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Period B

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Mr. Kendall

Libya: Second Time is the Charm?

In the past, if you asked anybody where Libya was on a globe, chances are most people would not be able to tell you. Now, however, anyone who has watched the news or read the newspaper could tell you that Libya is a large country in northern Africa. The reason this country is suddenly so recognized is because it is currently going through a violent change. There have been massive uprisings and protests all throughout not only Libya, but multiple countries in northern Africa and the Middle East. One reason this stands out so much and has made so many headlines is because of the enormous display of nationalism shown by the Libyan people. They are willing to fight and die for their country in order to make it a better place. What isn’t being mentioned in the news is that Libya has a history of nationalistic pride leading to change.

In the early seventies the “people’s revolution” was starting up. Its prominent leader was Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Gaddafi is quoted saying, “The hour for revolutionary action has struck, and the purge has begun”. Gaddafi played off of the Libyan people’s sense of nationalism to over throw the then current king and assert himself as the new leader in his attempt to extend his military dictatorship. Gaddafi destroyed everything that was not a part of Libyan people’s main faith of Islam or their descent. The churches were left standing, but the crosses were all replaced with the Islamic star and crescent. Arabic letter began to replace the Latin ones. These are just two examples of the changes made by Gaddafi. Gaddafi’s sense of nationalistic pride is what led him to “purge” the country of all outside influences. The then current laws were mostly “Italian and British imperialism”. Gaddafi instantly got rid of these laws and rules of governing. His government went on a “witch hunting, book burning binge aimed at restoring Libya to Islamic purity”. He did it so immediately that there was no official law to guide the country. Instead, Gaddafi believed that Islam would rule in the best interest of the people. He went on good faith that people’s sense of pride combined with their religious beliefs would govern the country until official laws were written.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Now, in 2011, there is another attempt at revolution happening in Libya. Col. Gaddafi is involved in this one as well, except this time the people are fighting against him. This change of events was triggered by the people’s desire for a new and more democratic government. The people of Libya were seeking to become a sovereign country. Unlike the revolutions of past, technology has played a huge role in advancing the revolution. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have been used to spread nationalistic messages and different types of propaganda. The revolution started as posts on Facebook and Twitter. People were becoming more aware of what was happening in their country. People took advantage of this to send inspiring messages aimed to activate the peoples’ sense of nationalism. This sense of pride caused them to go out and protest for their right to a democracy. This quickly led to fighting caused by Gaddafi sending the military in to disperse protesters. The problem was that deadly force was used in some instances. This enraged the Libyan people even more and caused groups of rebel fighters to emerge. These “rebels”, as they have been called in the media, are actually normal civilians who are willing to lay down their lives in the pursuit of sovereignty. Nationalism is defined as intense loyalty and devotion to a nation. Giving up your life to better your country is the ultimate act of nationalism. The United States has been generally neutral, but has aided in air strikes on Gaddafi controlled strong points in order to give the rebels a chance to compete against pro-Gaddafi forces. Currently, the revolution is still on-going, but the majority of crucial cities in Libya are under rebel control. This has led to Gaddafi fleeing the country and the ability for progress towards Libya’s sovereignty to be made.

NTC (National Transitional Council) Chairman Mustafa Abdul Jalil has recently announced that a new interim government will be declared soon. The Current interim Prime Minister of Libya, Mahmond Jibril, has said that “Democratic Libya is coming to life and reaching out to the international community”. This is a sign of progress and sovereignty coming to Libya.[[2]](#footnote-2) “’Arab politics have been fundamentally altered in a way that’s irreversible’ says Robert Danin of the council on foreign relations. ‘The Arab people now have a voice in their own politics’”.[[3]](#footnote-3) These statements are proof that sovereignty is beginning to take hold in Libya. The world is beginning to recognize that Libya is becoming a democracy.

Only history will tell if Libya is finally able to fully become a sovereign country. This is the country’s second attempt at becoming sovereign and this time it seems to be going in favor of the rebels and introducing democracy to Libya. The intense nationalism shown by the Libyan people is driving them to fight for what they believe is their right. Libya may someday soon become a democracy brought about by nationalism.

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2. Alistair Leithead, *Libyan troops clash with pro-Gaddafi forces in Sirte* [article on-line] (BBC News Africa*.* September 24, 2011, accessed September 24, 2011); available from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15047278 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Patricia Smith, "Arab Spring: What's Next?" *Upfront*, Spetember 19, 2011: 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)