ENDING LIBYA'S CIVIL WAR: RECONCILING POLITICS, REBUILDING SECURITY

FREDERIC WEHREY

More than three years after the fall of strongman Muammar Qaddafi, Libya is in the midst of a bitter civil war rooted in a balance of weakness between the country's political factions and armed groups. With a domestic landscape torn apart by competing claims to power and with interference from regional actors serving to entrench divides, restoring stability in Libya and building a unified security structure will be difficult if not impossible without broad-based political reconciliation.

Polarized Politics, Fractured Security Institutions

- After Qaddafi, Libya's security sector evolved into a hybrid arrangement marked by loose and imbalanced cooperation between locally organized, state-sponsored armed groups and national military and police.

- The system broke down as political and security institutions became increasingly polarized along regional, communal, and ideological fault lines.

- The country is now split between two warring camps: Operation Dignity, a coalition of eastern tribes, federalists, and disaffected military units; and Operation Dawn, an alliance of Islamist forces aligned with armed groups from Misrata. Each camp lays claim to governance and legitimacy, with its own parliament, army, and prime minister.

- Regional backing of the two camps—with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates supporting Dignity and Qatar, Turkey, and Sudan backing Dawn—has deepened these divisions.

- Outside efforts to train and equip Libya's security institutions have failed because of this polarization. There is no effective command structure; trainees have reverted to regional loyalties or are on indefinite leave because there is no military structure for them to join.

Recommendations for Libya's Leaders and Outside Supporters

Implement a ceasefire between Operations Dignity and Dawn and secure the withdrawal of forces taking part in those campaigns. The military units of these coalitions should move out of the major cities, and those that attacked civilians or civilian facilities should be disbanded.

Push for a transitional government that is inclusive of all factions. A face-saving power-sharing formula should encompass all politicians and include supporters of both Dignity and Dawn—if they renounce support for terrorist groups and attacks on civilian facilities.

Implement a regional pact against military interference in Libya's affairs. Outside powers should stop equipping and funding armed groups and push their allies in Libya toward reconciliation. A September 2014 noninterference pact—including Egypt, the UAE, Qatar, and Turkey—is a promising start.

Support the development of a new Libyan security architecture, national army, and police force by harnessing local security initiatives. After a broad political pact is forged, the United States and its allies should focus on supporting a civilian-controlled defense architecture, municipality-based forces, and local disarmament and demobilization efforts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frederic Wehrey is a senior associate in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He focuses on Gulf political and security affairs, Libya, and U.S. policy in the Middle East.

CarnegieEndowment.org

@CarnegieEndow

facebook.com/
CarnegieEndowment

The Libyan Crisis refers to the ongoing conflicts in Libya, beginning with the Arab Spring protests of 2011, which led to the First Libyan Civil War , foreign military intervention , and the ousting and death of Muammar Gaddafi . The civil war's aftermath and proliferation of armed groups led to violence and instability across the country, which erupted into renewed civil war in 2014 . The ongoing crisis in Libya has so far resulted in tens of thousands of casualties since the onset of violence in... FREDERIC WEHREY is a senior associate in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the author of "Ending Libya's Civil War: Reconciling Politics, Rebuilding Security." WOLFRAM LACHER is an associate in the Middle East and Africa Research Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs and the author of "Fault Lines of the Revolution." More By Frederic Wehrey. More By Wolfram Lacher. Marsad Libya Libyan Security Sector Observatory. Home. About Marsad. How does Marsad work? How to use Marsad. What is the security sector? Actors. Civil Society and Media. Civil Society. Media. Political Parties and Groups. Research Organisations. More than three years after the fall of strongman Muammar Qaddafi, Libya is in the midst of a bitter civil war rooted in a balance of weakness between the country's political factions and armed groups. With a domestic landscape torn apart by competing claims to power and with interference from regional actors serving to entrench divides, restoring stability in Libya and building a unified security structure will be difficult if not impossible without broad-based political reconciliation. To read the full paper click here.