

Libya: the Desert Experience

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The historical development of Libya has been marked by two factors, whose repercussions are still felt today in both domestic and foreign policy. To begin with, Libya was long ruled by foreign powers, all the way back to the 16th century with the Spanish occupation of Tripoli in 1510. Taking over from Spain was the Ottoman Empire, only to be interrupted by the independent dynasty of the Albanian Janissary officer Ahmed Qaramanli (1711-1835).

In this century, foreign influence intensified with the short-lived but profound social changes produced during the Italian colonial period (1911-1943) and under the joint British and French military administration from 1945 to the declaration of independence on December 24, 1951. Yet present, official historiography includes even the ensuing Sanusi Monarchy (1951-1969) in the period of foreign rule, assuming that this monarchy was not recognised as genuinely sovereign and independent by the Libyan people, due to the strong American and British associated with it (military bases, control of banks and the oil industry). It was precisely the policy pursued by King Idris of alliance with the USA and Great Britain, as well as the misuse of the military bases during the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, that provided the Nasserist propaganda with innumerable targets for attack.

The military coup of September 1, 1969, under the leadership of Muammar al-Qaddafi, Chairman of the Union of Free Unionist (Nasserist) Officers, was in light of the country's past a reaction both to Libya's foreign policy dependence

and to its domestic socio-economic mismanagement, whose elimination was to be achieved through the new orientation of foreign policy (pan-Arabism, closing down of foreign military bases in 1970, expulsion of Italian settlers, demand for reparations for the damage caused to the country in the Second World War, etc.) and "development revolutions" (in agriculture, industry, health care and education).

The second factor profoundly marking Libya is the tripartite division of its present-day territory, a division which has prevailed since antiquity: the three parts in question consist first of all of the Western province of Tripolitania in which on average two thirds of the population live, and whose orientation is to the Maghreb (primarily Tunisia); second, of the fertile northern part of the eastern province of Cyrenaica with its alignment with Egypt; and third, the Sahara territories (southern Cyrenaica and the province of Fezzan), traditional transit land for the trading caravans bound for the Sahel (Kanem, Borku, Baguirmi, Ouaddai) that mainly start out from Tripoli, the classic "gateway to the Sahara".

The bid to overcome this tripartite division of the country, visible in its administrative structure until 1963, by means of the establishment of new regional administrative units, and in particular, the attempt to overcome the backwardness of the southern regions by massive investments in infrastructure and in the social sector, since 1969, has been and remains a central concern of the revolutionary leadership. After all the members dominating the leadership do not come from the traditional elite of the coastal towns, but from the desert regions of Syrte and Fezzan. In this respect, the age-old north-south divide in Libya between settled urban culture in the few towns, notably Tripoli, Zuwara, Misurata, Benghazi and Darni, and a nomadic way of life with its fluctuating lines of demarcation depending on the extent of power of the rulers resident in Tripoli (even though all the nomads have become settled as a result of the socio-economic changes since the early 1950s) is for the moment dominated by the "South". Repeated efforts by Qaddafi and others in 1987 to transfer the capital to Jufra (in central Libya) aimed at strengthening the balance of power in favour of the traditionally peripheral part of the population (Fezzan constitutes 10 per cent of the population).

A rather striking fact is that the concept "people in arms", the policy pursued by the Revolutionary Council for the revaluation of the political role of women and their forced integration into the armed forces and into the economic process, and the structure of the political system based on consultation, finds its roots in the Bedouin lifestyle and world of experience. It contrasts sharply with the domestic political conception of the Sanusis monarchy, arranged on a tribal basis, conditioned through the loyalty of the Northern Cyrenaikan tribes, in particular. Through the extensive support by the traditional urban elites, the monarchy opened up government and power to the political influence of the Shalhi, Muntasir, Kikhya and other families, with the consequence of large-scale nepotism and corruption, favoured by the growth of oil revenues since 1960. The restrictions of the political system (outlawing of parties in 1952 after doubts about the results of the first parliamentary elections; suppression of union activities) and the repression of popular demonstrations against the domestic and foreign policy line adopted by the regime created a situation in which the armed forces were the only viable mass organisation capable of overcoming the crisis of authority that had been exacerbated by the end of the 1960s.

A dictatorship apart from the rest

Just like the Sanusis monarchy, the Libyan Arab Republic was also distinguished by a transformation of system which found expression at the constitutional level. Thus the 1951 Constitution of the United Kingdom of Libya, was amended in 1963, since the federal system with its royal house, federal government and three provincial governments proved economically too costly and politically and administratively too cumbersome. There was one important consequence for certain: Libya's development into a unified central state. Similarly, the Libyan Arab Republic founded on September 1, 1969, with its basis in the provisional constitutional declaration of December 11, 1969, inspired by the Egyptian constitutional model, was institutionally obsolete by the mid-1970s. The Nasserist phase came to an end with the proclamation of popular rule on March 2, 1977. The era of the popular masses, exclusively shaped by Qaddafi, was then introduced, and the state form of Jamahiriya established.

While the constitutional declaration of 1969 corresponded to conventional constitutional texts in form, structure and length, the proclamation of 1977 consisted merely of a document of four brief paragraphs (1. The official name of Libya is the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya; 2. The holy Koran is the law of society; 3. The direct rule of the people forms the basis of the political system. The rule of the people is the only authority, there is no other beside it. The people exercises its rule through basic people's conferences, people's committees, trade unions and professional associations and the General People's Congress; 4. The defence of the homeland is the duty of each male and each female citizen. The schooling



Desert knights

of the people and its arming are achieved through "General Military Training"). Its meaning is only fully revealed by consulting further documents and legal texts: the Proclamation of September 1, 1969, the programmatic speech by Qaddafi at Zuwara on April 15, 1973, by which the People's Revolution was inaugurated, and the three chapters of the Green Book published by the Libyan state gazette (edition of March 15, 1977; Green Book Parts II and III followed in the editions of May 31, 1978 and March 15, 1980), which are to be evaluated almost as constitutional texts.

Through the transformation of the political system, all the institutions and administrative bodies created at the beginning of the revolution—the Revolutionary Council, the Ministerial Council, the single party, the Arab Socialist Union (ASU), founded on the Egyptian model in June 1971—were replaced by new ones. The institutional restructuring process was introduced by Qaddafi's speech of April 15, 1973, in which he spelt out a five-point programme, calling on the population to overcome both the bureaucratic impediments and the lack of mobilisation of the ASU by, among other things, the establishment of people's committees.

With Qaddafi's formulation of the regime's political ideology ("Third Universal Theory"), aimed at pointing an alternative way between capitalism and communism, the activist element in the political system was strengthened beginning in 1975. The ASU was downgraded as the unity party, and transformed into the basic people's conferences, open to all citizens. At the same time the collective organs of the administrative people's committees, elected by the basic people's conferences every two years and accountable to them, exercise their reinforced executive functions in newly restructured administrative bodies. This system of basic people's conferences and people's committees, established in January 1976, still forms the central structure of the governmental system. The proclamation of the Jamahiriya and the self-dissolution of the Revolutionary Council on March 2, 1977, provided the finishing touches to this process and represent the definitive break in the further political development of the post-Nasserist Libyan state.

Levels and levels of structure

Libya's political system, like its tripartite administrative levels (local level, level of the Baladiya-towns, national level), is based on three different types of legislative people's conferences and executive people's committees: at the legislative level, the (originally 187) so-called basic people's conferences, the (originally 42) people's conferences on the Baladiya level, and the national General People's Congress (GPC, with approximately 1100 delegates) which meets annually in Tripoli and also in other towns, and at the executive level, the local people's committees, the people's committees grouped on a departmental basis (education, health care, transportation) at the Baladiya level including the Baladiya People's Committee (District Council), and the General People's Committee at the national level.

The basic people's conferences meet annually in three ordinary sessions, of which two are dedicated to local affairs, while the third is mainly devoted to the discussion of national matters and to the drawing up of those resolutions from the ordinary GPC meeting held once a year and passed by imperative mandate. In this way the GPC, beginning in January 1976, has so far held 16 ordinary sessions (most recently on March 2-9, 1990), at which the General People's Committee has to give an account of its activities to the delegates and be regularly re-elected. Extraordinary sessions both of the basic people's conferences and of the GPC (so far there have been 17 of these) are also held; decisions are reached at them on important matters (including the union with Morocco in 1984, the passing of the Human Rights Declaration on June 12, 1988, and the ratification of Libya's membership in the Arab Maghreb Union in 1989).

This so-called Government Sector with its legislative and executive institutions has been accompanied since March 2, 1979 (Proclamation of the Separation of Government and Revolution), by a formally independent Revolutionary Sector, whose organs consist of the revolutionary leadership and the Revolutionary Committees. The revolutionary leadership itself consists of the five remaining members of the revolutionary council disbanded following the attempted putsch of Omar Muhaishi in 1975: it is formed by the Revolutionary Leader Qaddafi, Chief of Staff Jallud, Colonel Jabir, Commandant al-Humaidi and

Commandant al-Kharrubi, who hold high offices in the armed forces. The Revolutionary Committees were set up since the appeal for them was made by Qaddafi at the beginning of 1977 ("Committees in every place", "No revolutionary outside the Revolutionary Committees"). They originally had as their task the "mobilisation and guidance of the popular masses in the exercise of people's power". Since March 1979, they were given additional far-reaching prerogatives for the system's security, and took over the struggle against the "Enemies of the Revolution".

The powers invested in the Revolutionary Committees include not only their own judicial authority in the form of so-called Revolutionary Tribunals and the possession of weapons, but also intervention in the agendas of the basic people's conferences (for example, suppression of unpalatable themes such as the discussion of the conflict in Chad) and the right of veto over selected members of the People's Committees. Represented in all important institutions since 1980 (educational institutions, media, armed forces, police), the Revolutionary Committees developed into an omnipresent instrument of repression until recent times. Then, in 1987, in the context of the economic crisis, the foreign policy escalation in confrontation with the USA and the devastating defeat in the war in Chad, the (as yet passive) opposition of the population in the basic people's conferences, the armed forces and the people's committees grew in scale, threatening the stability of the system and forcing a liberalisation at first in the economic sphere, and then, beginning in 1988, in the political structures, as well.

The history of the establishment of the Revolutionary Committees is closely connected with the promotion of the ideological premises which Qaddafi published in the second part of his Green Book in 1978, dedicated to economic policy and representing a handbook for the implementation of the Third Universal Theory. Whereas the translation into action of the first part of the Green Book of 1975 (introduction of the system of basic people's conferences and people's committees) at first gave rise within the administrative apparatus of the single party and in the colleges to opposition which could be broken without any great difficulty, the main demands of the second part of the Green Book (including "The house as the property of its occupier", the abolition of

private domestic trade and installation of a network of people's supermarkets, and the transformation of private businesses into enterprises owned by the people, run by people's production committees) were aimed at taking power out of the hands of the trading families who had enriched themselves during the 1960s and between 1970 and 1975, when there was still hardly any interference by the state in the capitalist sector. Yet it proved too late, especially in 1980 and 1981, for any massive and open opposition to the implementation of the ideologically motivated economic interventions by the state, since the Revolutionary Committees had consolidated their presence between 1977 and 1979 and already controlled all institutions and social sectors. Numerous merchants consequently preferred exile to open confrontation (mainly emigrating to Italy, France, Great Britain, Greece and the USA), in order to contribute to political opposition from abroad in one of the many groups that had sprung up. Transferring its activities beyond Libya's frontiers, the justice of the Revolutionary Committees persecuted them, however, even in exile (leading among other things to the liquidation of 10 "Enemies of the Revolution" between March and June 1980; 37 victims by the end of 1987). It was only following the introduction of liberalisation measures that the Revolutionary Committees were once again subjected to stricter controls and their competences restricted.

Libyans get involved

Apart from the use of the traditional clientelist relationships especially in the more strongly tribal areas of eastern Libya, the participation of the population in the political system has been achieved in varying degrees of intensity since 1969. Soon after the assumption of power by the Revolutionary Council, numerous Libyans of both sexes became active in the so-called "intellectual seminars" established in 1970, and expressed their hopes in the establishment of democratic structures. Yet the retention of the ban on political parties imposed in 1952, the prohibition of strikes and the constitution of the single ASU party in 1971, soon led to a disillusionment which resulted in the low degree of acceptance of the party. This lack of mobilisation and legitimation led to the proclamation of the People's Revolution in April 1973, and the remodelling of the ASU into the basic people's conferences. But the general

mistrust of the population in the new institutions could not be overcome in this way.

Qaddafi himself, in his speech of May 25, 1976, criticised the high rates of absenteeism of the population at the meetings of the basic people's conferences (between 40 and 60 per cent, peaking at 90 per cent, in Misuratah, for example, the home town of Omar Muhaishi, the Revolutionary Council member who had led the abortive putsch in August 1975, before fleeing abroad), and announced the establishment of special Mobilisation Committees, from which the Revolutionary Committees emerged in 1977.

After the interim 14 years practice with the direct democratic experiment, the Libyan people have now formally got used to the new institutions, and learnt how to handle them. They have used the structures of the basic people's conferences and people's committees for the local political transformation to articulate innumerable project wishes, and to amend or (exceptionally) to reject legislative proposals, though not without being conscious of the narrow limits of tolerated criticism. In particular, the revolutionary sector, characterised by the foreign and domestic policy decisions of Revolutionary Leader Qaddafi, is taboo, and also legally sanctioned by the so-called Document of Revolutionary Legitimacy issued by the GPC on March 9, 1990.

The paternalist structure of Libyan society, as already expressed in the monarchy's slogan ("God-King-Fatherland"), was modified after the change of regime in 1969. Until the September Revolution of 1969, the religious leaders, the tribal sheiks and the heads of the great urban families stood at the apex of the country's elite structure. But they were stripped of this role by the Revolutionary Council (average age in 1969: 26), the free officers, the members of the Cabinet and (since 1971) the cadres of the ASU, though without completely eliminating the elite structures, in view of the still imperfectly developed ideological principles of the Revolution or the opportunities for participation in the administration (for example, as head of the local administrative units). It was only the establishment of the system of people's conferences and people's committees, the religious Revolution initiated by Qaddafi in 1975 (rejection of religious savants as intermediaries

between man and God), and the ideologically motivated economic interventions that succeeded in completely stripping of political power the social elites that had dominated the country before 1969.

At the same time, the permanent political transformation in the years 1969-1979 progressively increased the state of uncertainty of the middle class active in the administration and the economy (indicator: rates of absenteeism), with the result that the revolutionary leadership in its bid for "mass mobilisation" increasingly came to rely on the younger generations and on "the least qualified segments of Libyan society" (as the Libyan political scientist el-Fathaly has argued). With Qaddafi's support, Libya's girls and women have become involved in this process. They not only play an important role within the Revolutionary Committee movement, but, since the opening of their own military academy in 1980, have at their disposal a much-used channel of social advancement and increasingly have come to be chosen for political offices both at the Baladiya and national levels (in March 1989, a woman was named Secretary for Education). The integration of women in the labour process also has economic reasons: namely, the replacement of foreign workers (34.4 per cent of the workforce in 1980), who have had to be progressively reduced in number ever since the financial crisis of the mid-1980s (oil revenues in 1981: \$22 billion; in 1986: \$ 5.4 billion).

Qaddafi the realist

Domestic political militancy in the pursuit of the Revolution and the remodelling since 1976 of the Jamahiriya state-structure model, based on basic people's conferences and people's committees, the liquidation of Libyan opposition figures in exile (campaigns in the early 1980s) by members of the Revolutionary Committees, and foreign policy activities which have been described—in part justly—as subversive, destabilising and expansionist (in Chad, for example) by many states affected by them have all coincided to isolate Libya more and more, especially since the end of the 1970s. The conflict with the USA, culminating in the US air strikes on Tripoli and Benghazi in April 1986, openly manifested this isolation, and the defeat of the Libyan forces in northern Chad in 1987, added a further blow to Qaddafi's failing foreign policy ambitions.

However, Qaddafi is—as François Soudan rightly pointed out in *Jeune Afrique* of August 30, 1989—definitely “a realist”, who is willing to abandon political positions and strategies, if the costs of carrying them out are too high or their negative effects too onerous. Since 1987, the political observer thus has been able to witness a reorientation process which has in the space of two years transformed Libya’s domestic, foreign and economic policy: a reorientation to which such terms as “Libyan Perestroika” or “Revolution in the Revolution” (in the Arab press) have been given.

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The point of departure was the development in the economic sphere. Alongside Libya’s ever growing oil revenues at the end of the 1970s, the ideological assault on the economic sector was intensified after 1978, following the publication of the Second Part of the Green Book (“The Solution to the Economic Problem”). Thus, in various phases, rented accommodation and private housing were partly nationalised, partly privatised in favour of former tenants. Production enterprises were transferred to so-called “people’s ownership” under the control of production councils elected within plants (with state assumption of losses). Private trade was prohibited from 1980-81, and its role taken over by the so-called “people’s markets” (under the control of local political organs, the basic people’s conferences) or by distribution points for the monopoly companies set up by the state to handle imports.

This decentralised but in practice inefficient production and distribution system, in conjunction with the financial crisis beginning in 1982, against a background of increasing short-term financial commitments to major economic projects and military imports since the 1970s, led to a strangulation of the Libyan economy with the well-known consequences: the expulsion in 1985 of

numerous migrant workers from Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Mauretania and other states (in part, under inhuman conditions), the rigorous reduction of imports, cutbacks in state benefits and the swelling of queues in front of distribution centres, wage cuts, restrictions on foreign travel, and so forth. To this situation, which was criticised by various delegates during the annual session of the General People's Congress held in Sebha in late February 1987, Libyan Revolutionary Leader Qaddafi reacted with a critique of the current development policy and with the announcement of economic reforms.

The initial economic liberalisation phase was introduced by two speeches given by Qaddafi in March and May 1987. In them he announced a restructuring programme, which basically spelt out a number of recommendations aimed at increasing the efficiency both of agriculture and industry, in particular through the pushing through of new worker cooperatives subject to the laws of the market (transformation of the so-called *tasharukiya* principle), and the dismantling of the ideologically motivated economic interventions—as postulated in the second part of the Green Book in 1978. The consequent liberalisation of the economy in the form of a reauthorisation of private trade, the termination of the state import monopoly and the promotion of private enterprise in production activities, meanwhile produced its first positive effects, and together with a general improvement in the situation of supplies (in spite of the then stagnating oil revenues of approximately 6 billion US-\$ per year, though offset by lower defence expenditures), led to the reactivation of the old Souk of Tripoli, which had been reduced to more or less a ghost town since 1981, and to the establishment of numerous new markets into which flowed the imported goods (consumer and utility goods), especially those imported from Tunisia since the opening of the frontiers with that country.

Abolition of the state import and export monopoly on September 1, 1988, had the effect of fostering the increasing development of private initiative, reducing the shortage of imports and alleviating the shortcomings of the distribution system. Regardless of the drop in foreign currency earnings, work on the so-called “great artificial river project” went ahead. Its realisation was accorded the highest priority, with the result that the first stages in its construction could be completed on schedule in the spring of

1989. Alongside the revaluation of agriculture, considered of strategic importance, the phased diversification process in the petrochemical sphere, considered equally important, was also continued, leading to the development of foreign investments (foundation of a Foreign Petroleum Investment Corporation in April 1988). In this sector, in spite of US pressure, cooperation with foreign countries intensified, especially with Western Europe. At any rate, Libya advanced to take its place as one of the oil suppliers of the Federal Republic of Germany in March 1989.



The halls of wealth and power

The economic reform programme implemented since 1987 assumed even greater significance following the defeat of the Libyan forces in northern Chad in late 1986, and up until the truce in September 1987. By this setback, the threshold of tolerance of the Libyan population, with whom the war in Chad

had never been popular, was reached, and assumed proportions such as to threaten the whole system. In this situation, the Libyan revolutionary leadership decided to take far-reaching political measures aimed both at ending Libya's foreign policy isolation and curbing its internal opposition.

At the foreign policy level, this was achieved above all by the reconciliation with Tunisia: the fundamental prerequisite for any further political development of the Maghreb region as a whole. With Tunisian President Ben Ali, Habib Bourguiba's successor in the post since November 1987, not only was agreement reached on a joint exploitation of the disputed Bouri oilfield, but the Libyan border with Tunisia was opened and the need for visas abolished, with the result that between January and December 1988 alone, according to Tunisian sources, 1.243 million Libyans (i.e. almost a third of the Libyan population) visited Tunisia either as tourists or on shopping trips. These beginnings of private cooperation between the two countries also had their counterpart at the state level with Qaddafi's visit to Tunisia and Ben Ali's to Libya and the signing of numerous agreements, including a resumption in the flow of Tunisian manpower to Libya. Bilateral relations between the two countries have not been so good since 1969.

Political and economic cooperation with Algeria was also intensified to an extent that had long been unknown. The agreement reached in June 1988 on a union of both states is an indicator of this, although the voting procedure to which its acceptance was subject, originally scheduled for November 1988, was cancelled as a result of the October 1988 unrest in Algeria, and although the dynamic process of integration between the Maghreb countries since the first Maghreb summit in June 1988 (Arab Maghreb Union created February 17, 1988), saw the introduction of new trends. Yet Libya not only newly revamped its Maghreb policy in 1987 and 1988, but also, following its reconciliation with Chad (among other things, the resumption of diplomatic relations in October 1988), demonstrated its goodwill to the whole of Africa on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the September Revolution, and overcame its extreme political isolation since 1986 (1988-89: visits by the presidents of Niger, Mali, Senegal, Uganda, Burkina Faso and Somalia). Moreover, the first signs of a thaw in the long-standing

confrontation between Libya and Egypt was followed by the partial reconciliation between Qaddafi and Egyptian President Mubarak, mediated by the Moroccan King Hassan II and Algerian President Chadli Bendjedid at the Arab summit in Casablanca at the end of May 1989.

A kinder, gentler Libya

Yet it was the liberalisation of domestic policy that had the most far-reaching positive effects for the Libyan population. Announced by the special session of the highest Libyan legislative organ, the General People's Congress, in November 1987, and by the passing of a new and more moderate compulsory military service law in December 1987, it was given prominence following several speeches by Qaddafi in the spring of 1988. First, Qaddafi, in his speech on the occasion of the 14th ordinary session of the GPC on March 2, 1988, emphasised the dissatisfaction both of the population and of the revolutionary leadership with the revolutionary committees, which had been created by the GPC itself in 1977 with a view to establishing the "rule of the people" (exercised through local people's conferences and the people's committees with executive functions dependent on them), but which had since then increasingly developed as authoritarian organs of government.

The most concrete passage in Qaddafi's speeches, and the one most attentively registered by the population, followed on March 9, 1988, when Qaddafi criticised the revolutionary committees, which he had in the past entirely endorsed as a proven means of pushing through his ideological conception, as enshrined in the Green Book. He now denounced them publicly for their excesses, for their execution of opposition figures both at home and abroad, and for their misuse of power. He also dissolved the revolutionary courts and placed the revolutionary committees under the strict supervision of a new ministry (Secretariat for Mass Mobilisation and Revolutionary Leadership), though without wholly abolishing them—as some had demanded.

Even more sensational measures were announced in March 1988. Already on March 3, Qaddafi in a symbolical act had demolished the central prison of Tripoli, and freed the political prisoners detained in it. Altogether over 400

Libyan opposition figures and 130 foreigners were released from prison throughout Libya in the space of two weeks—as also confirmed by Amnesty International. Not only that, but Qaddafi opened up the death sentence to review, and pleaded that if it not be abolished entirely by the people's conferences, it should at least be used only in exceptional circumstances (in the case of high treason). This development was welcomed by Amnesty International in its Annual Report for 1989.

Another measure greeted with pleasure by the Libyan population was when Qaddafi personally visited the so-called "Immigration Office" on March 12, and there—demonstrating at an open window on the first floor—proceeded to destroy the lists containing the names of the Libyans (running to many thousands) prohibited from travelling abroad by one of the four securities authorities (secret service, revolutionary committees, military police, military secret service). Since then, no further travel documents and authorisations are needed; indeed they would be quite pointless in view of the totally open border with Tunisia. At the same time, the return of many Libyan exiles to Libya (albeit many of them only on visits) shows that the free entry into and travel out of the country is in fact guaranteed.

The various measures, which have only been sketched in outline here, should, in the intention of the Libyan Revolutionary Leader, be backed up by virtual constitutional guarantees, in order to prevent relapses in the future, and to underpin the enduring character of the new policy. Discussions in the local basic people's conferences on the form and content of a corresponding constitutional text resulted in the drafting of a Human Rights Declaration, which was ceremoniously adopted at a new extraordinary session of the General People's Congress on June 12, 1988, in the presence of Qaddafi himself, and of other members of the revolutionary leadership, and of numerous foreign representatives (including Amnesty International). This document, also known as the "Green Charter of Human Rights", contains for the first time since the September Revolution in 1969, a codification of the rights which each citizen enjoys, and to which each citizen can formally make appeal. In the context of the dispensation of justice hitherto operative in Libya, it has increased the legal protection given to the Libyan people.

The introduction of a new People's Court of Justice, where suits can be brought for violations of human rights, completed this development, as also did the new establishment of a Ministry of Justice in March 1989 (15th ordinary session of the General People's Congress). A further aspect of the reforms was the pursuit in the new General People's Committee of the emancipation of Libyan women as called for by Qaddafi for years, leading to the appointment for the first time of a woman to head a ministerial body, namely, the Ministry of Education. A law of April 1989, lastly, authorised women to be appointed as judges and public prosecutors.

More dangerous than AIDS

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Libyan state exhibits heterogeneous traits in its domestic, foreign and economic policy. First of all, in terms of domestic policy, a directly democratic system has been built up and the rule of the people postulated, but at the same time the revolutionary leadership round Qaddafi has claimed the right of infallibly pointing the way. The resulting "interval democracy", discredited through the excesses of the revolutionary committees, has led to the paradoxical situation that with the increasing "ideologisation" of political life and the simultaneous ending of clientelism resting on traditional clan spirit, a revaluation has been achieved of the Qadadfa tribe, whose members control the security services and also hold state posts.

With regard to a summary evaluation of the political development of Libya at the beginning of the third decade of the Libyan Revolution, the parallel existence of political pragmatism and continuing ideological debate may be ascertained. And, in the conflict between the two, it is the domestic and foreign policy coalitions of powers that have decided the predominance of one or the other. While the ideologically motivated intervention in the economy and politics has been relaxed or, in part, wholly abolished under the pressure of necessity since 1987, the question whether the liberalisation process will be pursued, or whether political freedoms will once again be curbed and the authorities of the revolutionary committees once again extended, depends on

the extent of the Islamic opposition which has been formed especially in recent years. Numerous arrests of Islamic fundamentalists in 1989 and 1990 following armed conflicts, and branded as "more dangerous than AIDS" (Qaddafi in his speech of October 7, 1989), and Qaddafi's approval of their execution in repudiation of his earlier stance on the relaxation of the death sentence, show in any case the (relative) precariousness of positions adopted in support of human rights. Qaddafi will always take the necessary political measures to insure that in the future, too, the slogan holds good: "al-fatah abandon" (September Revolution for ever).

Second, in terms of foreign policy, the revolutionary leadership not only pragmatically pursued a policy for the achievement of national interests, but at the same time claimed an ideological leading role (mission of the Third Universal Theory/of the Green Book and Qaddafi's conception of Islam) and supported with militant means the "struggle against Imperialism, Colonialism, Zionism, Fascism and Reactionism" (as the slogan of the institution specially set up to this end declares). This revolutionary interventionism has produced numerous sources of tension not only within the Arab world (in Egypt and Tunisia), but also in Africa (including Sudan, Chad and Niger), and led to confrontation with the USA (and Western European states). At the same time, however, a marked sense of pragmatism has permitted timely changes in course and avoided the formation of coalitions of forces that might have threatened the whole system.

Finally, in terms of economic policy, Libya as an oil producer, in pursuit of its foreign economic policy aims, has become fully integrated into the world market. The domestic economy, on the other hand, is dominated by state capitalist structures whose lack of investment and poor distribution have prevented the revolutionary legitimacy bequeathed by the Revolution in 1969 from being transformed into any lasting legacy of achievement.