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## Libya After the Civil War: Regime Change and Democratisation

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### Abstract

This article examines changes in Libya's internal security, politics, economy and international relations since the start of the revolution in February 2011. Our main argument is that in order to transition from authoritarianism to democracy significant change in each of these four, mutually reinforcing, areas is needed. Drawing on data collected through media analysis and field work, we offer a discussion of the nature of change in Libya and how far the country has democratised. We claim that significant changes in Libya's political system and foreign relations have taken place since 2011 that reinforce the process of democratisation. Within the political system these changes include the conduct of free and fair elections, the formation of new political parties, the reinforcement of civil rights and liberties, governmental accountability and the emergence of a participant political culture. Within foreign relations they include deeper cooperation with regional and international actors, reintegration into the Arab League, and rapprochement with Western states. However, we also observe that structural economic changes, in particular raising personal incomes and lowering poverty, and the normalisation of security provision are moving forward more slowly. We conclude that democratisation in Libya is taking place and there is a solid possibility that embedded democracy will emerge in Libya in the medium to long-term.

**Keywords:** *Libya, regime change, democratisation, revolution, civil war*

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### Introduction

The revolution against the regime of Muammar Gadhafi began on 15 February 2011 in Benghazi and was quickly met by a brutal governmental response which fuelled the uprising further. More than eight months of civil conflict followed, resulting in several thousand deaths and casualties,<sup>1</sup> the destruction of large parts of villages, towns and cities, mass detentions and rising poverty. The conflict also gave rise to two United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions (1970 and 1973) authorising external actors to use military force in order to protect civilians and to establish a no-fly-zone over Libya, which NATO and other forces implemented, often engaging in combat against Gadhafi's forces. The conflict ended in late October 2011 with the liberation of all of Libya (with the exception of Bani Walid as discussed below) and the murder of Gadhafi. In the early stages of the uprising the opposition established the National Transitional Council (NTC) to act as a government in opposition and to oversee the war effort.

Libya now appears to be moving further along in the regime change process, with elections for the country's first parliament in almost five decades held on 7 July 2012 and plans for the constituent assembly to write a new constitution paving the way for further elections, which are scheduled for 2014. But many Libyans and outside observers have expressed concern that Gadhafi's regime will simply be replaced by another authoritarian regime as has so often happened in the Arab world in the past. This study explores these concerns by examining four key areas of change that are necessary for a successful transition from authoritarianism to democracy. We argue that significant political, economic, and security changes as well as changes in Libya's international relationships are all necessary for democracy to be established. Furthermore, change in some but not all of these areas is insufficient for the transition to be complete, and therefore full democratisation might take at least several years to be realized.

Several months of field work over 2011 and 2012 enabled us to collect primary information on the changes taking place in Libya and to gain an understanding of the experiences of 'ordinary' Libyans, whom we define as those not directly involved in government or 'big

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1. Estimates vary significantly and accurate figures were hard to ascertain due to the media clampdown of the Gadhafi regime, the fluid nature of the conflict and limited intelligence gathering capabilities on the ground. The NTC's last estimate issued in early 2013 estimated there were approximately 4,700 deaths amongst rebels and civilians with a further 2,100 missing and unverifiable but similar numbers anticipated for government forces. See: Black, "Libyan Revolution Casualties Lower Than Expected".

business'. This field work consisted of a series of interviews, discussions and meetings lasting approximately 100 hours over three months. Interviewees were selected based on their professional positions, geographical location, gender and age in order to achieve as diverse a sample as possible, cutting across political, economic and social differences. Interviews with key decision makers included Mahmoud Jibril, the former Chairman of the National Transitional Council, Ali Ashor, the Minister of Justice, Ibrahim Dabashi, the Deputy Ambassador to the UN, and Abd Alhamid Nami, President of the Democratic Centre Party. We interviewed 80 'ordinary' Libyans from Tripoli, Al-Khoms, Misrata and Benghazi.<sup>2</sup>

### Regime Change and Democratisation

Studies that consider violent revolutions and civil conflicts often focus on causality, duration and outcome.<sup>3</sup> Considerations of how the process of revolution and civil conflict affect the overall dynamics and pace of subsequent post-conflict transitions are in the minority. Furthermore, analyses that do exist tend to focus on only one or a few spheres of change: usually a combination of the security, political and economic spheres.<sup>4</sup> Policy-focused analyses often focus on quantifying the damage caused by civil conflict and its immediate political impact. Gurses and Mason<sup>5</sup> focus on the outcome of civil wars, and in particular their destructiveness ('loss of life, damage to the economy and fraying of the fabric of social trust'<sup>6</sup>) and the manner in which the conflict ends (rebel victory, government victory, or negotiated settlement<sup>7</sup>). Likewise, Prashad<sup>8</sup> analyses the revolution in Libya by focusing mainly on international involvement, ultimately concluding that Libya's international relations are the key determinant of its transition. While these studies offer some compelling conclusions on issues of human security, conflict resolution and international relations, we argue that in order to understand and explain Libya's revolutionary transition it is necessary to examine several processes at the same time. As Joshi<sup>9</sup> argues, revolutions are processes of change and are not constituted by single events (such as the formal removal of a dictator from power). This is especially the case for revolutions that are inspired by the desire for representative government.

Central to our approach is the hypothesis that in addition to the negative impact that civil conflict has on human security, there are three other areas of change that, in combination, affect the overall dynamics and pace of democratisation. These changes take place within (1) the political system, (2) the economy and (3) within international relations. Our argument is that these spheres of change reinforce each other. The result is a wide-ranging transition

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2. We experienced limitations in accessing other decision makers and some geographical locations. Citizens from Sirte and Bani Walid were absent from our sample.
  3. For examples see: De Rouen and Sobek "The Dynamics of Civil War Duration and Outcome", 303-320; Buhaug et al., "Geography, Rebel Capability, and the Duration of Civil Conflict", 544-569; Collier et al., "On the Duration of Civil War", 253.
  4. See: Sprinborg, "The Political Economy of the Arab Spring", 427-433; Gaub, "The Libyan Armed Forces Between Coup-Proofing and Repression", 221-244; Zguric, "Challenges for Democracy in Countries Affected by the Arab Spring", 417-434.
  5. Gurses and Mason, "Democracy Out of Anarchy", 315-336.
  6. Ibid, 317-318.
  7. Ibid, 316.
  8. Prashad, *Arab Spring, Libyan Winter*.
  9. Joshi, "Reflections on the Arab Spring", 64.



from one human condition to another that takes place at both the individual and state levels. We term this *systemic transformation*.<sup>10</sup> The theoretical approach used in this study is informed by the later work of Susan Strange<sup>11</sup> and Joan Spero<sup>12</sup> and posits that there is a direct political-economy-security-international relations nexus, but that there can be variations in the pace of change in these spheres.

Security change: internal security and stability are necessary for a successful transition from authoritarianism to democracy. By their nature authoritarian regimes encourage 'human insecurity' through political exclusion, physical threat, economic marginalisation and injustice.<sup>13</sup> Since the fall of the Gadhafi regime in October 2011 we have seen that armed militias that remained armed can act as agents for stability by securing centres of government, and protecting civilians and infrastructure until centralised security is established. However, these same groups can also serve to destabilize a country by fighting each other and hindering the establishment of governmental authority.

Security heavily influences economic wellbeing and it is difficult for a national economy to develop under conditions of violent conflict.<sup>14</sup> Foreign investment and international trade are interrupted, reducing economic productivity. Where states are unable to manage or contain violent conflict within their borders, external actors can be drawn in as combatants, mediators, aid donors and weapons suppliers. Even in a situation of insecurity without overt violence, international relationships will be affected. The migration of people from one state/region to another, for example, is heavily influenced by insecurity either in the home state/region or in transit states/regions.<sup>15</sup>

Political change: when a civil war results in a rebel victory the conflict tends to serve the purpose of removing one government from power and replacing it with another. This undoubtedly is a significant political change in itself. However there are other relevant, if less visible, changes to consider. We adopt Stephen Krasner's<sup>16</sup> use of the term 'regime' here and use it to refer not only to government itself but also to the range of institutions, infrastructure, actors, procedures, values, ideas, language and channels of public-private communication that make up the political landscape. We assume that these elements of political structure and function have a direct impact upon the nature of politics. Thus, when considering the transition from one political condition to another, it is necessary to examine if these have changed/are changing. In the case of an authoritarian regime being removed and replaced by a democratic one,<sup>17</sup> for example, we would assume that there would be significant change in all of the above aspects of politics.<sup>18</sup>

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10. El-Anis, "Disintegration and the Emergence of the State System in the Middle East", 9-28.

11. Strange, *States and Markets*.

12. Spero and Hart, *The Politics of International Economic Relations*.

13. King, *The New Authoritarianism in the Middle East and North Africa*.

14. Murdoch and Sandler, "Civil Wars and Economic Growth: Spatial Dispersion", 138-151.

15. Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*.

16. Krasner, *International Regimes*, 1-21.

17. Characterised by universal adult suffrage; frequent, free and fair elections for parliament and the executive; transparent and accountable political institutions; embedded civil rights, liberties and responsibilities; the rule of law; free media; constitutional authority; party politics; and a culture of political participation.

18. We have adopted Diamond and Morlino's definitions of democracy and how to assess it. See: Diamond and Morlino "The Quality of Democracy", 20-13.

Changes in a state's political system directly impact on domestic economic and security relationships and foreign relations. Political instability and authoritarian governance often have a negative impact on economic well-being.<sup>19</sup> When governance is dominated by an economic and political elite that is insulated from public participation and scrutiny, foreign investment is discouraged.<sup>20</sup> Where economic activity is directed towards the enrichment of the elite as opposed to the development of the economy more broadly, international trade is also limited. At the same time, authoritarian governments can sometimes have troubled international relationships that can result in the imposition of economic sanctions, as was the case for Libya for much of the Gadhafi era.<sup>21</sup> Political factors affect security in much the same way as economic factors do. In the case of Libya, the influence of political elites on all aspects of social life was significant.<sup>22</sup> Libyan state-controlled media had long influenced what the masses knew about political, economic and international issues while state ideology was reinforced through schools, universities and other public institutions, helping to influence public discourse and narratives.<sup>23</sup> Yet conversely, it was also the enduring rule of an authoritarian government, the closed political landscape, rampant political corruption, lack of transparency and accountability, illegitimate use of force, and limited representation that ultimately led to the regime's demise.

Economic change: writers including Buchanan<sup>24</sup>; Fukuyama<sup>25</sup>; Griswold<sup>26</sup> argue that democratic governance and liberal economics are closely linked. The success of democratic transitions relies on the success of liberal economic reform and vice-versa, suggesting that the overall process of regime change will be long and uncertain in contexts where liberal economic structures and practices do not exist or are very limited. There are certainly plenty of countries in which democratic systems and liberal economies reinforce one another. However, there is also evidence to suggest that liberal economies do not always prompt the emergence of competitive democratic politics, even over a long period of time. In pre-revolution Tunisia and Egypt sometimes unpopular liberal economic practices were reinforced by authoritarian governance.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that the link between economic and political change is highly contextual and we take this flexibility into account here.

Changes in the political economy that support higher employment, higher gross and per capita economic growth, poverty reduction, rising incomes and more equitable income distribution can play an important contributing role in the achievement of human security goals. Generally speaking, it is only once a person's immediate survival and security needs are met that they are able to contribute substantively to political and civic life.<sup>28</sup> The basic needs of sustenance and healthcare require income. Economic changes that allow for greater prosperity and social mobility allow people the time and space to engage with political

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19. Jamal, "The Prospects of Democracy and Economic Reform in the Arab World", 545-547.

20. Jensen, *Nation-States and the Multinational Corporation*.

21. Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*. | West, *Karama: Journeys Through the Arab Spring*. 152-161.

22. Geddes and Zaller, "Sources of Popular Support for Authoritarian Regimes", 319-347.

23. For an analysis of the role of social divisions (including ideology, religion and tribalism) see: Sawani, "Post-Qadhafi Libya", 1-26.

24. Buchanan, "Politics Without Romance", 11.

25. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*.

26. Griswold, "Trading Tyranny for Freedom",

27. Richards and Waterbury, *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, 239-243 & 248-252.

28. Barro, "Determinants of Democracy", 158-83.



processes, while the absence of economic means tends to have the opposite effect.<sup>29</sup> Economic security and well-being also affect physical security. When economic resources are controlled by a select group for their own benefit at the expense of the masses the likelihood of physical conflict at the local and national levels is high. Furthermore, where the economic aspirations of the masses are not matched by the reality of their circumstances, resentment, disillusionment and anger arise.<sup>30</sup> Where economic growth, employment, incomes and other key indicators are strong, satisfaction and peaceful engagement tend to follow.<sup>31</sup> Access to greater wealth and resources also allows for higher levels of education, civil society engagement, individual agency and other aspects of human development.

Change in international relationships: for most states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region external actors play a significant role in influencing domestic political, economic and security processes. Through the Cold War, superpower competition pitched Arab states allied to the USA or the USSR against each other.<sup>32</sup> In the post-Cold War era many of these relationships have remained, with Cold War allies of the USA, in particular, maintaining close bilateral links with Washington, while those states that shared close links with Moscow (for example, Libya and Syria) have maintained close bilateral relations with Russia.<sup>33</sup> Change in existing international relationships can contribute towards a shift from support for the incumbent regime (in the case of pre-revolution Libya, an authoritarian regime) to the opposition or emerging regime.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, a state's international relationships can change significantly over short periods of time.<sup>35</sup> These changes are most important in a situation where previous support had been for an authoritarian regime and the emerging external relationship(s) support democratisation.

It is difficult for a state's political, economic and security sectors to remain insulated from international relationships. Membership of international organisations partly results from the widely recognised need to ensure a degree of integration between a country's national economy and those abroad, and from the need for political cooperation at the global level. Key features of contemporary international relations include high levels of travel, communication and cultural exchange,<sup>36</sup> which have a direct impact on international relations between people and the ways in which different communities relate to each other.<sup>37</sup> In the MENA region much of the post-independence era experience of statehood has been characterized by clientelism with most states in the region being deeply tied to one or a few patron countries and relying heavily on them for economic, security and political support.<sup>38</sup>

### Change in the Libyan security context

29. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy", 69-105.

30. Lindsey, "The Trade Front: Combating Terrorism", 1-16.

31. Griswold, "Trading Tyranny for Freedom", 1-16.

32. Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations*, 97-129.

33. Ibid, 127-154.

34. See: Mullerson, *Regime Change*, 223-233.

35. See: Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution: How External States Can Prolong Civil Wars", 115-127.

36. Smith, El-Anis and Farrands, *International Political Economy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 70-78.

37. See: Ollikainen, "European Education, European Citizenship", 6-21; MacLennan, "European Community Developments", 182-187.

38. Sayyid, *International Dimensions of Middle Eastern Authoritarianism*; Lawrence, *A US-Middle East Trade Agreement*. 17-19.

One obstacle to Libya's post-conflict transition is the actual nature of the civil war itself and the way the regime change came about. One of the most concerning security issues that Libya currently faces is bringing the militias under the authority of Tripoli and into a unified security force with a single chain of command.<sup>39</sup> While the militias remain largely autonomous the government is unable to implement its authority, including legislation relating to the treatment and trial of prisoners taken during the fighting in 2011. By mid-2013 there were approximately 8000 prisoners of war taken in the conflict, being held in over 60 detention centres largely run independently by militias that do not come under the authority of the government. Occurrences of torture, maltreatment and abuse of human rights have been reported by both international non-governmental organisations such as Amnesty International<sup>40</sup> and international media networks such as Al-Jazeera.<sup>41</sup>

A key component of the NTC's plans to move towards democratic government is enshrining respect for human rights, fair trial and legal representation in law. The practices of militias outside of central control, especially those not observing their responsibilities to protect human rights, run counter to these aims. Ali Ashor, the acting Minister of Justice, has highlighted that the 'government [...] is prioritising security and trying to improve law and order in the key urban centres, including Tripoli and Benghazi, followed by the rest of the country.' He expects that this is likely to be achieved within a couple of years (by mid-2014) and notes that 'honouring' commitments to the militias that toppled the Gadhafi regime will be important in bringing them into a centralised security framework.<sup>42</sup> However, this has proven far from easy to realise. The aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres halted its work in Misrata in January 2012 because its members working there were being asked to treat prisoners who were victims of torture in order for them to be 'interrogated' further.<sup>43</sup>

Ensuring coordination between militia groups has proven to be difficult and central governmental authority over the militias and their weapons has not been established in much of the country. The 8 May 2012 attack on the government's headquarters in Tripoli and the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi on 11 September 2012 are key indicators of how serious the security problem has become. In the former case, armed militiamen from the Nafusa Mountains (a group that saw heavy fighting against Gadhafi's forces during the latter stages of the 2011 conflict) had travelled to Tripoli to demand payment of salaries and medical treatment for fighters and civilians injured in the conflict. These had been interrupted by a government order to suspend such funds and services.<sup>44</sup> The NTC claimed that they needed to investigate corruption and fraud related to these payments and would resume them once the matter was cleared up. However, the militia groups were dissatisfied by this response and fighting broke out between them and security guards protecting the NTC headquarters. One guard was killed and several others injured in the two hour battle that

39. Al Jazeera, "Can Libya's NTC Secure the Country?", 5 June 2012, <http://blogs.aljazeera.net/blog/africa/can-libyas-ntc-secure-country> (accessed 5 June 2012).

40. Amnesty International, *Detention Abuses Staining the New Libya*.

41. Al Jazeera, "Who Is Really Controlling Libya?", 27 January 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2012/01/20121279497910159.html> (accessed 5 May 2012).

42. Ali Ashor, Tripoli, Libya, 26 December 2011, personal interview.

43. Al Jazeera, "Aid Group Halts Work in Libya Over 'Torture'", 26 January 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/01/2012126133028210385.html> (accessed 1 February 2012).

44. Al Jazeera, "Fighters Attack Libyan Government HQ", 8 May 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/05/20125813525293203.html> (accessed 8 May 2012).



ensued.<sup>45</sup> In the case of the attack on the US consulate an armed group stormed the compound and the attack resulted in the death of J. Christopher Stevens, the US ambassador to Libya.

Fighting between Libyan security forces and fighters loyal to the former regime has also occurred. On 23 January 2012, for example, a group of up to 150 armed men raised the Green Flag of the Gadhafi era in Bani Walid, one of the last pro-Gadhafi towns to fall in the civil war which had seen very heavy fighting, and attacked government security forces stationed there. The fight included the use of heavy weapons from both sides, resulting in four deaths and the withdrawal of government forces.<sup>46</sup> The continued existence of pro-Gadhafi elements in part of Libya and the fact that many still have weapons means that the risk of fighting between Libyan security forces and these groups remains a concern for the government. It must be noted, however, that there have been no significant clashes between pro-government and pro-Gadhafi regime fighters since the January 2012 Bani Walid engagement. This suggests that progress has been made in this aspect of the security situation in Libya, which positively reinforces political stability as discussed below.

### Change in Libya's political structures and processes

The key motivations of the protesters and revolutionaries at the start of the uprising in February 2011 were partly rooted in historical political processes which had traditionally shaped the relationship between the Gadhafi regime and the Libyan people. Government repression and brutality, unconstitutional detentions, torture, restrictions on freedom of speech, media censorship, government corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, and political repression had long been major features of Libya's political landscape. However, the current moment in Libya's history represents an opportunity to ensure that authoritarian rule is surpassed by democratic governance. A national constitution is to be created with the intention of embodying the key political changes that need to take place in order to move away from authoritarianism to democracy. The collapse of Gadhafi's regime has revealed severe political challenges that Libyans have to confront and overcome in order to achieve real political transition. It is not surprising to see these challenges emerge, as the Libyan peoples' political experience over the past four decades has been limited if not completely non-existent.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the complete collapse of the major political and governmental institutions during the civil war led to political chaos. This process of disintegration, combined with the already under-developed nature of political institutions in Libya, means that politics has had to be almost entirely 'rebooted'.<sup>48</sup> Exacerbating this is the fact that during the Gadhafi era there was no constitution, political parties, civil society or meaningful mass political participation.<sup>49</sup>

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45. Ibid.

46. Al Jazeera, "Fighting Erupts in Libya's Bani Walid", 24 January 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/01/2012123182559826642.html> (accessed 24 January 2012).

47. ICG, "Popular Protests in North Africa and the Middle East (V): Making Sense of Libya." 6-12.

48. Ibrahim Dabashi, Al-Khoms, Libya, 17 January 2012, personal interview (Libyan Deputy Ambassador to the UN).

49. Abd Alhamid Nami, Tripoli, Libya, 18 January 2012, personal interview (President of the Democratic Centre Party).



For much of the past forty-plus years the Libyan political landscape was largely embodied in one person (Gadhafi) and his ideology. This authoritarian regime purposefully resorted to the use of a policy of exclusion and political neglect as instruments to maintain its survival. Therefore, a major challenge facing Libya since late 2011 has been rebuilding the country's political system, improving public awareness of the political transitions taking place, emphasising civil rights and responsibilities, and educating people about the legislative process.<sup>50</sup> This is something which the transition leadership that emerged in 2011 seemed to be well aware of. Mahmud Jibril, the Chairman of the NTC throughout the conflict, has stated that '[...] Tunisia and Egypt have an institutional heritage to build on, while in Libya we do not. In addition the absence of a political culture in Libya is going to make the change [to democracy] even more difficult for us.'<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, there have been some key indicative changes occurring in the Libyan political landscape since the late summer of 2011 that may have important impacts on the overall political transition. These changes include the emergence of a culture of political awareness and participation, pluralism in political actors, the establishment of free media and freedom of speech and association, free and transparent election and revisions to the legislative and judicial systems. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

For many Libyans, understandings of political democracy are still emerging. This includes understandings of the nature of elections and how to vote, as well as the formation and practices of political parties the purpose of a constitution (and how it is created) and the role of civil society foundations.<sup>52</sup> However, the general political atmosphere has changed since late 2011. Increasingly, it is common to find Libyans talking openly and publicly about these concepts and various other freedoms such as the freedom of expression, free media, and freedom of thought. This reflects the desire of many Libyans to learn about politics and democracy and to become capable of being involved in political processes.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, popular interest and participation in politics is perhaps the most important single factor leading to democracy, the rule of law and a just state. During the Gadhafi era talking about these issues was often deemed to be a criminal act, as discussed at the start of Gadhafi's Green Book, often leading to imprisonment and even death. Ordinary Libyan citizens have expressed concern that while they have '[...] been liberated from Gadhafi's regime, [they] have not yet been fully liberated from the non-political mentality that was encouraged under Gadhafi.'<sup>54</sup> At the same time many have a sense that there is a development of political culture: 'We were living without affiliation, but now our feelings of responsibility to our homeland have doubled, we can help our country.'<sup>55</sup>

Regime change in Libya reflects a change in social attitudes and it will in turn have an impact upon these same attitudes over a longer period of time. Social changes, as discussed by

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50. More than half of the 80 citizens interviewed in Libya highlighted that their understanding of democratic processes were limited.
  51. Mahmud Jibril, Al-Khoms, Libya, 24 December 2011, personal interview (Former Chairman of the NTC's Executive Office).
  52. Ibid.
  53. Ibid.
  54. Anon.a, postgraduate student, Tripoli, Libya, 19 December 2011, personal interview (the interviewee wished to remain anonymous).
  55. Anon.b University Officer, Al-Merbeh University, Al Khums, Libya, 15 December 2011, personal interview (the interviewee wished to remain anonymous).



Rashid Khalidi,<sup>56</sup> are also very important in democratic uprisings. Among the most significant of these social changes are alterations in one's perception of one's place in society, the understanding of one's rights and responsibilities in the public as well as private spheres, and awareness of one's agency and ability to impact the broader community. The appreciation of ownership in the public space (in the democratic rather than socialist sense) is also a key social change that needs to happen en masse at a given moment in a state's history in order for democracy to be realized.<sup>57</sup> The impact on this communal awareness of ownership of the public space will be important in the coming years and it will emerge against the backdrop of competing identities that Libyans have, given their varied religious, ethnic, tribal and community affiliations.<sup>58</sup>

Following the end of the civil war in October 2011 there have been rather sudden and overarching changes in the political landscape as multiple new actors have emerged. The NTC, for example, was formed during the uprising and has included individuals not previously engaged in public life. The rebels themselves, as disparate and dis-unified as they have been, have become key actors in security, political and even economic affairs, while civil society organisations have begun to proliferate rapidly<sup>59</sup> (for example, the Libyan Committee for Humanitarian Aid and Relief, the Attawasul Association, Libya Outreach, and the National Committee for Charity and Humanitarian Assistance). Furthermore, many political parties have been formed and have been actively promoting their principles and policies. More than fifty parties have been established since the end of the conflict. These are founded on many different ideological principles including Islamism, and liberalism, as well as centrist and leftist ideologies, and tribal affiliations and codes of conduct.<sup>60</sup> Ibrahim Dabashi, Libya's deputy ambassador to the UN, views the proliferation of political parties as a good sign in Libya's political maturing, but highlights the limitations that '[...] many senior party members do not have the necessary experience yet, and while they have good intentions, we still need time to let these parties develop. But, he sees hope in the '[...] fact that Libyans are well-educated, and their political awareness and abilities will increase given some time.'<sup>61</sup> Under the previous regime political life in Libya did not acknowledge most of these types of ideologies and there was no notion of pluralism, which is a fundamental feature of democracy, making the current changes even more dramatic.

Significant developments in Libya's media industry have also occurred. In particular there has been a proliferation of media outlets with many new TV channels being established (for example, Libya TV/Libya Al-Ahrar, Libya Alhurra TV, Libya Awatania, and Tobacts TV). Most of these channels claim to be free from any type of government connections and provide, in addition to other programmes, political programmes with much greater space for free expression and open discussion political matters. These publicly criticise NTC officials and the transitional government. Additionally, a myriad of new electronic and print newspapers and

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56. Khalidi, "The Arab Spring", 7-9.

57. This is a key theme in discourse on the Middle Eastern 'street'. An interesting collection of essays written by young Middle Easterners demonstrating this theme among others can be found in Weddady and Ahmari (eds.), *Arab Spring Dreams*.

58. St. John, *Libya: From Colony to Independence*, 55.

59. UNESC, *Assessing Needs of Civil Society in Libya*.

60. Jibril, 24 December 2011.

61. Dabashi, Ibrahim, 2012.

magazines have been established (for example, Al-Bilad, Libya Herald, New Quryna, Mayadin, Voice of Al-Khoms and the Tripoli Post).<sup>62</sup> In time it is likely that these changes will help to raise political awareness in Libya and should help to contribute to the process of re-building. They will provide space for principles of free and civil society to develop. For example, today people are more supportive of the exercise of civil society in the form of protests and demonstrations. Frequent protests, marches, demonstrations and rallies are held across Libya, the vast majority of which remain peaceful and civil, suggesting that people are becoming more eager to engage in these political activities and more capable of doing so.

A number of cities held local elections in early to mid-2012 to select their local councils, including Misurata, Benghazi, Zwara, Darna and Zawia. Indeed, as local and national elections continued through 2012 Libya underwent a very important moment on the path of democratic transition. Many Libyans have been recorded in electoral lists in their allocated constituencies and obtained voting cards for the first time. This is the first experience of this type of democratic exercise since before the 1969 coup that brought Gadhafi to power. On 7 July 2012 Libyans went to the polls to elect members of the 200-strong National Congress that was tasked with creating a new constitution (120 seats in the parliament are reserved for individual candidates while the remaining 80 are reserved for party list candidates). These elections were monitored by international and Libyan civil society groups and were seen to be fair, transparent and overall conducted effectively despite some delays and disruptions. In terms of the political parties contesting the election, Mahmoud Jibril's National Forces Alliance (NFA) won the election with approximately 50 per cent of the vote. A significant number of the seats going to individual candidates have been won by those allied to the NFA.<sup>63</sup> One of the key tasks that the National Congress was charged with was to choose a new prime minister and form a new government. Ali Zeidan was elected by the congress on 14 October 2012 and asked to form a government. This followed the failure of Mustafa Abushagur to form a government following his narrow congressional election victory over Mahmoud Jibril for the post of Prime Minister in September 2012.

When compared to the situation before the uprising, these political developments combined suggest that significant changes have taken place and will likely continue in the coming years. In order to conduct these elections the NTC produced new electoral legislation establishing the number of seats in parliament (200), the voting system (parallel voting), the age to stand for election (21 years), the constituency to party list seats ratio (120:80) and eligibility.<sup>64</sup> It is not possible to conclude whether Libya will become a democratic state based solely on observations of these and other changes as discussed below, but we can observe that Libyan politics is already quite different to the extent that there is now public participation, political parties have been legalised and formed, free elections have taken place and increased civil rights have been established. A particularly indicative sign of progress in the political transition is the creation of a set of new laws, written by the NTC in collaboration with civil

62. Al-Jazeera, "Building Libya's New Media 'From a Void'", 12 May 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/05/2012512141942911357.html> (accessed 13 May 2012).

63. Middle East Online, "New Libya on Path to Become Civil State", 12 July 2012, <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=53357> (accessed 12 July 2012).

64. UN News Centre, "Libya: UN Welcomes Adoption of New Electoral Laws", 9 February 2012, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41185&Cr=libya&Cr1> (accessed 13 February 2012).



and governmental groups from around Libya, in order to conduct the local and national elections.

### Change in Libya's economic structures and processes

In addition to the political motivations of the 2011 uprising, historical economic processes that perpetuated poverty, underdevelopment and unemployment were also an important contributing factor. During the interviews conducted in Libya for this project, concerns over economic growth and development were often expressed, and this mirrors similar research done for other works.<sup>65</sup> A quantitative review of Libya's key economic indicators over the past four decades or so, coinciding with the Gadhafi regime's existence, demonstrates that while there has been significant economic growth in Libya's GDP poverty and unemployment levels have remained high. These have actually increased significantly in both absolute and relative terms in some areas. At the same time income disparity has also grown.<sup>66</sup> These facts give credit to the concerns expressed by ordinary citizens living in Libya regarding economic well-being.

As Libya tries to move forward in its transition the need to reduce poverty, create jobs, stabilise the economy and raise overall living standards will be some of the most significant and enduring obstacles to democratic change. These problems affect the concerns of ordinary people in Libya who are central to the eventual outcome of the current transition from one regime to another. As discussed above, the ability of citizens to meet their key economic demands, attain some measure of financial security and provide themselves with the economic resources to be politically mobile and engaged, are fundamental to democratisation.<sup>67</sup> Mahmud Jibril summarises the emerging leadership's awareness of the importance of the economy as '[...] being central to Libya's progress [...] there is a need to base our economy on knowledge industries and rely less on oil. This will allow us to move forward with political reforms in the future.'<sup>68</sup> At this moment it is not possible to come to concrete conclusions about the success of Libya's economy in meeting these key demands. It is possible, however, to explore some of the emerging economic relationships both within Libya and internationally as well as the policies coming out of the NTC and other political actors.

The economy was a major factor contributing to the eruption of the Libyan revolution in 2011. As with political institutions, there has long been a near-complete absence of economic institutions in Libya that adopted clear and effective economic strategies which focused on overall economic development and raising living standards at the national level.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, Libya under the Gadhafi regime suffered from the absence of any real private sector, particularly one founded on transparent legal controls that would create an environment of opportunities for individuals and groups to engage with competitive

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65. West, *Karama*; Noueihed and Warren, *The Battle for the Arab Spring*.

66. See: UNDP, *Libya – Country Profile* data; Arab League, Human Development Reports 2002-2009.

67. More than half of the 80 citizens interviewed in Libya highlighted economic concerns and the achievement of financial stability as primary interests.

68. Jibril, 24 December 2011.

69. Vandewalle, *Libya Since Independence*.

investments and other market mechanisms. Some observers have noted that over the period of Gadhafi's rule this led to significant deterioration in the country's economic capabilities.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, even though Libya had resolved many of its previous disputes with the international community by 2004, there have been few signs of the expected economic benefits. This situation seems to have contributed to increasing frustration among ordinary Libyans have been ever more disappointed by the country's low standards of living. Over half of those interviewed stated that they were concerned about their immediate economic future: '[t]he economy is not getting back to normal here, we have trouble getting what we need and my salary [is] lower than before' the revolution. This is especially important in the wake of the record inward financial flows resulting from high oil prices on international markets in recent years.<sup>71</sup> Instead, the majority of benefits from foreign investments in Libya and large-scale development projects were largely restricted to the narrow circle of beneficiaries who were close to Gadhafi and his inner circle.

The collapse of the Gadhafi regime constitutes an opportunity to rebuild the Libyan economy on a more open, internationally competitive and technology- and industry-driven basis consistent with the potential of the natural and human capital found in Libya. Furthermore, the current regime change and transition represent an opportunity to improve living conditions and quality of life for Libyans by achieving economic growth that would be more diverse and inclusive. The civil war that accompanied the revolution undoubtedly negatively affected the Libyan economy, which relies on the export of hydrocarbons.<sup>72</sup> These exports were significantly interrupted during the conflict and some infrastructure destroyed. Non-hydrocarbon economic activity was also damaged because of the partial destruction of the country's physical infrastructure, particularly the power grid and transport networks. In addition, the banking system was also damaged because of limitations on its ability to obtain foreign exchange, as well as the departure of foreign workers which in 2011 contributed to a decline in the GDP to 60 per cent of the 2010 total.<sup>73</sup>

In the coming phase of the post regime change era there are many things that the new government must do in order to overcome the structural economic problems that been inherited from the Gadhafi regime. As is the case with regards to political changes, rebuilding and reforming the economic system will not be easy. There are signs already that these changes are taking place with the NTC pursuing policies that encourage growth in the private sector, foreign investment, and the opening up of the economy to external competition and opportunities. The NTC has taken several steps to manage a peaceful transition and return the economy to stability and growth. One of the most important steps is the resumption of oil exports – which as discussed above are the key sources of revenue for the Libyan economy, accounting for more than 70 per cent of Libyan GDP in 2010, more than 95 per cent of its exports, and just under 90 per cent of the government's budget. Before the revolution began Libya was producing 1.77 million barrel per day, equivalent to 2 per cent of global

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70. Sawani, "Post-Qadhafi Libya", 4-9.

71. Ashy, "Libya: Economic Challenges After the Revolution", 3 October 2011, <http://arabic.carnegieendowment.org/publications/?fa=45663> (accessed 10 October 2011).

72. Yahia and Saleh, "Economic Sanctions, Oil Price Fluctuations and Employment", 1713-1719.

73. Ashy, *Libya: Economic Challenges*.



production.<sup>74</sup> Due to the revolution, production of crude oil sharply dropped to reach a low of only 22,000 barrels in all of June 2011.<sup>75</sup> Resuming the production of hydrocarbons and their export is the most important development in the economic changes after the announcement of the end of hostilities. Indeed, it is not only resumption of production to pre-revolution levels that is necessary, a rapid increase in production beyond these levels is also possible and will benefit reconstruction and the ultimate success of the transition period. Mahmoud Nakoa, the Libyan Ambassador to London, has confirmed that by early 2012 a return to pre-revolution oil production levels was not expected in the immediate future. Instead, it was believed that production could only reach 1.5 million barrels per day before the end of 2012. However, actual production by June 2012 exceeded this figure. Ambassador Nakoa<sup>76</sup> confirmed that production levels should exceed 2 million barrels per day by the end of 2012.

Another important step has been reforming the banking sector. The financial situation in Libya has deteriorated steadily during and after the civil war due to the central bank's inability to use its foreign assets which were frozen by the UNSC resolution 1970 on 17 March 2011. This led to problems including a scarcity of cash in Libya, a decline in the international value of the Libyan dinar, rising prices and limited supply of goods. The new Libyan government has implemented a range of policies to refresh the banking sector, especially after the release of frozen assets in late 2011.<sup>77</sup> These policies include increasing salaries in the public sector and the minimum wage in the private sector, providing liquidity in foreign currency to strengthen confidence in the value of the Libyan dinar, reducing customs tariffs, and improving the banking system which plays an essential role in the development of trade and investment.<sup>78</sup>

The third initiative taken by the new government is the allocation on 29 February 2012 of 68.5 billion Libyan dinars, or nearly \$52.5 billion, for the 2012 budget. This budget is the largest in the history of the country. According to Idris Sharif, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance,<sup>79</sup> the largest share of the budget will pay the salaries of state employees, which are estimated at \$20 billion. A further \$12 billion will be allocated to provide of food commodities, electricity and fuel on a national scale. The government will also distribute the remainder of the oil revenues, which are expected to finance key priorities set by the government, including building state, security and defence institutions as well as the judiciary. This initiative is helping to reinforce recovery in the power and communications sectors which have been steadily reconstructed since the end of hostilities in October 2011. The recovery of these sectors is essential to broader economic recovery in the Libyan economy which has not yet reached pre-revolution levels.<sup>80</sup>

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74. Al-Jazeera, "Libya's Fuel Sector Returns to Pre-War Levels", 9 April 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/video/africa/2012/04/201249205013922921.html> (accessed 10 April 2012).

75. IMF, *Libya After the Revolution*.

76. Mahmoud Nakoa, London, UK, 16 May 2012, personal interview (Libyan Ambassador to UK).

77. Al-Jazeera, "UN Lifts Libya Bank Sanctions", 17 December 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/12/2011121773014678103.html> (accessed 17 December 2011).

78. Nakoa, 2012.

79. Russia Today-Arabic, "Libya Declares its Budget for 2012 at More Than \$52 Billion", 29 February 2012, [http://arabic.rt.com/news\\_all\\_news/news/579735/](http://arabic.rt.com/news_all_news/news/579735/) (accessed 2 March 2012).

80. Information was gathered during an interview conducted in Tripoli, Libya on 16 May 2012. The interviewee was a leading political analyst but was not authorized to comment publicly and so wished to remain anonymous.

### Libya's changing International Relations

Since the revolution began there have been significant changes in Libya's relations with other states in the MENA region and with states farther afield, including key NATO members. These changes have been solidified further in the months since the end of the civil conflict and the change of regime. The Gadhafi regime had rather turbulent relations with other Arab League states for much of its time in power and had an even more troublesome relationship with the international community in general. Gadhafi further aligned his government to African states in the past decade and maintained a close relationship with Russia. However, the position of the African Union, individual African states and Moscow through the revolution, their historical ties to Gadhafi, and rapprochement by Arab and Western states, are leading to a significant realignment in Libya's international relations. It is still too early for this realignment to fully solidify, making it difficult to predict exactly how Libya will position itself in international relations in the coming years under a new regime. At the same time, Tripoli is largely pre-occupied with the internal transition taking place in Libya and the establishment of new domestic structures and processes. Libya is not in a position at the moment to develop concrete and ambitious foreign policies. However, the results of the post-regime change adjustments that have taken place suggest that Tripoli is moving towards embedding a closer relationship with the Arab League and the West in its foreign policy, while moving away from Africa and Russia.

By late February 2011 the international community had become involved in the revolution in Libya, with Arab League states condemning the Gadhafi regime's response to the protests and offering financial and other support to the revolutionaries. The UNSC passed resolution 1970 placing sanctions on Gadhafi and other key members of his regime in late February 2011 (less than two weeks after the protests began). A further UNSC resolution, 1973, established a no-fly-zone over Libya and called for other actions to protect civilians in Libya. An international coalition of states from Europe, North America and the MENA region enforced the no-fly-zone and assisted the rebels.<sup>81</sup> Moscow remained strongly opposed to these policies and actions throughout the revolution and lent its diplomatic support (and likely covert military support) to the Gadhafi regime.

Following regime change Libyan relations with other Arab states seem to have strengthened, with many of Arab states cooperating closely with and lending their support to the newly installed national leaders. In late 2011 the Jordanian government signed an agreement with the NTC to transfer, treat and rehabilitate Libyan citizens and fighters who were injured in the conflict. The NTC in turn agreed to pay the costs of medical services for its citizens. By summer 2012 approximately 50,000 Libyans had been treated in Jordanian hospitals and medical centres.<sup>82</sup> Whilst this arrangement may have been profitable for the Jordanian health and hospitality sectors, we should also note that the Jordanian government has allowed Tripoli to make payments in respect of care at a relaxed pace, suggesting a measure of good-

81. BBC News, "Libya: NATO to Take Command of No-Fly Zone", 25 March 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12856665> (accessed on 21 April 2011).

82. Malkawi, "Libya Pays JD40m to Kingdom's Hotels", 12 July 2012, <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=53357> (accessed 12 July 2012).



will between the governments. At the same time, the UAE has also lent its support in organising the parliamentary elections, over-seeing the production of election materials including ballot papers. When a supply of materials were destroyed in Benghazi in late June Dubai immediately set about replacing them, managing to deliver the new stock to Libya in time for the election.

Libyan engagement in international forums and institutions like the World Economic Forum,<sup>83</sup> has also increased in the post-regime change period. According to Ambassador Nako, Tripoli will not seek to meddle in the affairs of other states (something which Gadhafi often did) but will instead seek to support other democratic revolutionary movements in the Arab world and support stability according to Libya's abilities (which he described as being more limited than Gadhafi assumed).<sup>84</sup> This seems to have been the case so far with regards to Libya's involvement in the Arab League, where Tripoli has been a strong supporter of moves by the organisation to pressure the Assad regime in Damascus and encourage international support for peaceful democratisation there. Overall, these changes in Libyan policy have served to encourage international cooperation and support for the democratic transition taking place while removing external military and intrusive diplomatic involvement.

### Conclusions

This study has raised questions about the nature of the post-conflict transition in Libya and what this means for the potential for democratisation there by surveying changes Libya's internal security, political system and economy and its relations with external actors. By analysing primary data collected during field work in Libya it has been possible to analyse key changes. The interviews conducted with leading decision makers as well as ordinary citizens in Libya have allowed us to contribute to existing analyses of the nature of change in Libya.<sup>85</sup> While previous studies have offered valid discussions of some areas of change in Libya since the revolution began, few offer a discussion of how political, economic, security and foreign relations impact each other. This study demonstrates the importance of analysing change as part of a complex systemic transformation.

Ultimately, we find that there have been significant (and positive) changes in Libya's political system with the emergence of party politics, the holding of transparent elections, the institutionalising of civil rights and freedom of speech, increased governmental accountability, and the embedding of a culture of political participation. We also find that there have been positive changes in Libya's foreign relations with increased rapprochement with key actors in the Middle East and North Africa (including key regional states and the Arab League as a whole) and further afield (in particular with the EU and the UN). These changes suggest that progress towards democracy is underway.

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83. World Economic Forum, "NTC Chairman Jibril Outlines Libyan Challenges", 22 October 2011, <http://www.weforum.org/news/ntc-chairman-jibril-outlines-libyan-challenges-world-economic-forum-special-meeting> (accessed 22 October 2011).

84. Nako, 2012.

85. Including in Haddad et al., *The Dawn of the Arab Uprisings*, 139-161; Dabashi, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*, 203-218.





At the same time, however, we also find that positive change in the security and economic sectors is proceeding far more slowly. The economy is recovering faster than many observers expected (which will certainly help in promoting stability, reconstruction and ultimately reconciliation) with GDP growth and greater investment in poverty reduction and social welfare, and normalisation in the security sector is returning for parts of the country. However, there is still much to be done in these sectors. Libya's economy as a whole was underdeveloped prior to the revolution and the conflict in 2011 severely damaged it. Achieving higher levels of income, reducing poverty and stabilising the financial sector will take many more years. It will also take several more years to achieve stability in the security sector. Efforts to demobilise the remaining armed militias and centralise control of security forces has stalled. The lack of central governance of security forces has led to power vacuums and the inability of the government to fully provide security, even in key cities like Tripoli and Benghazi. These factors will serve to slow democratisation in Libya but not halt or reverse it.



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