

Lessons Learned and Forgotten: How the Western Balkans Experience Could Help Libya

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•What are the main SSR lessons the international community could have learned in the Western Balkans that are applicable to the Middle East and North African region (MENA)?

•Centre's guest authors, analyzing Libya as a case study, argue those lessons to be:

- Disarmament and demobilization of all militias and para-militias
- Early adoption of key first generation reforms
- Careful crafting of the international actors' role
- Emphasis on "human factor"

With the Arab Spring shaking the Middle East throughout last year, the international community has found itself involved in a transitional spree similar to the one that occurred in Europe during the nineties. Whether the political transition was accompanied by more violence (like Libya) or less violence (like Egypt and Tunisia) or with or without direct engagement by international forces, these countries now face a crucial and sensitive "stabilization phase" that will determine the extent of future progress towards stability and democracy. Humanitarian issues, dysfunctional or inexistent state institutions and rampant economic crisis are the main characteristics of this phase, whose sensitivity lies mostly in its proneness to renewed conflict. One of the most important tools for stabilization of a state is security sector reform (SSR).

Conducting SSR in post-authoritarian and post-conflict environments is a difficult task, filled with numerous obstacles. It is important for international actors to draw lessons from previous and similar experiences, in order to avoid repeating mistakes, while still responding to the challenges of specific environments they are about to assist by supporting (or leading) SSR.

For a region as unique and complex as the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), lessons can be sought and found in the closest matching region - the Western Balkans¹. The reasons for such a comparison are many. To start with, all Western Balkan countries are post-authoritarian states, whether or not the dictatorship occurred during or during and after communist rule. Furthermore, most of them experienced internal violence, some of them even colliding with international forces (like the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, consisting of Serbia and Montenegro, during the 1999 NATO air campaign). NATO engaged in the region in 1992 with a minor maritime mission in the Adriatic Sea, then gradually increased its military and political presence, culminating in the aforementioned air campaign. Peacekeeping missions led by NATO were present in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Macedonia and Serbia/Kosovo -- where the mission is still operating, albeit on a lower deployment.

Of course, the comparison between the Western Balkan and the MENA region is not a perfect one, especially considering the cultural and political differences between the two areas. The most obvious and influential difference as far as SSR is concerned, is the fact that all Western Balkan countries are eligible for NATO membership (Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty) while no MENA states are. However, as demonstrated by the example of Serbia - the only Western Balkan state to opt out from membership by proclaiming neutrality - NATO partnerships can also serve as an excellent channel to stimulate and/or assist a country's SSR. Moreover, not all former Yugoslav countries had the same institution (re)building experience. On the one end of the spectrum, cases like Macedonia, BiH and Kosovo² started their SSR from scratch.

1 Western Balkans is a term used to describe countries occupying the territory of former communist Yugoslavia that was violently dissolved in the nineties. Slovenia is usually counted out, while Albania, which was never a Yugoslav republic, is often included in the term. However, in this paper we will not be analyzing Croatia and Albania as they did not "host" NATO peacekeeping forces on their territory and they are both already full member states of the Alliance.

2 Kosovo proclaimed independence on February 17th 2008 and was recognized almost immediately by the USA, UK, France and Germany, among others. However, the Republic of Serbia does not recognize this independence and its decision is supported in the UN SC by Russia and China. In the Western Balkans, the only neighbour supporting Serbia's views on Kosovo is Bosnia and Herzegovina while NATO and EU are formally status-neutral with Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Greece (and Cyprus among EU members) refusing to recognize Kosovo's independence.

On the other end, Serbia and Montenegro³ were from the beginning in a different position, as they inherited functional institutions from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), while still embarking on extensive reforms in the post-Milosevic period. Similarly, while the international community did not take a direct role in SSR in the cases of Serbia and Montenegro (while still providing assistance), it was actively involved in Macedonia, Kosovo and BiH.

The SSR efforts differed in their degree of success. Judging by several milestones, including the unification of armies that fought against each other during the war, SSR in BiH has been quite successful, despite a bumpy reform implementation process that has been replete with obstacles. In addition, during this process, BiH also joined the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program in 2006 and, in 2010, it was presented with a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP).⁴ Serbia and Montenegro, while inheriting most of the infrastructure, still lagged on SSR, mostly due to a troubled relationship with the ICTY as they struggled to conduct necessary arrests and extraditions of war crime indictees (many of whom were still highly positioned security sector officials when the SSR began). Kosovo and Metohija's de facto independence (under international protection) since 1999 was not at all helpful in redefining strategic goals, the perception of threats and adjusting mechanisms to respond to them. Kosovo, which was never independent, nor was a republic in communist Yugoslavia, had very limited institutional features to work with. Initially, the international community took responsibility for Kosovo's security allowing slow development of security mechanisms of their own. In addition, Macedonia, internally divided on an ethnic and religious basis (between Christian Orthodox Macedonians and mostly Muslim Albanians), experienced a brief violent collision between the groups, which ended in NATO's presence and stronger involvement in SSR.

In this article, we briefly analyze the main lessons of SSR from Western Balkans countries and then apply them to the MENA country where the most extensive and pervasive security sector reforms are being implemented: post-Qaddafi Libya.

3 Until 2003 the country (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, FRY) was composed of Serbia and Montenegro (two federal republics). Then, after the Belgrade Agreement was implemented, the country transformed into a weak state union of Serbia and Montenegro with a shared army, market and foreign policy. In May 2006, following the Montenegrin referendum on independence, the two republics went their separate ways.

4 Recently, in 2012, political leaders in BiH agreed on immovable military property, which had been an unresolved issue delaying implementation of the NATO Membership Action Plan. NATO welcomed this decision and urged for the implementation of this political decision so that BiH could fulfill the requirement of NATO Membership Action Plan.

NATO's Involvement in Security Sector Reform in the Balkans: Successes and Shortcomings

Despite the differences mentioned previously, a number of major common SSR lessons can still be drawn, with the most general requirement for any reform to succeed being an inclusive approach that fosters local political will to continue with the reforms even after international organizations leave the country. To achieve this goal, it is especially important to engage the civil society in the entire reform process, trying to obtain political support for SSR from all stakeholders. In addition, SSR in the Western Balkans also provides a number of other crucial insights:

Disarm and demobilize all militias and para-militias operating in the country (notwithstanding whether they were on a winning or a losing side) in order to protect the population, prevent conflict renewal and create a favorable environment for reforms.

As both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia/Montenegro cases showed, it is of great importance to disarm all para-militias and demilitarize the police (especially if these units were actively participating in the conflict) in order to ensure maintenance of the peace. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the war left behind three unofficial armed forces representing the country's main ethnic communities. These factions were later downsized and some weapons removed in accordance with the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. The unification of armed forces was completed in the later phases of SSR, as the armed groups first became armies of two separate entities (Republic Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and were only later united at the state level as the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia/Kosovo and Montenegro (FRY at the time) faced a different situation after the 1999 air campaign. Under the Kumanovo Agreement, the Yugoslav military and police withdrew from Kosovo, while the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) was to be disarmed, demilitarized and dismantled. However, not only this was not implemented thoroughly (as demonstrated by the outbursts of violence in March 2004) but also the KLA was later institutionalized by creating the Kosovo Protection Corps (mostly composed of former KLA fighters). This raised the mistrust of the Serbian minority in Kosovo, with respect to both local authorities and international forces alike, leading to increased tensions and stronger resistance to accept changes in the field.

Devote special and separate attention to SSR by focusing on early adoption of key first generation reforms in order to stabilize the state and society.

In countries that are at the same time post-conflict and post-authoritarian, it is important to provide the necessary conditions for the stabilization and democratization of the society at large. The early adoption of the key first generation reforms may prove crucial to ensuring both goals are met. Those reforms include clear articulation of the roles the security sector will play, through the adoption of a new set of strategic documents (Constitution, National Development Strategy, National Security Strategy etc.), clear division of responsibilities, depoliticization of the security sector, uncompromising democratic and civilian control over the security sector as well as its rationalization if oversized. By emphasizing some of the most important lessons from the implementation of first generation SSR in three basic elements of any security sector (police, intelligence and defence) we will try to underline its importance while noting that reforms in all these sectors have been characterized by the same obstacles - resistance to change by the old, particularly higher positioned personnel.

Police

Among these urgent first-generation reforms, reforming the police features prominently as an area that should be planned and implemented with the assistance of international organizations. In reforming the police, special attention should be devoted to “cleaning-up” existing police forces from officers whose service in the previous political system was compromised, with a strong focus on human rights and the establishment of the rule of law. This is not always easy to accomplish, as shown by the example of Serbia’s police reforms which proved to be a hard task to accomplish, as the organization had been closely associated with Milosevic’s regime and was substantially resistant to institutional change. In this context, the focus on “cleaning-up” the ranks of the police, demilitarization and refocus on civilian protection, were all crucial steps to ensure the successful transition of the police force.

Intelligence

A second crucial area of SSR reforms is that of the intelligence services, a process that should be both public and transparent, and which should be discussed with civil society as well. Failing to do so will prevent a successful transition of the intelligence sector, as occurred in the case of Macedonia—where few of the reforms were publicized and little was achieved in terms of improving the image of the intelligence sector in the eyes of the public. In BiH, the unification of two intelligence services under one state-level institution was initially a great challenge

due to political sensitivities and mistrust between the agencies, and because of their links to war criminals. In turn, this shows the importance of dealing with intelligence sector reforms first, supporting personnel clean-up, assisting creation, adoption and implementation of lustration⁵ and other legal framework aimed at reforms based on transparency, as well as establishing civilian control and democratizing the institution early on.

Defence reform

Considering the fact that the defence sector stands out as one of the key organs for providing security, establishing a unified national army under central, democratic and civilian control is required for the success of the first generation reforms. In the case of BiH, defence reform was a long and steady process, considering that three armies were organized around the individual ethnic groups as a legacy of the Bosnian War. In line with the Dayton Peace Agreement, the separate militaries organized first at the entity level were later unified under one central command in July 2006. The Western Balkans experience depicts the urgency and relevancy of having a unified state level army as one of the key first generation reforms. Demilitarization of civilian defence institutions (Ministry of Defence) is another step that needs to be taken as a precondition for a successful control of armed forces with resistance of uniformed employees representing one of the greatest obstacles on that path.

Craft your role carefully as an international actor involved with post-conflict/post-authoritarian state's SSR

This encompasses two types of measures. The first are those measures that serve to ease the complexities of establishing a constructive engagement with the international community. Other than that, special attention should be devoted to improving coordination between different international actors so as to avoid the duplication of activities. For example, at one point there were 11 regional cooperation⁶ initiatives addressing trans-border cooperation against organized crime. In this sense, a powerful lesson from the Western Balkans experience is certainly to boost coordination between the different international actors involved in the process. Even so, regional cooperation has proved valuable for SSR efforts, thus there is value to investing in such initiatives.

⁵ Lustration is the government process regulating the participation of the supporters of the previous regime (characteristic for former communist systems) in the newly established one. It particularly focuses on secret services and their employees in regard to their possible engagement in political positions.

⁶ Regional initiatives are processes of cooperation between all (or some) regional countries on a particular topic. They can be initiated by countries themselves or by an external actor.

In addition, it is of particular importance to find the balance between international involvement and local ownership. While local ownership may not be expected at the stabilization phase, nor can it be immediately expected in the early stages of the transition, still there should be a clear focus on empowering and involving local actors. For example, in the case of Kosovo, the international organizations were reluctant to transfer responsibility to local actors, fearing their incompetence. However, by not involving local actors from the outset in order to gradually build local capacity and allow for an eventual handover of responsibility, the pace and sustainability of the SSR efforts is negatively affected. BiH provides a similar example; despite its successes and ability to bring about security and territorial integrity, SSR in BiH was also accused of being predominantly driven by the international community, thus leading to a lack of local ownership. In turn, this meant that the sustainability of SSR has depended on the leverage of EU and NATO rather than on the local will to carry out reforms. In this sense, one of the most important lessons learned from SSR in BiH is again that participation of local actors should be stimulated for participation in both designing as well as implementing security reforms. Although applied in the later phase of SSR, Defence Reform Group Serbia -NATO⁷ represents a positive example of effective cooperation and assistance as it allowed for local ownership while providing necessary support and expertise.

At the same time, international organizations do have an important role to play in advising, assisting and even facilitating the reform process. To do so, positive reinforcement conditionality strategy has an important role to play, when it is used consistently and offers realistic incentives. For example, in the case of BiH, conditionality has been the driving force behind the SSR, with international actors employing a carrot-and-stick approach to accelerate the reform process. Unifying and downsizing the Armed Forces along with reducing military expenditures largely came in exchange for BiH's entry into NATO's PfP. Likewise, intelligence and borders reform was tied to the opening of negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement which strengthened the prospect of BiH's EU membership. Similarly, reform of the army in Serbia and Montenegro—considered the greatest success in Serbian and Montenegrin SSR—was influenced by positive reinforcement conditionality in implementing reforms to remove cadres tied to the Milosevic regime, establishing democratic civilian control—with the assistance of NATO, OSCE and EU—as well as restructuring and downsizing the army according to NATO standards. Compromise solutions like the TCP (Tailored Cooperation Programme) that allowed Serbia and Montenegro to participate in various PfP activities prior to being invited to join the Programme itself, served as a demonstration of good will on behalf of NATO, stimulating Serbia-Montenegro's compliance with the conditions required for obtaining the desired invitation.

7 Defence Reform Group Serbia-NATO (DRG) was established in February 2006 in order to facilitate ongoing cooperation between the Serbian MOD and the Alliance with regard to defence reforms. NATO experts assisted defence reform on issues their Serbian peers identified as problematic and requiring support.

Design and implement reforms while keeping in mind the “human factor” and the impact of reforms on the population.

Awareness of the “human factor” both in the design and implementation stages is of crucial importance for the sustainability of SSR. International organizations should design SSRs after assessing the impact of the reforms on locals and should propose programs to compensate for any likely negative impact on the lives of local population. For instance, downsizing the armed forces in BiH was met with resistance as it affected not only ex-soldiers but also their families. What’s more, demobilized and unemployed soldiers represented a potential security concern. To prevent this, the international community provided investment for programs for requalification of demobilized military personnel. For example, the NATO-PERSPEKTIVA program for Bosnia, or the PRISMA program in Serbia both provided training, assistance and funding for job placements and business start-ups. An important insight from the BiH experience is, also, that support for such programs should be designed well in advance to avoid negative reactions to structural changes brought on by SSR.

Although very different in planning and implementing security sector reforms, the experiences of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia do point out to a number of crucial best-practices in SSR reforms and, as such they should be taken into consideration when addressing how post-authoritarian, post-conflict nations—like Libya—should begin their own internal reforms and institution-building process.

SSR in Libya: Testing the International Community's Learning Curve

The Libyan National Transitional Council (NTC) declared the end of the hostilities in October 2011, eight months after the beginning of the uprising that overthrew the regime of Muammar Qaddafi. Shortly after this declaration, the TNC relocated to Tripoli and NATO's "Operation Unified Protector" officially ended, marking the beginning of Libya's stabilization and reconstruction phase. To signal its desire to allow for a speedy and successful transition, the NTC agreed with the international community to begin immediate implementation of political reforms, establishing an interim government, adopting an electoral framework, and committing to hold elections to choose a national congress by June 2012.

However, implementing political and security reforms in Libya is not an easy challenge: the country, despite being rich in resources and less in need of "traditional" support, still is far more from stable. Libya is highly fragmented internally—with competing tribal loyalties taking precedence over national identity—and lacks strong and functional central political institutions. In this sense, one of the toughest challenges of the NTC is to assert authority over tribes, cities, and provinces which had basically relied on self-ruling over the past four decades and which are now resisting attempts to bring about a measure of national centralized control. The recent declarations of semi-autonomous claims coming from Eastern Libya have to be read in this context.⁸

Therefore, reforms are needed to contribute to establish central control and authority and, as such, there needs to be a strong investment in terms of both time and resources, both from the NTC as well from the international community.

Disarm and demobilize

The proliferation of armed groups constitutes in fact one of the biggest challenges to the authority of the Council. While pro-Qaddafi groups obviously represent a security threat for the regime (although these groups have been, for the most part, successfully dealt with), also other armed groups as well as revolutionary brigades endanger the success of the transition by operating outside the realm of control of the political authority. What's more, the proliferation of armed actors has resulted in a high number of internal clashes among the different militias and tribal groups, raising the internal level of violence and instability.

This proliferation of militias is especially a problem given the weakness of the Libyan security sector, already weak during the Qaddafi regime, and in a nearly total state of disarray following the end of the revolution.

8 These declarations reflect also the popularity of the idea of returning to a pre-1963 division of Libya into Tripolitania, Fezzan, and Cyrenaica (Barqa).

The NTC has from the outset made a priority of dismantling all outstanding armed groups and integrating former combatants. This process has been handled by the Supreme Security Committee, established by the Council, in coordination with the Ministries of Defense and Interior as well as with the assistance of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

The program has been carried out first through local security committees, whose task has been to register and evaluate militia fighters, deciding (in consultation with the ex-combatants) whether to integrate them in the police, the army, or to whether to reintegrate them into civilian life. So far, approximately 148,000 have registered, with roughly thirty percent of the former combatants chosen to be equally integrated into the police and the army (ultimately the goal is to absorb 75,000 recruits), while another seventy percent destined to be reintegrated into civilian life.⁹ To do this effectively, the experience of the Western Balkans underlines the importance of investing in programs to facilitate this process, thus giving former combatants the opportunity to successfully enter the civilian workforce.

However encouraging these first steps are, still the authorities do face the enormous challenge of convincing all the existing militias and armed groups to agree to the demobilization process.

First generation SSR

In addition, there have been also efforts to bring the entire security sector under greater civilian control, an equally important—yet extremely difficult to accomplish—goal.

Police

While focusing on dismantling armed groups, with some initial measure of success, there have also been efforts to implement changes within the police force, another crucial first-generation SSR. Again, the main challenge in this sense is to get the police to resume its functions, ceasing to rely on revolutionary brigades. This is especially hard as the police force is currently badly equipped, in a state of internal disarray following the collapse of the regime, and still closely associated in the mind of the people with Qaddafi and his coercive apparatus.

To help this effort, the Libyan police desperately needs to be strengthened by new recruits, equipped and trained, something the NTC has been working on with the assistance of UNSMIL, through both training and advisory support. In addition to the UN, individual countries have also been offering to train the Libyan police, with Jordan pledging to train 10,000 ex-combatants and Turkey offering to train 750 cadets and 500 former members of militias.

In addition, while bringing the police force under strong central control

⁹ The data collected at the local level has been then channeled through the Ministries of Defence, Interior, and Labour for follow up.

does not seem feasible—given Libya’s history of high local autonomy—there should be efforts to adopt common standards and practices. Special attention should be paid to training on human rights and the rule of law. This has been also repeatedly noted by the UNSMIL, which has expressed concerns over the issue of the systematic violations of the rights of detainees, especially political prisoners and Sub-Saharan Africans held under the suspicion of having served as mercenaries. These efforts are complicated by the lack of qualified judicial police and by the reliance on revolutionary brigades. The NTC has requested international assistance on the issue of judicial police, and it is important to answer this call.

Intelligence

Less progress has been achieved on the subject of intelligence reform, another crucial first-generation SSR reform. On this topic, rebuilding the intelligence services and bringing the previously highly insular and secretive intelligence sector under the civilian control of the NTC would be an important step in the right direction. The secret services were the branch of Libya’s security sector most closely associated with Qaddafi and, as such, the post-revolutionary authority faces the monumental challenge of rebuilding them completely, while bringing the intelligence sector under civilian control. At the moment, the NTC has not made public any restructuring plan and—based on the lessons of the Western Balkans—there is a need to take such steps. To be effective, secret services reforms should be conducted openly and with the involvement of the civil society.

Defence sector

The Libyan Army, with an estimated size of 50,000 to 130,000 soldiers under Qaddafi, basically disintegrated in the months of the anti-Qaddafi protests. During the Qaddafi regime, the Libyan Army was traditionally weak as the dictator never trusted it and so he heavily coup-proofed it (for example by relying on mercenaries and leaving the Armed Forces largely ill-equipped), in turn affecting its capabilities and strength. What’s more, the Army was never really a national one, but rather a personal tool of Qaddafi.

Following the capitulation of the regime, the new political authority has found itself with a nearly disintegrated and badly equipped army. In addition, the NTC also faces the challenge of integrating or dissolving hundreds of parallel non-state armed groups and merging them to create a new and truly national army. To do so, the NTC has firstly invested in its program to demobilize former fighters, as mentioned above, and secondly it has attempted to assert internal and centralized command and control of its armed forces. In addition, the NTC has also focused its attention on the lack of equipment of its Armed forces, requesting the assistance of the international community on this issue. In this context, the United States, through Gen. Carter Ham, commander of the U.S. Africa Command, has discussed

potential collaboration with the NTC to rebuild and unify the Army, both key steps of effective SSR.

Finally, the NTC has also been focusing on creating the ad hoc Agency for Border Security and Strategic Installations Protection within the Ministry of Defence, tasked with patrolling borders to prevent smuggling of weapons and to secure them, one of the most important security challenges ahead for post-Qaddafi Libya. To fulfill this mission, the Ministry of Defense has declared it will integrate 16,000 members of the revolutionary brigades into five border patrol brigades. In this context, Libya has also announced the creation of a joint force with Sudan.

As Libya moves towards a political transition, it will be important—following the June elections for the creation of a national congress—to take concrete steps to create strong mechanisms of parliamentary oversight of the armed forces, as well as to invest in demilitarization of the Ministry of Defence.

Craft your role carefully as an international actor

It appears obvious that Libya has a long and daunting task ahead and that, in order to complete it successfully, it will need international assistance and support, especially in the crucial early stages of SSR. As noted by the previous description of the experience of SSR in the Western Balkans, the international community has an important role to play in assisting and shaping this process.

In the case of Libya, there has been assistance and involvement coming from a number of international organizations, like the already mentioned UNSMIL, established by the UNSC in September 2011 and tasked with assisting the post-Qaddafi transition. The UNSMIL has been helping local authorities through the TRC with restoring public security, planning the disarming of militias, assisting with training, and dealing with weapons proliferation.

Libya's security efforts have also been assisted by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the International Atomic Energy Agency—helping with weapons proliferation—or the EU expert mission implementing border management training. Similarly, UNSMIL's efforts against arms proliferation also have been designed by involving expertise from a number of UN Agencies, like the UN Mine Action Service, UNICEF, and UNDP. These initiatives and involvement are particularly crucial in the early SSR stages, as shown in the Western Balkans, and should be continued.

UNSMIL has been playing an important role in this context, seeking to coordinate the international assistance, which in turn is essential to synchronizing the efforts of the international community. This is particularly important in ensuring an overall positive impact of international assistance. What's more, UNSMIL has also been facilitating increasing security cooperation between Libya and its neighbors; while working with the African Union on topics like border security, weapons proliferation, and containment of armed groups. These are indubitably positive steps, given the importance of promoting regional cooperation on security matters.

The role of UNSMIL has been mostly an advisory one, working with the local authorities and guiding the process, rather than designing and implementing the reforms directly. Indeed the three main principles of the mission have been: national ownership, inclusiveness, and effective international assistance. In turn, this suggests that the international community has indeed learned something from its previous SSR efforts, investing from the beginning in the concept of national ownership. Similarly, UNSMIL has repeatedly asserted its intention to promote the role of civil society and involving them in every sector of the post-Qaddafi transition, including SSR reforms. However, in reality, this is easier said than done: after over four decades of dictatorship, Libyan society has long been deprived of functioning political and social institutions, thus lacking strong political parties and a vibrant civil society. In this sense, the challenge in getting the population involved in SSR is a monumental one, and the NTC has not yet met the people's expectations for openness and transparency. UNSMIL can and should play a role in pushing the new political authority to take into consideration all the local stakeholders. Finally, NATO also has a role in play in assisting SSR in Libya—something the organization's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has hinted could be possible following the end of NATO's ground mission last October. NATO has in fact both the expertise as well as the interest in ensuring a successful post-conflict transition for Libya. The organization has also some potential leverage over the NTC, for example by getting Libya involved in regional programs, like the Mediterranean Dialogue.

Human factor figuring in design and implementation of the reforms

From this brief analysis of the current situation in Libya, it emerges clearly that both context-sensitivity and awareness of the impact of the reforms on the Libyan people are going to be crucial to the success of the Libyan SSR.

For instance, given the highly fragmented nature of the Libyan society and its history of high local autonomy, it would be ineffective and ultimately counter-productive to push too hard towards creating a highly centralized system. Instead a certain degree of local autonomy should be preserved, while attempting to assert a clear chain of command and ensure that national standards of conduct are followed by all local sectors of the security forces.

In addition, awareness of the human factor will be crucial in facing the toughest challenge ahead for the NTC: demobilize and integrate militias. Firstly, this needs to be accomplished by openly involving all the relevant stakeholders, and secondly the reintegration progress has to be carried out with a strong focus on successful reintegration in civilian life.

It seems that the NTC is mindful of the importance of carrying out this reintegration successfully: for example the Ministry of Labor has repeatedly asserted the importance of providing vocational training for ex-combatants, while the Ministry of Interior has announced a plan to hire 10,000 former fighters under its payroll. The international community, as seen in the Western Balkans, could and should play a role in assisting these types of programs.

Conclusion

Taking into consideration political and cultural differences between the Western Balkans and the MENA region, this study examined the lessons learned from SSR in Western Balkans and provided insights that can be used by international organizations while assisting the local authorities in designing SSR in Libya.

The cases in the Western Balkans prove that disarming and demobilizing all armed groups that were part of the military conflict is the first requirement of any successful SSR. This will not only protect the local population, but it will also prevent the renewal of conflict and create a favorable environment for the implementation of reforms. In the case of Libya, demobilizing and disarming all outstanding militias represents both the hardest and most crucial challenge ahead for the NTC. It is in this sense encouraging to see that the political authority has made this its priority, but—despite some initial success in demobilizing militias—the challenge ahead is still daunting.

Next, early adoption of key first generation reforms - particularly within the police, the army, and the intelligence sector - is crucial for the success of the SSR. The cases in the Western Balkans also depicted the important role international organizations could and should play in assisting local SSR, emphasizing especially the role that positive reinforcement conditionality can play in accelerating internal changes in the security sector. Furthermore, finding the balance between the involvement of international organizations and local stakeholders (not only political elites but also NGOs, universities, journalists and ordinary citizens) is of particular importance to maintain local ownership of the SSR. In Libya, first generation SSR started by focusing on reforming both the police and the armed forces, and in both cases there has been substantial international support to the Libya SSR. This model, aimed at fostering local ownership from the beginning of the reform process is certainly a positive development. However, in order to succeed, the Libya reforms have to tackle and resolve a number of important outstanding issues: from creating national human rights standards, to ensuring central command and control, to investing in civilian oversight.

Last but not least, it is suggested that SSR reforms should be designed and implemented while keeping in mind the “human factor” and the impact of the reforms on the population.

To conclude, the cases from the Western Balkans depicted both the challenges and opportunities in designing and implementing SSR in post-authoritarian and post-conflict countries. The lessons learned and suggested in this study are a promising step towards helping international organizations like NATO to avoid repeating previous mistakes and thus maintain the sustainability of SSR. The case of SSR in Libya can prove an opportunity to apply these lessons beyond Western Balkans in the MENA region.

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Policy Brief

A policy brief is a paper in which an author presents briefly the current problems and dilemmas in the area of security and offers informed solutions for them. The form and content of the policy brief are the sole responsibility of the author. The views expressed in the paper do not necessarily represent the views of the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy.

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