DIALOGUES

SECURITAIRES DANS L'ESPACE SAHELO - SAHARIEN

SECURITY CHALLENGES AND ISSUES IN THE SAHELO-SAHARAN REGION

THE LIBYA PERSPECTIVE

by Mohamed Eljarh

CONTENT

FOREWORD

The recent Malian and Libyan crises have exacerbated the multidimensional insecurity (at personal, economic, political, social, environmental, healthcare, etc. levels) that affects the populations living the Sahelo-Saharan region, and have showcased not only the weakness of the States but also the necessity for regional cooperation, especially between the Maghreb and West Africa. Together, they may face up to similar challenges.

The project called "Dialogues about Security in the Sahelo-Saharan Region" stems from this observation. It was initiated by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Office in Mali, in partnership with its counterparts in Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia, in order to underscore the strong interdependences that exist between North and West Africa regarding security matters, and to promote national and sub-regional dialogues about the security challenges and issues that prevail within the States and across borders.

It aims at assessing the overall situation in the region, in light of the concept of human security. This is why country-based studies were conducted in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Chad and Tunisia. Each country-based study went through a validation process led by a committee of human security specialists from the country in question. Also, each country-based study was discussed by experts during a workshop that was organized for the purpose of not only identifying shared issues, but also agreeing on the top political actions that must be carried out in the Sahelo-Maghrebian region.

These country-based studies represent the first phase of an on-going multiyear project. They are also the intellectual basis on which some upcoming activities will be based, such as a regional conference that will focus on the priority issues that the experts have defined during their respective workshops.

The outcomes of the project will be used by all the key players involved in the various aspects of human security across the region. They will also be important sources of information and guidelines for the policy-makers and the members of the civil society, as well as for national and foreign researchers and university staff members.

Bamako, July 2016

Jan Henrik Fahlbusch   Countel Kanne
Residing Representative   Program Leader

INTRODUCTION

Since the start of the Libyan uprising and the subsequent overthrow of the Qaddafi regime, the Libyan trajectory has taken an unfortunate trajectory characterized by the mushrooming of armed groups, proliferation of massive stockpiles of weapons and ammunition, the failure of the political transition, and the fragmentation of state institutions, which resulted in a safe haven for terrorist groups in the region including the so called Islamic State and its affiliates. Consequently, a second low-level civil war broke out between the so-called revolutionary forces that worked together to topple the Qaddafi regime with the help of NATO and some Arab countries. All of these developments represent enormous security challenges and threats for Libya and the Sahel-Sahara region.

The instability in Libya has a direct impact on the already fragile Sahel region. A region that faces a multitude of simultaneously the challenges and threats ranging from extreme poverty to climate change, draught and frequent food crises, rapid population growth, fragile governance, corruption, unresolved internal tensions, violent extremism and radicalization, illicit trafficking and terrorist-linked security threats.

I. MAJOR SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THREATHS

As a volatile and unstable environment Libya is faced with enormous internal and external security challenges. Given the one-man rule and culture of the Qaddafi regime, vital security institutions and structures collapsed following the downfall of the regime in 2011. The collapse of the internal security institutions and structures such as policing, administration of justice, and rule of law with issues relating to the armed forces, the intelligence service, and the civilian institutions responsible for managing and monitoring them. This is true even as some argue that such institutions under the former regime were authoritarian and did not have sustainable structures to ensure continuity after the downfall of the Qaddafi regime. The vacuum left behind following the uprising in 2011 was filled with heavily armed militias and groups that lacked any sense of professionalism, discipline or cohesion. Such circumstances have made the tasks of Demobilization Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) an impossible mission for successive weak governments that took power since 2011.

The internal security challenges coupled with lack of functioning institutions and armed militias and the proliferation of arms in the lawless environment that ensued in post-Qaddafi Libya exposed the country to huge external security threats. As a result, Libya became a hot bed for extremist Jihadist groups such as the so-called Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb or AQIM and Boko Haram, as well as, armed movements such as the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Furthermore, Libya became the preferred transit country in the region for the activities of people and drug trafficking networks. This threat of violent jihadists groups coupled with the huge refugees and migration crisis added a new regional dimension to the security challenges faced by Libya with major security implications for the entire region especially North Africa, the Sahel and Europe.

Nature of Security Challenges and Threats

The nature of security challenges and threats in post-Qaddafi Libya could be broadly categorized as internal and external. The internal security challenges relate to poor governances, weapons proliferation and armed militias, political and economic instability. For example, little has been done over the past few years to embark on key security tasks such as DDR and SSR. In addition, there has been an evolving legitimacy crisis and lack of trust in governing institutions in Libya since 2011 with political and armed groups restoring to violence or intimidation tactics to impose their agenda. Such developments exacerbated insecurity and instability in Libya further leading armed groups and militias to keep their weapons and maintain their autonomous structures. In return the central authorities in post-Qaddafi Libya grew weaker with time adding to the huge trust deficit among its citizens. As a result individuals have retreated to their most basic social enclaves such as family, group, tribe or city in pursuit of security and sometimes justice that state institutions have been unable to deliver. Consequently, peripheries1 grew much stronger than the central authorities leading to the issue of post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Until the security situation is brought under control, progress on all other fronts such as political, economic and social development will be a daunting task and always at risk.

Part of the external security challenges stem from cross-border extremist and criminal groups that took advantage of the vacuum following the collapse of the Qaddafi regime allowing them to operate freely in various parts of the country. Aspiring jihadist extremists especially from neighboring countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Mali and other sub-saharan countries have been heading to Libya to join extremist groups. The instability and lawlessness in Libya provided the space for extremist groups to establish training camps and take control of entire villages and cities.

The presence of extremist jihadist groups and their activities bring with it new security challenges for Libya. Since the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime, certain countries took unilateral action in Libya. The United States snatched two Libyan jihadists in 2013 and 2014. Abu Anas al-Libi and Ahmed Abukhatalla both suspected of involvement in attacks against US targets both in Libya and abroad. In addition, on two separate occasions the US conducted at least two air strikes targeting al-Qaeda and ISIL senior leaders and training camps in the cities of Ejdabyia in Eastern Libya in June 2015 and the city of Sabratha in Western Libya In February 2016. In addition, the Egyptian air force carried out air strikes in February 2015 against ISIL targets in the eastern city of Derna in response to the killing of 21 Egyptian Copts at the hands of ISIL linked militants in the coastal city of Sirte. Such unilateral are considered contributing factors to a new kind of insecurity and instability in Libya. This brings to light the role of foreign interventions in fueling insecurity and creating fertile environment for terrorist groups and civil wars.

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1 Peripheries – refers to region- or city-based armed and political groups which have come into existence following the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime in 2011.

Root causes and key driving factors

The security threats and challenges in Libya are the result of a number of root causes including institutional vacuum that followed the 2011 uprising, and since then there have been a huge governance and legitimacy deficiencies. Political and administrative institutions were unable to cope with the period that followed the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime.

No attempts were made to embark on a serious DDR and SSR processes with successive authorities thinking they could buy their way out of their security problems. Appeasement of armed revolutionary groups and

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militias became the only policy. Payments to revolutionaries led to an exponential increase in the number of armed militants. Armed groups were transformed into private money making companies that exercised government extortion. Consequently, this multiplies the difficulties and challenges that would face any DDR or SSR process.

In addition, the failure to embark on a genuine reconciliation and transitional justice processes led to entire communities in parts of Libya to join armed groups for the sake of protection or in search for revenge or lost justice. Competing interests of political and armed groups complicate the prospects for any future reconciliation or transitional justices processes.

The lack of proper border monitoring and control capabilities has turned Libya into a safe haven for criminal and jihadist groups. Criminal activities have turned Libya into a money making machine for these groups through criminal activities such as people and drugs trafficking, weapons smuggling and other criminal activities that represent an important income for these groups. The institutional vacuum in the defense and security sectors, as well as, the lack of resources and technology

Some of the key driving factors of current and future security challenges for Libya includes the following:

1. **Sécurité et instabilité politique**: The ongoing security vacuum and political instability represent the main driving factors of current and future security. The political crisis in the country threatens a protracted low-level civil war, which have and will continue to provide the perfect environment for criminal and jihadist groups to flourish.

2. **Economic Crisis**: The political crisis in Libya is leading the country towards certain bankruptcy. The lack of job opportunities and salaries, increase in food prices and the lack of goods will lead people further into their most basic enclaves and towards group that might seem to be providing the most basic human needs including security, salaries and food. Criminal activities in Libya and cross the border would increases as a result.

3. **Struggle Over Control of Oil**: Struggle for control over Libya's oil and gas infrastructure such as oil fields, terminals and pipelines has been a driver of instability and conflict in post-Qaddafi Libya. Various competing groups knew the importance of the oil and gas sector as it represents Libya's only source of income. Control over oil and gas infrastructure gave a huge advantage and political leverage to those who control. On many occasions control of oilfields, terminals and pipelines was used a political bargaining chip to force concessions out of the central authorities in Tripoli. Here are some of the key moments of struggle over control of Libya's oil and gas infrastructure or the use of the oil and gas infrastructure as a political bargaining chip :

   > i. In 2013, armed federalist demanding autonomy from Tripoli seized Libya's main oil terminals of Essidra and Ras Lanuf and stopped crucial oil exports since then depriving the central authorities of much needed oil revenues.

   > ii. Ethnic Tebu an Taureg groups in the South have repeatedly closed down oilfields deep in the Libyan desert in protest over policies related to their rights or demanding employment opportunities.

   > iii. Groups from the city of Zintan have been closing the main pipeline connecting Southern oifields to oil terminals in the North since 2014 in protest over the expulsion of armed groups linked to the city from their positions in the capital Tripoli by Libya Dawn forces (a coalition of Misratan and Islamist armed groups in the capital Tripoli).

   > iv. In 2014, Libya Dawn forces launched an attack on the oil terminals of Essidra and Ras Lanuf in an attempt to capture them from the forces of armed federalist leader Ibrahim Jathran (also known as Petroleum Facilities Guards in the central region – PFG). The fighting resulted in major damages to infrastructure at Essidra's oil terminal.

v. In January 2016, IS forces from the city of Sirte launched an offensive on the same oil terminal in an attempt to capture them, but failed. After failing to capture vital oil and gas infrastructure, IS forces started to attack oil fields and terminals not for control but rather to sabotage Libya's oil and gas infrastructure to deprive future governments of much needed financial resources that would be used to tackle the presence of extremist jihadist groups such as IS.

4. **Legitimacy Crisis**: The lack of a legitimate social contract and legitimate institutions fuels an already huge trust deficit between various groups, regions and cities. In a post conflict environment such as Libya it is crucial to make a distinction between legitimacy and capacity to deliver – and how these two concept relate to each other in terms of delivering services such as security – For example, former regime officers and soldiers are well trained in various military and security disciplines, but they lack the legitimacy to offer their service due to the post-conflict context where the revolutionary legitimacy dominated the scene in Libya over a period of four years following the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime.

5. **New Jihadist Threats**: The emergence of ISIL represents a new type of security challenge for the Libya and the Sahel-Sahara region. ISIL seeks to control territory and using that territory launch further attacks to control more territory or at least seeks the destabilization of these territories. For example, the presence of ISIL in Libya represents a huge challenge in itself, but even its defeat in Libya represents a new security challenge and threat for the region. ISIL militants are likely to flee to neighboring countries in North Africa and the Sahel region and that would represent a enormous security challenge for countries in the region. With an imminent and new foreign intervention in Libya to tackle ISIL, a repeat of the destabilizing spillover from 2011 is very likely.

6. **Development Crisis**: Decades of developmental crisis in the region made the task of recruitment for groups such as ISIL easier, given that they control territory and are reported to be generating significant amount of income out of illicit trade and criminal activities. There are some reports that suggest economic migrants are choosing to work with ISIL out of economic need. This is the case for many Egyptian and Sub-Saharan African migrants. In addition, criminal groups and people smugglers are reported to be cooperating with extremist jihadist groups in the region.

7. **Migration Crisis**: Libya has been a transit country for migrants from African countries hoping to make it to Europe. During the last decade of the Qaddafi regime, Italy managed to negotiate a deal with Qaddafi regime regarding control of irregular migration through Libya. At times Qaddafi used migration towards Europe as a political bargaining chip and other times he used it as a threat. Since 2011, irregular migration has become a booming business for people traffickers. Migration represents a security challenge for Libya and a threat for the entire region and Europe. Currently, there are no comprehensive strategies or bilateral or multilateral agreements in place to address the issue. This year Libya is set to become the main sources of irregular migration towards Europe given that EU has reached a deal with Turkey to manage the flow of refugees and return economic migrants back to Turkey and from their back their countries of origin. People trafficking networks are expected to divert their activities and attention to Libya because the lawlessness, political and institutional vacuum in the country provides for a perfect environment for their activities.

8. Looming Intervention in Libya: On 17 March 2011, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1973 for a 'No-fly Zone" over Libya, which paved the way for an intervention in Libya that helped topple the Qaddafi regime faced with a popular uprising by its own people. More than five years on, the situation in Libya is characterized by the deepening divisions and fragmentation of the country, the growing influence and expansion of Islamic State, and an imminent new foreign intervention to tackle the growing instability in the country, especially the expansion of the ISIL and the migration (refugees) crisis which is having a destabilizing effect on the entire region.[2]

9.

With western capitals especially in Europe shifting focus towards Libya, it is clear that any foreign military action without concerted effort and focus on reconciling and uniting key armed groups in Libya will not achieve the intended outcome of eradicating Islamic State and restoring stability in the country. Foreign intervention alone by means of air strikes like in Syria and Iraq will not be successful and could have potentially disastrous results and serve as a recruitment and propaganda tool for Islamic State that has been for many months urging fighters

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[2] Security Council Approves 'No-Fly Zone' over Libya, Authorizing 'All Necessary Measures' to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions http://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10200.doc.htm

to head to Libya. Given that Libya has been a very hostile environment for Islamic in that only a small number of Libyans joined the group or sympathized with its cause. Fighting western intervention could give Islamic State in Libya the legitimacy it lacks. This makes it even more critical for any foreign intervention in Libya to have a strong Libyan element on the ground; otherwise such foreign intervention would serve as a boost for Islamic State recruitment from within Libya and the wider region.

II. LIBYA'S RESPONSE TO SECURITY CHALLENGES AND THREATS

Libya's political and institutional capability to respond to security challenges and threats can be described as weak at best. The disintegration and fragmentation of state institutions and political and armed rivalry have made impossible an effective or unified response to these threats and challenges at least in the short and medium term.

For instance, events in 2016 are so far illustrative of the serious limitations in Libya's ability to respond to the obvious threat posed by ISIL which controls the coastal city of Sirte and has presence elsewhere in the country. On May 3, forces allied with the city of Misrata attacked posts set up by what is known as the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by Gen. Khalifa Haftar near the town of Zallah in the basin of Sirte. These two rival forces were supposed to take on ISIL in the city of Sirte, but instead opted to confront each other militarily. They view each other as an existential threat, but none of these two rival sides views ISIL from this perspective.

Various competing groups have used ISIL as justification for their action against their opponents at times and as a political bargaining chip at others. For example, Gen. Haftar in Eastern Libya paints all of his opponents with the same brush accusing them of being terrorists, supporting terrorists or being terrorist sympathizers and that, in his view and that of his supporters, is justification enough to launch military offensives against any of his opponents[3].On the other hand, forces from the city of Misrata and their political islamist allies argue that Gen. Haftar and ISIL are two sides of the same coin[4]. Such rivalry makes the prospects for cohesive military and security sectors and institutions very unlikely, thus prolonging the institutional vacuum.

Capacity to respond to security challenges and threats

In order to measure Libya's capacity to respond to the current security challenges and threats within the country and the region, it is crucial to assess the country's political and institutional situation.

- **Political capacity**: Since the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime, Libya has suffered from polarizing politics which has paralyzed the country's institutions and led to the complete collapse of the post-Qaddafi political transition. On-going struggle for power and resources between various competing factions led to the politicization of the military and security structures. As an illustration, competition for control of the intelligence, defense and interior ministries over the last few years has ensured complete failure of Libya's security and defense sectors. Positions within these key security institutions were allocated to ensure representation of various opposing groups, and this resulted in paralyzed institutions which were unable to deliver any sense of security or establish the foundations for sustainable institutions. The consequence has been the strengthening of peripheral non-state actors at the expense of central state institutions.

- **Institutional capacity**: The political polarization and divide that characterized the trajectory of Libya's political transition had a clear impact on institutional development in post-Qaddafi Libya. Libya's institutional ability to respond to its obvious security challenges was crippled by infighting within every security and defense institution. Corruption and mismanagement led to huge losses of much needed financial resources for rebuilding and development. This institutional vacuum has been filled by established armed factions.

Key Actors and Stakeholders

Key groups and stakeholders in Libya are not homogenous and are usually fragmented and split in smaller groups. Alliances are formed based on convenience, common interests and threats, and disappear once those common interests or threats no longer exist. Since 2011, many alliances have formed and disappeared in Libya.

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3 I want to cleanse Libya of Muslim Brotherhood: Haftar http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/101760.aspx
4 BBC guide to Libyan militias http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19744533

There are currently three different competing governments in Libya: two located in the capital Tripoli and one in Eastern Libya. The internationally recognized and UN-backed Government of National Accord led by Prime Minister Faeiz Serraj is based in Tripoli. However, this government does not have much control beyond parts of Tripoli and is backed by key factions from the powerful city of Misrata. The National Salvation Government led by Prime Minister Khalifa al-Ghwell is also based in Tripoli and backed by the defunct General National Congress and its president Nuri Abusahmain. The Salvation government has the backing of a coalition of armed groups from the cities of Tripoli and Misrata and continues to challenge the authority of the UN-backed government for control of Tripoli.

In the meantime, the Libyan Interim Government led by Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thini is based in the city of Bayda in Eastern Libya and is backed by factions of the internationally recognized House of Representatives. General Khalifa Haftar, the General Commander of the powerful Libyan National Army, backs this Interim Government and has so far refused to recognize the internationally recognized and UN-backed government in Tripoli.

Since 2011, the Libyan scene has been flooded with new actors and stakeholders. However, it has been characterized by a toxic relationship between a weak center and increasingly strong and competing peripheries. The following list provides an overview of the key players in Libya today – in particular those who have a direct impact on the security situation in Libya and the region:

Misrata's Armed Groups (former Libya Dawn Coalition): Misrata has one of the most formidable forces in post-Qaddafi Libya. These armed forces control far beyond the city of Misrata. Their reach stretches to the capital Tripoli and the city of Sebha – a key city in the southern region of Fezzan - as well as to parts of the strategically important Jufrah district around 600 km southeast of Misrata. Estimates put the forces of the city of Misrata and their allies at around twenty-five thousand. They are well-equipped with rocket launchers, tanks, and helicopters and have at least three functioning fighter jets capable of conducting air strikes. These forces have control of three airbases, namely Misrata, Jufrah and Temenhent near Sebha. Misrata forces have allies in Tripoli comprising a number of Tripoli-based local armed groups, and in southern Libya the Misratans have formed an alliance with armed groups that belong to the Arab tribe of Awlad Suliman, and have influence over the security of key oil sites in the southern region through their 3rd division force. In the eastern region of Libya, Misrata armed forces had well-established links with former revolutionary groups, including the Libya Shield in Benghazi, and extremist groups such as Ansar al-Sharia and the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council in 2014. At the regional level, Misrata's forces are well connected to key regional players such as Qatar, Turkey and Sudan. These strong connections, capabilities and alliances make Misrata one of the key players which can impact the security situation in Libya and to an extent the Sahel-Sahara region in terms of irregular migration and human trafficking activities. Following the establishment of the presidential council of the Government of National Accord (GNA) in December 2015, there was a split among armed groups within Misrata between those supporting the GNA and those opposed to it.

1. **Pro-GNA camp**: The majority of Misrata's main armed groups and key actors have pledged their support to the GNA. These armed groups include the powerful brigades of al-Halbous and al-Mahjoob, as well as, the Libya Shield Central and the majority of Misrata's Third Force. These units are located in Tripoli, Misrata, and the southern Libyan region of Fezzan.

2. **Anti-GNA camp**: This includes groups such as the al-Marsa brigade and Jabhat al-Soumood, which have Jihadist tendencies and are linked to figures from the Libyan Islamic Fighting Groups. The controversial ex-Misrata congressman Salah Badi leads Jabhat al-Soumood. These factions supported a group of Benghazi extremists, led by commander Zaid Bala'am, which perpetrated attacks on Libyan National Army posts on 3 May 2016. These groups are loyal to the defunct GNC in Tripoli and follow the command of the Chief of Staff of the GNC Gen. Jaddallah al-Obaidi.

Libyan National Army (LNA): The Libyan National Army is another formidable force that is well-equipped, well-funded and well-connected both inside and outside of Libya. The Libyan National Army led by Gen. Khalifa Haftar and backed by the internationally recognized House of Representatives has its power base in the Eastern region of Libya. It has the support of all key tribes and local authorities in Eastern Libya, and has the backing of the Tebu groups in Southern Libya. The LNA has an important alliance with armed groups from the powerful town of Zintan and Wershafana, west of Tripoli. Currently, the LNA has mobilized its forces towards Sirte and what is known as the "oil crescent" region, where most of Libya's oil infrastructure is located (dozens of oilfields and the country's two main oil terminals of Essidra and Ras Lanuf). The LNA's alliances throughout Libya and the current territory it covers gives it a huge advantage in terms of influence over Libya's oil infrastructure and production. In addition, its connections in Southern Libya and links with Tebu groups give it a potentially key role in addressing and influencing the issue of irregular migration and human trafficking networks in light of the involvement of some Tebu groups and individuals in human trafficking activities. The LNA has the backing of key regional players including Egypt, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The LNA has some identifiable sub-groups within its ranks:

1.   **Zintan forces**: The western town of Zintan has some of the most powerful and formidable forces in Libya. They played a key role in 2011 and had a strong presence in Libya until August 2014 when they were forced out of Tripoli by a coalition of Islamist and Misratan forces. Currently, Zintan's forces are in an alliance with the LNA, but try to keep a degree of autonomy at the same time.

2.   **Tawhid brigade (Salafists)**: A salafist leader called Ashraf al-Mayar commands this group. He hails from the city of Marj where the LNA's General Command is currently located. The group pledged allegiance to Gen. Khalifa Haftar in 2014 after receiving Fatwas issued from senior clerics in the Salafist movement in Saudi Arabia urging them to join the fight against Jihadist groups such as Islamic State and Ansar al-Sharia.

3.   ○**Al-Sharif brigade (Tebu)**: This brigade joined the LNA's Operation Dignity back in 2014. The group took part in fighting in the cities of Benghazi and Derna against Islamic State and other Islamist groups. It is considered the LNA's main force in the southern border region. In 2014, the group started to play an increasingly important role in securing oil and gas infrastructure in the Sirte, Sarir and Kufra basins. The group is led by a Tebu army officer called Ali Sidi and supported by key Tebu leader Essa Abdulmajid. The group reflects the rivalry between Arab, Tebu and Taureg factions in Southern Libya. Each of these groups has decided to enter into an alliance with a powerful northern partner such as the LNA, Misrata or Islamist groups. In addition to Tebu groups, the Panel of Experts of the UN Security Council's Sanctions Committee on Libya has reported that the LNA and its leadership in eastern Libya , are using regional rebel groups, such as the Sudanese Justice and Equality movement fighters, to gain influence and control over territory in the middle of the Libyan desert including vital oil installations.

Armed Federalists (Central Region Petroleum Facilities Guards - PFG): This is considered to be the most visible and influential PFG unit. It is also considered to be the largest. Reasons for this were mainly due to the fact that PFG central was, in March 2013, transformed into a political and armed movement – the armed federalist movement. The group created its own political bureau and attempted to create its own government challenging that of central authorities in Tripoli. Ibrahim Jathran is the leader of this group. He claims to have around eighteen thousand fighters supporting him in eastern Libya. This number is undoubtedly exaggerated and takes into account non-binding support that Jathran got in 2013 and 2014, but which he lost much of when Operation Dignity led by Gen. Haftar came about in May 2014. However, informed military sources in the city of Ejdabyia have put the number of fighters loyal to Jathran at 2,500. Current indications suggest that Jathran's tribal and material support has dropped significantly in eastern Libya. The group presently supports the UN-backed Government of National Accord. Such support and loyalty is not genuine, but rather a tactical alliance.

Tripoli armed groups: Tripoli is divided into areas of influence and spheres of control for various armed groups. Among the main armed groups is the al-Nawasi brigade, which is a salafist brigade and nominally under the authority of the Ministry of Interior. The leader of this group is Abdulraof Kara. The group claims to be fighting crime in Tripoli, especially drugs and alcohol-related crimes. Another key group, led by Haitham al-Tajouri, is the Special Operations Unit nominally under the control of the Ministry of Interior. The leader of the group shifted his alliance multiple times by associating himself with various groups at various times. Another key group in Libya is the Abu-Salim Military Council, which is now known as the Salah –Albarky brigade after the name of its founder who was killed in March 2015 in a fight against forces from the city of Zintan. This is one of the Islamist armed groups in Libya linked to political islamist groups in Tripoli. The Albarky brigade was a key element of the Libya Dawn alliance when it was formed back in the summer of 2015. Broadly speaking, the capital Tripoli is currently divided between two alliances. One dominated by Misrata forces and another dominated by leaders from the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group supported by the Grand Mufti Sadiq al-Gheriani and the defunct GNC led by its president Nuri Abusahmain.

Armed Extremist Groups: This is a long-term security challenge and threat for the Sahel-Sahara region in light of the dire economic consequences. Extremist groups have become increasingly interconnected and their cross-border activity is dramatically on the rise since 2011. They have used Libya as a safe haven to plan and conduct attacks in the Sahel region and North African countries such as Mali, Algeria and Tunisia. They are also engaged in illicit trade and other criminal activities such as drug and human trafficking. They represent a huge security threat to oil and gas infrastructure in the region and tourism activities. Libya has a number of extremist groups in various parts of the country including the following:

1.   **Derna Mujahideen Shura Council (DMSC)**: This coalition of local armed extremist groups is based in the eastern Libyan city of Derna. It is linked to the former Libyan Islamic Fighting Group and often reported to have ties with al-Qaeda. The group is opposed to the LNA in eastern Libya, and at the time of writing this paper the possibility of armed confrontations between DMSC and LNA was very high. The group is supported by ex-LIFG figures from Tripoli such as Sami al-Saadi (member of the Fatwa Council in Dar al-Ifta), and Khaled al-Sharif (former deputy Minister of Defense). The group continues to receive support from its supporters in Tripoli in the form of financial resources, weapons and ammunition. The

coalition is estimated to have 2,000 to 3,000 active fighters belonging to various factions within the coalition. The main groups are the Abu Salim Martyrs brigade, the Islamic Army and some fighters from Ansar al-Sharia in Derna who decided to join DMSC in the fight against ISIL back in June 2015. DMSC is also linked to the defunct GNC and its Chief of Staff Gen. Jadallah al-Obaidi. Following the expulsion of ISIL from the city, DMSC is now trying to set up the Derna Defense Force in an attempt to establish themselves as the key group in the city of Derna and also establish links with the new UN-backed Government of National Accord.

2.   **Ansar al-Sharia**: This is one of the main extremist groups that have established presence in Libya following the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime. It has (or at some point had) presence in various parts of Libya including the cities of Derna, Benghazi, Ejdabyia, Sabratha, Misrata and Sirte. In the city of Derna alone, the group is estimated to have around 600 fighters with ex-alqaeda associates among its ranks. The group appears to have links with regional terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and its leader Mokthar Bel-Mokthar was reportedly received and hosted by the group in Derna and Ejdabyia where an American airstrike allegedly killed him back in June 2015.

3.   **ISIL (Islamic State or IS)**: ISIL established one of its largest strongholds in Libya, outside of Syria and Iraq. In October 2014, the group took control of the city of Derna making the city the first stronghold for ISIL outside of Syria and Iraq. The group was expelled completely out of Derna in March 2016 after a popular uprising in the city against the group which began in June 2015, and following attacks by local DMSC forces and LNA ground and Air Force units against IS in the city. However, subsequent to the start of the uprising in the city of Derna, IS managed to take control of the city of Sirte in the summer of 2015 after forces from the city of Misrata that were in control of Sirte retreated and left the city in the hands of IS. The group has a smaller presence in other parts of the country including in the Libyan desert and around Tripoli, specifically in the cities of Zliten and Sabratha. The group has been able to flourish in Libya despite the lack of any popular support due to the on-going armed and political struggle in the country between various competing groups and governments. The rising threat of ISIL in Libya is raising the potential for new foreign intervention in the country.

Human trafficking Networks: Ringleaders of human trafficking networks consider themselves businessmen who "provide a service"[5]. They have become well-established with links to extremist groups, government employees and officials, local authorities and armed groups. Taking advantage of widespread corruption and impunity in countries like Libya, these networks pose a serious security challenge for any national or sub-regional strategy to tackle irregular migration flows.

In addition to traditional state institutions and actors in the political, economic or security spheres, there are a considerable number of other stakeholders who are often overlooked and yet are directly affected by the security threats and challenges in Libya.

Local authorities (local CSOs): Local authorities in Libya have played a key role in efforts to address some of the security challenges and threats. For example, local authorities throughout Libya were the first to raise the alarm about human trafficking activities. Much of their concern has been security-related given that extremist jihadist groups have reportedly been using illegal migration routes to get their militants into Libya. Local communities have also expressed health concerns with regard to human trafficking activities in fear of the Ebola epidemic hitting their communities during the outbreak. Their activities included awareness-raising and mobilization of government agencies and local non-state actors to act against these security challenges and threats.

Tribes: Tribes have been playing an influential role in some parts of Libya where they are prominent, particularly in eastern and southern Libya and to a lesser extent in western Libya. For instance, in eastern Libya, tribes played a fundamental role in the formation and support of the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by Gen. Khalifa Haftar. The tribes supported the LNA in its attempts to establish a national army and fight extremist jihadist groups. Tribes in eastern Libya have used social or tribal immunity, as a weapon in the fight against extremist groups and human trafficking, i.e. any member of the tribe engaged in any such activities would lose their tribal immunity, in other words their tribe would not come to their aid or defend them if they are caught conducting such activities.

Local armed groups and criminal gangs: Armed groups and criminal gangs play a key part in terms of the types of security threats and challenges facing Libya today. Some local armed groups are involved in human trafficking activities, while others have been involved in criminal activities such as extortion, kidnap for ransom, etc.

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[5] Libya's most successful people smuggler: 'I provide a service' http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/01/libya-people-smuggle-provide-service

On the other hand, some locally based armed groups have been playing a major role in addressing human trafficking such as the "Masked Men of Zuwara"[6] who have been taking on people smugglers single handedly in the city of Zuwara where the majority of refugees or migrants used to embark on their dangerous journey towards Europe.

III. SAHEL-SAHARAN REGIONAL DIMENSION

The Sahel-Saharan region has been the most affected by developments in Libya since the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime. Indeed, Qaddafi's Libya was at times a source of regional instability, where oil wealth was used to support all sorts of rebel movements around the Sahel region and the entire African continent - from trafficking in weapons to establishing training camps in Libya for people like Liberia's Charles Taylor and Sierra Leone's Foday Sankoh, and going to war against Chad to claim the Aozou Strip. However, Libya was also a bastion of stability in a volatile region. This was especially true for the last couple of decades under Qaddafi's rule. Libya's borders were relatively well-controlled and Qaddafi was at times a constructive actor in peace agreements in Mali and Niger. Perhaps most importantly, Libya not only provided much needed foreign direct investment to neighboring Sahel countries, but was also a source of employment for people from nearby and faraway African countries. However, with all of that gone, and Libya becoming a source of instability itself, there are huge repercussions for the Sahel region[7].

The downfall of the Qaddafi regime and the collapse of the Libyan State have compounded existing security challenges and threats in a volatile and conflict-prone region. The Sahel and Northern Mali in particular were the first victims of the instability in post Qaddafi Libya. All strategies developed to address the situation in the Sahel region must therefore involve and focus on the various actors in order to restore local governance structures and offer economic opportunity through the social economy and social entrepreneurship. Otherwise, the door is open to armed Islamist forces expelled from Northern Mali and which have easily established new rearguard bases elsewhere, including in the southern Libyan region of Fezzan and in northern Libyan cities such as Derna, Ejdabyia, Sirte and Sabratha. Designing a new approach for the region will not be easy and will involve asking hard questions about current stabilization efforts in the region. Without a new approach, however, current stabilization efforts will not be sustainable. The international community will simply be putting out a fire one place, only for it to reignite elsewhere in the region until the process has gone full circle and goes back to where it first started.

Impact of Libya's Instability on the Sahel-Saharan Region

The instability in Libya has huge impacts on countries and people in the Sahel region from a humanitarian and human security point of view, as well as in terms of national security and economy.

Following the events of 2011 and subsequent fall of the Qaddafi regime, Libya's neighboring countries, especially those in the Sahel region, had to contend with the influx of hundreds of thousands of traumatized and impoverished returnees as well as the inflow of unspecified and unquantifiable numbers of arms and ammunition from the Libyan arsenal. Although the volume and the impact of the returnee population differ from one country to the other, the influx clearly has the potential to further exacerbate an already precarious and tenuous situation in these countries. In addition, these countries are directly threatened by an impending food security and nutrition crisis that could further exacerbate and negatively affect the political, social and economic situation in the region. The downfall of the Qaddafi regime in Libya also led to the loss of many civilian lives and posed severe humanitarian challenges to many African states.[8]

Fragmentation and Multiplication of Stakeholders in Libya

The institutional instability in Libya complicates the situation further for any regional engagement or response to address the security threats and challenges. From 2011 to 2014, institutional instability meant there was no continuity in state institutions - officials, stakeholders and interlocutors would change in very short periods of time. Such institutional instability

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[6] Libya's 'Masked Men' Hunt Human Smugglers http://www.wsj.com/articles/libyas-masked-men-hunt-human-smugglers-1444697206#:yr6FsUgC8Oph0A

[7] Boas, Morten; Utas, Mats, Introduction: Post-Gaddafi Repercussions in the Sahel and West Africa https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-367799661/introduction-post-gaddafi-repercussions-in-the-sahel

[8] 15 December 2011, International Organization for Migration (IOM) registered 209,030 returnees from Libya, including 95,760 in the Niger, 82,433 in Chad, 11,230 in Mali and 780 in Mauritania posing severe humanitarian challenges to the countries.

meant Libya's commitment in bilateral or multilateral agreements to address the persistent and ever evolving security challenges could not be guaranteed.

Following the House of Representatives election in June 2014, the institutional instability worsened. Libya became split between two authorities with each of them claiming legitimacy as the sole representative of the Libyan State. This multiplication of stakeholders in Libya made any bilateral and multilateral engagement with Libya impossible. There are justified fears that engagement with any of the competing authorities and not the other would fuel the conflict in the country.

Regional Response and Cooperation

The regional response to the security challenges and threats in Libya has been weak in terms of strategy and action. And this despite attempts by Libya's neighbors to coordinate efforts among themselves, with the latest meeting taking place on March 21 and 22 in Tunisia in an attempt to formulate a joint response to the evolving crisis in Libya and more specifically to the rising threat of ISIL in Libya. Representatives from the African Union and Arab League attended the meeting. However, these multilateral meetings have failed to result in any tangible response on the ground.

The issue with regional players in the case of Libya is that they are not on the same page regarding the crisis in Libya. Egypt for example supports the Libyan National Army and its leader Gen. Haftar and argues for the lifting of the arms embargo. The support does not stop there: the LNA receives technical and intelligence support, as well as weapons and ammunition shipment through Egypt usually paid for by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Algeria is trying to maintain a neutral stance on developments in Libya and is engaging with the Islamist dominated authorities in the capital Tripoli. Algerian officials seem to loathe the Egyptian approach in Libya and consider it to be counter-productive.

Other countries in the region have been accused by some Libyan reports of exporting their internal troubles across the border into Libya taking advantage of the vacuum and instability in the country.

IV. LIBYA'S STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE SAHEL-SAHARAN REGION

Post-Qaddafi Libya did not have the time or the space to develop a new strategy for its interests in the Sahel-Saharan region. However, since 2011, successive Libyan governments sought to turn a page on some of the destabilizing practices and policies of the Qaddafi era in the Sahel region more specifically and the African continent in general. During a visit to Khartoum in December 2012, former Prime Minister Ali Zeidan told his Sudanese counter-part during a press conference "The Qaddafi regime harmed the relationship between our two countries with complete disregard to our brotherly, diplomatic and human ties". During the press conference, Prime Minister Zeidan apologized for decades of Qaddafi meddling in their internal affairs and sought to assure them that such practices are of a "past and defeated era". During that visit the Chief of Staff and the Head of Intelligence among others, accompanied Prime Minister Zeidan and held specific meetings with their Sudanese counterparts to discuss issues relating to security cooperation and training of new Libyan forces at Sudanese military schools. This is an indication of the kind of bilateral cooperation that Libya and the Sahel-Sahara region could benefit from to address common security challenges and threats.

Libya has huge strategic interests in the Sahel-Sahara region. Currently, Libya's main interest and concern in this region is security. The flow of arms and jihadist fighters poses a major and common threat to the entire region and is considered a major contributing factor to instability in Libya. In addition, there is the migration and refugee crisis with many Sub-Saharan countries acting as countries of origin and Libya being a transit country for migration towards Europe – there is a shared interest between Libya, Sub-Saharan countries and Europe to address this common phenomenon that is being exploited by criminal and jihadist groups in the region.

The security threat in this case is bi-directional, the spillover from Libya destabilized Mali in 2012. Qaddafi had recruited a large number of Tuareg fighters to his side during the war, and when he was overthrown, many of those fighters returned to Mali and declared an independent republic in the northern part of the country. The other major factor was that the returning fighters brought heavy weapons belonging to the Qaddafi regime into Mali, which made the rebellion much more powerful. The increased flow of arms out of Libya also aided the terrorist groups active in the region, in particular, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Continued conflict in Libya means a constant source of arms and experienced fighters that can destabilize other African states. The flow of drugs from West Africa through Libya also helps finance terrorist groups. Such activities have a huge destabilizing effect on the situation in Libya as much as they do on the entire Sahel region.

Libya has significant economic interests in the Sahel-Sahara region. However, there are huge concerns about the future of Libya's investments in Africa, and in particularly in the Sahel-Sahara region. Since the downfall of the Qaddafi regime,

attempts have been made by African countries to seize Libyan investments in their country, such as Togo, which seeks to nationalize the Libyan company that bought the majority of its phosphate companies. The same applies to Mali and Niger. Libya has a huge interest in safeguarding and protecting these investments and potentially continue to play a comprehensive role in the development of the Sahel-Sahara region through direct foreign investment strategies.

It would be easy, right from the onset, to argue a convergence of interests with other countries in region. However, the nature of the legacy left behind by the former regime has somehow managed to fuel a clash of interests among countries in the region. It is certainly the case with Libya and some of the Sahel-Saharan countries when it comes to investments made by the African Investment Portfolio for example or the negative involvement of regional countries such as Egypt and Sudan in the proxy war that is taking shape in Libya.

V. BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL STRATEGIES IN THE SAHEL-SAHARA REGION

As mentioned in earlier sections of this paper, bilateral and multilateral strategies in the Sahel-Sahara region are lacking and poorly equipped to effectively respond to regional security challenges and threats.

For example, Sudan and Libya agreed on a joint force to patrol their joint borders in 2013. The force successfully thwarted weapons smuggling and human trafficking attempts through the Libya-Sudan border. However, the Libyan side suspended its participation in this force in August 2015 because of the fallout between the Sudanese authorities and the government in Eastern Libya led by Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thini. The fallout was the result of perceived support from Sudan to the Misrata-based Air Force unit and other Islamist-leaning forces in Tripoli. Such fallouts risk the emergence of a new type of confrontation and instability in the Libya-Sudan border area. In what seems to be retaliation for Sudan's actions, the LNA's Gen. Haftar has reportedly established links with the Sudanese – Justice and Equality Movement – by giving them sanctuary in the southeast of Libya and potentially using them to further his influence in the Libya-Sudan border area. Egypt and Libya have a similar arrangement and it seems to be working effectively. The Libya-Egypt arrangement is designed to cater for the needs of the local communities near the border areas of both countries. For example, entry visa restrictions for residents in the border cities of Tobruk and Matrouh are replaced with a special entry mechanism, which is organized by the local authorities of both cities. This gained the trust of these local communities and ensured their cooperation on issue such as weapons, drugs and people smuggling activities.

The initiative, started by Libya's neighboring countries to help support stabilization efforts in Libya, is the most relevant in the case of Libya. However, the countries involved have different positions on the situation in Libya. For example, Egypt has been calling for intervention in Libya to tackle the growing threat of terrorism, for the lifting of the arms embargo and support of the Libyan National Army led by Gen. Haftar in Eastern Libya, while Algeria on the other hand is opposed to all forms of foreign or regional intervention in Libya. Such divisions among Arab States ensured that proposals for a Joint Arab Force did not see the light despite initial optimism in early 2015. A meeting, which was scheduled to take place in August last year, was postponed "indefinitely" until further notice. The aim of that meeting was to decide on the composition and rules of engagement of the joint force, which according to them would fight "terror" in the region.

The African Standby Force, part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), is a crucial tool for the African continent to deal with today's security challenges and threats. Libya played a key role in establishing this force under the Qaddafi regime. The force's general secretariat was held and hosted by Libya voluntarily during the initial phase of starting up which lasted for three years (2005-2008). Then in 2008, it was recommended that the general secretariat for the force be located in Tripoli and that was the case until the events of 2011 which resulted in the downfall of the Qaddafi regime. However, the African Standby Force does not seem to be of relevance in the case of Libya. There are no plans or engagement from Libya or the African Standby Force on the potential role such a force can play in stabilization efforts in Libya. Another ambitious initiative from the Sahel region was the result of efforts deployed by ECOWAS to develop a comprehensive regional framework for promoting good Governance, Peace and Security, based on the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework. ECOWAS also adopted a Common Position on Migration and a Strategy for the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime, supplemented by an Action Plan, which provides a framework for regulatory and operational action by West African States. However, from a Libyan perspective this initiative is irrelevant because it does not have any mechanism or platform for engagement with a significant contributor to instability in the region, namely Libya. The ECOWAS initiative must be more comprehensive and versatile in this respect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following set of recommendations offer food for thought for Libya and the wider region about possible ways to improve current responses to the common security challenges and threats that affect Libya and the region:

Recommendations for Libya:

1.   Continue efforts to create unified state institutions and structures through dialogue and peaceful means to avoid further fragmentation and potential partitioning of the country.

2.   Better visibility and more effective engagement with regional strategies and instruments by ensuring institutional continuity and work towards ending the fragmentation and multiplication of stakeholders that impact local and regional security issues.

3.   Greater focus and work on region-based security and defense structures within Libya instead of initially focusing on a single central structure. Paradoxically, Libya's security and defense sectors must be rebuilt simultaneously from the bottom-up and top-down.

4.   The Libyan Government of National Accord must work to ensure management of border regions and local cross-border relationships in a more effective manner. This precludes any further exploitation by weapons, human and drug trafficking networks as well as terrorist groups.

5.   Start a genuine national reconciliation process with effective trust-building measures to pave the way for the development of an effective national army and police force.

6.   Ensure that the issue of citizenship rights for the Tuareg and Tebu is addressed and resolved in the upcoming Constitution.

7.   Conduct further research, studies and data gathering required for the southern region of Libya in order to gain a better understanding of the situation on the ground and address issues such as migration, trafficking and the presence of terrorist groups.

8.   Authorities in Libya must reflect on previous efforts and experiences relating to SSR and DDR processes carried out by previous governments in Libya. Participants in the roundtable discussion on Libya emphasized the need for such reflection.

Recommendations for sub-regional players:

1.   Consideration of joint border control and monitoring efforts - deployment of the African Standby Force as part of a joint EU-AU effort for border control and monitoring to help secure Libya's southern borders and address the issue of weapons, movements of fighters, human trafficking networks and irregular migration.

2.   Promotion of positive traffic and activities in border regions through bilateral agreements based on the specificities of local communities in border regions where local authorities on either side of the border can play a central role in monitoring the flow of people and goods. In addition, help tackle negative aspects such as people, drugs and weapons smuggling.

3.   Rethinking of relationships, agreements and partnerships through informed applied and innovative research initiatives to address challenges and threats related to economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security.

4.   Follow a localized security approach and improve State-to-State information sharing and cooperation.

5.   Given current Libyan and regional developments, it is crucial to discuss the structure and mechanisms for any new foreign intervention in Libya – and its implications on security challenges and threats in Libya. There must be a long term and sustainable strategy for intervention and post-intervention periods. In this regard, it is crucial to reflect on the lessons of the 2011 intervention in Libya.

DIALOGUES
SECURITAIRES DANS L'ESPACE SAHELO - SAHARIEN

Biography of the author

Mohamed Eljarh, Non-Resident Fellow – Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Centre for the Middle East

Summary

The country-based studies highlight the nature of the State and the key question of governance in the Sahelo-Saharan region. The types of relations that the State maintains with the populations become a crucial issue when one considers the identity/ethnic dimensions of the demands that minority groups often express at the risk of destabilizing the entire region. The issues of violent extremism and of crime organized across borders are also discussed.

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG