border guard, and perhaps an elite force to guard key parts of the nation's capital, key institutions, major infrastructure, and the oil and gas sector. Some individually vetted members of former Gadhafi regime units or current militias could be eligible to join these new institutions. If Libyans wished, such central forces could be aided by international advisors.

Several additional principles should guide security sector reform (SSR) going forward. It is important to establish solid and dependable salaries for any centrally paid personnel (say, for an expanded coast guard) to help ensure their professionalism and loyalty. Adequate pensions for former military officers and troops are also important, so that they do not clamor to dominate the staffing of future national security institutions as a way to access funds. Central coordination mechanisms to ensure cooperation among disparate local and national forces would also be needed.[10] In the past, it has proven very challenging to achieve this.

We propose that, if Libyans agree, a future path for building security forces could emphasize working with and shaping the militias. A charter agreed to by all militias, or at least many of them, could lay out basic standards in the employment of force, respect for human rights, support for local good governance (such as providing protection for schools and hospitals), and commitments not to monopolize local economic markets or discriminate against local population subgroups. Those complying with the charter would be certified and would be eligible for assistance, training, and light weaponry. In addition, over time, these militias would be encouraged to merge into a number of regional security structures that would in effect build a gendarmerie and/or army from

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8  "Libya Nationwide School Assessment Report," (Tripoli: Libya Ministry of Education, 2012), 11, https://www. humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/libya/assessment/nationwide-school-assesment; G. Reza Arabsheibani and Lamine Manfor, "Non-linearities in returns to education in Libya," *Education Economics* 9, no. 2 (2001): 140, https:// www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09645290110056976; and "The Road Not Traveled: Education Reform in the Middle East and North Africa," (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2008), 11, 15, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ INTMENA/Resources/EDU_Flagship_Full_ENG.pdf.
9  "Public Education in Libya: Problems, Challenges & Solutions," (Tripoli: Libya Organization for Policies and Strategies, August 2016), http://loopsresearch.org/media/images/photox68nwocvmb.pdf.
10  Frederic Wehrey and Peter Cole, "Building Libya's Security Sector," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, August 6, 2013, https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/08/06/building-libya-s-security-sector-pub-52603.

the ground up. There might be one regional command per province, once a final decision is made on the how many of the latter should be created.(A number of us believe that, to provide rudimentary security in key places now, and to improve confidence among competing militias into the future, Libyans should consider asking the U.N. Security Council to authorize a modest and narrowly-mandated outside force. This view is explained further in the appendix to this paper.)

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of militias should be postponed. Broad SSR is also only achievable over time. However, the United States and other outside actors can start by promoting discussion of a security framework that would be the logical next phase toward the military reunification that the Egyptians have been encouraging. The Egyptians have done a decent job of bringing together officers from the east and from the west for such initial discussions. But Egypt, with its ties to General Hiftar, is not seen as a neutral player despite having good contacts across the country, not just in the east. By comparison, the United States is seen as more neutral and credible.

Holding out the promise of participation in U.S. military exercises or training or procurement of U.S. military equipment may provide effective incentives for Libyan compliance with this framework. The U.S. Department of Defense is also skilled in technical aspects of institution-building. The presence of U.S. trainers and advisers would almost surely be seen as hugely prestigious. Militias that commit to supporting the local and regional organizations could gain access to them (whether within or outside of Libya), as well as to schools, weapons, and other equipment. Other outside actors besides the United States might train the various militias. But to avoid rivalry, they would all have to do so only under supervision, and with the explicit approval, of a U.N.-sanctioned body that determines eligibility based on militia behavior.

In seeking to work with militias and gradually help build regional structures, it is important not to become overly infatuated with Hiftar. His group may be more organized and better equipped than elements in the country's west, thanks to his external patrons, and he should have a role. But the LNA is still a confederation of militias with some questionable leaders, such as Mahmoud Warfalli, now the subject of an outstanding International Criminal Court warrant.

In addition, there are Salafi extremists now across Libya that outside actors need to address somehow, including much of the Special Deterrence Force in Tripoli. Again, a Libyan national conference should establish that militias will need to qualify for aid and assistance and legitimacy based on their behavior—they should not receive it automatically.

### *Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration*

Over time, there is little doubt that Libya's current security environment, awash in weaponry of many types held by many groups, cannot be conducive to national stability and must change. The current prospects for large-scale DDR of militia forces in Libya at this moment, however, strike us as poor. Indeed, it is largely for that reason that our proposed security strategy attempts to induce better behavior by the militias—so that they may, by necessity, help provide the backbone of what is needed to create national-level security forces and stability.

Contrary to widely held belief, DDR is not solely a technical endeavor. Rather, it is a complex undertaking associated with major changes in balances of power. It requires credible security assurances to those who disarm (and to populations in need of protection). In Libya, it also will require that they have some form of broad access to the country's economic and political resources. Libya at present does not yet enjoy the kinds of security conditions that make comprehensive DDR realistic.

For a broad DDR process to be politically viable with the militias, much would need to change, even beyond the gradual reform of militias and the stitching together of regional military commands. A credible vision would have to emerge for the creation of trustworthy, central security organizations that could provide for the safety of Libyans across the country. Libya is a long ways from such circumstances today.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can do no better than to quote from a recent report by the Libyan National Conference Process, which was initiated at the request of the United Nations mission in Libya, under the auspices of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva. It held more than 70 separate meetings, in Libya and elsewhere, with a grand total of more than 7,000 Libyans participating (over a quarter of them women). The report lists 10 main findings and principles, quoting from its executive summary:

"1. Libya's unity and national sovereignty must be preserved, while recognizing local and cultural differences within a framework of decentralization. This entails a complete rejection of negative foreign interference.

2. Rational and effective democratic governance is needed. This must be based on clear and objective criteria and competences rather than tribal, political or regional affiliations. This requires greater transparency in public affairs and appointments, and strong judicial oversight free from all coercion and pressure.

3. Security is essential in daily life, with strong and independent security and military institutions based on national values, obedient to the rule of law and subject to civilian and judicial oversight.

4. Unified sovereign and military institutions must be protected from political, partisan and regional interference. These institutions must operate in the interests of all Libyans.

5. Libya's national resources must be protected. Economic reforms are needed to ensure an end to corruption and the waste of state resources. Strong oversight must be exercised over public spending and financial institutions.

6. Libya's resources must be distributed fairly. This entails greater allocations for municipalities and a budget for major developments, reconstruction and infrastructure. A special fund should be created to reinvest some of the wealth generated by oil-producing and exporting companies in the sustainable development of the regions in which they operate.

7. The functioning of the state must be built on strong local governance. This requires capacity-building and a revision of the current legislative framework and system of municipalities. It is essential that municipalities continue to operate as apolitical bodies and in the interests of citizens.

8. The transitional phase must be ended, definitively, with the adoption of a constitution based on a consensus that can unite the country.

9. Safe, secure and transparent elections must be held when the minimal conditions are met, with no barriers to the full participation of all Libyans.

10. National reconciliation must be achieved, based on traditional Libyan practices and values and with respect for the demands of justice. The reconciliation process must be free from foreign interference."[11]

The two-pronged strategy we outline—of formalizing a cities-based strategy and re-engaging American leadership politically and strategically in support of that approach—is intended to give concreteness to principles like those listed above. It is also designed to give much stronger support to the ongoing efforts of the U.N. mission in Libya. They are much more promising than in the past; they are, however, nowhere near actual success.

Ultimately, all of this is of course for Libyans, and only Libyans, to decide. The role of Washington, and other outside actors, is to help make meaningful choices possible, and to support Libyans (rather than often work against them, as has too frequently been the case to date) once they choose their new path forward. Most likely, that new path will build on the principles and concepts that have always undergirded and empowered the Libyan nation and that are so inspiringly captured in the 10 principles cited above. It is time to turn inspiration into action.

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11  "The Libyan National Conference Process: Final Report," 11.

## APPENDIX: A U.N.-SANCTIONED FORCE FOR LIBYA

Although it was not a majority view in our group, several of us (including Amr, Fasanotti, Jones, Mezran, O'Hanlon, and Signé) felt strongly that any major strategic review of Libya policy needs to entertain an idea that has been anathema until now: the authorization and deployment of a modest international force for very specific security-related purposes. Otherwise, distrust among myriad competing actors may spoil any realistic chances for peace that may emerge in coming months.

Only Libyans could request such a force; we are not proposing that it be imposed on them. Indeed, there is virtually no chance that the United Nations Security Council could, or should, deploy such a force unless it has strong backing among Libyans. To allow Libyans to decide themselves if such a force merits serious discussion, United Nations specialists or independent experts could attend the envisioned national conference to provide information and analysis about other U.N.-sanctioned missions around the world, as grist for Libyans to debate in the event that they wish to consider such an option for themselves.

The force could be deployed to keep stability in central Tripoli, to guard oil assets and key infrastructure, and to protect key political actors and institutions (as well as to protect itself if need be). It would also conduct monitoring, and thereby provide confidence and reassurance, that the various militias will not attack each other.

Although Libyans, and only Libyans, could decide to invite such a force into their country, the international community could be more emphatic in its counsel. Based on precedents from around the world, the chances of reaching and sustaining any kind of ceasefire and stabilization in Libya are very low without some kind of external security assistance capability. Such is the hard calculus of trying to end civil wars.[12] The international community could also tie the creation of a new assistance fund to the willingness of Libya's national conference to request that the United Nations Security Council authorize deployment of a security assistance operation. Without such a force, providing additional foreign aid could amount to throwing away money.

Such a force need not have strong U.S. or European representation. But it would need real expertise and competence (meaning, among other things, that some degree of American, Canadian, European, Korean, Australian, or other such participation would be very helpful). It should also be accorded clear rules of engagement, and some kind of enforcement capability.

The force could only be approved with the support—indeed, the enthusiastic endorsement and formal request—of most major Libyan actors. Only in such a case would Russia likely vote for it at the U.N. Security Council; only in such a case would the risk of spoilers be kept to a manageable scale.

Some of the specific characteristics of a U.N.-authorized force might be as follows.

• First, while authorized by the United Nations, it need not be run by the U.N.

• The mandate for the force might include the protection of oil production facilities, ports, airfields, pipelines, electricity generation facilities and electricity lines, key

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12  See for example, Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work?: Shaping Belligerents' Choices after Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

political institutions, key individuals, and the force itself. The force might also have dual-key responsibilities, in conjunction with Libyan central authorities, to approve or reject major imports and exports done through facilities under its supervision.

- The force could issue public reports on what it observes and learns, providing an independent and more credible source of information on subjects like the state of any ceasefire than what is otherwise often available in Libya today.

- Unlike the debacles of the 1990s, in places such as Srebrenica, Bosnia and Kigali, Rwanda, this force (like virtually all U.N.-sanctioned forces of the 21st century) would have robust self-protection authorities and rules of engagement. It would presumably be authorized under Chapter 7 of the United Nations charter—not to grant unlimited powers to the outside force, but to allow robust rules of engagement for self-defense. Libyans would be involved in supporting the creation of this force and according it those powers. But once agreed to, the force would then be able to carry out enforcement actions within its mandate without further permission. In fact, it could even retaliate against Libyan actors that behave illegally or violently, though presumably it would seek to minimize the use of lethal force unless infractions are severe.

- The U.N. entity should also be backstopped by an over-the-horizon capability, perhaps U.S.-led, that would further punish transgressors and ensure the safety of the U.N. units as need be. Libya's geography lends itself to the effective employment of this approach more than most countries where U.N. forces have operated, given the proximity of NATO nations as well as the U.S. Sixth Fleet.

- Basing estimates on the modest size of the Libyan population and the limited mandate given to the force, its size might wind up in the range of 5,000 to 10,000 personnel, implying an annual cost of around $500 million if done through normal U.N. mechanisms.

- The force should have significant NATO capacity within its various elements and lines of effort. America's East Asian allies and European neutral states could also help. But the majority of its troops could come from carefully chosen Muslim-majority states (primarily states from outside the Middle East and North Africa region, presumably).

- Training of Libyan militias and other security structures could be done by the U.N. force, or by outside powers. However, in the latter event, the U.N. mechanism would need to certify which militias are deemed in compliance with their obligations to qualify for training and equipment and association with the incipient regional security commands. To do this job correctly, the United Nations force would need enough presence in the country's major cities—or at least those deemed reasonably safe—to have an intelligence-based process for reaching such assessments.

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