



Research Report

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Libya in Limbo: How to Fill the Security Vacuum

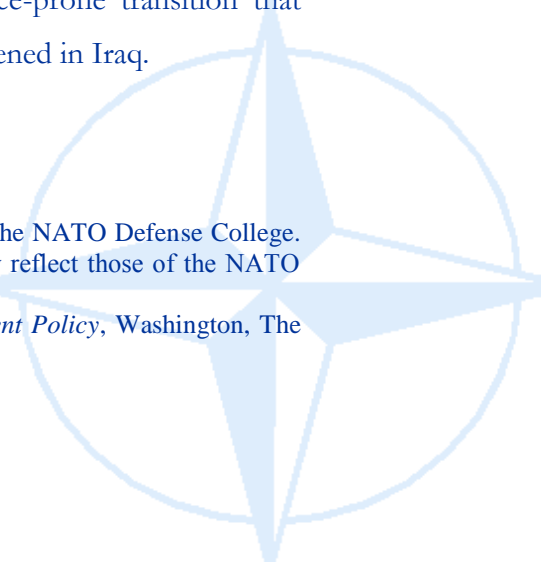
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With the entry of rebel forces into Tripoli, Libya will have reached a crucial juncture once the Qaddafi regime is gone; statistically, its chances of relapsing into conflict are now 44%². Security is thus the number one concern for the National Transitional Council (NTC), a 33-member body representing the opposition to Qaddafi's regime. The challenges in this area abound: absence of functioning security forces, presence of spoilers (from the previous regime, or anyone else benefitting from the status quo), criminal gangs, release of prisoners and proliferation of arms would be difficult for any society. In addition to an overburdened and complex security sector, Libya is however undergoing substantial political transition from 42 years of dictatorship, thereby worsening the challenge as this adds score-settling and general instability to the long list of problems to address.

While the NTC has made security one of its goals, and a number of its members are military officers (most of its members are unknown, for security reasons), its plans for post-Qaddafi Libya are not fully developed. Its draft constitutional charter does not even mention the security institutions. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that those in charge of security in the executive board, Jalal al-Digheily and Omar El-Hariri, have changed twice in only 6 months, undermining continuity. Yet, Libya urgently needs a security sector capable of managing the traditionally violence-prone transition that follows turmoil, or it will relapse into full-blown conflict as happened in Iraq.

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² Paul Collier, ed., *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*, Washington, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2003, p. 83.



The immediate necessities are therefore to assess the existing security sector, evaluate Libya's immediate and long-term security needs, and develop mechanisms to address these needs. This includes an immediate assistance force, as well as mid- and long-term security sector reform.

The current Libyan security sector

Libya's security sector will have to be reorganized once the conflict is over. Earlier planning would have been futile, as the rebels were fully engaged with toppling the regime and lacked the time, money or capacity to begin this crucial process in the midst of fighting. Some parts of the security sector will remain, others will have to be disbanded. The key concern should be the maintenance of security rather than political score-settling.

The Libyan rebels, renamed the **National Liberation Army** by the NTC at the end of May 2011, consist of roughly 17,000 troops. These can be divided into two groups: defectors from the Libyan armed forces who joined the rebels in February, and volunteers. The first of these two groups, consisting of more or less 1,000 troops, is the better organized and trained, having defected as formed units. The second group is made up of volunteers who joined the uprising without proper military skills; made up of men of all ages and backgrounds, this group's limited or non-existent military training has hampered the rebel effort considerably and at a certain point they were actually ordered to stay away from the front. Considerable parts of this group are likely to disband spontaneously after the conflict and return to their former homes and jobs. Islamist fighters, while present to a very small extent (and needed for their military skills), do not play a significant role.

Given its volunteer and ad-hoc character, it is questionable whether the National Liberation Army will be capable of ensuring security in post-Qaddafi Libya. Weakened by informal hierarchies, unclear command and control structures, lack of leadership, discipline and tactical experience, these forces have had difficulties from the outset. Although the influence and presence of professional military defectors improved the rebel forces' technical capabilities, it still served as an impediment to cohesion, ultimately leading to the assassination of rebel commander and former Qaddafi confidant General

Abdel Fatah Younis. While short training periods of four to six weeks have improved overall quality somewhat, the standard is still low, and the retention rate unknown.

The **Libyan Armed Forces** of the Qaddafi regime are estimated to number 20,000, although pre-conflict figures put them at 51,000 (25,000 army, 8,000 navy, 18,000 air force). In reality, Libya's armed forces were in a bad state before the uprising began. Not only was their arsenal outdated and badly maintained as a result of sanctions and neglect, but the troops were organized primarily with a view to protecting the regime from a coup d'état: frequently rotating officers, allocation of positions based on tribal affiliation and loyalty rather than qualifications, and punishment of independent reasoning all led to an armed force low in leadership, morale, cohesion and effectiveness. A large portion of its troops defected, deserted or simply did not exist from the start as the official numbers issued by the Qaddafi regime were inflated. In the confusion of the rebellion's immediate aftermath, whatever is left of the Libyan Armed Forces might disintegrate, and a fair amount of their equipment has been destroyed by NATO.

Internal security in Libya has largely been handled by the **People's Security Force** (formerly known as the Police at the Service of the People and the Revolution). Its tasks included regular police responsibilities such as law enforcement, crime prevention and the management of prisons. Because it was used less for regime protection than the other forces in the security sector, its reputation is slightly better; however, human rights abuses (such as torture) have been reported. It was estimated to be 45,000 strong before the conflict, during which its staff either fought back, melted away or joined forces with the rebels. Exact numbers are difficult to determine.

In addition, there is an unknown number of militias, such as the People's Militia (allegedly 40,000 strong) and the Revolutionary Guard (estimated to be 3,000 strong), which seem to have been integrated into the armed forces, plus an uncertain number of foreign mercenaries. These can on the whole not be taken into account for post-conflict planning, as they either existed to a considerable extent on paper or, when actually present, were the most brutal elements of Qaddafi's regime.

It is important to note that the Libyan security sector remained, in general, a privileged part of society throughout the regime years, benefitting from continuous access to oil

revenues and total absence of any civilian control. It is thus seen very much as having been entirely at the service of the Qaddafi regime.

Ensuring safe transition: Options and possibilities

Establishing functioning security in Libya will thus prove a real challenge. In a best-case scenario, all of Qaddafi's troops will lay down their arms and the rebel forces will take over security, but even this scenario raises the problem that they are not qualified to ensure this alone. In a worst-case scenario, protracted fighting will continue, or an insurgency will emerge.

Even in an optimistic scenario, Libya faces a substantial challenge – securing the country, and providing the blanket necessary for reconstruction and political reform, without the proper institutions in place. Post-conflict security is invariably more complex than security in relative peace, and on average requires 13 troops per 1,000 inhabitants – studies show that the size of a post-conflict security force depends on the size of a country's population rather than its topography or geography³. Where troops in smaller numbers are deployed, as in Afghanistan, security cannot be provided, and conflict will be prolonged. In Afghanistan, 5,000 troops were deployed initially although technically 377,000 were needed – a number which is far greater than the 130,000 achieved to date but is flanked now by Afghan police and armed forces.

As Libya has 6.6 million inhabitants, the number of troops needed there can be estimated at 85,800, a figure the National Liberation Army could not achieve even if it merged with the remnants of Qaddafi's armed forces and the whole of the various police forces. Worse, the rebel force is ill-equipped to manage security in a particularly challenging transitional situation. Several options must thus be considered, as detailed below.

- **Establishment of a foreign assistance force:** As Libya alone will not be able to ensure security fully and in all areas, it will need a foreign assistance force. The size of this force depends largely on the outcome of the fighting: in a permissive environment, where the fighting has ceased internally, it can be as little as one foreign soldier per 1,000 inhabitants, which in Libya's case would mean a force of 6,600 foreign troops. In such a

³James Dobbins et al., *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica 2007, p.41.

scenario, public security remains primarily in the hands of local forces, whereas the international force serves mainly as a facilitator of peace. This kind of force could be invited by the Libyan government on the basis of a bilateral agreement, or receive a United Nations mandate. Should a more powerful force be needed, the numbers may go as high as the previously mentioned figure of 85,800, depending on the burden that can be shouldered by local forces. The cost of such a force depends on the sending agency; traditionally, the figure for a NATO soldier in a peace enforcement environment is calculated at \$200,000 per year, whereas one sent by the United Nations would cost \$45,000. The costs for a small mission could thus range from \$3.8 billion for a UN force to \$17 billion for a NATO force – bearing in mind that the first five years after the end of a conflict require intensive security as a result of the high relapse rate.

Time is an issue, however. Deployment rates by the United Nations are considerably slower; were even a small force needed in Libya, deployment would take three months. Troops sent by Allies, outside the NATO context, can be deployed within weeks – under a NATO umbrella, this would prolong matters. An option to be considered is thus a bridging force provided by a nation in Libya's vicinity, such as a European ally or one of its North African neighbors, to ensure stability until the arrival of United Nations troops. In the current state of Libya's own security sector, such a force will be crucial, as the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan have shown. Political considerations play a role, however. NATO should be careful in taking on this task, as its missions in Afghanistan and the involvement of some of its member states in Iraq have created a crusader image which Colonel Qaddafi has consistently referred to in his strategic rhetoric. Occupation of Arab land by Western forces should not be taken lightly, and a regional solution would be preferable.

- Creation of a new Libyan military: The government of post-Qaddafi Libya, be it the NTC or another body, should build an entirely new military force. Rather than simply merging rebel and regime forces, a third structure should emerge which would not only facilitate the integration of personnel from Qaddafi's forces but also provide an opportunity to introduce improved standards in terms of recruitment, training and leadership. In addition, it would help the general process of reconciliation. A Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) program should be in place for those who have been dismissed. Simple demobilization without assistance in financial or educational terms has proven to be a recipe for disaster. Frustrated potential can act as a

spoiler in the transitional phase and has contributed to relapses into violence in many cases, such as Angola. In the Libyan context, Deqaddafication should not repeat the Iraqi experience of collective dismissal (all officers above the rank of colonel were initially debaathified), as this destabilizes the reconstruction process – not only because it can fuel an insurgency, but also because it robs the new government of important expertise. Considering Libya's urgent security needs, large parts of the former regime's military should not be demobilized but reintegrated into the new Libyan military.

While a new Libyan military will need almost everything from basic to specialist training, weapons and logistics, it is in the non-tangible areas that the difficulties are likely to arise. Leadership skills of officers, command and control structures, cohesion and morale are the basis for any effective armed force, yet they are also the most difficult to achieve. In addition, the history of the Libyan armed forces should be borne in mind; Libya's first and only sovereign, King Idris, and Colonel Qaddafi both staffed the armed forces with tribes they deemed loyal. This tribalization of the armed forces should be avoided in order to create a military representative of all of Libya.

Rebuilding a military force will take years. It is generally difficult to estimate how many men a new Libyan military force should comprise. In conflict-free societies, the ratio of military to civilian population is generally situated between 0.2 soldiers per 1,000 inhabitants and nearly 1 per 1,000 inhabitants, but these numbers are higher in post-conflict societies. Strength of military forces depends, among other things, on threat perception, budget, regional security and so forth. As the table below shows, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to rebuilding an armed force.

In the case of Libya, an armed force of 51,000, as under the old regime, is probably a suitable target to aim for, excluding the large reserve and people's militia. Apart from the fact that this number corresponds to the regional ratio, it also takes into account the fact that large parts of Libya's population are employed by the state. As an oil-producing state, Libya has never managed to diversify the economy to a significant extent; 98% of its GDP comes from oil exports. Under these circumstances, the difficulty of reintegration into a society which effectively has very few suitable jobs to offer is likely to create unrest, as Libyans since the days of independence have been used to a system of distribution of employment based on government jobs.

While the armed forces' tasks would at first mostly be concerned with internal security, this could and should evolve over time. Regional security, and relations, will play an important role here; while currently there does not seem to be an immediate danger from Libya's neighbors Egypt and Tunisia, there is some friction with Algeria, which did not support the NTC during the conflict.

Table 1: Comparing security sectors

Country	Population	Armed forces (no reserve)	Ratio of soldiers per 1,000 civilians	Police	Ratio of police per 1,000 civilians	Cost of NATO assistance force / year	Size of NATO assistance force
Afghanistan	29 million	171,600	5.9	134,000	4.6	\$12.5 bn + personnel	9,700
Iraq	30 million	200,000	6.6	464,000	15.5	\$32 mn / year + personnel	170 (+ 300 US advisors)
Libya	6.6 million	51,000	7.7	45,000	6.8	\$37 mn + personnel	200
Jordan	6.4 million	100,500	15.7	6,661	1.15	x	x
Bosnia	3.7 million	10,600	2.86	5,885	1.56	NA	NA
UAE	4.7 million	50,000	10.6	NA	NA	x	x

Sources: CIA World Factbook, Military Balance, UNODC, NATO

NATO is well placed to offer assistance in this area. Its experience in Bosnia's post-conflict armed forces merger, and in both its training missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, can be leveraged in the Libyan case. The key question then is how big such a mission could or should be, and what the relevant cost would be. As the table shows, there is considerable variety depending on the existing level of professionalism (hence the importance of integrating staff from the former military) and the security needs of the country in question. In the case of NATO's Training Mission in Iraq, the actual cost, and staff figures, are higher because of the bilaterally agreed American efforts in terms of training and the fact that NATO can benefit from force protection and facilities within the U.S. compound.

In the case of Libya, the actual cost and size of a NATO Training Mission Libya (NTM-L) would depend on a string of variables: the post-conflict political process could facilitate or hinder the task of such a mission, depending on the number of troops

integrated from Qaddafi's forces. A protracted low-intensity conflict could increase the need for force protection, and thus the cost; the actual size of the new armed forces could be greater or smaller than the estimated 51,000.

The actual need for training is thus difficult to assess; with a small staff of 170, over a period of six years in Iraq NATO managed an output of 9,000 federal police, 2,500 officer cadets, 200 Senior Non-Commissioned Officers, and about 500 graduates from the Joint Staff College and National Defense College, plus over 1,800 who completed training abroad at the NATO School Oberammergau, the NATO Defense College, the Joint Warfare Centre Stavanger, the Center of Excellence in the Defense against Terrorism and the Partnership for Peace Training Center. But the Alliance's expertise lies mostly in training and educating the officer corps. Basic combat training, as well as training for special occupational qualifications such as mechanized equipment, artillery, engineering and logistics capabilities, are also needed. Given the smaller size of the Libyan military as the sole focus of training, one could estimate a need for a training mission of about 200 staff.

- Creation of new internal security forces: Post-conflict security is largely an infantry or constabulary force task. However, Libya will need police forces sooner rather than later in order to give the new government credibility. Parts of the former police forces have melted into the population, or joined the rebels. It is thus unclear to what extent personnel and logistic capabilities can be counted on. In contrast to peace enforcement, there is considerable variation when it comes to the ratio of police to population – some countries, such as the United States, have 24 police per 1,000 inhabitants, whereas others such as Egypt have 3.8. There is thus no absolute level of staffing when it comes to police. In Qaddafi's Libya, police forces totalled 45,000, which corresponds to the ratio in Cyprus or the United Kingdom. As a planning target, this number seems appropriate but does not reflect the fact that immediate security needs will probably require a higher number, which could be covered by an assistance force. Best suited for such a training task would be the European Union, which now has considerable experience in the police training sector, notably from its mission to the West Bank. While NATO has also gathered some experience with internal security training, this was mostly in the area of gendarmerie forces with a military character. However, only nine NATO members have gendarmeries – namely Italy, France, Canada, Bulgaria, Portugal, the Netherlands, Romania, Turkey and Spain, not all of whom have expertise in training others.

Conclusion

Libya's security is now more important than ever, as it is only under a security umbrella that all necessary steps for reform and reconstruction can be taken. Taking Tripoli, while portrayed as the end of a brutal regime, is only the beginning, and nothing has been secured yet. If the opportunity is missed now, Libya could face years of protracted fighting, unemployment, poverty and further turmoil. Without proper security in place, the political change the Libyan people desire will not be achieved. Considering that little thought has been given to its post-conflict security sector, decision-makers will now have to move fast.