

Libya after Gadhafi

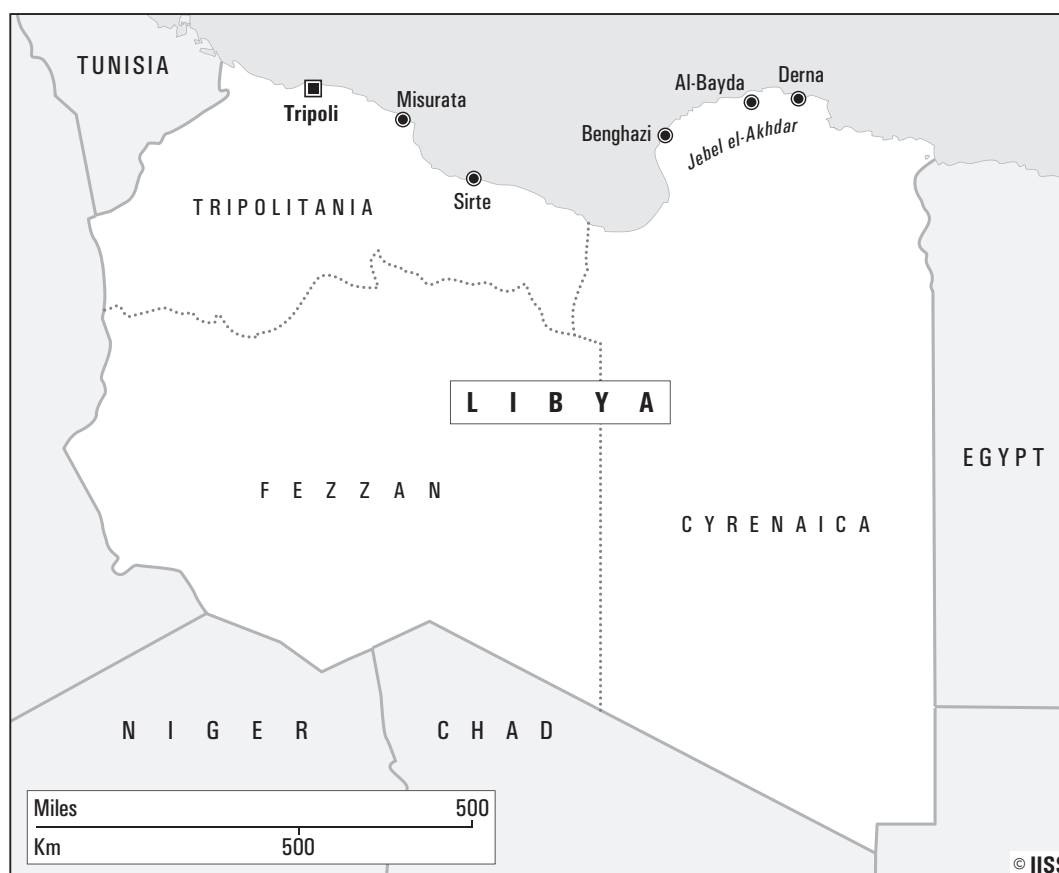
Saskia van Genugten

Libya lies between Tunisia and Egypt, the two success stories, at least for now, of the Arab Awakening. But the Libyan story has been much darker. Colonel Muammar Gadhafi and his regime have put up a remarkable resistance, withstanding as of early May both external military intervention and significant internal defections. After more than four decades of authoritarian stability, the country's future is unclear. Fears that Libya will become the next Somalia are probably over-blown, but even in the best case considerable difficulties lie ahead. Any democratic transition in Libya is likely to be protracted and fragile.

Gadhafi's legacy and Libyan identity

More than a month after France, Britain and the United States decided, with UN authority, to intervene on the side of rebel forces in the eastern province of Cyrenaica, the question of 'what the rebels want' remains open.¹ Self-proclaimed rebel leaders try to present a united front, but there are obvious disagreements and discontent. One divisive issue is the presence of major figures from the Gadhafi regime such as General Abdul-Fattah Younis, former interior minister and minister of public security. Another involves cooperation with the West. James Stavridis, NATO supreme allied commander for Europe, noted 'flickers' of al-Qaeda and Hizbullah presence among the rebels.² While the threat of extremism in eastern Libya might

Saskia van Genugten is a PhD candidate at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Bologna/Washington DC. Her dissertation focuses on Italian and British relations with Libya.



be marginal, it is nonetheless real.³ Among those training the rebel forces can be found so-called ‘Afghan’ Arabs, veteran jihadists from the Soviet–Afghan war, including former Guantanamo Bay inmates such as Sufyan Bin Qumu. What worldview predominates among the opposition remains, for the moment, unknown.

The Libyan opposition is, in fact, an alliance of strange bedfellows built around a single purpose: the removal of Gadhafi. When that is achieved, there may be little agreement on how Libyan society should be organised. Among the 31 members of the Libyan Transitional National Council that has adroitly established itself as the prime interlocutor abroad are religious conservatives, liberals and social democrats. In a well-functioning democracy, such pluralism would create a basis for vibrant debate. But to make a democracy work in the first place, there must be a minimal sense of a common history, present and destiny.

Whatever sense of Libyan national identity exists today can be attributed to Gadhafi. One of the main obsessions of his idiosyncratic rule was to

provide Libyans with a common purpose, a determined sense of national belonging and a strong feeling of citizenship. In Gadhafi's mind, 'the existence of a national identity is the basis for the survival of nations'. He developed a blueprint of what he thought Libya should look like and what the common characteristics of Libyans had to be.⁴ Beyond that, he wanted Libya to be the guiding nation for the spread of the Third Universal Theory, his own political, economic and social theories as expounded in his ubiquitous *Green Book*. One problem with Gadhafi's nation-building scheme, though, is that everything revolves around his person, raising the question of what will endure when he is gone, and what alternative identities and loyalties survived his four decades of repression.

Gadhafi's effort to 'create Libyans' was ambitious for a society that had never really seen a central authority prior to Italian colonial rule in 1911. And it was only in 1934 that Benito Mussolini decided to merge Tripolitania and Cyrenaica administratively. Libya is, indeed, an unlikely geographic entity. It stretches along 1,770 kilometres of coastline, with an essentially uninhabited hinterland. It is larger than Germany, France and the Benelux countries combined, but its only two real urban centres, Tripoli and Benghazi, are separated by 650km of desert. For most of history, these two centres have belonged to different economic and political spheres, with trade routes running north–south rather than east–west. In the Classical period, under the Greeks, Carthaginians and Romans, they remained separate. The Arab conquest brought two main tribes to modern Libya: the Beni Salim in Cyrenaica and the Beni Hilal around Tripoli. Under the Qaramanli dynasty (1711–1835) Tripolitania had a degree of self-rule from the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul, which it only lost under the threat of European colonialism. The area around Benghazi nominally fell under the same command as Tripoli at the time, but in reality the provinces were autonomous.

When the UN created Libya as an independent state in 1951, the Libyans understandably opted for a strong federal model.⁵ The new king, Idris el-Sanussi, was first and foremost the leader of the dominant religious order in Cyrenaica that had instigated resistance against the Italians.⁶ During the Second World War, Idris had sided with the British forces, and was able to extract a promise from Anthony Eden in January 1942 that 'his Majesty's

government is determined that at the end of the war the Sanussis of Cyrenaica will in no circumstances again fall under Italian domination'.⁷ This was the seed of Libyan independence; the king agreed only reluctantly to take Tripolitania under his wing as well. The monarchical flag prominently featured the crescent and the star, symbols of Cyrenaica, but made little reference to those of Tripolitania.⁸ King Idris was always most comfortable at home in Benghazi and Al-Bayda (perhaps coincidentally, the first city to fall under rebel control in the 2011 uprising).

The young and idealistic Gadhafi, 27 years old in 1969 when he took power in a coup, despised the Western-oriented monarchy that, in his eyes, kept Libya weak and dependent. Inspired by Gamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt,

Gadhafi despised the monarchy

he blamed the country's vulnerability on the inadequate sense of national identity. Once in power, he invested heavily in breaking local habits and allegiances and replacing them with national traditions and loyalty. This involved the usual rewriting of history textbooks, the elimination of contradictory ideas from public life and the wide use of banners, billboards, stamps and television shows to get the

new message across. The Berber minority was directly oppressed, but more indirect methods were also used. Gadhafi successfully altered, for example, the customs of several tribes in the extremely conservative desert oasis of Ghadames by forcing them to leave their traditional homes and settle in a new, modern purpose-built town. This eroded, among other things, the extreme gender separation that had traditionally prevailed.

But Libyans existed only as a blueprint in Gadhafi's mind. The majority of the population was unenthusiastic about his efforts to create a national identity, only going along because of the cradle-to-grave subsidies made possible by the country's oil wealth, combined with coercion. In theory, education and health care were free and everyone had the right to own a car and a house. Eventually, around 70% of the population was on the state payroll. This was an extremely powerful mechanism for control and manipulation, punishment and reward.

Gadhafi thus made himself and his philosophy the focal point of a Libyan national identity. The rebels are still united by Gadhafi: a shared hatred of

him, his eccentric theories and his regime's repressive practices. But below the surface Libya may still be fragmented, reflecting the pre-Gadhafi order and hosting contradictory views about the politics, economics and social structure of a post-Gadhafi world.

Uncivil society

Gadhafi's oppression fragmented any possible opposition, and no clear organisation or leadership has emerged in the recent uprising. Moreover, while the consensus is that a silent majority opposes Gadhafi, as long as he remains in power, it is difficult to determine how much genuinely pro-Gadhafi sentiment there is or what has been going on behind the facade.

But audible and at least semi-organised opposition never died out entirely. In the first decades after Gadhafi's coup, resistance was found mainly among the old pro-monarchy establishment, the Islamic clergy who had been associated with it, and tribal leaders. To be sure, new elements have arisen, including secular republicans, militant political Islamists ranging from the Muslim Brotherhood to al-Qaeda affiliates, and 'generation Facebook'. But recent developments still reflect historical patterns of opposition. Gadhafi privileged his native Sirte basin and the Tripoli region over the eastern parts of the country. The eastern province of Cyrenaica has always been more outspoken against any central authority. This less urbanised region was more closely tied with the monarchy and religious establishment.

Gadhafi overthrew both institutions. He tried the king *in absentia* and sentenced him to death, and got rid of those civil servants who supported the monarchy through 'anti-corruption' investigations as soon as their expertise was no longer needed. He declared the role of the ulema obsolete and unwarranted, but to appeal to the devout masses, he incorporated Islamic terms and concepts into his own rhetoric and tried to give Islam a nationalist twist, providing his own interpretation of the scriptures and slightly changing the Islamic calendar.⁹

When the velvet-glove approach didn't work, Gadhafi did not hesitate to resort to violence. During the 1980s, for example, assertive and violent opposition, some based on militant Islamism, began to emerge in the Jebel

el-Akhdar (Green Mountains) east of Benghazi. Gadhafi responded with a ruthless crackdown, including air strikes and public hangings. Such oppression silenced many, but encouraged others to step up their efforts. In 1995 a militant organisation, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), announced its formation, and the following year staged a failed assassination attempt on Gadhafi. Like another group, the Libyan Islamic Martyr's Movement, LIFG could build on the experience and expertise of returning jihadi fighters from the Soviet–Afghan war.

Despite several impressive operations, the LIFG was never really a success story. The regime was stronger, and more cold-blooded, than they

*The regime
was stronger
and more
cold-blooded*

anticipated.¹⁰ Moreover, after 9/11 and the rehabilitation of Libya by the West, Gadhafi could count on Western support to combat terrorism.¹¹ Many LIFG members were co-opted by the regime in exchange for economic compensation and rehabilitation. Efforts by Gadhafi's son Saif al-Islam and his Gadhafi Development Foundation to rehabilitate these fighters paid off. Hundreds of LIFG members have been released from prison since 2007

and in 2009 the LIFG leadership reviewed its strategy and renounced violence.¹² More recently, with programmes targeting youth unemployment in Cyrenaica, Saif's foundation has attempted to undermine the fertile ground of youth misery for terrorist recruiting. (Some have also attributed authoritarian motives to these programmes).

Many opponents ended up in prison, were killed or simply disappeared, as in the case of Mansur Rachid el-Kikhia of the Libyan National Alliance in 1993. The Abu Selim prison, and a massacre there in 1998, became symbols of the regime's brutality. In the face of such harsh repression, much of the opposition relocated abroad, with London perhaps the most vibrant centre. Monarchical movements such as the Libyan Constitutional Union were based there, as was the secularist and republican National Salvation Front for Libya. They were later joined by, amongst others, members of the LIFG. But even outside Libya, organising opposition remained difficult, as intimidation continued and Gadhafi publicly advocated a policy of killing such 'stray dogs' abroad. Musa Kusa, head of the Libyan intelligence agency

until 2009, was long responsible for the execution of such orders. (In March 2011 he fled Tripoli to London and announced his resignation as foreign minister and a member of the Gadhafi regime, without explicitly joining the opposition).

For many years, the opposition abroad remained a scattered collection of fringe groups. But it is partly due to such groups that the 2011 uprising has been more effective than previous ones. In 2005, seven opposition organisations joined forces in London, forming the National Conference for the Libyan Opposition. While some groups later withdrew from the conference and issued separate statements on the current rebellion, most groups decided to give their silent support. Several helped organise the 'Day of Rage' on 17 February 2011, two years to the day after protests against the Danish Mohammed cartoons developed into significant anti-Gadhafi demonstrations.

The Libyan Transitional National Council has several links with the opposition abroad, but also with the Gadhafi regime. It is chaired by Mustafa Muhammed Abdul Jalil, who resigned as Gadhafi's minister of justice in February 2011. Recently, the emergence on the political stage of the exiled heir to the throne, Prince Muhammed el-Sanussi, who is also based in London, has complicated the situation. While he claims to have good relations with the Transitional Council, he stresses its transitional nature while he campaigns for a restoration of the 1951 monarchical constitution.¹³

Both those linked to the Gadhafi regime and long-term exiles (especially in the West) face real difficulties in building domestic legitimacy. Showing that they can control events on the ground without resorting to Gadhafi-like repression is a challenge. A balance has to be struck between pluralism and democracy on the one hand, and preventing degeneration of the opposition into infighting on the other. A balance likewise must be struck with regard to the 30 or so tribal groupings with political significance. The uprising has upset the prevailing balance, and a demise of Gadhafi's regime will do so even more.¹⁴ Any transition of power in Libya will, moreover, be burdened by the legacy of mental and physical repression, human-rights abuse and civil war. The risk of revenge and of a Jacobin reaction is real, and reconciliation and trust-building will be difficult.

Institutional shortcomings

Freed from authoritarianism and its supporting structures, Libyans will be exposed to an unprecedented political freedom. There is no constitution in place, nor are there agreed-upon rules for a post-Gadhafi order. Few citizens have been exposed to serious and meaningful democratic processes. The existing Libyan state, institutionally speaking, is an empty space. In theory this could be an advantage, but it is more likely to be an additional complication on the road to democratisation and renewed stability, especially since there are institutions on more local and tribal levels that are considered more legitimate.

In the past 40 years, Gadhafi has used Libyan society as a laboratory to experiment with political structures. A little more than a year after his 1969 revolutionary coup, he announced his ideal of direct popular rule, later elaborated upon in his utopian ideas around a 'state of the masses'. State organisations had to be based on the 'authority of the people' to be as close as possible to a pure form of democracy. Parliaments, political parties and other collectivities had to be rejected. Instead of representing the people, such institutions would make them 'into the prey of instruments of government that compete over the people's goodwill'. He continued:

The principle of elected representation was advocated by philosophers, intellectuals and writers in times past, when people were unwittingly herded like sheep by sultans, emperors and conquerors ... After the triumph of republicanism and the beginning of the era of the masses, it is unthinkable ... an obsolete experiment. Power should be entirely for all the people.¹⁵

But how to implement such utopian ideas seems to have been a mystery to Gadhafi himself. What followed was a proliferation of experiments and overlapping authorities. The resulting uncertainty created a social environment that could be exploited by divide-and-rule tactics. Exchanging one political, administrative or economic structure or policy for another became the norm. Over the years, as the number of bodies multiplied, monitoring capacity increased and reporting on dissident behaviour became a core task.

This experimentation started in January 1971, when Gadhafi announced the creation of popular congresses that would elect the country's leader directly. A few months later he reversed this decision, arguing that he had overestimated the ability of his fellow Libyans to be politically engaged. In June of the same year, he created a nationwide body, the Libyan Arab Socialist Union, with a core task of helping Libyans develop political awareness. Only then could they face up to the task of becoming a vanguard of his universal theory. The union was not a political party, but rather a discussion forum for each and every citizen. Within a year, over 300,000 of a potential one million eligible citizens had reportedly signed up. But despite this apparent popularity, Gadhafi soon lost his appetite for the organisation and instead announced, in 1973, a cultural revolution: he urged his people to seize the bureaucracies and govern and defend themselves through popular committees and People's Militia.

Next, a mystifying structure of 600 Basic People's Congresses emerged, based on the framework of the Third Universal Theory, comprising all Libyans over 18 years of age. Still later, Revolutionary Committees would take over real power from these Basic People's Congresses, while cleansing committees were set up to control corruption. Basic Popular Commands, based on loyal tribal leaders, followed to balance the Revolutionary Committees and 'reestablish control' (in other words, to be above all existing bodies).¹⁶ In some areas, where the resistance to Gadhafi's rule was strongest (including the cities of Misurata, Derna and Benghazi), additional institutions appeared to make monitor and denounce the opposition.¹⁷

This experimentation with political structures may in part have been based at first on a genuine desire to create a utopian society. But the atmosphere quickly became one of continual instability, flux and uncertainty, everywhere except among the highest ranks. Gadhafi's revolutionary structures became a mechanism of control through which he could move civil servants from one administrative or executive office to the next to prevent vested interests from taking root and interest groups from solidifying.

Applying lessons learned from his own 1969 coup, Gadhafi made sure that the dynamics of controlled chaos reached as far as the defence community. A national army capable of being an alternative power centre would

not be allowed to emerge. Instead, the regular army was to remain a secondary player, balanced by other, competing forces, including Gadhafi's personal militia, several loyal tribes and, at times, foreign mercenaries. A similar logic was applied to the intelligence services. (There are believed to be at least seven, tasked not only with monitoring civilians, but also with keeping a close watch on each other).

In theory this social setup created a vibrant political grass roots where people could discuss and debate everything (except Gadhafi, Islam and national unity). But this was directly linked to the state, inhibiting development of comparable civil society institutions. Such political debate, moreover, was entirely irrelevant; a tight-knit group of high-ranked officials, and ultimately Gadhafi himself, decided all significant legislation and decrees. In times of relative peace, this system was slightly relaxed, only to regroup in times of crisis, when those whose loyalty was questionable were either pushed out or relegated to less influential posts. The greater the threat, the more Gadhafi fell back on direct family and tribal affiliations, other kinship relations and his most trusted advisers, the so-called *ahl al-cheima* ('people of the tent').

The absence of legitimate and stable state institutions will be a major challenge for Libya's transition, whatever form it takes. For a democratic transition, the inefficient bureaucracy will have to be drastically reformed and civil society will need to be strengthened. Libya has the financial resources to create a well-functioning state, but rentier states have a poor track record in building efficient and democratic institutions.

International involvement

For all their enthusiasm, the rebels have proved too unorganised, too untrained and too inexperienced to bring down Gadhafi's regime themselves. While all actors agree that Libyans should decide Libya's fate, the future of Libya will in fact be determined by the level of international commitment.

Libya is no stranger to competing overtures from major global players, even before the 1959 discovery of commercial quantities of high-quality petroleum. In 1943, after the Italians were defeated by the Allies, most of Libya came under the authority of the British Military Administration; the

French controlled the southern province of Fezzan to expand their sphere of influence in West Africa. In the early post-war period, Libya's future was a subject of great-power bargaining, with Britain, France and Italy all wanting to control a share, either for strategic or prestige reasons. With no agreement on partition in sight, however, the question was referred to the UN. The General Assembly decided to establish an independent kingdom, albeit one subject to strong British and American influence.

Economically dependent on the West, the monarchy could never be anything other than pro-Western. Gadhafi justified his coup by claiming to bring Libya true independence, but despite his anti-colonial and anti-imperialist rhetoric he has never been able to shake off dependence on the West. There were symbolic gestures: he demanded that the Americans and British give up their military bases on Libyan territory (the monarchy had made similar requests in its final years in power). More surprising was the expulsion of the remaining Italian community in 1970. But behind the scenes, less visible forms of cooperation were stepped up substantially, for example with the Italian oil and gas group ENI.¹⁸

*Libya was
the subject of
great-power
bargaining*

History has given Libyans a substantial distrust of foreign intervention. Even today, the issue of 'foreign forces' is debated within both the pro- and anti-Gadhafi camps. But with state income derived mainly from oil and gas exports, no Libyan leader will be able to withstand outside pressure for long. Having resources others are thirsty for does give the Libyan authorities leverage through the granting of privileged positions to particular actors. The ability to play one state against another has meant that embargos and sanctions have never really worked.

Good relations with the Libyan leadership can bring external actors many benefits, but backing the wrong horse can create many problems. Some months before Gadhafi's 1969 coup, the monarchy's main ally, Britain, decided that protecting it was no longer a priority. In fact, by the end of 1968, British officials had expressed the view that a change of regime might better preserve UK interests.¹⁹ The British authorities had little confidence in Crown Prince Hasan al-Rida. Expecting a coup from within the military,

they built up ties with a senior army officer whose objective appeared to be to overthrow the regime after the death of King Idris.²⁰ The British lobbied for a mission to train the Libyan army, with the real aim of controlling developments within it. But London was unpleasantly surprised when a rival group of officers led by Gadhafi staged a coup first. Gadhafi soon showed himself unwilling to grant Britain the privileged position it had held during the monarchy. Instead, he decided to favour the French, offering them commercial opportunities, including sales of their *Mirage* warplanes.

In the four decades that followed, playing competing European interests against each other became a profitable game for the Gadhafi regime. In today's more plural world, a new Libyan regime could be easily tempted to do the same, though today's winners need not be Western. Pleasing the likely winners of the current conflict is thus even more important.

* * *

Sixty years ago, a UN official charged with drawing up an economic plan for the new Libyan state concluded that the country combined 'all the obstacles to development that can be found anywhere: geographic, economic, political, sociological, technological ... If Libya can be brought to a state of sustained growth, there is hope for every country in the world.'²¹ The same could be said today about prospects for a Libyan transition to democracy or at least a move away from Gadhafism. Since independence, the problem of financial resources has been for the most part solved, but other problems remained and several new ones have emerged. Libya remains in many ways an artificial construct, to which Gadhafi has added a history of political uncertainty and institutional experimentation. Libya has real potential – it could be the next Norway rather than the next Somalia – if its resources are used wisely. But those who take responsibility for the necessary nation-building, state-building and trust-building need to be aware that they are building on sand.

Notes

- 1 This question has been asked in many important forums, but there is no clear answer. For example, at the end of March, US Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg acknowledged that little was known about the opposition and that the United States was in the process of 'growing to know them better'. Similarly, in early April, the EU sent a delegation as a 'listening exercise' to Benghazi to get a better idea of to whom support was directed. See 'Assessing the Situation in Libya', US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 31 March 2011, and 'EU Envoys to Meet Rebels in Libya's Benghazi', Reuters, 4 April 2011, <http://af.reuters.com/article/libyaNews/idAFLDE7331A120110404>.
- 2 Testimony of Admiral James G. Stavridis, US Senate Committee on Armed Services, 29 March 2011, archived webcast available at [http://armed-services.senate.gov/Webcasts/2011/03 March/03-29-11 Webcast.htm](http://armed-services.senate.gov/Webcasts/2011/03%20March/03-29-11%20Webcast.htm).
- 3 This can be seen in WikiLeaks reports and the so-called Sinjar records, a collection of personnel files of al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia found in 2007. They showed that eastern Libya was a main source of foreign fighters, with many youngsters registering as voluntary suicide bombers. For an assessment of jihadist factions amongst the rebels in Cyrenaica, see Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, 'The Enemies of our Enemy', *Foreign Policy*, 30 March 2011. http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/03/30/the_enemies_of_our_enemy. For WikiLeaks, see for example Cable 08Tripoli120, 'Extremism in Eastern Libya', 15 February 2008, US Embassy Tripoli.
- 4 Moammar Gadhafi, *The Green Book*, Part 3: 'The Social Basis of the Third Universal Theory' (Tripoli: World Center for the Study and Research of the Green Book, 2009 edition).
- 5 In 1963, the king decided to unify the provincial structures, based on demands by international oil companies for harmonisation of regulatory and taxation laws.
- 6 For an overview of the political cleavages in Libyan society since the Italian colonial period, see Moncef Djaziri 'Clivages partisans et parties politiques en Libye', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, nos 111-12, 2006, pp. 119-37, <http://remmm.revues.org/index2866.html?file=1>.
- 7 House of Commons Debates, Vol 377 (1942), cols. 77-78 as quoted in. Majid Khadduri, *Modern Libya: a study in political development*, 1963, p. 35.
- 8 The dominant colours and symbols of the traditional Tripolitanian flag were green, light blue with a palm tree, and a star or three half moons.
- 9 Ray Takeyh, 'Qadhafi and the Challenge of Militant Islam', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3, Summer 1998, p. 160.
- 10 For an overview of the Islamist opposition and the regime's strategy to eradicate it, see Luis Martinez, *The Libyan Paradox* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 56-83.
- 11 The US National Security Strategy of 2002, for example, stated that regional

- partners were encouraged in their efforts to isolate terrorists. When a threat was localised, the United States would 'help ensure that a state has the military, law enforcement, political and financial tools necessary to finish the task'. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss3.html>.
- ¹² US Department of State, 'Background Note: Libya', 17 November 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5425.htm>.
- ¹³ The European Parliament received Prince Muhammed on 20 April 2011. See 'Heir to Libyan Throne under Brussels Spotlight', *Euractiv*, 21 April 2011, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/east-mediterranean/heir-libyan-throne-brussels-spotlight-news-504222>.
- ¹⁴ While Libya is believed to host some 140 tribes or extended families, only some 30 are believed to have political influence. Gadhafi's own tribe (the Gadhafda) is rather small in number, so his regime was propped up by tribal alliances, particularly with the Magariha and the Warfala. The most important tribe in the east is the Misurata, especially strong in Benghazi and Derna. For a tribal map of Libya, see Abdulsattar Hatitah, 'Libyan Tribal Map: Network of Loyalties that will Determine Qaddafi's Fate', *Asharq Alawsat*, 22 February 2011, <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=24257>.
- ¹⁵ Gadhafi, *The Green Book*, Part 1, 'The Solution to the Problem of Democracy', pp. 11–12.
- ¹⁶ Moncef Ouannes, 'Chronique Politique – Libye', *Annuaire de l'Afrique du nord*, vol. 37, 1998, p. 173.
- ¹⁷ There was similar uncertainty in the administration. In 1983 a system of 42 districts (*baladiyah*) was introduced, reduced four years later to 25 districts and reorganised in 1995 into 13 districts (*shabiyat*), increased to 26 three years later and to 32 still later, only to be reduced to 22 again in 2007. In 1992, Gadhafi divided the country into 1,500 municipalities (*mahallat*), which were to be run by the Basic People's Congresses.
- ¹⁸ 'For the development of ties between Italy and Libya against the background of apparent hostility, see for example the historical archive of the Italian oil and gas company ENI (Direzione Estera, BA II 3, UDC 203, NUA 1717).
- ¹⁹ UK Public Records Office, FCO 39/452, Speares to Sarell, London, 9 January 1969; quoted in Massimiliano Cricco, *Il petrolio dei Senussi: Stati Uniti e Gran Bretagna in Libia dall'indipendenza a Gheddafi* (Firenze: Polistampa, 2002), pp. 153–4.
- ²⁰ In a memorandum of October 1968 the British agreed to supply new weaponry to the Libyan army. It was emphasised that the crown prince was not to be informed about the deal (not even after he became regent); the agreement was to be directly with the army and Colonel Abdul Aziz Shalhi.
- ²¹ Benjamin H. Higgins, 'The Economic and Social Development of Libya', UN Technical Assistance Program, 1953, p. 37, as quoted in Dirk J. Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).