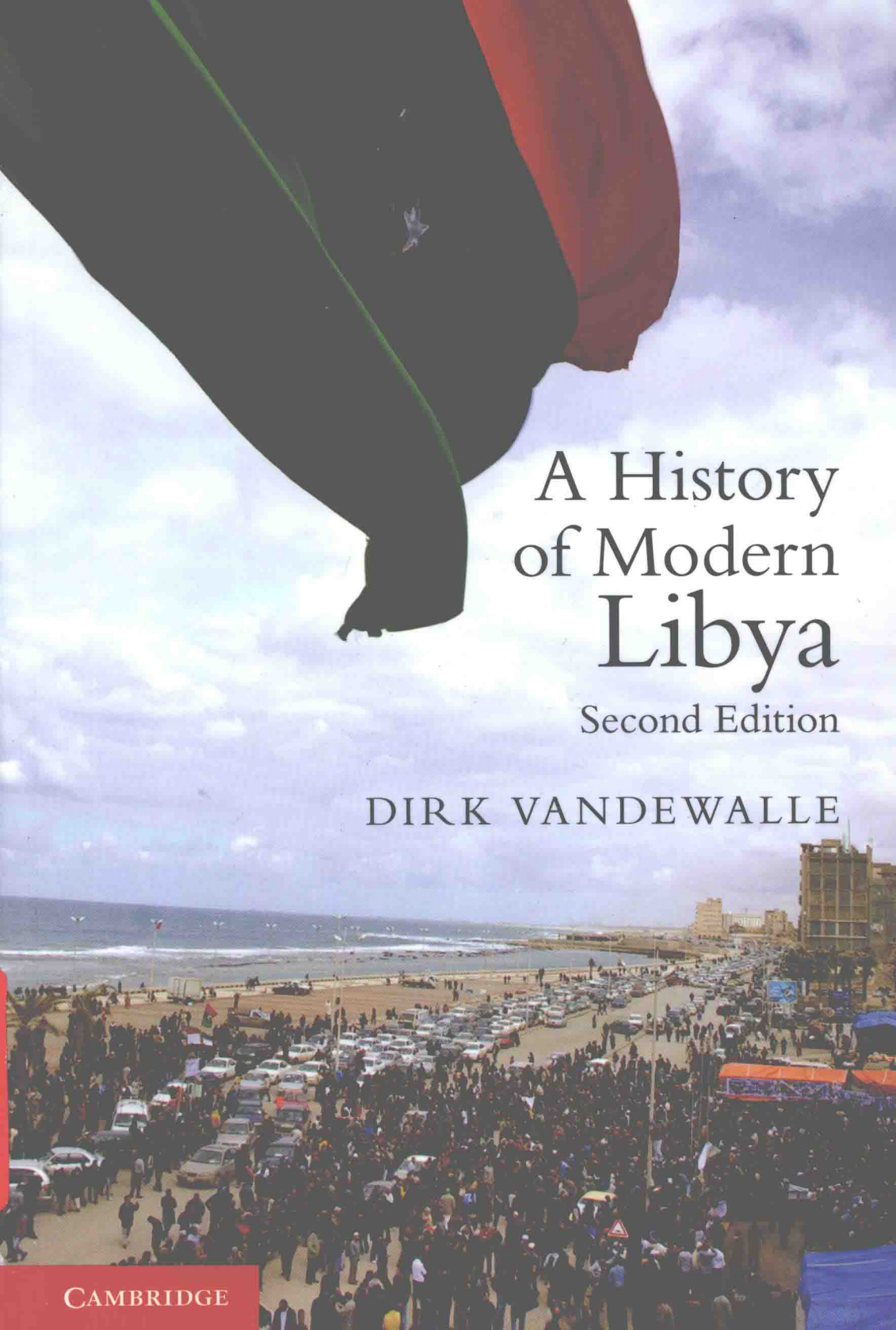

A History of Modern Libya

Second Edition

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A HISTORY OF MODERN LIBYA

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A HISTORY OF MODERN LIBYA

Second Edition

Dirk Vandewalle is one of only a handful of scholars who have made frequent visits to Libya over the last four decades. His formidable knowledge of the region is encapsulated in his history of Libya, which was first published in 2006. The book – based on original research and interviews with Libya's political elite – traces Libya's history back to the 1900s with a portrait of Libya's desert terrain, its peoples, and the personalities that shaped its development. It then examines the harrowing years of the Italian occupation in the early twentieth century, through the Sanusi monarchy and, thereafter, to the revolution of 1969 and the accession of Qadhafi. The chapters that follow analyze the economics and politics of Qadhafi's revolution, offering insights into the man and his ideology as reflected in his *Green Book*. In the wake of the civil war and Qadhafi's demise, the time is ripe for an updated edition of the history, which covers the years from 2005 to the present. These were the years when Libya finally came in from the cold after years of political and economic isolation. The agreement to give up the weapons of mass destruction program paved the way for improved relations with the West. By this time, however, Qadhafi had lost the support of his people and, despite attempts to liberalize the economy, real structural reform proved impossible. This, as Vandewalle contends in the preface to this new edition, coupled with tribal rivalries, regional divisions, and a general lack of unity, paved the way for revolution and civil war. In an epilogue, the author reflects on Qadhafi's premiership, *The Green Book*'s stateless society, and the legacy that Qadhafi leaves behind.

Dirk Vandewalle is Associate Professor of Government at Dartmouth College. He is the author of *Libya Since Independence: Oil and State-Building* (1998) and editor of *North Africa: Development and Reform in a Changing Global Economy* (1996) and *Qadhafi's Libya: 1969–1994* (1995).

Preface to the Second Edition

The uprising against the government of Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi that started in eastern Libya in February 2011 questioned many of the assumptions even seasoned observers of the country had made about the regime and about its durability. To many, the carapace of security organizations and other measures to protect the regime had long seemed unassailable. Yet, slightly over six months later, on the 1 September 2011 anniversary of Qadhafi's revolution, the Libyan leader was in hiding, and an international conference in Paris announced measures to provide international support to the Libyan opposition to help rebuild Libya. Seven weeks later, on 20 October, Qadhafi was dead. The willingness, by a population that had for more than four decades been cowered by the diktats of Qadhafi's revolution, to stand up for its rights seemed almost beyond belief. The surprise was even greater in light of internal developments in Libya since December 2003 when the government had agreed to hand over its weapons of mass destruction to the West and had embarked on a period of economic liberalization and reintegration into the international community that had seemingly provided a safety valve for the regime.

In the first edition of this book I covered developments in Libya roughly through 2005. In the conclusion to the final chapter I wrote about the challenges Libya would face as it moved toward becoming part of the international community once more. The assumption that underpinned much of the chapter's analysis was that Libya would somehow muddle through under Qadhafi, sustained by its oil revenues – but that serious economic reform would also entail political reform, something the regime was unlikely to allow (despite the entreaties of Saif al-Islam al-Qadhafi, the Libyan leader's son).

In retrospect, it is clear that none of Libya's essential political problems were seriously addressed between 2003 and the eruption of popular anger in 2011. This at least had come as no surprise. As I argued in the first edition, Qadhafi's self-styled revolution had become a self-reverential and

self-centered political experiment that would only change upon the death or the replacement of its creator. Most observers and most Libyans therefore had resigned themselves to a prolonged period of muddling through, aided by oil revenues that had once more dramatically increased by 2011. The uprising, therefore, marked a clear, surprising break with politics – or lack thereof – as usual in Libya.

When my editor, Marigold Acland, approached me to consider a second edition of *A Modern History of Libya*, her request afforded me the chance to not only bring the earlier volume up to date, but also to reflect in the Epilogue on what I see as the larger theme of political and economic development in an exceptionally rich oil exporter whose ruler has squandered much of that wealth in pursuit of a number of visions that to most Western observers looked quixotic, if not incomprehensible. The major question, as this book goes to press, is whether Libya's current and future rulers, now facing the enormous tasks of state and nation building, will do better.

The Libya that I visited prior to 2003 and the Libya that had emerged by the spring of 2011 – the period covered in the final chapter of this edition – was, at least at the surface, very different. The agreement on WMDs, the settlement of the Lockerbie claims, the reestablishment of more open trade relations with the rest of the world, and the renewal of diplomatic relations with the United States all contributed in various ways to help change the physical appearance of the country. Long an economic backwater as a result of the economic and diplomatic sanctions by the international community, the return of international oil companies and the renewed influx of oil money created virtually overnight a building boom the like of which Libya had never experienced in its history. For a short while, aided by the assurances by Saif al-Islam al-Qadhafi that Libya had turned a corner, it seemed as if the country would finally embark on a path of development relatively untainted by Qadhafi's earlier ideological preoccupations. When Libya reestablished diplomatic relations with the United States and then became its favored partner in the fight against Islamic radicalism in the region, the country's newfound direction seemed confirmed.

In the concluding chapter of the first edition I had remarked that "inexorably, the combination of economic necessity, generational turnover, and reintegration into the global economy will continue to change Libya's political and economic life." When I wrote those words in 2006, many close observers were cautiously optimistic about the country's future. There were, however, some warning signs that little had structurally changed in how the country was being governed. The events I describe in the final chapter of this second edition, particularly the cult of personality

and the propaganda campaign to burnish Qadhafi's international image after 2005 – eagerly underwritten by a bevy of Western intellectuals and public figures – should have made us more aware of some of the immutable aspects of Libyan politics.

The uprising against the regime came at a point when Libya's fortunes looked somewhat promising. The regime seemed firmly entrenched once more, with ample oil revenues capable of lubricating the regime's extensive patronage mechanisms. As the battles along the *litoranea* in spring and early summer 2011 became stalemated, however, the vicious fighting by both Qadhafi's supporters and the rebels starkly exposed some of the old faultlines the regime's policies since 1969 has obscured but never obliterated: the lingering suspicion between the tribes, between the provinces, among Libyans generally, and the more general lack of national identity. Above all, as the country descended into a war of attrition, there were hints of the chaos to come – the result of first the monarchy's and then Qadhafi's unwillingness to create this sense of identity that could have transcended the primoridal divisions within a country that was formed willy-nilly and *ex nihilo* six decades ago.

History has never been kind to modern Libya, and it will no doubt be equally unkind in the few months and years ahead. The civil war was only a harbinger of the equally daunting difficulties that lie ahead in whatever configuration post-conflict Libya emerges. Hopefully, as the reconstruction – or, perhaps more accurately, the construction, for the first time – of Libya as a political community with a truly national identity takes place, the sad shadows of the country's past can be erased. However, as I point out in the Epilogue to this book, the dual challenges of state and nation building will undoubtedly prove arduous in light of the tortuous political path the country has stumbled along since its independence.

London,
28 October 2011

Preface to the First Edition

This book is the result of almost three decades of observing and writing about Libya. In the process, countless individuals in a number of countries have talked to me and corresponded with me about Libya. Many of them I have acknowledged earlier in my *Libya Since Independence*. Since then, however, I have incurred additional debts to a number of others who kindly provided additional help and insights since the late 1990s. In no particular order, they include Dr. Saleh Ibrahim and Milad Saad Milad at the Academy of Higher Education in Tripoli; Ms. Salma al-Gaeer of the Academy of Higher Education and the Green Book Center; Youssef Sawani of the Green Book Center; Zahi Mogherbi of Gar Yunis University; Muhammad Siala, Secretary for International Cooperation; Mehdi Emberish, Secretary of Culture; Ahmed Jalala of the Academy of Graduate Studies; Engineer Jadalla al-Talhi, former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Jamahiriyya; Abu Zayed Dorda, former Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy; Saif al-Islam al-Qadhafi; Salem al-Maiar and Tony Allan of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London; Ethan Chorin of the United States Liaison Office in Tripoli; Tarik Yousef of Georgetown University; David Mack at the Middle East Institute in Washington; Moncef Djaziri at the University of Geneva; and Saad al-Ghariani of the Academy of Higher Education in Tripoli.

A very special thanks to Rosemary Hollis of the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London. My gratitude as well to Robert Springborg and Arnold Luethold, who organized two conferences at, respectively, the London Middle East Centre (at the School of Oriental and African Studies) and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. Last but not least, my gratitude to Mustafa Ben Halim, Prime Minister of Libya during the monarchy, who agreed to meet in London in order to shed light on the tumultuous developments that took place during his tenure in office. A sabbatical leave from Dartmouth College allowed me to finish the manuscript. Marigold Acland and two anonymous readers for Cambridge

University Press provided insightful and thoughtful comments as the manuscript progressed.

Transliterations from the Arabic in this book use the classical Arabic spelling except where any attempt to do so would render names unintelligible to some readers – hence Tripoli rather than Tarabulus. For the transliteration of place names I have relied on *Gazetteer No. 41 – Libya* (June 1958) published by the United States Board on Geographic Names. The *ta marbuta*, however, when not in construct state, is rendered a and not ah as in the *Gazetteer*: Zuwara rather than Zuwarah. Arabic words familiar to a western audience – such as *ulama* and *sharia* – are written without diacritical marks. Unless in quotations from original sources – that, for example, render Jaghbub as Giarbub or Giarabub in official Italian documents – I have chosen to adopt the spelling used by the *Gazetteer*, with the caveat noted above.

The General People's Congress and Committee system (Libya's equivalent of a parliament and a cabinet) used a complex and confusing set of designations for its institutions and for those who represent it. The Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Affairs is simply "the Foreign Minister" or "the Secretary of Foreign Affairs" in this book. The General Secretariat of the People's Bureau for Planning is simply "the Ministry of Planning."

A final note on sources: the literature on Libya is by now enormous, and of widely varying quality. In order to provide some guidance, and to keep the text manageable and accessible, readers will find in the bibliography and in the endnotes to each chapter references to some of what are, in my estimation, the most important works on Libya's modern history. Most, except for references to newspaper articles and Libyan documents, and excluding a handful of French sources, are in English. A more exhaustive bibliography, as well as references to additional Arabic sources, can be found in my *Libya Since Independence* and in specialized bibliographies of Libya. Just before going to press, the Centre for Libyan Studies in Oxford graciously provided me with the first three (of a projected eight) volumes of *Libya Between the Past and the Present* (in Arabic) by Dr. Muhammad Mugharyif [Mohamed Yousef Al-Magariaf]. They provide an extremely valuable overview of Libyan history, and include a collection of historical documents as well as previously unavailable pictures – some of which were provided, courtesy of the Centre for Libyan Studies, for this book. My sincere thanks to Youssef El-Megreisi for making them available.

A special thanks to Ian Martin who asked me to serve as his political advisor at the United Nations during its pre-assessment phase for Libyan

post-conflict planning in Summer 2011. Finally, as a result of Libya's civil war, several people mentioned in this Preface have either been killed or have left the country. This second edition is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Salma al-Gaeer, a close and longtime friend, who unfortunately did not survive her country's civil war.

Chronology, 1900–2011

THE OTTOMAN AND ITALIAN PERIOD

1517	The Ottoman Empire occupies Cyrenaica.
1551	The Ottoman Empire occupies Tripoli.
1711	Ahmed Bey Qaramanli, the Ottoman governor of Tripoli, establishes the Qaramanli dynasty.
1803	The *Philiadelphia*, a United States frigate, is captured off Tripoli harbor.
1835	End of the Qaramanli dynasty; the Ottoman Empire re-occupies Tripolitania, Fazzan, and Cyrenaica during three campaigns of conquest.
1843	Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab al-Sanusi, founder of the Sanusiyya, establishes his headquarters in Cyrenaica.
1843	The Ottomans occupy Ghadames.
1855	The Sanusiyya moves its headquarters to Jaghbub.
1859	Muhammad al-Sanusi dies in Jaghbub.
1890	Anglo-French convention delineates British and Ottoman spheres of influence in North Africa.
1895	The Sanusiyya moves its headquarters to Kufra.
1902	Ahmad al-Shariff al-Sanusi becomes head of the Sanusiyya.
1908	The Young Turk revolt takes place in Constantinople, briefly raising hopes for political independence in Tripolitania.
1910	A French–Ottoman agreement settles the borders between Tripolitania, Algeria, and Tunisia.
26 September 1911	Italy sends the Ottoman sultan an ultimatum, announcing its intent to occupy Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.

5 November 1911	Italy announces the annexation of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica and does so formally on 25 February 1912.
October 1912	The Ottoman Empire and Italy sign an ambiguous agreement at Ouchy, Italy, claiming sovereignty while Constantinople refuses to renounce its claim.
1912	Ahmad al-Shariff assumes the leadership of resistance against the Italians in Cyrenaica.
March 1913	Sulayman Al-Baruni, a Berber leader from Tripolitania, and his followers, are defeated at the Battle of Asabaa by the Italians. Al-Baruni flees to Turkey.
1913	Italian forces attempt the occupation of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fazzan, but make little initial headway.
1915	The Italians suffer a defeat at the hand of Ramadan al-Suwayhli of Misrata, at the battle of Qasr Bu Hadi.
1915	Sulayman Al-Baruni returns from Istanbul to Libya as governor of Tripolitania.
1915	Ramadan al-Suwayhli and his followers form an independent republic at Misrata.
April 1917	Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi, now head of the Sanusiyya, signs the Akrama Agreement with Italy, which placed virtually all of Cyrenaica under Sanusi control.
18 October 1918	Italian–Turkish peace treaty gives Italy nominal control over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.
October 1918	The defeated Ottoman Empire formally signs the Armistice agreements.
November 1918	Al-Baruni and Suwayhli formally declare Tripolitania independent, resulting in the creation of the Tripolitanian Republic.
1 June 1919	Italy recognizes, and issues statutes for, the Tripolitanian Republic.
October 1919	Separate statutes known as the Legge Fondamentale, for Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, accepted by Italy; each province to have its own parliament and local councils.
August 1920	Ramadan al-Suwayhli is killed in a battle with rival tribesmen who object to the Tripolitanian Republic.

October 1920	The al-Rajma Agreement between the Italians and the Sanusiyya confirms Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi as Amir of Cyrenaica.
November 1920	At the Gharyan conference Tripolitanian leaders attempt to forge a common agenda to press their demands vis-à-vis Italy.
28 July 1922	Representatives from the Gharyan conference offer the Amirate of Tripolitania to Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi.
October 1922	Benito Mussolini comes to power in Italy.
November 1922	Sayyid Idris accepts the Amirate of Tripolitania, and is now the recognized Amir of both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania.
December 1922	Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi leaves Cyrenaica for exile in Cairo where he will remain until after World War II.
1923	Umar al-Mukhtar organizes the resistance to the Italians in Cyrenaica after Sayyid Idris's exile to Cairo.
11 September 1931	Umar al-Mukhtar is captured by the Italians.
16 September 1931	Umar al-Mukhtar is executed.
June 1934	The Libyan–Sudan border is agreed upon between Great Britain and Italy.
March 1937	Mussolini visits Libya to inaugurate the Litoranea Libica and to have himself proclaimed Protector of Islam.
1938	Italy embarks upon grand-scale agricultural settlements in Libya.
August 1940	During a meeting in Cairo with Libyan exiles, Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi is authorized to negotiate with the British after the war for independence.
October–December 1942	Second battle of al-Alamein. As a result of the battles in Cyrenaica and western Egypt, the Italian settlers leave Cyrenaica and the Italians withdraw from Libya.
1943	The Allies' expulsion of Germany and Italy from North Africa leads to the creation of a British Military Administration in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, and of a French Military Administration in Fazzan.

LIBYA IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II

15 February 1947	Italy formally relinquishes its sovereignty over Libya.
6 March 1948	The Four Power Commission of Investigation arrives in Libya and finishes its work on 20 May.
15 September 1948	The United Nations General Assembly takes up the matter of Libyan independence.
10 May 1949	France and Great Britain publish the Bevin-Sforza plan, proposing ten-year trusteeships for the Libyan provinces. A resolution in support of the plan is defeated in the UN General Assembly.
June 1949	Cyrenaica creates an independent administration. Tripolitania, under British administration, creates municipal councils. Fazzan remains governed under French Military Administration.
21 November 1949	The United Nations General Assembly passes a resolution creating an "independent and sovereign state" of Libya, assigning to a future National Assembly the task of creating a provisional government of Libya.
25 November 1949	Libya's National Assembly, consisting of sixty selected members chosen equally from the three provinces – Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fazzan – meets in Tripoli for the first time in order to prepare the country's constitution. It declares that Libya will be a federal state.
10 December 1949	The United Nations appoints Adrian Pelt as the UN Commissioner in Libya.
2 December 1950	Libya's National Assembly decides to create as soon as possible a United Kingdom of Libya and offers Idris al-Sanusi the throne.
4 December 1950	The National Assembly creates a Committee of the Constitution to prepare a draft constitution.
March 1951	Provincial governments are created in Tripolitania and Fazzan.
29 March 1951	Libya's National Assembly creates a provisional government.
10 September 1951	Discussions begin in the National Assembly on a draft constitution.

7 October 1951	Libya's Constitution is promulgated by the National Assembly.

THE LIBYAN MONARCHY

24 December 1951	The United Kingdom of Libya proclaims its independence and is headed by King Idris al-Sanusi.
19 February 1952	Libya holds its first general election. Political parties are banned in its aftermath.
25 March 1952	Libya's Parliament meets for the first time.
12 February 1953	Libya joins the Arab League.
26 July 1953	Libya signs a twenty-year military agreement with Great Britain.
9 September 1954	Libya signs a military agreement with the United States.
5 October 1955	Assassination of Ibrahim al-Shalhi, Councilor to King Idris, by Al-Shariff Bin al-Sayyid Muhi al-Din al-Sanusi, grandson of Sayyid Ahmad al-Shariff and cousin of King Idris.
1955	Libyan Petroleum Law comes into effect, also creating the country's Petroleum Commission.
24 May 1957	Mustafa Bin Halim resigns as Prime Minister.
1961	Amendments are added to the 1955 Libyan Petroleum Law.
25 October 1961	Libya's first oil shipment leaves from Marsa al-Burayqa [Brega].
1962	Libya joins the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).
January 1963	Re-establishment of Sanusi zuwaya (religious lodges).
April 1963	The federal arrangement is abandoned in favor of a unitary state.
May 1963	Libya launches its first five-year plan for economic and social development. Creation of a Ministry of Planning.
1963	First development plan from 1963 to 1968.
1965	Second set of amendments added to the 1955 Libyan Petroleum Law, followed by the creation of the Libyan National Oil Company.
April 1968	Creation of the Libyan Petroleum Company (LIPETCO).

July 1968	Libya announces that it will no longer award concession agreements, and that all future agreements will be awarded under joint ventures with LIPETCO.

THE QADHAFI PERIOD

1 September 1969	A military coup, headed by Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi, overthrows the monarchy.
29 October 1969	The Libyan government demands the withdrawal of all British troops and the liquidation of its military bases.
14 November 1969	The first foreign banks and hospitals in Libya are nationalized.
28 November 1969	First major speech by Qadhafi on why representative democracy is unsuited to Libya.
11 December 1969	Proclamation of the new Provisional Constitutional Declaration.
27 December 1969	Libya, Egypt, and Sudan sign the Tripoli Charter.
28 March 1970	British forces are requested to evacuate Al-Adem Airbase.
5 May 1970	First colloquium of Libyan intellectuals and revolutionaries to debate the revolutionary orientations of the country.
16 June 1970	The last American troops evacuate Wheelus Airbase.
21 June 1970	Confiscation of Italian-owned properties announced.
5 July 1970	First major laws on the nationalization of the oil industry, initially limited to the nationalization of the internal distribution networks of Shell and Esso.
1 August 1970	The internal distribution networks of the remaining oil companies are nationalized.
28 September 1970	President Nasser of Egypt dies.
14 November 1970	Administrative reorganization: creation of governorates (*muhafadhat*) and municipalities (*baladiyyat*) or districts (*mudiriyyat*) to break down traditional tribal administrative boundaries.
December 1970	Nationalization of all banks.
14 January 1971	At Zawiya, Qadhafi announces the creation of Popular Congresses.

15 January 1971	Libyan Producers' Agreements announced.
17 April 1971	Libya, Egypt, and Syria agree to create the Union of Arab Republics, to officially come into effect on 1 January 1972.
5 June 1971	All foreign cultural centers, except that of France, are closed.
12 June 1971	Creation of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU).
15 October 1971	All Libyan insurance companies are nationalized.
28 October 1971	Creation of a commission by the Revolutionary Command Council to revise the country's legal system in conformity with Islamic law.
7 December 1971	British Petroleum nationalized.
28 March–7 April 1972	First national ASU congress in Tripoli.
12 April 1972	Abolition of the right to strike.
30 May 1972	The ASU adopts a law making all political activities outside the single party punishable by death.
4 August 1972	The United States reduces its embassy staff in Tripoli to fifteen members at Libya's request. The U.S. ambassador in Tripoli resigns.
November 1972	Qadhafi for the first time specifically proclaims sovereignty over the Gulf of Sirt.
16 April 1973	Qadhafi issues his Third Universal Theory and announces the popular revolution in a speech at Zuwara.
18 April 1973	Creation of the first popular committees.
2 June 1973	Popular committees take over the country's television and radio stations.
8 June 1973	Libya accuses the United States of infringing its 100-mile "restricted air zone" off the Mediterranean coast. Tripoli expels a U.S. diplomat for not having an Arabic passport.
11 June 1973	The popular committees take over education, agriculture, and culture in the country.
11 August 1973	The Libyan government nationalizes 51% of Occidental Petroleum.
1 September 1973	51% of all remaining foreign oil companies nationalized.