

Mediation between the opposing forces was attempted by the nations of the African Union and by the government of Turkey, but the rebels, supported as they were by the British and French governments, brushed aside mediation and went on to defeat and kill Gaddafi.

The regime established by the rebels has had difficulty in bringing the various militias that took part in the insurgency under control, but something like a stable government has now emerged. Unfortunately the way that Gaddafi was overthrown and subjected to a humiliating death meant that the Assad regime in Syria was hardened in its determination to suppress its opponents ruthlessly, resulting in the civil war that has devastated the country and destabilised the entire Middle East.

Read More:

[Crawford, Alex](#) (2012). *Colonel Gaddafi's Hat*. London: Collins. ISBN 978-0-00-746730-3.

Hilsum, Lindsey (2012). *Sandstorm: Libya in the Time of Revolution*. London: [Faber and Faber](#).

Morayef, Heba (2009). *Truth and Justice Can't Wait – Human Rights Developments in Libya Amid Institutional Obstacles*. New York :[Human Rights Watch](#). ISBN 978-1-56432-563-1.

Pack, Jason, ed. *The 2011 Libyan Uprisings and the Struggle for the Post-Qadhafi Future* (Palgrave Macmillan; 2013) 254 pages; scholarly essays on the roles of economics, outside actors, Islamists, and tribes in the rebellions.



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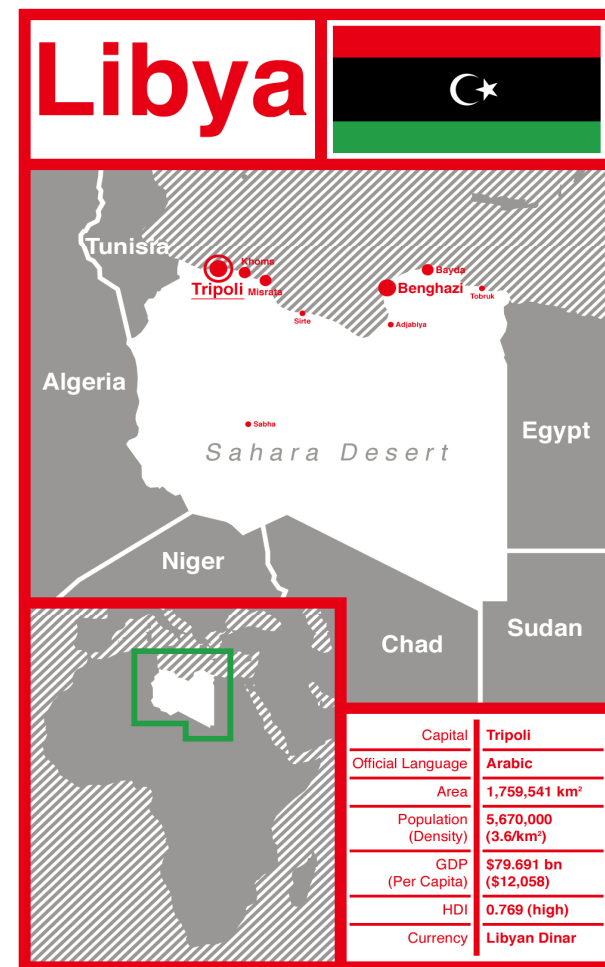
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With a population of 5.7 million Libya is the third largest territory in the African continent. The fact that under the regime of Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi Libya has been a significant player in the politics of North Africa and the Middle East derives from the wealth acquired from its reserves of oil and natural gas supporting the flamboyant political enterprise of Gaddafi himself.

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Modern History

In 1911 Italy invaded what were then poor provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and established a colonial government which lasted until the Second World War, when the British defeated the Italian and German forces there, and established a British protectorate. The French occupied the southern province of Fezzan. After the war the British protectorate ended and an independent United Kingdom of Libya was inaugurated, with Idris-as-Senussi installed as king.

In 1955 oil exploration began, and its exploitation brought unprecedented wealth to the nation. The wealth was not, however, well directed, and much of it served only to enrich the king and his immediate associates. This was a period when the Arab world was vigorously asserting itself, with Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalising the Suez Canal, and successfully thwarting the efforts of the British, the French and the Israelis to stop him. His achievement seemed to give reality to the idea of a great Arab nation, challenging the dominance of the Americans, the Russians and the Europeans in the second half of the twentieth century. It was an atmosphere in which the Libyan monarchy appeared a parasitic anachronism, and when in 1969 a group of young army officers deposed Idris, there was no effective resistance.

Gaddafi

The new government saw itself as socialist and revolutionary. Its leader, Colonel Gaddafi, nationalised the oil industry, closed US and other foreign bases, and proclaimed his support for a wide range of organisations throughout the world which were subverting imperialist regimes. This naturally included the Palestine Liberation Organisation, but extended to the Provisional Irish Republican Army, at war with Britain. Relations with the US were hostile. There was constant friction over the claim of Libya to the Gulf of Sidra as Libyan territorial waters. In 1986 there was evidence that the bombing of a Berlin night-club popular with Americans was organised from the Libyan embassy. In retaliation American bombers attacked Tripoli, and apparently tried to kill Gaddafi himself. Hostility reached a climax after 1988 when the US attributed the destruction of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie in Scotland, with the loss of 270 lives, to Libyan agents.

Responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing remains obscure. Initially it had the appearance of Iranian-inspired retaliation for the destruction of an Iranian air-liner by a US warship over the Persian Gulf, with the loss of 290 lives. There was evidence of involvement by the Shia Muslim militant group in Lebanon Hezbollah, but action in that direction could have endangered British hostages held in Lebanon at the time. Libya was a safer target,

and the Libyan government was urged to surrender two Libyan suspects for trial. The Libyans refused, and in 1992 the UN Security Council imposed severe sanctions on Libya. The sanctions had a considerable impact, and in 2003 the government yielded to UN demands, accepting responsibility for the bombing, paying compensation to the victims, and allowing two of the suspects to stand trial before a Scottish court, with proceedings on neutral territory, the Netherlands. One suspect was acquitted, but Abdelmasset al-Megrahi was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. There have been allegations of crucial evidence being withheld, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the conviction was unsafe. An appeal lodged by Megrahi might have thrown light on the issues, but his early release on grounds of ill-health prevented this.

Arab Spring

Early in 2011 a wave of popular uprisings against the authorities in Tunisia and Egypt spread to other Arab countries, and in Libya a revolt against Gaddafi's government was based in Cyrenaica in the east of the country. In the west, around Tripoli, the authorities retained control, and Gaddafi's forces moved against the rebels, and threatened their capital, Benghazi, with dire punishment. The UN Security Council authorised air strikes against government forces, which served to protect the rebels. p.t.o...