

ARAB NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY  
IN MONARCHICAL LIBYA: A STUDY IN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

by

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## INTRODUCTION

For a nation, any nation, political stability is high on its list of priorities. Political stability means creating an atmosphere for political order and effectiveness, for steady political, economic, and social development. Political stability, in short, is an important prerequisite for modernization and progress.

However, political instability has been a common feature in many countries, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, during the last two decades. Political instability increased significantly during the 1950's and 1960's. For example, violence and other destabilizing events were five times more frequent between 1955 and 1962 than they were between 1940 and 1954.<sup>1</sup> Throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America there has been a decline in political order, an undermining of the authority, effectiveness, and legitimacy of government. Political instability in Asia, Africa, and Latin America derives precisely from the failure to meet the following condition:

Equality of political participation is growing much more rapidly than 'the art of associating together.' Social and economic change-urbanization, increases in literacy and education, industrialization, mass media expansion-extend political consciousness, multiply political demands, broaden political participation. These changes undermine traditional political institutions; they enormously complicate the problems of creating new bases of political association and new political institutions combining legitimacy and effectiveness. The rates of social mobilization and the expansion of political participation are high; the rates of political

organization and institutionalization are low. The result is political instability and disorder.<sup>2</sup>

This paper is an attempt to study the reasons behind political instability in Libya during the monarchical regime from 1951 until 1969, the year of its overthrow by the army. The objective of this study is to test the hypothesis that the political instability during the monarchical regime in Libya was a result of differences in the ideology of the ruling elite and that of the bulk of the population. This difference resulted from the regime's failure to develop supportive political socialization. The result was a crisis of legitimacy. This crisis was intensified by the lack of political institutions capable of bridging the gap between the ruling elite and the masses.

Libya presents a unique and interesting example for the study of political development in the new nations. Libya was granted independence by the United Nations on December 24, 1951, because the big powers did not know what to do with it otherwise. The prospects for the future were very dark. The country has very limited economic resources. Libya has to live on economic aid from the outside world, notably from the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Socially, Libya consists of a thin and fragmented population in three different regions separated by vast unpopulated areas. The difference among the people was so acute that it was necessary to have a federal type of government within these three regions. It was only in 1963 that the constitution was amended and Libya had a unitary type of government.

Because of all these difficulties, political instability was expected to be caused by internal and domestic struggle. Strangely enough, however, the political instability in Libya was caused by external factors -- the ideology or the ideals of Arab Nationalism.

The fifties witnessed a vast and drastic change and shakeup in the Arab countries. The most notable and crucial change occurred in Egypt. In July, 1952, Nasser seized power in Egypt. By 1956, and because of his nationalistic policies, he became the undisputed popular leader in the eyes of the Arab people. The idea of Arab Nationalism began to catch the imagination of the Arab masses. In Libya, this idea appealed strongly, for many reasons which will be discussed later; for the people Nasser became the leader and the symbol of Arab Nationalism in the Libyans' eyes. The outbreak of the liberation war in Algeria in 1954, and the role the people in Libya played in helping the Algerians enhanced the idea of Arab nationalism. Arab Nationalism took a strong hold of the Libyan masses. The political and military development of the Palestinian problem was a strong factor in the development of the nationalist ideas in Libya. The people in Libya judged the actions and the attitudes of their government in view of its conformity with their values and beliefs concerning Arab Nationalism. So strong was this feeling that most, if not all, of the political demonstrations and uprisings in Libya, including the army takeover, were due to the people perceiving their government as not being pro-Arab in its policies.

The term "ideology" is an exceedingly difficult one to define with precision. Most recent discussions of ideology have emphasized function rather than content.<sup>3</sup> However, for the purpose of this study, it can be said that ideology "...tends to specify a set of values that are more or less coherent and that it seeks to link given patterns of action to achievement or maintenance of a future, or existing, state of affairs."<sup>4</sup> Within this broad definition, the ideology of the Libyan masses will be examined in its relations to and its effect concerning political and social stability and conflict.

Ideology is an important variable in explaining conflict, consensus, and cohesion. Generally, ideology has two main functions: one social, binding the community together, and the other individual, organizing the role personalities of the maturing individuals.<sup>5</sup> These functions combine to legitimize authority. It is the relationship with authority that gives ideology its political significance.<sup>6</sup> Ideologies are the crucial lever at the disposal of elites for obtaining political mobilization and for maximizing the possibilities of mass manipulation.<sup>7</sup> This paper is an attempt to reflect the importance of the relation between the ideological thinking and the attitudes of the governing elite and the masses. Political and social stability, or instability, is determined, to a large degree, by the congruence or incongruence, respectively, between the government's and the people's ideologies.

Political conflict reflects the rise of a controversy

which taps the distinctive elements of two or more belief systems. Conversely the sharing of common belief-elements indicates the area in which we obtain political consensus.<sup>8</sup> Some political systems "...display a high extractive capability and succeed in eliciting enthusiastic, passionate, and trustful allegiance; other political systems display a low mobilizational and extractive capability. In certain instances we are confronted with monolithic political units characterized by extraordinary cohesiveness, but in other instances we find equivalent political units characterized by a hopeless lack of solidarity ties."<sup>9</sup>

In order to reflect on the importance of ideology to political stability, it will be discussed in its relation to, and its effect on, three variables:

(1) The process of political socialization: political socialization is the process through which a citizen acquires his own view of the political world. Political socialization has to do with "people oriented" explanations of political events. It is a concept directing attention toward the knowledge, values, and beliefs of the average citizen.<sup>10</sup> Political events and experiences later in life are interpreted within the context of these basic orientations. They serve as "political eyeglasses," through which the individual perceives and makes meaningful the world of politics. Any contradiction between the norms, beliefs, and values that people acquire through the process of political socialization and the actions, the norms, and the beliefs of the governing elite is a source of political instability and conflict. From

this point of view political socialization is discussed in this paper.

(2) Political legitimacy: the legitimacy of any given regime is a prime requisite for political stability. People view a regime as legitimate if they conceive no discrepancy between their norms, beliefs, and actions and those of the regime. People identify themselves with the regime they see as a representative of their own hopes and values. Conversely, political instability occurs when the people conceive contradictions between their beliefs and the governing elite attitudes. It is in this context that we are concerned with the problem of legitimacy.

(3) Political Institutions: this factor is being examined on the ground that political institutionalization is necessary for political stability. Some institutions and structures should intervene between the masses and the elite to minimize mass movements.<sup>11</sup> Political stability requires the development of effective social, economic, and political organizations which are capable of socializing the population in the mainstream of political life as well as of generating and coping with continuous peaceful change.

The purpose of this study is to examine and explain the instability of the monarchical regime in Libya which was climaxed by its overthrow on September 1, 1969. As stated above, it is the belief of the author that political instability in Libya was a result of the differences between the ideologies of the governing elite and those of the bulk of the population. This ideological contradiction, the paper

will argue, is first a result of the regime's failure in the process of political socialization. Secondly, this ideological contradiction raised the question of the regime's legitimacy among the masses. Finally, this contradiction poses us with the role of political institutions and institutionalization in minimizing or maximizing this contradiction.

Through studying the three variables, this paper will test the above hypothesis by showing that political instability in monarchical Libya was a result of three related crises or problems: crisis of political socialization, crisis in legitimacy, and crisis in institutionalization.

It would be suitable to explain the meaning of each of these three variables as they will be used in this study.

### Political Socialization

Political socialization is the "...process whereby political attitudes and values are inculcated as children become adults and as adults fill roles. Socialization is a continuing process throughout a lifetime and becomes the process by which political cultures are maintained and changed."<sup>12</sup> This situation includes "...what one knows about the political system under which he lives, and the way he feels about it and about his participating function in it."<sup>13</sup> A political system possessing institutions capable of socializing young citizens into politics in such a way that they grow up to identify with the system and its institutions successfully performs this function.

The degree of political socialization in a society is



dependent upon the amount of trust, empathy, and freedom from anxiety which prevails within the society. A "properly" socialized policy is one which eliminates the mistrust and suspicion that so often hinder cooperation and the development of a feeling of community in the new states; cooperation helps to eliminate the major sources of conflict and pave the way for stability and orderly progress. Empathy, or the capacity to place oneself in the other man's situation is indispensable in a modernizing society.<sup>14</sup> It enhances the ability of individuals to easily adapt themselves to new roles and relationships and facilitates cooperation and consensus, which are essential elements of stability.<sup>15</sup> Anxiety results in frustration and alienation from the political system. An alienated public is more susceptible to agitation and extremist behavior, elements that pose a threat to the survival of the system.

The study of political socialization is one of the better approaches to understanding political development and political stability. It is through the process of socialization that individuals are inducted into the political culture which determines their values, symbols, and commitments.<sup>16</sup> The political socialization of any society may be latent or manifest in nature. It is manifest whenever it involves the explicit communication of values or information toward political objects. It is latent whenever the communication involves non-political attitudes which will eventually affect attitudes toward roles and objectives within the political system.<sup>17</sup>



The analysis of the political socialization function in a particular society is basic to the whole field of political analysis, since it not only gives us insight into the pattern of political culture and subcultures in that society, but also locates for us in the socialization processes of the society the points where particular qualities and elements of the political culture are introduced, and the points in the society where these components are being sustained or modified. Furthermore, the study of political socialization is essential to the understanding of the other political functions. If political socialization produces the basic attitudes in a society toward the political system, its various roles, and public policy, then by studying political socialization we can gain understanding of one of the essential conditions which affect the way in which these roles are performed, and the kinds of political inputs and outputs which these roles produce.<sup>18</sup>

The home and school are primary instruments for the development of political attitudes. It is in the home that the youngster first shapes his attitudes and ideas, which are greatly influenced by the opinions of his parents. The school may help to increase the sense of political efficacy in the student. As the student grows in his understanding of the political system and of his role in it, his feeling of being a part of it should also grow. In the educational systems of the developing countries, however, youngsters are introduced to new ideas that are secular and often contrary to the traditional ideas they have been imbued with in

the home. Thus, the schools tend to impair rather than reinforce the family socializing function in changing societies. This situation often results in developing individuals who view society as bewildering and incoherent.

Besides family and school as agents of political socialization, there are other agents who influence political learning: (1) social groupings, such as class and race; (2) secondary groups, such as political organizations and occupational associations; (3) experiences with the political world; and (4) the communications media.<sup>19</sup>

### Political Legitimacy

The most serious and immediate concern of the leadership of a new state is the establishment of a sense of political legitimacy. Unlike the older nations which command a degree of traditional legitimacy, the new states, whose establishment meant a break with the traditional values and beliefs that had justified the existence of the old political system, have to fight for acceptance and survival.<sup>20</sup>

Legitimacy "...involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society... legitimacy is evaluative. Groups regard a political system as legitimate or illegitimate according to the way in which its values agree with theirs."<sup>21</sup>

A crisis in legitimacy is a crisis of change; it occurs during the period of transition to new political and social structures. Such a change threatens the traditional values

and institutions and signals the adoption of a new culture with acceptable values and rituals.<sup>22</sup> The development of such institutions, values, and beliefs, combined with an early demonstration of the system's efficiency and stability, are essential for political survival, for not only do people demand acceptable values, but they seek a government that will promote stability and be able to convince them that it is the best means for the achievement of national welfare.

### Political Institutionalization

Political stability and development in the new states require the ability to create effective political organizations capable of mobilizing popular support as well as harnessing demands. Without such organizations the majority of the population has very little power, and without power, they can exert but little influence over the political process. Organizations are the foundations of political stability as well as a precondition for political development.<sup>23</sup> Although the vacuum of power in modernizing political systems may be filled by charismatic leadership or military force, it can only be filled permanently by political organizations.<sup>24</sup> Peaceful change in a society undergoing political modernization is dependent upon the level of institutionalization of its political organizations. Institutionalization is the "...process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability."<sup>25</sup> The institutionalization of political organizations is especially important in developing areas because political organizations act as arbitrators for

the myriad of demands that arise in such an environment. If these political organizations are institutionalized (e.g., recognized by the different groups as valuable procedures to arbitrate demands), more harmonious interactions can be achieved.

If social institutions beyond the family and community level are broad in scope, command large resources, and are stable and persisting, the disruptive effects of discontent ought to be minimized. Such institutions are likely to provide additional peaceful means for the attainment of expectations and also may provide discontented men with routinized and typically nonviolent means for expressing their grievances.<sup>26</sup>

Political organizations include political parties, labor unions, students unions, and political institutions such as legislatures and parliaments. The effectiveness in promoting stability differs from one organization to another. Political parties are among the most important institutions in a developing society and can play a major part as instruments of political and social change. In a traditional political system (the case of Libya) the elites normally attempt to prevent the emergence of parties. Party organizations, like labor unions and peasant associations, are illegal. The traditional rulers and traditional elite attempt to limit political groupings to intra-elite factions and cliques functioning within the parliamentary assembly, if such exists, or within the bureaucracy.<sup>27</sup>

Institutionalized political parties could be an important

aid in the establishment of political legitimacy. Their value, in this area, stems from the important role they play in organizing participation, aggregating interests, and serving as a link between the masses and the government. The type of role they will play in providing legitimacy and stability in modernizing political systems will vary with the type of institutional inheritance of the system. If traditional political institutions survive in the era of modernization, parties will only play a secondary role. They will tend to help reinforce the legitimacy of these institutions by working within the system and adapting to its principles.<sup>28</sup> If the surviving traditional institutions are weak, or if no major institutions manage to survive as is the case with most newly established states, the role of the party is entirely different. In the absence of acceptable traditional sources of legitimacy, new sources are sought through ideology, charisma, and popular sovereignty. If a political party can incorporate each of these principles, it can become a source of legitimacy because it will then be viewed as the institutional embodiment of national sovereignty and popular will.<sup>29</sup>

## CHAPTER I

## THE CRISIS OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

The monarchical regime in Libya witnessed a crisis of creating a supportive climate for political socialization. There was no serious attempt to socialize the masses toward the regime. On the contrary, the process of political socialization alienated the masses, and in particular, the students and intellectuals from the regime.

Among the many agents of political socialization only two, the school and the mass media, will be studied in this paper to show the kind of crises the monarchical regime had to face.

However, this does not mean to minimize the role of other agents of political socialization. But it is the specific conditions, social, economic, and political, of Libya that made the school and mass media play such prime roles.

Although in many countries, especially Europe and the United States, the family played an important and crucial role in political socialization, it did not play that role in Libya. The prevalence of illiteracy at the time of Libya's independence (over 80 percent) hindered the family role. The social customs and traditions eliminated women as an active part of the society, and eventually their role in political socialization. The authoritarian-type of relationship between fathers and sons prevented, most of the time, any

kind of political discussion or expressing of any political views or opinions in the family.

On the other hand, the school and the mass media tried to resocialize the young children and students and free them from the effects of the traditional and backward views of their families.

## EDUCATION AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

### Educational development in Libya

One of the major consequences of Libya's long history of successive foreign occupations and subjugation to foreign domination has been the extreme paucity of educational facilities for the indigenous people.

In 1921 only a few Arab primary schools were in existence in Tripolitania with a total of 611 pupils, and there was a similar lack of development in respect to native education in Cyrenaica.<sup>1</sup>

During the following years some expansion took place, and by 1939 there were in Tripolitania 70 Italo-Arab primary schools with 6,884 Arabs and 170 Italian pupils, 13 girls' trade schools with 944 pupils, a secondary school, and an arts and crafts school with 85 students. In addition, evening classes were started for adult Arab illiterates, and in 1928 Arabs were permitted to attend Italian secondary schools. Small numbers of Arabs also gained admittance to Italian and Egyptian Universities. Koranic schools also increased in number from 52 with 1,792 pupils in 1921 to 496 schools with

10,165 pupils in 1939.<sup>2</sup>

Up to the year 1939 the educational system for Arabs in Cyrenaica was similarly underdeveloped. At that time not more than 37 elementary schools were in existence with a total of 2,600 Arab pupils.<sup>3</sup>

The defeat of Italian Fascist forces and the occupation of Libya by the British meant yet again new elements of foreign educational implantation, but there was a possibility under the new political situation for an Arab and Libyan national educational system to emerge. In Tripolitania, the total number of students at the primary education level increased more than fivefold from 1943/44 to 1950/51. At the preparatory, secondary, and technical educational levels, the total number of students increased more than sixfold from 1947/48 to 1950/51.<sup>4</sup>

Even the number of female students at primary levels improved -- a very significant development in the light of the traditional position of women's education up to that point in Libya. In Tripolitania, the numbers at primary levels increased from "...314 to 2,923 between 1943/44 and 1950/51, and in Cyrenaica from 30 to 700 during the same period."<sup>5</sup>

Despite the statistical upsurge in educational development between 1943 and 1950, the condition of education in Libya was in reality quite serious. There were no female teachers in primary schools anywhere until 1950. There were no females at the secondary educational levels and there were only 25 teachers at the secondary educational level in



all Libya.<sup>6</sup>

The Libyan people, therefore, entered into political independence deprived of technical training, of administrative, organizational, scientific, and vocational experience, and of a planned and clear-cut path for educational advance.

The educational conditions of Libya at the time of its attainment of independence was as poor as the health and housing conditions of the country. According to the official census figures of 1954, 81.1 percent of the main Libyan population were illiterate. The illiteracy rate was higher<sup>7</sup> for women (90.1 percent) than for men (72.1 percent).

Illiteracy was expectedly highest in the age group 64-plus among men and women and lowest in the age group 10-14. In 1954 in the 64-plus group, illiteracy for males stood at 86.7 percent and in the 10-14 age group at 53.9 percent. For women, the corresponding figures were 90.9 and 80.8.<sup>8</sup>

After independence was gained, the student population in Libya increased significantly in both size and political importance. It grew rapidly because the Libya government from the beginning of its existence placed high priority on improving the educational opportunities available to its subjects. In expanding the numbers of students at all levels, the government also created a group of highly articulate, confident young members of society, susceptible to outside influence and, by reason of its age and experience, often critical of the established political authority and its policies. In the 1960's, the government found itself simultaneously trying to continue the expansion of educational

facilities while struggling to contain the dissident groups that developed within the schools.

The Libyan Constitution clearly spelled out the commitment to make education available:

Every Libyan shall have the right to education. The State shall ensure the diffusion of education by means of the establishment of public schools and of private schools which it may permit to be established under its supervision, for Libyans, and foreigners.

Teaching shall be unrestricted so long as it does not constitute a breach of public order and is not contrary to morality. Public education shall be regulated by law.

Elementary education shall be compulsory for Libyan children of both sexes; elementary and primary education in the public schools shall be free. (Article 28, 29)

Rapid expansion took place in the educational system at all levels in the first decade of independence. Compulsory primary education increased the number of students by three times, although in rural areas girls still lagged behind. In 1955, preparatory schools were established for grades seven through nine, to channel students into secondary schools and into professional and technical trainings. The number of secondary school students increased more than four times. Adult education was also encouraged. All education was free.

The number of students enrolled in primary schools rose faster than the increase in population between 1958 and 1965. Population during this period increased by 24 percent, but the enrollment of boys at primary levels increased by 67 percent, and of girls by 102 percent. During this period, the enrollment of boys at preparatory levels increased by 232

percent and of girls by 726 percent. The enrollment of boys in secondary schools increased by 138 percent and of girls by 717 percent. In the ten years, 1953/54 to 1962/63, the enrollment of girls at all levels rose from 8,872 to 37,943 and the percent of girls in the total enrollment rose from 17.7 percent to 21.3 percent.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1  
Number of Students

Year	Primary	Prepara- tory	Secun- dary	Tech- nical	Teacher Training
1951-52	32,115	---	402	375	193
1955-56	65,164	2,565	1,170	641	1,018
1959-60	111,967	7,455	1,729	856	1,881
1963-64	153,952	17,546	3,092	1,190	2,407
1964-65	169,788	17,711	3,760	1,016	2,401
1965-66	191,774	18,720	4,326	933	3,330
1966-67	214,841	22,038	4,808	1,064	4,681
1967-68	252,001	26,498	5,922	1,163	4,681

Source: Libyan Arab Republic, Ministry of Planning, Census and Statistical Department, Statistical Abstract. (Tripoli: July, 1969), p. 81, 82.

By 1968, about 85 percent of the primary school age population was in school. More classrooms were built and more teachers were trained to handle the growing numbers of students. By 1966 there were over 1,200 schools. The percentage of the government budget devoted to education increased

steadily to pay for this expansion. Public expenditure for education rose from 9.6 percent of the public budget in 1950/51 to 20 percent in 1963/64.<sup>10</sup>

Table 2

Number of Government Schools in the Years  
1950/51 and 1967/68

School Year	Kinder- garten	Pri- mary	Prepara- tory	Secon- dary	Tech- nical	Teacher's Training	To- tal
1950/51	---	194	---	4	8	2	208
1967/68	27	1302	152	27	11	23	1314

Source: Libyan Arab Republic, Ministry of Planning, Census and Statistical Department, Statistical Abstract. (Tripoli: July, 1969), p. 79.

One tangible change from this investment was an increase in the literacy rate among men and women.

Table 3

Literacy (over six years old)

Year	Men	Women	Total <i>AVE</i>
1954	24.0%	2.4%	13.6%
1965	43.2%	41. %	27.0%

Source: Libyan Arab Republic, Ministry of Planning, Census and Statistical Department, Statistical Abstract. (Tripoli: July, 1969), p. 12.

Higher education was a more important source of both political activity and future political leadership, and early

efforts were made to establish a local university. In 1956, a royal decree was issued founding the Libyan University, beginning with a Faculty of Arts, Letters and Education in Benghazi. The University was steadily expanded to include a College of Commerce and Economics and a Law School in Benghazi, and a Science Faculty, an Advanced College of Technology and in 1966 an Agricultural School in Tripoli. All students at the Libyan University received free tuition and lodging, plus a monthly allowance, which was larger for those who did not live in University housing.

There was also government support for study abroad. At first most students went to Egypt, but other Arab countries and Turkey were also important areas of study; Great Britain, the United States, and Western Europe grew in importance in the 1960's as funds became more available and modern technology became more important in Libya.

Schools require not only buildings and books, but teachers. Libya had none of her own, and the requirements that Libyan teachers had to meet narrowed the search. Certainly the western world could not provide them. They had to know the Arabic tongue intimately. They had to have a firm grounding in Arab history and Arab literature. Moreover, they had to have a lifetime immersion in the culture and traditions of Islam. The young men to teach Libyan pupils and students had, then, to be found somewhere else in the Arab World. The majority of preparatory, secondary, and high school teachers in Libya were foreigners. In 1960-61, more than 64 percent were expatriates, most of whom were

Egyptian, followed by Palestinians and Jordanians in numerical importance.<sup>11</sup> For the period 1964 to 1969, it was estimated that 4,484 teachers were needed at primary and intermediate school levels and 291 at secondary levels. The teacher-training colleges below the secondary levels were expected to turn out only 1,844. In addition, there were 950 expatriate school teachers in Libya in 1964. The graduate teachers were largely expatriate. Over two-thirds of the technical instructors in vocational schools were not Libyans.<sup>12</sup>

One of the general characteristics of the expanding Libyan educational system was the influence of foreign countries in the running of the schools and the formation of student attitudes. The United States devoted a large part of its aid efforts to building schools and most of its support went into educational facilities, and had little direct impact on the students.

The Egyptian presence more obviously molded a great deal of the educational content. In the early years, an Egyptian acted as advisor to the Libyan Minister of Education, and Egyptian syllabuses and textbooks were used. Egyptian teachers dominated instruction at the post-primary level. Egypt had recently undergone a successful revolution that seemed to herald a new period of Egyptian leadership in the Arab and Afro-Asian countries, and this spirit represented by the Egyptian teachers' presence made a strong impression on Libyan students.

Table 4

## Students at the University of Libya

Year	Faculty of Agriculture	Faculty of High Teacher Training	Faculty of Engineering	Faculty of Law	Faculty of Science	Faculty of Commerce & Economics	Faculty of Arts	Total
1955-56	---	---	---	---	---	---	32	32
1958-59	---	---	---	---	52	112	178	342
1959-60	---	---	---	---	77	242	227	546
1960-61	---	---	---	---	115	310	303	728
1961-62	---	---	---	---	152	383	383	918
1962-63	---	---	---	72	168	423	333	996
1963-64	---	---	105	132	178	420	404	1,239
1964-65	---	---	179	190	250	536	527	1,682
1965-66	---	80	218	223	290	461	664	1,936
1966-67	---	112	237	239	300	441	715	2,044
1967-68	98	186	282	303	298	387	940	2,494
1968-69	198	317	356	375	334	408	981	2,966

Source: Libyan Arab Republic, Ministry of Planning, Census and Statistical Department, Statistical Abstract. (Tripoli: July, 1969), p. 70.

## School and Political Socialization

In modern societies a major portion of political learning takes place in the classroom. It is through this agency that the most comprehensive and deliberate efforts are made by modern and modernizing politics to shape the political outlooks of new citizens. Within the classroom the formal curriculum of instruction, various ritual activities, and the activities of the teachers all help to shape the political development of youngsters.<sup>13</sup> Education is very important and essential to any nation. Its importance stems from the fact that education is a means of socialization, in the first place, and then of unification. Studies in political socialization indicate that the main reasons for the preoccupation with education are to create a strong sense of national identity, to encourage better understanding of the political system and its components, and to turn out a more loyal citizenry and to enhance the situation and power of the political system as a whole.

One of the main means of political socialization in the school is the curriculum and in particular, in the civics and social sciences. The curriculum is potentially one of the major instruments of political socialization. Cultural values, political indoctrination, which concerns the learning of a specific political ideology which is intended to rationalize and justify a particular regime, are supposed to be included in the school curriculum.<sup>14</sup>

In all the Arab countries, the elementary school



curriculum and the textbooks are predetermined by the central ministry of education. Private, national, and foreign schools are required to follow the essential elements of the program of study, particularly, in social studies such as history, geography, and civics. Textbooks used in such schools must also be approved by the government authorities before they are used in the schools.<sup>15</sup>

The case of Libya represents a very interesting and important example of the role of curriculum in formulating political ideas and beliefs. After gaining independence, Libya had to depend on Egypt to provide her with textbooks and other materials. Needless to say, this factor had a very important impact upon the Libyan students. Instead of exerting efforts to create a feeling of Libyan identity and nationalism, the textbooks are full of stories about Arab history and Arab Nationalism. The textbooks are written and printed in Egypt. They glorify the idea of Arab unity, and Arab struggle against imperialism. The introduction of a seventh grade reading book emphasizes the above mentioned ideas:

We are careful to include, in this book, the elements that make the Arab student feel that a new spirit exists in him, and create in his character the pride in Arab language, Arab Nationalism, and Arab Nation....<sup>16</sup>

In another part of the same book, under the title "About the Flags of the Arab countries", it reads:

If your country is your known state, the Arab Nation is your large country. You are an Arab first. Your larger nation stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Gulf,....<sup>17</sup>

And that was the prevailing theme in all the reading books in the Libyan schools. Everything, even if it was about Libya, is related to Arab Nationalism and Arab Unity. In the Reader of the ninth grade, under the title "I am an Arab", it reads:

"I'm an Arab. Yes, I say it with all the pride and the happiness. I'm not alone. Every Arab is my brother in language, religion, feeling and nationhood....Yes, I'm an Arab from Libya."<sup>18</sup>

Every single reader in the elementary, the preparatory, or the secondary schools in Libya contains articles and subjects about Arab Nationalism and Pan-Arabism. In the readers of the grades three, four, and five, there are 18 articles and subjects about general Arab history and countries. None of them are talking about or mentioning Libya. Throughout the readers from the grades seven to ten, there are 87 articles and subjects concerning Arab and Islamic history, having information about Arab countries, and glorifying Arab Nationalism and the Unified Arab struggle against imperialism. Only eight of these 87 articles were devoted to Libya, but even these were linked and related to Arab unity, Arab nationalism, and Arab struggle.

The Libyan student, through his school learning was oriented toward Pan-Arabism and not toward the already weak Libyan Nationalism and Libyan identity. Thus, the school was a most important factor in creating Arab Nationalist feeling in Libya which affected strongly and effectively the political life in Libya.

Although the Libyan education system was still in the developing stages, it was inevitable that when students were encouraged to examine and question in the classroom, they would also begin to question the social and political organization of their own country. Students in Libya, as in other developing countries, began to gain confidence in their right to speak out, because they knew that their status as students would lead to positions of authority and power in society.

In the Arab countries, students have often been encouraged by both government and opposition leaders to carry out demonstrations and devote more of their time to politics than to study, each group trying to marshal student support for its own position.

Although in Libya the government did not encourage this procedure, Libyan students were well aware of the importance students played in other Arab countries and often sought to emulate them. In countries where social revolutions have taken place, student interest in social change can be channeled through government policies. In countries like Libya, where the political elite still represented the older generation of traditional leaders, students were radicalized into dissident actions seeking to replace the monarchical government with a more progressive government.

In the United States, until recently, most of the political concerns of university students were channeled into the party system through university and other younger sectors of the national party organizations. This procedure gave students an outlet for their convictions, and an area in

which to work to promote changes in party or government policy. Because Libya had no party system, there was no structure by which students could express their political views, and they went into the streets to perform public demonstrations to influence other Libyans and to pressure the government. Libyan students saw in neighboring Arab countries, particularly Egypt and Algeria, more activist regimes dedicated to reform and reorganization, and, at least, in the late 1950's and early 1960's, achieving greater success in modernization than was Libya.

Thus, their demonstrations reflected their growing impatience with their government and that sometimes erupted into overt hostility against it. Most students had little loyalty concerning the monarchical system and the traditional Libyan hierarchy and the moderate domestic and foreign policy the system advocated. They were more sympathetic with Pan-Arabism than the official government position. In the decade after the founding of the university, particularly in 1964-67, numerous demonstrations took place, illustrating the concerns of the students and the government's methods of control.

In the 1950's, demonstrations were primarily against foreign targets, particularly French policy which was unpopular throughout the Arab world, and other pan Arab-issues. Thousands of students, sometimes joined by other, demonstrated against France in 1956, 1957, and 1960.<sup>19</sup>

As the number of students continued to increase and the political climate in Libya became more volatile in the 1960's,

student demonstrations became more overtly political and disruptive. Several factors came together to increase the tension among students: students were gaining confidence in their opinions and in their rights to express them; students sought approval for the formation of a student union which the government tried to block; the government policy was more repressive and inflexible than was necessary.

The first highly disruptive student demonstration broke out in January, 1964, in Benghazi and Tripoli, causing bloodshed and major police reaction, and forcing a change in the government. The student activity began with marches in support of the Arab summit meeting taking place in Cairo. After January 13 high school and college students demonstrated sporadically. The principal object of the demonstrations was to display solidarity with the pan-Arabism preached by President Nasser. The police were called out to restore order. In the clash with the students, police in Benghazi resorted to excessive force, and several students were killed; many others were wounded. This situation also sparked sympathetic demonstrations in Tripoli and in both cities the demonstrations turned to riots, requiring the use of tear gas and guns by the police, and causing thousands of dollars in damage. Eleven deaths were officially reported. But unofficially, the toll was thought to be much higher.<sup>20</sup> After eight days of student street unrest, Prime Minister Fekini was replaced by Mahmoud Muntasir, an older and more conservative politician chosen by the king for his ability to restore order. Since Fekini had been more responsive to

social change and more sympathetic to pan-Arab nationalism, this change was very unpopular with the students and spurred further protests.<sup>21</sup>

These demonstrations involved thousands of students and were a real threat to the whole political structure, not only bringing about the resignation of the Prime Minister, but also inspiring the threat of King Idris to abdicate. The Libyan government re-established domestic calm by forceful control of the students in the street, combined with a public commitment to renegotiate the base treaties with Great Britain and the United States. Resentment against brutal treatment of the demonstrators was ~~not~~ forgotten, however, neither by the students nor by their families and sympathizers.

Student unrest broke out again the next year, over the issue of relations with the West German government and over general student demands for the right to form a single student organization. The German issue grew out of another meeting of all the Arab countries, which demanded in March that all Arab countries should break off diplomatic relations with West Germany if it established relations with Israel. When this situation developed, Libya was one of the few Arab states which refused to end its relations with Germany, although it did withdraw its ambassador in protest. Students protested the decision, both in Cairo and before the Libyan Embassy, and in Tripoli where there were clashes with the police. The Libyan government handled the situation very carefully; it was already prepared for some sort of student

action in commemoration of the demonstrations and deaths of the year before.

First, the government closed all the schools and the University. This action stimulated sympathetic marches by Libyan students abroad, but led to no overt action within Libya. Next, the government agreed to consider the question of granting recognition to a national student organization. The police were careful not to provoke violence, and tension eased when the schools were reopened after a few weeks.<sup>22</sup>

As the students became more estranged from the government, and government control within the country became increasingly repressive, more of their activity took place outside Libya. In February, 1967, a sit-in and a hunger strike took place by sixty students studying in London. They ignored an ultimatum to leave the embassy or lose their grants in order to press their demands for the recognition for the General Union of Libyan Students, and the reinstatement and in some cases, release from prison of students in Libya who had been expelled or arrested in their efforts to establish the student union. The action in London was repeated in other European cities, and in Cairo, in Libya there were reports of growing numbers of arrests. The militant students in Benghazi staged a sit-in against the University, but lack of support from moderate students forced an abandonment of the effort after several days, without any use of police force.<sup>23</sup>

When the Arab-Israeli War broke out in June, 1967, students joined in the widespread anti-government activity



led by workers and political dissidents.

Student views at the end of the monarchy were somewhat ambivalent. In foreign affairs they were committed to pan-Arabism and less sympathetic to Libya's pro-Western policies. In domestic affairs they supported sweeping social and economic reforms similar to those in Algeria or Egypt.

Because the new military government has the same generational outlook as the students it may be more successful in satisfying their political demands.

#### MASS MEDIA AND POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

News<sup>1</sup>papers, radio, television, magazines, and other communication media transmit many types of messages which affect political orientations. Both day-to-day information about political events and evaluations of these events are transmitted from government to citizen, from group to group, from group to individual, from elite to nonelite, through the communication media. As a result of technological advancements in communication media and the weakening of traditional social structures like the extended family and the local community, the mass media are becoming increasingly important as shapers of political orientations.<sup>24</sup>

Even as the mass media have become a crucial ingredient for the modern state, they are also an important mechanism through which traditional societies move toward modernity and political integration. Because the mass media can disseminate a consistent and standardized political message simultaneously to vast numbers of people, they can play a key role in the



rapid transformation of society. Hyman points out that in transitional societies, the media, as instruments of socialization, are:

efficient and their sweep is vast enough to cover the huge populations requiring modernization. Their standardization...is suited to producing widespread national uniformities in patterns of behavior; and their spirit is modern, no matter what else is wrong with it. By contrast, while the conventional agencies of socialization in society -- parents, teachers, peers, neighbors, and the like -- can be more flexible in suiting the lesson to the capacities and needs of the particular learner and more potent an influence, the outcomes cannot be as uniform, and their efforts are often directed against modernization.<sup>25</sup>

One of the important elements of Libyan development was the emergence of public opinion as an increasingly articulate, and on occasion, forceful factor on the political scene. At the time of independence most of the Libyan population was parochial in its outlook and generally apathetic to most issues of national scope beyond the simple question of independence. They were ill-informed about matters outside their village or tribe, and although loyal to their immediate chaikh or to King Idris, were not concerned with questions of national policy or political organizations. By the middle of the 1960's, many more Libyans knew about national questions of domestic measures or foreign relations, and were no longer totally inert in the face of their government's actions. Better equipped with knowledge of national politics, as well as with partisan criticism of the government, throughout the 1960's different groups in the population attempted to

influence government decision by extra-legal pressure, since they felt the constitutional avenues for expressing their opinions were inadequate.

The development of public opinion had two aspects: first, it involved the creation and expansion of institutions, particularly the press and the radio, for communicating information to the people; second, it grew out of social changes which were transforming Libya after she gained independence. Although the press had existed under Italian and British rule in Libya and had participated in the process of establishing an independent government, it had been handicapped by the sparse resources available to it and to its readers, and was consequently limited in its performance. After independence was gained, the press expanded in numbers and activity, but it was still hindered in fulfilling the broadest role that political theorists assign to the press in a representative society. At the same time, national radio broadcasting was being developed under government auspices, and, toward the end of the monarchy, television service was initiated.

In many developing countries government support for the press has been essential because domestic conditions have prevented the press from becoming self-supporting. Widespread illiteracy and low per capita income restricted newspaper circulation, as did the frequent inadequacy of the transportation system, particularly in countries as large as Libya, which prevented the establishment of a nationwide press. Even when literacy and incomes rose, the population

lacked the newspaper-reading habit and readership expanded slowly. This made government support necessary, and often government support led to government control. In Libya many newspapers were owned by the government, and independent newspaper depended on various kinds of government help.

When Libya gained independence there was virtually no independent press in Libya, even in Tripoli, the most densely populated region. During the military occupation independent newspapers had been banned, but even though they were encouraged after winning independence, the prospects of financial failure inhibited independent publishers. The provincial governments in Tripoli and Benghazi published papers, but they were limited to use of official news and were inadequate for the task of keeping the public informed. The only daily papers in 1956 were still those run by the provincial governments, but several independent weeklies had grown up. In Benghazi, one paper echoed government positions and expressed strong pro-Western views, but the other ones combined support for the royal family with a pro-Egyptian and anti-Western position. In Tripoli, English and Italian language papers served the foreign communities, and the Arabic-language paper was often critical of the local administration.<sup>26</sup>

In the next decade, more papers were founded. The provincial government of Fezzan started the first paper in its region in 1957, but elsewhere independent papers were started by two labor unions, as well as by individuals. By 1967 there were six daily papers, one of which was run by the

government, and twelve weeklies, also including one published by the government.<sup>27</sup>

The Libyan government provided both assistance and control for the press. The commitment to freedom of expression, with some limits, was expressed in the constitution:

Freedom of thought shall be guaranteed. Everyone shall have the right to express his opinion and to publish it by all means and methods. But this freedom may not be abused in any way which is contrary to public order or morality. Freedom of press and of printing shall be guaranteed within the limits of the law. Everyone shall be free to use any language in his private transactions or religious or cultural matters or in the Press or in any other publications or public meetings. (Articles 22-24)

In both its speeches and its actions the government acknowledged that a strong press was essential to the development of Libya, but it set limits on what it considered overzealous criticism. The government provided material and financial support, but at the same time delayed issuing press licenses to some applicants without cause, declaring that such licenses were important privileges and must be considered carefully.

In spite of official support of an independent press, the Libyan government sporadically engaged in censorship and control. Mostly this involved temporary suspension of journals publishing critical articles, although it also took the form of seizure or banning of specific offensive issues or loss of government revenue.

In the 1950's, papers were seized, temporarily closed, or lost their licenses for "inflammatory articles", reporting

stories denied by the government, or refusing to comply with provisions of the press law. In the 1960's, several papers had issues seized or were suspended for criticism of Libya's foreign policy. Occasionally the editors tried to use the courts to prevent government action, but usually they had to accept the seizure or suspension, and editors learned to express their views with caution.<sup>28</sup>

The arbitrary character of this censorship was clear in the closing of the Sunday Ghibli in June, 1967. The ostensible reason was that its English editor violated the provision of the press law restricting editors to Libyan nationals or foreigners resident for twenty-five years. Yet, the illegal editor had held the post for the five years since the press law was adopted and the law was not enforced until June, 1967. Most people believed that the closing was due to the paper's decision to give detailed reporting of the riots in Tripoli and Benghazi during the June War.<sup>29</sup>

Direct government interference was only one of the pressures hampering full coverage of domestic news by the Libyan Press. In the first place, the role of the press was restricted by the general social conditions; low literacy, low income, and the lack of the newspaper-reading habit restricted the circulation and consequently the income and the influence of Libyan newspapers.

Strong measures of self-censorship also inhibited domestic news coverage; financial dependence on the government and uncertainty over governmental interpretation of the constitutional warning against printing that which was "contrary to

public order or morality" made editors very careful. All editors received government funds, not only from advertising, but also from large government purchases, and from unofficial grants; thus they were unwilling to displease the government and lose that income. Their reluctance to test the limits of government tolerance restricted the publication of any anti-government views or demonstrations. Many national crises, such as the riots of 1964 or the decision to dismiss the recently elected parliament in 1965, were barely mentioned in the local press. Any incidents of political opposition were ignored or granted minimum attention; thus, papers avoided any conflict with the Ministry of Information and Guidance, and also failed in their responsibility to the public.

In 1957, the government inaugurated radio broadcasting over the Voice of Libya, and in December, 1968, television stations began transmitting in the heavily populated coastal areas. The goal of radio and television services was "enlightening and orienting" public opinion. The Ministry of Information and Guidance prevented the broadcasting of stories or interpretations unfavorable to the government, and the absence of independent operators comparable to the independent newspaper publishers prevented any censorship problems. Undoubtedly, the programs made the Libyan public better informed, and provided the basis for developing a more active public opinion.

Although the services presented the government views, they could not monopolize the airways; competing points of

view, particularly from Cairo, continued to be heard in Libya, and often challenged the government interpretation. The strongest radio broadcasts came from Cairo's Voice of the Arabs.<sup>30</sup> It was through Egyptian newspapers and magazines, which have a substantial circulation in Libya, that the ideas of Arab Nationalism and the news about the struggle against imperialism and reactionary forces in the Arab countries were presented to the Libyan public. The most effective and important role was played by both radio Cairo and the Voice of the Arabs from Cairo. Whatever strong effect the newspapers had, it was limited to a small educated and literate segment of the population. On the other hand, the radio services had access to most of the Libyan cities and villages. The speeches of the late President Nasser and the commentary of the Voice of the Arabs were heard in every place in Libya. In 1964 the streets of Benghazi and Tripoli were full of angry demonstrators just because the late President Nasser called on Libya, in a speech which was heard through Radio Cairo, to liquidate the British and American military bases in Libya.

Throughout their learning in school and because of the Egyptian mass media, the Libyans were more and more oriented toward pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism. The people in Libya judged the actions and the attitudes of their government in view of its conformity with their values and beliefs concerning Arab Nationalism.

Meanwhile, the monarchy did not have an ideology of its own to rally the masses around it. The rationale for the



king legitimacy was built on religious and tribal premises, and that was weakened during the process of social change and modernization. The people were alienated from the government. There was no sense of identification with its policies and actions. The only serious attempt to make the people identify themselves with their government came in 1968 under Prime Minister Abdul-Hamid Bakush, a lawyer of thirty-five who was once an advisor to a British oil company. His background and his age ideally fitted him to understand the underlying political ferment among youth. The Prime Minister's tough line toward anti-regime elements was accompanied by "a concentrated effort to get the people to identify themselves more closely with the government."<sup>31</sup> He set up a committee composed of the Ministers of Education, Information, Culture, Youth and Sports, Labor, and a Universities representative to "promote national consciousness."<sup>32</sup>

This attempt did not bring the desired results for two major reasons: first, it was too late to try something of this kind. The people had already formed their ideas and values and it was difficult to convince them. Secondly, the Prime Minister did not stay long enough in office to pursue his efforts. He was replaced with another Prime Minister after a few months.

The political socialization of the Libyans toward pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism, and the failure of the Libyan government to make the people identify themselves with its policies was accompanied with a pro-West, anti-Arabism foreign



policy that created the gap between the people and the monarchy. As it is stated above, political socialization serves as "political eyeglasses", through which the individual perceives and makes meaningful the world of politics. Any contradiction between the norms, beliefs, and values that people acquire through the process of political socialization and the actions, the norms, and the beliefs, of the governing elite is a source of political instability and conflict.

Because the people's beliefs, norms, and values in Libya were not identical with their government, many crises and conflicts were created. The people ceased to identify themselves with the government, and began to regard it as illegitimate and unrepresentative. Thus the monarchy in Libya was faced with a crisis of legitimacy.

## CHAPTER II

## THE CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY IN LIBYA

The inculcation of a sense of legitimacy is probably, as noted by David Easton, the single most effective device for regulating the flow of diffuse support in favor both of the authorities and of the regime. A member may be willing to obey the authorities and conform to the requirements of the regime for many different reasons. But the most stable support will derive from the conviction on the part of the member that it is right and proper for him to accept and obey the authorities and to abide by the requirements of the regime. It reflects the fact that in some vague or explicit way he sees these objects as conforming to his own moral principles, his own sense of what is right and proper in the political sphere.<sup>1</sup> Legitimacy of a political system can be derived from different sources, i.e., traditional, social, religious, nationalistic, economic, or general capability in maintaining the belief that the present regime is best of all. David Easton pointed out three sources of legitimacy -- ideological, structural, or personal -- which may characterize support for any political system.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of Libya, the political legitimacy of the regime rested on the personal and religious traits of King Idris. There was no ideological identification between the regime and its people, largely because the regime had no ideology of its own, and more important, the educational

conditions and the high rate of illiteracy in the early years of independence prevented any kind of ideology to prevail and have the support of the people. However, these circumstances did not hold for long. The rapid social change and urbanization undermined much of King Idris' personal and religious legitimacy. On the other hand, the vast and rapid expansion in education, accompanied by the increase of the Arab nationalism affected the whole Middle East including Libya, and created a strong and articulate intellectual class motivated by the ideas of Arab nationalism and Arab unity. This situation created a sense of ideological identity among many segments of the population, especially among students, labor forces, civil servants, and junior army officers. This emerging ideology found itself incompatible with the traditional regime and, as a result, these new forces felt that the regime was not able to translate their beliefs into actions. Accordingly, the regime lost its legitimacy among the emerging new forces.

In this chapter two factors will be examined. First, the sources of the personal legitimacy of King Idris and the reasons behind its decline, and, secondly, the monarchical regime policies, especially its foreign policy, which created the feeling among the articulate segment of the society that their ideological norms and beliefs were incompatible with those of the regime.

#### KING IDRIS' PERSONAL LEGITIMACY AND ITS SOURCES

Until September, 1969, Mohamed Idris al Mahdi al Sanusi,

King Idris I, was the central source of political leadership in independent Libya. For decades the leader in exile of opposition to the Italian administration in Libya assumed a crucial role in the negotiations for independence, and after its achievement exerted a dominant influence over the Libyan political scene. Because of his pre-eminent position during the initial period of Libyan nationhood, the study of the Libyan monarchy is synonymous with the study of the role of King Idris.

The Libyan constitution, establishing a government both "democratic" and "representative", granted extensive power to the King. Although "the sovereignty of the United Kingdom of Libya is vested in the nation...By the will of God the people entrust it to King Mohamed Idris al Mahdi al Sanusi and after him to his male heirs." (Article 44) It also established the ruling that "executive power shall be exercised by the King within the limits of this constitution" (Article 42) and "legislative power shall be exercised by the King in conjunction with Parliament." (Article 41) The King, as "supreme head of the State" was "inviolable" and "exempt from all responsibility." (Articles 58-59) He sanctioned and promulgated the laws, and, "if, when Parliament is not in session, exceptional circumstances arise which necessitate urgent measures, the King may issue decrees in respect thereof which shall have the force of law provided that they are not contrary to the provisions of this constitution." (Articles 62-64)

He also opened and closed parliamentary sessions and

could convene extraordinary sessions. He was the Supreme Commander of all the armed forces and had the power to declare war, conclude peace and enter into treaties which he ratified after the approval of Parliament. (Articles 65-69) He created and conferred titles and other signs of honor, and had vast powers of appointment, naming the Prime Minister, whom he could remove from office at any time, and the other Ministers at the proposal of the Prime Minister. He named diplomatic representatives and senior officials, and could remove them from office. (Articles 71-74) His influence extended into parliament with his power to appoint members of the Senate. The original constitution granted him the power of appointment of one-half of the Senators, after the first Senate was totally appointed by the King. Following the amendments of 1964, the King constitutionally appointed all twenty-four senators. (Article 94; original Article 95, later repealed)

The Sanussi dynasty in Libya rested its legitimacy upon religious and social factors. The Sanussi movement introduced a concept of legitimate central authority which was in conformity with the tribal attitudes. Consequently, the leader of the Sanussi movement became both the final religious authority and the intermediary who solved tribal disputes.<sup>3</sup> After the establishment of the Libyan State, Idris took the reign and started his rule by virtue of a religious, rather than a distinctively political pattern of authority. Thus, the Sanussi movement became a tool of legitimacy for the kingship.

In Cyrenaica, the rise of the Sanussi movement gave a sense of unity and supplied leadership which proved to be Cyrenaica's greatest asset. The founder of the movement, Mohamed Bin Ali al Sanussi, was concerned with religious reform; but when Libya was captured by Italy, Sanussi's followers rallied behind his authority to oppose Italian penetration into the country. The Sanussi order was founded on a network of Zawiyas (lodges), spread over the desert oases between the Sudan and Tripolitania, which supplied a kind of politico-religious organization under the head of the order and rescued the country from unrest and anarchy. The headquarters of the movement were established in the interior of Jaghbob, which constituted both a strategic center for consolidating Sanussi power and for spreading the creed among the tribes along the caravan routes. The Sanussi order was an Islamic revival movement which aimed at purifying Islam from accretions that had crept into it during the past few centuries. It is a Sanussi creed, following the Maliki school of law, and is adapted to desert life. It supplied the Cyrenaican tribesmen with religious zeal and a sense of unity. The challenge which aroused the tribesmen to rally around the Sanussis and fight a religious war was Italy's attack on Libya; it was taken as an encroachment on Islam's territory, and the war did not come to an end when the Sultan made peace with Italy.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, before nationalism began to take the place of religion, the Sanussis supplied the incentive for the Libyans to resist Italian occupation. But when nationalism became

the new mode of loyalty, especially among the new generations, the Sanussi movement began to decline.

In Tripolitania and Fezzan, too, Idris was recognized as the foremost national leader, but the loyalty to him was less personal and more pragmatic. In Fezzan the local tribes did not belong to the Sanussi Order, and the tribal leaders were not linked to Idris; but when the question of unification arose they were willing to trade their personal loyalty for promises of local administrative power, and to link their tribal structure with Idris within the national body. This was also true of tribal areas in Tripolitania.

The most active group in Tripolitanian nationalists was at first reluctant to see Idris assume the leadership of the country. Those seeking a republican form of government rejected the monarchy completely; more moderate Tripolitani-  
ans were willing to accept Idris as the symbol of national unity, but they sought greater constitutional restrictions on his power than were finally drawn up. Both of these groups recognized that a monarchy under Idris was a necessary condition to independence, and on these grounds they accepted him.<sup>5</sup> The tribes of Cyreniaca insisted upon Idris' leadership as prerequisite for unity.

Thus, King Idris derived his power partly from the traditional loyalty enjoyed by his family, and partly from his diplomatic activities during World Wars I and II, which resulted in his recognition as the Amir (Prince) over his people after World War I and in the final expulsion of the Italians from his country after World War II. In tribal areas,

where the Sanussi Order was widespread, King Idris' authority was supreme. But in the towns, where nationalism began to gain ground, Sanussi leadership was admittedly acknowledged as a political expediency.<sup>6</sup>

### Social change and the decline of the Regime Legitimacy

Social change can and frequently does give rise to new claimants, to elite status, and to political power. In the case of Libya, the basis for change was to be found in the discovery of oil. In the short space of 10 years (1957-1967) Libya raised her per capita gross national product from approximately \$50 to \$1,018. The trend was geometric, witnessed by the fact that the increase for 1967 over 1966 was a startling 42 percent. By 1970 Libya had risen to be the fourth largest and fastest growing oil producing country in the world.<sup>7</sup>

These transformations in the Libyan economy were accompanied by dramatic changes in the country's social fabric. In rapid succession, increasing numbers of Libyans were swept up in the oil boom. The process of urbanization achieved revolutionary dimensions as demands for housing, health services, and educational opportunities proliferated. Educational improvements were impressive. The number of children served by the nation's schools rose from 33,000 in 1951 to 170,000 in 1965. In five short years enrollment nearly doubled again. Moreover, the more than 300,000 children attending school in 1970 included at least 85 percent of Libya's school-age population.<sup>8</sup>



By 1969 it was apparent that all these facts were dramatic. No one doubted the existence of a feverish economy -- including inflation. But much of the prosperity did not affect the majority of Libyans. Rather than creating happiness and contentment, the discovery of oil beneath the desert sand had done exactly the reverse. A closer look at the structure of the Libyan society explains this. Oil revenues had indeed enriched the country and promoted advances in various sectors. At the same time they had created or sharpened social disparities that in turn generated mounting tensions. They provided prosperity, directly or indirectly, for only ten percent of the total population, while 70 percent continued to wrest their meager subsistence from a decaying agriculture. The per capita income figures are misleading because they average the wealth of the privileged few with the earnings of the poor. For example, the annual income of peasants is less than \$45.<sup>9</sup> (for what period?)

Relative deprivation and consequent frustration were encouraged by a government that, in spite of its developmental plans and public investments, was inactive and corrupt. The younger generation in Libya had long been restless because of this problem. It was a vicious cycle for the new generation. They were more urbanized, literate, and sophisticated than their parents and those in the volatile urban centers were more numerous. While, in 1957, 80 percent of all Libyans lived in rural areas farming and tending their flocks, ten years later more than two-thirds of the population had migrated to the cities.<sup>10</sup> There, they became educated, informed,

and were introduced to new ideas and way of thinking. This situation occurred at the same time that the Libyan political system was being run by men whose lives dipped into the traditional past, whose behavior was nepotistic and personal-advantage seeking.

As the process unfolded, the gulf between the traditional ruling elite and the newly emerging social groups widened. Education and exposure to other societies produced a disenchanted educated elite; the oil industry produced a working class which was alienated as a result of the government's interference with union activity and its refusal to permit the formation of a labor party. Within the security services, youthful officers bridled against the favoritism displayed by the Palace for members of a few families. A new generation was rising, anxious to assume responsible roles, outraged by rampant corruption in the organs of public administration, and determined to reform the policies and programs of the Idrisi regime.

Idris was King of the Libyans, father of his country, and he enjoyed much prestige among many of his countrymen; however his immunity to criticism decreased as fast as oil revenues rose. Students -- as usual -- were among the first to become seriously disaffected. They even expressed their discontent from time to time in mild urban skirmishes with the policy. Impatient with government ministers whom they believed had concerned themselves only with personal gain -- and fired by a Nasserite brand of Arab nationalism -- they began to demand an elimination of the Anglo-American military

bases. They also argued for a genuine independence that would liberate them from foreign domination. The newly emerging federation of Libyan workers identified with these themes and, along with the students, became exceptionally combative. Intellectuals and some small property owners joined in. A pro-Nasser demonstration in Benghazi in early 1964 set off a serious, and destructive, riot.

The reaction of King Idris and his government was very strong. The repression they ordered was not only bloody but was accomplished with a certain amount of uninhibited glee by the police who participated. Indeed, so complete and so unfettered was the application of coercion that only the increasingly nationalistic Libyan army remained physically untouched. But even it was psychologically deterred from any anti-government action; the King's loyal Cyrenaican Defense Force was just as well equipped and had twice as many  
 11  
 men.

In the days and months which followed the riots of 1964, the King and his government forbade any organized political activity, proscribed the holding of public meetings or the carrying out of workers' strikes, muzzled the press, and paralyzed Parliament. In the face of all this turmoil, the country remained calm; but it was only by the grace of the local police, the Cyrenaican Defense Force, and foreign intelligence that national stability could be preserved. The discontented lost their voice. Few channels existed through which urban interests could be aggregated and expressed. Students were contained, workers manipulated, the jails

increasingly filled with political prisoners. Only the army could make some demands. Yet, as we have seen, even that was counterbalanced by the tribal militias and the Cyrenaican Defense Force.<sup>12</sup>

The advent of technology and the diffusion of culture from other parts of the world had affected the social life in Libya. The construction of a road network tying the cities together, the urbanization of the society, the rise of a middle class, and the formation of a Libyan nation, all contributed to the disintegration of the traditional society and the weakening of religious and tribal loyalties. Consequently, the popular base of the Sanussi dynasty, especially in Cyrenica shrank. The unpopularity of King Idris, an absolute monarch who governed with the aid of a handful of corrupt followers, grew in the rest of the country, particularly among the intellectuals. They, as well as other groups in the society, perceived the King as a tool of Western imperialism. Gradually, as a result of the combination of all these factors, the royal house lost a great deal of mass support.

Nevertheless, the intellectuals could not express their opinion, for there was no appropriate means of doing so. For one thing, the broadcasting system was, as in all the Arab countries, under the government's control. Furthermore, without the government's subsidies, the newspapers would have closed down. Most often, because of fear of censorship, or the closing down of the newspapers, most of the newspapers either flattered the ruling elites or avoided antagonizing

them. Despite all these circumstances a great deal of disgust was there, but it was a latent one. Moreover, the intellectuals did not believe in the legitimacy of King Idris as a ruler in the first place. Certainly, this feeling was freely expressed after the revolution, in an article entitled "The Legitimacy of The Revolution". The author indicated that the former system was not based on the will of the people, and he added that the system was imposed by force during a crucial political period and under an imperialist plan.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MONARCHY AND THE ACTIVE GROUPS IN LIBYA

While the changing conditions of the Libyan society, economically and socially, were exerting their impact by weakening the traditional and religious legitimacy of the monarchy, they, at the same time, created the atmosphere for new ideas and beliefs to come, largely, from outside Libya to preach the notions of Arab nationalism and Arab unity. These ideas caught the imaginations of the new emerging classes. The ideas of Arab nationalism had their strongest effect on the new classes. They affected the new students, new workers, new property owners, new emerging middle class, and new junior officers in the military. These ideas were inspired, essentially, in Cairo, spread to Tripoli and Benghazi, and, finally, were cast upon the whole of urban Libya.

There is some differences of opinion as to the extent Idris actually helped foster Libyan nationalism. He certainly

helped to form the new state. Yet, the idea of nationhood was a new concept to most Libyans, and he did little to introduce its modern political meaning to his subjects, reinforcing instead their traditional ideas of tribal or personal links. Thus, after a decade, the idea of Libyan nationality was not strong enough among many to withstand the appeal of Arab nationalism.

### Public Challenge to Government Authority

The views of the Libyan people did not influence the political decisions being made. The preparation for independence was led by various traditional spokesmen with little substantial public following. Many factors explain this paucity of active public opinion. Throughout the twentieth century, Libyans had been isolated in small communities, their sense of common concern inhibited by poverty, lack of education, and poor communications.

Within a decade this situation had changed and public opinion had become an effective force in Libya. The government found it had to consult the public, and in some cases change its policies to meet public demands. Libyans no longer passively accepted government actions; they were able to form their own views concerning political questions because of new political awareness of their responsibility. At the same time the social and economic changes were easing the spread of ideas throughout the country.

The creation of the Libyan nation-state as a part of the international community and a member of the United Nations

and the League of Arab States gave the Libyan people another stimulus to develop their opinions on questions outside the small circumference of their daily lives. The area of foreign relations was much simpler and more one-dimensional than that of domestic policy, and hence more easily utilized for arousing public opinion.

The Algerian War aroused the government and the people to a strong sympathy for the aspirations of the Algerians and a distaste for the French colonial policy. The Suez crisis in 1956 reflected more ambiguities, since the government of Prime Minister Ben Halim attempted to balance its commitments to Great Britain with its support of Egypt, although popular feelings were much more clearly opposed to British policy. In the 1960's, when public opinion was becoming more active, it was also diverging from government foreign commitments. The crisis over relations with West Germany in 1964, the upheaval sparked by the Arab-Israeli War in 1967, and the continuing dispute over the presence of foreign bases in Libya confronted the government with popular demands far stronger than those engendered by most domestic issues.

As Libya entered its second decade of independence the government realized that public opinion was a political force that could no longer be ignored. Information was distributed not only by government agencies, but also by independent newspapers edited by Libyans and by foreign radio transmitters and information offices. Workers and students had a sense of their common interest in interpreting the news



and expressing their opinion about it. The social and political challenge created by the oil boom inflamed public opinion over questions of foreign policy, government manipulation of elections and harassment of the opposition, as well as the long-standing conflict between the older and younger generations in politics. By the mid-1960's, the period of an apathetic public in Libya was over, and public opinion could not be ignored by the government if it wished to preserve stability in the polity.

The population of Libya became informed about the process of making political decisions in the new states. Some groups sought to influence the way in which those political decisions were made. Groups which sought rapid change in the organization of Libyan society felt that the parliamentary system was inadequate for carrying out those changes. They believed that the King and his traditional advisors dominated the political sphere and prevented younger voices, demanding more thorough reform, from being heard. They considered Parliament lacking in initiative and unrepresentative of the forces of change because the government controlled the electoral process and there was no party system to mobilize and articulate support for change. The emerging public opinion in Libya often represented groups that were frustrated or confused by the rapid economic changes that were taking place and thus critical of the existing system.

When this new force felt restricted because the political system was not responsive, it was forced to look at non-constitutional methods to make itself heard. Although the



Libyan government structure maintained internal stability until its bloodless overthrow, particularly in comparison to the volatile changes taking place in other Arab countries, there were sporadic attempts to upset this stability. It is ironic that immediately before the monarchy was displaced by the military coup, most people in Libya felt the government had learned how to control the forces seeking to change or replace it. Various dissident groups had threatened the monarch during the 1960's, but their efforts had little connection with the group of officers who finally succeeded.

In the mid-1950's, the greatest source of opposition to the Libyan constitutional structure was over its foreign policy. In July, 1956, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company, arousing hostility from most of the western nations that were the major canal users, and support from the other Arab countries. In November, Britain and France, in cooperation with Israel, invaded Egypt in an attempt to overthrow Nasser or at least force him to back down on the canal issue. Not only were they forced to withdraw before achieving their objectives, but they also succeeded in alienating Arab public opinion.

There was a strong demand in Libya to break relations with Britain and France, and to expel British troops from their bases on Libyan soil. The government hoped to maintain its relations with Britain, while stressing its friendship with Egypt, by getting a British pledge that troops stationed in Libya would not be used against Egypt or any other Arab country.

Meanwhile, signs of internal unrest due to the influence of nationalist elements and foreign broadcasts had become apparent, and the Wali (Governor) of Tripolitania warned the government of impending disturbance. The government moved to take measures necessary for internal security. It issued a decree declaring the country in a state of seige and the provincial administrations imposed restrictions on the movements of the people. The government asked Egypt to recall its Military Attache in Libya for allegedly distributing arms to Libyans and encouraging attacks on British installations. Such attacks, despite government precautions, caused some damage to several British and American installations. Libyan government actions were received unfavorably by the Libyan public and Egypt; however they were denounced by the Egyptian Press as the tool of western imperialism. The Libyan government paid lip service to Egypt at the Beirut conference (November 13-14, 1956) held by Arab states to discuss their attitudes toward England and France, but refused to sever Libya's diplomatic relations with those powers.<sup>14</sup>

When the Iraqi army overthrew the monarchical system on July 14, 1958, the manner in which the Royal Family had been liquidated grieved King Idris. He ordered the Chief of his Royal Diwan to declare the country in a state of mourning for two weeks, beginning July 21, 1958, and refused to recognize the new regime in Iraq for three weeks.

Libyans, however, especially those who espoused the ideals of Arab Unity, displayed undisguised delight in the

liquidation of the Iraqi Royal House and regarded the event as a victory for the movement toward Arab unity led by President Nasser of Egypt. They accordingly expected the Libyan government to recognize the new Iraqi regime in line with other Arab governments. When Libya failed to extend recognition quickly, the Egyptian radio spread the news throughout the Arab world that only Libya and Israel had not yet recognized the new national government of Iraq.<sup>15</sup>

The next major challenge to the Libyan government also was inspired from abroad. In August, 1961, the Tripolitanian security police arrested a number of youths belonging to the Baath Party. The Baath Party, more correctly called the Arab Socialist Resurrection Party, resulted from a merger in 1953 of the Arab Resurrection Party and the Socialist Party, both based in Damascus. The Baath constitution defined a party program of "a national, populist, revolutionary movement fighting for Arab unity, freedom, and socialism." Its nationalism was not tied to any particular Arab state, but to the whole Arab people, rejecting "all other denominational, factional, parochial, tribal, or regional loyalties." The Party asserted that it was "a revolutionary Party: it believed that its main goals of reawakening Arab nationalism and building socialism could be achieved except by revolution and struggle. The party believed that to rely on gradual evolution and partial reform threatened these goals with failure."<sup>16</sup>

The Baath was strongest first in Syria and then in Iraq, but it had branches and supporters in most Arab countries.

The Libyan government believed the Baath program was hostile to its survival, especially in its espousal of "revolution and struggle" which seemed to be aimed particularly at conservative regimes like the Sanussi monarchy. Charges against the group were mixed, including distribution of pamphlets denouncing the government and the presence of American and British bases in Libya, and a plot to carry out a coup against the existing government.<sup>17</sup>

The trial of the arrested Baathists was held in February, 1962. Some of the 159 people who were accused were from other Arab states, including Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq, and those not in Libya were tried in absentia. The charges accused them of forming Libyan cells of the Baath Party and carrying on subversive activities aimed at overthrowing the political, economic, and social system of the state. Almost half of those charged, 72 people, were acquitted, and 87 men were found guilty. The court also ordered the dissolution of all Baath Party cells and the confiscation of their funds, papers, and books. The non-Libyans found guilty were to be deported.<sup>18</sup>

In May, 1965, a series of man-made explosions took place in one of the major oil fields. Conflicting accusations as to responsibility for the explosions quickly developed. Some believed the sabotage was a protest against the Libyan government's refusal to break diplomatic relations with West Germany as the Arab League had recommended. Most Arab countries broke relations, but Libya did not, because Germany was the largest market for oil and a major trading partner.

The Libyan Ambassador was withdrawn, but this partial step did not satisfy pan-Arab sentiment.

At the end of May a report asserted that "there is considerable evidence that the wells were dynamited by Egyptian saboteurs." Cairo sources disclaimed any responsibility, but stated that the wells were blown up by revolutionary elements opposed to the Libyan's governmental "breach in Arab unity" over the question of relations with Germany.<sup>19</sup>

The greatest challenge to the political authority of the monarchy was set off by the passions generated by the Arab-Israeli War on June, 1967. The government was threatened by mob demonstrations and violence, and by a more calculated effort to overturn it by political pressure.

The war, in which most of the fighting took place between the United Arab Republic, the leader of the Arab nationalist cause, and Israel, broke out after amonth of increasing tension throughout the eastern Mediterranean area. In Libya, as in other Arab countries, feeling against Israel was strong; public opinion demanded that the government support the cause of the Arab nation against Zionist attack. Already high feelings were further excited by Nasser's charge that the swift defeat of the Arab forces was caused by American and British air support for Israel, partially from their bases in Libya.

Disappointment about the Arab defeat turned to hostility against the government for its protection of the bases and its alleged lack of conviction in the struggle against Israel.

Although the government endorsed all the anti-Israel positions adopted by the Arab League, the dissidents called its actions in support of the measures inadequate. In addition, radicals opposed the government's decision to resume oil exports after a short time. The selective prohibition of shipments to the United States and Great Britain were too moderate to satisfy the radicals.<sup>20</sup>

Anti-government demonstrations took place in Tripoli and Benghazi. There was a mob uprising against the symbols of foreign domination, particularly foreign businesses, Jewish businesses, and American and British official buildings. In both cities many stores and cars were wrecked, and in Benghazi the USIS building was burned and the British Embassy half burned.<sup>21</sup>

The police and the army quickly restored order. Abdulkader Badri was appointed new Prime Minister to indicate the government's determination to stand fast. At that point, however, Badri found himself faced with a different kind of threat, a concentrated campaign to force major changes in government policy, if not in the organization of the government itself.

This campaign started in early July with a general strike in Tripoli, enhanced by a strike in the oil fields. It was led not by the established labor leaders, but by young political activists who had gained strong positions in several key unions. Legislators and even some cabinet members joined in the Popular Conference, demanding major changes. For ten to fifteen days this group challenged the government, and

some believed that if they had had a charismatic leader they could have seized power. But the group had no popular leader, and Badri sent tough units of the Cyrenaican security force to break the strike in Tripoli; the threat was brought under control.<sup>22</sup>

In one sense this threat to the government helped restore order, because the most active opponents to the regime identified themselves openly. Again in control, the government was able to arrest the opposition leaders and shut down their headquarters. With more time to organize, the opposition might have mounted a stronger attack on the monarchy, but the rapid developments of the June War brought the opposition into the open before it was strong enough to successfully overthrow the government.

The event was brought to a close in January, 1968, by a mass trial of 106 people, including 11 non-Libyan Arabs, accused of trying to overthrow the Libyan regime by force, and belonging to a political organization, the Arab Nationalist Movement, with that aim. The specific charges included possession of explosives, receiving commando training in other Arab countries, and using Arab students and trade unions for subversive ends.<sup>23</sup>

Certain elements have been consistent targets for domestic opposition; the most outstanding of these was the presence of foreign military bases. In Libya, as in other parts of the world, foreign military bases, regardless of their material contribution to the nation's development, were condemned by local nationalists as a violation of national



sovereignty. Even at the time of independence, when the country had almost no resources to undertake the tasks of building an administration, the strongly nationalistic National Congress Party and others demanded the removal of the British military installations.

Generally, the government officials valued the financial return won in exchange for the bases, and even in the 1960's when oil revenue made grants from abroad unnecessary, they appreciated the security provided by the presence of military forces. The conservative Libyan leaders feared both revolutionary neighbors, Algeria and Egypt, and believed that foreign troops helped protect their independence. Yet, they could not totally ignore nationalist attacks on their policy of allowing the bases to stay. In times of widespread Arab nationalist sympathy, the government had to take steps to bring the base treaties to an end as the people demanded. When the peaks of Arab nationalism receded, the government slipped back to accepting the status quo of the bases.

The issue burst into new intensity after the attack on the bases by President Nasser in 1964. In 1967 the government again faced a popular demand for the termination of the base agreements. Again it temporized, publicly committing itself to negotiations to bring an end to the foreign presence, but privately still trying to delay. The American base, and a small British force, remained in Libya until pressure from the military government forced them to withdraw in 1970. Throughout the 1960's, the government was uncertain whether greater internal stability would result from giving



in to the public demand for an end to the bases, or from relying on the foreign military presence to protect it from incursions from its neighbors.

One important characteristic of the 1960's was the focusing of the growing opposition to the government's political authority. Issues of foreign policy, such as the presence of Western bases, relations with West Germany and Libyan involvement in the Arab-Israeli struggle, acted as a catalyst to stimulate challenges to the conservative monarchy. Even though economic and technical ties with the West continued, many younger Libyans continued to be attracted to Arab socialism and other anti-Western radical Arab views. At a time when Arab relations were becoming increasingly volatile, the Libyan ruling groups were failing to develop among Libyan students and youth a comparatively strong sense of Libyan nationalism. Until the fall of 1969, King Idris and his advisors managed to preserve their leadership in the face of these pressures; yet, the growing bitterness over foreign policy that had developed during the decade formed a public opinion receptive to the overthrow of the monarchy.

King Idris had done the utmost possible to postpone the revolutionary day of reckoning. He imposed a "...blockade to prevent contagion from the virulent nationalism that had already ravaged the Middle East and to keep the budding opposition from establishing this with neighboring countries. Anyone who was politically suspect was refused permission to travel abroad. News agencies were tightly controlled and

the local press confined to publishing official communiques, articles on subjects as anodyne as they were boring."<sup>24</sup>

But the Libyans did not live in a sealed jar, thanks to the transistor radio, students sent abroad to further their studies and recruitment in other Arab countries of technicians and teachers, whose services were indispensable to the economic and cultural awakening. The public listened to the anti-imperialist indictments of Cairo's "Voice of the Arabs", and impregnated themselves with the "scientific" or "Arab" socialism preached by Damascus, or Cairo. The Palestinian problem, toward which they might have felt aloof, became embedded in their national and social aspiration.<sup>26</sup>

Militant nationalism tinged with socialism found its most fertile soil among the discontented; in a working class which showed itself to be exceptionally combative and among small property owners, civil servants, students and intellectuals. Their principal demands were the elimination of the Anglo-American bases, which they alleged furthered "Israeli aggression," the attainment of a "genuine independence" that would liberate the local economy from foreign bondage, and the right to exercise civil and personal freedoms, in short:

The failure of the old order to adapt and respond, and its technique of sending out the Cyreniacan Defense Force to put down everyone who yelled in protest, was more indicative of weakness than strength and of decay than development. Idris, through the image of his person, and in spite of the many disagreeing

tribal factions and city groups with which he had to work, had given his homeland a sense of identity and nationhood. He had gotten Libya off to a good start. He failed, however, to arrive at second base, refusing to sponsor the development of absorptive institutions and proscribing the institutions that attempted an analogous function on their own (political parties, for example). The regime's nepotism, the requirement of political docility, the necessity to extend favors, and the need to ignore bureaucratic corruption in order to acquire mobility in the absence of family connections were not only insufficient means of absorption but clearly unacceptable ones as well. Idris had allowed Libyan politics to deteriorate because of the machinations of cliques, selfserving exchanges among traditional lords, and 'profit-taking' among corrupt, incompetent bureaucrats.

The moral, we suspect, is that it is only under unusual circumstances (as, for example, when there is a colonial presence) that new social forces and traditional institutions, especially political ones, can get along. In the absence of such a 'negative unifying force', the legitimacy, or utility, of the old order and its leadership decays; and it becomes increasingly necessary to maintain order by coercion-police power-jails, harrassment, deportation, and execution. In Libya, values and attitudes of the new socially mobilized groups had changed. The old monarchy and the religious and clerical foundation upon which much of it rested -- including the Sanusi order and traditional tribal organization -- were seen as standing in the way of progress.<sup>26</sup>

The monarchy did not try to develop its traditional views and give access to the new emerging ideas. Thus it alienated itself from the new forces, and consequently, lost its legitimacy among the masses.

## CHAPTER III

## THE CRISIS OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Participation is one of many problems which face any political system. Political participation means the demands from groups in the society to have a part in the decision making of the system.<sup>1</sup> The participation of the population in political life is an important phenomenon; thus it should not be ignored by the ruling elite. The problem, or challenge of participation commonly has to do with rapid increases in the volume and intensity of demands for a share in the decision making of the political system by various groups and strata in the domestic society. Such increases in demands for participation are usually associated with, or have the consequences of producing some form of political infrastructure -- political groups, cliques, and factions, and representative legislative assemblies. Demands for participation may also challenge a political system to develop political competence and the attitudes associated with it among groups in the society and responsive attitudes and bargaining skills among the elite.<sup>2</sup>

In societies with no political parties playing the political role of recruiting individuals aggregating and articulating interests, political participation cannot be organized on a collective basis, but rather on an individual basis. However, it should not be forgotten that the social structure, i.e., family, kinship, clan, tribe, play the

party's role. Moreover, some other social and other organizations such as student unions, trade unions, and others may play the same role as that of a political party.

This chapter will deal with the problem of political participation in Libya, and how the regime was affected by the absences of political organizations (for example, parties) and the inadequacy of a political institution (Parliament) through which the masses would have been able to channel their demands and support to the system.

Besides the absence of political parties and the inadequacy of Parliament, other groups and organizations, such as labor unions and student unions, were suppressed by the monarchical regime. Due to this fact, the active groups in the society, especially labor forces, students, and intellectuals, became more and more alienated from the regime and ceased to identify themselves with its norms and institutions. And as a result, these groups resorted to street demonstrations and underground political activities as the only means to voice their demands and feelings.

#### POLITICAL PARTIES IN LIBYA

No sooner had Libya been liberated from Italian rule than the politically conscious public both in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica began to agitate for participation in the administration and demanded the formation of political parties. Some of the political parties had their origins either in groups formed during the early period of Italian occupation or in societies founded by Libyans in exile. When Italian

rule ended, the return of the exiled leaders and the relative freedom enjoyed under British administration prompted the leaders to resume political activities. Nationalism, though confined to the few and the articulate, became the dominating force, and the masses were stirred to agitate for the transfer of authority from foreign to native hands as the national aspiration of the entire country. This spirit, though awakened by the events of World War II, was by no means new, for it was part of a larger wave of political consciousness that swept the whole Middle East following the war.

While in exile many Libyans took an active part in the political activities of neighboring Arab countries, partly in sympathy with their coreligionists in their struggle to liberate their countries, but mainly because such a struggle was directed against western colonial rule generally. In their participation with such activities, they had not only learned at first hand the technique of nationalist agitation as practiced in Cairo, Beirut and Damascus, but also the tactics employed in opposing foreign influence. Some of them took active part in nationalist agitation and participated in public meetings and street demonstrations. After their return to Libya, they were prompted to stage similar performances against foreign rule when circumstances permitting the expression of political opinions became more favorable.<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, a new generation had arisen within Libya itself during the thirty years of Italian domination. Although Italian policy aimed at keeping these young men

immune from nationalist contamination, the tide of nationalism in neighboring Arab lands during the interwar period was so high that its influence was bound to be felt in Libya. Some young Libyans had been able to study abroad and were exposed to nationalist influence as were their exiled compatriots, although, upon their return home, they had to be discreet about their nationalist aspirations.<sup>4</sup>

#### Umar al-Mukhtar Group in Cyrenaica

In the opposition to the group of elderly men and tribal chiefs, there were a few enthusiastic young men who felt keenly that elder politicians had been too much preoccupied with Cyrenaican parochialism to pay proper attention to the interests of the Libyan nation at large. Most of these young men had been influenced by the idea of nationalism as expounded and diffused by the Arab Press. Some had studied in Egypt and were greatly influenced by the political ideas of her leaders. While in Egypt they witnessed the establishment of the Arab League and hoped that Libya would be re-established as an independent state to play her role in this newly created Arab organization. But these men, though full of enthusiasm, had not yet been organized into a formal group and therefore were weak and impotent. The idea that young men should play an increasing role in the future shaping of their country was acknowledged by many leaders, but it was particularly prevalent among those who had been in exile when their country was still languishing under foreign domination.



While in Egypt, a few Libyan young men began to organize a society early in 1942. Finding the conditions of war not quite favorable for a political organization, it was decided to call it "the Umar al-Mukhtar Sporting Society",\* but privately the members met to discuss political questions. The founders were men who had been watching the political development in Arab lands with a keen eye and hoped that once their country was liberated from foreign control, she would take her place in Arab political circles.<sup>5</sup>

After the expulsion of Axis forces from Cyrenaica, the Mukhtar group began to return to Libya. The group formally declared the formation of the society in Benghazi on April 4, 1943. They sought the support of a few elder men in order to widen its appeal to the public. The society was formally registered as a "club". The main purpose of which was allegedly to promote cultural and spor activities, but it was quite apparent from the very beginning that its ultimate objective was political. Very soon, less than a year after the establishment of the club, its press began to criticize the British authorities and the younger members posed as the spokesmen of the country, demanding the fulfillment of their country's national aspiration.

During 1945-56, the club underwent a change. It became avowedly political. Older members of the leadership were replaced by younger men, and the club became, to all intents and purposes, a youth movement.<sup>6</sup>

\* After the name of the resistance leader against Italy.



When the four Power Commission arrived in Libya and the Palestine question became the subject of public discussion, the club issued manifestos expressing its opinion on these questions. Its members participated in such activities as organizing a demonstration on the occasion of the United Nations resolution declaring the independence and unity of Libya. The name of Umar al-Mukhtar was dropped by the club upon the protest of the Mukhtar family against the use of the name, and the laws of association and the press, issued in 1950, forced the club to separate its cultural and sporting from its political activities. Due to circumstances, the Mukhtar group applied for permission to form, under the association law, a new political organization called the National Association, but the new organization continued unofficially to be called the Mukhtar Club.<sup>7</sup>

When Tripolitanian leaders, who had been given no assurance of independence and were fearful that their country might revert to Italian controls called for unity with Cyrenaica, the Mukhtar group, believing in the advantages of unity between the two provinces, proved to be more receptive to the Tripolitanian call than the elder politicians and became Cyrenaica's most outspoken advocates for national unity. The call for national unity gave the Mukhtar group a wider national appeal, but it accentuated its differences with the advocates of Cyrenaican parochialism.<sup>8</sup>

However, in 1951, after some encounters with the authorities, the government issued a decree dissolving the Mukhtar organization and confiscated all its assets. The

suppression of the Mukhtar Club by no means ended the agitation, since the group resorted to clandestine activities and the rift between the old and the new generations was widened.<sup>9</sup>

### Political Parties in Tripolitania

Upon the cessation of hostilities, political consciousness received further impetus when political exiles and students who had studied abroad returned home. When these were not given posts or patriotic activities were not recognized, they joined the ranks of malcontents. This situation coincided with the rising tide of nationalism in the Arab world, which had already reached a high pitch of excitement after the War.

Oppressed for a long time under Italian rule and denied the rights to organize political association, Tripolitanian leaders quickly took advantage of the freedom given to organize political parties when the War was over. Unlike Cyrenaica, where Idris proved a balanced leadership, Tripolitania had long suffered from the lack of organized leadership and from factional differences which reduced the country to a state of virtual anarchy. Feudal and family loyalties continued to play significant roles in the shaping of political groups; nationalism, which had not yet taken root in the country, could not supersede these traditional loyalties. As a result, numerous political groups emerged and their leaders failed to co-ordinate their activities.

Among the many political parties, three emerged as more

powerful and better organized than others were: the Nationalist Party, the United National Front, and the Free National Bloc. However, inspite of the existence of many political parties and groups, they agreed upon the fundamental principles of unity and independence; they demanded:<sup>10</sup>

1. Complete independence,
2. Unity of the country, and
3. Membership in the Arab League.

But the most controversial issue among the parties was the Sanussi leadership. The Parties were split between advocating and opposing Idris' leadership. However, it became quite clear to many Tripolitanian patriots that Libyan unity would not be achieved unless Sanussi leadership were acknowledged in Tripolitania. The political parties in Tripolitanian found it necessary to co-ordinate their activities and then agreed to form a single body called the Tripolitania National Congress. The National Congress found it necessary to recognize Idris leadership over the whole of Libya.<sup>11</sup>

After achieving independence, the government held the first elections in February, 1952. The National Congress Party, believing that the Majority was on its side, decided to participate in the elections. When the elections were completed, the result was a victory for the Congress Party in Tripoli City, and an overwhelming victory for pro-government candidates in the country.

The defeat of the Congress Party in the tribal area of Tripolitania came as a surprise to the Party's leaders who

had expected an overwhelming victory. Believing that government officials had tampered with the elections, the tribes, inspired by Congress leaders, rushed to government buildings and destroyed public property, cut telephone wires, and interrupted transportation. The government reacted quickly to stop the threatened rebellion. The principal leaders were arrested and the Party was dissolved.<sup>12</sup>

From the time Libya was emancipated from Italian control, there was keen interest in organizing political parties along western lines in order to develop a democratic form of government. Before the war, political parties existed in the form of groups revolving around leading feudal or tribal chiefs, but they would hardly be called parties in the modern sense of the term. This traditional pattern persisted, although some of the parties that developed in Tripolitania showed a tendency to invite the public to participate in political activities.

The programs of the Tripolitanian parties consisted of three basic principles: complete independence, unity of Libya, and membership in the Arab League. The Cyrenaican parties, except for the Umar al-Mukhtar group, stressed local self-government within the larger Libyan unity and demanded that Idris be the head of state.

Although some of the Tripolitanian parties and the Umar al-Mukhtar group of Cyrenaica advocated the principles of democracy, all the parties were based on a traditional pattern in structure. Nor did they, except for the Umar al-Mukhtar Club, carry on any important social or cultural

activities in the country. They could hardly be called popular, in the sense that they included the people, nor did the public outside the large towns have a clear understanding of the significance of party platforms. However, the parties, especially the Umar al-Mukhtar in Cyrenaica and the National Congress in Tripolitania, claimed that they enjoyed the support of the majority of the people. The leaders as a rule were either members of well-known families or wealthy city dwellers. Among the tribes, the chiefs spoke for the tribesmen and they, especially in Cyrenaica, were under Sanussi influence.

After the promulgation of the Constitution and the declaration of independence, the National Congress Party was dissolved and the Mukhtar Club, even before Cyrenaica had joined the Union, was closed. The remaining political parties failed to achieve their purpose and were dissolved shortly after gaining independence. Since the achievement of independence was the principal reason for the establishment of the parties, there seemed to be no chance for the reappearance of new parties. They had to wait for new principles to be formulated which would appeal to the political conscious public. There were strong indications that new ideas were gradually spreading among the younger generation. But the ruling authority was not well-disposed to the reappearance of a party system. Thus political groups had to work underground.

In the late 1950's and mid-1960's new underground parties came into existence. These parties were influenced by the

Arab Nationalist ideas preached by the different groups outside Libya. The largest influence was that of the Baath Party and the Arab Nationalist movement. These parties regarded secondary school and university students as important elements to be politically won over. But it should be pointed out that these parties were largely small urban groups, sharing the same goals, i.e., emancipating the Libyan region from foreign rule, founding a socialist revolutionary political system, and leading the country toward freedom, socialism, and Arab unity. However, in spite of these similarities, there was uneasiness between the different underground political parties in the 1960's, and that was a reflection of the conflict between these parties outside Libya. In the early 1960's the Baath movement was broken up after leaflets were circulated. The members of the clandestine Arab Nationalist movement were arrested and tried in the late 1960's for, allegedly, conspiring against the system.<sup>13</sup>

The social conditions in Libya played an essential role in hindering the emergence of political parties in Libya. However, the development of political parties in Libya was blocked essentially by opposition from the ruling authority. This opposition grew out of King Idris' ambivalent attitude towards the concept of political opposition. He appreciated the theoretical value of an opposition within the parliamentary system, but as the dominant figure in the government knew a permanent opposition would be directed against him. He also realized that the main issue available for an

opposition party would concern foreign affairs, and would seek to replace his pro-western policy with a strong pan-Arab position involving the expulsion of Western bases. Since the pro-Western policy was very acceptable to Idris and very much the result of his personal conviction, he was reluctant to tolerate any political party or opposition structure.

The absence of political parties in Libya was becoming increasingly risky as the population acquired greater political awareness. As long as there were no political organizations to channel dissent and discussion, the population remained highly susceptible to any small but disciplined political group which wanted to make a radical departure from the existing government structure. Until its overthrow, the government used effective police power and controlled the press to prevent the appearance of any political organization it considered dangerous. Throughout the 1960's, the increased Libyan wealth made the government more fearful of subversion at the same time that more Libyans sought political outlets. If the coup had not overthrown it, the monarchy would have been faced with increased political pressure; if it had not granted greater freedom and responsibility, greater political repression would have been required to control the internal discontent.

#### THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT IN MONARCHICAL LIBYA

The monarchical constitution described Libya as "a democratic independent sovereign State" and remarked that "its system of government is representative." (Preamble, Article 2)



Thus, the National Assembly established a Parliament to exercise legislative power in conjunction with the King: "the King promulgate the laws when they have been approved by Parliament in accordance with the procedure prescribed by this Constitution." (Article 41) Parliament consisted of two chambers, a Senate and a House of Representatives, embodying compromise between adherents of a unitary and a federal state and between supporters of full democracy and believers in a more oligarchical system. The Senators were indirectly chosen to represent the provinces. Each province had eight Senators serving for eight year terms, half of whom were to be selected by the King and half were to be chosen by the provincial legislative councils. The minimum age for Senators was forty, and members of the Royal family were eligible for appointment. (Articles 94-99)

Deputies in the House of Representatives were elected by direct popular vote, with one deputy for every twenty thousand inhabitants or fraction of that number exceeding half. They had to be over thirty years old, and could not be members of the Royal family. Each deputy was elected for the duration of one four year term of four sessions, unless there was a special dissolution. After a dissolution, elections had to be held within three months. (Articles 100-107)

There had been four different Houses elected; the first in 1952, the second in 1956, the third in 1960, and the fourth in 1964.<sup>14</sup> From the very beginning there had been a noticeable eager desire on the part of political leaders to enter Parliament, especially when opposition parties were still in



evidence, in order to influence government policy. After the dissolution of parties, most of the candidates in the second election were government nominees and the electorate showed less eagerness to go to the polls than in the first election, because of the rigid control exercised by the government. In the third election in 1960, there was a noticeably greater freedom, resulting in the victory of candidates who conducted vigorous campaigns on their own. Several candidates who held seats in the first two elections lost in the third, and new faces, including former members of opposition parties, for the first time won seats in the new Parliament. The new opposition elements proved to be instrumental in the fall of one Cabinet.<sup>15</sup>

Parliament did not exert a great deal of initiative or influence in Libyan political decision making. This was partly attributable to the electoral system in which political parties were banned and campaigns were fought on a personal basis rather than on substantive issues. In Libya, as in many developing countries, the elections were manipulated. The over-all trend was merely to reduce the opposition's chances of success at the polls. Opposition appeared to the ruling elites as treason. Another basic weakness in the electoral system stemmed from the Libyan social character, found in other countries as well; the tribal and parochial nature of Libyan society fostered voting on grounds of personality or family or tribal connections, rather than on national issues. The strong local loyalties inhibited the formation of national political groups that could define positions and

mobilize support. All the pre-independence parties existed only in the provincial organizations, and their demise prevented any effort to build national bodies. Personal pretige had long been the crucial measure for selecting tribal leadership, and even in the urban areas kinship and mutual assistance rather than policy distinction have linked leaders and their supporters.

#### OTHER GROUPS IN LIBYA

In a model parliamentary system, non-governmental institutions complement parliament; they represent specific groups organized for specific goals, and help to channel information about the desires of the people directly to the government. When the parliament inadequately represents or asserts the wishes of the people, the independent groups in society may try to play a greater political role. This political role by non-governmental groups can remain within the legal and parliamentary systems, or it may be forced into extra-legal demonstrations and protests. In Libya, both aspects appeared. Independent institutions grew up, but often without strong cohesion or leadership, and consequently political frustration drove dissidents into the streets.

The most important areas of political concern outside of the government were among the labor unions and the students. The position of labor changed as technical and economic development moved a greater percentage of the labor force off the land and into urban manufacturing and service operations. The creation of an urban labor force was rapidly

followed by the formation of unions to focus demands for economic and social benefits. When these demands were not peacefully met, strikes and other violence took place. Students were less organized than the workers, but had broader demands for change. The student population had increased rapidly, and had become the most vocal advocates of pan-Arab ideas. Because the students were not well organized and had slight opportunities for peaceful political pressure, their grievances most often took the form of street demonstrations, frequently leading to clashes with the authorities.

Other groups in society, particularly the military, also had potential for influencing the political decision-making process. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to discussing the role of labor and the military in Libyan politics. The students role will not be discussed because it was dealt with in Chapter I.

### The Role of Labor in Libyan Politics

Independence brought Libya its first opportunity for economic development, as Libyans gained control of their own resources for the first time in the modern era. In most development schemes the major emphasis is industrialization, and even in Libya where the main resource was agriculture there was an attempt to establish some industry to process agricultural goods and provide employment for surplus agricultural labor. This shifted a significant portion of the population from agriculture and stock raising, the major

economic activities before independence, to industry, sales and services, and mining.

The earliest Libyan trade union movement was linked to the Italian unions through Dr. Enrico Cibelli, an ex-Fascist official, a lawyer, and a journalist, who had become a Communist or at least a "Social Marxist." He led the Tripolitanian Workers Union in the late 1940's, which was about 70 percent Italian in membership, but which became the training ground for many Arabs who left the Tripolitanian Workers Union to form unions of their own. Tripolitanian workers were more politically aware than Libyans in general, and widely supported independence and the program of the National Congress Party. Sharing a reformist zeal and anti-foreign feeling, some of the Arab union leaders broke away from Cibelli's organization, even before independence was established. In 1949 the Union of Libyan Labor was formed; in 1951 this became the Federation of Libyan Trade Unions, an amalgamation of twenty separate unions, and in 1952 it was renamed the Libyan General Labor Union (LGLU). Although based in Tripolitania, the LGLU dominated labor over the whole country.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, the number of unions grew; their members increased, and several union federations emerged. The leading federation, the National Federation of Trade Unions (NFTU), was formed in 1963, when the Petroleum Workers and the Printers broadened the membership of the old LGLU. This move was challenged primarily by the Libyan Federation of Labor and Professions Unions (LFLPU) formed in 1959,

and considered both by its own leaders and by the leaders of the NFTU to be more ideological and political in its concept than the role of unions. Its founders were inspired by radical ideas learned from Baathists and Egyptian Arab socialists. Unions in Cyrenaica, joined in the Federation of Libyan Trade Unions (FLTU), were weaker than those in Tripolitania, since labor conditions in Cyrenaica were less developed than in Tripolitania, and labor leaders were less experienced. Although the two major federations planned a merger in 1965 and talked of joining with the Cyrenaican federation, nothing came of these plans, primarily because of personal rivalries.<sup>17</sup>

In the later part of the 1950's, labor unions began to show their strength by work stoppages, sometimes for purely economic and sometimes for mixed economic and political ends. Major political clashes between the unions and the Libyan government took place in 1967, in the context of the general disturbance over the Arab-Israeli war. In the crisis of the 1967 June War the Libyan government faced a new challenge from militant labor leaders. It was government policy to maintain order and protect its economy, particularly the vital oil exports; certain radical union leaders wanted to use Libya's resources against Israel and its Western allies, and to the advantage of the popular wave of pan-Arab enthusiasm generated by the War to attack the conservative Libya monarchy. In defiance of the government's attempt to maintain ordinary economic activity, those leaders called a general strike in the oil fields and a boycott against American and British

shipping. These decisions were made by young, militant, radicals, skilled in parliamentary tactics, bright and hard-working, who had recently taken over leadership of the crucial petroleum and dock workers unions to use them for political purposes. The government responded firmly, using police and military troops to break the strikes and to arrest the militant leaders. In this way the government succeeded in disarming the labor movement as a potential political force.<sup>18</sup>

Generally, the demands of the labor groups in Libya could be understood in two ways: first, there is the fact that those who were proletarianized by the power of Libyan oil revenues wanted both a good economic life and a limited form of political freedom; second, there is also the fact that those who were fleeing from the wretched life of the rural areas to get a place in the labor force of the urban areas wanted not only a good life, but also opportunities to redress grievances whenever things go astray. But both groups of people needed channels of communication by which to deal with their environment. The urban worker needed an organization which would aggregate and articulate his interests, and the rural emigre needed an organization which would try to articulate politically what they (workers) felt socially and economically, in brief, the main demands of labor in Libya were political participation and more freedom in the realm of collective bargaining.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the monarchy, Libyan labor unions had a potential for political organization that was undermined

both by union weakness and by government policy. Government and labor leaders cooperated to achieve economic and political stability, and neither felt the need to work for the reality of independent unions. The government wanted to prevent disturbances in the economy and was willing to provide wage increases and subsidies to union activities, such as their newspapers, to achieve it, backed up by the threat of repression if necessary. Union leaders were satisfied with their economic benefits, and were happy to prevent strikes of their unions, or tests of their uncertain leadership. Both sides realized that unions were not as strong as their officers claimed, but they also knew that unions were among the few organized and disciplined groups in Libya, and a serious challenge to government authority was possible, as the events of 1967 established. The monarchy generally succeeded in its policy of paternalistic benefits and control, but the labor movement had and will continue to have a serious potential for political influence.

### The Role of the Military

Almost every nation considers one measure of its strength to be its military power, and new nations especially are anxious to build up their military forces to show that they are on an equal level with older nation states. In some new states the military have come to assume a more comprehensive responsibility than that of defending the sovereign government. Increasingly, the army has come to play a political role, since it attracts the brightest and most ambitious youth



of the country, trains them in leadership and technical skills, and imbues them with contempt for the civilian authorities until they finally seize control of the government.

The military begins to see itself as an equalitarian institution, highly trained and efficient, dedicated to preserving the national tradition while leading the process of national development. In contrast, the civilian politicians are often corrupt, and appear confused and hesitant about what the country needs to fully break away from its colonial past. During the 1950's and early 1960's, the notion of military government was gaining increasing respectability, not only in the countries where they were established, but among political scientists and analysts elsewhere. Before that time, military governments had been characterized by their appearance in the Balkan and Latin American countries, where they tended to be administratively incompetent, inert, and authoritarian. In the 1950's, however, a new style of military rule emerged, characterized by itself, and often by others, as dynamic and self-sacrificing, and committed to "progress and the task of modernizing transitional societies that have been subverted by the 'corrupt practices' of the politicians." These governments became particularly well regarded in the United States because they often stopped social disorder and the spread of communism.<sup>20</sup>

This image was particularly pervasive in the Middle East, among Libya's neighbors and other members of the Arab League. In Egypt, the military led by Gamal Abdel Nasser had taken over the government in 1952 and replaced civilian parliamentary



rule with a government by military officers. Iraq was beset by the same stagnation and inefficiency which were existing in Egypt, and which drove many of the young men of the lower and middle classes into the army where they developed increasing resentment against the monarchy, finally striking out against it with violence and bloodshed in 1958. The military government led by Colonel Kassem proved to be much less effective and more short lived than Nasser's, but it opened the way for a series of the military governments repudiating the weaknesses of the previous constitutional rule.

Libya's neighbor to the west, Algeria, came under military rule in the mid-1960's, when a group of officers over-turned the revolutionary government of the anti-French rebellion in the name of more efficient national development. In Sudan, too, the military had taken control of the government, and in Syria the army had intervened many times against the civilian administration, although it had shown itself to be equally unskilled in orderly rule.<sup>21</sup> Libya repeated this pattern of military takeover in September, 1969. Before that time the army had exerted almost no influence on the government, but had become a more conspicuous symbol of national strength. The army was small and weak in the first decade of the monarchy because of the shortage of money, but after 1960 it grew in numbers and equipment.

Yet even with this expansion, in 1967 the army was still smaller than the internal police and security force. The police had been from the early days of independence well-

trained and had sufficient salaries to attract capable recruits. The security force had been organized on a provincial basis until the constitutional change in 1963 when it was brought under the Ministry of Interior. This security force was the effective police power within the country; it had good morale, because of its good administration and also because it strongly represented tribal groups, and was unified by both tribal ties and loyalty to the Sanussi Order. Consequently, it was loyal to the King, and was supported by him as the central means of maintaining domestic order. The regular army resented the strength of this security body.<sup>22</sup>

Within the army there was a sharp division between the older officers originating in the Sanussi tribes, and the younger officers who resented the power held by the original group of officers who were generally less well educated than the younger men, but who were powerful enough to block the advancement of the younger men.<sup>23</sup>

The younger officers were torn between their strong feelings of loyalty and service to the nation, headed by the monarchy, and their resentment at the conservative policies of King Idris' government. In the crisis of 1967, the army was instrumental in restoring order, but a small number of officers took their units, against orders, into Egypt to join the fight.<sup>24</sup>

Many observers realized the young army officers were frustrated with government policy, but the extent of the frustration was unclear until the successful military seizure

of power. For years a progressively growing number of young officers had been receiving training outside Libya. Their political ideas had been developing along lines compatible with those held by students, workers, and intellectuals. They wanted a new Libya, a modern Libya, and a nationalistic Libya. The officers who overthrew the monarchy were young, mainly in their twenties and thirties, and much more in line with radical Arab views of the east than with the conservative views of their own government.<sup>25</sup>

The exercise of force and not giving access to the politically active groups to channel their demands and needs through political organizations and institutions created a gap between the ruling elites and the emerging groups of students, labor, intellectuals, and junior officers. These new groups found their beliefs and norms incompatible with those of the ruling elite. The monarchy did not try to develop its traditional views and to give access to the new emerging ideas. Thus it alienated itself from the new forces, and consequently, from the masses.

The political rulers were able to withstand pressures from opposition groups, mainly by suppression and by not giving democratic access to the general members of the society. And it was apparently this exercise of force that gave rise to the eventual demise of the monarchy in Libya.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident from the circumstances surrounding the Libyan achievement of national independence, that the titles and the institutions of a nation-state do not automatically call into being a sense of national loyalty binding the population and the new structure to each other. Loyalties in the pre-modern state were of a different quality, being at the same time smaller in scale and limited to the family, village or tribe, and much broader in scope, as in the devotion to Islam as the basis of political as well as religious loyalties. Modern government makes extensive demands upon its adherents, while being built on a foundation that undermines traditional loyalties. New loyalties must be created to justify the claims of government.

Libya, having inherited a constitution and political system that the mass of the population was hardly aware of, clearly fits into this pattern. The choice of a political structure was made by a small group of Libyan leaders who were very much aware that the United Nations General Assembly, which had decreed their independence, expected them to adopt a modern representative system. The parliamentary structure they set up was based on federalism, with the electoral law upholding traditional tribal organizations, in order to make it more appropriate for Libyan conditions. Nevertheless, the modern political system adopted after independence in the pre-mobilized Libyan society, failed to function as it was supposed to.

It was clear in the early years of Libyan independence that links between the government and the population were weak. The federal structure had several areas in which contact with the people was limited, but localism and separatism within the three provinces made it the only acceptable form. Many of the governments' scarce administrative skills and resources were dissipated in the task of smoothing relations between provincial and federal centers rather than in meeting the challenge of economic and social construction. The Libyan polity lacked social as well as political cohesion. The urbanized inhabitants of Tripoli felt that they had little in common with the herdsmen of the desert tribes, nor did the traditional religious leaders of Cyrenaica share many values with the slowly growing group of young educated Libyans. There were no common bonds of education or experience, and few links of radio, newspaper, and easy interaction along roads or by plane to foster the exchange of ideas. Meanwhile, the appeal of Arab nationalism troubled a society which was still unsure of its own values. The appeal of Arab nationalism was so strong among the Libyan masses that it was reflected in their opposition to their government's foreign policy.

General foreign relations posed an implicit threat to the stability of the Libyan monarchy as it tried to preserve its pro-West policies, and to maintain its closer ties with the Western allies. Libya's identity as an Arab state posed more volatile issues; the monarchy tried to preserve the western military bases while calming pan-Arab attacks on them.

The periodic eruption of hostilities with Israel ignited an emotional commitment to Arab nationalism in Libya as elsewhere in the Arab countries, and Arab nationalism often seemed incompatible with the moderate Libyan monarchy.

Young Libyans, anxious for change, looked for a comprehensive ideology. Libyan nationalism was only occasionally vital enough to satisfy their searchers, and depending on external and internal events, they fluctuated between commitment to a Libyan or to a wider Arab ideology. Government leaders under the monarchy generally failed to appreciate the importance of satisfying the need for an ideological mystique; they concentrated on material improvement without fulfilling the emotional needs of the restless younger generation.

The burden of meeting these challenges fell on the internal political system. Under the monarchy, Libya witnessed economic and technical development, but political progress was less conclusive. The traditional ruling families gave first priority to stability as a basis for strengthening new political and economic institutions. They tried to ensure stable growth by limiting political freedom, and restricting participation in parliament, elections, and non-governmental organizations. Expression of public opinion was postponed until some later date when the political fabric would be more cohesive. Yet, this restriction on individual freedom for the sake of stability was in itself a threat to Libya's freedom and the sought-after stability.

By the end of the 1960's, the Libyan people were increasingly anxious to participate more fully in political

decisions that affected them. The throne under Idris had been a powerful symbol of national unity, but Idris' extensive powers were less welcome as Libyans sought to assert their individual judgement in governmental questions. Parliament would have to become more responsive to popular demands and assume greater responsibilities within the government in guiding and evaluating the actions of the executive. Elections would have to become completely free from government control or even the rumors of such control, and political parties would have to be allowed to reflect and express popular issues. As political institutions expanded their interactions with the people, the people needed greater freedom to build viable interest groups, such as labor unions, student organizations, and political parties.

The Libyan government was highly traditional before the revolution, although its traditionalism was cloaked in the garment of modern constitutionalism. Furthermore, it has been argued in this study that the processes of modernization during the monarchical regime gave rise to increasing tension and disruption ultimately undermining the monarchical system.

This study also has argued that the monarchy failed to deal effectively with the growing political restlessness of the middle classes. The monarch's disability was both structurally and ideologically determined. Structurally, the system was not open and flexible enough to accommodate political demands of the newly politicized groups within the society. Ideologically, the ruling elites' values seemed quite irreconcilable with those of the politically active



groups.

The fact that no serious efforts were made by the traditional elites to accommodate the new forces in Libyan society explained the political instability which characterized Libya in the 1960's. The rulers could have avoided their downfall if they could have reconciled their traditional vested interests with the political demands of the emerging middle class. The Libyan Monarchy did not recognize the fact that his power depended upon the support of his people. By denying access to the politically active groups, he was safeguarding his political position, but at the same time he was indirectly undermining his legitimacy.

During the process of modernization, the people were politically socialized toward values and beliefs that were in contrast with the ruling elites' values and attitudes. This ideological contradiction, along with the effect of modernization itself, created a crisis of legitimacy, which was deepened by the absence of effective means of popular political participation in the decision-making processes.

Because of Idris' inability, or lack of desire, to develop his regime politically, he eventually alienated the new emerging classes. In the long run, therefore, the King's destruction of political party activity and his failure to create alternative means of channeling the energies of the socially mobilized classes, greatly served to produce a legitimacy crisis. As the old traditional patterns of social control broke down, few new ones emerged.

In the failure of positive action, the new military



regime will be no more immune to the legitimacy dilemma than was Idris. More instability can be anticipated if the new regime fails to develop institutions that can satisfactorily absorb the newly mobilized group into the social and political system.

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ARAB NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY  
IN MONARCHICAL LIBYA: A STUDY IN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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Political stability is an important consideration for any regime, but it is an especially important problem in the developing countries. In their quest for modernization under-developed countries find themselves engaged in vast and complicated processes to rebuild the structure of government in order to promote efficiency, stability, and development. Less-developed countries are also faced with the task of changing the traditional outlooks of their citizenry, and of encouraging the emergence of new ideas and ways of thinking so that their people will accept and implement new ideas of modernization and progress.

Throughout these processes less-developed countries are faced with possibilities of political, social, and economic instability. Promoting political stability depends essentially upon how successful the regime is in creating a structure of government flexible enough to accommodate important interest groups in its society. Also, it is of prime importance to create the feeling among the population that the regime is the best possible representative of the people's norms and beliefs.

This thesis will examine the importance of the relationship between the ideological thinking and attitude of governing elites and of the masses and its effect on political stability. The specific purpose of this study is to examine and explain the political instability of the monarchical regime in Libya before its overthrow on September 1, 1969. The political instability of the monarchical regime in Libya was mainly a result of lack of ideological identification between the

governing elite and the bulk of the population. This lack of identification in ideology was a result of the regime's failure to create supportive political socialization. This problem raised the question of the regime's legitimacy among the masses. This situation was intensified by the lack of effective political organizations and institutions to bridge the gap between the regime and the masses.

Because of their school learning and the effect of the Egyptian mass communication media, Libyans were more and more oriented toward pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism. The people of Libya came to judge the actions and the attitudes of their government in relation to its conformity with their values and beliefs concerning Arab nationalism. Meanwhile the Libyan monarchy pursued a pro-West, anti-Arabism foreign policy that created the gap between the people and the monarchy. The political legitimacy of the regime rested on the personal and religious traits of King Idris. Rapid social change and urbanization undermined much of King Idris' personal and religious legitimacy. On the other hand, a vast and rapid expansion in education, accompanied by an increase of Arab nationalism in Libya, created a strong and articulate intellectual class motivated by the ideas of Arab nationalism and Arab unity. This situation created a sense of ideological identity among students, labor forces, civil servants, and junior army officers. Such an emerging ideology found itself incompatible with the traditional regime, and, as a result, these new forces felt that the regime was unable to translate their beliefs into action. Accordingly the regime lost its



sense of legitimacy among the emerging new forces.

The Libyan monarchy withstood pressures from opposition groups mainly by suppression and by refusing to give democratic access of government to the general members of the society. The refusal of the monarchy to permit the establishment of political parties and organizations widened the gap between the monarchy and the emerging forces which had to resort to illegal and underground activities. It was this policy that gave rise to the eventual demise of the monarchy in Libya.