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**The 2011 Libyan revolution and Gene Sharp's strategy of nonviolent action : what factors precluded nonviolent action in the 2011 Libyan uprising, and how do these reflect on Gene Sharp's theory?**

Siobhan Lynch  
*Edith Cowan University*

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**The 2011 Libyan revolution and Gene Sharp's strategy of nonviolent action:  
What factors precluded nonviolent action in the 2011 Libyan uprising, and how  
do these reflect on Gene Sharp's theory?**

Siobhan Lynch, BA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of

Bachelor of Arts Honours (History)

In the faculty of Communication and Arts, Edith Cowan University

Date of submission: 5 November 2012

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores impediments to regime change using the strategy of nonviolent action, through an integrated examination of consensual power theory as articulated by Gene Sharp and Antonio Gramsci, and by incorporating James Scott's theory that observable consent in the public discourse can belie a private realm of resistance to a system of domination. Using the context of the 2011 Libyan uprising, this thesis analyses the reality of consensual power in Libya to explain what factors precluded nonviolent action succeeding in the 2011 revolution.

Critically evaluating the theories, this study examines a wide range of information about the historical, political, economic and social power structures of Libya and the significance of these factors in the 2011 Libyan revolution. By clearly elucidating the internal dynamics of the Libyan system, this thesis argues that domination and not consent served as the primary source of political power for Qadhafi's revolutionary regime and thus Sharp's strategy of withdrawing consent does not fit the reality of Libya. Additionally, consent must be understood as a vastly more complex phenomenon if nonviolent strategy is to be successful in the future.

## **Declaration**

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- i. *incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;*
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- iii. *contain any defamatory material.*

Siobhan Lynch: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 5 November 2012

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My special thanks go to my mother Glyn Hezakah a.k.a. 'The Old Goat' and stepfather Phillip Foster for their support throughout my six-year mature age educational journey. I am thankful to you both for what you consider the 'small things' (although 'big things' in my book) such as having me over for dinner, delivering cat food, arranging dry cleaning, buying me a coffee, and just generally making the day-to-day jobs that less of a burden to enable me to concentrate on my thesis.

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## Glossary

ASU – Arab Socialist Union

BPC(s) – Basic People’s Congresses

Cyrenaica – the eastern coastal region of Libya

Fazzan – the southern province of Libya

GPC – General People’s Congress

Green Book – Qadhafi’s ideological primer for Libya’s political, economic and social structure

*hadith* – the collected sayings of the Prophet Muhammed

*ihsan* – the highest form of worship where a connection to God is established through the Prophet Muhammed and his companions

*Jamahiriyya* – Arabic word with no official translation but unofficially translated to mean “state of the masses”

*jihād* – holy war

PC(s) – People’s Committees

PSLC(s) – People’s Social Leadership Committees

RC(s) – Revolutionary Committees

RCC – Revolutionary Command Council

RCLB – Revolutionary Committees Liaison Bureau

*sharia* – moral code and religious law of Islam

*Sufism* - form of Islamic mysticism

*sunna* – a collection of traditions about the life and habits of the Prophet Muhammed

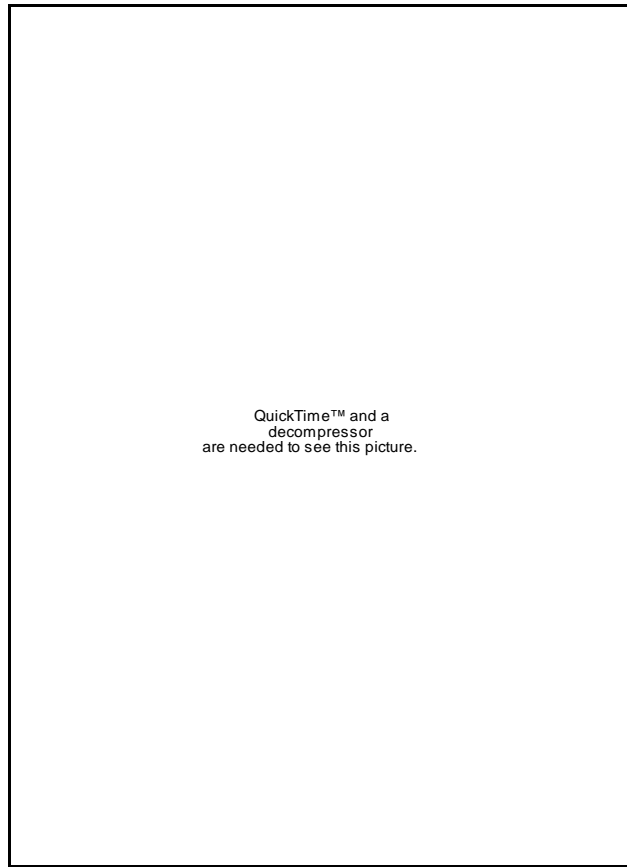
Tripolitania – the most populous of Libya’s three historic regions, situated in the north-western part of the country

*ulama* – religious scholars learned in *sharia* law

*zawiya* – religious lodge/school of the Sanusiya Order

## Maps

### Libya and its provinces



Source: Vandewalle (1998)

### Libya's tribal territory



Source: Davis (1987)

## **Introduction**

The four-decade-long revolutionary rule of ‘Brother Leader’ Muammar Qadhafi ended on 20 October 2011 when after a protracted eight-month civil war he was killed at the hands of his own people (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2011b). In early 2011 nonviolent protests swept Tunisia and Egypt overthrowing the long-standing dictatorships of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak. While Libya appeared next in line to oust an entrenched dictator using nonviolent action, the strategy could not be sustained and swiftly deteriorated into violent conflict. Although the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and subsequent uprisings, have been collectively termed the ‘Arab Spring’, this terminology belies profound differences in internal dynamics and grievances that sparked the protests (Anderson, 2011). This study will be examining how Libya’s historical context and contemporary situation led to a violent outcome in the 2011 uprising – a vastly different result to the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia.

Libya has a long history of foreign domination: subjugation to the Ottoman Empire from 1551 for nearly four centuries, then Italian colonialism from 1911 for another three decades (Anderson, 1983; Ahmida, 2009). After Mussolini’s Fascist regime lost Libya during World War II, the country was placed under British and French administration from 1942-51. Thereupon the United Kingdom of Libya was declared on 24 December 1951 uniting the provinces of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fazzan under the monarchical rule of Idris al-Sanusi, who claimed legitimacy as heir to the Sanusiya religious movement (Davis, 1987; Vandewalle, 2006). During the first decade of independence Libya overwhelmingly relied on foreign aid for its survival, but with the commercialisation of oil in the early 1960s Libya transformed into a super-prosperous nation (Naur, 1986; St John, 2008). Nevertheless, with political activities proscribed, and with substantial oil revenues placing immense strain on kinship as the sole mechanism for economic distribution, politically disenfranchised Libyans began demanding change (Vandewalle, 1995; St John, 2011).

On 1 September 1969 the revolutionary regime of Muammar Qadhafi usurped the monarchy’s power and imposed a socialist system of government (Bearman, 1986; El-Kikhia, 1997). While the Colonel initially garnered popular support through Islamic rhetoric, symbolic gestures of national independence, and charisma, his increasingly radical interpretation of Islam alienated the Libyan people (Takeyh, 2000; St John,

2011). Through extensive oil revenues the revolutionary regime implemented an idiosyncratic political and economic system of ‘direct democracy’ in which political authority was ostensibly vested in the Libyan people but in reality sole power was conferred upon Qadhafi (Vandewalle, 2008). From the 1980s to the early twenty-first century Libya was a pariah state in which declining oil prices, combined with trade sanctions over Qadhafi’s alleged support for global terrorism, reduced the regime’s ability to pacify its citizenry (St John, 2011). Following the regime’s renunciation of weapons of mass destruction in December 2003 Qadhafi embarked upon further economic reforms but failed to generate support among an alienated, apathetic population (Vandewalle, 2008). The regime’s 2011 downfall highlights an opportunity to analyse the internal dynamics of the Libyan system, investigate what motivated an apparently apathetic population to rebel, and examine why nonviolent resistance proved insufficient to effect change.

Gene Sharp is considered “the father of nonviolent struggle” (CNN, 25 June 2012) and is the world’s foremost expert on nonviolent revolution (Christian Science Monitor [CSM], 16 June 1986; Martin, 1989; BBC News, 21 February 2011). The 84 year-old American academic has devoted most of his life to the study of nonviolence, for which he received a Nobel Peace Prize nomination in 2009 (BBC News, 21 February 2011; New York Times [NYT], 16 February 2011). While Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr are synonymous with nonviolence, Sharp has theorised nonviolent technique for application within wide-ranging contexts. The central tenet of Sharp’s work is that rulers’ power is derived from the consent of subjects, and that withdrawing consent using nonviolent techniques diminishes that power (Sharp, 1973; BBC News, 21 February 2011). Sharp’s nonviolent strategy is credited with inspiring global uprisings from Thailand, Indonesia, Bosnia and Zimbabwe, to the downfall of the Milosevic regime in Serbia, and propelling the Eastern European revolutions of the early 2000s (BBC, 21 February 2011; NYT, 16 February 2011). More recently, Sharp’s scholarship is believed to have been a major influence for the 2011 Arab Spring, particularly in Tunisia and Egypt (NYT, 16 February 2011; CNN, 25 June 2012).

Another prominent political theorist of consensually based power is Antonio Gramsci, the twentieth-century Italian philosopher who was imprisoned under Mussolini’s fascist regime from 1926 until his death in 1937 (Forgacs, 1999). While imprisoned Gramsci wrote the *Prison Notebooks* where he developed his theory of hegemony, arguing that

the dominant group in society maintains dominance through the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups: such consent is not based purely on economic interests nor force and coercion but is rather reliant upon political and ideological consensus (Bates, 1975; Jackson Lears, 1985).

In contrast James Scott questions consensual power by focusing on how subordinate groups resist domination. In Scott's view, understanding systems of domination cannot solely rely on examining interactions between the dominant and subordinate groups in the public discourse, but must also incorporate offstage forms of resistance to be discovered in the subordinate group's private world (Scott, 1985, 1990). Scott argues that subaltern groups have not consented to domination, which can be evidenced through everyday forms of resistance. This paper will be drawing on Gramsci and Scott's theories to examine Sharp's theory of nonviolent action.

While nonviolent action has proven successful within a variety of contexts, such as Tunisia and Egypt, the strategy could not penetrate the situation in Libya where violent conflict eventually liberated Libyans from the seemingly inexorable Qadhafi regime. Libya's 2011 uprising thus provides a prime opportunity to explore impediments to regime change using the strategy of nonviolent action. The analytical framework for this thesis will comprise a study of the prominent political theorists introduced above: Sharp, Gramsci and Scott will provide an integrated approach to examining consensually based power in relation to nonviolent technique. The 2011 Libyan revolution then provides the context in which to explore the reality of consensual power, where potential limitations of nonviolent action will be identified. As Ruth First eloquently stated after Qadhafi came to power:

There is no denying the special cast given the Libyan revolution by the idiosyncratic character of Mu'ammarr Gadafi...[but] to explain Libya by the temperament, eccentricity, even instability of Gadafi is to make no meaningful explanation in terms of history and Libyan society...while this might help in explaining Gadafi, what explains the Libyan response to him. (First, 1974, p. 20)

Consequently, taking into account First's point and considering the space necessary to adequately discuss the Libyan system's complexity, that the original intention to devote a chapter of this paper to analysing Qadhafi's character through political psychology has been sequestered for discussion at a time when there is ample scope to do the topic

justice. Similarly while Arab nationalism, Qadhafi's foreign policy exploits, and the impact of international sanctions have contributed to Libya's internal situation, these areas will only be explored where necessary for contextualisation due to the size constraints of this dissertation.

Plato once stated "I may assume that your silence gives consent" (Jowett, 2011, p. 39). However, does not such an assumption underestimate the ambiguity of silence? Thus determining the truth of this statement informs a fundamental argument of this thesis – what is the meaning of that silence? While overt expressions of dissent were highly unusual in Libya, to purport that behavioural or perceived active ideological support in the public discourse is indicative of consent underestimates the population's private realm of dialogue, where everyday modest and usually anonymous acts could provide evidence against the assumption that silence gives consent. The primary concern of this thesis is to examine the Libyan people's response (both overt and covert) to Libya's power structures, explaining what factors precluded nonviolent action during the 2011 Libyan revolution and how these factors reflect on Gene Sharp's theory.

This thesis contends that contrary to Sharp's assumption that consent is always the basis of political power, in accord with Gramsci where consent fails domination serves as the primary source of political power supporting Scott's assertion that apparent consent in the public discourse can actually disguise resistance to domination. Qadhafi's system of 'direct democracy' was in reality a façade behind which the Colonel ultimately controlled Libyan power structures leaving most Libyans powerless and apathetic, which became the breeding ground of violence. Once consent failed Qadhafi ruled Libya through a system of domination in which the Libyan citizenry was left politically and economically alienated, socially fragmented, with any opposition suppressed by a pervasive security apparatus. Thus it will be demonstrated, using the Libyan context, that the effectiveness of nonviolent action is limited where consent is not the underlying source of power, and that consent is a vastly more complex phenomenon than asserted by Sharp.

This thesis is divided into this introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter includes a literature review and discusses the major ideas of the three theorists. Through the theoretical framework of consensual power, chapters two and three will examine a history of consent and structures of domination in Libya. Chapter four will

culminate in a discussion of the 2011 Libyan uprising's nodes of violence. Findings and recommendations regarding consensual power and the effectiveness of nonviolent action will be presented in the conclusion.

## **Chapter One: Historiography and theory**

**“Libya is a difficult country to know, let alone analyse”**

**(Cited in First, 1974, p. 24)**

Making sense of modern Libya has proven challenging for scholars due to its tightly controlled institutions and scarcity of data, not to mention the Qadhafi regime’s contradictory directives. Vandewalle claimed, “no analyst has ever figured out precisely how the system works” (1986, p. 34). Nevertheless, a select group of authors have produced well-researched, comprehensive accounts of the Libyan system’s internal dynamics. The following sources have provided invaluable context for an understanding of Libya’s contemporary situation. To understand Libya one must explore its historical roots based on Islam and the tribe. Evans-Pritchard (1949) provides a deep-historical analysis of the Islamic Sanusiya Order’s developmental history from its absorption into the Bedouin tribal structure to its transformation into a political organization. Additionally, Ahmida (2009) explains how Sufi Islam and tribal military organization fuelled the resistance against colonialism, and how the political and cultural legacy of resistance strengthened Libyan attachment to Islam. Both Anderson (1986) and Davis (1987) document the strength and resilience of the tribal system from integration into the Ottoman Empire to revival under Italian control.

Around the theme of contradiction, First (1974) studied Libya from 1969-73 during four visits in the immediate post-revolution period, highlighting the regime’s contradictions such as using fundamentalist religion to create socialist revolution. El-Kikhia (1997) concentrates on Libya’s political system ostensibly controlled by the Libyan people but actually dominated by Qadhafi using chaos and turbulence to ensure the regime’s survival. St John (2008, 2011) too focuses on contradiction, initially tracing the development of the revolutionary state and then emphasising the inconsistency between its rhetoric of ‘direct democracy’ and day-to-day life in Libya. Vandewalle’s (1995, 2008) edited works from a select group of academics provides insight into Libya’s political, economic and social organization from its earliest history, to independence, through to the 1969 revolution and beyond.



Libya's political and economic development, were dominated by massive oil revenues under both the Sanusiya monarchy and Qadhafi regime, leading to the neglect of modern state institutions as ideological aspirations were instead pursued. Allen (1981) provides a detailed historical analysis of Libya's economic situation prior to oil, and how the discovery of oil impacted on Libya's political and economic development. Additionally, Vandewalle (1998) examines Libya's lack of institutional growth since independence arguing that Libya was a 'distributive state' in which economic largesse was favoured at the expense of institutional expansion and economic sustainability.

Of central importance to this research are three empirical studies conducted in Libya over four decades<sup>1</sup>. El Fathaly and Palmer (1980) evaluate the regime's mobilization and modernization efforts in the four years after the 1969 revolution concluding the regime's goals were not achieved. Obeidi (2001) analyses how the regime's ideology influenced the political beliefs, values and attitudes of Libya's younger generation, concluding significantly that the regime was neither successful in developing politically active citizens nor in cultivating an alternative social base to the tribal system. While Al-Werfalli (2011) examines the extent and effect of political alienation in Libya, in which common behaviours such as apathy and violence are linked to the depoliticization of the Libyan population.

While the 2011 Libyan revolution was widely reported, the primary source materials were chiefly gathered online from reputable news media such as the *BBC News*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *New York Times* and *Amnesty International News*. The news reports assist in examining the Libyan uprising's initial nonviolence and the extent of the subsequent violent conflict. Additionally, news reports provide insight into recent events that fuelled the insurrection; elucidates the role of the tribes and military during 2011; and describes Qadhafi's responses. The newspaper accounts also allow for basic comparison between the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions that preceded the situation in Libya.

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<sup>1</sup> El Fathaly and Palmer collected information using questionnaires and personal interviews with the population of Zawia province in 1973 (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980). Obeidi's study is based on research conducted in 1994 with male and female students at the University of Garyounis in Benghazi (Obeidi, 2001). In 2001 Al-Werfalli conducted a survey and interviews with residents of the Al-Orouba quarter in Benghazi (Al-Werfalli, 2011).

Gene Sharp has written extensively on nonviolence originating with his 1951 masters thesis *Nonviolence: A Sociological Study*, to his 1968 doctoral dissertation *The Politics of Nonviolent Action: A Study in the Control of Political Power*. Sharp's seminal 1973 work *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* articulates his theory on the nature and control of political power and catalogues 198 methods of nonviolent action into three broad categories: protest and persuasion; noncooperation; and nonviolent intervention, providing central principles for socially based action and each method's relative impact (Sharp, 1973). Sharp's *Social Power and Political Freedom* (1980) built further on his theory of power and delineated civil society's role in controlling power through nonviolent action.

Sharp's most disseminated text, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation*, is a handbook on how to overthrow dictatorships using his 198 nonviolent methods. *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, originally written for the Burmese democratic movement in 1993, is available in over 30 languages and is free from Sharp's Albert Einstein Institute – founded in 1983 to promote nonviolent action globally (BBC, 21 February 2011; New York Times, 16 February 2011).

Sharp has written approximately 30 books on nonviolence, including:

- *Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power: Three Case Histories*, 1960
- *Civilian Defense: An Introduction*, 1967
- *Exploring Nonviolent Alternatives*, 1971
- *Gandhi as a Political Strategist with Essays on Ethics and Politics*, 1979
- *National Security Through Civilian-Based Defense*, 1985
- *Making Europe Unconquerable: The Potential of Civilian-Based Deterrence and Defense*, 1985
- *Resistance, Politics, and the American Struggle for Independence 1765-1775*, 1986
- *Civilian-Based Defense: A Post-Military Weapons System*, 1990
- *The Role of Power in Nonviolent Struggles*, 1990
- *Self-Reliant Defense Without Bankruptcy or War*, 1992
- *Nonviolent Action: A Research Guide*, 1997
- *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: Twentieth Century Practice and Twenty First Century Potential*, 2005
- *Self-Liberation: A Guide to Strategic Planning for Action to End a Dictatorship or Other Oppression*, 2010

- *Sharp's Dictionary of Power and Struggle: Language of Civil Resistance in Conflicts*, 2011

Gene Sharp is considered the Machiavelli of nonviolence (Christian Science Monitor, 16 June 1986), and for all modern Machiavellians the interdependence of force and consent are fundamental to any theory of power (Bates, 1975). For Sharp, a ruler's power depends on the political obedience of their subjects derived through a combination of free consent and fear of sanctions (Sharp, 1973). From this ruler-subject-dichotomy perspective, Sharp determined that power is not monolithic: while the ruler may hold centralised power this is not a permanent and unchangeable arrangement.

For Sharp, power is pluralistic and dependent upon an intricate structure of human and institutional relationships for its reinforcement (Sharp, 1973; Sharp, 1980; Sharp, 2005). Sharp has termed these independent groups and institutions 'loci (or places) of power', including family, social, cultural and religious groups, government bodies and political parties. Where loci are effectively dispersed throughout society, such loci will regulate a ruler's power and that of other loci. However, if no significant loci exist, challenging a ruler's power will have limited effect (Sharp, 1980).

Sharp maintains that beyond the state power is rooted in society itself, so the more extensive the ruler's control over society, the greater cooperation the ruler will require from the individuals they rule (Sharp, 1973; Sharp, 2005). The degree of cooperation and obedience of the subjects, which remains essentially voluntary despite sanctions, determines the extent to which a ruler can access sources of power upon which the ruler is dependent (Sharp, 1973).

Sharp identified six sources of political power; it is rare for all six sources to be completely available or totally absent (Sharp, 1973; Sharp, 2005). The sources of political power are:

- Authority: the extent to which people voluntarily accept the ruler's authority/legitimacy without the imposition of sanctions. The greater the authority, the more obedience the ruler will receive.
- Human resources: the number of people who are obedient and cooperate with the ruler, or provide special assistance.

- Skills and knowledge: the abilities and skills of the people obeying and cooperating with the ruler.
- Intangible factors: psychological and ideological factors that influence behaviour and attitudes toward obedience, and the presence or absence of a common ideology or faith.
- Material resources: the extent to which the ruler controls natural resources, financial resources, the economic system, property, transportation and communication.
- Sanctions: the type and extent of coercive measures to enforce obedience (Sharp, 1973; Sharp, 2005; Sharp, 2010).

Consent is central to Sharp's theory of power. Sharp reasons that people provide consent out of: habit; fear of sanctions; moral obligation; self-interest; psychological identification with the ruler; indifference; and an absence of self-confidence to disobey (Sharp, 1973; Sharp, 2005). While various social forces influence the reasons for obedience, ultimately the individual's will or opinion determines consent (Sharp, 1973). For instance: subjects obeying out of habit choose not to consciously examine their compliance; certain individuals may dislike a ruler or system but obey out of self-interest; and even in the case of sanctions a subject makes a choice to obey to avoid punishment (Sharp, 1973).

Sharp emphasises that "the obedience of subjects is essentially the result of the act of volition" (Sharp, 1973, p. 26). Sharp is clear that consent can either be 'free' consent or what he has termed 'intimidated' consent through fear of sanctions, either way consent is determined by the individual's will or choice (Sharp, 2005). With a ruler's political power overwhelmingly determined by the subjects' willing obedience, power may be weakened by shifting conditions affecting the individual's will and reasons for cooperating (Sharp, 1973; Sharp, 1980; Sharp, 2005). A ruler may counteract a loss of obedience by increasing the reasons to obey, such as harsher sanctions or greater rewards for loyalty. However, a change in the subjects' will, may lead to withdrawal of consent from the ruler and thus their service and cooperation to the sources of political power (Sharp, 1973).

We have arrived at Sharp's strategy of nonviolent action based on the premise that the pluralistic nature of power enables subjects to withdraw consent and thus control or even destroy a ruler's power sources (Sharp, 1973). The extent to which a ruler's power is weakened depends not only on the quality of nonviolent action and number of nonviolent protestors, but also on the dominant political and social milieu (Sharp, 1973; Sharp, 2005). Sharp acknowledges that society's structural conditions influence the effectiveness of withdrawing consent; where autonomous social groups and political institutions expand to create 'democratic space' the greater strength society will have in controlling the ruler's power (Sharp, 1973; Sharp, 2010). Accordingly, society's strength is weaker in highly centralized states that strongly control institutions and social groups (Sharp, 1980). Under such conditions significant power-wielding groups, the 'loci of power' will either be absent or incapable of independent action, increasing the difficulty of controlling the ruler's power through modification of power sources (Sharp, 1980).

Nevertheless, Sharp stresses that incongruence between the formal government structure and the structural condition of society leaves the ruler's power dependent on the vigour of social organization and the subjects themselves (Sharp, 1980). Irrespective of the prevailing formal government structure, through individual human agency consent can be withdrawn to challenge the power of a ruler. Refusal to consent requires knowledge on how to resist, motivation to resist, self-confidence and willingness to experience inconvenience and suffering (Sharp, 2005). Political freedom is not bestowed on subjects by the ruler nor does formal structures of government alone determine degrees of freedom or set limits on a ruler's power. While people depend on the support of their government, governments conversely depend on the good will of their people (Sharp, 1973; Sharp, 1980).

Critics of Sharp (Lipsitz & Kritzer, 1975; Martin, 1989; McGuinness, 1993) dismiss his consensual power theory as not being identifiable in all power relationships, lacking detailed structural analysis and being too restricted to capture political systems' full dynamics. For Martin (1989) Sharp's power theory based on a ruler-subject dichotomy neglects political life's complexity, ruling out the structures of capitalism, patriarchy and bureaucracy as systems of power. Martin (1989) argues that capitalism can simultaneously benefit and oppress those living within the system, just as patriarchy cannot simply be extinguished by withdrawing consent. McGuinness (1993) too is critical that Sharp's theory overlooks patriarchy as a system of power, in which consent

is of limited value in terms of gender relations. Lipsitz and Kritzer (1975) stress that political power is not always about controlling people but could simply be used to control resources or territory.

Consent as viewed by Sharp has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on human agency and choice, overlooking structural limitations (McGuinness, 1993; Attack, 2006). Wehr, Burgess and Burgess (1994) argue that for subordinate groups choice can at most be considered cooptation (positively leveraged) or coercion (negatively leveraged), and that these 'choices' do not constitute consent as a viable alternative is absent. For Attack (2006) the term consent underestimates a far more complex individual dealing with oppression at multiple levels: the individual's internal psychological world, pragmatic social relations of daily life and with state institutions.

In McGuinness' (1993) view a shared political culture underpins consent, therefore consent will only be present where a shared culture exists – just as a common set of values are required when consent is withdrawn. For Lipsitz and Kritzer (1975) if a ruler's goal does not involve extracting submission directly from their subjects, then a ruler's power will not be dependent on consent. If Sharp has failed to adequately characterise power then his strategy of withdrawing consent may also be inadequate (McGuinness, 1993). Despite these criticisms, Martin (1989) merits Sharp's strategy as being ideal for stimulating action whereas structural approaches are better suited to analysis. Nonetheless, for Sharp's critics power is a much more complex phenomenon than articulated in his consensually based strategy of nonviolent action.

Supporting Sharp's theory of consensually based power is Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, which proposes that the 'spontaneous' consent of the general population to the dominant worldview imposed by the ruling group is the basis for control in society (Bates, 1975; Jackson Lears, 1985). For Gramsci, hegemony is about ruling through ideas not force: the ruling group procures active or passive consent from society rather than ruling by sanctions alone (Thomas, 2009). Adamson (1980) offers two related presuppositions for Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Firstly, consensual power predominates the political system as opposed to the state's monopoly on coercive power; and secondly, the economic base of the state must be overcome to advance to a consciousness of common cultural, intellectual and moral awareness. Thus hegemony as

distinguished by Gramsci is exercised primarily through a society's 'superstructure' as opposed to the base or 'structure'.

The superstructure comprises political society as the site of coercive power and civil society as the site of hegemonic leadership (Bocock, 1986). Only where hegemonic leadership involves the organic cohesion of intellectual, philosophical, moral and emotional consent between the ruler and subjects will the relationship be representational (Bocock, 1986). As Gramsci understood it, the moment of hegemony goes beyond a theory of state-as-force: hegemony involves active struggle between state-civil society relations and depends on shaping the consciousness of civil society through validation of the dominant group's ideas and values in the public discourse (Jackson Lears, 1985; Morton, 2007).

Fundamental to Gramsci's theory is the dialectical integration of the theoretically distinct moments of consent with coercion, and hegemony with domination. For Gramsci, within the 'normal' exercise of hegemony force and consent are both evident, although one factor usually predominates (Jackson Lears, 1985; Morton, 2007; Thomas, 2009). Gramsci considered political hegemony as the moment in which civil society as the terrain of consent and political society as the location of force make contact (Bates, 1975; Jackson Lears, 1985; Thomas, 2009). At times Gramsci ascribed to consent active commitment to the established order, while at other times Gramsci alluded to the ambiguous nature of consent whereby an individual's conscious thoughts sometimes conflicted with their actions.

Consent, for Gramsci, reveals the contradictory and complex reality of consciousness that combines resistance with resignation and approbation with apathy (Jackson Lears, 1985). While consent provides a method of control, the role of force should not be overlooked, for in Gramsci's view hegemony and domination are strategically different components of a unitary political power. For Gramsci hegemonic rule is epitomised in the diffusion of a consensual viewpoint throughout society and its interrelation with the state's coercive apparatus, without force undermining consent (Bates, 1975; Adamson, 1980; Morton, 2007). Nonetheless, where the creation of genuine hegemony fails the state will fall back on the coercive apparatus constructed in anticipation when 'spontaneous' consent declines (Bates, 1975).

With consent accorded increasing primacy in Gramsci's theory his 'structure' as the site of the social relations of production was recast to include only the material and technical instruments of production – enabling differentiation between the economic base and the 'superstructure' (Jackson Lears, 1985; Bocoock, 1986). Gramsci considered the 'structure' as simply the dominant mode of production, whereas the 'superstructure' comprised long-standing private institutions such as family and religious groups, and public institutions such as the government and army (Bates, 1975; Bocoock, 1986). For Gramsci, hegemony goes beyond the 'structure' to the complex realm of 'superstructures' where ideas are introduced, consciousness is raised, an individual's awareness of conflicts with the world of production is realised, and where economic sacrifices are made to appeal to wider social groups (Morton, 2007; Thomas, 2009).

In Gramsci's vision civil society does not come before nor lie beyond the state, but is rather integrated with political society – responsible for adjusting civil society to the economic, leaving civil society the marketplace of ideologies (Bates, 1975; Morton, 2007; Thomas, 2009). Hegemony for Gramsci is all about ideologies which must penetrate both the structure and superstructure – where the ideology is historically organic it will have validity in moving people and elevating consciousness, but where arbitrarily applied its longevity will be limited (Bocoock, 1986; Forgacs, 1999). Gramsci concluded that the structure will not determine forms of consciousness but rather what forms are possible, and that through interaction between the structure and superstructure a 'historical bloc', to be discussed next, may be formed where a coherent ideology will attempt to establish hegemony (Jackson Lears, 1985; Forgacs, 1999).

Bringing Gramsci's theory together are the key concepts of the 'integral state' formed of civil society and political society and the 'historical bloc' as the dialectical unity of structure and superstructure (Bocoock, 1986; Thomas, 2009). The integral state is based upon a set of common ideas and a shared philosophy in which active consent is procured through interaction between state-civil society, the moment of hegemony, rather than through fear of sanctions (Morton, 2007). Gramsci's notion of a historical bloc is the infusion of hegemony throughout society, initially through class alliances but then through the relatively organic relationship between the structure or economic life with that of the superstructure or political and cultural life (Adamson, 1980; Jackson Lears, 1985).



For Gramsci, while hegemony must stem from a historical bloc not all historical blocs become hegemonic. For hegemonic success a historical bloc's economic and ideological viewpoint must appeal to wide-ranging groups within society and claim some validity as representing society's interests at large (Adamson, 1980; Jackson Lears, 1985). When 'organic crisis' occurs in which the historical bloc in its entirety (both the structure and superstructure) is no longer able to manifest hegemony or where hegemony has not been established, the dominant group will resort to rule through force (Bates, 1975; Jackson Lears, 1985).

Scott (1990) proposes an alternative view of consensually based power, suggesting that the complicit behaviour of subordinates observable in the 'public' transcript (the discourse of political society) could merely be a tactic; without also incorporating the 'private' transcript of subordinate groups the public transcript cannot elucidate the whole story. Scott (1985) is cautious of any assessment of power that infers active ideological support from observable compliance. For Scott (1985), there are at least two possible interpretations to explain observable consent: subordinates actively or grudgingly accept the hegemonic order; the alternative being acceptance through domination. Although subordinates conform to expected behavioural norms in the public transcript, such conformity could mask a vastly different private transcript (Scott, 1990).

In Scott's opinion (1990) the feigned behavioural compliance of subordinate groups in the public transcript is possible when a private transcript is created where subordinates act out in fantasy the natural impulses of rage and anger denied reciprocal action in the public transcript – these muted impulses provide the content of the private transcript. Scott (1985) argues that the public transcript's convincing behavioural and ideological conformity is often a façade behind which resistance will be evident in the private transcript. It is Scott's assertion (1990) that the political life of subordinate groups is not to be found in absolute hegemonic compliance nor in overt defiance but on the terrain between these two opposites – in the discourse and action of the private transcript intersecting with the public transcript.

For Scott domination, in which 'real' choice is absent, creates the pseudo-hegemonic order that makes it impossible to distinguish from the public transcript alone whether the prevailing hegemony is based on willing consent or coerced compliance (Scott, 1990). Scott (1990) argues that through the practice of domination in the public transcript the

private transcript of subordinate groups is created – a private transcript that will match the intensity of the domination experienced. For Scott (1990) the public transcript becomes the stage on which the subordinate group offers a performance of deference and consent while privately surveying the dominant groups real intentions, and where the dominant group polices for any signals of subordinate resistance that might weaken their public mastery and ideological justification for domination.

Of central importance to Scott is the idea that there is always an ambiguous, coded, and sanitized version of the subordinate group's private transcript in the public transcript, providing terrain to examine ideological resistance and pseudo-hegemony (Scott, 1990). Distinguishing between the hegemonic ambition of the public transcript and the private transcript of subordinate groups reveals a variety of political dialogues in which some subordinates support the prevailing ideology for their own interests, while for others a dissident culture is created that is completely obscured from the public transcript – then there is the realm between these two where subordinates inject coded messages of their private transcript into the public transcript (Scott, 1990).

It is the coded private transcript within the public transcript that provides evidence of a pseudo-hegemonic order, with the prevailing conformity in the face of domination simply an act of survival and repression of violent impulses (Scott, 1990). For Scott, the constant dialogue between acts of resistance and thoughts about resistance facilitates access to the realm of consciousness of subordinate groups where lines of action that are presently impossible but plausible in the future are revealed, thus challenging the dominant group's hegemonic ambition both behaviourally and at the level of consciousness (Scott, 1985).

The art of political disguise is paramount to Scott's assertion that evidence of the private transcript of subordinates can be recovered from the public transcript. These forms of disguised and anonymous resistance include but are not limited to false compliance, feigned ignorance, foot dragging, gossip and rumour, which can be individually or mass enacted and avoids direct confrontation with the dominant group (Scott, 1985; Scott, 1990). These anonymous acts may take on more physical forms such as arson, pilfering and violence; however, they more often manifest as passive noncompliance such as evasion and deception (Scott, 1990). For instance, while grumbling stops short of making an explicit statement it enables subordinates to express dissent publicly without

provoking retaliation from the dominant group. Grumbling releases feelings of anger, disloyalty and contempt from the private transcript in a vague form into the public transcript revealing a larger story (Scott, 1990).

The advantage of political disguise and acts of anonymity means it is possible to declare the private transcript while disguising individual identity. However, the muted nature of these acts conspires to create a complicitous silence extinguishing these everyday acts of resistance from history (Scott, 1985). While the private transcript of subordinates is typically irrecoverable, it is through the muted or veiled forms thrown into the public transcript that Scott (1990) believes we can recover some of the private transcript to discover a political dialogue of resistance in the public transcript.

The theories detailed above will form the analytical framework for this thesis. Gramsci's theory of hegemony will be used to examine the actuality of consent predominating force in the Libyan system, and whether this conforms to Sharp's assertion that a ruler's power is based on consent despite the availability of coercive measures. While Scott's public-private transcript perspective will be used to analyse if observable consent in Libya's public discourse provides sufficient evidence of the consensually based nature of power as determined by Sharp.

## Chapter Two: A history of consent

**“I love the masses as I love my father, yet fear them in the same way. In a Bedouin society, with its lack of government, who can prevent a father from punishing one of his children? It is true that they love him, but they fear him at the same time. In the same way, I both love and fear the masses, as I love and fear my father”**

**(Qadhafi cited in St John, 2008, p. 154)**

Applying Sharp and Gramsci’s analytical framework, the intent of this chapter is to provide an extensive historical narrative of the structures of consent within Libya from the mid-nineteenth century through to the first few years of Qadhafi’s revolution. The discourse will trace the history of the tribe and Islam as organic superstructures of consent, and evaluate the role of these superstructures during the colonial war and under the monarchy, where focus on economic largesse to acquire consent will also be discussed. The analysis will then turn to the 1969 revolution where mechanisms of consent used by Qadhafi to garner authority will be assessed to determine whether hegemony was established as Gramsci articulates, and if these mechanisms procured consent in the way Sharp asserts.

### **The Sanusiya Order**

Algerian religious scholar Sayyid Muhammad bin Ali al-Sanusi known as the ‘Grand Sanusi’ founded the Islamic revivalist movement the Sanusiya Order in Mecca in 1837. In 1843 he turned toward Cyrenaica where he established the first *zawiya* or ‘Mother Lodge’ of the Order at al-Azwiya al-Baida on the central Cyrenaican plateau, marking the rise and expansion of the Sanusiya Order in Libya<sup>2</sup> (Evans-Pritchard, 1949; Davis, 1987; Vandewalle, 1995; St John, 2008). In Cyrenaica, the Grand Sanusi found an essentially homogenous religious culture based on Sunni orthodoxy, which like most of North Africa followed the *malikite* rite based on the primary sources of the Quran and *hadith*<sup>3</sup> (Harris, 1986; Vandewalle, 1995; St John, 2008).

The Grand Sanusi’s combination of Sunni orthodoxy and Sufism’s mystical *ihsan* worship resonated with the ascetic tribal ethos of the Cyrenaican nomadic and semi-

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<sup>2</sup> Ever since the Arabs brought Islam to Libya in 642 AD, religion has played a central role in the everyday lives of Libyans (Obeidi, 2001, p. 38).

<sup>3</sup> Other orthodox Sunnis also accept consensus/agreement among the faithful (*ijma*) and analogy/what should be believed about the teachings of the Prophet (*qiyas*) as legitimate doctrinal sources—the Grand Sanusi rejected both of these doctrines (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, p. 1; Harris, 1986, p. 32).

nomadic Bedouins, where the Sanusiya found its inner core of support. There were fewer adherents among the more cosmopolitan Tripolitanians, and Qadhafi would later oppose Sufism's influence<sup>4</sup> (Deeb & Deeb, 1982; El-Kikhia, 1997; St John, 2008). Under the Grand Sanusi's leadership the Sanusiya founded twenty-one *zawiyas* throughout Cyrenaica, and his son and successor Sayyid Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sanusi brought the Sanusiya to their peak of influence by establishing another twenty-two *zawiyas* by the time of his death in 1902<sup>5</sup> (Evans-Pritchard, 1949; Vandewalle, 2006). In terms of Gramsci's analytical framework, the common religious and moral basis of Islam formed an organic superstructure that bestowed the Sanusiya with the Bedouins' political consent.

Libya's tribes have traditionally played a major role in inculcating social norms, serving as a 'loci of power' as described by Sharp or, in Gramscian terms, the site of hegemonic leadership in civil society's superstructure (Sharp, 1980; Bocock, 1986; Obeidi, 2001). Thus the Sanusiya Order used the strength of the tribal system to turn an amalgam of parochial tribal interests into a powerful religious and political force (Davis, 1987; El-Kikhia, 1997). With their influence over the Cyrenaican Bedouin tribes firmly established, the Order utilised the tribal social system to propel the movement into the south-western Fazzan region and to a lesser extent, Tripolitania (Vandewalle, 1995). The Order came to be characterised through traditional kinship structures and tribal identities, with *zawiya* established on the basis of tribes or tribal sections rather than towns; this tactic was also utilised to manage tribal rivalries<sup>6</sup> (Evans-Pritchard, 1949; Davis, 1987).

As tribal society increasingly came into contact with outside political forces, the Sanusiya movement provided a rudimentary structure for tribal political expression, crystallizing in Cyrenaica as an opposition movement when a *jihad* was declared against Italian colonialism (Vandewalle, 2006; St John, 2008). "The tribes provided the Order with a social system, and the Order gave to that system a political organization" (Evans-

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<sup>4</sup> The Sanusiya also accept the teachings of the *sunna*, a collection of traditions about the life and habits of the Prophet (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, p. 1).

<sup>5</sup> When the Grand Sanusi died in 1859, a regency of ten Shaikhs was appointed to control the Order until Sayyid Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sanusi, born in 1844 the eldest of two surviving sons, was of age to lead the Order (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, p. 19).

<sup>6</sup> The origin of tribal divisions originated with the eleventh century arrival of two Arab tribes, the Bani Hilal who settled in Tripolitania and Tunisia, and the Bani Salim who settled in Cyrenaica and Syrte (Obeidi, 2001, p. 43; Ahmida, 2009, p. 46).

Pritchard, 1949, p. 91). In Sharp's terms, the Sanusiya's power rested on their authority and a shared faith with the Cyrenaican tribes, a power they extended by procuring greater human resources in the Fazzanese and Tripolitanian tribes (Sharp, 1973). Over the Order's 80-year lifespan the superstructural elements of Islam and tribal life were vital for extending the Sanusiya's hegemonic leadership.

### **The colonial war**

During the Turco-Italian War 1911-12 resistance formed under the Ottoman government, supported by the Sanusiya Order. However, when the Ottomans surrendered Libya to Italy in November 1912<sup>7</sup>, resistance continued as a more purely Cyrenaican Bedouin struggle in the name of the Sanusiya, now under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif<sup>8</sup> (Evans-Pritchard, 1949; Anderson, 1983; Vandewalle, 2006). In Tripolitania meanwhile, the absence of a cohesive leadership owing to factional disagreements meant their action proved relatively ineffective<sup>9</sup> (St John, 2008). While resistance proved the dominant pattern across the provinces not all Libyans joined the struggle, with merchants in Tripoli and urban notables in Cyrenaica collaborating with the Italians, motivated by status, power, and economic self-interest (St John, 2008).

During World War I Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif abdicated Sanusiya leadership to his cousin Sayyid Muhammad Idris al-Mahdi al-Sanusi who, supported by British authorities, garnered back some authority over Cyrenaica from the Italians<sup>10</sup> (Anderson, 1983; Vandewalle, 2006). Similarly, Tripolitanian notables also seeking to regain control from the colonialists formed the Tripoli Republic in 1918, but unable to generate international support and enfeebled by internal discord and factionalism struggled to wring

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<sup>7</sup> Sovereignty to Libya remained divided between Italy and Turkey for some years, until the Ottomans signed an armistice treaty with the Allies in October 1918 ending both their involvement in World War I and influence in Libya (Anderson, 1986, p. 185).

<sup>8</sup> After the death of Sayyid Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sanusi, his nephew Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif assumed leadership falling into three periods: 1902-1912 unsuccessfully opposing French expansion in the Sahara; 1912-1918 leading the Bedouins of Cyrenaica against the Italians and British; and from 1918-1933 when he went into exile, eventually dying in Saudi Arabia (Evans-Pritchard, 1949, p. 27; St John, 2008, p. 13).

<sup>9</sup> Tripolitanian notables, Farhat al-Zawi and Sulayman al-Baruni took opposing positions: the former wanted to negotiate with the Italians while the latter advocated continued armed resistance (Anderson, 1986, p. 188).

<sup>10</sup> Negotiations with the Italians through British intermediaries resulted in two related agreements, Al-Zuwaytina in April 1916 and Akrama in April 1917 granting Sanusiya sovereignty to the Cyrenaican hinterland (St John, 2008, pp. 66-67).

concessions from the Italians<sup>11</sup> (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982; St John, 2008). In October 1920 when Idris al-Sanusi was granted the title of Amir in Cyrenaica from the Italians, the Republic appealed to Idris to extend the amirate into Tripolitania so they might also benefit from Italian patronage; after considerable hesitation Idris accepted<sup>12</sup> (Anderson, 1986b; Vandewalle, 2006; St John, 2008). The Fascist takeover of Italy in October 1922 ended Italian collaboration with local Libyan elites, and Idris al-Sanusi went into exile. This left more martial members of the Order to resist the Italian pacification campaigns, where another Sanusiya brother's leadership would come to the fore.

The Sanusiya Order led resistance against the Italians from 1917 but their role became more prominent during the Italo-Sanusi War 1923-32. The Italians had subdued Tripolitania by late 1924 but came to expect strong resistance from Cyrenaica, and thus it was with most of Libya's anti-Italian leaders in exile that the Cyrenaican tribal shaikh Sidi Umar al-Mukhtar became the resistance figurehead (Anderson, 1986b; Deeb & Deeb, 1986; Vandewalle, 2006; St John, 2008). Al-Mukhtar embodied the rare qualities of *marabat* (holy man) and *mujahid* (fighter for the faith) - a combination of religious legitimacy and physical endurance that resonated with the Bedouin who made up the majority of the resistance (Evans-Pritchard, 1949; Davis, 1987).

Decades of Sanusiya influence resulted in notable cohesion among the Cyrenaican tribes, which along with anti-colonialist sentiment ensured the Bedouins remained committed to the cause (St John, 2008). Nevertheless, the resistance eventually died in 1931 with al-Mukhtar, who was captured and subsequently hanged before 20,000 Bedouin. By 1932 Libya was completely subdued and the Sanusiya Order decimated, however the exiled Sanusiya leadership remained Libya's major indigenous political force<sup>13</sup> (Evans-Pritchard, 1949; Deeb & Deeb, 1982). Aware of the enduring legacy of the colonial period, in 1981 Qadhafi commissioned a feature film about the life and exploits of al-Mukhtar entitled *Lion of the Desert*, and used anti-colonial sentiment as a platform for

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<sup>11</sup> The Tripoli Republic consisted of a four person council supported by a twenty-four member advisory group. The first formally republican government in the Arab world was not based on republican sentiment, rather an inability to agree on an acting head of state (Anderson, 1986, p. 205).

<sup>12</sup> The 25 October 1920 Accord of al-Rajma granted Idris the title of Amir in return for dismantling Cyrenican military units and applying the *Legge Fondamentale*, which provided for a special form of Italian-Libyan citizenship (St John, 2008, p. 69).

<sup>13</sup> The Fascist regime was unable to defend its 'Fourth Shore' during the North African campaign of 1940-1943 during World War II, with Italy eventually signing a peace treaty on 10 February 1947 renouncing all rights to Libya (St John, 2008, pp. 78, 91).

authority after the 1 September Revolution (St John, 2008). In a Gramscian sense, the superstructural elements of Islam and tribal military organisation under the hegemonic leadership of the Sanusiya order were used as cultural and social weapons to fight against colonialism (Ahmida, 2009).

### **Libya under the monarchy**

On 24 December 1951 the United Kingdom of Libya was declared an independent nation, with the title of king conferred upon Idris al-Sanusi claiming religious legitimacy as head of the Sanusiya Order (St John, 2008; Vandewalle, 2006). At independence Libya lacked a unified political community, thus a federal system<sup>14</sup> of government with an elaborate and expensive administrative structure of overlapping jurisdictions was adopted to balance the capitals, Cyrenaica and Tripolitania<sup>15</sup> (Anderson, 1986b). All major tribes were represented in the country's parliament, but with real authority codified in the king and his *diwan* (mainly Cyrenaican tribal elites loyal to the Sanusiya) parliament simply acceded to the monarchy's decisions (Vandewalle, 1998). Moreover, after violent clashes marred the first parliamentary elections in February 1952, Libyan politics descended into a "kind of benign despotism" (St John, 2011, p. 40) in which provincial political structures influenced by tribal leaders and urban notables became the principle forums for political competition<sup>16</sup> (St John, 2011).

The commercialisation of oil in the 1960s prompted the adoption of a unitary government in April 1963 to improve efficiency of the multifarious government structures<sup>17</sup> (Vandewalle, 1998). Theoretically the unitary system aimed to improve governance, cut costs, and streamline administrative systems by centralising services at the national level. In reality, the unitary system increased the power of the king and the royal *diwan*, eviscerating the provincial bureaucracies' power. The new centralized

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<sup>14</sup> Cyrenaica and Fazzan favoured a federal system, concerned a unitary government would be dominated by Tripolitania where two-thirds of the country's population lived. Tripolitania argued for a unitary government, suggesting a federal system would weaken the central government's authority to implement decisions of national interest (Vandewalle, 2006, p. 47).

<sup>15</sup> By 1958 the total government payroll equalled 12 percent of GNP. The provincial governments of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica employed more civil servants than did the federal government, which alone had a payroll that approached forty thousand employees (Anderson, 1986, p. 256; Vandewalle, 1995, p. 5).

<sup>16</sup> The defeated National Congress Party accused Tripolitania of electoral fraud resulting in violent conflict. Henceforth, political parties were outlawed and no multi-party elections were held from 1952 until the Qadhafi regime was overthrown in 2011 (Vandewalle, 2006, p. 69; St John, 2008, p. 112).

<sup>17</sup> On paper, the centralized government abolished the three traditional national divisions replacing them with ten administrative districts each with its own governor (Harris, 1986, p. 11; St John, 2008, p. 115).



government was staffed by a narrow circle of intimates to the king, leaving state institutions devoid of real power (Vandewalle, 2006; St John, 2008; St John, 2011). In the unitary environment the king attempted to promote a sense of Libyan nationalism but to no avail. Politically, Libyans were disenfranchised from an absolutist political system that came to rely on economic handouts for acquiescence (Naur, 1986; Vandewalle, 1995; St John, 2011). Under the monarchy, Libyan politics was characterized by the perpetuation of family, tribal, and parochial interests at the expense of a modern state.

The discovery of oil in the late 1950s and its commercialisation in the 1960s profoundly changed the economic base of Libyan society<sup>18</sup> (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982; Vandewalle, 1995). At independence, Libya was one of the poorest independent countries in the world, with 35 percent of GNP accumulated from foreign aid and rental income from leasing military bases to the United States and Britain<sup>19</sup> (Allen, 1981; Vandewalle, 1998). In 1960 70 percent of the population was employed in the agricultural sector, which only contributed 26 percent to the GNP. Meanwhile, by 1958 the industrial sector only accounted for ten percent of GNP, with some 20,000 employees working in industries such as flourmills, canning tomatoes, and handicrafts (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982).

The early 1960s marked a change in Libya's source of income with petroleum accounting for 98.7 percent of exports by late 1963<sup>20</sup> (Vandewalle, 1998). Between 1964 and 1966 oil revenues increased between 17 and 29 percent annually - relatively modest compared to the 100 percent increases experienced prior to 1964. Moreover, between 1962 and 1969 national income increased from (Libyan Dinars) LD180 million to LD820 million, with gross disposable incomes increasing 15 percent annually during the same time period (Allan, 1981). Spending oil revenues increased dramatically between 1963 and 1969, with all sectors such as housing, transportation, communication, health, and education reaping the benefits. The substantial capital inflows impacted all levels of society increasing the standard of living and nurturing entrepreneurial and employment

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<sup>18</sup> Oil exploration began in Libya in 1955. In 1959 American prospectors confirmed commercially viable quantities at Amal and Zelten, separate oilfields in Cyrenaica (St John, 2008, p. 121).

<sup>19</sup> Aside from foreign aid and rental income, the other major sources of revenue consisted of the sale of scrap metal left behind by the belligerents during the war and esparto grass used in craftwork (Anderson, 1986a, p. 67; Vandewalle, 1995, p. 5).

<sup>20</sup> The production of oil climbed from 20,000 barrels per day in 1960 to almost 3 million barrels in September 1969 (Vandewalle, 2006, p. 63).

opportunities unparalleled in Libya's economic history (Allen, 1981). In addition to enriching the government, the accumulation of substantial oil revenues precipitated enormous strains on the traditional administrative and cultural fabric of Libyan society, where a politically awakened populace demanded change that the monarchy appeared unwilling or unable to accommodate (St John, 2008; St John, 2011).

During the first decade of independence the monarchy overwhelmingly relied on kinship for economic distribution, creating a domestic political economy in which public administration and private interests were virtually indistinguishable (Anderson, 1986b; Vandewalle, 1995; Vandewalle, 1998). However, with the commercialisation of oil in the early 1960s Libya changed from a poor desert economy to a super-affluent one, becoming the fourth largest oil exporter toward the end of the decade (Naur, 1986; St John, 2008). Rapid economic growth began to undermine the king's reliance on kinship to distribute the country's resources and as a source of political power, but needing to maintain political quiescence the monarchy turned toward large-scale patronage and distributive measures (Vandewalle, 1995). Recruitment to distributive outlets followed the traditional pattern of kinship alliance, with tribal leaders (particularly in Cyrenaica), the royal *diwan*, and Sanusiya family members collectively controlling the economic bureaucracy - a bureaucracy corrupted by the inundation of oil wealth (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Vandewalle, 1998; St John, 2008).

For politically disenfranchised Libyans, the monarchy's main attraction was its role as the purveyor of economic handouts, but the growing economic disparities between the provinces and among individuals unleashed social tensions and divided loyalties. The monarchy's resistance to modernizing Libya's human and material resources, or any serious attempt to broaden its political base, fuelled demands for social and political change (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Vandewalle, 1995; St John, 2008; St John, 2011). By the end of the 1960s many Libyans concluded that Idris' policies were parochial, if not corrupt and had to be changed, but without a galvanizing national ideology with which to express collective dissent Libyans turned to the nascent forces of Arab nationalism (St John, 2008; St John, 2011). Corruption had devalued the king's religious legitimacy, with authority now resting on economic largesse - albeit unevenly distributed (Anderson, 1986a). In Gramsci terms, because political society had not adjusted civil society to the new economic structure, rule through hegemony was denied with coercive force lingering in the background should economic consent fail.

## **Qadhafi's 1969 revolution**

On 1 September 1969 The Free Officers' Movement headed by a twelve-member directorate the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) with Muammar Qadhafi as leader, carried out a bloodless coup overthrowing the Sanusiya monarchy<sup>21</sup> (Naur, 1986). With Libyans deeply dissatisfied with the corruption and mismanagement of the monarchy - eager for change, and hungry for ideological fulfilment, the 'One September Revolution' was received by a wave of spontaneous support, albeit out of the desire for change, rather than specific support for Qadhafi (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Harris, 1986; St John, 2011). Vandewalle (1995) argues that many Libyans remained apathetic, having little interest in the revolutionaries beyond their ability to distribute the revenues of an oil state. The monarchy's authority had been established on the historical traditions of tribe and Islam, but neither Qadhafi nor the RCC could claim any such legitimacy coming from less prestigious tribes marginalized under the monarchy<sup>22</sup> (First, 1974; Vandewalle, 2008; St John, 2011). As Al-Werfalli (2011) states, where traditional or rational-legal authority is absent, charismatic legitimacy provides an alternative, often utilised as a coping mechanism when traditional societies breakdown.

Without any traditional authority Qadhafi set about establishing his charismatic credentials with his youth, down-to-earth manner, and religious devoutness proving advantageous (El-Kikhia, 1997; Vandewalle, 2008). Additionally, being neither Cyrenaican nor Tripolitanian but a Bedouin from Sirte made him an ideal leader for the rival regions, with his humble origins rallying the respect and support of the minor tribes (Harris, 1986; Vandewalle, 2006). Moreover, the new regime's major platforms of Arab nationalism, opposition to colonialism and imperialism, and a commitment to Islam ingratiated these young revolutionaries to the Libyan people (Bearman, 1986; Harris, 1986). As to whether Qadhafi's charisma, which had proven the most powerful psychological mechanism (what Sharp terms an intangible factor) of consent during the first years of the revolution, could be transformed into a unifying ideology to penetrate

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<sup>21</sup> At the time of the 1969 coup, King Idris was abroad for medical treatment. Idris eventually settled in Egypt, living in exile in Cairo until his death on 25 May 1983 aged 94 (St John, 2011, p. 47).

<sup>22</sup> Only two of the twelve-man Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) came from major tribes, and one came from a privileged background. Mgarief was a member of the Sa'adi tribe the al-Magharba and Yunis belonged to an important tribe from the Augila oasis in Chad. Meheishy was born of a Misuratan father who was a provincial notable (First, 1974, p. 115).

the structure and superstructure to establish hegemony remained to be seen (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Vandewalle, 2008).

Colonel Qadhafi inherited a state based on a religious foundation in which Islam featured as the central political ideology, so to ensure the regime's survival and success the new leadership identified with Islam to legitimise its actions<sup>23</sup> (Allen, 1981; Anderson, 1983; Takeyh, 2000). Apart from Qadhafi's personal commitment to Islam, Islamic rhetoric was employed to undermine the religious authority that had sustained the monarchy, and to establish the new regime's own religious credentials (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Anderson, 1986b; Vandewalle, 1995). The *ulama* more than any other group in a Muslim country have the power to influence public opinion and legitimise the actions of a ruler, and given Qadhafi lacked the social prestige of the previous elite he set about forging an alliance with the orthodox non-Sanusiya *ulama* not accorded power under the monarchy (Takeyh, 2000; Gibrell, 2001).

The orthodox religious establishment, enjoying an improved status under Qadhafi, allowed themselves to be used as a source of legitimacy during the early years of the revolution; it was through religious authority that Qadhafi reintroduced *sharia* law as the basis of the Libyan legal code (Anderson, 1983). However, when the jurisprudence of the orthodox *ulama* interfered with Qadhafi's increasingly idiosyncratic interpretation of Islam, he discarded them as a source of legitimacy (Anderson, 1983; Harris, 1986). To emphasise the revolutionary regime's Islamic status acceptable religious activities were also redefined, with the consumption of alcohol and any public entertainment considered pornographic or obscene banned (St John, 1983; Anderson, 1986b). By the mid-1970s, Qadhafi had consolidated authority by coopting Islam's historical legitimacy as an organic superstructure and intangible source of political power.

Part of Qadhafi's initial popular appeal was his commitment to Arab nationalism and discarding the vestiges of colonialism and imperialism that had long suppressed Libya<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> The Qadadfa tribe of which Qadhafi was a member was a saintly (*murabit*) though not noble or wealthy tribe, said to be descendants of the Prophet. Although proud of his tribal origins, Qadhafi made no claim to a special religious charisma to justify the regime's accession to power (Anderson, 1983, p. 138).

<sup>24</sup> The 1969 revolution generation had grown up during a period in Arab history marked by numerous tumultuous events: the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine; the Egyptian Revolution and Nasser's ascent to power, the Algerian war of liberation; a succession of military coups in Syria; the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq; the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the tripartite invasion of Egypt (Al-Werfalli, 2011, p. 16).

Qadhafi and his Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) garnered considerable support by creating a sense of political allegiance among Libyans – drawing on Libya’s history of anticolonial resistance and presenting themselves as heirs to colonial hero al-Mukhtar (Harris, 1986; Vandewalle, 2008; Ahmida, 2009). Qadhafi’s early action in successfully negotiating evacuation of British and American military bases, symbolic of foreign domination, was regarded heroic and miraculous against what many Libyans believed were omnipotent nations, winning the regime mass support<sup>25</sup> (El-Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Ahmida, 2009; Al-Werfalli, 2011).

On 21 July 1970, Qadhafi announced that prime agricultural, business and other properties owned by Italians, a major source of contention among Libyans, were to be confiscated and restored to the Libyan people. Additionally, Libyan citizenship was denied to Italians forcing their repatriation to Italy (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980). Within three months of Qadhafi’s proclamation up to 20,000 Italians had departed, relinquishing 21,000 hectares of farming land, 1700 properties, and approximately LD9 million in frozen funds – Qadhafi had successfully removed a perceived threat to the revolution and created a nationalistic charisma around his person<sup>26</sup> (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Bearman, 1986; Al-Werfalli, 2011). Moreover, Italian place and street names were changed into Arabic, Italian churches were closed or turned into mosques, with all foreign passports translated into Arabic (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Bearman, 1986; St John, 2011).

With growing claims for Arab nationalism these symbolic acts of national independence and the glorification of Libya’s Arab history and culture enhanced the regime’s legitimacy while establishing Qadhafi’s credentials as a future leader of the Arab revolution<sup>27</sup>. Nevertheless, in a Gramscian sense, while Arab nationalism provided the regime with a superstructure of consent, the consensual nature of pan-Arabism was more

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<sup>25</sup> In the mid-1960s, being more economically independent and with the appeal of Arab nationalism conflicting with the monarchy’s pro-Western stance, plans were already underway to evacuate the United States and British military bases (Harris, 1986, p. 12). The British evacuated Al-Adem Base on 28 March 1970 and the Americans left Wheelus Air Base on 11 June 1970, after which these two dates became official holidays commemorated annually in popular festivities (St John, 1983, p. 474).

<sup>26</sup> 7 October was proclaimed a national holiday marking the date in 1970 that Italian-owned assets were confiscated and all remaining Italians expelled (St John, 1983, p. 474).

<sup>27</sup> The blessing of Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, the preeminent national hero to Libyan youth, enhanced Colonel Qadhafi’s aura of strength and sanctity. After Nasser’s death in 1970, Qadhafi enhanced his charismatic credentials by claiming to be Nasser’s legitimate heir of the Arab revolution (Al-Werfalli, 2011, p. 26).

in response to the prevailing circumstances rather than being an organic phenomenon – this is supported by Qadhafi’s recognition of the futility of Arab nationalism, which he abandoned in the late 1990s to instead pursue pan-Africanism (St John, 2011).

Qadhafi’s charismatic figure was further reinforced when he seemingly single-handedly forced a revision of world oil prices in the early 1970s (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980). The monarchy’s 1955 petroleum law entrusted the entire economic development of Libyan oil to multinational oil companies, leaving the government to simply collect its 50 percent share of net revenues; this arrangement led to the production of too much, too fast, threatening the long-term health of Libyan oil fields (Allan, 1981; St John, 2011). The oil companies’ monopoly over Libya’s oil industry came to an end when Qadhafi and the RCC moved to assert domestic control and increased the posted price of oil (Ahmida, 2009; St John, 2011).

The revolutionary regime’s conservation policy forced a reduction in the production of oil by 40 percent between 1970 and 1972, adversely affecting independent oil companies (Allan, 1981). Occidentals were most vulnerable to the conservation policy, with no other oil reserves outside Libya, they were forced to accept the May 1970 cut in production of 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) and an increase of \$0.30 per barrel in the posted price of crude oil (Allan, 1981; St John, 2011). In the same year cuts of around 125,000 bpd were levelled at other independents, with the RCC eventually cutting oil companies’ collective production by 800,000 bpd while increasing the price per barrel; this hardline policy ended the myth that only oil producers could set the posted price of oil (Allan, 1981; St John, 2011).

Reduced production had an immediate impact on world markets – in Libya the higher prices sustained or increased revenues while oil reserves were conserved (Allan, 1981). Qadhafi’s successful negotiations raised Libya’s crude oil to one of the highest-priced among the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Companies (OPEC) members; from 1972 OPEC controlled price-setting with Libya simply ensuring its prices were competitive with other producers<sup>28</sup> (Al-Werfalli, 2011). Qadhafi consolidated his

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<sup>28</sup> Libya’s oil revenues for the fiscal year 1970-71 were LD 469 million, in 1971-72 revenues rose to LD 652 million, and then levelled at LD 646 million in 1972-73 but escalated with the rest of OPC in 1974 after the October 1973 crisis (Allan, 1981, pp. 184-185).

authority over Libya's major material resource, one of Sharp's six sources of political power, which he would use to procure consent for his leadership.

With Libyans already accustomed to the workings of a distributive state, the revolutionary regime applied the strategy of buying support by extending Libya's national prosperity to all sectors of society (Al-Werfalli, 2011). Libya became a land of free social services offering healthcare, education, childcare, and unemployment compensation, which enjoyed widespread support (Harris, 1986; St John, 2011). Though official policy advocated a socialist economic system the revolutionary regime encouraged and subsidized capitalist ventures from 1969 to 1973 (St John, 1983). Farmers could purchase land taking on mortgages for only 10 percent of the estimated value, while receiving a government salary until the land yielded returns (El Fathaly & Palmer). Additionally, small businesses flourished with the adoption of a 'Libya first' policy in which Libyan firms were granted all government contracts (Vandewalle, 1998). Government finance was also available to establish commercial enterprises with 95-100 percent of initial capital loaned (Allan, 1981).

The economic initiatives adopted by the regime provided a direct economic stake in the revolution to a broad section of the population, winning the regime a tentative level of support. However, it would not provide the long-lasting support needed for political legitimacy (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Al-Werfalli, 2011). Qadhafi's support of capitalist enterprises secured a base of support for the regime, but when the socialist revolution was unleashed in the mid-1970s Qadhafi condemned capitalism and the groups that had brought him some legitimacy (Vandewalle, 1998; St John, 2011). Qadhafi's intangible mixture of charismatic, historical, symbolic, and cultural elements resonated among the Libyan population giving him a degree of authority. Nevertheless, to ensure the longevity of the regime and achieve hegemony in the true Gramscian sense, Qadhafi would need to achieve ideological consensus within the political and civil superstructures of Libyan society, the alternative being rule through domination.

### **Chapter Three: The green shadow of domination**

**“You should understand that since 1977 we no longer have any constitutional prerogative...You may seek our advice; we are ready to play the role of revolutionary instigators...However, we are restricted by people’s authority...People’s authority has become restrictive even on revolutionaries...it restricts even Mu’ammār al-Qadhafi; I cannot act”**

**(Cited in Vandewalle, 2006, p. 120)**

The chapter aims to examine the reality of Sharp’s theory that consent (regardless of whether it is ‘free’ or ‘intimidated’ consent) remains the basis of political power. Sharp’s assertion will be challenged by incorporating both Gramsci’s assumption that where ‘spontaneous’ consent fails the state will rule through domination, and Scott’s public-private transcript theory that seeming consent in the public discourse can disguise resistance to domination in the private transcript. To adequately convey the complexity of the Libyan state apparatus this chapter will trace the revolutionary regime’s initial attempts at political consolidation and mobilization, examine the formal and informal political structures, and use of material resources to pursue a socialist economy. While this chapter is relatively detailed and descriptive, this approach was necessary to sufficiently demonstrate the revolutionary regime’s successive failures to win consent, which ultimately resulted in rule through coercion, fragmentation and force.

#### **Political consolidation and mobilization**

To reduce the potential counter-revolutionary influence of the tribes and tribal sections that had prospered under the monarchy, in November 1970 Qadhafi abolished the tribes’ legal authority and reconfigured the traditional administrative boundaries into mixed tribal zones (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; St John, 2011). Moreover, local officials were dismissed and replaced by new local administrators typically from less prestigious tribes whose origins were more congenial with those of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) (Obeidi, 2001). To fill the void left by the abolition of the tribal system, Colonel Qadhafi established the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) on 12 June 1971 as the sole political party in Libya, to serve as the primary link between the people and the regime<sup>29</sup> (Vandewalle, 1995; Vandewalle, 2006; St John, 2011). Thus Qadhafi abandoned the tribe as an historical superstructure of consent through which ideologies were disseminated,

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<sup>29</sup> Law Number 71 of 30 May 1972 stipulated that anyone who created a political party or was involved in political activity outside the ASU would be subject to the death penalty (First, 1974, p. 133; Vandewalle, 2006, p. 83).



and arbitrarily established a single political institution to instil revolutionary ideology; as Gramsci asserts, where ideology is arbitrarily applied its longevity will be limited (Forgacs, 1999).

The structure of the ASU made it less a popular political movement than a parallel administrative structure to the RCC machinery; it suffered from the inherent conflict of representing both the regime's interests and local concerns<sup>30</sup> (Obeidi, 2001). The RCC rigidly controlled the ASU ensuring bureaucratic remnants of the monarchy were replaced with its own modernising adherents, although they proved mainly apolitical. By centralising decision-making power in the ASU the RCC stifled local initiative that conflicted with the RCC's goals; and squashed any re-emergence of tribal solidarities – a task that proved more arduous than expected (First, 1974; Vandewalle, 2006). With the scope and activities of the ASU closely circumscribed by the RCC, the ASU lacked the legitimacy to mobilise Libyans toward political participation (Vandewalle, 1998; Obeidi, 2001; St John, 2011). El Fathaly and Palmer (1980) argue that the dismal membership record of the ASU reflected the average Libyans political apathy, along with an active boycott by traditional tribal and religious leaders. In Sharp's terms Qadhafi's regime was unable to procure authority and human resources as sources of political power, instead using coercion and veto to enforce political legitimacy. While organic superstructures of consent (which Qadhafi had abandoned or was in the process of discarding) in the tribe and Islam continued to influence the political landscape.

Dissatisfied with the performance of the ASU, Colonel Qadhafi decided on a more radical strategy of bottom-up mobilisation to encourage political participation (Vandewalle, 2008). On 15 April 1973 Qadhafi proclaimed the 'Popular or Cultural Revolution' where he announced a five-point program to breakdown the residual power of the old bureaucracy and replace them with popularly elected people's committees (PCs) serving as subordinate local branches of the national ASU (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982; Naur, 1986; Vandewalle, 2006; Obeidi, 2001). Libyans received Qadhafi's declaration reluctantly; unconvinced the administration could be changed from the bottom-up. However, after initial hesitation some workers and students established PCs in their place of work or study, displacing the modernising administrators appointed by

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<sup>30</sup> The ASU consisted of three basic tiers: local, provincial, and national assemblies. Representatives met once every four months at the General Congress being the highest authority of the ASU, where the RCC occupied the position of executive committee (Vandewalle, 1998, p. 67; Al-Werfalli, 2011, p. 29).

the RCC<sup>31</sup> (Al-Werfalli, 2011; St John, 2011). While committee elections often resulted in the re-empowerment of the same traditional patron-figures Qadhafi sought to marginalise, the RCC often intervened by appointing loyal supporters from the lower classes who were considered more closely aligned with the masses. This often filled committees with unqualified members, without appropriate administrative and managerial skills (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982; El-Kikhia, 1997; Al-Werfalli, 2011).

Much like the ASU, the people's committees system failed to generate spontaneous popular participation, with most Libyans remaining indifferent to Qadhafi's system of popular democracy (Bearman, 1986; Vandewalle, 1995). Colonel Qadhafi criticised the population's resistance to people's committees as undermining the goals of the revolution, but for the Libyan people the ostensibly democratic committee system was merely cosmetic, with real authority vested in the Libyan leader (Allan, 1981). In terms of Scott's framework despite the veneer of popular rule in the public transcript the RCC remained firmly in control, with the non-participation of the population an expression of their private transcript of opposition. The bifurcation of the formal political/administrative institutions and extra-legal revolutionary mechanisms of political control became an enduring feature of Libyan political life through to the present day (Vandewalle, 2006).

### **The breakdown of religious and revolutionary legitimacy**

Qadhafi's confrontation with the *ulama* began in the early 1970s with the 'Cultural Revolution' that sought to replace all existing laws with *sharia* law, and intensified with the publication of part one and two of the *Green Book* over the mid-to-late 1970s<sup>32 33</sup> (Harris, 1986; Vandewalle, 1998). The *ulama* have substantial power in traditional Islamic societies, being entrusted with the interpretation and administration of *sharia*, but their status remains dependent on the government's attitude toward Islam (Gibrell, 2001). In Qadhafi's desire to reform the legal system he attacked Islamic jurisprudence based on two orthodox Sunni doctrines, the *hadith* and *sunna*, as being contrary to the

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<sup>31</sup> After the 1979 split between political and revolutionary authority, the people's committees remained as administrative units to implement the decisions of the new political structures, the General People's Congress and the Basic People's Congresses (Vandewalle, 1995, p. 191).

<sup>32</sup> Under the monarchy the legal system was essentially secular with *sharia* law only used to deal with personal matters (Vandewalle, 1995, p. 146).

<sup>33</sup> The *Green Book* is Qadhafi's ideological primer for Libya's economic, political, and social structures based on direct democracy, that is, rule by the people not by representation (Ayoub, 1987, p. 35).

revolutionary spirit of Islam embodied in Qadhafi's 'Third Universal Theory'<sup>34</sup> (Anderson, 1983; Naur, 1986). Qadhafi demanded the Quran serve as the exclusive source of religious inspiration and for direct communication between the individual and God, not through intermediaries such as the *ulama* (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Vandewalle, 1995). Qadhafi stripped the traditional religious establishment of its power making them consultants of the courts rather than arbiters of *sharia* (St John, 2011). Religion had served as a strong basis for Qadhafi's original legitimacy, but in alienating the religious establishment the Libyan leader undermined two sources of political power as proposed by Sharp - intangible factors and authority.

The release of the *Green Book* exacerbated tensions between Qadhafi and the *ulama*, with the latter arguing that its socialist prescriptions conflicted with the principles of Islamic law which sanctioned capitalist ideas including private property rights and inheritance<sup>35</sup> (Allan, 1981; Vandewalle, 1998; Takeyh, 2000). In response to the criticism of the *Green Book* Qadhafi strongly attacked the religious scholars, describing them as a reactionary group who distorted Islam (Deeb & Deeb, 1982; Bearman, 1986; Harris, 1986). Again, Qadhafi abandoned a historical superstructure of consent, supplanting it with his own arbitrary religious doctrine. The Libyan population found Qadhafi's radical interpretation of Islam disturbing, thus he forfeited his legitimacy as a representative of Islam as a superstructural node of spontaneous consent, instead becoming the unifying ideology of the Libyan opposition. Nevertheless, Qadhafi did not surrender religious legitimacy, regarding the *Green Book* as the new gospel (Anderson, 1983; Takeyh, 2000).

The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) seemingly brought to power a group of military men who agreed on the political direction for Libya. In the early days of the revolution the RCC assumed both executive and legislative functions, and although Qadhafi was clearly the final arbiter in all decisions every RCC member had some

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<sup>34</sup> Qadhafi has insisted that the Third Universal Theory (TUT) is a common-sense interpretation of Islam. The TUT was not meant to supplant Islam but instil a new set of laws based on a reinterpretation of the Quran from which all humankind could benefit. The TUT is explained in the *Green Book* as an alternative to capitalism and communism (Anderson, 1983, p. 147; St John, 1983, pp. 475-476; Ayoub, 1987, pp. 35, 87; Takeyh, 2000, p. 156).

<sup>35</sup> The *ulama's* argument over Quranic interpretations of private property was also motivated in defence of their *waqf*, property alienated for the purpose of religious endowment and exempt from traditional inheritance law and taxation, and the major revenue source of the religious establishment. The socialist economic reforms effectively nationalised *waqf* (Bearman, 1986, p. 162; Vandewalle, 1995, pp. 148, 150).

authority over Libya's political and economic life (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980; Joffe & McLachlan, 1982; Obeidi, 2001). Qadhafi dominated the RCC as both a leader and a psychological guide for its members. Individually, RCC members could not censure the Colonel but their collective weight placed a restraint on his behaviour (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982). Behind this facade of cohesion, the RCC split into two distinct factions: technocrats argued for orderly, well-planned economic and political modernisation; while revolutionaries sought activist policies sacrificing oil revenues for Arab unity and other ideological pursuits, with Qadhafi himself seeing Arab unity as the uncontested objective of the revolution (Vandewalle, 1998; Vandewalle, 2008). In Scott's terms, the RCC's initial public appearance of cohesion belied a private realm in which consent did not underlie their relationship.

As Qadhafi's power ascended he became less willing to share collegial authority with the RCC, and his determination to impose his own vision led to intense conflict manifesting in a failed coup from within the RCC in August 1975<sup>36 37</sup> (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982; El-Kikhia, 1997). In the wake of the coup Libya's technocrats were defeated, clearing the way for Qadhafi to implement his vision of a stateless society. The failed coup attempt reinforced Qadhafi's consolidation of personal control and led to his Declaration of the Authority of the People on 2 March 1977, creating the Socialist People's Arab Jamahiriyya – displacing the RCC and ASU with a new committee system (outlined in the *Green Book*) as the core political institutions of the revolution<sup>38</sup> (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982; Obeidi, 2001). Qadhafi had failed to procure ideological consensus from all RCC members at Gramsci's superstructural level but had instead asserted his position of dominance.

### **Protecting the regime: formal and informal means of power and control**

Following the declaration of people's authority, political control was vested in Basic People's Congresses (BPCs) that had gradually replaced the ASU local committees since

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<sup>36</sup> The 1975 coup arose over intense policy conflict between Qadhafi and a coalition of RCC members centered around Bashir Hawadi (Chairman of the ASU) and Umar al-Muhayshi (Minister of Planning), in which the disaffected RCC members accused Qadhafi of monopolizing power at the expense of the RCC. In December 1969, a coup was instigated by two free officers occupying the positions of minister of defence and minister of the interior who rejected Qadhafi's revolutionist vision; both were arrested and charged (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980, p. 47; Bearman, 1986, p. 148; Vandewalle, 2008, p. 18).

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix A for the composition of the RCC from 1969 to 1975.

<sup>38</sup> In place of the RCC, Qadhafi created the General Secretariat of the General People's Congress, which he filled with former RCC members with himself as Chairman of the body (El-Kikhia, 1997, p. 54; Vandewalle, 2008, p. 62).

1975 (with the older people's committees as their executive branch), as well as trade unions, professional associations, and the General People's Congress (GPC, which will be discussed shortly)<sup>39</sup> (Vandewalle, 1998; Obeidi, 2001; Al-Werfalli, 2011). Theoretically, the BPCs were the main decision-making institutions through which people were involved in the political process at the grass-roots level, where the people alone were to exercise authority in decision-making – but the reality was, as Qadhafi acknowledged in the *Green Book*, “theoretically, this is genuine democracy but realistically, the strong always rule i.e. the stronger party in the society is the one that rules” (Qaddafi, 1980, p. 53). Thus the formal political system of popular rule became a façade behind which Qadhafi and a narrow circle of intimates had ultimate power<sup>40</sup> (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2011a).

In principle, attendance at BPCs was compulsory but despite good attendance during the early years abstention became the predominate posture (Al-Werfalli, 2011; ICG, 2011a). Al-Werfalli's (2011) study found that high attendance during the early years did not stem from an ideological sense of duty but rather in response to threats that non-attendees would have no recourse against BPC decisions. Moreover, Al-Werfalli (2011) found increased use of force accounted for a rise in involuntary attendees too fearful not to attend. Qadhafi resorted to ‘guided democracy’ in which revolutionary committees (RC) forced attendance where a lack of revolutionary ideological consensus prevailed (Harris, 1986). More than half of the participants in Al-Werfalli's research that attended BPCs did so in response to a potential or direct threat, with the inclination to show false compliance the predominant attitude (Al-Werfalli, 2011). While many Libyans may have privately deplored Qadhafi's revolutionary ideology, they rarely expressed dissent in public demonstrations (Harris, 1986). As Scott (1990) argues, a regime's control of the public transcript can provide a convincing façade of hegemony, but revealing the private transcript of subordinates – as Al-Werfalli does – can clarify the situation as one of domination.

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<sup>39</sup> All citizens over eighteen years of age registered as members of the BPC in their area, and based on professional and functional categories established themselves into trade unions and professional associations that operate within the congress/committee system of the Jamahiriyya. Records indicate there have been between 400-600 BPCs all of which operate in isolation from one another (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982, p. 243; Obeidi, 2001, pp. 142-143; Al-Werfalli, 2011, p. 35; ICG, 2011a, p. 9).

<sup>40</sup> Since the creation of the BPC system, the only change to the formal political system occurred in October 1998 with the creation of 26 regional units known as *sha'abiyat* positioned between the BPC and GPC, each with its own people's congress and people's committee with their task to improve the coordination of local interests and decentralize authority (St John, 2011, p. 76).

The official separation between political and revolutionary authority was declared at the General People's Congress (GPC) on 2 March 1979 and henceforth the GPC seemingly replaced the RCC as the highest decision-making authority in Libya<sup>41</sup> (Naur, 1986; Vandewalle, 1995). To further emphasise the distinction between political and revolutionary authority, Colonel Qadhafi and former RCC members relinquished their roles as members of the GPC General Secretariat to focus solely on revolutionary activities, with all top positions within the formal political structure becoming civilian<sup>42</sup> (Vandewalle, 2008; Al-Werfalli, 2011). The GPC was the Libyan equivalent of Parliament, headed by a Secretary and composed of the secretaries of the BPCs, people's committees, the unions, and professional associations in total comprised of around 1,000 delegates who turned local decisions into national resolutions<sup>43</sup> (Obeidi, 2001).

The GPC was charged with appointing secretaries (ministers) to the General People's Committee (cabinet) as the highest executive authority headed by a Secretary General (prime minister), and elected a five-member General Secretariat. The General Secretariat was responsible for organising the annual two-week long meeting of the GPC, preparing the GPC's agenda by soliciting and reviewing GPC delegates' comments, and undertaking functions normally reserved for the head of state (Vandewalle, 2008; Al-Werfalli, 2011). In theory the GPC had the power to discuss and criticize government institutions and issue decrees with the force of law, but in reality it was simply a vehicle through which the Colonel's decisions were ratified (Al-Werfalli, 2011).

The twenty secretaries of the General People's Committee were nominated by the Revolutionary Committees Liaison Bureau (RCLB, to be discussed below), endorsed by Qadhafi; with the predetermined choices ratified through the GPC electoral process (Allan, 1981; Obeidi, 2001; Al-Werfalli, 2011). While the General People's Committee had to explain their policies to the GPC when requested, it did not take orders from GPC delegates who were simply messengers of their respective BPC (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982). The participants in Al-Werfalli's study overwhelmingly mistrusted the GPC and

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<sup>41</sup> In January 1976, the ASU Congress was renamed the General People's Congress (GPC) to reflect the new congress/committee system (Bearman, 1986, p. 149; Vandewalle, 1998, p. 96).

<sup>42</sup> From March 1979 Colonel Qadhafi never again occupied any formal political position with his post stationed above the political fray in the role of 'Leader or Guide of the Revolution' (Joffe & McLachlan, 1982, p. 243; Al-Werfalli, 2011, p. 35).

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix B for a diagram of the structure of the people's authority system.

the General People's Committee perceiving these governmental bodies as unreliable, given regime loyalty was the basis for appointment (Al-Werfalli, 2011). For many Libyans, these political institutions were the domain of regime stalwarts, and nothing more than talking shops tasked with implementing arbitrary decisions made by Qadhafi (ICG, 2011a). In a Gramscian sense the Colonel arbitrarily imposed the GPC on the Libyan population, and while the GPC publicly purported to be an institution of collaborative and consensual decision-making, the private reality was that it served Qadhafi and perpetuated his rule through domination.

In accordance with Qadhafi's *Green Book* declaration "committees everywhere" (Qaddafi, 1980, p. 35) in the late-1970s revolutionary committees (RC) were formed in businesses, educational institutions, and the armed forces, with an RC unit built into every BPC, people's committee, professional association, and other state institutions (Naur, 1986; Vandewalle, 1995; Obeidi, 2001). The revolutionary committees had two main functions: to mobilise the masses toward political participation and to serve as watchdogs within the formal political structures to prevent any deviation from revolutionary ideology<sup>44</sup> (Vandewalle, 1995; El-Kikhia, 1997; Al-Werfalli, 2011). After the separation of political and revolutionary authority in March 1979, Qadhafi appointed the RCs 'gatekeepers' of the BPCs, now considered inefficient and hostile to political innovation (Vandewalle, 1995). The RCs monitored BPC agendas; censored proposals that conflicted with revolutionary programs and the *Green Book*; guided elections for the leadership of BPCs in which RC members were predominantly recruited; and gathered intelligence against enemies of the revolution (Naur, 1986; Obeidi, 2001; Vandewalle, 2008). In Sharp's terms, the Libyan leader used the RCs to acquire 'intimidated' consent where 'free' consent was not forthcoming.

Between 1979 and 1987 the revolutionary committees were the single most powerful group within Libya, and understanding the allure of power Qadhafi did not permit the RCs to organise activities themselves, nor were they allowed to contact one another; all RCs reported to the Revolutionary Committees Liaison Bureau (RCLB) held directly

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<sup>44</sup> In 1979, the Revolutionary Committees established a weekly newspaper entitled *al-Zahf al-Akhdar* or The Green March, followed in 1980 by *al-Jamahiriyya* in which newly founded committees were regularly announced (Vandewalle, 1995, p. 95; Obeidi, 2001, pp. 145-146).

responsible to Qadhafi<sup>45</sup> (Vandewalle, 1995; El-Kikhia, 1997; Vandewalle, 1998). Nevertheless by December 1988, in the context of growing public dissatisfaction with the economy, Qadhafi publicly curtailed the RCs' role as their continued misuse of power in violently pursuing anti-revolutionaries had become counterproductive to encouraging meaningful popular participation (Vandewalle, 1995; Obeidi, 2001). However, Qadhafi did not abolish the RCs entirely and in the mid-1990s they were rehabilitated to provide Qadhafi with moral and physical support against opposition movements (El Kikhia, 1997; St John, 2011). In May 2002, there were an estimated 60,000 revolutionary committee members in Libya (Vandewalle, 2008). With revolutionary ideology proving an insufficient mechanism for mobilization, Qadhafi exercised domination over the Libyan population through the RCs. As Gramsci asserted, where the creation of genuine hegemony fails the state will revert to reliance on its coercive apparatus constructed in anticipation when 'spontaneous' consent declines (Bates, 1975).

The Revolutionary Committees' membership was not electorally based but available to anyone who believed in the revolutionary ideology codified in Qadhafi's *Green Book* (Obeidi, 2001). Graduates of political indoctrination camps in which the regime hardcore imparted revolutionary knowledge provided initial membership of the RCs, with subsequent members undertaking *Green Book* courses after RC membership was granted (Vandewalle, 1995; Vandewalle, 1998). RC members were largely motivated to join by ideology, including loyalty to the charismatic figure of Qadhafi, but some members had joined opportunistically hoping to improve their economic and social standing (Al-Werfalli, 2011). Al-Werfalli's (2011) survey asked respondents to identify if they were members of the RCs, given the RC movement was the sole mechanism through which individuals were allowed to exercise revolutionary activism (Vandewalle, 1995, p. 94).

The results of Al-Werfalli's study revealed that 62.3 percent of the population never joined the RCs, but of those who did the incentives and benefits attached to RC membership was a strong inducement (El-Kikhia, 1997; Al-Werfalli, 2011). Furthermore, Al-Werfalli was able to classify RC members into three distinct groups: pro-regime wing who supported Qadhafi unconditionally; reform wing forming a small proportion of the survey sample, who supported Qadhafi so long as his directives

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<sup>45</sup> Prior to the RCs curtailment, several members of the Revolutionary Committees Liaison Bureau (RCLB) were appointed secretaries (ministers) of the General People's Committee of the GPC (Vandewalle, 1998, p. 102).



enhanced 'direct democracy'; and withdrawal wing who abandoned the RC movement because their values conflicted with the revolutionary leadership (Al-Werfalli, 2011). Despite pro-regime wing support, the data revealed that pro-regime political activities were exceptionally low, with RC support most evident in the BPCs where approximately 90.6 percent participated occasionally or regularly (Al-Werfalli, 2011). Qadhafi's revolutionary ideology was even unable to fully penetrate the superstructure of his supposed adherents, where a performance of consent in the public transcript belied opportunistic content in the private transcript.

### **A socialist economy, economic sanctions and failed reforms**

Guided by the second part of Qadhafi's *Green Book* – on the 'solution to the economic problem' – by the end of the 1970s a socialist transformation had drastically modified Libya's long-standing economic structures (St John, 2011). These socialist developments conflicted with Libya's virtually homogenous commitment to orthodox Islamic values (which sanctioned capitalist ideas); replaced by Qadhafi's own idiosyncratic Islamic vision (Vandewalle, 1995). Nevertheless, with Libyans largely depoliticized and passive beneficiaries of economic largesse, Qadhafi's monopoly of oil revenues allowed him to pursue ideological economic policies without seeking popular endorsement (Vandewalle, 1998; Takeyh, 2000; Vandewalle, 2006). Beginning in 1978 a series of socialist reforms was initiated starting with Qadhafi's dictum "no wage-earners, but partners" (Qaddafi, 1980, p. 66) – encouraging workers to take over the running of their workplaces, with some 180 takeovers completed by the end of the year<sup>46</sup> (Deeb & Deeb, 1982). Moreover, new guidelines for property rights granted ownership of all tenanted properties to their occupants – Libyan families thereafter only being allowed to own one house, undermining the economic power of real estate investors<sup>47</sup> (Naur, 1986; Vandewalle, 1995; Al-Werfalli, 2011).

The demonetisation of banknotes above one Libyan dinar in 1980 successfully encouraged those with cash hoards to deposit them in nationalized banks, increasing government control over private assets (Allen, 1981). However, the most profound

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<sup>46</sup> This was a more radical change than the 1973 'popular or cultural revolution' workers take over in which workers were eligible to receive a share of annual profits if their enterprise employed more than 10 workers and if annual profits exceeded LD 4,000 (Deeb & Deeb, 1982, pp. 115-116).

<sup>47</sup> The new owners had to pay a mortgage in monthly instalments constituting only a third of the former rent, with former landlords granted compensation payments over a period of years (Deeb & Deeb, 1982, p. 116).

socialist prescription was the elimination of private commerce, wholesale as well as retail, being replaced by a centrally controlled economy (St John, 1983; St John, 2011). The state owned all banking, insurance and other major services, was in charge of agriculture, manufacturing, imports and exports, with state-run supermarkets established in 1981 as the sole distribution centres for all basic commodities (Naur, 1986; Vandewalle, 1995). These socialist reforms disenfranchised a substantial section of the population, particularly the ‘new capitalists’ who prospered under the early days of the regime (Deeb & Deeb, 1982; St John, 1983). In Sharp’s terms Qadhafi’s control of the country’s material resources provided him with his main source of political power and seeming consent, but in a Gramscian sense true hegemony goes beyond consensus of the economic structure.

In Qadhafi’s attempt to implement ‘Islamic socialism’ it became evident that Libya’s human resources were not being equally developed (Harris, 1986). By 1975 every sector of the workforce largely depended on foreign labour, with 58 percent of expatriate personnel holding professional and managerial positions, while foreign workers comprised 41 percent of the service sector (Bearman, 1986). The oil industry, accounting for almost 99 percent of Libya’s capital inflows, only employed one percent of the active Libyan population – largely relying on a more technically savvy expatriate workforce. Meanwhile the stagnant public sector accounted for 70-75 percent of Libyan employment (Allan, 1981; Naur, 1986; Vandewalle, 2006). With the private sector eliminated and the State the sole economic provider, the Libyan population was consigned to unproductive, rent-seeking activities (Vandewalle, 2006).

In principle the *Green Book’s* directives entrusted economic authority to the people’s congresses and committees, with Qadhafi often stating he was no longer responsible for economic decisions, now the people’s responsibility (Vandewalle, 2008). In reality the people’s congresses and committees did not seriously debate economic policies but served as a facade behind which a handful of officials and technocrats linked to the Libyan leader intervened extensively in the economy, making decisions on national economic development unobstructed by the purchased passivity of the population (Vandewalle, 1995; Vandewalle, 1998; Takeyh, 2000). Qadhafi arbitrarily changed the economic structure rendering the Libyan population economically superfluous, and although Qadhafi’s control of the country’s main resource purchased behavioural compliance it did not convert into ideological consensus.

As global oil prices and Libyan exports declined during the 1980s, Libya experienced a serious recession that reduced the regime's ability to purchase popular consent (Takeyh, 2000; St John, 2011). Libya's oil revenues dropped from \$22 billion in 1980 to \$5.4 billion in 1986, and oil production decreased and steadied at 1.0 million bpd from 1983 onwards, compared to the previous average of 1.8 million bpd in 1980<sup>48</sup> (Bearman, 1986; Vandewalle, 1995; St John, 2011). In response, the regime implemented austerity measures that had severe economic consequences. The expulsion of foreign workers severely interrupted food supplies and brought the services sector to a screaming halt (Vandewalle, 1995; St John, 2011). Prices of basic commodities doubled as state-run supermarkets suffered endemic shortages, and popular discontent rose as the inefficient and corrupt distributive system virtually collapsed (Bearman, 1986; Harris, 1986). While some Libyans expressed anger and discontent at the economic turmoil through anonymous acts of vandalism, and grumbling, the majority of Libyans accepted their reduced economic circumstances with passive anger (Harris, 1986; Al-Werfalli, 2011). As Scott asserts, while public grumbling stops short of making an explicit statement of opposition, it provides evidence of an individual's private transcript of dissent without provoking retaliation from an authoritarian regime.

The failure of Qadhafi's distributive policies continued to erode the Libyan leader's legitimacy, but sensitive to increasing internal discontent Qadhafi announced an *infitah* (liberalization) in late 1987, reintroducing private sector initiatives to significantly cut state spending (Vandewalle, 1995; Vandewalle, 2006). The liberalization attempt proved difficult as Libya lacked the necessary institutions of a modern state, neglected in the pursuance of 'statelessness' (Vandewalle, 1995). In the early 1990s another liberalization effort was instigated but was implemented half-heartedly, with most Libyans unwilling to participate in an uncertain economic climate where growth only proceeded at 0.8 percent annually<sup>49</sup> (St John, 2011). Qadhafi ruled by purchasing popular compliance but

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<sup>48</sup> Two factors exacerbated the decline in export earnings: In 1981, Libya's share of the oil market shrank as Libyan crude was priced \$4 higher compared to other exporters such as Saudi Arabia which expanded production from 8.5 million bpd to 10.3 million bpd creating a glut in the world market (Bearman, 1986, p. 268). Moreover, the trade sanctions imposed by the United States in March 1982 in response to Qadhafi's alleged support of global terrorism, restricted US companies from exporting Libyan crude oil which accounted for 35 percent of Libya's oil exports, and banned the import of American oil and gas machinery to Libya (Bearman, 1986, p. 268; St John, 2011, p. 95).

<sup>49</sup> Adding to Libya's economic woes, on 15 April 1992 and tightened in November 1993, the United Nations imposed sanctions on Libya that included a ban on air links with Libya, an embargo on the sale of aircraft, military and petroleum equipment and the freezing of Libyan assets overseas. The sanctions were

with the collapse of the economic structure and failing to institutionalise his socialist ideology within the superstructure, Qadhafi predominantly utilised coercion to perpetuate his rule with passive anger bubbling away in the private transcript of the Libyan population.

### **The state coercive apparatus**

Gramsci (Bates, 1975) asserts that when ‘organic crisis’ occurs whereby hegemony is absent from both the structure and superstructure the dominant group will resort to rule through force. In Libya Gramsci’s assertion was validated, as when revolutionary hegemony as embodied in the *Green Book* failed at both levels, the Libyan leader prevailed upon a pervasive security apparatus to prolong his rule. The military provided the main source of coercive power in the early days but, wanting to counterweight the military’s power which represented the most serious threat to Qadhafi’s authority (to be discussed in chapter four), the Libyan leader established a multi-layered and overlapping network of security organizations that were carefully controlled to limit any vertical or lateral bases of oppositional power forming (Vandewalle, 1995; El-Kikhia, 1997; Vandewalle, 2006).

The revolutionary committees discussed previously were the embodiment of the regime’s coercive apparatus. Particularly throughout the 1980s and 1990s RC members staffing revolutionary courts, not bound by the country’s penal code, were involved in numerous arrests, tortures and public executions against individuals involved in anti-revolutionary activities<sup>50</sup> (Vandewalle, 2008; Al-Werfalli, 2011). Although the visible public profile of the RCs was curtailed, they remained a core component of Qadhafi’s revolutionary apparatus (Vandewalle, 1995). In June 1990 Qadhafi created the People’s Guard as a visible deterrent to counter increasing Islamic agitation. In September 1994 the Colonel established cleansing or purification committees whose official duties included identification and elimination of counterrevolutionaries (St John, 2011).

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initiated after Libya failed to cooperate with officials investigating the December 1988, Pan Am flight 103 that exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland killing 259 passengers and 11 people on the ground, and nine months later the UTA flight 772 that exploded over Niger killing 179 passengers. The sanctions were permanently lifted in September 2003 after the trial of the two Libyan suspects in the Lockerbie case had concluded (St John, 2011, p. 98).

<sup>50</sup> The RCs were also involved in the killing of dissidents, a spectacular case occurring in 1984 when Libyan dissidents peacefully protesting against the Qadhafi regime outside the Libyan People’s Bureau (Libyan embassy staffed by RC members) in London were fired upon resulting in several casualties including the death of British police officer, Yvonne Fletcher (St John, 2008).

Other security institutions included the Military Secret Service, the Jamahiriyya Security Organization, the World Centre for the Fight Against Imperialism, Racism and Fascism (involved in the persecution of Libyans in exile during the 1980s), and the Intelligence Bureau of the Leader located within the Bab al-Aziziyah military compound that also served as Qadhafi's residence (Vandewalle, 2006). Beyond these formal security organs Qadhafi relied on relatives, members of his tribe (the Qadhafa) and affiliated tribes to fill important and sensitive positions to safeguard the Colonel and his regime (El-Kikhia, 1997; Vandewalle, 2006; ICG, 2011a). The fact that all security sector institutions remained outside the Jamahiriyya's people's committee and congress system indicated that ultimate control remained firmly within Qadhafi's grip, where domination prevailed over consent (Vandewalle, 2006).

Qadhafi's abandonment of the tribe and Islam as two organic superstructures of consent forfeited access to mechanisms of 'spontaneous' or 'free' consent, with the Colonel instead implementing successive arbitrary political institutions that failed to generate popular participation. Additionally, the imposition of his *Green Book* ideology was unsuccessful in establishing revolutionary legitimacy at the superstructural level (even failing to some degree within the RCC and RCs, which embodied revolutionary authority). Nevertheless, access to substantial capital inflows enabled the Libyan leader to purchase the Libyan population's political acquiescence (although this proved more difficult during a recession and under sanctions), which along with coercion and force produced a façade of behavioural compliance and seeming hegemony in the public transcript. In Sharp's terms this would be considered 'intimidated' consent, while Gramsci would argue that the state was ruling through domination given 'spontaneous' consent had failed. While overt expressions of opposition by the Libyan population were minimal thus supporting a public transcript of hegemony, this apparent consent belied a private transcript in which Libyans' passive anger was injected into the public transcript in the form of non-participation or anonymous acts of opposition, challenging the picture of hegemony into one of resistance to domination as suspected by Scott.

## Chapter Four: The 2011 revolution - a search for the sources of violence

**“He will never let go of his power,” said one, Abdel Rahman. “This is a dictator, an emperor. He will die before he gives an inch. But we are no longer afraid. We are ready to die after what we have seen”**

**(Cited in New York Times, 21 February 2011)**

That Libyans chose 17 February 2011 as their ‘Day of Rage’ was not just a reaction to the prevailing events in North Africa in which long-standing dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt were overthrown<sup>51</sup>. The date marked the fifth anniversary of a brutal crackdown on a public protest in Benghazi in 2006 (Amnesty International [AI], 2011). This chapter brings together the analysis of the deep historical superstructures of consent, specifically the tribe and Islam, and the examination of Qadhafi’s policies of rule through domination, having failed to capitalise on organic consensual superstructures or imbed revolutionary legitimacy. These elements will be discussed within the context of Libya’s recent history and the events of the 2011 uprising to explain why violent rebellion against the regime arose, and how these factors precluded nonviolent action in the way Gene Sharp advocates.

### **Recent events leading to the 2011 revolution**

On 17 February 2006 a crowd of 1,000 protesters set fire to the Italian consulate in Libya protesting against Italian minister Roberto Calderoli for wearing a t-shirt displaying a Danish cartoon satirising the Prophet Muhammad, originally published in September 2005 (BBC, 18 February 2006; St John, 2008; Christian Science Monitor [CSM], 17 February 2011). The International Crisis Group (2011a) suggests that the originally regime-orchestrated demonstration against the cartoon turned into an anti-regime protest, while Amnesty International (2011) maintain that the violence was simply anger about the cartoon, rather than being against Qadhafi. Nevertheless, Libyan security forces deployed to suppress the violence, killing at least 12 protesters (AI, 2011; BBC, 18 February 2006; CSM, 17 February 2011). As usual, the Qadhafi government held nobody responsible for the protesters deaths, with any criticism of security forces silenced (AI,

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<sup>51</sup> On 1 February 2011, Jamal al-Hajii, a Libyan writer and political commentator imprisoned by the regime in 2009 and 2010, was arrested by Qadhafi’s security forces over an alleged car accident but is believed to have been in relation to his calls for peaceful demonstrations to take place in Libya similar to the recent protests in Tunisia and Egypt (Amnesty International News, 5 February 2011; Amnesty International News, 8 February 2011).

2011). The following year the regime became aware of demonstrations planned for the anniversary, they thus banned all gatherings without regime approval, arresting, detaining incommunicado, and eventually sentencing the activists to prison terms ranging from six to 25 years for attempting to overthrow the political system (AI, 2011). For the International Crisis Group (2011b) Benghazi's tradition of activism, which had resurfaced during the 2006 anti-cartoon protests, made it a natural epicentre for the 2011 uprising.

Despite the Libyan population's catalogue of grievances it was a group called the Abu Salim Families, relatives of victims of the 1996 Abu Salim prison massacre, which sparked the 2011 uprising (Amnesty International News [AIN], 16 February 2011). On 28 June 1996 guards at Tripoli's Abu Salim prison (notorious for holding opposition activists) fired on inmates protesting poor living conditions, killing over a dozen and wounding several more (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2003). Top security officials, including Qadhafi's brother-in-law Abdullah Sanussi, ordered a ceasefire and opened negotiations while dead prisoners were removed and the injured supposedly taken to hospital (HRW, 2003; AIN, 26 September 2011). Instead, the injured were probably executed, and the following morning prisoners were forced into the courtyards where guards killed an estimated 1,200 of the prison's 1,700 inmates with grenades and heavy machine-gun fire (HRW, 2003). For six years the Libyan regime denied the massacre, then in 2002 began informing some families of inmate deaths without returning the bodies or indicating how they had died (HRW, 2003; CSM, 2 September 2011).

Since 2002, lawyers representing the Abu Salim Families had become the regime's most vocal opponents, so the arrest of lawyers Fathi Terbil and Fraj Esharani two days before protests planned for 17 February 2011 led hundreds of protesters to gather outside a security forces building to demand their release (AIN, 16 February 2011; CSM, 16 February 2011; CSM, 2 September 2011). The lawyers were released the next day but peaceful protests continued with demonstrators calling for Qadhafi's resignation, resulting in security forces using tear gas and water cannons to disperse them (AI, 2011; AIN, 16 February 2011; CSM, 17 February 2011). Following his release Fathi Terbil stated:

We, the Abu Salim families, ignited the revolution ... The Libyan people were ready to rise up because of the injustice they experienced in their lives but they

needed a cause. So calling for the release of people ... became the justification for their protest. (Oakes, 2011, pp. 224-225)

### **The 2011 revolution**

The 'Day of Rage' in Benghazi and the eastern city al-Bayda started in tense circumstances but proceeded as relatively coordinated peaceful demonstrations, resembling the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt (CSM, 17 February 2011; New York Times [NYT], 22 February 2011). While overwhelmingly nonviolent, aside from a few protesters throwing stones at security forces buildings, Libyan security personnel retaliated violently – firing live ammunition into the crowds, killing up to 24 protesters and injuring scores (AI, 2011; CSM, 18 February 2011). Some protesters thus became involved in violent confrontations with security forces, with reports of 170 civilians killed and more than 1,500 injured in Benghazi and al-Bayda between 16 and 21 February (AI, 2011). Incensed by the brutal crackdown, over the coming days spontaneous protests swiftly erupted across the country outrunning efforts to coordinate them.

Uprisings spread widely, from Nalut and Zintan in the mountains; to al-Zawiya and Zuwara in the west; to Kufra in the south-east; and Misratah (Libya's third city, located between Benghazi and Tripoli). The protesters set fire to buildings symbolic of state repression and unrest evolved into armed conflict at alarming speed, with the death toll (in addition to the Benghazi and al-Bayda death toll) climbing to 109 over a three-day period (AI, 2011; ICG, 2011a). In Tripoli the protests lagged behind, but by 21 February 2011 protesters converged on the central Green Square (a symbol of Qadhafi's power adorned by huge posters of the Colonel) where security forces opened fire on them (AI, 2011). Witnesses stated that heavily armed regime forces and African mercenaries were thick in the streets of Tripoli, roving in trucks and firing indiscriminately (NYT, 21 February 2011; NYT, 22 February 2011). As one protester stated:

It is too late ... I don't think anyone is prepared to listen to Qaddafi anymore, and it is not one town or one area. It is the whole country in an uprising. (New York Times, 22 February 2011, p. 4)

Qadhafi initially denied the protests, asserting "there are 'no demonstrations at all in the streets' and that 'all my people are with me, they love me.'" (CSM, 1 March 2011, p. 3).



However, unable to suppress the uprising Qadhafi became defiant stating, “I will fight on to the last drop of my blood” (NYT, 22 February 2011, p. 2) and threatening to “purge Libya inch by inch, room by room, household by household, alley by alley, and individual by individual until the country is purified” (AI, 2011, p. 16). By late February violence had erupted across the country, diminishing any chance of a nonviolent resolution. Through its actions and declarations, Qadhafi’s regime had made it clear that nonviolent resistance was futile and the Libyan leader would ‘fight to the death’. In Sharp’s theoretical terms the Libyan population had withdrawn consent, with the failure of nonviolent action potentially attributable to an absence of sufficient ‘loci of power’ through which to spread adequate training in nonviolent technique; unlike in Egypt where Sharp’s scholarship had been disseminated prior to using nonviolence. However, in reality and in a Gramscian sense, Qadhafi had not actually established hegemony where active consent must be imbedded at the superstructural level, and had instead ruled through domination for over four decades – thus it was the absence of consent (meaning there was no consent to withdraw) that goes toward explaining the failure of Sharp’s nonviolent technique.

### **A defiant military**

Unlike the Tunisian and Egyptian militaries whose tradition of non-partisan loyalty to state institutions allowed them to play mediatory roles in their own Arab Spring uprisings, the Libyan military had no such identity and had been kept deliberately fractured and weak by a suspicious Qadhafi (CSM, 22 February 2011; CSM, 1 March 2011; ICG, 2011a). Not long after assuming power Qadhafi sought to counteract the power of the military, which he perceived as threatening his authority<sup>52</sup>. In addition to purging the military of individuals suspected of disloyalty and regularly rotating high-ranking military personnel, Qadhafi abandoned professional and technical criteria as the basis for military recruitment (Harris, 1986; Vandewalle, 1995). Loyalty superseded competence creating two groups within the armed forces: ‘professionals’, who were generally non-political; and ‘loyalists’ originating within the RCC and the Free Officers, who overtly supported the regime (Vandewalle, 1995; Vandewalle, 2008).

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<sup>52</sup> To augment and offset the military the 1973 popular revolution called for the creation of a people’s militia, primarily used to guard public buildings and man remote checkpoints, to be placed under the control of the RCC and independent of the army and police. In 1979 conscription and military training compulsory for all young people was introduced with the goal of replacing the traditional military with a popular military force. Neither initiative was ever able to unseat the military (El Fathaly & Palmer, 1980, p. 122; St John, 2011, p. 63).

To supplement and counterweight the loyalists Qadhafi relied heavily on expatriate armed forces from East Germany, Syria and Cuba – further dividing the military (Vandewalle, 1995; Takeyh, 2000). The military was thus never assigned to safeguard the regime, the domain of Qadhafi's special security forces, which were always stronger than the regular army (ICG, 2011a). Additionally, rank did not ensure actual influence, with loyalty to the revolution and membership of Qadhafi's tribe determining appointment to sensitive security and army positions (El-Kikhia, 1997; Vandewalle, 2008). Despite Qadhafi's measures the military remained the one institution that threatened Qadhafi's power – manifest in numerous coup and assassination attempts against the Colonel (Harris, 1986; Takeyh, 2000). The military reflected the discontent felt toward the revolutionary regime and served as a breeding ground for counterrevolutionaries (Naur, 1986). In a Gramscian sense while the military remained a superstructure of political society, rather than it serving as an institution through which to imbue revolutionary ideology, it was utilised as a vehicle of opposition and a source of violence against the regime.

The dislocation and discontentment of the Libyan armed forces set the stage for heavy defections during the 2011 Libyan uprising (NYT, 22 February 2011). Forces of the former Libyan National Army abandoned their uniforms to join the rebels, whereby late February roughly 8,000 soldiers were reported to have defected (ICG, 2011b). The majority of military defections occurred in the eastern capital of Benghazi, the rebel army's headquarters, while defectors in Tripoli and other western cities joined local military brigades (ICG, 2011b). The military's indignation toward the revolutionary regime's tactics was evidenced at the Tobruk command where Major General Suleiman Mahmoud refused to follow regime orders to fire on demonstrators. His aide, Major Salma Faraj Issa, recalled that, “‘This was something impossible for us,’ ... ‘We were being asked to fire on our brothers, our sisters, we decided to stand with the people’” (CSM, 24 February 2011, p. 2).

A major indication of the regime's diminishing legitimacy was the defection of General Abdul Fatah Younis who had been Qadhafi's interior minister and an original member of the RCC. Younis was dispatched to Benghazi to suppress armed protesters but instead defected becoming military commander of the rebel forces (ICG, 2011b; CSM, 1 March 2011; CSM, 25 August 2011). Nevertheless, on 28 July 2011 Younis was assassinated

with the perpetrators believed to be either Islamists within the rebel forces or Qadhafi security forces (CSM, 25 August 2011; Oakes, 2011). The predominant role of the armed forces in the 2011 uprising ensured there was little chance the conflict would be resolved non-violently. Unlike Sharp's nonviolent protesters who are trained to control anger and fear and direct that energy into a nonviolent power, the opposite is true of the army which provides discipline in warfare, where individual weaknesses like fear and the instinct of flight are instead channelled toward violent action (Gregg, 1935; Sharp, 1973). Additionally, in Sharp's theoretical terms General Younis (as interior minister and original member of the RCC – the embodiment of the One September Revolution) had in the public transcript actively consented to the revolutionary ideology. However, in a Gramscian sense Younis' defection provides evidence to counter ideological consent at the superstructural level (which could simply have been opportunistic consent) and confirmation of covert resistance in the private transcript, supporting Scott's assertion that apparent consent in the public transcript can mask resistance to domination in the private transcript.

### **Tribe and Islam as superstructures of resistance**

Tribalism runs deep in Libyan history, with no greater example than the tribes' resistance to Italian colonialism (CSM, 25 August 2011). Despite the revolutionary regime's initial hostility towards tribalism and attempts to eliminate it, in the face of increasing discontent in the 1990s Qadhafi turned to the tribes as a tool of socialisation to maintain his power (Obeidi, 2001; St John, 2011). In Gramscian terms, the tribe is an organic superstructure of consent in civil society and the site of hegemonic leadership, and will not be easily destroyed through the introduction of arbitrary structures that typically have a limited lifespan (Bocock, 1986, Forgacs, 1999). Tribal identity proved impervious to the regime's interference, evidenced in studies by El Fathaly and Palmer (1980) in 1973 and Obeidi (2001) in 1994, which found that tribal identity and loyalty remained very strong.

Given the strength of tribalism, in July 1994 Qadhafi incorporated the tribes into the political structure by establishing the people's social leadership committees (PSLCs) comprised of tribal leaders, heads of families and other prominent local officials<sup>53</sup>. The

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<sup>53</sup> In 1996, the PSLCs were brought into a national organization with members of local PSLCs sent to the national PSLC. The national committee was directed by a general coordinator, a position typically held by high-ranking military personnel for six-month terms. In March 2000, Qadhafi suggested that the general coordinator should be considered the formal head of state, in effect, his successor. Then in October 2009,

PSLCs were tasked with the distribution of state subsidies and maintaining social stability through the prevention of opposition, increasing kingship's importance as a source of safety and support, and a mechanism through which to access distributive networks (Vandewalle, 2006; Obeidi, 2011; St John, 2011). Nevertheless, the practical reality of encouraging the PSLCs allowed Qadhafi to use the tribal system to his advantage, offering economic privileges and other advantages to tribes that were loyal and punishing those that were not, thus agitating intra-tribal rivalries (Telegraph, 4 March 2011; CSM, 25 August 2011). In a 1992 interview with Muhammad Ibn Ghalbun founder of the exiled opposition group the Libyan Constitutional Union, he stated, "were Qadhafi to fall, neither the exiled secular opposition nor internal Islamist activists would prevail; instead, a civil war between or among various tribal factions was likely to develop" (Vandewalle, 1995, p. 230).

With a history of tribal violence, and an environment of simmering tribal tensions, nonviolent collaboration was improbable. Nonetheless, during the 2011 uprising Libya's biggest tribe the Warfalla abandoned the Qadhafi regime – evidence of a private transcript of simmering tribal animosity injected into the public transcript (Telegraph, 4 March 2011). Other tribes also joined the anti-government side in violent conflict, with the eastern Agouri tribe's leader Mohamed El Deeb stating, "For 42 years, Qaddafi put hatred between the tribes. But this is the first time they feel like they are working together" (CSM, 25 August 2011, p. 3). Despite the revolutionary regime's attempts to manipulate and subvert the tribal system, the tribe remained a persistent feature of Libyan society supporting Gramsci's assertion that organic historical superstructures are not easily extinguished and continue to serve as mechanisms of ideological consent even when arbitrary structures seek to replace them. This upholds Sharp's theory that intangible factors can provide a source of consensually based political power. Nevertheless, where a ruling group abandons an organic superstructure it will no longer provide a source of political power, instead becoming a weapon of resistance for subordinate groups – manifest in overt resistance in the public transcript and/or covert resistance in the private transcript, however it does not then follow that these organic superstructures of opposition will support nonviolent principles.

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Qadhafi urged the national PSLC to appoint his son Saif al-Islam al-Qaddafi as general coordinator with no term limit (St John, 2011, p. 75).

Islam as a historical superstructure of consent, or what Sharp terms an intangible factor of political power, remains a primary unit of loyalty and identity in Libyan society. Islam nurtured resistance against foreign rule during the colonial war, and it played a similar role under Qadhafi's authoritarian rule (Harris, 1986; Obeidi, 2001). In a society like Libya where Islam has played a prominent role in shaping beliefs, values and attitudes, Qadhafi's increasingly radical interpretation of Islam set him at odds with both the religious establishment and the Libyan population, ensuring that Islam became a weapon of violent resistance rather than a source of political consent for the regime (Anderson, 1983; Vandewalle, 1995).

Islamic opposition intensified during the 1980s and 1990s to which Qadhafi took a zero-tolerance approach, declaring opponents "more dangerous than AIDS" (Vandewalle, 1995, p. 109). Nonetheless, under Qadhafi's tenure several Islamic opposition groups were established, the most prominent being: the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), born in Afghanistan in the early-1990s (which numerous individuals killed during the Abu Salim massacre belonged to); and the Libyan Islamic Group (the Muslim Brotherhood's local branch – established in Egypt in 1928 and brought to Libya by Egyptian teachers and students)<sup>54</sup> (Vandewalle, 2008; Al-Werfalli, 2011; ICG, 2011a). Other Islamic opposition groups included the Islamic Liberation Movement and the Islamic Martyrs' Movement, both of which supported a jihadist culture and were proficient and committed practitioners of violence (Takeyh, 2000).

While militant Islamists were a source of annoyance for the Libyan leader, by the end of the 1990s Qadhafi had successfully suppressed them, aided by their own internal divisions that prevented a united front (Takeyh, 2000; Al-Werfalli, 2011). Despite the absence of continued Islamic opposition within Libya, Islamic resistance remained active outside the country (Vandewalle, 2008; St John, 2011). Although Islam provides a node of consent within Libyan society, which in a Gramscian sense performs as an organic ideological superstructure of consent and in Sharp's terminology as a loci of power to control the authority of the ruling group, with LIFG adherents trained to "get into knife fights and other situations involving extreme and life-threatening violence" (Vandewalle, 2008, p. 96) it would not serve as a source of nonviolent resistance during the 2011 uprising.

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<sup>54</sup> In March 2011, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group changed its name to the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change (ICG, 2011b).

### **Economic and political opposition**

Despite Libya's relative economic security compared to other North African countries it is understood that grievances over corruption, unemployment and poverty propelled the 17 February 2011 'Day of Rage' (AI, 2011; ICG, 2011a). Over recent decades average Libyan living standards were eroded, leaving Libyans exasperated over what they perceive as years of poorly planned, piecemeal development of a country that "given a population of a mere six million ... ought to resemble Dubai" (ICG, 2011a, p. 2). During the 2000s the regime promoted economic liberalization but it did not induce the anticipated economic revival, where after almost four decades under a socialist command economy crude oil continued to account for 95 percent of exports and 70-80 percent of government revenues with private investment dormant at around two percent of GNP (Takeyh, 2000; St John, 2011).

Despite Libya's economic wealth a majority of Libyans work at least two jobs, one typically in the public sector accounting for 75 percent of employment where salaries remain pitiful and irregular, while approximately 30 percent of the Libyan population is unemployed or underemployed leaving a massive untapped labour pool (Takeyh, 2000; ICG, 2011a; St John, 2011). The reduced standard of living, the employment situation and an increasingly expensive cost of living fuelled the epidemic of corruption rife across state enterprises (Al-Werfalli, 2011; St John, 2011). Corruption has been justified as rightfully restoring to the Libyan people what was stolen from them by the state, with one of Al-Werfalli's research participants stating "By stealing the thief's money, you are not committing a crime, you are getting back your stolen money" (Al-Werfalli, 2011, p. 83). Contrary to Sharp's (1973) assertion that a ruler's political power can be restrained through the withdrawal of consent of a country's human resources, in Libya where the major material resource was controlled by Qadhafi and where the majority of the population was superfluous to economic growth, they were deprived of targets of nonviolent resistance to influence the economic base.

Both Obeidi (2001) and Al-Werfalli's (2011) research found that while numerous respondents desired political change and wanted to contribute to the change process, they felt they had no capacity to influence the system through the basic people's congresses (BPCs), which were regarded as ineffective channels of political participation essentially controlled by the regime. Not convinced by the efficacy of the political participation

process and frightened that any expression of criticism would be severely punished, numerous respondents withdrew from the BPCs entirely, accounting for the poor attendance records (Obeidi, 2001; Al-Werfalli, 2011). Moreover, Al-Werfalli's (2011) study found that even those that attended the BPCs occasionally never participated in debate. While Sharp (1973) acknowledges that under such conditions sufficient 'loci of power' will be absent or limited in its effectiveness to wield independent action, Sharp maintains that irrespective of these structural circumstances it is through overt expressions of individual human agency that consent can be withdrawn to modify an authoritarian regime's sources of political power. In opposition to Sharp, Scott (1990) argues that under systems of domination individuals will instead seek to covertly resist an authoritarian regime where acts of anonymous resistance such as non-participation enables a non-confrontational expression of opposition.

Political alienation from authoritarian regimes arises from an individual's awareness that the imposed political system is obstructive to the achievement of their goals and political expressions (Al-Werfalli, 2011). Thus where political participation is circumscribed and forms of protest and resistance are blocked, alienation will manifest in disguised forms of resistance such as desertion and false compliance to avoid direct confrontation with an oppressive system (Al-Werfalli, 2011). This corresponds with Scott's (1990) assertion that there will always be an ambiguous or coded version of the subordinate groups' private transcript in the public transcript providing terrain on which to discover resistance. Al-Werfalli (2011) hypothesised that the respondents' withdrawal from BPC participation was indicative of political alienation and an expression of non-compliance. This was supported as most respondents indicated that instead of airing grievances in the BPCs, their chosen channels of political resistance were either to talk privately with trusted individuals or to remain silent<sup>55</sup> (Al-Werfalli, 2011). Political alienation leads to a sense of powerlessness whereby people believe the choices available to them are irrelevant or are in fact non-choices, so no matter what the individual does they feel powerless to have any impact (Al-Werfalli, 2011). Where individuals are denied their legitimate rights over an extended period a state of powerlessness is created, leading to apathy and accompanying feelings of impotence and aggression, with violence the predictable end result (May, 1972). "Violence arises not out of superfluity of power but out of powerlessness" (May, 1972, p. 23).

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<sup>55</sup> See Appendix C for the results of Al-Werfalli's study on the methods of expressing disapproval.

Given many Libyans were left powerless in a political system that stifled opinion and suppressed dissent, and with a remarkable number of respondents in Al-Werfalli's (2011) research declaring their support for violence to change the system, it is unsurprising that the 2011 uprising could not be resolved through nonviolent action. Despite Sharp's assumption that consent (whether freely given or induced through intimidation) is the basis of political power, the reality of Libya provides evidence that consent is a far more complex phenomenon meaning Sharp's theory will be limited. Apparent consent (characterized behaviourally by either overt support or passive support) in the public transcript can in fact disguise covert resistance (ideological opposition) in the private transcript, where if sustained for a long duration will breed tendencies toward violence. Thus as Scott asserts subordinate groups have not consented to domination, which is evidenced through the everyday forms of resistance of their private transcript injected into the public transcript.

### **Youth and violence**

That the 2011 Libyan uprising and other Arab Spring revolutions were initiated by disaffected youth is somewhat expected given younger people are more often at the forefront of movements for social and political change (CSM, 24 February 2011). In Libya younger people have historically proven an anti-regime source, evidenced after the 1975 RCC coup attempt when university student uprisings started in Benghazi and Tripoli, in which the killing of ten anti-Qadhafi student's sparked further protests (Bearman, 1986; Vandewalle, 1998). More recently, the rise of Islamic opposition movements has been almost completely a youth phenomenon, with the anti-cartoon protest already mentioned instigated by young people (Vandewalle, 1998; Al-Werfalli, 2011). In 1990, 65 percent of Libya's population was under twenty-five years of age, with the 15-24 demographic accounting for 867,000 of the total population, making Libya a youthful country. In 2010, approximately 36 percent of the population were under the age of 15 with only four percent over 65, exposing a significant generation gap between the average Libyan and the ageing revolutionary regime (Obeidi, 2001; Al-Werfalli, 2011). Thus the inability of the Qadhafi regime to accommodate the aspirations of its youth and facilitate their entry as productive members of the economy would serve to create lurking discontentment with explosive potential (Takeyh, 2000, p. 159).

Al-Werfalli's (2011) study found that Libya's youth were the most dissatisfied with their circumstances and expressed acute alienation from the political system. When Al-



Werfalli (2011) asked respondents about the methods they would support to bring about change, centring on the options of nonviolent or violent action, the prevailing view among youthful respondents, falling into the 18-37 demographic, was a determined support for violence. However, nobody in the 57-and-over age group supported violent methods, largely advocating peaceful resistance. When elaborating on their support for violence, youthful respondents regarded nonviolent means to be futile against an intolerant regime and armed resistance the only effective course of action (Al-Werfalli, 2011).

Given the central role of Libya's youth during the 2011 uprising and their predisposition toward violence to effect change, it was unlikely that the uprising could be resolved nonviolently. Libya's youth serves as a 'loci of power' that has been continually obstructed from overtly expressing their dissatisfaction with the revolutionary regime in the public transcript. Thus, contrary to Sharp's assertion that such a loci could provide a source of nonviolent action, Libya's youth instead became a source of violent opposition, nurtured in their private transcript waiting to be unleashed into the public transcript as evidenced during the 2011 Libyan revolution.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to examine Libya's political, economic and social structures to determine the predominant source of the Qadhafi regime's political power, and thus elucidate an explanation regarding which factors precluded Sharp's consensually based strategy of nonviolent action succeeding in the 2011 Libyan revolution. Through a detailed analysis of Libya's history from the nineteenth century as a traditional tribal society, to the monarchical period starting in 1951 when oil was discovered and commercialised, through to the Qadhafi era from 1969 to 2011, a clear picture of the internal dynamics of the Libyan system has emerged in which domination served as the underlying source of the revolutionary regime's political power. This has highlighted that the longevity of Qadhafi's regime is insufficient evidence to claim the existence of political legitimacy based on Sharp's 'free' consent or Gramsci's 'spontaneous' consent and hegemony, but that it is rather more reasonable to conjecture that the enduring nature of the regime was due to the constant application of force, which procured the Libyan population's acquiescence. Moreover, through detailed analysis of Libya's history and the events of the 2011 revolution it is evident that consent is a vastly more complex phenomenon than asserted by Sharp, requiring a more integrated approach for nonviolent action to become a viable strategy to effect regime change.

The structure-superstructure model of consensually based power as proposed by Gramsci is a useful analytical instrument in highlighting the enduring nature of the tribe and Islam as organic historical superstructures of consent within Libyan society (superstructures abandoned by Qadhafi's regime and instead used as weapons of resistance against authoritarian rule). Additionally, Gramsci's superstructure approach validates Sharp's assumption that intangible factors (psychological and ideological) can serve as sources of consensually based political power. The strength of Gramsci's theory has been in identifying that consent is a variable phenomenon, which is procured at multiple levels. While consent can be established at the economic base (structure) through the social relations of the material and technical instruments of production this will be insufficient for long-lasting consent and must go beyond the economic base to the superstructure (the realm of ideologies within both civil and political society) for hegemony to be established. Although Sharp also includes material resources as a source of consent, unlike Gramsci he does not distinguish between the tiered platforms of economic and ideological consensus, thus he does not adequately capture the full dynamics of political

systems in which economic consent will only sustain authority for a finite period unless accompanied by ideological mechanisms of consent.

Where consent is authentic, in Gramscian terms it originates as ‘spontaneous’ consent before evolving into ideological consensus at the superstructural level, while for Sharp it begins and remains as ‘free’ consent unless sanctions are involved (to be discussed next). In this sense ‘authentic consent’ can either manifest as ‘overt/active consent’ at both the behavioural and ideological level or as ‘passive consent’ (or more accurately ‘acquiescence’) expressed behaviourally as conformity, but will not involve consensus at the ideological level. One explanation for the absence of ideological consent is that individuals may not question the policies/ideologies of a regime if their current needs are being satisfied. By tracing the history of Libya it has been shown that the tribe and Islam as organic superstructures of consent provided the Sanusiya Order, the monarchy, and initially Qadhafi, with the Libyan population’s behavioural and ideological consensus or ‘overt/active consent’. Behavioural conformity (‘passive consent/acquiescence’) was established without ideological consensus, as was the case when Tripolitania united with the Cyrenaican tribes while fighting Italian colonialism but did not ideologically consent to the Sanusiya Order, and also when Qadhafi used economic wealth to initially garner behavioural support – only after which he attempted to establish revolutionary ideological consensus.

Incorporating Gramsci’s structure-superstructure framework with Scott’s public transcript and private transcript theory has proven beneficial in determining whether seeming hegemony in Libya’s public transcript is ‘authentic consent’ or if it conceals resistance to domination in the population’s private transcript. Contrary to Sharp’s assertion that ‘intimidated’ consent through the use of sanctions remains the basis of consensual power (Sharp considers that an individual’s choice to be obedient despite sanctions is indicative of consent, which differs from the notion of domination where ‘real’ choice is absent and is replaced with acquiescence through the use of coercion), Gramsci argues that where ‘spontaneous’ consent declines or where genuine hegemony has not been established the state will resort to rule through domination. Similarly, in Scott’s terms apparent behavioural conformity in the public transcript can disguise ‘covert/passive resistance’ to domination in the private transcript of subordinate groups – manifest as ideological opposition or as anonymous acts of behavioural resistance injected into the public transcript. Through the examination of Libya under Qadhafi’s

revolutionary regime it has become evident that while the Libyan leader initially established what Sharp terms 'free' consent through intangible factors such as personal charisma and Islam, and distribution of material resources, when Qadhafi arbitrarily imposed his revolutionary political system he immediately alienated the majority of Libyans, abandoned organic superstructures of consent, and instead employed domination to enforce behavioural conformity and revolutionary legitimacy.

However, the Libyan population's response to domination continued to support a picture of apparent hegemony in the public transcript. 'Overt/active consent' was seemingly embodied in the regime's most ardent adherents, the revolutionary committees (RCs) (although Al-Werfalli's 2011 study argued this was often opportunistic behaviour rather than 'authentic ideological consent'). Meanwhile 'passive consent/acquiescence' was manifest in the population's acceptance of the regime's economic rewards, with negligible 'overt/active resistance', apart from Islamic opposition groups that were quickly suppressed (and thus removed from the public transcript). However, Al-Werfalli's 2011 research challenged the image of the public transcript's 'authentic consent', demonstrating that acts of 'covert/passive resistance' continued in the population's private transcript. Research participants described choosing to talk privately with trusted friends and/or remained silent as a means of behavioural and ideological resistance, and that non-participation at the basic people's congresses (BPCs) was a behavioural manifestation of resistance – the injection of their private transcript into the public transcript and evidence to counter that silence gives consent (those who did participate at the BPCs did so out of fear from the threat of force confirming rule through domination).

This evidence supports the notion that 'authentic consent' was not operating in Libya under Qadhafi, but rather as Scott argues the majority of Libyans were resisting a system of domination using disguised forms of resistance. Thus in Libya, the population could not withdraw their consent in the way Sharp asserts (such as through labour strikes, withdrawal from government employment or refusal to provide the government with revenue voluntarily), as the regime was economically independent of the people through exclusive access to vast oil revenues and foreign workers, with the population largely reliant on the economic benefits of government employment for their day-to-day living. While 'authentic consent' can serve as the basis of political power (evidenced through the use of the tribe and Islam as organic superstructures of consent) this will not always

be the reality. The longevity and seeming stability of the Libyan regime was not by virtue of 'authentic consent' but was instead maintained through force and coercion.

Scott's public-private transcript analysis was pivotal in elucidating that domination was the Libyan regime's primary source of political power, and that the majority of Libyans were responding to domination through 'covert/passive resistance' – evident in a sometimes overt form within the military, the tribes, and the Islamic opposition. Chapter four discussed the multifarious historical and contemporary sources of violence in the 2011 Libyan uprising. Perhaps the most salient point is that 'covert/passive resistance' sustained for a long duration in a situation of powerlessness, where 'real' choices are denied by the regime's domination of all social structures, creates a state of apathy, which is a breeding ground for violence. Thus it may be concluded that individuals who live in a state of daily oppression in which their 'covert/passive resistance' is confined to their private transcript where feelings of impotence and aggression are uprooted support for the use of violence will be more predominant. Given Qadhafi's willingness to use military repression against the nonviolent protesters in the 2011 uprising (a perpetuation of the revolutionary regime's historical tactic of domination through violence) it was even more probable that individuals in a constant state of 'covert/passive resistance' would retaliate with violence. Therefore, Sharp's theory of consent upon which his strategy of nonviolent action is based would seemingly be unsuitable within the Libyan context.

In applying the theories of Sharp, Gramsci and Scott to the Libyan context it has been demonstrated that in reality consent is a far more complex and variable phenomenon than articulated in Gene Sharp's theory of consent, and that local conditions will therefore impact the effectiveness of his nonviolent strategy. A limitation of Sharp's theory is that it assumes consent is always the basis of political power expressed either as 'free' or 'intimidated' consent. The Libyan situation suggests that consent is not a simple, linear concept, but has behavioural and ideological manifestations, and can be procured through enduring historical sources of consent or through arbitrary political institutions with more limited lifespans. Additionally, while consent can seemingly provide evidence of hegemony, it could in fact be masking domination as the source of political power, which Sharp does not address.

Moreover, as demonstrated in the Libyan context nonviolent action (as both a behavioural and ideological concept) will only be a suitable weapon of resistance within certain milieus. Circumstances in which nonviolent action could be instigated include where 'overt/active consent' has become 'overt/active resistance' such as the defections of Qadhafi's inner circle during the 2011 uprising (or where opportunistic notions yield to an ideological aversion of current conditions). Additionally, where 'passive consent/acquiescence' is manifest, whereby apparent behavioural conformity could belie ideological ambivalence or ambiguity providing terrain on which to introduce and nurture nonviolent action toward supporting opposition to prevailing conditions – such as where nonviolent methods of 'overt/active resistance' toward an oppressive state have become the main target of an authoritarian regime and could benefit from support from a wider section of the population which may not have ideologically considered the long-term consequences of the environment in which they live.

However, where 'covert/passive resistance' is the underlying context (and as such it is more likely that domination has become the main source of political power) the strategy of nonviolent action will not find many receptive adherents (given the probability that attempts at 'overt/active resistance' have already been crushed) who out of their state of powerlessness are more likely to have resolved that violent conflict is the only outcome. While 'passive consent/acquiescence' and 'covert/passive resistance' will behaviourally appear almost identical because the state represses any sign of overt resistance, it is in determining the difference between these categories (to be discovered in the content of their private transcript) that will elucidate whether consent or domination is present, and therefore determine whether nonviolent action presents the most effective method through which to effect political change. Moreover, where a state is independent of its people's labour and consent, as was the case in Libya, then withdrawing consent nonviolently will not be sufficient to bring down the state.

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## Appendix A – Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) from 1969 to 1975

Name	Region	Social background	Educational background
Mu'ammār al-Qadhafī*	Middle	Lower	Military
Abd as-Salam Jallud*	South	Lower	Military
Muhammad al-Mugaryef***	East	Middle	Military
Bashir Hawadi**	South	Lower	Military
Abu Bakr Yunus Jabir*	East	Lower	Military
Al-Khuwaylidi al-Hamidi*	West	Lower	Military
Mustapha al-Kharubi*	West	Lower	Military
Omar al-Muhayshi**	West	Upper-Middle	Military
Mukhtar al-Gerwy***	West	Middle	Military
Abd al-Munim al-Huni***	West	Middle	Military
Muhammed Najm***	East	Middle	Military
Awad Hamza***	East	Lower	Military

\* The only politically active RCC members after 1975.

\*\* Lead the 1975 coup against Qadhafi.

\*\*\* Forced from the RCC as members of the pro-Muhayshi faction failed coup of 1975.

Source: Vandewalle (2008)



## Appendix B – Structure of People’s Authority System

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Source: Al-Qaddafi (1980)

### **Appendix C – Methods of expressing disapproval (%)**

Contact the administration body concerned	21.6
Contact the Leadership	0.2
Contact the revolutionary committee in the commune	29.3
Bring the matter to the BPC at a meeting	12.8
Bring the matter to the media	4.4
Talk in public places	0.5
Talk privately with trusted individuals	94.6
Keep silent	68.9
Other	23.0
Do not know	0.6

Source: Al-Werfalli (2011)