

One thousand and one failings

Security sector stabilisation
and development in Libya

Hamzeh al-Shadeedi
Erwin van Veen
Jalel Harchaoui

CRU Report



Clingendael

Netherlands Institute of International Relations



Clingendael

Netherlands Institute of International Relations

One thousand and one failings

Security sector stabilisation and development in Libya

Hamzeh al-Shadeedi
Erwin van Veen
Jalel Harchaoui

CRU Report
April 2020

April 2020

Cover photo: Tanks outside of Misrata © Wikimedia Commons

Unauthorized use of any materials violates copyright, trademark and / or other laws. Should a user download material from the website or any other source related to the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', or the Clingendael Institute, for personal or non-commercial use, the user must retain all copyright, trademark or other similar notices contained in the original material or on any copies of this material.

Material on the website of the Clingendael Institute may be reproduced or publicly displayed, distributed or used for any public and non-commercial purposes, but only by mentioning the Clingendael Institute as its source. Permission is required to use the logo of the Clingendael Institute. This can be obtained by contacting the Communication desk of the Clingendael Institute (press@clingendael.org).

The following web link activities are prohibited by the Clingendael Institute and may present trademark and copyright infringement issues: links that involve unauthorized use of our logo, framing, inline links, or metatags, as well as hyperlinks or a form of link disguising the URL.

About the authors

Hamzeh al-Shadeedi is a researcher at the Institute of Regional and International Studies (IRIS) at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani, whose work focuses on security and the rule of law in Iraq. He used to work for the Conflict Research Unit of the Clingendael Institute, dividing his time between country analysis of Libya and Iraq.

Erwin van Veen is a senior research fellow with the Conflict Research Unit of the Clingendael Institute. His research primarily focuses on the political economy of conflict in the Levant – Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Palestine/Israel – against the backdrop of Iranian, Turkish and Saudi foreign policy. His work also takes an occasional look at security sector reform, peacebuilding and adaptive programming more generally.

Jalel Harchaoui is a research fellow with the Conflict Research Unit of the Clingendael Institute. He has been specializing in Libya and covering particular aspects of the country, such as its security landscape and political economy. He is also a frequent commentator on Libya in the international press, publishing widely in *Foreign Affairs*, *Lawfare*, *Politique Étrangère*, *Middle East Eye*, *Orient XXI*, *War on the Rocks* and the *Small Arms Survey*.

The Clingendael Institute
P.O. Box 93080
2509 AB The Hague
The Netherlands

Follow us on social media

 [@clingendaelorg](https://twitter.com/clingendaelorg)

 [The Clingendael Institute](https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-clingendael-institute)

 [The Clingendael Institute](https://www.facebook.com/theclingendaelinstitute)

Email: cru@clingendael.org

Website: www.clingendael.org/cru

Table of contents

Abstract	1
Executive summary	2
Acknowledgements	5
Glossary	6
1 Introduction	7
2 The main phases of the Libyan civil war	10
Strategic implications for future Security Sector Development	13
3 Analysis of major national security initiatives in Libya (2011–2018)	18
The Warriors Affairs Commission (2012)	18
The Supreme Security Committee (2011–14) and the Libya Shield Force (2012–14)	20
Colonel Salem Joha’s Plan (2012)	22
The Libyan National Guard (2012–13)	23
The US Training Mission (2012–13)	24
The General Purpose Force (2013–14)	25
Operation Dignity / Libyan National Army vs. Libya Dawn (2014–)	27
The Presidential Guard (2016–18)	28
The Egyptian Initiative (2017–)	30
The Tripoli Protection Force (October 2018–April 2019)	31
A brief synthesis	33
4 Lessons from global security sector development practice	34
5 Points of departure for security sector development	38

Abstract

The prospects for security sector development (SSD) in Libya have been bleak since at least April 2019. Although unlikely to change in the near future, now is the time to consider what kind of SSD initiatives should be set in motion once a window for such work opens in the country. The main challenge is a matter of conceptualisation. The Libyan civil war has caused widespread and intense social, political and military fragmentation. Many of these sociopolitical ‘fragments’ are both mistrustful and armed. Despite this, most previous SSD-type initiatives in post-2011 Libya attempted to pursue a form of centralised security. The analysis underpinning this report indicates that this is one of the principal reasons they failed.

Our research points to the need for a decentralised post-conflict model of security provision, with territories and communities in charge of their own security based on a shared set of principles and rules. It is inevitable that current militias will come to undertake state-sanctioned security roles. Yet, some leadership vetting and buying off a number of the more egregious individuals can limit the risk of entrenching the status quo. Moreover, to prevent a decentralised model from turning into an archipelago of warlord-run militia, it will need to be clearly regulated and feature a central backstop capacity that is able to mitigate abuses and excesses. This could consist of reconstituted and well-equipped ‘intervention brigades’ that represent the whole nation, and which, initially, may need to be provided by UN-mandated forces from across the region. Moreover, a decentralised model needs a credible mechanism that enables regular dialogue and renegotiation between ‘peripheries’ and the ‘centre(s)’ about the exact allocation of authority and security resources. In the meantime, under the umbrella of such decentralisation and continuous conversation, national security organisations can institutionalise and professionalise. Other essential preconditions for SSD – which must be included in any ceasefire agreement – include the centralisation of security funding, of modalities for force capability training and of the authority to promote security leaders to higher ranks, as well as an effective halt to partisan support by foreign powers.

Executive summary

The central challenge for future security sector development (SSD) in Libya is to negotiate feasible ways to gradually defragment Libya's mosaic of armed factions that compete for power and authority. This cannot be accomplished based on standard SSD assumptions of working through a unitary state, an established bureaucracy or existing security forces, since currently none of these exists. SSD in Libya will have to be more imaginative than the pre-2018 security sector stabilisation and development initiatives, all of which have failed. A useful starting point is to explore and develop a decentralised, but reasonably well-regulated, model of security provision. Its exact distribution of authority, and human and financial resources, would have to be regularly rebalanced and renegotiated between 'peripheries' and 'centre(s)' over time, as central security organisations institutionalise, professionalise and develop a credible backstop capability.

Because Libya's internationalised civil war is on a downward trajectory, the current environment is more suited to stabilisation efforts than SSD initiatives, at least if the latter are understood as aspiring to improve citizen-oriented security by augmenting both security governance and security capabilities in an interlinked manner. The present negative trajectory notwithstanding, the Libyan civil war has occasionally featured promising moments for conflict resolution, such as the initial period of peaceful political contestation in 2011–2012 and the defeat of most radical Islamist forces in 2017. If and when another such moment arrives, the international community and the Libyan population must be ready to engage in SSD as part of a multidimensional peacebuilding effort to save the country further destruction from the scourge of war.

To be able to face the future requires an understanding of the past. With a view to identifying useful lessons for future SSD, this paper takes stock of the many security initiatives undertaken in the course of Libya's civil war between 2011 and 2018, in the context of different episodes of warfighting. Since 2011, a plethora of armed groups has come into being on the back of an institutionally weak (or even absent) state. Today, these armed groups have few permanent material or ideological connections. Rather, they are connected by fluid ties of pragmatism, personal relations and temporarily shared interests, with some shared revolutionary experiences and social ties (e.g. tribal) in the background. This situation has several important social and security effects. It makes many Libyan communities and groups more dependent on sub-state identities and protection mechanisms, expanding the control of coercive actors over Libya's (in)formal economy and fragmenting perceptions of the legitimacy of Libya's government and the country's many armed groups.

In consequence, key assumptions of the global SSD paradigm are not necessarily relevant in Libya. Future SSD cannot work on the assumption that a unitary state exists that can serve as counterpart, or that there exists a weak but coherent bureaucracy (including security forces) that can be strengthened. Both are simply absent. Instead, the central challenge for future SSD is to negotiate feasible ways to gradually defragment Libya's mosaic of armed factions that compete for power and authority. Once there is a modicum of stability to work from, future SSD initiatives must ensure that a return to violence becomes more costly and that central security forces are gradually professionalised and institutionalised as part of a long-term strategy to shift the balance in a decentralised security arrangement from the 'periphery' to the 'centre'. This will require stratagems such as creating a decentralised, but reasonably well-regulated, security structure, a strong central backstop capability, broad ethnic and territorial representation in reconstituted central security forces at all ranks, and the co-optation of armed group leaders into national politics. Inevitably, this means that the quality and recourse options of local security provision will vary for some time to come. The strong influence of armed groups on local (in)formal economies will also remain.

As to past security initiatives, it should be noted that our review was unable to identify interventions in Libya between 2011 and 2018 that were fully premised on the paradigm of SSD as it has been internationally agreed by the UN, African Union and OECD. Rather, we found that Libya witnessed many security 'stabilisation' initiatives that, at best, contained scattered elements of SSD, but which more often represented partisan efforts to gain the upper hand in an active conflict.

The SSD elements of many of these security initiatives failed mostly because they: integrated whole groups into new security structures rather than units or individuals (allowing groups to maintain their cohesion); did not create incentives that could co-opt armed group leaders; established unclear lines of authority; introduced unjustified salary disparities; and/or failed to ensure adequate geographical representation in newly constituted (or integrated) security forces. Generally speaking, they were also strongly focused on operational capability improvements without much thought for the quality of security governance or accountability. Finally, insofar as they were supported by international actors, such support was typically either partisan or limited in nature, reinforcing the fragmentation of Libya's security landscape rather than reducing it.

In consequence, for any SSD effort to have a chance of success it must tap deeply into global SSD practice and experience to avoid the errors of the past. It will not, for example, be adequate to entrust the task of supporting SSD work to technically competent military and police advisers, however useful they may be. It will be equally essential to employ experts in behaviour, organisational development and dialogue between security forces and the population, as well as sociologists, political advisers and managers capable of developing and running adaptive programmes.

Moreover, key conditions for being able to deliver SSD support effectively – such as rudimentary security structures, new lines of authority and methods for integrating existing security forces – must be politically negotiated ahead of any SSD intervention and sustained throughout its implementation. This makes it essential that future SSD initiatives avail themselves of strong diplomatic negotiation capabilities, including the diplomatic muscle of a quorum of sponsoring foreign states that act in relative alignment.

Based on our inventory of ‘SSD initiatives’ in Libya between 2011 and 2018, we can offer eight lessons for the future. Four are conceptual and four are practical. They should form the basis of any future SSD initiative.

Concepts for future SSD work	Operational bases for future SSD work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable decentralised plural security provision. Put a decentralised security architecture in place that reflects Libya’s plurality of security provision in a reasonably well-regulated manner with central backstop arrangements and with a measure of citizen input • Professionalise new security forces. Focus on the composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation of newly-established (or re-integrated) central security forces to create new national loyalties and a shared identity. Initially, these will serve as central backstop capability • Incentivise armed groups. Provide incentives for armed groups to cooperate with new security structures that reflect their interests and, in exchange, demand concessions that enable progress in anchoring and expanding such new security structures • Base initiatives on international alignment. Ensure coordinated international support for SSD interventions to avoid donor competition or worse, stimulating conflict. As long as foreign states, such as the UAE and Turkey, interfere militarily in Libya with impunity and scant regard for the arms embargo, Libya’s security sector will remain fragmented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature a political change strategy. Be based on a political strategy to negotiate the change necessary to develop new and re-purpose existing security institutions • Enjoy ample entrepreneurship. Feature entrepreneurial support in the relevant donor bureaucracies to deal creatively with the many challenges that will inevitably arise. Getting stuck in the standard ‘train and equip’ format that has proved largely ineffective must be avoided at all costs • Be adaptive. Feature an adaptive approach to programme design and implementation to be able to respond flexibly to Libya’s complex realities • Have a long-term approach. Base initiatives on long-term and renewable engagement, i.e. six years or more.

Acknowledgements

This paper is a desk-based review of security initiatives undertaken in Libya between 2011 and 2018 with the aim of identifying lessons for future security sector development (SSD) at the national level. It served as an input for the Libyan Security Sector Planning Project by providing starting points for further research into the political economy of SSD in Libya. This project is funded by the US Department of State and implemented by a Consortium led by Strategic Capacity Group (SCG) with Danish Demining Group (DDG) and Clingendael's Conflict Research Unit (CRU). The paper itself was independently researched by Clingendael.

The paper owes a debt of thanks to Louis-Alexandre Berg (Georgia State University), Youssef Sawani (University of Tripoli), Lahib Higel (Dialogue Advisory Group), Camille Schyns (European Institute for Peace) and Floor El Kamouni-Janssen (formerly with Clingendael) for their thoughtful peer review. The contents of the paper remain the responsibility of its authors.

The analytical work underpinning the paper was completed in June 2019 and the paper was written in the autumn of 2019.

Glossary

Actor/institution	Short description
Al-Bunyan al-Marsus (Impenetrable Wall)	A formation of Misratan armed groups that affiliated with the GNA and liberated Sirte of Islamic State control in December 2016.
Ali Zeidan	Prime Minister of Libya from 14 November 2012 to 11 March 2014. PM Zeidan's cabinet was responsible for most of Libya's attempted SSD/DDR programmes.
Fayez al-Serraj	Chairman of the Presidential Council of Libya and Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord (GNA).
General National Congress (GNC)	A temporary legislative body elected in July 2012 to transition Libya towards a permanent democratic constitution over a period of 18 months.
Government of National Accord (GNA)	Libya's interim government formed under the sponsorship of UNSMIL as per the terms of the Libyan Political Agreement signed on 17 December 2015.
House of Representatives (HoR)	An elected legislative body created by the June 2014 national elections, replacing the GNC, and based in the city of Tobruk.
Khalifa Haftar	Head of the Libyan National Army and Dignity Operation. In 2015, Haftar was appointed commander of the armed forces loyal to the HoR. In Gaddafi's days, he served as a brigadier in the war against Chad. After Libya's defeat, he was arrested in Chad but soon defected and was relocated to the US.
Justice and Construction Party (JCP)	A political coalition emerging from the July 2012 elections, made up mostly of Islamists and members affiliated with the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood
Libyan National Army (LNA)	A self-styled army led by commander Khalifa Haftar. In addition to professional brigades it consists of militia groups, mercenaries and tribal levies.
National Front Alliance (NFA)	A political coalition that emerged from the July 2012 elections and consisted mostly of non-Islamists and Gaddafi regime defectors.
Supreme Revolutionaries' Council (SRC)	An alliance of armed groups composed of forces favouring the Political Isolation Law and keen to remove PM Zeidan from office. The SRC was mostly Misratan, but included units from Cyrenaica, al-Kufrah, Salfist and Amazigh groups.
UNSMIL	The United Nations Support Mission in Libya, headed by UN Special Envoy, Ghassan Salame.

1 Introduction

From its hopeful beginnings as a revolutionary rebellion against the autocratic regime of Colonel Gaddafi, the Libyan civil war has long since joined the ranks of interminable conflicts that resulted from the Arab Uprisings.¹ Telltale signposts for this scenario were present from the beginning, such as the weak institutional basis of the Libyan state under both King Idris I (18 years) and Colonel Gaddafi (42 years), the start of the rebellion in the east of the country, the presence of extremists and the unfinished business of the NATO-intervention based on UN Resolution 1973 (March 2011). Yet, initially, in 2012 and 2013, there were also encouraging indicators of the development of more constructive and peaceful national politics.²

By 2018, these indicators had given way to extensive fragmentation of Libya's political and security landscape to the effect that it has become a mosaic of groups and actors. As with so many conflicts, today the Libyan civil war presents a complex mix of international interference and patronage on the one hand, and highly localised conflict factors on the other. Many of its warring groups cater to local and (inter)national constituencies as well pursuing their own interests in gaining power and riches on the back of the shell of the Libyan state.³ While on the face of it the present situation is formed by the competing coalitions of the Government of National Accord (GNA), under Prime Minister Al-Serraj in Tripoli and the Libyan National Army (LNA) under General Haftar in Tobruk/AI-Baida, the reality is much more fragmented. It includes: militia rule of Tripoli, which constrains the GNA's authority to the buildings it operates from;⁴ an amorphous Fezzan, which straddles smuggling, crime and cross-border conflict; the use and mobilisation of tribal identities and allegiances throughout much of the country;⁵ the persistence of at least two dozen key militias⁶ – revolutionary, tribal, Islamist and

1 Lynch, M., *The New Arab Wars*, New York: Public Affairs, 2016.

2 Jebnoun, N., 'Beyond the mayhem: Debating key dilemmas in Libya's statebuilding', *The Journal of North Africa Studies*, 20:5, 832-864, 2015; Smits, R., F. Janssen, I. Briscoe and T. Breswick, Floor Janssen, *Revolution and its discontents: state, factions and violence in the new Libya*, The Hague: Clingendael, 2013.

3 See for example: Floor El-Kamouni Janssen, Hamzeh al-Shadeedi and Nancy Ezzeddine, *Local security governance in Libya: Perceptions of security and protection in a fragmented country*, The Hague: Clingendael, 2018; Lacher, W. and A. al-Idrissi, *Capital of militias: Tripoli's armed groups capture the Libyan state*, Geneva: SAS, 2018.

4 Lacher, W., 'Libya's local elites and the politics of alliance building', *Mediterranean politics*, 21:1, 64-85, 2016.

5 Jebnoun (2015), *op.cit.*

6 Development Transformations, *Typology of armed actors in the Libyan security sector*, Washington DC: DT, 2017.

other – that profit from both the state payroll and illicit revenue; and Salafist armed groups.

This situation has arisen from a mix of foreign intervention, new splits in Libyan society, and state institutions that were historically kept weak to enable personalised regime rule.⁷ As to foreign intervention, a number of Western countries such as the UK and US, as well as the UN, support the GNA politically, but do not provide enough practical development and security support to have a positive impact on conflict resolution. Turkey represents about the only exception to this 'rule'. In contrast, countries like Egypt and the UAE offer much firmer support to the LNA. As to new splits in Libyan society, the division between those with more revolutionary credentials and those with more loyalist credentials has caused significant follow-on conflict in the wake of the original uprising. In terms of weak institutions, Colonel Gaddafi's personalised, competitive and informal methods of rule have ensured that, in the organisational and regulatory sense, the state is hardly present in Libya.⁸ It is rather its symbolic prestige, international relations and, in particular, centralised oil revenue that is being fought over.

The result has been an internationalised civil war of lower intensity than the calamities that have befallen Yemen and Syria. Libya nevertheless matters a great deal because of the bridge it forms between Europe and Africa, its symbolic and practical relevance in the unfinished business of the Arab Uprisings, the conflict's human suffering and its negative externalities such as illicit trade, extremism and human trafficking. In this context, some of the key factors required to bring about greater stability and security in Libya lie in the diverse interests, patchwork of territorial control and shifting affiliations of the country's key armed groups, roughly two dozen in number.

This paper looks at security initiatives in Libya between 2011 and 2018 in the context of its civil war to identify security sector stabilisation and development lessons for future SSD efforts and programmes. While this is far from the only perspective needed to inform future SSD initiatives that are both feasible and responsible, it can help to avoid past mistakes. Other essential pieces of the analytical puzzle of what makes good SSD possible include: examination of links between the illicit economy and key Libyan armed groups; the power base, relations and composition of armed groups in Cyrenaica (the LNA coalition), Tripolitania (with Misrata as a case on its own) and the Fezzan (including its tribal and ethnic particularities); Salafist influences across Libya; and international support for particular armed groups (especially from Egypt, Turkey, the UAE, Russia and France).

7 Anderson, L., 'They defeated us all: International interests, local politics and contested sovereignty in Libya', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 71, No. 2, pp. 229-247, Spring 2017.

8 Anderson (2017), *op.cit.*; Jebnoun (2015), *op.cit.*; Smits et al. (2013), *op.cit.*

Section 2 offers a brief outline of major developments in the key phases of the Libyan conflict to 2018, highlights the environment each phase created for SSD and, on this basis, identifies four strategic implications for future SSD. Section 3 examines the relevance of these strategic implications in the context of 12 major security initiatives undertaken at the national level between 2011 and 2018. Section 4 subsequently distills a number of operational implications from a short review of global SSD practice that are relevant to the implementation of future SSD initiatives in Libya. Finally, Section 5 offers points of departure for thinking about future SSD in Libya.

2 The main phases of the Libyan civil war

The Arab Uprisings reached Libya in early February 2011. Political opposition first crystallised and turned into rebellion in Cyrenaica in the east (especially in the city of Benghazi) because of its marginalisation by Gaddafi and its historical affiliation with Libya's Sanusi monarchy. Political exiles returning from abroad, local elites, and defectors from Gaddafi's military apparatus rapidly established the National Transitional Council (NTC) to represent revolutionary interests, both in Libya and internationally. While the NTC attempted to coordinate revolutionary armed groups and efforts across Libya and to spread the revolution to Gaddafi's strongholds in Tripolitania (in the west), it never managed to establish hierarchical control over the plethora of militias that sprung from the first revolutionary fires. By August 2011, most of Libya was under revolutionary control, including Tripoli. In October, Sirte and Bani Walid, Gaddafi's last strongholds, fell and the revolution was over.⁹ The ensuing 'evolution of the revolution' continues today.

The period from late 2011 until the end of 2018 can be divided into four main conflict phases. While any division of the Libyan conflict into time periods is to some extent artificial, it nevertheless helps in discerning broad shifts in the nature of the conflict and the implications these have for the prospects of future SSD. Table 1 below summarises these four main conflict phases and outlines the context they represented for SSD. From this, the paper distills four key strategic implications for future SSD in Libya.

9 Lacher, W., 'Families, Tribes, and Cities in the Libyan Revolution', *Middle East Policy*, Winter 2011; Husken, T., 'Tribal Political Culture and the Revolution in the Cyrenaica of Libya', *Orient*, 2012.

Table 1 Summary of the internationalised Libyan civil war in four episodes

	<i>February 2011–May 2013</i>	<i>May 2013–July 2014</i>	<i>July 2014–March 2016</i>	<i>March 2016–December 2018</i>
	(1) Contested order	(2) Violent division	(3) Broken compromise	(4) Deeper fragmentation
From/to	From the revolution to the Political Isolation Law	From the Political Isolation Law to the 2 nd civil war	From the 2 nd civil war to GNA settlement in Tripoli	From GNA settlement in Tripoli to the Tripoli Protection Force
Short description	This period saw the collapse of the authority of the personalised networks of rule around Colonel Gaddafi, a relatively peaceful period of party-political competition and the abrupt closure of this new political space through the adoption of the Political Isolation Law. As 'revolution after the revolution', it brought about a major shift in the parameters for political competition and increased incentives for using coercive capability since the law eliminated a significant part of the Libyan elite from formal national roles.	This period witnessed the rise and consolidation of General Haftar as well as the strengthening of Libya's Islamists, resulting in the superficial unification of many eastern factions and their mobilisation in the 'Dignity' coalition. This subsequently clashed with more Islamist-type forces organised in the 'Dawn' coalition in Tripoli in 2014. Not only did these developments produce Libya's 2 nd civil war, they also led to two distinct claims to legitimate national governance.	This period saw an international/local push in response to the 2 nd civil war to re-establish a functional form of national unity government. Initially, this took the form of the GNC, followed by the HoR and culminating in the GNA on the basis of the 2015 Libya Political Agreement mediated by UNSMIL. The GNA focused immediately on fighting IS / violent extremism.	This period witnessed the failure (2017) of the Libyan Political Agreement (of 2015), largely due to the non-inclusion of key armed groups, anti-Islamists, tribes and elements loyal to Gaddafi. Despite efforts to revive it (such as the Libyan Action Plan), re-entrenchment of the loose west-east split helped ensure its expiry. Moreover, this period featured clashes in Tripoli between different armed factions to establish spheres of influence over parts of the GNA administration and, in response, the token creation of the Tripoli Protection Force.

	<i>February 2011–May 2013</i>	<i>May 2013–July 2014</i>	<i>July 2014–March 2016</i>	<i>March 2016–December 2018</i>
	(1) Contested order	(2) Violent division	(3) Broken compromise	(4) Deeper fragmentation
Key characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division between ‘revolutionaries’ and ‘loyalists’ • Reconfiguration of Libya’s political space resulting in a zero-sum game • Fragmentation of a diverse array of actors/groups • The end of national politics by ‘terminating’ the National Front Alliance (secular-ish) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of the ‘city states’: Misrata, Zintan, Tripoli • Rise of Islamists, radicals and those who supported military rule • A national split based on two loose military coalitions using patronage and resources as glue • Local-level fighting also continued for reasons such as control over resources and revenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International concerns about radical forces create pressure to form the GNA • Armed groups pursue their self-interests more blatantly • Consolidation of localised, ‘city-state’ logic • Establishment of the militia cartel in Tripoli 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GNA remains ineffectual due to the split with the LNA, lack of control over Tripoli, and the power of armed factions • National mediation/ negotiation process is frozen • Rising tensions and clashes at the country’s southern borders with Niger and Chad
The context for SSD	<p>If there was a moment for a national-level SSD effort, it was probably here. But with old security institutions discredited and the country awash with arms as well as revolutionary fervour, it would have had to be interest-based with clear incentives for armed groups to consolidate. On this basis, it could have focused on laying the foundations of new national institutions.</p>	<p>National-level SSD efforts would automatically serve partisan and exclusionary political purposes in this period due to the Political Isolation Law and the emergence of the Dawn and Dignity groupings.</p>	<p>Given the limited legitimacy and wherewithal of the GNA, SSD efforts could have become a ‘statebuilding strategy’ par excellence. But the GNA had little leverage and armed groups dictated terms. Instead, there was a strong international focus on combating violent extremism.</p>	<p>National-level SSD efforts being absent, a political agreement and/or powerful sponsors on both sides would have strengthened a particular side. Local SSD efforts would have needed to depart from the idea that national security institutions need to be established and/or that a centrally-run Libyan state in the Weberian sense is feasible.</p>

Strategic implications for future Security Sector Development

The preceding overview highlights that the institutional basis for work on Libya's security sector is mostly absent in the sense that there is not even a semi-(dys)functional state security architecture that can serve as a foundation. There are professional remnants of the former Libyan Army, but after seven years of conflict these no longer exist in the conventional military sense. What does exist is a highly diverse range of armed groups that are mostly hybrid in nature in terms of their relationship with one or several of Libya's existing 'governments', meaning that they collaborate and compete depending on what best serves their interests.¹⁰ Moreover, skewing the playing field for political competition by adopting the Political Isolation Law had the far-reaching consequence of splitting the country down the middle between those who had cooperated with the Gaddafi regime out of necessity, for profit or for ideological reasons and those who were instrumental in his downfall. The lessons of the de-Ba'athification experience of 2003–2005 in Iraq were clearly ignored in Libya and it is safe to say that the passage of this law laid a foundation stone for the later Dignity–Dawn division. With this in mind, the preceding overview suggests four strategic implications for future SSD.

Box 1 Defining security sector development and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration

Security sector development (SSD) amounts to a multisectoral (re-)development of a country's security sector, including state and non-state actors, through a combination of savvy political processes and high-quality programming that balances governance, institutional and capability dimensions in a manner that delivers greater levels of people-centred security.

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) is typically conceived of as a process that reduces the number of active combatants and/or the availability of military-grade weaponry in public spaces by incentivising commanders, combatants and local communities to replace sources of status and influence, transform self-identification mechanisms and perceptions of violent masculinity, improve livelihood prospects and address at least some reconciliation and justice demands.

10 For some thoughts on the drivers of competition versus cooperation: Van Veen, E. and F. Fliervoet, *Dealing with tools of political (dis)order: Coercive organisations in the Levant*, The Hague: Clingendael, 2018.

While linkage between SSD and DDR appears logical on paper, it is difficult in practice. The main challenge is that the slow pace and longer time horizon required for effective SSD sit uncomfortably with the urgency of DDR in (post-) conflict environments. DDR is ideally driven by the security priorities and capability requirements that follow from an SSD process but in practice it will often not be possible to wait for such SSD outputs.

Sources: OECD/DAC, *Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting security and justice*, OECD: Paris, 2007. Relevant UN, EU and AU SSD policy documents contain definitions that are similar on key points; Luckham, R., 'Whose violence, whose security? Can violence reduction and security work for poor, excluded and vulnerable people?', *Journal of Peacebuilding*, Vol. 5, Issue 2, 2017; Van Veen, E. and M. Price, *Securing its success, justifying its relevance: Mapping a way forward for Security Sector Reform*, The Hague: Clingendael, 2014; see also the research work of *Plural Security Insights* at <http://pluralsecurityinsights.org/> (accessed 21 March 2019); the United Nations Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS), here and here; McFate, S., *The Link Between DDR and SSR in Conflict-Affected Countries*, Washington DC: USIP, 2010 v. De Vries, H. and E. van Veen, *Living Apart Together? On the Difficult Linkage between DDR and SSR in Post-Conflict Environments*, The Hague: Clingendael, 2010; CIGI online commentary.

A **first strategic implication** of the preceding analysis for future SSD efforts is that any reconfigured or newly-established security forces will need to be balanced in their geographic and ethnic composition. The focus of their development should be on the gradual professionalisation of individuals and organisations in terms of their behaviour and performance standards. This must include the creation and infusion of such forces with public and organisational values that can gradually heal the cleavages that have emerged in the Libyan political-security landscape. Newly-minted national affiliations and a national identity will be key to organisational success.

As highlighted in Table 1, despite being endorsed internationally, the GNA has limited domestic legitimacy. This means that the conventional state-centric focus on rebuilding a formal security apparatus for the GNA, based on the assumption that such an apparatus would derive its legitimacy from the newly-established 'state structure' the GNA represents, is wrong. Instead, such an approach is likely to create or reinforce structures of power and dominance that serve vested interests and reflect the capture of what symbols and institutions the Libyan state features in Tripolitania. Indeed, a recent Clingendael survey of perceptions of legitimacy of various security providers across Libya demonstrates clearly that the sources and status of such providers – state, hybrid and non-state – are too varied to support the assumption that GNA-linked security providers are considered sufficiently legitimate in the areas where they hold sway.¹¹

11 El Kamouni-Janssen et al. (2018), *op.cit.*

In fact, it can be argued that the artificiality of the creation of the GNA in terms of its shallow support base and coalition of convenience has become a long-term problem by investing the international community in a governance mechanism that has serious legitimacy and capability deficiencies. The overlap between Western fears of the rise of violent extremist groups, which required a quick response, and the expectation of both the Dawn and Dignity groupings to profit handsomely from national resource rents via the Libyan Central Bank and National Oil Corporation after the LPA, reduced the focus on the need to gradually establish legitimate and capable governance with sufficient attention paid to Libya's socio-territorial diversity.

A second strategic implication of the preceding analysis for future SSD efforts is that they must start from an inclusive political deal that is negotiated based on the interests of key elites (including militia leaders, armed groups and hardliners) and from which they stand to profit in terms of position, prestige, privilege and/or wealth.¹² At the same time, the deal should contain provisions that require armed groups to make concessions to a gradual process of SSD, including penalties that forfeit profits in case of non-compliance. A credible monitoring and verification mechanism with sufficient enforcement power will therefore also need to be part of the deal.¹³

Furthermore, the preceding analysis has detailed how the Libyan conflict has fragmented since its early revolutionary days in terms of its number of armed groups and their interests. The near-total absence of either a semi-functional state power or an actor sufficiently powerful to compel others to bend to its will, has created both insecurity and autonomy that have forced many Libyans to fall back on pre-existing structures like tribal networks. Such autonomy enabled armed groups to tap into lucrative illicit sources of revenue such as human trafficking and the drugs trade, creating new interests that became harder to address once entrenched. The various efforts to create a new government from a weak institutional basis were also instrumental in maintaining this fragmentation since its very weakness forced it to co-opt armed groups by putting them on the state payroll without having the means to enforce its authority. Today, Libya features an advanced degree of plural security provision that has become entrenched and that is reflective of the many political and economic interests that have developed

12 It should be noted that elite interests, here largely equated with armed group interests, tend to be a complex mix of ideational factors, which can be political, ideological (including religious) and/or tribal in nature, and transactional factors that include personal, commercial and short-term benefit considerations. Practically, a deal that reflects elite interest may mean that SSD efforts will need to tolerate certain kinds of illicit activities for a good while to come.

13 Learning from past experiences suggests that any laws, measures and other formal agreements that may come to regulate the Libyan security sector should have sunset clauses to prevent permanent elite capture and foreclose future change, and that institutionalisation of such regulation must be subject to regular performance feedback loops.

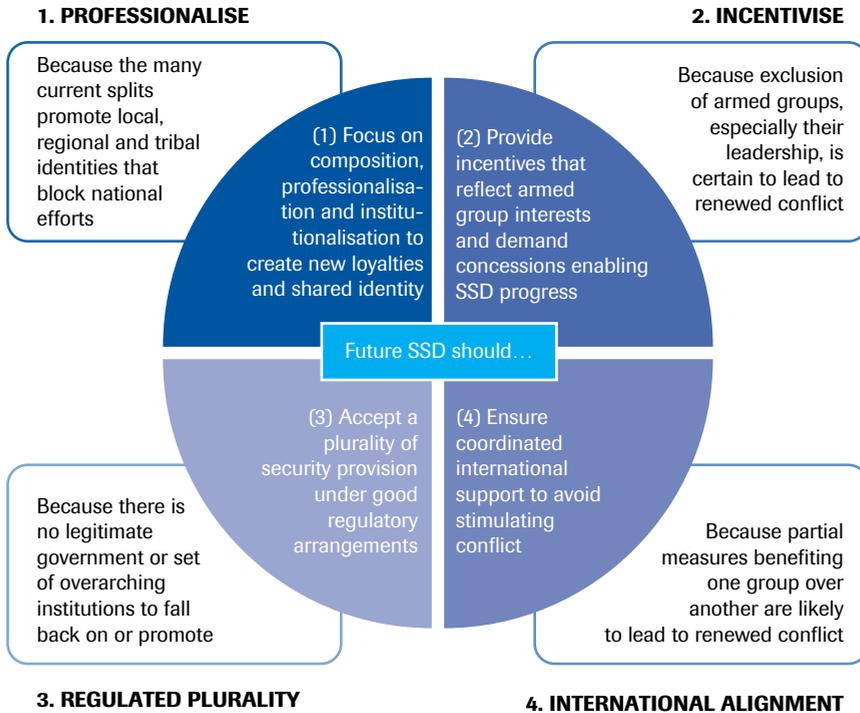
since 2011. These interests will not easily converge in actual practice. As a result, viewing SSD as an operational pathway for consolidating Libya's current array of security actors is problematic if this aims to work towards the establishment of a state monopoly on the legal use of violence in the short to medium term.

A third strategic implication of the preceding analysis for future SSD efforts is that they need to generate a framework that authorises coalitions of armed groups to act as decentralised security providers (e.g. through a system of permits) for well-defined geographic areas and/or to address particular types of security problems. This should happen in parallel to the creation of national institutions (see the first strategic implication) and central levers of control (such as a centralised payroll, centralised security training and a strong Inspector-General) as well as local accountability mechanisms (e.g. local councils or NGO fora). This will ensure that, at least to some extent, decentralised security providers are oriented towards providing citizen-centred security and providing citizens with some options for redress. It has to be accepted, however, that the quantity and quality of security provision will vary throughout the country for a good while to come.¹⁴

A fourth strategic implication of the preceding analysis for any future SSD efforts is that they must have a critical mass of foreign support behind them in terms of both unity of effort and volume of assistance. Practically, this means that one or two lead foreign countries, together with their Libyan counterparts, will need to set the direction, doctrines and standards for SSD in Libya while benefiting from tacit or active support from most of the other foreign countries actively involved in the area of security in Libya. A supporting secretariat and multi-donor trust fund run by a competent international organisation can provide administrative incentives to help ensure that efforts are coherent. If donors engage bilaterally, SSD efforts may well contribute to prolonging the conflict as they are likely to benefit one side more than another. Table 1 also highlights how foreign countries' national interests in Libya generated a volume of support and interference that was not enough to make a decisive difference, but sufficient to prevent conflict resolution. In other words, once basic foreign priorities were adequately addressed in the short term – such as violent extremism, refugee flows or achieving a particular military advance or stalemate – tangible military, economic and diplomatic support started to lag.

14 An additional advantage of such an arrangement is that it has the potential to do justice to Libya's varied geography, which combines a densely populated coastal strip, a smattering of towns and oil fields in its hinterland and vast deserts with long, porous borders.

Figure 1 Key strategic implications for future SSD based on the Libyan civil war



The next section provides brief descriptions of 12 security initiatives attempted in Libya between 2011 and 2018 in order to assess whether the four strategic SSD implications reflected in Figure 1 (resulting from a top-down analysis of the course of Libya's civil war) make sense in the context of specific security interventions (a bottom-up analysis of security initiatives).

3 Analysis of major national security initiatives in Libya (2011–2018)

The limited SSD/DDR efforts of the National Transitional Council (NTC) in the early days of post-revolutionary Libya set the scene for much of the fragmentation of the security landscape and the entrenchment of armed group interests that followed. The NTC attempted to initiate SSD/DDR as soon as Gaddafi was removed from power. But the politicians who formed the NTC were opposition figures who had returned to Libya during the uprising, senior officials who had defected from Gaddafi's regime, or business and tribal leaders. Many had not participated in the actual armed struggle, did not have political credentials, and close to none had actual governing/administrative experience. In a context of weak institutions, these factors made durable implementation of SSD/DDR initiatives difficult.¹⁵

As a result, there were no major SSD/DDR initiatives in Libya between 2011 and 2018 to speak of – or to research. Arguably, in fact, the failure of the NTC's incipient SSD/DDR efforts contributed to the intensification and prolongation of the Libyan conflict. Libya did however witness a number of security initiatives over the past eight years that cannot be considered in whole – or even in part – as SSD/DDR, yet nevertheless had significant consequences for the prospects of future SSD/DDR in terms of having created new interests, parameters or critical constraints. This section outlines 12 such security initiatives to assess whether the four key implications for future SSD distilled from the general course of the Libyan civil war are relevant as a gauge for future SSD efforts.

The Warriors Affairs Commission (2012)

A key goal of SSD/DDR efforts in Libya was to integrate the revolutionaries who fought against Gaddafi into the state apparatus, and to demobilise/disarm those unwilling to incorporate. The first step the NTC took towards this goal was to register all those claiming to have fought against Gaddafi and put them on the state's payroll.

15 Sayigh, Y., *Crumbling States: Security Sector Reform in Libya and Yemen*, Beirut: Carnegie Middle East, 2015.

In January 2012, the NTC established the Warriors Affairs Commission (WAC) – later renamed the Libyan Programme for Reintegration and Development. This initiative was tasked with overseeing a DDR process of revolutionaries who participated in the Libyan uprising.

The Commission's most lasting accomplishment was the registration of 250,000 men claiming to have been revolutionary combatants. However, in addition to revolutionaries, the registration process attracted unemployed youth and members of radical organisations, creating an exaggerated and unrealistic list ten times the size of the 'true' number of fighters who actually fought in the uprising.¹⁶ Hundreds of thousands were put on the state payroll based on the WAC's database, but the WAC was only able to provide vocational training for a small number of those registered due to its limited budget. Moreover, the commission was unable to convince militiamen to surrender their arms and reintegrate into society as it did not have the required resources or capacity to incentivise them. Finally, Libyan nationalists and secular citizens considered the WAC a Muslim Brotherhood initiative. The lack of trust this perception generated essentially blocked any next steps the WAC could have undertaken. In the end, the WAC became inactive when its initial budget ran out.¹⁷

Several factors played a role in the failure of this initiative. First, the US was reluctant to commit to sustained support for nation building due to its negative experience with Iraq in the mid-2000s. It was also determined to follow the lead of Libya's interim government as far as SSD and DDR were concerned. In reality, even in early 2011, the government in Tripoli was too divided to play this role. With the US putting its faith in the interim government and European countries not engaging, sustained support for the initiative remained absent. The other, and more important, factor influencing the failure of the WAC initiative was the belief that money could incentivise armed actors into behaving in a more disciplined and civilian-oriented manner. The Tripoli government's decision in late 2011 to grant salaries and bonuses to members of armed groups did much to enhance their status and resources, but little to increase public security. It also set a dangerous precedent.

16 McDonough, D., *Reforming Libya's Post-Revolution Security Sector: The Militia Problem*, Waterloo: Center for Security Governanc, 2014; Sayigh, Y., *Crumbling States: Security Sector Reform in Libya and Yemen*, Beirut: Carnegie Middle East Center, 2015

17 *Ibid.*

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given results of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	Low	No
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation and demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	Yes (too much)
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	-	-
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	-	-

The Supreme Security Committee (2011–14) and the Libya Shield Force (2012–14)

The first two ‘SSD-like’ attempts by the NTC were the creation of the Supreme Security Committee (SSC) and the Libya Shield Force (LSF). Both initiatives had undesirable consequences and adverse effects on Libya’s security sector. The SSC was established in October 2011 as an umbrella body within the Ministry of the Interior, which brought together a diverse range of armed factions to fulfil policing duties. In December 2011, the NTC gave the SSC the authority to conduct investigations and arrests. By mid-2014, the SSC had been partially dismantled, on paper at least, when 80,000 of its members were transferred to the police. In reality, the armed factions that had been incorporated into the SSC were able to maintain their autonomous status while benefiting from being put on the state payroll. It should be noted that the SSC was much more present in Tripoli than other parts of the country. For example, it was practically non-existent in Benghazi and eastern Libya.¹⁸

Sometimes described as the NTC’s ‘cardinal sin’, the LSF was established in March 2012 as an organisation within the Ministry of Defence to act as a substitute for Libya’s army, which had disintegrated during the uprising. Powerful revolutionary armed groups were enlisted and placed on the government’s payroll, mirroring the SCC process, and put under the authority of the Chief of Staff. Collectively, they formed the LSF, with 12 divisions located throughout Libya’s regions.¹⁹ Several issues plagued the effectiveness and performance of these initiatives:

18 Wehrey, F., *Ending Libya’s Civil War: Reconciling Politics, Rebuilding Security*, Beirut: Carnegie Middle East Center, 2014.

19 *Ibid.*

- The NTC admitted armed *groups* into the SSC and LSF rather than armed *individuals*. Not only did this enable groups to preserve their cohesion and hence their interests, it also provided groups with the incentive to exaggerate their size in the absence of a reliable vetting mechanism and registration system. Group commanders simply doubled or tripled the size of their group, cashed salaries for all and pocketed the difference.
- The NTC allowed for group salary payments to armed factions instead of making individual salary payments to fighters. This lost it a key lever to (re)orient individual loyalties towards the central Libyan state. Moreover, the salaries of SSC and LSF members were higher than those of the army and police, which created both jealousy and competition. Efforts by the government of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan to align salaries failed.
- The Ministries of the Interior and Defence were weak and dysfunctional, which ensured poor communication, command and control. This in turn allowed armed group commanders to retain actual power and authority on the ground. Armed factions within the SSC and LSF were thus able to finance their fighters from public resources while also keeping continued access to local resources via (il)licit activities.
- The expectations of the SSC's functions between the Ministry of the Interior and the SCC itself were misaligned. Where the Ministry of the Interior viewed the SSC as a substitute for the police, the SSC saw itself as a force with an ideological vision for society, which it tried to enforce in the communities where it held sway. The same applied to the LSF and the Ministry of Defense. The NTC hoped to use the LSF to quell communal and regional conflicts. However, it soon realised that the LSF had its own biases and in some cases contributed to these conflicts, such as those in Warshefana, Benghazi and Bani Walid. Understandably, this situation did not incline armed groups to work towards national goals.²⁰
- Armed factions refused to dismantle or demobilise because they could not find better employment opportunities elsewhere. They also rejected full integration because they viewed it as a tactic to deprive them of leverage. The inability and unwillingness of various armed groups within the SSC and LSF to integrate, cooperate and coordinate contributed to the deterioration of citizens' safety and security and the outbreak of clashes in Tripoli in July 2014, which effectively terminated both initiatives.²¹

20 *Ibid.*; Sayigh (2015), *op.cit.*; Wehrey, F. and A. Ahram, *Taming the Militias: Building National Guards in Fractured Arab States*, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015.

21 *Ibid.*

In the background, the lack of trust between senior officials and revolutionaries, as well as the division of the Libyan population into winners and losers, continued to have a major influence on the outcome of NTC-initiated SSD programmes. Revolutionaries did not trust senior officials who had defected from Gaddafi’s regime and the latter viewed the former as undisciplined radicals. Furthermore, communities that remained loyal to Gaddafi during the uprisings were not invited to the negotiating table. This arrangement meant that every government plan excluded large portions of Libyan society.

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given results of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	High	No
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	Yes (far too much)
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	High	No (persisted in practice)
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	–	–

Colonel Salem Joha’s Plan (2012)

Colonel Salem Joha, a former artillery officer who led the defence of Misrata during the 2011 siege by Gaddafi forces, put forward a plan to transform the Libya Shield Force into a more regular and formal unit within the military by making it a reserve military force. According to Joha’s plan, recruits would join the LSF as individuals rather than as members of an armed group; they would train for one month a year and serve close to home. In return, they would receive a monthly salary and medical benefits for themselves and their families. Collecting and buying back weapons was another integral part of the proposal.²²

Joha’s plan did not get off the ground because he was unable to gain the trust of armed groups and revolutionary leaders in Misrata, or in other parts of Libya for that matter. The fact that Joha is from Misrata made the realisation of his plan even more difficult since, back then, Misrata was perceived as the city with the strongest militias and there were fears that it would dominate the LSF. The initiative also failed because it intended

22 Wehrey, F., *Ending Libya’s Civil War: Reconciling Politics, Rebuilding Security*, Beirut: Carnegie Middle East Center, 2014.

to dismantle armed factions and collect their weaponry before a broad-based political agreement had been reached. The inclusive nature of Joha’s approach was another factor in its failure, since many local political actors across Libya were unwilling to endorse the necessary compromises such an approach demanded.²³

In addition to Joha’s moderate approach being sabotaged or ignored by numerous Islamist and hardline revolutionary armed groups, 2012 was also a year of extreme fiscal profligacy. From US\$6.6 billion in 2010, the Libyan government’s wage bill reached \$16 billion in 2012. More generally, the government spent a total of US\$51 billion, a record for Libya.²⁴ A large part of this expenditure went to armed groups, either via salaries or through corruption and embezzlement. This extraordinary spending boom, combined with the aforementioned lack of trust, doomed Joha’s SSR initiative.

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given results of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	High	–
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	–
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	High	–
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	–	–

The Libyan National Guard (2012–13)

In late 2012, UNSMIL suggested the formation of a ‘national guard’-like structure to act as security stabiliser in the country while the official army was being trained and built. The Libyan Territorial Army, as the Guard was to be called, would consist of three brigades to perform police and security duties. Supporters of this idea drew many parallels between the proposed plan and the way the US dealt with its own post-Civil War militias, Denmark’s Home Guard, and Britain’s Territorial Army. The idea was endorsed by the international community, the US, the UK, and the EU, and received support from some Libyan officials.²⁵

23 Ibid.

24 Harchaoui, J., *Libya’s monetary crisis*, Lawfare, [online](#), January 2018.

25 Wehrey, F., *Armies, Militias, and (Re)integration in Fractured States*, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018.

Nonetheless, the plan for creating the Libyan National Guard failed because Gaddafi loyalist tribes, the regular officers' corps and many revolutionary groups believed that the initiative was a Misratan and Islamist attempt to increase their control over the country. The National Force Alliance considered the initiative an effort to establish an official Islamist army rather than a National Guard. More importantly, however, was the fact that the nature of the Guard's composition, mission, mandate, purpose, oversight, and future relation to the military remained unclear throughout the process. This fed suspicion and prevented effective progress. The proposal for creating a National Guard was moved off the table in 2013. When Prime Minister Ali Zedan attempted to set up his own version of the project, it suffered the same fate and caused as much controversy as the original.²⁶

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given results of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	High	Yes
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	No
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	High	No
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	High	Some

The US Training Mission (2012–13)

In the summer of 2012, the US sponsored a security initiative to train and equip several hundred Libya counterterrorism and special forces in Camp 27. The camp, named after its 27 km distance from Tripoli on the coastal road to Tunisia, was an existing Libyan military base rehabilitated by US Green Berets. It was to be used as a training facility to refine the abilities of 800 Libyan counter-terrorism fighters. However, the fact that there was no clear Libyan chain of command of its military forces, the fragmented and volatile security situation and shortcomings in the selection process blocked most progress. For example, most recruits originated from western brigades, mainly in the city of Zintan. Furthermore, trainees lacked military experience and their allegiances (country, tribe, city) were not clear either. Another obstacle was the camp's location in a disputed area between two tribes, which US forces were unaware of and which their Libyan partner, General Abd al-Salam al-Hasi, did not inform them about.²⁷

²⁶ Wehrey and Ahram (2015), *op.cit.*

²⁷ Wehrey, F., *The Burning Shores: Inside the Battle for the New Libya*, New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2018.

The project was terminated when anti-Zintan armed groups stormed the compound in June 2013 and seized equipment (such as M-4 rifles, pistols, military vehicles, ammunition, and night vision goggles). Even the modest goal of training 100 Libyan Special Operation Forces was not achieved. The timing of this US-sponsored initiative is also relevant as it shows that the US did not leave Libya after the murder of its ambassador, Chris Steven. Instead, its trainers went home in 2013, with a full evacuation only taking place in 2014 as a result of the Dawn-Dignity conflict.²⁸

The failure of this initiative illustrates well what the consequences can be if foreign states take sides, willfully or inadvertently, with particular parties in the Libyan conflict via SSD efforts. The SSD intervention risks becoming part of the conflict and viewed as a threat by other factions. This makes it susceptible to resistance and failure, and can worsen the original conflict conditions.

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given results of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	High	Yes
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	No
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	High	No
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	High	No

The General Purpose Force (2013–14)

In the summer of 2013, preparations were underway to create a Libyan General Purpose Force with international assistance.²⁹ At the request of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan, the plan was endorsed during a G8 summit in Ireland. G8 nations, including the US, UK, Italy and Turkey, agreed to train a military force of 20,000 individuals for a period of eight

28 Schmitt, E., *U.S. Training Elite Antiterror Troops in Four African Nations*, The New York Times, [online](#), May 2014 (Accessed 13 March 2019).

29 Nickels, B., *Pitfalls for Libya's General-Purpose Force*, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2013; Wehrey, F., *Modest Mission? The U.S. Plan to Build a Libyan Army*, Foreign Affairs, [online](#), November 2013; Ryan, M., *Libyan force was lesson in limits of U.S. power*, The Washington Post, [online](#), August 2015; U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, news [release](#), January 2014.

years. The general objective of the GPF was to assist the Libyan government in extending its authority, protecting political figures and public institutions, and putting pressure on militias to disarm. The project was quickly embroiled by operational complications, such as:

- Libyan and international partners had to agree on training locations, cost allocations, recruitment target groups (e.g. which groups would receive training and on what basis they would be selected) and how to handle the arms embargo that was in place. Eventually, an agreement was reached that the training would take place outside Libya.
- While all parties involved concluded that there was a need for thorough vetting, important questions were left unanswered. For example, how the force would eventually be integrated into Libyan military structures, who would command it, how the force would relate to future SSD/DDR efforts in Libya, and what the force's actual mandate would look like.
- Western countries were not ready to provide Libya with what it needed, and instead offered what fitted their expertise and interests. For example, Italy and Turkey offered gendarmerie support and the US counter-terrorism training, but what Libya acutely needed was a force that could tackle border security, illegal smuggling and trafficking, and low-level insurgency.
- Major obstacles on the part of the Libyan administration hindered progress. For example, international partners complained that their staff, regardless of seniority, were not able to track down key Libyan officials, obtain answers to emails, or trigger payments. Prime Minister Ali Zeidan was unable to build domestic political support for his proposal because the GNC viewed it as an attempt to empower former regime figures. Moreover, the Libyan authorities struggled to find competent recruits willing to travel abroad, and failed in attracting members of armed factions to join the training.

In the summer of 2014, training nevertheless started in Turkey, Italy and Britain. US (AFRICOM) planning progressed more slowly, although a training facility in Bulgaria had already been chosen. It pulled out of the initiative entirely in May 2014. The UK undertook to train 300 Libyan personnel in Cambridgeshire but, within months, one-third had returned home and many others had sought asylum. Eventually, the UK returned the whole group to Libya, in part because of sexual assaults on local people by a small number of trainees. In Turkey, half of the 800 participants in a police-training programme dropped out because the training was 'too hard'. The initiative was later cancelled in the wake of the 2013 clash between the AKP and elements of the Turkish police dominated by the Gülenists. Only Italy managed to successfully train 250 officers

for 24 weeks, although contact was not maintained after their return to Libya. The failure of this initiative highlights the risks when there is a lack of coordination between foreign states volunteering to support SSD work in Libya.

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given aim of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	High	Some
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	Unclear
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	High	Unclear
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	High	Yes

Operation Dignity / Libyan National Army vs. Libya Dawn (2014–)

In addition to the formation of two separate claims on Libyan state authority, the conflict between the Dawn and Dignity coalitions profoundly affected all military formations that existed and ended any existing SSD/DDR initiatives. On the back of Operation Dignity, General Haftar revived the Libyan National Army (LNA) by appealing to officers who had been negatively affected by the Political Isolation Law. A reconstituted LNA, complemented by Operation Dignity coalition forces, established control over Cyrenaica in the course of a few years and recently significantly increased its influence in the Fezzan. The LNA is a self-styled army composed of militias and tribal forces that support Haftar, which was later endorsed by the Interim Government of the East and its elected House of Representatives (HoR). In eastern Libya, the LNA was able to increase the local population’s sense of safety, although this came at an appreciable human cost.

While the LNA effectively controls Cyrenaica, it lacks international recognition. Neither is it officially recognised by the UN-backed Government of National Accord. The LNA leadership compensates for this lack of international legitimacy through bilateral cooperation with Western powers such as France and regional powers such as Egypt and the UAE. Although LNA influence in Tripolitania remains limited, it maintains good connections with towns like Zintan, Sabratha, and Wershefana. The tactics used by the Dignity coalition are premised on establishing shallow co-optation of local actors rather than establishing more permanent territorial control. A key reason is that Marshall Haftar’s military and financial resources are limited.

On the other side of the coin, the armed factions that joined the Libya Dawn coalition were not able to retain their coherence once Haftar and his allies no longer posed a direct threat to the Tripoli area. The little progress made was largely enabled by the moderate Misrata faction in early 2015: Fathi Bashagha and other local businessmen purged hardliners from the city, turned the powerful Mahjub Brigade in favour of the GNA, and worked with the Central Bank to reduce funds allocated to Misrata’s hardliners.

At the end of the day, none of Dawn’s armed factions was strong enough to defeat the others and control the capital. The rest of the country – especially the Fezzan – remained in the hands of local and transnational armed groups that act independently or maintain a loose relationship with either the Dawn or the Dignity coalition.³⁰ The governance shortage that resulted from this security fragmentation enabled rebels, mercenaries, terrorists and criminals from other countries to roam unhindered around large parts of Libya. Unsurprisingly, this increased the level of insecurity faced by significant parts of Libya’s civilian population.

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given results of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	High	No
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	Yes
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	High	No
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	–	–

The Presidential Guard (2016–18)

When Presidential Council (PC) members and GNA officials arrived in Tripoli in March 2016 and realised that their government did not have its own force to protect it against the various local militias in the Tripolitania area, they revived the idea of creating a Libyan National Guard under the name of the Presidential Guard (PG). Western powers and UNSMIL endorsed the plan and the first PG formation was put together in May 2016.³¹

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ <http://www.digitaljournal.com/news/politics/commanders-of-the-libyan-presidential-guard-appointed/article/473820> (Accessed 22 March 2019).

The PG was responsible for the protection of government personnel and buildings, VIP guests, and strategic locations such as ports, power plants, sources of water and energy supplies, and air and land borders. It is important to highlight that, at the time, the PG was a work in progress with little authority or credibility in Tripoli, let alone in Libya as a whole. Ultimately, the PG could not withstand the powerful armed factions present in Tripoli because it was militarily inferior to those groups.³² This was made clear when forces affiliated with Misratan Brigade 301 and the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade loyal to Haitham al-Tajuri easily evicted the PG from their positions at the Prime Minister’s office and Tripoli International Airport in May 2018.³³

The sudden collapse of the GNA’s Presidential Guard in 2018 – despite its having received support from several states, including France and Algeria – suggests that sometimes foreign states pursue SSD efforts in Libya that are largely symbolic. In this particular case, the diplomatic and material support that could have ensured greater PG effectiveness was simply absent.

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given results of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	High	Some
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	No
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	High	No
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	High	Some

32 <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-SANA-BP-Tripoli-armed-groups.pdf> (Accessed 22 March 2019).

33 Lacher and Al-Idrissi (2018), *op.cit.*

The Egyptian Initiative (2017–)

The Egyptian National Committee on Libya initially sponsored a series of meetings between Dignity coalition forces and armed factions from western Libya (mostly Misrata) between May and October 2017.³⁴ These were revived at the end of 2017 but came to a halt again in March 2018. Restarted in September 2018, they were once again terminated on 21 October 2018 when General Haftar and Prime Minister Serraj failed to attend a planned meeting in Cairo to negotiate the final details of the agreement that was meant to result from the Egyptian initiative. The most prominent participants were Colonel Salem Joha from Misrata, LNA spokesperson Ahmed al-Mismari, the commander of the LNA's western region, Idris Madi, and Aguila Saleh, President of the HoR. A key accomplishment of these start-stop series of meetings was that in October 2017 both parties (Dawn and Dignity) agreed to form joint technical committees to help ease the unification process of the Libyan Army. However, little practical progress has been made since.³⁵

The main reason why the Egyptian initiative has so far failed is that Egypt is not seen as a neutral actor by the factions that oppose Haftar in western Libya. Via the aforementioned meetings, Egypt intends to promote an arrangement in which Haftar heads the entire Libyan military structure. Yet, the failure to arrange a meeting between Serraj and Haftar in Cairo, together with Haftar's plan to advance into Tripoli with his forces – which Egypt disapproves of – appears to have cooled relations between Haftar and his Egyptian allies.³⁶ Nonetheless, Egypt continues to support Haftar in his efforts to 'fight terrorism and extremism', and in his attempts to challenge the authority of militias that are independent of him.³⁷

While Egypt's 'armed-forces re-unification' initiative showed promise in late 2017 and early 2018, the initiative rapidly lost meaning because Egypt refused to swap its strong pro-Haftar attitude for a more neutral one.

34 This committee was established by president Al-Sisi and is headed by the Egyptian armed forces Chief of Staff, Marshal Mahmoud Hijazi, who is also charged with the coordination with Haftar's forces in Cyrenaica.

35 Khaled Mahmoud. 'Sisi's Ambitions in Libya'. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – Sada. 30 November 2018: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/77847>

36 'After failed meetings with Serraj, Haftar's move to mount offensive on Libya capital sparks disagreement with Egypt'. Mada Masr. 28 December 2018: <https://madasr.com/en/2018/12/28/feature/politics/after-failed-meetings-with-sarraj-haftars-move-to-mount-offensive-on-libyan-capital-sparks-disagreement-with-egypt/>

37 Aidan Lewis, 'Egypt's president meets Libyan commander Haftar in Cairo', *Reuters*, 14 April 2019: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-libya/egypts-president-meets-libyan-commander-haftar-in-cairo-idUSKCN1RQ09N>

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given results of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	–	–
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	No
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	–	–
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	High	No

The Tripoli Protection Force (October 2018–April 2019)

On 18 December 2018, Tripoli’s key armed factions announced their unification into one armed force called the Tripoli Protection Force (TPF). Its composite groups are the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade, the Abu Salim Deterrence and Rapid Intervention Force, the Nawasi Brigade, and the Bab Tajura Brigade. In its ‘founding’ statement, the TPF stated that it had formed in response to the intense fighting that engulfed parts of the capital in August/September 2018. It added that it supports UNSMIL and its Special Envoy, Ghassan Salame, and endorses the Libyan National Conference. Furthermore, the TPF explicitly stated its rejection of the use of military force to reach political objectives – a clear message to military forces from Tarhuna, the Summoud Brigade led by Salah Badi (UN sanctioned) that attacked the capital, and General Haftar and his LNA. The primary role the TPF claims to fulfill is the protection of Tripoli to allow state institutions to function.³⁸ In addition, its creation arguably improved the security of the capital’s population, at least for the time being. Although the TPF’s armed factions have stated that they have no political or ideological motives, the formation of the TPF was in part politically motivated:

- It opposes forces loyal to the LNA that are stationed to the west of Tripoli and the 9th Brigade (a successor of al-Kaniyat Brigade) from Tarhuna.
- It also anticipated pushback from armed groups that lost power and influence as a result of the Al-Zawiyah ceasefire agreement. This proved correct as fighting around Tripoli renewed on 16 January 2019.

38 <http://www.libya-analysis.com/tripoli-militias-unite-into-tripoli-protection-force/> (Accessed 22 March 2019).

- In forming the TPF, its four composite groups attempted to integrate themselves into the new GNA ‘security arrangements’ as a counter to the attempts of the Minister of Interior with whom the four groups have a tense relationship, to increase the influence of Zintani and Misratan militias.³⁹
- To counter Haftar’s progress, the TPF also announced in early February that it will be integrated into a larger regional coalition known as the Western Region Protection Force. In their statement, the TPF gave little information on the nature and participants of the force, but stated that the planned grouping will have a unified command structure.⁴⁰

The TPF’s case illustrates a recurring theme: Libyan armed actors are often sophisticated enough to portray their self-defence or offensive aims as SSD and seduce foreign countries to support the corresponding initiatives they undertake – diplomatically, materially, or both. A potentially successful SSD initiative requires that its foreign sponsors are cognisant of the ability of Libyan factions to disguise their war pursuits and power grabs as SSD endeavours.

Implication for future SSD (Future SSD should...)	Relevance given aim of initiative (high-medium-low)	Applied in initiative (Y/N)
(1) Focus on composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation to create new national loyalties and a shared identity	High	No
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	High	Yes
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision with good regulatory arrangements with a measure of citizen input	–	–
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	–	–

39 <https://www.libyaherald.com/2019/01/09/serraj-determined-to-progress-with-security-arrangements/>

40 Zaptia, S., *From TPF to WRPF: western Libya militias seek amalgamate*, Libya Herald, [online](#), February 2019 (Accessed 13 March 2019).

A brief synthesis

On balance, very few of the 12 security initiatives analysed above that occurred in Libya between 2011 and 2018 align with the internationally agreed SSD paradigm.⁴¹ They were mostly partisan efforts intended to gain the upper hand in an active conflict, often disguised as SSD/DDR interventions.⁴² Only a couple of initiatives feature scattered elements of SSD. By the standard of warfighting interventions, most seem not to have been terribly effective given the prolonged and indecisive nature of the Libyan civil war. By the standard of global SSD, these initiatives have produced unequivocally poor results across the board. Both perspectives generate an interesting set of lessons for future SSD efforts:

Many of the security initiatives discussed suffered from pursuing integration efforts at armed group rather than unit or individual level. They failed to create incentives that could co-opt armed group leaders, established unclear lines of authority, introduced unjustified salary disparities and/or failed to ensure adequate geographical representation in newly-constituted (or integrated) security forces. These all represent fail factors in terms of their operational effectiveness.

Also, most of these initiatives were strongly focused on realising capability improvements without much thought for stimulating the quality of security governance, let alone accountability. Finally, insofar as they were supported by international actors, such support was typically either partisan or limited in nature, reinforcing the fragmentation of Libya's security landscape rather than reducing it. These elements represent fail factors in terms of their durability and legitimacy.

41 Sayigh (2015), *op.cit.*; Wehrey (2014), *op.cit.*; Wehrey and Ahram (2015), *op.cit.*; Wehrey, F. *Armies, militias, (re)integration in fractured states*, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018; David McDonough, *Reforming Libya's post-revolution security sector: the militia problem*, The Centre for Security Governance, 2014: [Online](#) (Accessed 5 March 2019); Mada Masr, [online](#), 2018 (Accessed 5 March 2019); Khaled Mahmoud, *Sisi's ambitions in Libya*, Beirut: Carnegie Middle East, 2018. Libya Analysis, [online](#), 2018 (Accessed 5 March 2018); Libya Herald, [online](#), 2019 (Accessed 5 March 2019).

42 Efforts to improve the quality and quantity of security provision for regular citizens by realising interlinked improvements in security governance and security capabilities.

4 Lessons from global security sector development practice

The internationally-sponsored SSD practice of the last decade represents a mixed bag in terms of featuring relatively few examples of long-term, politically well-informed and balanced programmatic interventions. Rather there have been many instances of poorly designed train-equip-build interventions that mostly benefited state security forces, with little attention to security sector governance, non-state security actors (other than as adversaries of state security organisations) or the people's security priorities.⁴³ Many interventions have tended to focus on the state as a proxy for a focus on people – assuming that states will at some point start taking care of their citizens – and on capability improvements – on the assumption that improvements in governance would somehow follow in their wake. In reality, neither assumption has held up in the often neo-patrimonial, violently contested, personalised and fragmented political orders of fragile and conflict-affected states.

Moreover, the practice of DDR has shifted from its traditional focus on post-conflict situations as part of a broader 'peacebuilding recovery package' to include settings of ongoing violence with more varied conflict conditions and combatants. Quite a few DDR efforts have been a sort of internationally-funded scheme to purchase outdated weaponry and stimulate immediate demobilisation with limited regard for longer-term

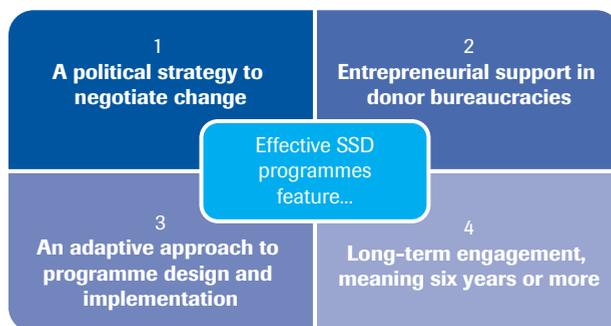
43 ADE, *Thematic Evaluation of the European Commission Support to Justice and Security System Reform*, Final report ref. 1295, Brussels: European Commission, 2011; Independent Commission for Aid Impact, *Review of UK Development Assistance for Security and Justice*, Report 42, London: ICAI, 2015; Van Veen (2017), *op.cit.*; Van Veen, E., *Improving Security and Justice Programming in Fragile Situations: Better Political Engagement, More Change Management*, Paris: OECD, 2016; Ekhard, S., *The challenges and lessons learned in supporting security sector reform*, Berlin: FES, 2016; Penksa, S. et al., *Evaluation of EU Support for Security Sector Reform in Enlargement and Neighbourhood Countries (2010-2016)*, Brussels: European Commission, 2018; Denney, L. and C. Valters, *Evidence synthesis: Security Sector Reform and organizational capacity building*, London: DFID, 2015.

livelihood prospects or combatant-community relationships.⁴⁴ It is fair to say that a fair number of such internationally-funded initiatives were short-term successes but amount to longer-term failures, a few notable indigenous efforts excepted.⁴⁵

Despite these developments, a number of practical lessons on what successful SSD programmes look like, and how they are implemented, can be distilled from global practice on the basis of a rapid review of key policy and academic literature. These are summarised as operational building blocks in Figure 2 below and briefly discussed afterwards.⁴⁶

-
- 44 For instance: Sharif, Sally, *A critical review of evidence from ex-combatant re-integration programs*, Politics of Return Working Paper No. 2, London: Social Science Research Council, 2018; Munive, J. and F. Stepputat, 'Rethinking Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 4(1), 2015; Idris, I., *Lessons from DDR programs*, Birmingham: GSDRC, 2016. It is unclear to what extent 'second generation DDR' represents an improvement of actual DDR practice rather than just intellectual progress. For the concept: United Nations, *Second generation DDR practices in peace operations*, New York: UN DPKO Orolsi, 2010; see also: Stankovic, T. and S. Torjesen, *Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: A Survey for Practitioners*, Oslo: NUPI, undated; Munive and Stepputat (2015), *op.cit.*; Muggah, R. and C. O'Donnell, *Sequencing Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration in Peace Processes*, Leuven: KU Leuven, 2015; United Nations, *The changing landscape of armed groups: Doing DDR in new contexts*, New York: WBG, UN DPKO, SSRS, 2018.
- 45 For the successful case of DDR in Ethiopia: Nathan, L., *No ownership, no commitment: A guide to local ownership of Security Sector Reform*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2007.
- 46 In addition to a number of references already indicated in previous footnotes: Eckhard (2016), *op.cit.*; Bärwaldt (2018), *op.cit.*; Van Veen (2016), *op.cit.*; CIGI's work on 'second generation SSR', [online](#) (2013-2017); Sedra (2010), *op.cit.*; De Catheu, J., *Security, justice and rule of law survey*, Paris: OECD DAC, 2016; Bärwaldt, K. (ed.), *Strategy, Jointness, Capacity: Institutional Requirements for Supporting Security Sector Reform*, Berlin: FES, 2018; Van Veen (2016), *op.cit.*. More general on programmatic approaches as a tool to stimulate developmental change, including SSD: The research streams on 'Thinking and Working Politically' ([online](#)) and 'Doing Development Differently' ([online](#)); see also: Van Veen, E. and A. Rijper, *Re-perceiving results: Aid programs and change in fragile societies*, The Hague: KPSRL, 2017; Kleinfeld, R., *Improving Development Aid Design and Evaluation: Plan for Sailboats, Not Trains*, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015.

Figure 2 Four operational building blocks for effective SSD programming



(1) A political strategy to negotiate change – This means that an SSD programme must be based on a sound analysis of the political economy of security in a particular country, including the key interests and actors involved in SSD. Such analysis can subsequently be used to enact a political strategy in support of programme implementation. It enables navigation of the contested political landscape by linking key interests to incentives. It also provides ideas on how these can be deployed to marshal support and overcome resistance to bring about citizen-oriented change in how security is organised and provided. In addition, it serves as a hedge and point of reference to resist the inevitable efforts elites and armed groups are bound to undertake to politicise any SSD process to create competitive advantage. Both analysis and strategy require regular updating.

(2) Entrepreneurial support within the relevant donor bureaucracy – In respect of programme implementation, it is vital to recognise that the operational realities of conflict-affected countries and the administrative requirements of donor bureaucracies are in permanent tension with one other. To avoid a situation in which this tension stalls or even blocks progress, there needs to be individuals within the donor bureaucracy who can mobilise and creatively overcome administrative hurdles where programme realities require it.

(3) An adaptive approach to programme design and implementation – Programmes in conflict-affected environments face a fluid pace of events, with regular setbacks and windows of opportunity. To adapt to the pace of events and avoid being rendered irrelevant, programmes need to be constructed in a manner that allows for regular and fast – albeit well-documented – adjustment of their objectives and be flexible in how they allocate their resources (time, money, expertise and political capital). Moreover, programmes require regular reflection on, and testing of, their initial assumptions against implementation progress and ongoing analysis.

(4) A long-term engagement, meaning six years or more – SSD programme success depends critically on gaining the confidence of those local and international actors that are essential to the effort. Conflict-affected environments are notoriously low on trust and high on coercion. This means that building relationships supportive of progressive SSD requires time and effort. There are no shortcuts. Moreover, operating adaptive programmes is demanding and requires more time than linearly designed programmes. Practical experience indicates that programmes need to last at least six years or longer to have a chance of making relevant changes.

As a result, and in general terms, effective SSD requires an initial focus on pragmatic improvements that are realistic in a particular context as demonstrated by an in-depth assessment of elite and people security interests. Such improvements must be pursued in a way that is politically savvy, inclusive-enough, adaptable, long-term and benefits from support that is aligned across donor bureaucracies.

5 Points of departure for security sector development

During conflict, coercion and violence are used to enable and block political change, and also to obtain economic advantage. This makes efforts to transform the function and possession of the associated capabilities for violence both politically sensitive and delicate. Powerful vested interests will resist it. SSD is by definition a highly politicised process in the sense that conflict actors will try to use it to create a competitive advantage. The risks of instrumentalization of support offered by international actors are substantial. These risks do not necessarily decrease in the 'post-conflict' phase because contemporary intrastate conflicts are typically protracted and hybrid in nature, with violence continuing in certain areas of a country and/or exhibiting rapid changes in intensity. This makes it harder to delineate clear war-to-peace transitions, more difficult to focus on the longer-term, and more challenging to initiate effective SSD efforts. An obvious point to make is that SSD at national level can and should not take place without either a clear prior victory/defeat, or one/several political agreement(s) that unite(s) key warring factions around a common way forward on major governance issues – such as the distribution of (state) power, the nature and modalities by which it is exercised, the allocation of revenues, and how to reconstruct a halfway functional bureaucracy.⁴⁷

Against this backdrop, reflections on SSD in Libya may seem to come at an odd moment as, since April 2019, the country has sunk back into more intense fighting after years of relative and negotiated calm. Large parts of the country are run by makeshift coalitions of armed actors that feature a broad variety of motives and intentions. Yet, if it is accepted that there is no place for SSD at scale in Libya at present, the time for reflection is in fact propitious because it can be undertaken without pressure for immediate action.

Based on the review of key episodes of the Libyan civil war between 2011 and 2018 and of 12 major security initiatives undertaken in this period, a number of critical observations on prospects for SSD in Libya can be identified to inform further thinking:

⁴⁷ See for example: Development Transformations, *Libya Security Actor Mapping Project an overview of Security Sector Reform in post-2011 Libya*, Washington DC: DT, 2017.

- Key assumptions underlying the global SSD paradigm are not necessarily relevant in Libya, in particular that a unitary state exists that can be worked with and that there is a coherent bureaucracy (including security forces) that can be strengthened.
- The central challenge for SSD in Libya is the fragmentation of the political and security environment with numerous armed factions competing to establish and maintain their authority. There is no permanent material or ideological connection between most of these factions. The nature and intensity of their relations varies significantly across place and time.
- While, arguably, the main priority should be to consolidate these armed groups, this needs to be accomplished in a way that takes account of their interests, is reasonably well regulated and contributes as much as possible to 'people-oriented'⁴⁸ security and professionalisation/ institutionalisation at the national level.
- None of the modest efforts to strengthen the Libyan security sector have so far achieved these objectives. Instead, many exacerbated the fragmentation that undermines SSD prospects. Past operational and strategic fail factors must be prominently addressed in future SSD efforts.

Building on these observations, Table 2 below proposes eight points of departure for future SSD in Libya. They are relevant to any international actor wishing to engage in such initiatives, both at the strategic level of thinking through what SSD efforts should aim to achieve, and at the operational level of devising how SSD efforts need to be implemented.

48 While a little vague, we prefer the term 'people-oriented' over the term 'citizen-oriented' in our recommendations since the latter can create a divide in security status and provision between Libyans and migrants on Libyan territory. Given Libya's traditional attraction to migrants from across the Sahel region and beyond, this is undesirable.

Table 2 Strategic and operational points of departure for future SSD in Libya

Strategic: <i>What would SSD need to achieve?</i>	Operational: <i>How would SSD need to be implemented?</i>
(1) Focus on the composition, professionalisation and institutionalisation of newly created national security forces to promote national loyalties and a shared sense of identity	(1) Possess a clear political strategy to negotiate change, underpinned by adequate diplomatic resources
(2) Cater to armed group interests to incentivise their cooperation <i>and</i> demand concessions from them that would enable SSD progress	(2) Organise entrepreneurial support in donor bureaucracies to deal imaginatively with the many challenges that will arise and avoid getting stuck in a 'train and equip' format
(3) Accept a plurality of security provision organised via reasonably good regulatory arrangements, a backstop capacity and a measure of citizen input	(3) Use an adaptive approach to programme design and implementation to ensure lasting flexibility and sensitivity to changing context
(4) Ensure coordinated international support to avoid stimulating conflict	(4) Craft a long-term engagement, meaning six years or more, to build the relationships and confidence essential for working towards SSD progress

Note: The details of each point are elaborated in Sections 3 and 4.

It is important to emphasise that these points represent an interlinked set of factors. They are not a menu of options. Moreover, in our analysis they are necessary conditions for the success of future SSD efforts in Libya, but not sufficient. This is because many other pieces of the puzzle required for effective SSD have not been discussed in this paper. These include: a) the need for a detailed mapping of the interests, relations and power dynamics between Libya’s top-20 armed groups, b) dissection of the nature, composition and interests of coalitions like the LNA, c) analysing political and security developments, in particular geographic areas with their own power dynamics such as Tripolitania, the Fezzan and Misrata, d) understanding the influence of ideologies like Salafism on the conduct of the war and expectations of future governance, and e) assessing the precise objectives, relations and type of support of key foreign countries such as the UAE, Egypt, Turkey, Russia and France for particular Libyan armed groups. Together, analysis of these issues will generate the strategic insights and operational parameters necessary to develop pathways for future SSD in Libya.