Centre for Security Governance

eSeminar Summary Report

Libya: Dealing with the Militias and Advancing Security Sector Reform
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Introduction

Libya is at a critical juncture in its political and security transition. Although an air of optimism continues to exist across the country, there is also a creeping sense that progress in Libya's democratic transition has slowed or even come to a halt. Frustration over the heavy-handed and intrusive presence of militias in places like Tripoli has boiled over into vicious street violence and prompted Prime Minister Ali Zeidan to call on non-state armed groups to leave the capital.[1] Temporary security solutions, like the Supreme Security Committee (SSC) and Libya Shield forces, that were put in place during the transition from the National Transitional Council's interim government to the democratically elected General National Congress (GNC) have yet to be replaced by permanent formal mechanisms. The bulk of security services are still offered at the non-state level. Some of these informal, quasi-state actors have helped play a stabilizing role in the absence of a strong state authority; others, however, have added to insecurity and criminality and have exercised an unhealthy degree of influence over the political process.

Libya's formal security sector is in disarray, a legacy of the Gaddafi regime, which opted against building robust and effective security institutions out of fear that they could challenge its hold on power. Formal security institutions have not established a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and are unable to operate in a transparent, accountable and rights-respecting fashion. These shortcomings have resulted in the formation of a hybrid security arrangement, where non-state and semi-official armed groups have informally adopted many of the security functions of the state. Similar hybrid arrangements have emerged in other post-conflict settings, with mixed results in terms of promoting sustainable security and stability. This is a crucial period for Libya's democratic transition, and the country represents an important case for the broader field of security sector reform (SSR).

The formal security sector's ability to address underlying insecurity and establish a monopoly over the use of force is essential for other elements of Libya's state-building process, such as the reform and restoration of public services like health and education and the advancement of economic development. A stable Libya will also contribute to regional security and address the chal-

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1   See Edward Yaranian (2013).

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

Abdul Rahman AlAgeli is the security file coordinator in the Office of the Prime Minister as well as the co-founder of the Libyan Youth Forum.

Frederic Wehrey is a senior associate in the Middle East program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Mustafa el Sagezli is the general manager of the Warriors Affairs Commission in Libya - a government body that works for the productive reintegration of ex-combatants into Libyan society.

Robert Perito is a senior associate with the Security Governance Group and director of the Perito Group, LLC. He was also the former director of the security sector governance program at the United States Institute of Peace.

lenging issue of Libya's eastern border, which has become a key transit point for the movement of illicit arms, militants and smuggled goods of various kinds.[2]

The purpose of the Centre for Security Governance's inaugural eSeminar, held on November 6, 2013, was to take stock of the volatile security situation in Libya and discuss the progress of SSR and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) initiatives.[3] The event brought together a panel of four experts — two from Libya and two from the United States — to dissect this multidimensional challenge and provide insight on the way forward.

Summary of Presentations

Abdul Rahman AlAgeli: A Holistic Approach

Abdul Rahman AlAgeli sought to provide a "rational common sense analysis" of the conditions in Libya from someone "experiencing it day-to-day on the ground." Importantly, he argued for a holistic response, looking beyond security interventions to include social, economic and political activities. Semi-official groups such as the Libyan Shield and SSC are filling, at least partially, the void in security.[4] Bankrolled by the Libyan state, these militias lack accountability and often act with impunity. They were intended to be a short-term remedy to Libya's security needs, but increasingly look like a permanent feature of the security and political environment. AlAgeli sees the proliferation of militias, armed criminal groups and ideologically oriented extremists as a major threat to the state. He detailed how attempts by Libyan authorities to advance DDR and SSR initiatives have largely been ineffective and disorganized. In fact, they have contributed to

2 For an overview of the worsening security situation in Libya, see Frederic Wehrey and Peter Cole (2013).
3 The Centre for Security Governance Primer Paper No. 1, *Libya: Dealing with the Militias and Advancing Security Sector Reform*, can be viewed at: www.ssr-resourcecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/eSeminar-Primer-No.1-Libya.pdf. Primer papers will be released in advance of all upcoming eSeminars.
4 The SSC is a "quasi-official body of former anti-Gaddafi fighters that is cooperating with the Interior Ministry — for ensuring law and order" (Human Rights Watch, 2013: 582). The Libya or National Shield Forces were formed as an "army-in-waiting" and consist of revolutionary brigades who see themselves as "guardians of the revolution." The force is nominally subordinate to the Defence Ministry, but acts with a high degree of autonomy (Small Arms Survey, 2012: 2).

the fragmentation of the security sector and the retrenchment of non-state security actors. Libya's state security institutions have been incapable of absorbing or managing combatants due to poor administrative and human resource management capacities.

The failings of DDR and SSR efforts also stem from a lack of economic opportunity and limited capacity to provide alternative livelihoods for youth combatants. Youth combatants who disarm now would be giving up their only means of employment and instrument of political leverage, all without incentives or guarantees that the state will limit its power and create the type of society that the revolutionaries fought for in the toppling of the Gaddafi regime. Thus, weapons have become a political tool and as AlAgeli stated, "The nature of the armed struggle has created what you may call 'new men' that are no longer willing to be passive and are instead seeking further empowerment."

AlAgeli also highlighted a "Libyan mentality," which he sees as a general sense of entitlement to the state's wealth that distorts incentives for society to be productive in the public sphere or create transparent and accountable institutions. This problematic feature of contemporary Libyan society has the effect of limiting economic opportunity and growth, fostering a rentier state. This has further driven non-state actors to take over the provision of public services.

Given the various overlapping factors contributing to state weakness and the proliferation of non-state armed groups, AlAgeli concluded his presentation by reaffirming the need for a holistic response. Such a response, he explained, would encompass comprehensive structural and economic reform to reduce Libya's rentier state symptoms and restructure how state resources are managed and redistributed. He emphasized that, in the short term, an immediate and sustained effort to improve security sector governance is needed. In this regard, improved inter- and intra-ministerial coordination is urgently required. The lack of a common cross-government Libyan vision for SSR and DDR efforts has hamstrung these critical processes.

Frederic Wehrey: The Four Dimensions of Security Sector Reform Challenges

Wehrey explained how Libya's militias were deeply embedded in society, with significant economic and political support at the community and state levels. He introduced the idea of hybrid security arrangements and indicated that these could form part of a long-term solution for the Libyan security sector. Wehrey detailed how major non-state and quasi-state security groups like the SSC and Libya Shield have a "tenuous and sometimes hostile relationship with regular state security forces," with volatile ties that vary "depending on locale and personality." This situation contributes to "overlapping responsibilities, competition, parallelism and redundancy." The hybrid nature of the security sector in Libya makes it difficult for outside states and donors to engage, given that they are accustomed to dealing with formal security actors. In contemporary Libya, formal structures remain a shell, with real power centred in non-state militia groups.

Wehrey outlined four types of challenges that have obstructed efforts to advance SSR and rein in the militias: political, institutional, economic and personal. On the political front, there is a clear rift between different centres of power in the Libyan security sector. Drawing from field interviews, Wehrey explained how many Libyan revolutionaries were driven to maintain their arms and even use force against the government by their desire to acquire power for their groups or communities, as well as deep concerns over the deficiencies of the state in the areas of transparency, representation, service-delivery capacity and infrastructure.[5] The absence of an effective judiciary has also promoted conflict. Many militias formed as a result of intercommunal rivalries and "micro-revolutions," where old scores were settled between groups favoured under the Gaddafi regime and those that were repressed, a so-called "contest for revolutionary legitimacy." Without a functioning judiciary and a sense of public safety, these community-based militias will likely continue to resolve disputes through the barrel of a gun. Furthermore, the drafting of a new constitu-

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5 A prominent example of militia violence against the state was the attack on Libya's foreign ministry by armed groups tentatively aligned with the GNC. See Esam Mohamed and Maggie Michael (2013).

tion, which will help to redefine governance and the rule of law in Libya, is upheld by most militia groups as a key condition for surrendering their arms and joining the formal security architecture. This led Wehrey to argue that "until this political impasse that is driving the polarization of the security sector is resolved, other measures will be ineffective, if not counterproductive."

From an institutional perspective, Libya's security sector faces many barriers to reform. The dysfunctions of government ministries and agencies, marked by human-capacity deficits, pay and rank inequities, and bloated management structures, has encumbered efforts to integrate combatants into the formal security sector and advance complex reforms. Intense opposition to reform from senior officers in the military has also prevented the integration of non-state militias, as they are seen as radicalized and undisciplined. Wehrey explained that the integration of non-state and quasi-state revolutionary militias into the army could in fact provide it with a significant boost in capacity, injecting some needed operational experience and small unit leadership into the junior and mid-level officer ranks.

The absence of economic opportunities for young men has meant that those who want to leave military life lack viable alternatives. Accordingly, the incipient efforts of the Warriors Affairs Commission to identify the career aspirations of ex-combatants and launch alternative livelihoods programming are instrumental for Libya's political and security transition. Wehery outlined the many personal advantages of militia membership for Libyan youth, including camaraderie, a sense of purpose and a source of income. Any reintegration scheme will have to address these personal motives for militia mobilization.

Wehrey concluded his presentation with an overview of the General Purpose Force, a new security force being established with US, British, Turkish and Italian assistance in response to Prime Minister Zeidan's urgent appeal for additional support to address Libya's security vacuum.[6] The force cur-

rently lacks a clear mandate; it is ambiguous how and where it will be used and deployed, what sort of oversight mechanisms will govern it and where the recruits will primarily be drawn from. Wehrey emphasized the inherent dangers in constructing a force without greater clarity over its role and purpose.

Mustafa el Sagezli: Improving Prospects for the Militias

Like Abdul Rahman AlAgeli, Mustafa el Sagezli has front-line, on-the-ground experience in Libya's complicated security transition. As the general manager of the Warriors Affairs Commission and a senior figure in the Libyan government, el Sagezli offered a valuable insider perspective on existing efforts to advance DDR and SSR in Libya.

El Sagezli recalled his experience leading the first revolutionary brigade in Benghazi, noting that even in the early days of the revolution he harboured reservations about arming scores of previously disenfranchised young men, foreshadowing the challenges facing post-revolutionary Libya in trying to disarm those same fighters. He also reminded participants that prior to the revolution, "the security sector served one good — the protection of Gaddafi" and that this was not conducive to a well-trained, well-organized security apparatus, which has set the stage for many current challenges.

Echoing the comments of the other experts, el Sagezli explained that reintegration programming should be the centerpiece of any effort to deal with the country's militias. El Sagezli highlighted a survey of 165,000 combatants undertaken by the Warriors Affairs Commission, which asked what opportunities they envisioned for themselves in the years ahead.[7] Aside from employment, they revealed their desire for housing, marriage, the ability to support a family and other simple goals that were difficult to achieve under the Gaddafi regime. The results of the survey confirmed that militiamen would be willing to demobilize and relinquish their guns if the right opportunities existed in the civilian economy. In el Sagezli's words, the militias are "not insisting on keeping their weapons, but simply want a re-

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6 Prime Minister Zeidan appealed to international partners at the G8 summit in June and September, 2013 to help restore security, stem the flow of small arms and rebuild security and justice institutions. See Hadi Fornaji (2013).

7 For more information on the Warriors Affairs Commission, visit http://wac.gov.ly/armod/.

Fig. 1: eSeminar Polling Question #1
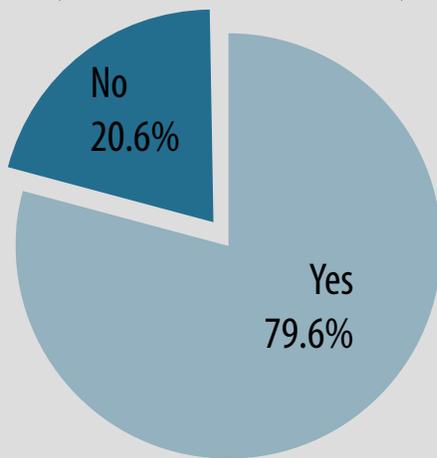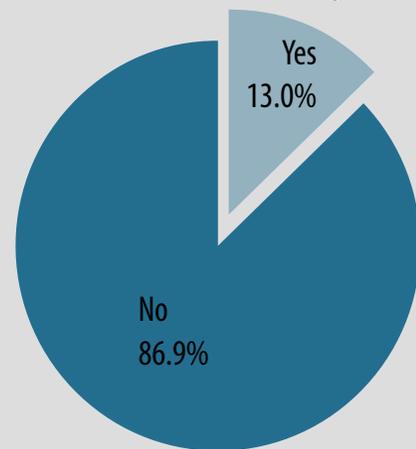*Do you think that DDR is feasible in Libya?*

No
20.6%

Yes
79.6%

Fig. 2: eSeminar Polling Question #2
Do you think that DDR efforts are on the right track in Libya?

Yes
13.0%

No
86.9%

placement for these weapons."

When polled, eSeminar participants strongly indicated that DDR is a feasible process in Libya (Fig. 1). However, polling also revealed that most believe the process is on the wrong track (Fig. 2). According to el Sagezli, the key to advancing SSR and DDR is a more comprehensive strategy. He decried the lack of coordination and planning, domestically and among external stakeholders. A comprehensive strategy needs to look beyond the conventional security architecture, linking with activities to advance good governance, spur economic growth and generate employment opportunities for militiamen. Finally, el Sagezli highlighted the need to build a consensus on Libya's future — grounded in public consultations and efforts to advance political reconciliation — in order to unite the Libyan people, provide a sense of mutual trust and to facilitate the drafting of the country's constitution.

Robert Perito: Overcoming Challenges and Identifying Entry Points

Robert Perito focussed his remarks on the challenge of operationalizing SSR in Libya. He identified a "dual-track" challenge of reforming the existing Ministry of Interior and the police, while building the Ministry of Defence and the army from the ground up. Perito recognized Libya's extensive financial capital, but also its lack of appropriate institutional models and legal infrastructure, explaining that under Gaddafi these had been "perverted or twisted in

ways that made them almost unrecognizable."

At the same time, the international community also lacks an appropriate model for engaging Libya. The heavy-footprint military and state-building interventions in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq are not appropriate for Libya, nor is the international donor community in a position to undertake such an ambitious operation. Perito warned that the current donor (particularly US) approach to the Arab Spring countries is verging on inaction. Key donors must look for opportunities or points of access where key reform processes, like SSR, can be advanced in a meaningful way.

Perito reminded the eSeminar participants that a fundamental guiding principle of SSR is local ownership, which needs to be developed further in the Libyan context. Donor resources must be dedicated to encouraging Libyan leadership for the SSR process. One practical way to foster this leadership is by building Libyan capacity to undertake strategic assessments and planning within the security sector.

Perito argued that police reform and development should be prioritized as a central plank of efforts to demobilize and decommission the revolutionary militia groups, which have justified their existence on the grounds that the state lacks the capability to enforce public order and the rule of law. Accelerating police development requires the Libyan government to address key questions concerning the role

of the police force, its size, operational doctrine and modes of training. Perito also emphasized that special attention must be given to reforming pay and rank systems in the police and across the security sector in order to curb corruption and prevent the bloating of state ministries and agencies.

Perito concluded his talk with the simple message that "nothing takes place in security sector reform, police transformation or military modernization without political agreement. That is the starting point and the sustaining force behind these efforts." Short-term, quick-fix approaches to SSR could be counterproductive over the long term without a fundamental political consensus on the process and its goals.
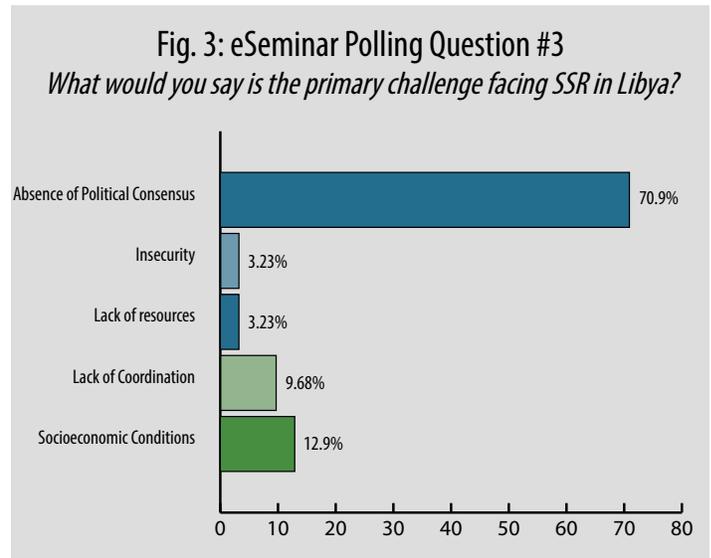
Thoughts on the Way Forward

Based on the speaker presentations and audience discussion, some common themes emerged on how to advance SSR and DDR and overcome current obstacles to change in Libya.

Finding Political Consensus

Responding to a question posed by Yannick Hingorani of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development inquiring as to whether there were any overarching central government plans to generate political consensus over SSR and DDR, the panellists widely agreed that these were lacking. The absence of a political consensus was overwhelmingly identified as the main challenge for SSR through polling of the participants, with 71 percent indicating that this was the top concern (Fig. 3). Disagreement among the old guard, the revolutionaries, Islamists, tribal groups and regional groups has led to infighting, political paralysis and even outbreaks of violence.

As a result, no overarching vision concerning the future of the Libyan security sector has coalesced. This is evidenced by delays in efforts to replace the interim Constitutional Declaration and resistance to the creation of a National Guard, which was proposed as a transitional step to a more permanent

Fig. 3: eSeminar Polling Question #3
What would you say is the primary challenge facing SSR in Libya?

- Absence of Political Consensus — 70.9%
- Insecurity — 3.23%
- Lack of resources — 3.23%
- Lack of Coordination — 9.68%
- Socioeconomic Conditions — 12.9%

and accountable force.[8] The initiative to create the National Guard failed due to political infighting. An important step to address this void of consensus was taken by Prime Minister Zeidan with his call for a national dialogue.[9] This process must be comprehensive and inclusive and should seek to advance reconciliation across existing societal fault lines. Inter-group competition and suspicion within Libya have hindered efforts to demobilize revolutionary militias and integrate fighters into the security forces and must be overcome to advance these objectives.

Building Institutional Capacity

Panelists and participants both agreed that Libya does not lack the resources or the capital to develop the state and its economy. What is lacking is the capacity to direct these resources and effectively manage the security sector. Addressing this gap requires donor investment in administrative and human resource capacities, as well as the creation of new bureaucratic systems grounded in good governance principles. Another important step is enhancing inter- and intra- ministerial coordination. AlAgeli noted that in his capacity as the security file coordinator in the Prime Minister's Office, many strategies

8 In July 2013, Prime Minister Zeidan reversed a decision to establish a National Guard after the proposal generated a significant amount of controversy. The unit was intended to attract fresh recruits and maintain a non-political or ideological position. See Sami Zaptia (2013).
9 In August 2013, Zeidan announced a national dialogue to be held by a commission of civil society personalities independent of the government. The dialogue will address issues related to reconciliation, disarmament and security and is meant to strengthen the Libyan national identity. For more information, see Associated Foreign Press (2013).

for achieving this had been devised, but that implementation has lagged.

While these processes should continue to be led and directed by the Libyans, donors can play an important facilitative and technical advisory role. For instance, Wehrey highlighted the need for advisory assistance at the ministerial level. To this end, the stalled US Department of Defense Ministry of Defense Advisors program in Libya would be a good step in securing ministry competency in the areas of finance, personnel, logistics and strategy.[10] Perito also pointed to the role of the European Union in providing an institutional model for Libya's Interior Ministry based on the structural and operational composition of European ministries. Such institutional strengthening would have the added benefit of making Libya a more reliable partner for external donors.

Institutionalizing Hybrid Security Arrangements

Given the proliferation of informal, non-state security actors in Libya, hybrid security and governance arrangements of different forms may be necessary and practical over the short term and could perhaps become a permanent feature of the security architecture. Establishing relationships of shared responsibility over local-level security matters between the state and particular non-state security actors could not only have the effect of improving security conditions, but also help build social capital and state legitimacy. However, there is no shortage of risks accompanying such arrangements, which would have to be carefully constructed and subjected to rigorous oversight.

The reality is that hybrid security arrangements are already in place across Libya, with several militia bodies like the Libyan Shield enjoying semi-official or quasi-state status. However, these hybrid arrangements have proven controversial, with the militia groups displaying a tendency to act with impunity.

The absence of state oversight structures to manage these hybrid relationships has made them problematic. Establishing effective governance systems is a critical task for architects of future hybrid structures. Wehrey suggested that this could be a key topic for the national dialogue, with the goal of building public understanding and respect for democratic institutions. Perito added that a common training program for militia and non-militia recruits would serve the purpose of building unit cohesiveness and overcoming the strong tendency to value militia loyalty over that of the state security forces. Most militia members are recruited to the formal security sector as part of a group rather than as individuals, thus, forging a new esprit de corps and identity would be a necessary component for institutionalizing hybrid structures in the security sector.

Making Alternative Livelihoods Available

Several eSeminar participants acknowledged that the presentation of viable alternative livelihoods for combatants represent the centrepiece of the militia demobilization project and are currently insufficient. Existing employment opportunities in the licit economy tend to be menial, less lucrative, and lack the purpose and stature of militia life. As AlAgeli noted, the "new men" of Libya that emerged during and after the conflict are no longer willing to be passive observers of state building in Libya. New initiatives must, therefore, focus on providing these men with skills and opportunities to make productive contributions to society.

To catalyze these efforts, a number of recommendations arose throughout the seminar. Creating a trust fund for small businesses, establishing scholarships for students and restructuring the public sector were all suggested as possible methods for creating suitable employment opportunities. David Law, a senior associate with the Security Governance Group, asked where the economic resources for such initiatives would come from. Wehrey suggested that one way would be to redirect funding from militia payments and the bloated public sector. The Warriors Affairs Commission should also continue to work with combatants to ensure their voices, desires

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10 The Ministry of Defense Advisors Program of the Department of Defense partners with civilian experts to build ministerial core competencies such as personnel and readiness; logistics, strategy and policy; and financial management. See Defence Security Cooperation Agency (2013).

and motivations are reflected in the programming provided. To facilitate integration into the formal security sector, Wehrey noted that it is important to make senior-level positions available for militia leaders. He recommended implementing retirement incentives for high-ranking military personnel to encourage them to clear the crowded senior ranks. Steps such as these would create a variety of new opportunities for militia fighters.

Libyan Ownership and Needs Analysis

eSeminar participants were divided on the question of whether the international community is providing enough assistance to Libya, as demonstrated in Fig. 4. However, a slight majority of the respondents indicated that more assistance is necessary, and a number of opportunities for outside assistance were identified, such as building Libya's domestic security sector management capacity. Ministerial reform, border security and public sector management have all been named as areas where more assistance is needed, support which could be provided by donors like the United States and the European Union. Jonathan Sandy, currently on a mission with the African Union (AU)'s Defence and Security Division in Addis Ababa, offered a regional perspective and highlighted successful AU DDR and SSR programs in places like Burundi, as well as useful AU frameworks like the Policy Framework on Security Sector Reform as models for Libya to utilize and integrate. Regional involvement is also required to address what Christopher Swallow of Swallow Consulting described as the "significant ungoverned space, especially in the South-East," where trafficking and the movement of militants thrive.

Wehrey stated, however, that there is a limit to the reliability of regional partners, given that the security apparatus of some neighbouring states, such as Egypt, have their own institutional challenges and lack an appropriate model on which to base their assistance. Furthermore, there is already a heavy international presence in Libya. AlAgeli pointed out that a plethora of international organizations, governance advisers and security force trainers were present in the country. He went on to explain that this massive presence would achieve little without a

Fig. 4: eSeminar Polling Question #4
Is the international community providing enough support to Libyan SSR and DDR?

Yes
42.1%

No
57.8%
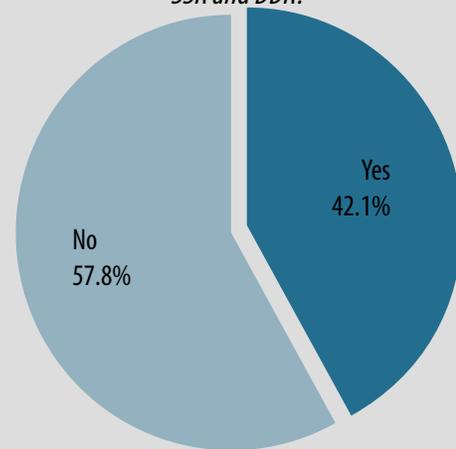
frank assessment of Libya's needs and capabilities.

There was broad agreement on the panel that SSR and DDR initiatives would only be successful if they were owned and driven by the Libyans. AlAgeli explained that most strategies for advancing state building in the country have been based on international assessments of Libya's needs, which were presented at major international conferences in Paris and London and often devised without reliable "on the ground" information.[11] This stems, in part, from a lack of Libyan capacity to undertake comprehensive and broad-based needs assessments or to build domestic consensus, which suggests that international and regional support may be best directed towards providing Libyans with the capacity to collect and analyze data and facilitate a dialogue among themselves. Without this capacity, external assistance will continue to have a limited impact, with the Libyan government lacking the technical means and unified strategic vision to best harness the resources provided by external partners.

11 For more information on the outcomes of these conferences, see FDI Libya (2013) and France Diplomatie (2013).

Table 1: Participant responses to short answer questions[12]

What are the most important steps for SSR moving forward?	
• Feasible and funded options that would replace the weapons	• Government is paralyzed by a lack of public legitimacy/ support to enable it to cohesively drive economic changes that provide the foundation for a stable society.
• Convening a national dialogue and training a new security force that can secure government institutions and protect officials.	• Judicial system, remove corruption, remove Gaddafi loyalists in disguise.
• Political cohesion and a coordinated approach at the top.	• Emergence of a central political leader or centralized political process.
• Any General Purpose Force must be made up of peoples from all regions and tribes of Libya.	• Agreement between various political forces to not use/employ militias to support their views/ideological positions.
• Supporting political consensus and ensuring inter- and intra-government strategic planning and communications.	• Broad-based dialogues on roles of new security actors in Libya.
• Linked tactical and strategic development.	• Absorption of militias.
• Powerful centralized government and decisive leadership.	• Honesty in correctly diagnosing the issues, building in long-term vision with short- and medium-term steps based on a correct diagnosis of the main issues.
• Incentives for militia commanders to cooperate with the government. These incentives differ widely from the lack of economic opportunity available for militia members, to prestige and wealth and hostility to regime remnants.	

What resources do you think Libya has that would enable it to leverage SSR?	
• If it could determine how to effectively allocate resource revenues, money wouldn't be an issue to funding DDR/ SSR initiatives.	• Financial and human resources.
	• People who wish to be involved in their own governance.

What steps can be taken to foster political will towards SSR in Libya?	
• Armed politics is still a significant issue. The influence of the revolutionary groups on the GNC must be broken.	• Change from within.
• They need to exhaust themselves of the need for conflict.	• Outsiders need to work even harder to listen to the insiders.
• They need a functioning parliament and a functioning NSC-type body. Need broader national dialogue. Need municipal level governance structures that are elected, not appointed as they are currently.	• Coordination and correct analysis, then dialogue.

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12 The responses displayed in Table 1 were compiled from a series of short answer polling questions presented to eSeminar participants throughout the event.

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