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On October 19, 2016, the International Peace Institute (IPI), Stimson Center, and Security Council Report co-organized a workshop to assess the challenges faced by the UN in Libya. This workshop is the second in the "Applying HIPPO" series, which brings together member states and UN actors to analyze how UN policies and the June 2015 recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) can be applied to country-specific contexts. The first of this series was held in April 2016 and focused on the implementation of the HIPPO recommendations in the case of Mali.

This meeting note was drafted collaboratively by IPI, the Stimson Center, and Security Council Report. It reflects the rapporteurs' interpretation of the discussions and does not necessarily represent the views of all other participants.

# Applying the HIPPO Recommendations to Libya: Toward Strategic, Prioritized, and Sequenced Mandates

DECEMBER 2016

## Introduction

In light of the challenges faced by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the expected renewal of its mandate in December 2016, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Stimson Center, and Security Council Report organized a roundtable on the challenges faced by the UN in Libya. Held on October 19, 2016, this workshop aimed to contribute to the discussions ahead of UNSMIL's renewal by developing a shared understanding and common strategic assessment of the situation on the ground in Libya, and to use that common assessment to inform the political strategy and design of the mission, particularly by crafting a strategic, prioritized, and sequenced mandate for UNSMIL.

This was the second workshop in a collaborative series entitled "Applying HIPPO and UNSG Recommendations: Toward Strategic, Prioritized, and Sequenced Mandates." This series, organized by IPI, the Stimson Center, and Security Council Report, brings together member states and UN actors to analyze how UN policies and the June 2015 recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) can be applied to country-specific contexts.

The workshop began with a discussion of UNSMIL's political strategy. Experts presented a brief analysis of the conflict context in Libya, and participants then discussed the current elements of UNSMIL's political strategy that respond to the threats identified. The workshop then transitioned to discuss the highest priority objectives for the mission and how to sequence them in order to advance the political strategy discussed in the previous session.

## Political Strategy

Despite the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) and the appointment of the Presidency Council of the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in December 2015, the situation in Libya remains precarious. The political process is extremely fragile, and security threats are ever-present and unpredictable. The GNA's Presidency Council has yet to agree on a new cabinet list to submit to the Tobruk-based House of Representatives for its endorsement, following the rejection of a previous list on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Despite some engagement by members who had been boycotting the Presidency Council, key divisions among its members remain. In addition to the Presidency Council's political deadlock and failure to deliver basic services, it has become further polarized following the attempt by Khalifa al-Ghawi, prime minister of the Tripoli-based government supported by the General

National Congress, to seize the State Council.

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, forces led by General Khalifa Haftar, who backs the Tobruk-based House of Representatives, seized several export terminals in Libya's oil crescent that were under the control of a militia that had struck a deal with the Presidency Council. The terminals were handed over to the National Oil Corporation on September 15<sup>th</sup>, although they remain under the protection of Haftar's forces. Oil exports resumed at several terminals in October.

Terrorist actors, including elements of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS), continue to operate with impunity throughout the country. Several counterterrorist operations conducted by different armed groups with external support are reinforcing the positions of key actors in the conflict and may be undermining efforts to reach a political solution. These developments continue to challenge the authority of the UN-led political process in Libya.

In the first session of the roundtable, experts and workshop participants identified a number of key challenges facing the UN mission in Libya and its ability to effectively support the LPA and achieve its mandated activities:

- **Fragmentation:** Experts noted that the extent of social and political fragmentation within Libyan society has far surpassed what the international community expected in 2011. Libyans have proved unable to create any real political consensus or generate a sense of national unity, threatening the feasibility of a political solution to the crisis. This has in turn led to the fragmentation of security provision and an increase in the number of spoilers to the political process. Forty rival armed groups operate within the capital alone. This fragmentation at the national level reflects similar divisions at the regional and international levels. The failure of the international community to act in unison since the fall of Muammar Qaddafi has led directly to the deterioration of the political situation. Although the Security Council may have managed to maintain some consensus on Libya despite the divisions that emerged in 2011, various countries continue to support different factions in Libya, making a nationally owned political solution to the crisis elusive.
- **Legitimacy:** The UN-led political process has very little legitimacy in the eyes of the Libyan population. The agreement was negotiated by members of two legislative bodies whose legitimacy and leverage over local security actors have been questioned, and the various tracks designed to include the voices and agendas of armed groups, municipal actors, and civil society in the negotiations were largely symbolic. The limitations of the political process, in addition to a lack of progress and dividends on the ground, have led to a loss of confidence on the part of the Libyan public in the international community's ability to restore peace.
- **Services:** The legitimacy of the Presidency Council is in part hampered by its inability to change the day-to-day circumstances that Libyans are currently facing. If the Presidency Council cannot make a positive impact on electricity and fuel shortages, currency and liquidity issues, and healthcare deficiencies, it will not be able to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the population. This is perhaps most starkly the case with regards to the provision of security services. The GNA has not demonstrated an ability to improve security and keep the peace, and as such, security providers in Libya remain hyper-localized. Salafist groups, jihadist groups, tribal groups, and politically aligned armed groups operate in parallel and interconnected structures with often overlapping responsibilities. Moreover, many of the salaries of these actors with competing interests continue to be paid by the Central Bank of Libya, further complicating security sector reform.

Over the course of the deliberations, participants articulated a number of core observations that should inform UNSMIL's political strategy moving forward. The first was that despite its perceived illegitimacy, the LPA remains "the only game in town." The group achieved consensus on the strategic need for a political foundation on which to build, and most agreed that regardless of its faults, the LPA represented the best option for pursuing such a political foundation. However, the international community's approach to implementing the LPA—overlooking its flaws and having the hawkish tendency to label those unwilling to jump on board as "spoilers"—is

counterproductive and needs to be revisited and revised.

A second observation was the need for UNSMIL's political strategy to incorporate both top-down and bottom-up approaches to nation building. While the mediation process that led to the LPA theoretically attempted to include municipal and civil society voices with a view to bolster the legitimacy of the process at the grassroots level, in practice these efforts did not come to fruition. Participants recognized the need for UNSMIL's political strategy to strike a balance in supporting the political process at both the national and grassroots levels, and articulated that neither approach could succeed on its own. It was also pointed out that analysis of the situation in Libya should not overlook what still works in the society.

A third observation was the need for a "grand bargain" among the various regional and international stakeholders. Participants agreed that the international community needs to come together and develop a unified and coherent strategy for moving forward and engaging with the various Libyan national actors. Without addressing the role that regional and international actors are playing in perpetuating instability in Libya, efforts by the UN and other actors to pursue peace and stability will continue to be undermined.

A fourth observation was that traditional mechanisms for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) will not work in Libya. While participants disagreed on how best to sequence DDR and SSR initiatives, the group achieved consensus on the notion that such activities could not be implemented as they have been in other contexts with UN peace operations. Libya presents a unique challenge due to the heavy reliance on a vast array of different militia groups, with different formal and informal alliances to Libyan political factions, to provide basic security (including securing the GNA in Tripoli), combined with the threat of ISIS. When DDR and SSR are tackled, they will need to be tailored specifically to the Libyan context and achieve buy-in from all key Libyan stakeholders.

Finally, one of the main takeaways from the discussion was that UNSMIL needs to look forward, not backward. While the mission might be

inclined to attempt to mold Libya into a familiar context in order to be able to proceed with the stabilization and nation-building activities that were outlined in its post-revolution mandate, participants cautioned against such a strategy. UNSMIL's political strategy needs to meet Libyan actors where they currently are, listen to their perspectives, and move forward from there. Any attempt to reshape the Libyan context into a more familiar conflict context, or to "return" to 2011, would be futile.

## Prioritization and Sequencing

Guided by the first session's analysis of political strategy, participants proceeded to identify six priorities for UNSMIL that could be incorporated into its renewed mandate and undertaken immediately. Participants agreed that implementing these priorities first would lay the groundwork for other important peacebuilding activities later on.

- **Enhancing the legitimacy of the LPA framework:** Participants agreed that a legitimate political process is the necessary first step in addressing the crisis in Libya and identified building the legitimacy of the LPA as the highest priority for UNSMIL. In the HIPPO's spirit of political solutions needing to guide the design and deployment of UN peace operations, this implies making mediation and good offices the priority of UNSMIL's mandate. UNSMIL should use mediation and good offices to prioritize engaging with and facilitating dialogue between a far more inclusive array of Libyan political and security actors, on the one side, and relevant regional and international actors, on the other, in the political process moving forward. UNSMIL's ability to travel to different parts of Libya and to bring Libyan stakeholders to meetings in Tunis give it a comparative advantage relative to other international actors in engaging municipal, tribal, and other key local actors, without whose participation the political process will not be seen as legitimate. While UNSMIL was relocated to Tunis in 2014, a return of the mission to Libya could help with engagement of local actors, including municipalities and tribal representatives.

- **Supporting the delivery of basic services:** In the spirit of linking top-down and bottom-up approaches to improving the legitimacy of the political process and of institutions that will emerge from it, participants also identified support to actors and organizations delivering basic services as a crucial priority for UNSMIL. While the previous mandate supported basic service delivery through the national government, participants agreed that the GNA does not currently have the capacity to deliver services and that this deficit was undermining the population's confidence in the political process. Direct support, including funding and capacity building, to local-level or traditional actors with the capacity to provide basic services to swaths of the Libyan population will enhance the legitimacy of the political process.
- **Reinvigorating the constitution-making process:** In an increasingly polarized political environment, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly has been able to continue its work and to maintain its independence and integrity. In a context in which lack of ownership and legitimacy of the LPA continue to challenge its implementation, discussions on the adoption of a new constitution can be an opportunity to address some of the outstanding issues in a spirit of national reconciliation and clear Libyan ownership.
- **Supporting key Libyan institutions:** While many Libyan institutions have been destroyed by the current crisis, a few state institutions remain functional. These include the central bank (which has managed to continue dispensing salaries to state officials, including security actors), the anti-corruption commission, the national investigation authority, the National Oil Corporation, and border control authorities. Participants agreed that it is important for UNSMIL to support the institutions that remain active and neutral through simple forms of nonpolitical operational capacity development and technical assistance. Some specifically argued for support to economic institutions in order to preserve the value of Libya's assets for future generations. Others argued that such support would help to counter the abandonment narrative that is currently eroding the local population's confidence in the efforts of the international community.
- **Leveraging the lifting of sanctions and the arms embargo:** Some participants argued that hardline labeling of those who disagree with the LPA as "spoilers" is neither useful nor appropriate. Others, however, suggested that the Security Council could politically leverage the existing sanctions regime, assets freeze, and arms embargo on Libya (particularly given the repeated requests from Libyan actors to partially lift the arms embargo to be able to fight terrorism) in support of the implementation of the LPA and to shift internal dynamics. If all Libyan actors agreed on the need for sanctions to be lifted, however, they would also need to outline a clear plan for integrated command of security forces on the ground.
- **Coordinating international engagement:** Some participants felt that, considering the need for the international community to engage Libya with a cohesive and unified voice, UNSMIL should devote resources and good offices to pursuing the "grand bargain" discussed during the first session. Others argued that such a priority might extend beyond what is feasible for the mission and the special representative of the secretary-general to achieve. Ultimately, such a process relies on the political will of individual member states. Many participants felt that the Security Council should not leave this issue only to the mission and should engage directly with regional and international actors that might be undermining the prospects for a political settlement in Libya.



## Agenda

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

8:30–8:45

### Opening Remarks

Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, *Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, UN Department of Political Affairs*

8:45–10:30

### Session 1: Political Strategy

*In this session, experts will present a brief conflict analysis, outlining the major threats to peace and security in Libya. Participants will then discuss the elements of a political strategy for the mission that responds to the threats outlined in the conflict analysis. In discussing the elements of a political strategy, participants will reflect on how the members of the Security Council can set a clear direction and forge common purpose for the UN's engagement on Libya.*

**Discussion questions:** *What is the political strategy underlying the current mandate of UNSMIL? Is that political strategy still viable, or does it need to be revised? What are the primary obstacles to the successful implementation of the LPA and the establishment of the GNA in Libya? What kind of security arrangements can make this possible? What mission capabilities and approaches have proved effective at positively influencing conflict dynamics? How can the Security Council as a whole remain engaged in support of UNSMIL's political strategy?*

#### Chair

Ian Martin, *Executive Director, Security Council Report, and former member of the HIPPO*

10:30–10:45

Coffee Break

10:45–12:30

### Session 2: Prioritization and Sequencing

*In this session, participants will discuss the mission's highest priority objectives in order to advance the political strategy defined in the previous session. Participants will also discuss the sequence in which priority objectives should be undertaken in order to ensure their achievability. By sequencing and prioritizing objectives, participants will aim to ensure that the mission is not burdened by too many tasks at the same time. Participants will also aim to sequence objectives so that the mission is not asked to carry out certain tasks prematurely, before the conditions for their success are in place.*

**Discussion questions:** *Which objectives should be prioritized? What obstacles have prevented the mission from translating mandated tasks into action, and what conditions need to be in place for those tasks to be carried out? How should a new mandate for UNSMIL reflect this prioritization? What prioritized and achievable benchmarks could be set for the mission?*

#### Chair

Youssef Mahmoud, *Senior Adviser, IPI, and former member of the HIPPO*

## Participants

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Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the  
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**Mr. Arthur Boutellis**

International Peace Institute

**Mr. Victor Casanova Abos**

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**Mr. Said Conde**

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UN Support Mission in Libya

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**Ms. Peggy Vissers**  
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**Mr. Eduard Zalyalov**  
Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to  
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