

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Libya

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>-7</td> <td>-7</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>7</td> <td>7</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>59</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	-7	-7	0	Democ:	0	0	0	Autoc:	7	7	0	Durable:		59		Tentative:		No		
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Durable:		59																							
Tentative:		No																							
SCODE	LIB	CCODE	620	Date of Report	1 November 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
1	0	0	1	4	1																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date			Begin Date																						
			24 December 1951 (Ind.)																						
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution																									
1977																									
Executive(s)																									
Interim Prime Minister Abdel Rahim al-Keab, elected by the 52-member, self-selected National Transitional Council, assumed office 31 October 2011																									
Legislature																									
Unknown: The Transitional National Council is the internationally-recognized governing authority in Libya since the defeat of the Gadhafi regime																									
Judiciary																									
Unknown																									

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Self-Selection (4)

For 42 years, Libya was a military dictatorship dominated by a personalistic leader, Colonel Mu'ammar Al-Gadhafi, the self-proclaimed Brotherly Leader and Guide of the Revolution. Capt. Gadhafi originally came to power as the leader of the Free Officers Movement which successfully and bloodlessly overthrew the government of King Idris I on 1 September 1969. The Free Officers Movement set up a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and a civilian administration to govern the country; political parties continued to be prohibited under the new government. An attempt by the Ministers of Defense and the Interior to take control of the RCC in December 1969 was thwarted and (now) Col. Gadhafi named himself prime minister on 16 January 1970. Gadhafi instituted his own peculiar brand of Arab socialism and "direct democracy" in Libya which was designed as a form of permanent revolution to keep anyone from remaining in a position of authority or leadership for long enough to establish independent bases of support and loyalty that could challenge Gadhafi's supremacy and undermine his personalistic regime. Rejecting all "imported

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

ideologies,” Gadhafi initially established a political system in Libya based on his personal interpretation of Arab nationalism, Islam and “home grown” socialism; these beliefs, which are outlined in Qadhafi’s *Green Book*, rejected electoral politics and conventional political parties and served as the unofficial constitution of Libya.

Note: Small-scale protest began in Libya in January 2011, encouraged by anti-regime protests in neighboring Tunisia and Egypt. By mid-February 2011, large, popular demonstrations centered in Libya’s second largest city, Benghazi, on the eastern coast directly challenged Gadhafi’s rule and on 19 February 2011 a division of forces in Libya had coalesced and violent clashes replaced protest as the main form of contention. A Transitional National Council (TNC) was set up by rebels in Benghazi on 27 February 2011. By early March 2011, government forces had mounted a concerted assault on rebel strongholds and a civil war had begun. On 17 March 2011, the UN Security Council passed a resolution authorizing the use of force to protect civilian populations and NATO declared a “no fly zone” over Libya. Attacks by NATO warplanes systematically decimated the government’s military capabilities, allowing rebel forces to withstand loyalist assaults and advance westward toward the capital, Tripoli. By 1 August 2011, the authority of the Gadhafi regime had effectively collapsed. Rebel forces established control of Tripoli by 26 August 2011 and moved against the last remaining Gadhafi-loyalist strongholds. Gadhafi’s last stand came in Sirte; his convoy was attacked by NATO warplanes while he was attempting to flee Sirte and he was captured by rebel forces and killed on 20 October 2011. An expatriate, Abdel Rahim al-Keeb, was elected prime minister by the TNC and tasked with forming a new, interim government; he assumed office on 31 October 2011.

Executive Constraints: Unlimited Authority (1)

As laid out in the 1969 Constitutional Proclamation and the 1977 Declaration on the Establishment of the Authority of the People, Libya is ruled by its citizenry through a series of popular congresses. According to these official documents, Libya is a country that is governed by popular will through a network of local, regional and national congresses that seek to establish an egalitarian, Islamic-based state. Despite the rhetoric of popular participation in Libya, in practice, Qadhafi and his inner circle tightly control political power. Qadhafi appoints military officers and official functionaries down to the local level based on their personal loyalty to him and his regime. Instead of serving as institutional mechanism for the voicing of popular desires and grievances, the congress system in Libya simply serves to consolidate Qadhafi’s rule and is used by his regime to exercise government control over most aspects of citizens’ lives. Additionally, the judiciary has demonstrated little autonomy from the *de facto* executive and does not serve as an effective check on his authority.

Political Participation: Repressed Competition (1)

While the constitution provides for citizen rule, in practice Qadhafi coordinates with the Revolutionary Committee and Comrades Organization to dominate virtually all aspects Libyan politics and society. All opposition political parties are banned and Qadhafi’s political party, the Arab Social Union, is the only legal political organization in the country. The rule of law is weak in Libya as citizens do not have a right to a fair trial and human rights abuses perpetrated by the government continue to go unpunished. Despite recent overtures of political liberalization, Qadhafi’s regime continues to restrict political activity and censor voices critical of the government. Anyone who calls for the establishment of any grouping, organization or association proscribed by law can be executed. In addition to restricting the political activities of advocates of democracy, since the early 1980s Qadhafi has also cracked down on Islamic fundamentalists. Taking a cue from the experiences of Algeria and Egypt, Qadhafi fears a politicized mosque, which he believes may serve as a potential rallying point for opponents of the regime.

A growing division between reformist and conservative blocs within the ruling elite became increasingly noticeable in 2010. The power struggle between these two factions is a result of the aging of the “Great Leader” and the desire of each faction to show their relative strength prior to his departure from the political scene. Surprisingly, these divisions are reflected within the Qadhafi family itself. Three of Qadhafi’s seven sons are suggested to have political ambitions. Sair al-Islam Qadhafi is viewed as the “reformist” son. While he has played an active and public role in opening Libya up to Western governments and foreign investors in recent years, his attempts to reform the internal political structures of Libyan society have faced considerable resistance and have largely failed. One of his reform efforts, which would have given Libya its first constitution and parliament, failed due to conservative opposition in 2008.

Sair al-Islam's brother, Mutassim, is viewed as a conservative with strong ties to the armed forces and has opposed the liberal reforms proposed by his more public sibling. The youngest of the three brothers, Khamis, is in charge of an influential army brigade and has sought to alternately balance support for each of his brothers although he is widely seen as being closer to the conservative faction and as having his own political ambitions. In 2010 the conservative faction arrested 19 journalists and media executives affiliated to a firm owned by the reformist Sair al-Islam. The conservatives argued that the media outlet was both seditious and libelous to the government and its leader. Muammar Qadhafi did not see it this way and sided with his reformist son by ordering the detained journalists to be released. Also, the ascendancy of the reformist agenda was seen in March 2010 when the Libyan government freed more than 200 Islamist inmates as part of its effort to "rehabilitate" militant groups within society. This initiative was spearheaded by Saif al-Islam Qadhafi, whose Qadhafi Foundation, has actively sought to engage Islamists in the political process. In recent years the rehabilitation program has led to release of over 700 Islamists from Libyan jails (a reported 400 are still under detention).