



# Libya: Looking Forward

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The last several months have born witness to a new wave of uprisings and upheavals across the Middle East. Decades of suppression, human rights abuses, and dire economic conditions have all served as catalysts for the smattering of rebellions across the MENA region. Libya, being one of the first countries to lead the so-called "Arab Spring", finds itself in a precarious position. As it seems that Moammar Ghaddafi's days as the leader of Libya are quickly coming to an end, it is important to analyze the future of the North African nation and the Middle East. Had Ghaddafi regained absolute power, a harsh, "iron fist" rule unrivaled by its earlier days would have been sure to ensue. As Moammar Ghaddafi gets closer to being ousted from power, though, Libya inches closer to becoming a proactive member of the Middle East and establishing stronger relationships with the GCC countries, the Middle East as a whole, and the international community.

The world has become quite confident by now that possibilities such as Ghaddafi regaining absolute power or even a division of land between rebel forces and those loyal to Ghaddafi are essentially off the table. As Ghaddafi's senior level cabinet and supporters continue to flee the country and rebel strongholds in the east of the country continue to grow in both numbers and influence, it seems it is only a matter of time before the Libyan leader is ousted from power. The issues for Libya remain: survival, restructuring, and organization. The majority of Ghaddafi's reign has essentially revolved around isolating Libya from the rest of the world and ensuring utter dependence on the state, removing any support functions and roles from other Libyan institutions. If the state crumbles, which seems almost imminent at this point, there are no institutions or individuals to play a leading role in reorganizing the country. The rebel

forces will need to bring the country together in order to try and avoid the possibility of dividing into smaller provinces and/or power falling into the hands of local tribes.

Ghaddafi's removal from power will benefit the nation of Libya, the MENA region, and the international community as a whole. While this option may not and likely will not happen overnight, it certainly would help Libya begin down a path that it has not seen over the last 41 years, since Ghaddafi assumed power in the coup of 1968. Ghaddafi's isolationist mentality and control of vast oil revenues has made him revered in Africa for helping bring wealth to the continent.

Psychologically he has always seen himself as "number 1," and his notoriety in Africa has contributed to his mentality. He has likely steered Libya away from diplomatic and trade relations with other countries in the Middle East, since Libya would not be in the spotlight the way it is among



other African countries. Among its Middle Eastern peer countries, Libya is just another country with oil and a fractured government. Ghaddafi's removal from power would help the North African nation reintegrate into the MENA region and eventually the international community.

This being said, one relationship in particular that seems to be strengthening daily on a number of levels is that between Qatar and Libya. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the ruling Emir of Qatar, has made an effort to provide assistance to the rebel forces opposing Ghaddafi's regime. Rebel groups are receiving payments from oil sales through a trust fund established in Qatar. The money from the oil sales is being used by rebel forces to purchase food and other aid in order for the forces to continue their campaign against Ghaddafi. In April, Qatar marketed 1 million barrels of oil on behalf of Libya's Interim National Council (INC). It seems the Qatari nation is investing in the possibility of an ally in North Africa, as the rebel forces in Libya continue to grow in support and influence. Even Libya's Oil Minister, Shukri Ghanem, who fled Libya yesterday, May 18, 2011, is reported to have ended up in Qatar. Sheikh Al-Thani's optimism of a rebel victory in Libya seems to be prom-



ising-so far-in hoping to gain another ally in the region. Given the direction of the current relationship between Qatar and Libya, there seem to be promising business and diplomatic opportunities for the two countries in the future.

While Libya attempts to come out of decades of dark ages and suppression imposed by the Ghaddafi regime, coun-

tries like Qatar, France, and others will continue to lend direct support to the North African nation and help it capitalize on its resources to provide assistance along the path towards restructuring and reorganization. The process will likely be a slow one, rife with uncertainty and violence, but will prove beneficial to the country and its people in the long run.