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## To what extent have the domestic objectives of the AI-Fatah Revolution and the Third Universal Theory been implemented in Libya since 1969?

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## **“To what extent have the domestic objectives of the Al-Fatah Revolution and the Third Universal Theory been implemented in Libya since 1969?”**

### **1. Libya: an ideological nomad**

Libya is an often ignored but highly important case for political scientists and theorists to analyse when studying concepts such as decolonisation, democratisation and socialism in practice. Harbours a distinct political ideology - a theoretical hybrid of Arab nationalism, socialism and communism - Libya can be seen to provide a seemingly unique form of government, both in theory and practice.

Ernest Gellner best encapsulated this unique national combination in the following review of John Davis' first work on the country:

‘Libya is important...because it combines five...features which are also present elsewhere, though not in this combination: it is radically revolutionary; it is endowed with an enormous oil wealth; it is reacting to decolonization; it exemplifies a puritan and fundamentalist form of Islam; and although it is a dictatorship, it toys with aspirations towards statelessness and a kind of direct popular self-government’.<sup>1</sup>

Rather than compare Libya with other states based on path-dependent normative criteria, this essay will identify the objectives of the Free Officer Movement in overthrowing the Libyan monarchy in 1969 and theories that followed, evaluating the extent to which these ‘aspirations’ were achieved. In this sense, the essay will evaluate the extent to which there was any measurable practical application of the ideology behind the Al-Fatah Revolution and Third Universal Theory, ascertaining whether it is any more than an ideological mirage to hide a conventional dictatorship, as is often the popular perception.

The wider importance of such an evaluation is to ascertain if Libya is a distinct theoretical and practical model of government, or simply the conjecture and rhetoric that emerges as a product of *realpolitik*. As such this essay will seek to judge

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<sup>1</sup> Gellner, E, 1987 in Davis, J, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution* (London, I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1987)

revolutionary objectives in their own terms rather than judging them by external conceptual standards. In order to avoid path-dependency, I will first carry out a diachronic historical synopsis of the causes of the Al-Fatah Revolution in order to provide a context for Revolutionary objectives.

The evaluation itself will first require a coherent identification of what the objectives of the Al-Fatah Revolution and Third Universal Theory were, for which I will use both secondary literature review but also the primary document of Colonel Qaddafi's political theory, *The Green Book*. Although my interpretation of his Theory will be affected by my own normative assumptions, I believe that as I will be comparing the objectives of the Theory directly with political practice, that his method is most valid. I will supplement my findings with the view of Saif al-Islam al-Qaddafi, the son of the 'Leader of the Revolution'.<sup>2</sup> The opportunity to interview the Leader's son is in itself a sign of changing times, and I will critically analyse his public views as a gauge of Libya's objectives in the modern world.

In measuring the extent to which the objectives have been achieved, I will combine a qualitative and quantitative approach, through an exhaustive literature review and statistical data where applicable. It should be noted that there is a considerable lack of publicly available data regarding electoral outcomes, thus I will rely more heavily on quantitative data in analysing the economic objectives.

This approach should provide enough empirical evidence with which one can conclude the extent to which the domestic objectives of the Revolution have been achieved, and, where relevant, the current direction in which Libya is heading vis á vis those original theories and aims in the modern world.

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<sup>2</sup> Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi no longer fulfils any constitutional role in Libyan government, but is now commonly addressed as 'Leader of the Revolution'.

## 2. Oil and Nationalism: The Al-Fatah Revolution in context

Before identifying the objectives of the Al-Fatah Revolution, it is certainly necessary to provide a short synopsis of the causation of the revolution itself - for as Vandewalle identifies, 'the overthrow of the Libyan monarchy came not unexpectedly';<sup>3</sup> it is imperative to place such goals in the historical and political context from which they were borne.

Upon gaining its independence in 1951, Libya's constitutional monarchy consisted of three disparate federal regions – Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan. At this point, despite being the fourth largest country in Africa, Libya had little by way of (known) resources and was certainly a rather economically docile and stagnant country. This would all change upon the discovery of oil.

Academic literature appears somewhat divided between those who believe that the coup lead by Qaddafi was a response to the failing of the monarch, and those that believe that the system of monarchy was inherently incapable to responding to the socio-economic and ideological changes that were sweeping through Libya. The balance weighs more heavily in favour of monarchy being an insufficient mode of government, but given that there still exists many monarchical oil-exporting countries in the world, one certainly cannot negate domestic contingent factors entirely.

In some respects Libya's immediate post-independence political history echoes that of Morocco and Jordan, with King Idris confronting the main nationalist party, the Tripolitanian National Congress, in 1952, before seizing all political power, keeping parliament firmly under his direct influence.<sup>4</sup> However, unlike Jordan and Morocco, there were considerable differences with the political operation of Libya that lent itself to provide a breeding ground for revolution.

Owen in particular posts the blame more at the governing traits of Idris I, rather than wider socio-economic factors. He levies three main criticisms at the King to imply it

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<sup>3</sup> Vandewalle, D. *A History of Modern Libya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) Page 77

<sup>4</sup> Owen, R, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004) Page 53

was the monarch himself rather the form of government that was overthrown, in the first instance at least. Firstly, the limited size of the royal family proved a predicament for the King. As a result of a confrontation with rebellious relatives in 1954, one of who had murdered his senior aide, the King confined the succession of the throne to his brother and blood members of his own line, depriving the remainder of his family of their royal titles and right to hold public office. To compound this shortage of royal talent, King Idris had no son of his own to succeed him.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, 'the king showed none of the energy of a Hussein or a Hassan in constantly reinforcing his legitimacy and in reminding his subjects of his authority by endless public performance, preferring instead to hide himself away...and to manipulate the political system from afar.'<sup>6</sup> A final crucial difference - and one which eventually proved a more acute problem - was the King's failure to maintain personal control over the regular army, or to impose a manageable standard of behaviour either on close relatives or his key advisors when it came to nepotism and corruption.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, whilst grievances were certainly exacerbated by King Idris' particular actions, there were arguably wider nationalist and socio-economic reasons behind the revolution. The discovery of sizeable oil reserves in 1959 and the subsequent income from petroleum exports enabled what had been one of the world's poorest countries to become extremely wealthy in a very short period of time. Between 1960-1970, total GDP per capita increased by 24.8 per cent.<sup>8</sup> Although oil drastically improved Libya's finances, popular resentment grew as wealth was increasingly concentrated in the hands of economic and political elites.

El-Kikhia cites that the unification of the federal system in 1962, as a result of lobbying from oil companies unwilling to navigate both state and regional regulation, meant that power was concentrated within a unitary clique, making a coup increasingly viable.<sup>9</sup> Further, the increased dependence of Libya's ruling elite on oil, alleviating their need to garner political compliance through taxation, meant that the

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<sup>5</sup> Owen, R, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Page 54

<sup>6</sup> Owen, R, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Page 54

<sup>7</sup> Owen, R, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Page 54

<sup>8</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993) Page 96.

<sup>9</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction*, Page 37

Libyan people became increasingly subject to what Katouzian labels 'petrolic despotism'.<sup>10</sup>

To compound domestic economic factors, the monarch showed little skill in distancing himself from the British and the Americans, whom had long had unpopular military bases in the country and whose companies were now seen to be extorting Libya's wealth with relatively small gains for the ordinary Libyan. On the backdrop of the wave of decolonisation as the 'winds of change [were] blowing through Africa'<sup>11</sup>, Libya's monarchy seemed entirely out of kilter with the *zeitgeist* of the continent.

Of course politically, Libya's people were increasingly aligning themselves with the growing ideology of Arab Nationalism. The neighbouring Egyptian regime of Nasser had led to mass mobilisation in Libya, through the media, an influx of Egyptian migrant workers and an increasing number of Libyans studying in Cairo. Egyptian life permeated Libyan governmental systems and with it came increasingly Arab Nationalist sentiments; even the Libyan judiciary was run by graduates of the Al-Azhar University of Cairo.<sup>12</sup>

A groundswell in education led to an increasingly politicised younger generation finding themselves stifled by the monarchical system. Popular participation was denied, as it simply did not benefit the political elites who surrounded the King. As a result, there were riots in 1964 in which four students were shot by security forces, whilst the oil workers' strike of 1967 demonstrated solidarity with the Arabs over their war with Israel, the final major point of contention.<sup>13</sup>

The failure of the King to enter the Arab-Israeli war in 1967 in support of Libya's Arab comrades, especially given the country's oil wealth, meant that social unrest would reach a peak. The Libyan monarch made no attempt to negotiate with the growing internal opposition, led by intellectuals, students and employees of the oil industry. This resulted in an increased desire amongst the Libyan people to achieve

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<sup>10</sup> Katouzian, H. *The political economy of oil exporting countries*, Peuples méditerranéens 1:3:22

<sup>11</sup> Macmillan, H., Address to the South African Parliament, 1960

<sup>12</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction*, Page 38; Al-Azhar University is considered to have the foremost authorities on Islamic religion and Sharia in the Muslim world.

<sup>13</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* Page 38-39

representation and 'freedom' of political action and speech – or at least populist expression, as opposed to absolutist rule. Meanwhile, El-Kikhia emphasises that the Libyan monarchy, 'could not meet the demands of changing economic conditions'; the *laissez-faire* model was certainly not sharing its wealth with the ordinary Libyan.<sup>14</sup>

Davis compounds economic and political crises with military and moral failures: 'certainly, young officers were alarmed by the...neglect of the army; some of them were shocked by political and administrative corruption and by more directly sensual evils apparent in the booming cities.' However, he also concurs with El-Kikhia that, 'the main focus of their dismay was their government's inability or refusal to support the interests of the Arab nation.'<sup>15</sup>

For months preceding the coup there had been persistent rumours of plans for a military takeover. On balance, the revolution was a culmination of socio-economic and ideological factors, enhanced with the personal failings of this particular monarch. However, the relevance of these factors to this essay is that the failings of the monarchy provided the motives and *raison d'état* for the post-revolutionary government; the causes of the military coup directly shaped the objectives of the Al-Fatah Revolution in the short-term, and guided the more long-term aspirations of the Third Universal Theory as it came to emerge.

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<sup>14</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* Page 39

<sup>15</sup> Davis, J, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution* Page 30

### 3. The Al-Fatah Revolution: 'Freedom, Socialism, and Unity'

Upon seizing power from the monarchy in a bloodless coup on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1969, the 'Free Officers' had no clear ideological blueprint to follow; therefore the initial objectives of the Al-Fatah Revolution were largely responsive to popular sentiments.<sup>16</sup> The initial objectives were to as far as possible alleviate the popular pressure that had built up regarding Libya's role in supporting the Arab Nation, the presence of Britain and America on Libyan soil, and the foreign plutocracy that operated within Libya's economy. Having abolished the constitution and ruling by decree, it would be easy to argue that Qaddafi and the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) were ruling simply to satiate their own political bend.

However, it can certainly be argued that before 1973, the RCC's political agenda emerged distinctly from below, as Qaddafi became the champion of Islam and Arab unity at home and abroad.<sup>17</sup> Whilst on the international scene Libyan petrodollars flooded towards all Muslim movements wherever they existed, at home the first year of the revolution witnessed the 'Egyptification' of Libya, culminating in the unification of the two countries in 1970. However, what is clear is that for the first three years of his rule, 'Qaddafi himself did not appear to have an idea of how the country should be run'.<sup>18</sup> Libya's slogan since the revolution has been, 'freedom, socialism, and unity. However in the years immediately after the coup, these goals were met with only partial success.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed in this period, only three immediate objectives appeared in the public domain. First was the eradication of all things 'colonial' and 'alien'. This was not a difficult task for the RCC to achieve, given the fact the political freedom was too suppressed under the monarchy and the grip of Arab Nationalism had become all the more fervent. Moreover, freedom here was more in the sense of collective freedom from Western imperialism, as opposed to a more Western concept of individual negative liberty. The first decree issued by the newly created RCC, was therefore to expel all British and American troops on the premise of achieving 'true decolonisation'.

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<sup>16</sup> Muscat, F. *My President, My Son* (Valetta, Malta: Edam Publishing, 1980) Page 7

<sup>17</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* Page 41

<sup>18</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* Page 41

<sup>19</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* Page 41



Simultaneously, 20,000 Italian residents were expelled from Libya and replaced in the bureaucracy by appointees from local Libyan tribes.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, there was a clear attempt by Qaddafi to embody himself as the revolution and vice-versa, not simply for his own benefit but to garner the unity required in accepting Arab nationalism. Here again, this did not prove difficult. By endearing himself to Islam he appealed to a conservative base; by advocating Arab nationalism he appealed to the masses and by neither nationalising property as Nasser had done nor restricting their ability to acquire wealth, Qaddafi did not offend the growing Libyan bourgeoisie. In fact, Qaddafi's first five-year plan helped the private sector to increase its wealth at a phenomenal rate.<sup>21</sup>

As for Libyan Socialism, the term was not used in its Marxist sense until the end of the 1970's, after the publishing of the second part of The Green Book. In this ephemeral period, the regime had no objection to the operation of the private sector, and Qaddafi permitted public and private sectors to operate simultaneously.<sup>22</sup> The state actively encouraged what was called 'non-exploitative' capitalism, again interpreted in a national sense - the state encouraged entrepreneurs to employ native Libyans and the idea was that exploitation –and therefore poverty – could be prevented via taxation.<sup>23</sup>

However, the abundance of public corporations that sub-contracted their development projects to either private companies, or as in most cases, international companies, meant that Libya could not in the early days be called a socialist state in the fashion that even Qaddafi claimed it to be, akin to Egypt. Indeed Ruth First highlights that Libya's state simply intervened and co-ordinated the market to begin with, rather than seek to replace it, despite collectivist rhetoric.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> El-Fathaly, O.I. and Palmer, M. *Political Development and Social Change in Libya* (Lexington: D.C.Heath:, Mass., 1977) Page 39

<sup>21</sup> Libyan Government, Maslahat al-Ihsa' wa-al-Ta'dad. Report on the Third Phase of the Household Sample Survey (Benghazi Town): Household Expenditure (Libyan Arab Republic Technical Planning Body). (Tripoli: Libyan Arab Republic, 1976)

<sup>22</sup> Elmaihub, A. *The Role of the Public Sector in the Development Strategy: The Case of Libya* (Benghazi: Dept. of Economics, University of Garyounis, 1981)

<sup>23</sup> First, R., 'Libya: Class and State in an Oil Economy' in *Oil and Class Struggle*, edited by Peter Nore and Teresa Turner: (London: Zed, 1974) Pages 119-140

<sup>24</sup> First, R., 'Libya: Class and State in an Oil Economy' in *Oil and Class Struggle*, Pages 119-140

It is certainly accurate to point that this hybrid form of 'Libyan socialism' effectively meant that planning was still motivated by profit, rather than by need, a concept that would later feature as crucial in Qaddafi's Third Universal Theory. However the extent to which the state was co-ordinating bourgeois investment should not be underplayed. After their first four years in power, the Government had directed the building of houses, factories, roads, schools and other infrastructure, but there was no clear development plan or motivation, other than profit and employment.

El-Fathaly and Palmer identify seven objectives that emerged from the RCC in the second year of the revolution onwards. Conceptually, these can be labelled as: preservation of the revolution, anti-imperialism, Arab leadership, modernisation, populism, religiosity and militarism. The degree to which the members of the RCC were individually committed to these objectives remains unclear, but the collective desire to achieve them was portrayed through the speeches and directives of Colonel Qaddafi.

As a regime, it can certainly be seen that broadly speaking these objectives were achieved. The only problem was getting the population to share them in their entirety to allow further ideological advances. Until 1973 the RCC were still attempting to reorganise all levels of government along the lines laid out in Egypt, centralising power in their own hands.<sup>25</sup> Aside from the rhetoric, the four-year period immediately after the Al-Fatah Revolution was more concerned with consolidating the regime than it was a transition to Arab socialism. In this respect the RCC were entirely successful, particularly in providing the building blocks for the Third Universal Theory.

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<sup>25</sup> Owen, R, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Page 54

#### 4. The Emergence of a Third Universal Theory

##### ***Direct Democracy: “No representation in lieu of the people”***

By 1973, when the RCC realised that their tentative measures were not making sizeable advances in terms of gaining popular support for their regime, it was Qaddafi who became the fount of the Third Universal Theory as it developed. Qaddafi announced a ‘cultural revolution’ with the goal of ridding Libya of all ‘imported poisonous ideas and fuse the people’s genuine moral and material potentialities’.<sup>26</sup> Despite throwing off the shackles of imperialism in terms of foreign military and administrative presence, ‘foreign’ ideas still permeated the Libyan intelligentsia and Muslim clerical sphere. Upon this basis, the first focus upon direct democracy can be witnessed, almost four years after the revolution; it was from this speech that participatory government gained its first public and lasting emphasis. The RCC felt that in order to get the support of the people for their regime, it would be necessary to enable, and even burden the Libyan people with the ability to govern themselves at the lowest possible level.

Literature disagrees on the success of the cultural revolution; Ruth First argues that the political repression which remains, although to a far lesser extent today, means that Libya became ‘the most politically confined [country] in the world’ which seemingly undermines the object of achieving participatory democracy.<sup>27</sup> El-Fathaly and Palmer, on the other hand, argue that Libya’s cultural revolution was not at all like its Chinese counterpart, and instead more akin to the Yugoslav model of workers self management: ‘more specifically it was to become an experiment in popular self-administration’.<sup>28</sup> Similar to China, Qaddafi hoped that the new People’s Committees would devour the reactionary bureaucracy, seen as preserving Libya’s inefficient economy and tribal divisions and therefore acted as a buttress against achieving unity and socialism. However, unlike the Chinese, Libya had no party to lead the mass mobilisation – all parties had been banned, an issue discussed later in this

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<sup>26</sup> Qaddafi, M. Zawara Declaration, April 16 1973

<sup>27</sup> First, R, *Libya: The Elusive Revolution* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974) Pages 138-139

<sup>28</sup> El-Fathaly, O.I. and Palmer, M. *Political Development and Social Change in Libya* (Lexington: D.C.Heath, Mass., 1977), Page 118

essay.<sup>29</sup> Instead the RCC recruited members of the ailing Arab Socialist Union to initiate the process by forming steering committees, a form of vanguard transitional committee. The RCC were certainly successful in rolling out the apparent democratisation of Libya – arguably proving too successful by undermining future economic goals. El-Fathaly and Palmer noted, ‘individuals selected to serve on the preparatory committees were generally teachers, principles and local government employees; in other words, individuals with some stature, but not members of the traditional local elite structure’.<sup>30</sup> Therefore the RCC achieved its aim to force a form of popular, civic unity up Libya’s citizens, a civic nationalism below that of Arab nationalism, but above that of tribal allegiance.

Elections were duly held in large public spaces where voting was accomplished by show of hands as opposed to secret ballot, indeed Libyans voted on average once in every eighteen months.<sup>31</sup> Each of Libya’s thirty-two municipalities and 1,500 local wards included popular committees for citizens, workers, students and other groups. The committees were mandated to co-ordinate all aspects of governance, electing their own chairpersons and once constituted were theoretically autonomous. Members of the committees could serve for no longer than two-years. Indeed Qaddafi himself publicly advocated constant recall as a means of assuring that the committees did not lose their revolutionary zeal and become ideologically stagnant.

Therefore on paper, the primary objective of the cultural revolution was achieved, namely the mass mobilisation and (compulsory) participation of the people. It is, however, important to note that to gain compliance to such a form of government involved the secret police making arbitrary arrest of individuals who were anticipated as a threat to the new system, namely by attempting to hijack the emerging peoples committees; Communists, Ba’athists and followers of the Muslim Brotherhood were all arrested and incarcerated for the stability of the regime. Objectively the initial democratisation of Libya, adjudged by it’s own theoretical terms, seemed extensive and successful in allowing the different regional and economic disparities to be reflected on such committees, whilst failing to provide any outlet for dissent.

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<sup>29</sup> Prohibition of Party Politics Act Number 71 of 1972, Arab Socialist Union, Jamahiriya

<sup>30</sup> El-Fathaly, O.I. and Palmer, M. *Political Development and Social Change in Libya* Page 119

<sup>31</sup> Davis, J, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution* Page 142

A codified manifesto outlining Qaddafi's commitment participatory democracy was codified and espoused by the Green Book, in which both arguments for a *jamahiriya* and the apparatus for it to function were outlined in detail (See Figure 1). This provided the theoretical backbone to the practical objective of mass participation. In it, Qaddafi critiques representative democracy, parties and class division, arguing that in contrast direct democracy is 'natural': true democracy exists only through the participation of the people, not through the activity of their representatives.<sup>32</sup> Therefore Qaddafi proclaims that in the ideal, democratic system, there should be, 'no representation in lieu of the people'.<sup>33</sup> In a representative democracy, people are seemingly provided with an elitist, vacuous democracy and a parliament that is in effect a denial of participation rather than an enabler of it - representative democracy is therefore false democracy. Finally he argues that representative elections serve simply elites who peddle 'propaganda' to win votes.<sup>34</sup> Qaddafi contends that those without equal access to economic resources are denied equal access to the political process, in line with the leftists criticisms of the democracies in the West: 'Poor people fail to compete in the election campaign and it is always the rich – and only the rich – who come out victorious'.<sup>35</sup>

Before espousing his more positive justification (and therefore goal) to achieve direct democracy, Qaddafi also levels criticism at the concept of party systems. Unlike other socialist or communist states, Libya has never exhibited a multi or single party system – 'the party is the contemporary dictatorship'; Qaddafi argues that parties have a tendency to oppress their members, act purely for collectivist and therefore divisive interests, and impose their ideals on the rest of society – 'to make a party you split society'.<sup>36</sup> Saif al-Islam Qaddafi justifies such a stance on practical as well as ideological grounds: 'at that time [parties were banned] to protect the regime from parties such as a communist party or the Muslim Brotherhood. Libya does not have

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<sup>32</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 2

<sup>33</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 2

<sup>34</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 10

<sup>35</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 10

<sup>36</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 11

the culture of parties; it is not in our history. We are a Bedouin society so we don't need parties.'<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, The Green Book criticises class division, but moreover class dominance, including any 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. 'The class political system is the same as the party...if a class or party...dominates a society, the whole system becomes a dictatorship.'<sup>38</sup> Thus Colonel Qaddafi, in the wake of transition from a monarchical regime, increasingly prescribed a system of direct democracy which, it is claimed by the regime, exists in Libya today: 'popular congresses and people's committees are the final fruit of the people's struggle for democracy...any system of government other than popular congresses is undemocratic'<sup>39</sup>

However, despite the rhetoric, the regime became increasingly unwilling to delegate power to these institutions, which they had purported to be 'autonomous and sovereign.'<sup>40</sup> This emerged not from the RCC's desire to maintain a firm grip of Libya's political goals, but devolved government soon collided with the regime's attempt to eradicate poverty, or 'need' as Qaddafi coined it. Given Libya's sparse resources other than oil, many workers were locked into working for local entrepreneurs where there existed little choice in most villages and towns as to what an employee could do, allowing for chronic levels of exploitation. Thus the second part of the implementation of the Third Universal Theory, not only imposed on the market, but resulted in the necessary infringement of the democratic bodies that had at first been created.

As tensions arose between the people committees, the suppression of two coup attempts left Qaddafi in sole control of Libya's political and economic future until the present day. He continued to espouse the notion of direct democracy, but there is no

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<sup>37</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

Saif al-Islam Qaddafi is a son of Muammar al-Qaddafi, Leader of Libya. He heads the Qaddafi International Foundation for Charity Associations, an NGO which campaigns for human rights and has intervened in various hostage situations involving Islamic militants. He is known to push for Libya to adopt closer, more amiable ties with the West and is a keen moderniser. Saif also performs a public relations and diplomatic role for his father. He has been mentioned as a possible successor, though he has firmly denied this, claiming that Libya's future lies with direct democracy.

<sup>38</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 17

<sup>39</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 24

<sup>40</sup> Davis, J, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution* Page 137

doubt that the mass mobilisation that emerged as the primary goal of the RCC would not re-emerge with the same verve for some time. In 1975, Qaddafi abolished the RCC and replaced the Arab Socialist Union with the General Peoples Congress (GPC), which was meant to respond to the concerns of the local and municipal committees instead of the vanguard ASU and RCC. Theoretically, this was an advance in democracy, in line with the withering away of the state and mirroring the constitutional apparatus outlined in *The Green Book* (See Figure 1). In fact from this point Qaddafi himself had no constitutional role in the regime: 'it restricts even Mu'ammarr al-Qaddafi'.<sup>41</sup>

In March 1977 came the announcement that Libya would henceforth be known as a '*jamahiriya*' – 'state of the masses' as further codification of the popular and participatory governmental objectives that were enveloping Libya. Whilst this edict was distinctly top down, and is painted entirely as so by much of the academic literature, it is at this juncture that it becomes suitable to discuss the role of nationhood and 'statelessness' in the Libyan context.

It can feasibly be argued that a nation is a social construct. When one thinks intuitively of the concept of a nation, it is often conceived that a nation is 'a group of people who feel themselves to be a community bound together by ties of history, culture and common ancestry'.<sup>42</sup> In Libya, a common characteristic of 'statelessness' was a national concept in that there existed no state agency that had historically intervened with the nomadic and Bedouin tribes that occupy this part of the Sahara. Libya is a nation of tribes, based on distinctly local customs, with Islam being the main cultural characteristic binding the Libyan nation. Qaddafi built the Third Universal Theory on the notion that, 'the natural law of any society is either tradition (custom) or religion...A constitution should have a source for it's justification beyond that which is simply 'man-made'.<sup>43</sup> Here Qaddafi is referring to the importance of Islam upon which he forms his social basis for natural democracy and natural socialism.<sup>44</sup> For Saif al-Islam al-Qaddafi, Islam and democracy are compatible and natural, 'because there are very clear verses which state that you have to have a

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<sup>41</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report 9/9/1993, Pages 19-20

<sup>42</sup> Kellas, J. *Politics of nationalism and ethnicity* (London: Macmillan Press, 1991)

<sup>43</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 29 - 30

<sup>44</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 101

deliberative and consultative form of government. You have to consult your people and you have to have deliberation between the rulers and the subjects.<sup>45</sup>

More acutely, the geography and anthropology of Libya has meant that above all, the tribe was the strongest political unit, not simply through tradition, but through political and economic practicality. In a country that is 95 per cent desert, a state based on cross-country reciprocity and trade was not feasibly viable. What vegetation grows in Libya grows universally along the coast and around oases and, before the discovery of oil, Libya's tribal system meant that the populations of its villages were used to a concept of self-sufficiency and dependent on sparse local resources. Therefore a concept of 'statelessness' is an important, natural concept for most Libyans that has been adopted and proposed since the revolution, but has its roots in 'how men have lived, rather than how they should live', in the Machiavellian sense.<sup>46</sup>

It is true that Qaddafi sought to break hierarchical tribal structures, and by adopting a centralised socialist economic framework imposing modernising state agency, and the goal here, whether through provision of food or universal right to housing, was to obliterate need – 'for in need freedom is latent' – in order to provide economic and political liberty for villages and towns throughout Libya. .

However, as a result several failings emerged in meeting the objective of creating direct democracy, which aspired to this concept of 'statelessness' against a modern, developed economy. Firstly, there arose problems resulting from fragmentation. Intentionally or otherwise, there emerged from the multiplicity of committees, 'local particularism at the expense of the developing view of the common interest'.<sup>47</sup> El-Kikhia casually argues that by attempting to satisfy the needs of everyone, the highly complicated system has resulted in satisfying no-one.<sup>48</sup> A more accurate analysis lends one to identify that there certainly, emerged a cleavage between the peripheral localities, and the political centre, which had effectively become a Qaddafi dominated GPC. Davis identifies that the centralising grip of Tripoli (not always the Jamahiriya's

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<sup>45</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

<sup>46</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961) Chapter XV pages 90-1

<sup>47</sup> El-Fathaly, O.I. and Palmer, M. *Political Development and Social Change in Libya* (Lexington: D.C.Heath., Mass., 1977),

<sup>48</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993) Page 54



capital, but always it centre for communications) has tended to remain weaker the more remote and provincial the people's committee might be.<sup>49</sup>

A second failure has emerged through the juxtaposition of central planning through socialism, at it emerged from 1978 onwards, and the need to at the very least manipulate the local committees by the national political centre. This clearly undermines the grass-roots intentions of direct democracy both in theory and in practice, but must be viewed in the context of the logistical reasons behind it, as discussed later in this essay. A similar theme emerges from the fact that in order to keep a degree of political flexibility in the system, the constitutional guarantees of the 'authority of the people' were not written or codified outside of very general terms. As problems and differences emerged, power would simply be retracted to higher levels, which inevitably lead to the GPC gaining control over most policy, under the influence of Qaddafi. In fact the reverse principle of subsidiarity was adopted and decisions have ended up being taken at the highest level of expedience.<sup>50</sup>

A far more pressing problem undermining the democratic structures was that of non-participation, despite participation being legally compulsory. Qaddafi had made it clear from 1973 that he wished to weed out those who did not conform to his thinking. As such there was no vehicle for dissent or participation for those who disagreed with him. As Hinnebusch has written, 'as institutions of participation, as a system of accepted channels and procedures for making decisions...the structures Qaddafi has built...remain very much the creature of the leader who can change the rules of participation at will and cannot be held accountable in any formal way.'<sup>51</sup>

By the end of the 1970's in realising the deficiencies of the practical application of a decentralised system, which depended so heavily on centralised economic co-ordination, Qaddafi coincided the application of the second part of the Third Universal Theory with the re-introduction of revolutionary committees. These vanguard institutions were intended to allow mass mobilisation to continue without detraction

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<sup>49</sup> Davis, J, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution* Page 139

<sup>50</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* Page 54

<sup>51</sup> Hinnebusch, R.A. 'Libya: Personalistic Leadership of a Popular Revolution.' in *Political Elites in Arab North Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt* edited by I. William Zartman et al. (New York: Longman, 1982)

from the underlying national ideology of Islamic Socialism, as Qaddafi increasingly espoused from 1978 onwards.

The 'revolutionary sector' was expanded against the backdrop of the Iranian revolution; Qaddafi was keen to enable wealth distribution across Libya, and launched a concerted attack on economic privilege. The role of the political centre in the economy therefore became paramount in solidifying compliance with the regime and it was seen that in order to protect the wider objectives of the revolution, a vanguard-element was required in order to minimise political turbulence. Simultaneously, this period saw Qaddafi take, an increased role in the political and economic operations of the *jamahiriya*.<sup>52</sup>

Another criticism is that can be levied is that whilst the GPC did itself exercise some degree of autonomy from Qaddafi on domestic issues, it has implemented central coercion through the revolutionary sector upon the basic peoples committees and congresses. Davis cites the example of where a trade agreement with Malta had already been agreed centrally, before the peoples committees had even ratified such an agreement, which they duly obliged under pressure from the centre.<sup>53</sup> Thus political power has had a tendency to flow downwards rather than upward in Libya, denying the converse democratic objective expounded in the Third Universal Theory.

Without doubt, the role of the revolutionary committees is contradictory to the objective of direct democracy as set out in The Green Book. However, it would be correct to identify that whilst there existed this contention of the theory, the democratic institutions have remained intact despite interventions from the revolutionary sector and GPC, which have lessened in recent years. Davis in particular cites a number of electoral and governing examples, dispelling the myth that direct democracy in Libya is entirely a mirage.<sup>54</sup> Arguably, by holding elections at all rejects Qaddafi's original theory, which rails against all 'elections', but given that his basis for this critique is founded on a desire for political equality, this is perhaps not the most obvious objective failing.

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<sup>52</sup> Owen, R, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Page 54

<sup>53</sup> Davis, J, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution* Page 138

<sup>54</sup> Davis, J, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution* Page 141

Elections that have taken place have not been without difficulty. The Libyan press agency, JANA, published results in 1980 that recorded the cancellation of two elections due to fighting and wounded candidates.<sup>55</sup> Also, the absence of a secret ballot also causes problems with tribal cleavages and conflicts emerging in some rural communities, exacerbated by the use of a first-past-the-post electoral system; Qaddafi's direct democracy was meant to nullify the divisiveness of tribes.<sup>56</sup>

In an attempt to quell such dissent, on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1986, the newspaper *Az Zahf al-Akhdar*, the mouthpiece of the revolutionary committees, featured an article, supposedly written by Qaddafi, which surprisingly proposed an urgent need to form a new political party. It was argued that the new political party could replace the people's congresses, justified by the exploitation, tribalism and reactionism that some of them exhibited. The statement was seemingly motivated by a desire to purge the GPC and people's congresses of elements who voiced their opposition to Qaddafi's policies.

However, in response to continued domestic resistance and international pressure, in 1988 Qaddafi called for the end of arbitrary arrests for political dissenters and announced 'The Great Green Charter of Human Rights'. A Ministry of Justice was also created to theoretically protect such rights from the previous arbitrariness of the regime, installing the right to independent legal council. There did, however, exist major caveats, namely that provisions for private property could be overridden in the 'public interest', which contradicts the Third Universal Theory's commitment to some private property as discussed later.

Despite the non-constitutional role that Qaddafi fulfils, his charismatic and informal role should not be undermined, even on the domestic scene. There still exists several security organisations, such as the Intelligence Bureau of the Leader, Jamahiriya Security Organisation, People's Guard and Purification Committees which since the late eighties and early nineties have maintained the Leader's influence,

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<sup>55</sup> Bleauchot, H. 'Chroniques et documents libyens, 1969-1980. Chroniques de l'Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord (Paris: Editions du Centres National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1983) Page 257

<sup>56</sup> Davis, J, *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution* Page 147

although their role is dwindling.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, the role of the 'revolutionary sector' (the army, police and revolutionary committees) cannot be undermined in historically intervening with the democratic institutions of Libya, although their role is also diminishing as Libya espouses a commitment to greater political freedom. Saif al-Islam al-Qaddafi believes that whilst the revolutionary committees still exist, 'the environment has changed...there is no need to use them now or for them to be energised,' given the decreased threat at home and abroad.<sup>58</sup> Also, whilst the prominent central bureaucracy arguably undermines Qaddafi's theoretical commitment to devolved democracy, 'the cadres [of the revolutionary sector] are not a [central] elite hardened by repression, but local people from local communities. As such, ordinary people still have room to manoeuvre within the framework of the revolutionary sector,<sup>59</sup>

That is not to excuse Qaddafi's failing in achieving the theory which he has so consistently espoused, after all, it was prescribed that 'society is its own supervisor'. This has been undermined, more so in foreign affairs, by the prominence of Qaddafi in shaping policy.<sup>60</sup> However, Saif al-Islam sees his father's role as 'a catalyst...we need a leader to speed up the journey to democracy in Libya...because without his support, things can be slow or stagnant. But still, he needs other people around him in order to implement a new direction in order to achieve that goal [of direct democracy].'<sup>61</sup>

Also, Qaddafi's insistence upon political and economic conformity has contradicted the objective of direct democracy. As Ruth First noted, a rigid ideology, 'suffocates any political thought or action not initiated by the state'.<sup>62</sup> That said, there have been examples, where the GPC has rejected Qaddafi's own views and it would be entirely incorrect to describe the *jama'iriya* as entirely dictatorial. Ironically, it can be interpreted that Qaddafi spoils for his own overthrow: 'if an instrument of governing is dictatorial...the society's vigilance toward deviation from law will have only one way of readjustment. That is violence, which means revolution against the instrument of

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<sup>57</sup> Vandewalle, D. *A History of Modern Libya* Page 150

<sup>58</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

<sup>59</sup> Davis, J. *Libyan Politics: Tribe and Revolution*

<sup>60</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 34

<sup>61</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

<sup>62</sup> First, R. *Libya: The Elusive Revolution* Page 65

governing'.<sup>63</sup> There is also the question of what or who comes after the Leader? According to Saif al-Islam, 'the role will disappear...the power will go to the prime minister and the president and the institutions below it. The highest executive position should be the Prime Minister; there should not be a president.'<sup>64</sup>

Opinion varies as to what extent Libya is a direct democracy, but the debate is an important one in establishing whether the goals of the revolution have in fact been achieved. There are some obvious failures in achievement, namely the aspiration that the 'central government administration is abolished'.<sup>65</sup> Given the influence and control that central government has, particularly in achieving Islamic Socialism, this clearly has not been the case.

Also, the notion of participatory democracy does not merely consist of a theoretical fusion of government and administration, but more generally builds on the notion of 'partners not wage workers' that Qaddafi has sought to embody and that popular committees have been formed both in the workplace and schools not simply for the purposes of governing, but also to garner democratic collectivist identities outside of the Mosque and tribe. It can be reasonably argued that where democratic institutions exist, they are perhaps at the mercy of Qaddafi. As Saif al-Islam concedes, 'central government is not democratically elected and certain things do not happen without the consent of the leader...we need a constitution'.<sup>66</sup> As a result, he concedes that Libya, 'is not a fully democratic country...in theory we have an excellent system but in practice we are not there yet. Our practice is amateur rather than professional direct democracy.'<sup>67</sup>

According to Saif al-Islam, one step towards achieving this 'professional' democracy was taken last year, with the, 'first democratic, transparent election to elect the regional government [uniformly without any intervention from revolutionary committees]'.<sup>68</sup> Other ways that he envisages the achievement of direct democracy are through the use of technology. Saif al-Islam is supervising a project to bring e-

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<sup>63</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 35

<sup>64</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

<sup>65</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 36

<sup>66</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

<sup>67</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

<sup>68</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

government to Libya, which would abandon the revolutionary sector and inconvenience of the current system in having to conduct so many public, manipulated and open ballots.'

As it remains, there certainly exists considerable flaws in Libya's sought achievement of 'no representation in lieu of the people'. However it is also certainly true that democratic conventions, institutions and cultures do exist and it would be entirely incorrect to label the *jamahiriya* a fig-leaf for dictatorship, as is the popular perception.

### ***Islamic Socialism: 'Partners, not wage-workers'***

The second major revolutionary objective focussed on transforming Libya's managed market economic system by adopting a radically socialist one. Indeed evidence of 'Islamic Socialism' is witnessed in many aspects of Libya's economy today.

In the second part of The Green Book, 'The Solution of the Economic Problem' Qaddafi espouses a socialist ideal as a way of satiating individuals' needs whilst preventing exploitation. The overwhelming theory is that in the ideal economic system, people should fulfil their own material needs wherever possible, and employment relations in industry should consist of 'partners, not wage-workers'.<sup>69</sup>

His critique seeks a third way between communism and capitalism, using almost a third camp socialist analysis of both systems; Qaddafi condemns the exploitation of wage-workers in the capitalist world as 'a type of slave', whilst he criticises the domination of state bureaucracy under communism.<sup>70</sup> For Qaddafi, the 'ultimate system' is one where the wage-system is abolished and the economy is realigned to one of needs-fulfilment rather than exploitation. Similar to the Marxist analysis of alienation, Qaddafi believes that by abolishing the wage-system, Arabs will become emancipated from their 'bondage and...return to the natural law which defined relationships before the emergence of classes'.<sup>71</sup>

Exploitation should be replaced with partnership, with each person having equal access to resources no matter what role they play in the scheme of production.<sup>72</sup> An interesting tangent is the emphasis that Qaddafi places on the role of technology: 'strenuous tasks are now carried out by machine...the working class is continually declining as science and machines develop'.<sup>73</sup> This in some way apes Marx's appraisal of capitalism as being vital in order to provide the technological abundance required for communism to be viable in the modern world. Instead of advocating a dictatorship of the proletariat, Qaddafi cites that the role of capital and the state as a

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<sup>69</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 43

<sup>70</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 45

<sup>71</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 48

<sup>72</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 48

<sup>73</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 52

vehicle of economic growth will wither away as democracy prevails in both political and economic spheres.

Qaddafi's theory has often been labelled Marxist, but a clear contrast with classical Marxist theory is that Qaddafi maintains a crucial need for some degree of private ownership. Qaddafi quantifies such basic needs as ones house, vehicle, clothes and food supply; 'the house is a basic need of both the individual and the family...there is no freedom for a man who lives in another's house.'<sup>74</sup> Whether owned by another private individual, or by the state, Qaddafi regards such ownership of others' means for satisfying basic needs as 'domination', for example the owner of a man's clothes has the 'propensity to leave a man naked'.<sup>75</sup> Property superfluous to these basic needs should be held collectively and democratically, as 'the legitimate purpose of economic activity is solely to satisfy the need of the individual'.<sup>76</sup> In his analogy of apple picking, Qaddafi again idealises the concept of self-sufficiency within a social framework, as opposed to exploitation by man or state.<sup>77</sup> Therefore Qaddafi's prescribes 'private ownership to satisfy [wherever possible] the needs without using others, and socialist ownership in which the producers are partners in production' where this is not possible.<sup>78</sup>

Qaddafi is a strong proponent of industrial democracy and advocates that all public utilities should be run by people's committees that will be responsible to the basic popular congresses, and these 'dictate the policy to be followed by the people's committees and supervise its execution.'<sup>79</sup> Citizens should also form their own unions and syndicates, and manage and share the profits of public corporations.<sup>80</sup> Although in theory unions would become unnecessary as workers managed their own industries, in practice unions are seen to exist in Libya and are guaranteed representation at the annual meeting of the GPC.

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<sup>74</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 53

<sup>75</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 59

<sup>76</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 56

<sup>77</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 58

<sup>78</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 64

<sup>79</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 27

<sup>80</sup> Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, Page 28



Implementing goals to achieve such a form of Islamic Socialism meant nullifying nearly all-previous economic policies enacted previously. From 1978 onwards, employment was restricted to three categories: government employees, corporate employees and self-employed workers. However some elements of 'Islamic Socialism' existed from the outset of the revolution - most notably the minimum wage was doubled, and subsidised rents and food introduced. However, the period between 1978 until 1986 saw huge expansions in welfare provision to provide individuals with their basic needs (generally as interpreted by the GPC), which admittedly fails Qaddafi's preference for individuals to satisfy their *own* needs autonomously and locally.

One appropriate test case – given that this 'need' is named specifically in The Green Book - is housing, which was high on the policy agenda even before Qaddafi's espousal of 'true' Islamic Socialism. Between 1969 and 1979 Tripoli's population had tripled, necessitating an expansive and centralised housing policy to accommodate citizens.<sup>81</sup> As such by 1975 slums were eradicated. In correspondence with Qaddafi's theory of ownership and need, new property ownership laws mandated that families could only own one dwelling. Individuals could no longer rent housing from other individuals – nor even the state – and instead housing was to be provided by the state and ownership immediately transferred to its inhabitants. In this respect whilst the *means* were not private or autonomous, the *ends* were in terms of private ownership of one's house. By the late 1970s, the tenements surrounding Tripoli and Benghazi had given way to modern apartment blocks with running water and electricity. Between 1970 and 1986, the government invested 2.8 million Libyan Dinar in housing, which made possible the construction of 277,500 homes. Since 1984, budget allocations for housing have fallen in keeping with a general decline in government spending, however the housing sector has constituted one of the most expansive and notable of the revolution's achievements in providing a 'basic need' for Libyans. Entirely in line with Qaddafi's objective, housing was provided for nearly all Libyans, with even oasis towns and troglodytes provided with housing equipped with satellite (state) television and water.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Allan, J.A. *Libya: The Experience of Oil* (London: Croom Helm, 1981) Page 143

<sup>82</sup> Federal Research Division US Library of Congress. <http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/lytoc.html> 2nd May 2006

By the 1980s, the welfare available to Libyans included much more than was provided under basic social security law. Various entitlements for retirement, work injury, disability and sickness were provided courtesy of Libya's bountiful oil wealth and highly redistributive taxation policies. Subsidised food, free medical care and education, and profit sharing were among the other benefits that have dispelled the previously unmet 'needs' of most Libyans. In addition, there emerged state nurseries to care for the children of working mothers, orphanages for homeless children, and homes for the aged. These welfare programs have reached even the oasis villages of the desert, where they were received with general satisfaction.<sup>83</sup> The giving of alms to the poor remains one of the pillars of the Islamic faith, but the extent of public welfare was such that there was increasingly less call for private welfare. Between 1970 and 1985, the number of doctors and dentists increased sevenfold, producing a ratio of one doctor per 673 citizens. The number of hospital beds tripled in the same period.<sup>84</sup> More recently, Libya ranked 58<sup>th</sup> out of 177 on the 2004 United Nations Development Programme's, Human Development Report - which measures quality of life - significantly higher than Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.<sup>85</sup>

Undoubtedly, within the bounds of Qaddafi's Third Universal Theory, the objective of Islamic Socialism has been largely met on a practical level. Whilst the wage system has not been abolished entirely, the levels of worker protection and social security means that most people's basic needs are provided for by the state whilst larger projects regarding economic development are now co-ordinated and funded publically.

In seeking to create a large pool of labour for Libya's socialist expansion, peripheral successful objectives have concerned the increased role of education and female participation both in society and the economy, particularly in teaching (see Tables 1 and 2). Socially, this has also moved towards Qaddafi's desire to tackle sexual discrimination, which he calls a 'flagrant act of oppression without justification.'<sup>86</sup> The

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<sup>83</sup> Federal Research Division , US Library of Congress. <http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/lytoc.html> 2nd May 2006

<sup>84</sup> Federal Research Division , US Library of Congress. <http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/lytoc.html> 2nd May 2006

<sup>85</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2004  
[http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/pdf/hdr04\\_HDI.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/pdf/hdr04_HDI.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> El-Khawas, M *Qaddafi: His Ideology in Theory and Practice* (Vermont: Amana, 1986) Page 91

increased provision of education has also acted as a form of political cohesion and mass mobilisation by the *jamahiriya* and positively correlates with the period of socialist expansion.

The most prominent examples of centralised socialist planning are undoubtedly the Kufra Oasis project and the Great Man Made River. Inherited as a showcase from the monarch, the project in Kufra, an oasis town in the south-east of Libya was nationalised and provided 50,000 acres of agricultural land in the middle of the Sahara by 1973, irrigated by aquifers discovered when drilling for oil. The cost of its of grain compared to 20 times world prices even by 1980, but was a nevertheless an achievement of Islamic Socialist production as Qaddafi had prescribed. Tangentially, 80 per cent of Kufra's workers are foreign migrants, which has allowed Qaddafi to showcase his African-unity credentials since the mid-90's.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, the four phases of the Great Man-Made River, providing Libya's coastal towns and cities with fresh drinking water from aquifers, yields 6.5 million cubic metres of water a day from over 1,000 desert wells - over 1000 litres a day per Libyan citizen. (See Figure 2)<sup>88</sup>

However, the centralised planning that these projects require has arguably impacted upon Libya's commitment to direct democracy. In October 1983, the General People's Congress held an extraordinary session to draft the resolutions for the basic People's Congresses to pass under pressure from the revolutionary committees, when deciding to fund and execute the Great Man-Made River Project.<sup>89</sup> Also with respect to centralised intervention, where in history there has often been a tendency amongst rural communities to resist the encroachment of state agency, this has been witnessed to a certain extent in Libya with regards to disturbing cultural norms, by re-housing those living in the mud-brick oasis towns and underground caves for example. Thus it can be evaluated that in many of Qaddafi's large projects with a national scope, the objective of Islamic Socialism has stunted aspirations of direct democratic government.

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<sup>87</sup> Birks, S. and Sinclair, C. 'Libya: Problems of a Rentier State.' in *North Africa: Contemporary Politics and Economic Development*, edited by Richard Lawless and Allan Findlay, (Crom Helm, London, 1984) Page 214 - 75

<sup>88</sup> Libyan Jamahiriya Broadcasting Corporation, [http://en.ljbc.net/online/subject\\_details.php?pageNum\\_series\\_of\\_sub=1&totalRows\\_series\\_of\\_sub=2&sub\\_id=7&cat\\_id=1](http://en.ljbc.net/online/subject_details.php?pageNum_series_of_sub=1&totalRows_series_of_sub=2&sub_id=7&cat_id=1), 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2006

<sup>89</sup> Great Man Made River Authority, Jamahiriya, [http://www.gmmra.org/contant\\_english.asp?id=11](http://www.gmmra.org/contant_english.asp?id=11) 1st May 2006

However, the opposite trend has also occasionally been witnessed, with democratisation of industry resulting in job losses. Whereas the 1973 profit-sharing obligation of companies seemingly increased workers incomes by requiring private and public firms to redistribute one-quarter of their profits, the 1978 extension hindered workers by undermining the profitability of the enterprises in which they worked. Indeed, 'many owners liquidated their businesses rather than face losing control of them.'<sup>90</sup> Finally, the ambition to make Libya nationally self-sufficient with regards to food has proved understandably difficult, given the desertified terrain and cost of irrigation to achieve such an objective.<sup>91</sup>

The ideological commitment to 'Islamic Socialism' is perhaps most remarkably demonstrated by the fact that despite being funded by Libya's nationalised oil wealth, there is little correlation between its prosperity and redistributive social policies. In real terms, GDP grew each year from 1972 to 1980 and in both 1974 and 1976, real GDP grew at an annual rate of over 18 per cent. However, since 1980 – the period of Islamic Socialist expansion - there has been a continual decline. The turning point for the economy occurred in 1981, as real GDP dropped a staggering 18 percent. However, exemplifying Libya's commitment to satisfying Libyans' 'basic needs', the only component of GDP to exhibit a steady growth during the period of decline was the public service sector, which rose from 5 percent in 1978 to 12 percent in 1984.<sup>92</sup> In real terms, this resulted to an almost doubling of the Libyan development budget (see Table 3). In this sense it can certainly be argued that Libya' achievement of Islamic socialism was for ideological reasons rather than simply as a result of economic prosperity, given the contrast of relative economic decline.

However, there arises the question of how long Libya can afford to meet its socialist objectives based on its current model. As Birks and Sinclair argue, 'Libya is more likely to collapse economically after the cessation of oil reserves than any other oil-endowed state in the Arab world...hence the urgency for a reassessment of

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<sup>90</sup> Federal Research Division , US Library of Congress. <http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/lytoc.html> 2nd May 2006

<sup>91</sup> EL-Kikhia, M.O. *Libya's Qaddafi: The Politics of Contradiction* Page 77

<sup>92</sup> Federal Research Division , US Library of Congress. <http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/lytoc.html> 2nd May 2006

development strategy in Libya.<sup>93</sup> Since the lifting of sanctions in 2004, Libya has sought to relax rules on the private sector and is now actively seeking foreign direct investment. Such a path is endorsed by Saif- al-Islam al-Qaddafi, who argues that privatisation, 'is a positive effect because you are not under the mercy of the state or the public sector. [In Libya]...the state will always provide a safety net in housing and health but we will become similar to the Scandinavian model.'<sup>94</sup> An interpretation of this statement is that by loosening up its commitment to Islamic socialism, Libya can more firmly achieve its goal of direct democracy, whilst also continuing to provide for the 'basic need' of future generations. However, in the present day it can clearly be seen that Libya has actively and successfully achieved the aim of creating a socialist economy to a large extent, as espoused in Qaddafi's Third Universal Theory.

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<sup>93</sup> Birks, S. and Sinclair, C. 'Libya: Problems of a Rentier State.' in *North Africa: Contemporary Politics and Economic Development*, edited by Richard Lawless and Allan Findlay, (Crom Helm, London, 1984) Page 273

<sup>94</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

## **5. *Jamahiriyah*: An ideological mirage or the materialisation of a theory?**

In conclusion, Libya has seen a mixed achievement of the domestic aims of the Al-Fatah Revolution and Third Universal Theory. The regime initially responded well to popular sentiments of anti-imperialism and Arab nationalism, but it was the combined aims of 'direct democracy' and 'socialism' that have been most vociferously espoused by Qaddafi himself.

In that respect, it can be seen through qualitative and quantitative analysis that a socialist economy was created akin to that prescribed in The Green Book, although it remains to be seen how Libya's liberalising economic agenda will affect the achievement of this objective. Secondary objectives concerning the increased participation of women and increased provision of education have similarly been achieved.

However, the achievement of 'direct democracy' as advocated by Qaddafi is certainly more difficult to quantify. It is certainly not possible to argue that it is either entirely democratic, or entirely repressive and dictatorial. As such, it would be a bold claim to say that direct democracy has been achieved in Libya as idealised in their own terms, although democratic institutions have indeed been formed and have governed their regions semi-autonomously, to greater and lesser extents, over the last thirty-seven years. It is often wrongly interpreted that the Libyan system is dependent entirely on Qaddafi's leadership, but there is a strong case that whilst Libyans are used to varying degrees of political repression, which they have increasingly resisted, they are equally used and attached to the democratic elements of their system.

The value of this essay is that it has shown that Libya has not simply spoken of aspirations of direct democracy and socialism as ultimate objectives', but has gone a partial way to achieving them. Thus arises the question: could Libya be a model? Saif al-Islam believes that the 'natural' objective of participatory democracy are witnessed in Iraq, where, 'people committees have sprung up in villages and towns' since the occupation of the Allied forces.'<sup>95</sup> The value of this opinion is not for this

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<sup>95</sup> Saif Al-Islam Al-Qaddafi, Personal Interview, London, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006

essay to decide, but it certainly corresponds with the notion that Libya has demonstrated a political model in its own right and not merely a fig leaf of dictatorship.

Of course no conclusion is without caveat. Methodologically, the lack of publicly available quantitative electoral data in particular makes definitive conclusions difficult and reliant on secondary literature and the interpretative field research cited in such literature. A greater clause is that by interpreting the Third Universal Theory directly, one's own normative assumptions may have affected interpretation. A similar concern regards interviewing Saif al-Qaddafi. As with any interview, the Greenspoon effect and line of questioning affects outcomes. That said, the Leader's son appeared to be remarkably frank and critical of the Libyan regime and this is less of a concern than would perhaps be envisaged.

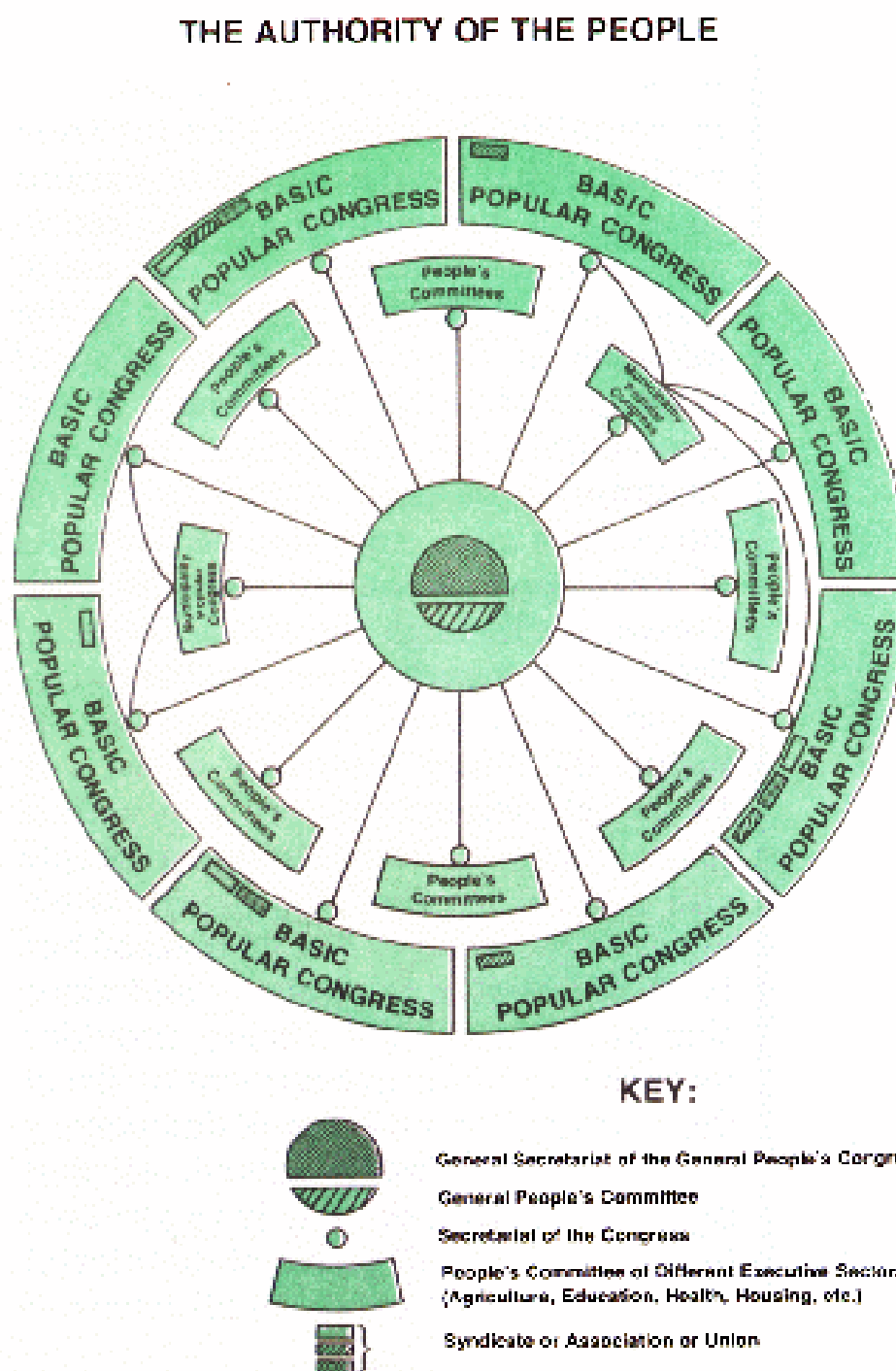
This study has proved that based upon its own criteria rather than path-dependent criteria, the Revolutionary objectives have at least been partially achieved. Excluding the clear flaws in the operation of the democratic institutions that are clearly in place, it is fair to say that to a large extent the goals of the AL-Fatah revolution and Third Universal Theory have been at least partially achieved, although in a practical rather than a theoretically pure sense.

The conventional view of Libya is as dictatorship cloaked in eccentric rhetoric, however, the more one scratches below the surface, the more it becomes evident that the system is partially democratic and socialist, cloaked in a form of vanguard leadership, which itself does contradict Qaddafi's own objectives. Paternalistic intervention contravened the very political process Qaddafi advocated by preventing the masses from reaching the stage of true self-reliance, Qaddafi's ostensible goal.

However it is also certainly true that direct democratic and socialist conventions, institutions and cultures do exist and it would be entirely incorrect to label the concept of a *jama'iriya* as simply a fig-leaf for dictatorship, as is the popular perception.

Appendices

Figure 1. The Political Composition of the *Jamahiriya*



Sources: Qaddafi, M., *The Green Book*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (World Center for the Study and Research of The Green Book: Tripoli, Jamahiriya: 1999), Page 25



**Table 1. Educational Enrolment, Total and Female, 1975-86**

Level	1975-76		1980-81		1982-83		1985-86	
	All Students	Females	All Students	Females	All Students	Females	All Students	Females
Primary	556,169	256,065	662,843	314,570	721,710	341,979	774,000	n.a.
Secondary	166,122	55,722	296,197	118,953	420,000	n.a.	271,000	n.a.
General secondary	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	88,000	n.a.
Technical education	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	26,000	n.a.
Teachers institutes	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	35,000	n.a.
University and institutions of higher education	13,427	2,358	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	37,000	n.a.
Total	735,718	314,145	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,231,000	575,0243

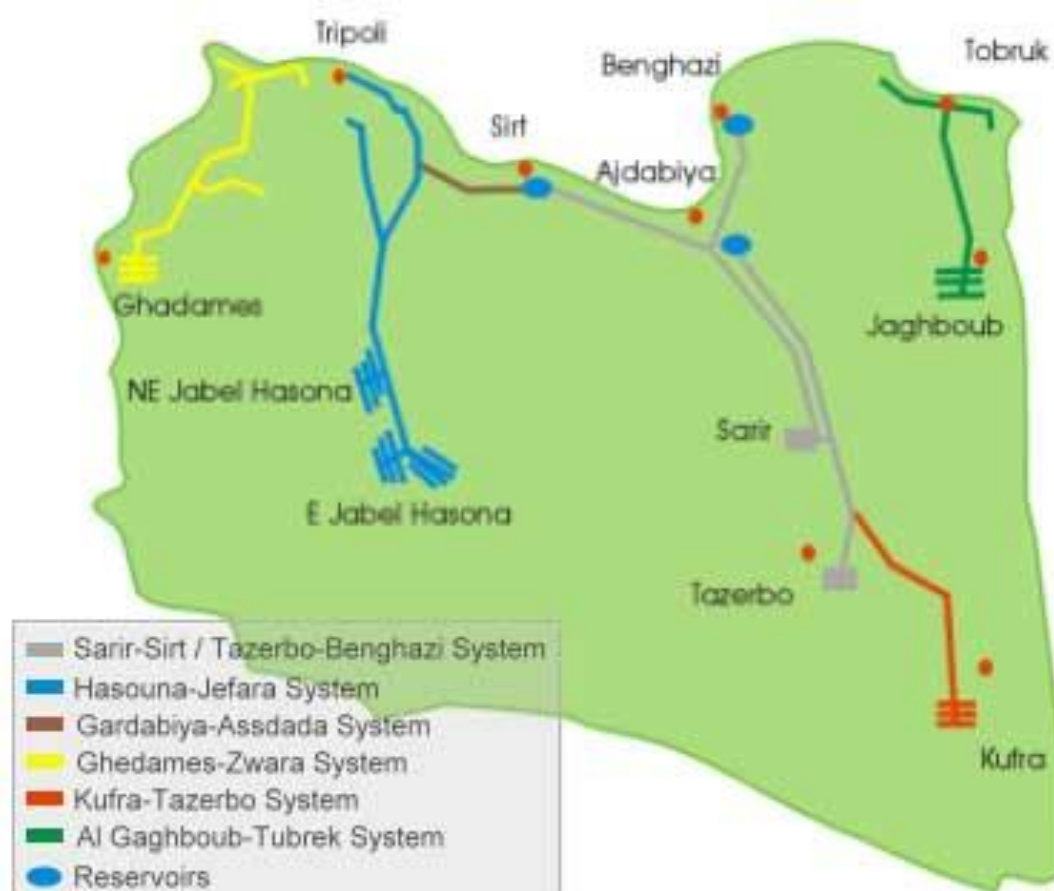
Sources: United Nations, *Statistical Yearbook, 1983-84*, New York, 1986, Tables 55, 56, and 57; and *Az Zahf al Akhdar*, Tripoli, September 1, 1986, Joint Publications Research Service, *Near East/South Asia Reports*, NEA-86-145, November 28, 1986, 44.

**Table 2. Number of Teachers, Total and Female 1975-86**

Level	1975-76		1980-81		1982-83		1985-86	
	All Teacher	Females	All Teachers	Females	All Teachers	Females	All Teachers	Females
Primary	24,331	7,086	36,591	17,160	42,696	22,627	n.a.	n.a.
Secondary	11,819	n.a.	24,323	5,750	30,673	8,483	n.a.	n.a.
University and equivalent institutions	951	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Total	37,101	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	79,043	n.a.

Source's: United Nations, *Statistical Yearbook, 1983-84*, New York, 1986, Tables 55, 56, and 57, and *Az Zahf al Akhdar*, Tripoli, September 1, 1986, Joint Publications Research Service, *Near East/South Asia Reports*, NEA-86-145, November 28, 1986, 44.

Figure 2. Great Man Made River Project



Source: Great Man Made River Authority, Jamahiriya, [http://www.gmmra.org/contant\\_english.asp?id=3](http://www.gmmra.org/contant_english.asp?id=3) 14<sup>th</sup> April 2006

**Table 3. Allocations of Development Plans, 1976-80 and 1981-85**

<b>(Millions of Libyan Dinars)</b>				
	<b>1976-80</b>		<b>1981-85</b>	
<b>Sector</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agriculture	1,476	16.0	3,100	17.9
Industry (light and heavy)	1,205	13.0	4,008	23.1
Public works	1,131	12.2	3,305	19.1
Transportation and communications	930	10.0	2,204	12.7
Education	522	5.6	100	0.6
Health	276	3.0	621	3.6
Other	3,710	40.1	3,952	22.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,250</b>	<b>100.03</b>	<b>17,290</b>	<b>100.03</b>

Sources: Birks, S. and Sinclair, C. "Libya: Problems of a Rentier State," in Richard Lawless and Allan Findlay, eds., *North Africa: Contemporary Politics and Economic Development*, New York, 1984, 243; and from Central Bank of Libya, *Annual Report, 1984*, Tripoli, n.d., 55, 60.

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