

The Political Belief System of Qaddafi: Power Politics and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

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1. Introduction: Who is Mu'ammār Qaddafi?

Some have called: him a madman,¹ a strongman,² the Fifth Horseman,³ a terrorist,⁴ a psychopathic ruler,⁵ an oxymoron,⁶ an enigma,⁷ a pariah.⁸ Others have called him a thinker,⁹ a visionary,¹⁰ a brother leader,¹¹ a charismatic leader,¹² and even a prophet.¹³ For instance, to Professor Francis Dessart, who is the IAWP (International Association for World Peace) Permanent Representative to UNESCO, Qaddafi is "A man of faith and tradition, Mu'ammār Qaddafi cannot be classified according to the criteria commonly admitted. If you search for him on the Right, you will find him on the Left, since he preaches in many ways a renovation with the air of revolution. But if you look for him on the Left, you risk finding him on the Right, because this sincere mystic is tied to more than one traditional value. It is not Qaddafi who is senseless; it is the terms that are obsolete, and upon which are based the subjective judgements of foreign observers who are more interested in polemic than in the truth."¹⁴

At the Second World Mathaba Conference held in Tripoli on 15 March 1986, Minister Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the "Nation of Islam" in America, introduced Qaddafi as follows:

The Libyan Arab people's collective need for freedom produced a leader who was born to serve the masses...when a people is oppressed, the need for freedom produces a longing which in turn produces a leader....The oppressor is always watching for that leader.... They know that the people will never be free until they produce a leader with the vision to create the revolution and see it through to its end. Such a leader is Mu'ammār Qaddafi... He is more than just the Leader of the Libyan people, more than the Leader of the struggling Arab nation, more than the symbol of hope and freedom for the oppressed of Africa, Asia and Latin America. For he is, above all, the Leader of the World Revolution. A man of determination and courage, who is carrying the torch of real liberty not just for his own people but for the people of the entire world. These are not just mere words or idle phrases but praises, because unlike many of this century's heads of state who have laid claim to the mantle of "revolutionary leader," Mu'ammār Qaddafi's actions and life have earned him the title of Leader of the World Revolution. Many men have apportioned to themselves the titles of Leader and Revolutionary, but few reflect the great responsibilities of such appellations in even the smallest aspects of their lives. Mu'ammār Qaddafi is a truly unique man, a man of a different calibre, a man whose example and thoughts inspire the struggling oppressed masses and haunt the oppressors. This is why he is loved by the peoples of the world but feared by the ruling, exploiting cliques who know that his words and actions expose them for what they are.¹⁵

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In Mirella Bianco's book *A Voice from the Desert*, the Italian writer portrays Qaddafi in glowing colours, whose singularity was apparent even as a child. His seriousness and taciturnity, she reports, marked him off other children. "Yet," the reader is assured, "his stern countenance was always tempered with an inquisitive smile. He was an only son to a family who lived in the desert, far from the city and its demands and benefits. Young Mu'ammār seldom played with his cousins; rather he was always lost in thought about one thing or another."¹⁶ Bianco, intent on outdoing other Qaddafi eulogists, actually compares him with the Prophet Muhammad, both of them being "Bedouins of a similar desert background". According to her, they both share common love for freedom, physical endurance, and an ideal of equality in society. They are both given to meditation, and share the belief that no real change in society can occur without a spiritual transformation. Both share a feeling of urgency in having to convey their vision of the universe to others. They are both teachers with unshakable certainty in the rightness of their convictions. They both possess unusual courage and an indomitable determination to pursue their mission. Finally, they are products of similar moments of transition and change in human history.

The panegyric marches on unchecked to the end of this "biography," which concludes with these resounding words: "The future will decide whether Mu'ammār Qaddafi is to be simply a shooting-star across the skies of the Arab World from the Atlantic to the Gulf, or whether he is to be the bearer of its message to mankind."¹⁷

And when Qaddafi himself was asked about how he was brought up, he responded by stating that:

It was difficult in terms of the circumstances and the environment under which I lived. Bedouin life is mobile; the strictness of upbringing therefore comes from the severity of these circumstances. But socially I was free. We were Bedouins enjoying full freedom, and we lived amongst nature and everything was absolutely pure, in its true self, in front of us. We lived on the land and there was nothing between us and the sky. Bedouin society made me discover the natural laws, natural relationships, life in its true nature and what suffering was like before life knew oppression, coercion and exploitation. This enabled me to discover the truths that I have presented in the *Green Book*. It gave me a chance, which has never been given to anybody else in my position. I have known and lived life in its very primitive stages. Because of that early life, a very simple life, I have lived life in its various stages right up to this modern age of imperialism when life became very complicated, very abnormal and unnatural...I had a general idea how to make the masses free, how to make man happy. After that, things started to get clearer.¹⁸

So what are we to make of Qaddafi? Is he a great man, a superman, a near-prophet, as described above, or something else? In an attempt to assess his character and achievements, this article will try to address the following three questions:

1. What is the essential nature of Qaddafi's politics?
2. What are his main goals?
3. How does he pursue his goals?

2. What is the Essential Nature of Qaddafi's Politics?

Qaddafi sets much store by power; the essence of politics is the struggle for power, and he has emphasized this on many occasions and in numerous speeches. In one of his first speeches, addressed to the students of Gharyounis University at Benghazi in May 1975, he told his audience that "...I have become the leader of this revolution by force, and you should know that I will not leave it except by force..."¹⁹ He also concludes his *Green Book*, Part I, *The Solution of the Problem of Democracy*, published in English in 1976, with the following statement: "Theoretically, this is the genuine democracy. But realistically, the strong always rule, i.e. the stronger part in the society is the one that rules."²⁰

3. What are Qaddafi's main goals?

Qaddafi believes in nationalism,²¹ unity,²² socialism²³ and heroism.²⁴ The first of his pursuits is Arab nationalism, the constant element proclaimed by Qaddafi as his main goal. He has based this Arab nationalism on a glorification of Arab history and on a culture that conceives of the Arabic-speaking world as a single, Arab nation. He considers Libya as the heart, the vanguard, and the hope of this nation hence the custodian of Arab nationalism. He also sees himself as Nasser's heir, and claims that Nasser designated him the trustee of Arab nationalism.

His second goal is Arab unity. He believes that the ultimate purpose of the Libyan Revolution of 1 September 1969 was to embark on the process of Arab unification. Within weeks, of this event, Qaddafi did in fact take the first tangible steps toward realizing such unity, amongst other things, offering Libya to Nasser as an instrument to be used for implementing his Pan-Arab vision. Part I of the Constitutional Proclamation of 11 December 1969, described Libya as an Arab, democratic republic whose people constituted part of the Arab Nation (*al-umma al-'arabiyya*) and whose objective was Arab unity.²⁵ To Qaddafi, unity between the Arab counties is not just an option but is, as he stated in a speech on 16 September 1969, "an inevitable necessity...a decisive historical reaction to the challenges of Zionism and colonialism...necessary to protect the achievements of the Arab nation."²⁶ Since 1969, he has made around fourteen attempts to unite Libya with Arab and non-Arab countries, all of them ending in failure. For instance, on successive occasions he has tried to unite Libya with Egypt, with Sudan, with Syria, with Tunisia, with Algeria, with Morocco, with South Yemen and with Chad. He has proclaimed that "Arab geopolitical unification is an absolute necessity, and there is no way for any Arab state other than unity."²⁷

His third goal is socialism, which he regards as the only solution to the economic problems facing the world today. Indeed, the term freedom, itself, according to Qaddafi, is closely related to socialism. Thus in a speech delivered on Tripoli Radio, 16 October 1976, he said that the people who have long been denied social justice and robbed of their wealth will accept no alternative to socialism.

Qaddafi's approach to socialism took a clearer form with the publication, in 1978, of Part II of his *Green Book, The Solution to the Economic Problems: Socialism*, in which he argues that the economic problem still exists "because the wage worker is like a slave to the master who hires him, even if the state owns the enterprise and the income from it goes to the community (as under Marxist systems). No-one, Qaddafi continues, can be free if somebody else controls what he needs to live a comfortable life. Everyone is entitled to a house, a vehicle and an income, but he should not work for wages, since he would then be under the control of his employer; nor should he have an extra house to rent out. Ownership of land is specifically prohibited, because land is the property of society and not the individual. The accumulation of savings beyond a level necessary to satisfy individual needs is considered exploitative, on the assumption that all societies suffer from a scarcity of economic goods, hence accumulating wealth beyond one's immediate needs is at the expense of others."²⁸

His fourth and final goal is to have himself considered as the saviour of the Arab nation. He considers himself a hero, defining such a person in his *Green Book*, Part II, thus: "Heroes in history are persons who have made sacrifices for others."²⁹ He conceives a leader as being a saviour of his people, one who should guide and encourage them to take over the instruments of government. He is always proud to tell the story of his alleged confrontation with the English language inspector, in the town of Misurata one day early in 1962, in order to show his heroism and defiance. Concerning this, Frederick Muscat, in his book *My President, my Son*, describes Qaddafi's story as follows:

All young men in the class rose to their feet with a precision that seemed almost mechanical. They all rose together, except him [Qaddafi]. The door opened inwards and crashed against the classroom wall as the English inspector Johnston, who was in charge of the English Language course, floated in, self-assured and arrogant. He eyed the students with a discerning look on his face, and his gaze fell on Qaddafi, still rooted in his seat, immobile as the rest of the class stood uneasily to attention. Johnston's stare remained glued on the defiant young man... Qaddafi glared back and then started to tear some of the papers on the desk... They continued to stare and glare at each other for some time, and then Qaddafi began waving a key-chain at him.... Out of the corner of his eye, Johnston could just make out the minute portrait of Nasser hanging at the end of the chain, and slowly, it was becoming clearer and clearer to him what the young man meant by his attitude ... Johnston had fully and completely understood the challenge, and he meant to break that student down, there and then. He approached him and abruptly ... "Boy, do I dislike you!" Qaddafi replied that he feeling was a mutual one... In a blind outrage, Johnston ordered Qaddafi out of the classroom. Qaddafi felt that it was a slap in the face and replied: "You are the one who will have to leave. How dare you dismiss me in my own homeland, you colonialist." Qaddafi was called to the office of the headmaster of the school.... The Headmaster advised Qaddafi never to react in an emotional state of mind. "Do as Nasser does," he told him.³⁰

Whether fact or fiction, the story is a reflection of how Qaddafi has projected himself as a hero and a man of courage. Since Qaddafi succeeded in his coup d'etat on 1 September 1969, he has believed that in order to achieve Arab unification, the

Arab people need a leader, and he thinks that he is that leader, the new Nasser. To achieve this goal, Qaddafi started shortly after his successful coup by designating himself leader of the Revolutionary Command Council. With the suspension of the Libyan Constitution and the outlawing of political parties in 1969, Qaddafi went on to make himself the undisputed leader of his country.³¹ Since then, he has considered himself as the leader or the "guru" of the revolution, the one who oversees the philosophical direction of the nation and ensures that it is on the right path. He also sees himself as the Bismarck of the Arabs, one whose mission is to reconstitute the deep-rooted identity of the Arab nation.

4. How does Qaddafi Pursue his Goals?

In pursuit of his goals, Qaddafi has had recourse to a variety of means and tactics, regardless of whether they are legal, moral, humane, or not. These will be considered here under six headings.

(a) The Role of Need in Human life

A Bedouin by birth, Qaddafi was reared to believe in an old Bedouin saying, "If you starve your dog, it will follow you," one that the Bedouins used in training their dogs for herding sheep. Unfortunately, Qaddafi has taken this maxim out of its context and has applied it as a guiding principle, in this case, to the Libyan people. He has understood this saying to mean that the more you make people feel that they need you, the better will they toe the line, a manipulative technique consistent with several observations that he makes in his *Green Book*. Thus he has written that "Man's freedom is lacking if somebody else controls what he needs... a person in need is a slave indeed."³² Armed with this manipulative weapon, Qaddafi's belief in the role of need has led him to use it very effectively to control the Libyan people. For instance, he has used it to create conflict between property owners and tenants, as he explains in the *Green Book*: "The house is a basic need of both the individual and the family. Therefore, it should not be owned by others. There is no freedom for a man who lives in another's house, whether he pays rent or not...no-one has the right to build a house additional to his own and that of his heirs, for the purpose of renting it out, because the house represents another person's need, and building it for the purpose of rent is an attempt to control the needs of that man and, and freedom is only latent for a person in need."³³ This declaration by Qaddafi encouraged many of those tenants to refuse paying their rents to the owners, thus causing a lot of friction, especially in large cities such as Tripoli and Benghazi.

(b) Crushing opponents.

The second tactic used by Qaddafi to pursue his goals is crushing his opponents, and his success in retaining power can be attributed to his brutal repression here. He himself has been the target of at least nineteen attempts at coups d'etat, and there have been several reported assassination attempts since his coming to power in

1969. He has stated in numerous speeches that the enemies of the revolution are the enemies of the people, and they have to be crushed by any means necessary. He considers every one who has opposed him within Libya as an enemy of the people, and external enemies as the enemies of the revolution. From his first day in power, he has attacked the major collaborators with, what he called the old regime, labelled enemies of the people and imprisoned or expelled, and this policy culminated in his speech of 15 April 1973 at Zwara, one which came as a surprise even to his Revolutionary Command Council, in which he expounded "Five points for the continuation of the Revolution."

In the early eighties (especially from 1980 to 1982) Qaddafi directed what he called the Revolutionary Committees and Revolutionary Guards to act against the critics and opponents of the Revolution. Their brief was startlingly simple: to get rid of the enemies of the Revolution or as Qaddafi put it, "to liquidate stray dogs."³⁴ In February 1980, his Revolutionary Committees called for the liquidation of Libyan dissidents living abroad, after which "hit squads" were sent abroad to silence opponents. These Committees and Guards have used a wide range of tactics, with boundless zeal. They have periodically "carried out crackdowns on opponents at home and despatched hit squads to murder Libyan exiles who have criticized Qaddafi in Europe or in the United State."³⁵ "Qaddafi has proudly acknowledged killing more than a dozen of these "stray dogs" since 1980."³⁶

Qaddafi claims that he has the right to crush his opponents because they are the enemies to the Libyan masses and the Revolution, not because he wants to remain in power. "It is shameful, he has said, "for a man individually to defend the authority he practises. It is a crime if one kills others in order to remain in power, but it is honourable to defend the authority of the people and to kill in order to make it possible for the Revolution to triumph. Therefore, we will not be ashamed when we carry our arms in the streets for the sake of the Revolution, and we will never hesitate to crush any attempt that opposes the authority of the people."³⁷ According to the British Broadcasting Corporation, Qaddafi has said that "we will corner the traitors here, and we will trample them underfoot, and we will physically liquidate them. With their blood, we will wash off the disgrace they have left on our soil". He has labelled Libyan exiles as "stray dogs" and has called for their elimination. Eleven exiles living in Europe were killed in 1980-81 by Libyan agents, and the countries in which these acts occurred justifiably condemned the Libyan regime.

(c) The Politics of Fear.

The third tactic used by Qaddafi to pursue his goals is what may be called the politics of fear. Fear is, on one hand, Qaddafi's main enemy, and on the other hand, it is his best friend. He recognizes that fear is a potent factor in politics, and he knows where, how, and when to use it. He has become adept in scaring the weak and avoid the wrath of the powerful. Fear makes Qaddafi trust almost no-one, to the extent that, within Libya, he never sleeps in the same place two nights in a row and does not eat food prepared and served by people he does not know. Because of

an obsessive fear of losing in a contest, he backs down whenever he feels that he is in real danger. For instance, when President Ronald Reagan came to office in the United States in 1981, the new administration determined on restoring American international reputation and prestige. What was needed by Reagan, as Jack Anderson has stated, "was an enemy that could be easily defeated, that was not too closely allied with Moscow, and whom the American people could hate." Libya seemed like an appropriate candidate. The only problem was that though Americans detested Qaddafi, they were not necessarily in favour of military action. In August 1981, the United States sent its Sixth Fleet into waters and airspace claimed by Libya. The U.S. claimed that it was merely asserting its right to use international waters. However, U.S. officials later admitted that they were doing this because "We wanted to tweak Qaddafi's nose."³⁸ Or as one official said: "Of course, we are aching for a go at Qaddafi", and if he "sticks his head up, we will clobber him; we are looking for an excuse."³⁹ The administration believed that, in order to build support for a military strike against Libya, "Qaddafi would have to be provoked into taking some action. Therefore, the U.S. forces moved across the line drawn by Qaddafi, his 'Line of Death.' The U.S. forces had been told by the White House that they were to use disproportionate strength in responding to any Libyan action."⁴⁰ The administration made no secret of what it was hoping to achieve by the clash.. "The question now is what will Qaddafi do to save his manhood?"⁴¹ When Qaddafi recognized the seriousness of the situation, and believed that the U.S. was engaging in a direct threat to his own person and actively trying to overthrow him, he backed down, acknowledging publicly that he "...had previously backed some groups without meticulously examining their aims and role. He claimed he had totally withdrawn his support from some of them when he discovered that they had been practicing terrorism for its own sake."⁴²

(d) Destroying the Main Institutions and Instruments of Public Administration in Society.

The fourth tactic used by Qaddafi to pursue his goals has been to destroy the main institutions and instruments of government in society. In his speech of 15 April 1973 at Zwara, he declared that "... If we want the Revolution to continue, we need to have a *Revolution against Bureaucracy*. The masses whom I shall arm," he went on, "will destroy bureaucracy and do away with the barriers... Any bureaucrat who tells any citizen to come back tomorrow, or who neglects his own work, should expect the man from the street to react against him... I am aware of the fact that there is an administrative bureaucracy that stands as a barrier facing the masses, a barrier which grows day by day. Revolution should be declared against such a structure. Accordingly, whoever wants to join our march should become a revolutionary, whereas he who stands against us will be trodden under our feet."⁴³

Qaddafi re-emphasizes this point in his *Green Book*, which he considers to be the final solution to the problem of the institution of government. He states that all modern political institutions and institutions of government should be eliminated.

These include such institutions as parliaments, political parties, plebiscites, participation, and even the constitution and laws of society. Thus he believes, as stated in the *Green Book* that: (i) a parliament is a misrepresentation of the people and parliamentary governments are a misleading solution to the problem of democracy;⁴⁴ (ii) representation is a denial of participation and a falsification of democracy;⁴⁵ (iii) the party system aborts democracy. The party is the contemporary dictatorship, the modern dictatorial instrument of governing, the rule of a part over the whole;⁴⁶ (iv) plebiscites are also a fraud against democracy. Those who say "yes" and those say "no" do not, in fact, express their will; they have been silenced through the conception of modern democracy;⁴⁷ and finally, (v) law is the other problem parallel to the problem of the institutions of government. It is undemocratic, and should be regarded as invalid, for a committee or a parliament to be entitled to draft the laws of society and likewise for an individual, a committee or a parliament to amend or abrogate the law of the society.⁴⁸

(d) Avoiding Responsibility

The fifth tactic used by Qaddafi in order to pursue his goals has been avoiding responsibility.

In 1969 he declared himself the leader of the Revolution Command Council, and in 1970 he also became the Prime Minister. From 1970 to 1977 he worked systematically to destroy the main political and social institutions of the land. He also crushed all opponents and anyone who tried to criticize him. In 1977, the official name of Libya was changed from a Republic to the Jamahiriyya and the Revolution Command Council was replaced by the General People's Congress. Qaddafi was its first Secretary-General and from 1977 to 1979 he gave himself the title of the Secretary-General of the People's General Congress. In March 1979 he resigned from the post of Secretary-General of the General People's Congress, so that he could, as he claimed, devote more time to revolutionary work. However, he remained the sole ruler of Libya. Since then he has been trying to justify his new position by separating his personal authority from the Revolution. Thus in what he called the "Revolutionary Manifesto," which he issued on the Ninth Anniversary of the Revolution, he stated that "I will not practise authority as from now, but I will be practising the revolution with the revolutionary forces, the revolutionary committees and the revolutionary groups, while the masses, alone, will practice authority... I myself will remain outside the conferences and the Secretariats, including the General Secretariat. I will remain outside the popular committees, including the General Popular Committee. I will not assume any executive, administrative or union post, but I will return to my proper and natural place which is the Revolution, not the exercising of authority."⁴⁹ Accordingly, Qaddafi still refuses to call himself a head of the state, preferring the designation of "motivator of the masses to permanent revolution." He is in charge without position or responsibility, so that one might say that he is head of everything but responsible for nothing. If Qaddafi will remain outside the popular committees, as he said, and

will not assume any executive, administrative, or union post so the question is, what, then, is Qaddafi's role in the Libyan government today? And how can he be held accountable? When he was asked this question by the French daily *Le Figaro*, his response was: "Now my role is peaceful. I fought at the time of national liberation ...But now one can throw away the gun, and work for peace and development. That is my role."⁵⁰

(f) An Endless Succession of Mass Campaigns

The sixth and final tactic used by Qaddafi to pursue his goals is what could be called an endless succession of mass campaigns. By the time he has finished one campaign, he initiates another. Amongst these, the following six have been of paramount importance:

1. The Seminar on Revolutionary Thought (May 1970);
2. The establishment of the Arab Socialist Union (1971);
3. The Popular Revolution campaign (1973);
4. The establishment of the People's authority (1 September 1976);
5. The establishment of the Revolutionary Committees (1978); and
6. The physical liquidation campaign (March 1979).

In his first communiqué to the Libyan people, on 1 September 1969, Qaddafi made the following declaration, on behalf of the Revolutionary Command Council: There shall be no one oppressed, deceived or wronged, no master and no slave, but free brothers in a society, over which, God willing, shall flutter the banner of brotherhood and equality.⁵¹

When the Libyan people heard this speech on the radio, they rushed into the streets in waves of celebration and support. Even though the Libyan masses did not know who was behind this coup d'état, they felt that this was what they had been looking for. Thousands of people, in every town and village in Libya, took to the streets, shouting for freedom and hailing the downfall of the monarchy.

The first mass campaign mobilized by Qaddafi took the form of debates at public seminars in May 1970, when he called upon all Libyans, and especially intellectuals, to engage in open and frank debate about how they should govern themselves. He and his fellow members of the Revolutionary Command Council acknowledged that one of the problems they were facing was that of defining and institutionalizing authority. He acknowledged that "We have no magic wand. We are having a hard time and feel that we are not going to last forever. Sometimes we wish that someone could take our place."⁵² These public seminars were no more than disjointed discussions with little sense of direction, but the meetings provided Qaddafi with a clear sense of what the intellectuals in Libya expected from the new regime. The seminars also showed, for the first time, that neither Qaddafi nor his fellow-members of the Revolutionary Command Council had any clear or unified vision about the future of Libya and its relationship with the rest of the Arab world.

For instance, while Qaddafi was insisting that Arab unity and integration was more than a sentimental demand, but was practical and could be achieved, Captain Omar al-Muhaishi, a member of the Council, argued that it was not. He asserted that Sudan, for instance, "had its own problems in the south of the country and did not want to enter into unity instantly. The same was true of Egypt."⁵³ This period of the Revolutionary Thoughts for which Qaddafi called for in the early 1970s, was short-lived. Stunned by the unexpected intensity of criticism by the elites and their expectations, his flirtation with open and free thought and discussion ended when he declared the establishment of the Arab Socialist Union in 1971.

On the second anniversary of the Revolution, 1 September 1971, Qaddafi announced the creation of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU). It was the first major direct link between the masses and his government, and its main purpose was to enable the people to participate in government. Organized at both the local and the national levels, ASU units consisted of two elements, a conference and a committee. From the outset, Qaddafi insisted that the ASU was not a political party, but was, rather, a mass organization that comprised an alliance of activists, comprising members of various social forces within the population (labourers, farmers, soldiers, women, students, etc.), all committed to the principles of the Revolution.⁵⁴ It was designed as the alternative to experiments with political parties.

However, the ASU was plagued by bureaucratic inefficiency and lack of public enthusiasm. To correct these problems, Qaddafi proclaimed on 15 April 1973 what he called the "Cultural Revolution". At Zuwar, again, he delivered a speech which was a surprise even to his fellow-members of the Revolutionary Command Council, in which he changed the whole structure of the state, calling upon all Libyans to take authority into their own hands and laying down five points for the continuation of the Revolution. He posed the question, "If we want the Revolution to continue, we have to start anew, but exactly how? Hence there were now advocated five further points:

7. The abrogation of all laws;
8. Purging the country of sick persons;
9. Freedom of the people;
10. Revolution against bureaucracy; and
11. The Cultural Revolution."⁵⁵

The institutional lynchpin of this campaign was what he termed the People's Committees, which were very similar to the ASU structure. The main functions of these new People's Committees, according to Qaddafi, were to act as the primary instrument of the Revolution. They were to decide what actions and what persons conformed to the principles of the Revolution, a task that included the purging of government officials (up to the rank of Under-Secretary) and private executives and managers. Thousands of these last two groups were dismissed, demoted or transferred. This was a new "anti-Rightist" campaign. A "Rightist" was, in

Qaddafi's view, anyone who complained about the government or tried to criticize his own policies or ideas. This sudden action led to numerous socio-economic problems which made peoples' lives more difficult. The Peoples' Committees were constituted haphazardly, and the vast majority of them yielded only indifferent and ineffective results. All these problems and challenges brought about by the Committees forced Qaddafi to call for, on the seventh anniversary of the Revolution, 1 September 1976, for yet another "mass" movement which he now called the People's Authority.

In a speech given on this occasion, he announced the declaration of the establishment of the People's Authority, the result of a new plan adopted by the General People's Congress (GPC) in an extraordinary session on 2 March 1977. The declaration included four basic points: (1) changing the country's name from the Libyan Arab Republic into the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya; (2) adopting the Qur'an as the law of society; and (3) establishing popular, direct authority through a system culminating in the General People's Congress (GPC). Qaddafi claimed that the people, and no other institution, were the sole authority. The era of the masses or "direct democracy" thus began. This popular, direct authority was to be exercised through the people's congresses, people's committees, syndicates, unions, professional associations and the GPC; and (4) the assigning of responsibility for defending the homeland to every man and woman through general military training as a normal practice. The people were thus to be trained and armed. The methods of preparing the military cadres and their basic training were to be defined by the law also.⁵⁶ By this declaration of the People's Authority, Qaddafi succeeded in abolishing the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the Council of Ministers, and at least weakening the Libyan Army, his main objective here being to make sure that the Libyan Army could not be an effective enough instrument to overthrow him. Also, he vested in the GPC all executive and legislative authority in the nation.

The fifth "mass" campaign that Qaddafi waged in order to retain power and to control the political system was the Revolutionary Committees campaign in 1978, to be used as a corrective procedure for fixing anything he might do wrong. He superimposed a new element over the already existing parts of his political system, namely, the Revolutionary Committees. The first of these committees appeared in late 1977 and was modelled on a Central Revolutionary Committee established at Al-Fatah University in April 1967. That committee's purpose had been to purge what it called the remnants of the reactionary right from the University and supervise the formation of new People's Committees there. The Revolutionary Committees supposedly comprised the best and the most committed members of the Basic People's Congresses (BPCs). They were established (a) to guide these People's Committees and Leadership Committees; (2) to encourage the masses to exercise authority; (3) reputedly to "emanate from the people" and (4) not to be, according to Qaddafi, official government organs. He asserted that "The Revolutionary Committees would not dissolve or replace People's Committees, nor

would they expel or even reprimand any member.”⁵⁷

The sixth “mass” campaign Qaddafi used was the campaign physically to eliminate Libyan dissidents, which started in 1979. He announced the policy personally during a speech in March in which he called for the liquidation of enemies of the Revolution both inside and outside Libya. As a result, a campaign of politically-inspired murders started against all those who dared to criticize the regime. The term “enemies of the Revolution” was very loosely applied, and included not only those who were politically active against the regime but even those Libyans who did not actively support the regime, those who had taken up residence in other countries and those not willing to return to Libya. The results of this vicious campaign were horrific. There were more than “forty-four victims killed or wounded in assassination attempts carried out by Qaddafi’s hit squads in various countries since March 1980.”⁵⁸

5. Conclusion

It is undeniable that the ideosyncracies of Qaddafi have, since 1969, dominated and affected Libyan domestic and international politics, making it almost impossible for most of the time to understand Libyan politics without understanding Qaddafi himself. One may safely infer from Qaddafi’s system of belief that he has had a stormy, controversial period of power, one full of contradictions. As for his ideology, this obviously consists of a heterogeneous and incoherent collection of ideas, beliefs and myths which he has been implementing regardless of their costs or to their consequences for the Libyan people. On many occasions, his tactics have led to a backlash or to destructive and costly results. All opponents of Qaddafi and his regime have either escaped into exile or have been jailed, or have been reduced to silence. Intellectuals and members of what Qaddafi stigmatises as the bourgeoisie have been closely watched and have been sent to Revolutionary Camps for re-education. Finally, there emerges from Qaddafi’s stormy period of rule and from his ideological ragbag of ideas, beliefs and myths, that he is willing to accomplish his goals by all means necessary, believing that the ends justify the means. As a result, he has become a destructive force to his own country and an agent of division within the Arab World. When an Israeli former Chief of Military Intelligence was once asked whether Qaddafi was a real threat to Israel, he responded that “Qaddafi, in all his frantic attempts to unite the Arabs, is keeping them divided... He is a strategic threat, but perhaps a tactical asset, an agent of division in the Arab world”⁵⁹ To put it in a nutshell, Qaddafi is a megalomaniac ruler who is obsessed with power and is bent on having his name synonymous with Libyan history, regardless of cost: a man who should not in normal circumstances be a ruler, but in harsh reality is one.

NOTES

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