CONTENTIOUS POLITICS IN LIBYA: A STUDY OF THE INITIAL PERIOD OF
THE 2011 LIBYAN UPRISING

by

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Contentious Politics in Libya: A Study of the Initial Period of the 2011 Libyan Uprising

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at George Mason University, and the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Malta

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DEDICATION

In memory of my father, Francis F. Talbot, and all that he taught me.

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ABSTRACT

CONTENTIOUS POLITICS IN LIBYA: A STUDY OF THE INITIAL PERIOD OF THE 2011 LIBYAN UPRISING

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This thesis describes the initial two weeks of the 2011 Libyan uprising. Through a detailed case study of this period, a narrative timeline is produced that includes significant events and descriptions of the actions taken by established and emerging political actors. Pulling from these descriptions, I consider whether this initial period of the Libyan uprising meets the criteria for an episode of contentious politics. Once establishing this, the thesis explores the scale shifting process commonly found in contentious politics and its applicability to the Libyan case. By identifying evidence of both brokerage and diffusion mechanisms as well as the emulation of a violent protest repertoire, I present the findings of the thesis. I concluded with recommendations on possible future research on Libya as an episode of political contention that could both deepen the understanding of the 2011 Libyan uprising and broaden the understanding of contentious politics in non-Western, non-democratic societies.

INTRODUCTION

October 20th, 2011, is a day that I will not forget. I had been in Libya for more than two months and, like many Libyans, had spent the morning at a bank struggling with bureaucracy in an attempt to get access to funds in my organization's account that seemed increasingly difficult as a liquidity crisis wreaked havoc on the recently liberated capital, Tripoli. As I left the bank, a colleague phoned me from the hotel and said that he thought the rebels had captured Muammar Qadhafi in Sirte, the birthplace of Qadhafi and the last stronghold of the regime. Having heard this sort of rumor before, I told my colleague that if it were true we would be engulfed in the noise of celebratory gunfire. As I departed the bank and headed back to the Tobactis Hotel near the main square of Tripoli, I first heard the crackle of Kalashnikov rifles followed shortly thereafter by the thuds of anti-aircraft guns mounted on the back of pickup trucks.

As I arrived at my hotel, it appeared that all of the guests as well as staff were in the small café adjacent to the lobby intensely watching a single television screen broadcasting Al Jazeera and reporting on the news of the capture of Qadhafi. I was not alone in my skepticism of such rumors, but within thirty minutes of my arrival the first images of Qadhafi being dragged through the streets of Sirte by revolutionary fighters began to be shown on the screen. The images were clearly Qadhafi and with the visual evidence of his capture, the café and seemingly the entire city erupted in celebration as

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well as a collective sense of relief. The celebratory gunfire across the city became

deafening. As everyone in the café was cheering and embracing, I remembering seeing an

elderly women in the corner sobbing. I would later learn from her daughter that she had

been in exile for more than twenty years and had never thought this day would come.

She had returned to Tripoli only a few weeks earlier.

On that day and over the many months to come, nearly every Libyan that I met

wanted to tell me their story and the injustices that they had suffered under the Qadhafi

regime as well as their hopes for the future. Like many other foreigners, I do not think I

was naïve in my assessment at the time. The challenges for Libya were immense and the

divisions among the anti-regime actors apparent. But that is not what this thesis is about.

Like many other foreigners I witnessed the slow unraveling of the country during the

post-Qadhafi transition, but few foreigners witnessed the initial period of the uprising and

this is what I hope to understand from my research.

A Brief History of Modern Libya
Libya is situated in North Africa sharing borders with Tunisia, Algeria, Niger,

Chad, Sudan and Egypt. More than ninety percent of Libya's population lives along the

Mediterranean coast with the two largest cities being Tripoli, situated in the western

coastal region, and Benghazi, situated in the eastern coastal region. Historically, Libya

has been divided into three regions – Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan. Following a

brief period of colonization by Italy, Libya became a United Nations protectorate at the

end of World War II. In 1951, the Kingdom of Libya was established unifying the three

regions under a constitutional monarchy with King Idris as the head of state and a federal system of government (Vandewalle, 2012).

At its inception, the Kingdom of Libya was one of the poorest nations in the world with government revenue primarily generated by renting land for British and American military bases. However, the discovery of oil in 1955 found this poor kingdom suddenly flush with cash. King Idris, a decedent of the Senussi order, came from the Cyrenaica region and thus the elite families from this region benefited particularly from the newly found oil wealth. In order to appease the hydrocarbon sector, whom had difficulty navigating the federal bureaucracy, King Idris revised the Libyan constitution in 1963 abolishing the federal system of government in order to centralize power (Vandewalle, 2012).

By the 1960s there was a growing resentment towards the monarchy that was increasingly perceived as a puppet of the western powers. The monarchy's refusal to join other Arab nations in the Six Day War against Israel further reinforced this perception. Inspired by Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and his notion of Pan-Arabism, a group of junior officers led by Muammar Qadhafi organized a bloodless coup d'état in 1969 (Vandewalle, 2012). After a brief experiment Arab Nationalism, the new leadership started on its own political path with the intention to create a system of "direct popular democracy" over a "stateless state" (Joffe, 2013: 24). The leadership further attempted to alter the economy in order to eliminate the private sector. These efforts produce an exodus of commercial elites from the country (Joffe, 2013).

By the 1980s the Libyan regime was firmly centered around the personality of Muammar Qadhafi, who increasingly took controversial position on the international stage. The Libyan regime's role in the Berlin disco bombing in 1986 caused the United States to respond with airstrikes on several locations within Libya. The alleged role of Libyan officials in the 1992 Lockerbie bombing of a PanAm flight further caused the isolation of Libya and the view of Qadhafi as sponsor of terrorism. This isolation continued through the 1990s during which the United Nations imposed several sanctions on the country and its leadership (Vandewalle, 2012).

In the early 2000s, Libya slowly began to reemerge on the international scene following its renunciation of terrorism and promises to abandon its weapons of mass destruction programs. Within the country, these years witnessed a loosening of restrictions on methods of communication with the introduction of mobile phone and internet services. Additionally with most travel restrictions lifted, the Libyan government increased the number scholarships provided Libyan youth to study abroad. These developments increased the class of informed professional Libyans with aspirations for genuine reform. Those hopes for reform were further reinforced as Qadhafi's western-educated son began to elude to the need for Libya to undergo political and economic reforms (Joffe, 2013).

Inspired by the wave of protests and toppling of regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, mass public demonstrations began in several locations across Libya in February 2011. From these initial protests and a harsh reaction by the Qadhafi regime, the popular uprising evolved into an eight-month civil war pitting the regime against a rebel

government that was actively supported by a United Nations Security Council authorized no fly zone implemented by NATO. The forty-year reign of Muammar Qadhafi came to an end on October 20th, 2011, when he was captured by rebel forces in Sirte and executed (Cole & McQuinn, 2015).

A Brief History of Resistance

It would be false to assume that the Libyan population was docile during Qadhafi's rule and only began to resist the regime in 2011. In fact, during Qadhafi's forty-two year reign there were multiple attempts to unseat him from power. Perhaps the first attempt occurred only a few years after the 1969 military coup led by Qadhafi. In 1973, members of the Union of Free Officer, the same group that organized the 1969 coup, attempted a second military coup to overthrow Qadhafi. Unsuccessful, the failed coup resulted in the execution of twenty-two officers (Joffe, 2013).

In the early 1980s, an opposition group mostly consisting of political exiles formed the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL) that promoted economic reform and free elections (Sawani, 2013). Within the NFSL was a military wing called the Salvation Force, whom with assistance from the United States launched several failed attempts to violently overthrow the Qadhafi regime (Vandewalle, 2012). In addition to the NFSL, a group of Libyan veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war conducted a short-lived insurgency in Cyrenaica's Green mountains against the regime (Fitzgerald, 2015). In 1993, an attempted assassination of Muammar Qadhafi by members of the Warfalla and Qadhadhifa tribe produced yet another failed coup d'etat (Joffe, 2013).

However, resistance to the regime did not only manifest itself as exiled political opposition groups, Islamist insurgencies, and failed military coups. Popular protest also occurred repeatedly during Qadhafi's rule. In 1975, the announcement on military conscription produced student protests that were quickly suppressed by the regime (Vandewalle, 2012). In 2006, Benghazi residents initially protesting a religiously offensive cartoon quickly turned their attention to grievances against the regime and, too, were suppressed (Joffe, 2013). Yet not all protests failed because of regime repression. The families of political prisoners, who had either disappeared or been killed in prison riots of the 1990s, continued to pressure the regime for answer both through legal appeals as well as organizing demonstrations in the years before the 2011 uprising. These small, relatively peaceful protests appeared to be for the most part tolerated by the regime (Bartu, 2015)

Research Question

Recognizing that during the rule of Muammar Qadahfi there are multiple examples of Libyan resistance to the regime, all of which failed prior to the 2011 Libyan uprising, it is beneficial to understanding of how these events differ. The obvious difference is that unlike previous episode that generally remained local, the demonstrations that initially started in Benghazi rapidly spread across the country. Therefore, the research question put forward for this thesis is:

How did the 2011 Libyan uprising escalate from localized demonstrations during the initial two weeks of uprising?

In order to answer this question, I will utilize the case study approach in order develop a detailed description of this time period. From this description, I will explore the applicability of theories of contentious politics to the case. In particular, I will look at the scale shifting process, the associated mechanisms of brokerage and diffusion, and repertoires of contention.

The outline of this thesis begins with a review of literature applicable to the 2011 Libya uprising. The first is a review of literature that specifically researches the case.. Second, I review literature from the field of contentious politics in which the Libyan case is considered. Following the Literature Review chapter, the thesis will proceed to the Theoretical Framework chapter. In this chapter, I will explain the principal components of contentious politics and its origins in the study of both revolutions and social movements. Additionally, I will define the concepts of scale shifting process, brokerage and diffusion mechanisms, and repertoires of content. From this, the Methodology chapter will explain the rational for using a case study approach for this study – noting both the advantages and limitations of this approach.

After conducting a literature review, laying out the thesis' theoretical framework, and explaining the methodology of the study, I will proceed to the Case Study chapter. This chapter is divided into seven sections. The sections maintain a chronological timeline for the period between February 15th and 28th. In addition to describing the events during this period, the sections further describe key actors involved in the events as well as a broader description of these actors and their backgrounds. Following the

Case Study chapter will be chapters on the findings of the study and conclusion in which

I propose possible future areas of study based on the findings of this thesis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section I will start with a review of the literature that has been produced during and since the 2011 Libyan Uprising. The objective of this is identify themes where most, if not all of the literature, have converged in agreement as well as to identify possible gaps in the literature that warrant further investigation. The review identifies one important gap – a general focus on the sources and outcomes of 2011 Libyan Uprising with less emphasis on the process at play. Identifying this, I proceed to review literature on Libya produced from the field of contentious politics because of the fields emphasis on the dynamics of contention. While noting that prominent scholars in the field have suggested that uprisings associated with the Arab Spring are episodes of contentious politics, I find little research specifically focusing on the Libyan case.

Libya Specific Literature

Prior to the events of 2011, academic literature was relatively scarce on Libya in comparison to other North African countries. This may in part be due to the isolation of the country for a significant portion of the Qadhafi regime's time in power. During this period, a general history of the modern state of Libya that continues to be routinely cited is Dirk Vandwalle's *A modern history of Libya*. Initially published in 2006, Vandwalle writes an overview of Libyan society from the Ottoman period, through the Senussi monarchy, and the 1969 coup d'etat that brought Muammar Qadhafi to power. He

concludes the book with several chapters laying out the history of the Qadhafi regime. In 2012, a second edition was published in which Vandewalle expands the history to include an additional chapter covering the final years of the Qadhafi regime and the 2011 Libyan uprising (2012). Alison Pragreter, too, published a modern history of Libya titled *The rise and fall of Qaddafi* that essential covers the same subject matter (2012).

Vandewalle has continued to produce literature focusing on the recent developments in Libya. He penned the opening chapter to one of the few edited volumes that focuses exclusively the 2011 Libyan revolution. In Peter Cole and Brian McQuinn's edited book *The Libyan Revolution and its Aftermath,* Vandewalle and other contributing authors provide detailed accounts of the period between 2011 and 2012. Each focusing on different aspect of the revolution and actors involved (2015). During a panel discussion held at the University of Malta's Valletta campus in February 2015, the former US ambassador to Libya, Deborah Jones, commented that Cole and McQuinn's publication was an essential read for any diplomat or researcher looking to understand the current events in Libya.[1] Based on this recommendation, this book is used extensively in this thesis.

Another edited volume investigating the Libyan events of 2011 is Jason Pack's *The 2011 Libyan Uprisings and the Struggle of the Post-Qadhafi Future*. Pack, perhaps more than any other scholar, has developed and advocated the theory of a power struggle between the periphery and center that is a historical pattern and the reason for the lack of a salient national identity among Libyans (Pack & Barfi, 2012; Pack 2013; Pack & Cook,

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[1] Author was in attendance http://www.kitegroup.com.mt/uncategorized/libya-an-unfinished-revolution-a-successful-event/

2015). This theory has been expanded upon by researchers, such as Mattio Toaldo, who argues that this lack of national identity resulted in "decentralized authoritarianism" during the post-Qaddafi transition (2016). In Boduszynski and Pickard's article, *Libya Starts From Scratch*, they too argue that the weakness of the post-Qadhafi state is a result of a lack of a national identity and a profound trust gap between actors within the anti-regime coalition (2013).

The German scholar, Wolfram Lacher, has also been a prominent voice among the post-Qadhafi Libyan literature. In *Families, Tribes and Cities in the Libyan Revolution*, Lacher made one of the first attempts to assess the key actors involved in the anti-regime coalition of 2011. Lacher argues that an initially spontaneous and disorganized uprising, primarily by disgruntled youth, was brought under the control of a well-established opposition leadership that mostly comprised prominent families from cities and tribes (2011). Continuing with this notion, Lacher contributed to both the edited volumes referenced earlier focusing on the communities in the Nafusa mountains (Lacher & Labnouj, 2015) and dynamics of tribal politics within Libya (Lacher, 2013b). He also assessed the prominent fault lines within the opposition during the revolution arguing that conflict within the anti-regime coalition centered more on local interests than on ideological positions (Lacher, 2013). Looking at the challenges facing post-Qaddafi Libya has also been a popular subject emerging from the literature with various researchers focusing on peacebuilding (Yilmaz, 2012), security sector reform (Muhlberger, 2012; Pelham, 2012), and democratization (Randall, 2015; Boduszynski & Pickard, 2013).

Two general points of census have emerged from the literature of the 2011 Libyan uprising. First is the heterogeneous nature of the anti-regime actors. The lack of salience surrounding a national identify is noted as significant challenge with most actors involved in the uprising putting more value on local, often sub-regional, identities (Lacher, 2011 and 2013; Boduszynski & Pickard, 2013). The second point of census among the literature concerns an internal division within the anti-regime coalition that steadily increased as the uprising progressed and become even more pronounced in the post-Qadhafi transitional period. This division pitted the revolutionary fighters, who engaged in direct conflict with regime forces, against a variety of actors comprising oppositional elites, regime defectors, and dissidents from the diaspora. While the former rooted its legitimacy in its sacrifice and success in direct violent resistance to regime forces, the latter rooted its legitimacy in its efforts to mobilization resources necessary to support the resistance and gain recognition from the international community. As this division widen between the two groups of actors, both camps demonstrated increasingly high degrees of mistrust among the other. (Lacher, 2013; Boduszynski & Pickard, 2013; Pelham, 2012; Pack, 2013; Cole & McQuinn, 2015). While these two points speak to the weakness within the anti-regime coalition and possibly the reason for the chaotic transition period that has played out over the past five years, the literature does little to answer the research question of this dissertation. If anything, the fragility of the anti-regime coalition reinforces the importance of not just researching the sources and outcomes of the Libyan uprising, but also an understanding of how it transpired.

Contentious Politics Literature on Libya

Within the field of contentious politics, the events of 2010 and 2011, commonly referred to as the Arab Spring, has received significant attention. Evidence of this is the inclusion of the it in the second edition of Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow's book, *Contentious Politics* (2015). The academic journal, *Mobilization: An International Quarterly,* that focuses specifically on research of contentious politics produced a special issue in 2012 on the Arab Spring (17.4). In the issue, Holm's researched the mass mobilization of protesters, creations of liberated areas and formation of self-protection organizations among the protesters during the Egyptian revolution (2012). Another article in the issue studied of the emergence of the Syrian uprising and the reasons that it started in the periphery of the country instead of the capital (Leenders, 2012). In the same issue, Charles Kuzman attempts to uncoil the Arab Spring by looking at the concept of bravery among protesters in the countries affected by the Arab Spring (2012). None of the articles published in this special issue of *Mobilization* specifically researched the episode of contentious politics in Libya. In fact, a search of the issues of this journal between 2011 and 2015, produced only ten articles in which Libya was referenced.

Again, none of the articles surveyed specifically researched the Libya case. In fact, most simply referenced the uprising in Libya as part of the regional phenomena known as the Arab Spring. However in George Lawson's study of the Arab Spring and the correlation of nonviolence and revolution, he considers the Libya case. Noting that the Arab Spring produced four outcomes, Lawson includes Libya along with Syria in the

category he calls violent polarization. The outcome produced when segments of the opposition are willing to take up arms (2015). Another article in *Mobilization* written by Tijen Demirel-Pegg investigates the process by which public protests transition into an insurgency with the key factors uncovered being the interactions between dissidents, the degree of state repression, and the amount of external support to the opposition. The case studied in Demirel-Pegg's article is the uprisings in Kashmir between 1979 and 1988, however, he argues that two cases from the Arab Spring, Libya and Syria, are likely similar processes deserving of more research (2014).

Like Tilly and Tarrow, who revised their book following the Arab Spring, another prominent scholar in the field of contentious politics, Donatella della Porta, has chosen to study this phenomenon. In her book, *Mobilizing for Democracy: Comparing 1989 and 2011*, she spends one chapter investigate violent uprisings. While first reviewing the cases of Romania and Albania, she then proceeds to briefly review the 2011 Libyan uprising with some attention to the initial mobilization of protesters in February. In this section, Della Porta places emphasis on the societal difference between Libya and its neighbors, Egypt and Tunisia, with particular emphasis the fragmentation within Libyan society. She further argues that the initial uprising in Libya emulated the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, noting the replication of occupying public space. While mentioning that the Libyan case spread across the country and turned violent relatively quickly, she does not elaborate on the processes involved in this observation. The conclusion of the chapter argues that the use of violence by a regime to suppress protests is a double-edged sword. While in some instances it may be an effective tool in

dissipating the opposition, it may also reinforce a feeling of indignity amount protesters and thus fuel the protests (2014). In Mark Lynch's edited volume, *The Arab Spring Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East*, he too includes the Libya uprisings with the other developments. However, the emphasis of the book is on understanding the protest wave at a regional level with particular emphasis on the three phases of mobilization, regimes' responses, and political outcomes (2015)

While research on the Arab Spring is increasingly a subject of interest for both leaders in the study of contentious politics (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015; Della Porta, 2014; Lynch, 2014) as well as the editors of one of the leading academic journals on the subject, there remains limited literature that focuses on the contentious politics that emerged in Libya in 2011. Of the literature reviewed, Della Porta's account of the Libyan uprising is perhaps the most detailed assessment. And even then, it is relegated to one case of many within a single chapter. Most of the literature reviewed positions the Libyan case alongside Syria as examples from the Arab Spring of uprisings that produced a violent trajectory and prolonged instability (Lawson, 2015; Demirel-Pegg, 2014). Likewise, other specific cases associated with the Arab Spring, have been studied in depth revealing characteristic that appear to also be present in the Libyan case (Holmes, 2012; Leenders, 2012).

Summary

This review finds that despite being a relatively new phenomenon, the 2011 Libyan uprising is producing a growing catalog of literature. However, the literature that specifically focuses on the Libya case overall has focused on the sources and outcomes of

the 2011 uprising, while paying less attention to how the uprisings developed and played out. An emphasis on this has produced consensus on two general points: the heterogeneous nature of the opposition and the lack of trust among elements of the anti-regime coalition. While these findings are beneficial, research of how the 2011 uprising played out would also be a useful means of expanding the understanding of this case.

Answering the question of how uprisings occur is very much a focus of the field of contentious politics. However, a review of the literature demonstrates that research on the Libyan case remains largely superficial among scholars of this field. Typically, the Libyan case is generalized as part of a regional phenomenon known as the Arab Spring or placed into the category with Syria of public protests that evolved into civil war. As has been demonstrate with case specific studies of other Arab Spring countries, it appears that such a study of the Libya case is lacking within the recent literature of contentious politics and could also prove to be beneficial to the general literature of the Libya uprising in 2011.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

As demonstrated in the Literature Review chapter, the field of contentious politics

has produced research on cases of the Arab Spring, both country-specific and regional

studies looking to expand on the theorization of contentious politics. Therefore, utilizing

theories applicable are likely to be a useful approach to studying the case of Libya and its

2011 uprising. Contentious politics is defined as:

> "episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their
> objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, and object of
> claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect
> the interests of at least one of the claimants" (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly,
> 2001: 5)

While this definition appears somewhat vague, it is done so specifically because

McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow's concept of contentious politics was purposefully designed

to cover multiple manifestations of this form of politics. As two of the authors later

argued *"contentious politics contains events ranging from local ethnic competition to

great revolutions"* (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 13).

Potentially concerned by the specializations of various forms of contentious

politics, these three scholars argued in the early 1990s that a new approach that

harmonizes these specialties was warranted. Two fields which they specifically focused

on were the studies of revolutions and social movements (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly,

1997). The convergences between the studies of revolutions and social movements had

been observable for some time. Jack Goldstone's review of the generations of the study of revolutions emphasized that by the late 1980s a shift was developing within the field as scholars began to investigate cases that did not appear to be usual, such as the Iranian and Afghani revolutions (Goldstone, 2001). Unusual in the sense that they did not neatly fit into what Skocpol had defined as a "rapid, basic transformation of society's state and class structures…accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below" (1979: 4).

While some attempted to apply tried and tested theories of revolution to these new cases, increasingly scholars acknowledged that this Marxist understanding of revolution with its focus on structural analysis was lacking when looking at these new cases that did not appear to be produced entirely by a class struggle (Goldstone, 2001; Beck, 2016). Instead, scholars of revolutions began to look elsewhere for explanations and found research in the field of social movement theory particularly promising (Goldstone, 2001).

Social movement theory, too, had its roots in the writings of Engel and Marx as well as the efforts of Lenin, but had truly developed as a field of research in the 1960s in an effort to understand the wave of popular movements that were occurring in western, democratic societies. These included the civil right movement in the United States and the student protests occurring in Europe (Tarrow, 1998). Scholars not entirely satisfied with the explanations at the time of mass mobilization focusing on grievance and identity, began to investigate the "how" of social movements (McAdam et al, 1997).

Interestingly it was an economist, not a sociologist, who made the first significant contribution to social movement theory. Mancur Olson, in the midst of the 1960s,

identified a fundamental problem faced by social movements and their ability to produce

collective action, which is called the free-rider problem. Meaning that the larger the

group and the more universally shared the success of the action, the less incentive

individuals have to participate. What Olson was describing would become known as the

rational choice approach within social movement theory (Tarrow, 1998). Those

advocating rational choice, referred to as the rationalist, argued that the fundamental

problem that social movements' encounter is that of free-riders. Looking at social

movements at the individual level and considering the cost-benefit of participation, the

rationalists highlighted that a social movement only succeed when it could muster

substantial support from the public – something of a challenge when the cost of

participation is risky and the benefits of the movement's success will transfer to all

(McAdam et al, 1997)

Uncomfortable with arguments of the rationalists, particularly its emphasis on the

individual, an alternative notion called resource mobilization was introduced to social

movement theory. Those promoting resource mobilization, referred to as structuralist,

argued that the fundamental challenge for a social movement is mustering the necessary

resource to mobilize and sustain a movement. Looking at social movements at the

organizational level, the structuralists highlighted the need for structure and coordination

in order to maximize the resources (both tangible and intangible) of the movement while

finding means to gain more resources (McAdam et al, 1997). Fearing that their American

colleagues had completely lost the plot, European scholars, known as the culturalists,

argued against both the rationalist and the structuralists claiming that collective framing

and identity were fundamental to understanding social movements as well as the social networks that were established among a movement. They criticized their colleagues for focusing too much on what is needed to mobilize a movement and ignoring how a movement is acted out (McAdam et al, 1997; Tarrow, 1998; della Porta & Diani, 2006).

While much ink was spilt defending the supremacy of one of these positions over the decades, by the 1990s a growing consensus among both scholars and students of social movements had emerged claiming the rationalist, structuralist, and culturalist were not mutually exclusive. Acknowledging the strengths, as well as the weakness, in each of the position produced a fusion of the arguments into the what is increasingly focused on political processes (McAdam et al, 1997).

Political processes, also referred to as political opportunity, maintains an approach similar to the structuralists while making efforts to integrate the strengthens of the other two approaches. For example, an expanding political opportunity will impact the cost-benefit analysis that individuals undertake before deciding to support or participate in a movement. Likewise, it acknowledges the power that culturally resonate claims have in mobilizing actors to enact cycles of protest (McAdam et al, 1997). The political process approach to social movement theory maintains some attributes of resource mobilization analysis, while suggesting that external resources, rather than the resources possessed by organizations involved in a social movement, are most influential when understanding the mobilization process.

This digression into the origins of contentious politics may seem excessive, but I believe it is relevant considering the amount of debate concerning the nature of the events

transpiring in Libya in 2011with some proposing that it was a revolution (Cole & McQuinn, 2015) and others claiming it was an uprising (Pack, 2013). It could very well be an uprising, revolution, or even civil war. However, by evaluating the Libyan case through the lens of contentious politics, I can side step such arguments because all of these labels as well as strikes, riots and others are particular manifestation of the phenomenon known as contentious politics.

Going back to the definition put forth at the beginning of this chapter, contentious politics is different than the majority of politics because it is episodic or non-routine. From this definition it is understood that contention requires a party (individuals and/or groups) to make a claim against another party and that this claim would harm the interests of the other party. Politics, according to this definition means that the contention includes a government as at least one of the parties involved in the claim (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015).

The study of contentious politics attempts to understand what is commonly understood to be a highly volatile and frequently dangerous phenomenon in social life – the convergence of collective action, contention, and politics (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). The presence of a government or its agents is not only a requirement of contentious politics, but also an important factor to understanding the power dynamics concerning the contention because those controlling the government are able to establish the parameters of acceptable political contention as well as the means to thwart deviations from the accepted forms of contention by coercive means (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015).

By promoting the notion of contentious politics, something that encompasses a variety of contentious collective actions, criticism has emerged. A principle critique has been that applying theories of social movement, a field that has primarily focused on the phenomena in developed Western democracies, may not be applicable to non-Western, often autocratic, societies and regimes. While acknowledging this criticism, supporters of the study of contentious politics argue that while conditions may not be identical, the processes do share similarities. Further, it is through the active investigation of such contentious politics in a variety of conditions that scholars will develop a richer understanding of what is undoubtedly a complex human experience. As Eitan Alimi notes "in their absolute number, episodes of contentious politics in undemocratic regimes constitute the lion's share of contentious political events worldwide." (Alimi, 2009: 219).

As Tarrow argues claim-makers do not spontaneously engage in collective action against the objects of their claims. Instead they choose methods that already exist within the society's public culture. Some such examples identified by scholars include: marches, petitions, occupy premises, and setting fires. Using such "repertoires of contention" enable claim-makers to overcome shortages in resources within the group (1998: 20). He further notes:

> "groups have a particular history – and memory – of contentious forms. Workers know how to strike because generations of workers struck before them; Parisians build barricades because barricades are inscribed in the history of Parisian contention" (Tarrow, 1998: 21).

Therefore, a study of an episode of contentious politics will benefit from identifying the forms of contention present.

Della Porta and Diani argue that repertoires of contention evolved from the "old forms", common during the 17th century that tended to be localized and unique, to new repertoires emerging with the creation of nation-states in which the object of claims tended to be of a national character. Further, they argue that modern repertoires are modular in that different groups will use similar repertoires as a means to assert their claims. The emergence of nation-states and increasing methods of communication encourages among claim-makers the "development of a new, general, flexible, and indirect repertoire" (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 168).

The receptiveness to claims by the government often provides an indicator to the types of repertoires that actors may choose to enact. In certain situations, actors may select institutional repertoires such as press conferences, lobbying or public rallies as well as more disruptive repertoires such as sit-ins and strikes. In situations where governments are not receptive, more direct, disruptive repertoires are frequently enacted, including revolt. The purpose of such repertoires is frequently to threaten authorities that a failure to respond to the claims could result in a further escalation (Alimi, 2015).

While identifying repertoires is beneficial, developing an understanding of the dynamics of contention is also required. This is done by considering both the mechanisms and processes that drive episodes of contention forward (McAdam et al, 2001). Mechanisms are understood to be "delimited sorts of events that change relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations" (McAdam et al, 2001: 24). Mechanisms can be further sub-divided into three categories: Environmental, Cognitive, and Relational. While environmental mechanisms look at

external factors that can affect conditions of social life, cognitive mechanisms look at the means by which collective perceptions are altered. Relational mechanisms look at how the connections between groups and networks are altered (McAdam et al, 2001).

An individual mechanism rarely operates in isolation. Instead in contentious politics, one finds multiple mechanisms operating to form what is identified as a process. Meaning that processes "are regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements" (McAdam et al, 2001: 24). Two common processes that are found in contentious politics are social change processes and political identity formation processes. The former looks at how environmental and cognitive mechanisms like political opportunity and threats as well as framing of disputes can operationalize social change. While the later, looks at cognitive and relational mechanisms and how the creation of political identities is associated with changing perceptions of individuals and the altering of connections among groups and individuals (McAdam et al, 2001)

As mentioned earlier, the 2011 Libya uprising was not the first episode of resistance in Libya during the Qadhafi regime. In fact, contention in Libya's public arena was fairly common. While rebellions prior to 2011 remained localized and thus repressed by the regime fairly easily, the uprising in 2011 not only rapidly evolved from public demonstration to armed revolt, but also rapidly expanded in scale by spreading quickly from Benghazi to other parts of the Cyrenaica as well as the regions of Tripolitania and Fezzan. The obvious question is how did this occur, when historically it had not?

Another familiar process to contentious politics, known as scale-shift, could be a possible causal factor for this different outcome. Scale-shifting is defined as "a change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions leading to broader contention involving a wider range of actors and bridging their claims and identities" (McAdam et al, 2001: 331). The process of scale-shifting is typically comprised of relational mechanisms. Two such mechanisms prominent in the scale-shifting processes are "Brokerage" and "Diffusion".

Diffusion can be understood as an emulation mechanism in which contention spreads among established social networks from the initiator and the adaptor (McAdam et al, 2001; Vasi, 2011; Walsh-Russo, 2014). Fundamentally, this occurs when there is "an attribution of similarity" perceived by the adaptor concerning the initiator, which depends on at least a minimal identification between the innovator and adopter" (McAdam et al, 2001: 334). Brokerage is understood as coalitional mechanism in which connections are created between two previously unconnected or weakly connected sites and thus allow for the spread of contention. (McAdam et al, 2001; Vasi, 2011; Walsh-Russo, 2014). Gould and Fernandez suggest that there are five identifiable types of brokerage: liaison, representative, gatekeeper, itinerant, and coordinating. A liaison brokerage represents the linkage between brokers for different groups, while a representative brokerage is where a member of group acts on behalf of the group with external actors. The gatekeeper brokerage is when one actor within a group determines which external actors are given access to members of the group, while an itinerant brokerage is when an external actor facilitates the linking between two actors within the same group. Finally, a coordinating

brokerage is when an internal actor facilitates the linkage with his own group (1989; See also Vasi, 2011).

While both relational mechanism (brokerage and diffusion) may be at play in a scale shifting process, one will usually take a prominent position in the process (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2008: 332-333) and thus defines the scale-shifting process. Understanding how a scale-shifting process occurs is fundamental to understanding when an episode of contention succeeds "because most episodes of contention begin locally. If there were no shift in scale from the local to the supra-local level, then contentious episodes would remain local." (McAdam et al, 2008: 311).

As has been discussed earlier, one difference between the 2011 Libyan uprising and previous episodes of contention in Libya is the fact that contention spread widely across the country as well as among various groups within the country. To understand how this occurred, it is worthwhile to investigate the brokerage and diffusion mechanism that may be at play in this specific episode of contention.

METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the question of how did the 2011 Libyan escalate from localized demonstrations, I will conduct a case study of the first two weeks of the uprising, February 15th to 28th, 2011. The objective of this study will be to explore the aspects of this episode in order to identify if the events meet the general criteria for an episode of contentious politics and, if so, was it transgressive or contained contention? Should the case study produce evidence that the 2011 Libya uprising began as an episode of contentious politics, the next endeavor is to identify processes and mechanisms present in this episode of contention. A superficial review of the first two weeks suggests that a process of scale-shifting could be present in this case, which would suggest that brokerage or diffusion mechanisms are also present in this episode. However, a more detailed account of this period is necessary.

While methods appropriate for studies of contentious politics are numerous and include both qualitative and quantitative approaches (McAdam et al., 2008), I argue that a case study with its emphasis on thick descriptions and holistic understandings (Yin, 1989) is particularly useful for exploring this initial period of the episode of the 2011 Libyan uprising. Further, a study of contentious politics focuses particularly on a mechanism-process analysis, and thus a case study is useful as a means to unravel these processes. As Gerring notes "any attempt to deal with this question of casual

mechanisms is heavily reliant on evidence drawn from case studies" (Gerring, 2007:

104). Further, Helen Simons argues that one strength of the case study approach is that it

is

> "useful for exploring and understanding the process and dynamics of
> change. Through closely describing, documenting and interpreting events
> as they unfold in the 'real life' setting, it can determine the factors that
> were critical in the implementation of a programme or policy and analyse
> patterns and links between them" (2009: 18).

There are several reasons to utilize a case study approach. The first could be

related to a basic interest in the specific case and wish to understand the case better.

Another reason could be to explore a case in order to gain insight into another issue or

topic. This approach is referred to as an instrumental case study. Finally, research using

multiple cases can be used to identify a collective understanding of a topic that is relevant

to all of the cases (Simons, 2009). In this study, I will use an instrumental approach in

order to understand the applicability of theories of contentious politics to non-western,

non-democratic societies. The intent, should the evidence confirm the applicability, is to

uncover initial findings that could raise further questions and justify additional research

of the Libyan case and comparisons of it to other episodes of contentious politics.

However, establishing boundaries is necessary for any research effort wishing to utilize a

case study. The 'boundedness' is essential to developing a single unit of analysis that is

defined by space and time (Donmoyer, 2009). The spatial boundary of this case shall be

the country of Libya and the temporal boundary shall be the events that occurred between

February 15th and 28th, 2011.

This study will rely exclusively on archival research that includes peer-reviewed articles and edited volumes investigating the 2011 Libyan uprising as well as media articles reporting on the events. Additionally, policy papers, reports and briefs from international think-tanks, advocacy groups, and non-governmental organizations are utilized. While field research including participant interviews and observations are frequently used in case studies, they will not be included in this study. On a pragmatic level, there was neither the time or funding necessary to conduct this type of data collection. While these limitations reduce the amount of data available for the case study, it is partially off-set by my own personal experience working in Libya between 2011 and 2015.

I arrived in Libyan during August 2011 as an employee for the National Democratic Institute, a US-based non-governmental organization. The organization's activities were funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, the Unites States Agency for International Development, and later by a grant from the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Initially arriving in Benghazi, I played an administrative role in supporting Libyan civil society and the National Transitional Council. During my initial year, I traveled to the majority of urban centers within Libya, interacted with many of the post-Qadhafi groups and institutions that emerged during that period. I also developed personal and work relationships with individuals who participated in the 2011 uprising. While these experiences and relationships are beneficial as I conduct this research, allowing me to start from a position of deeper understanding of the events and actors involved in the uprising, it is also a limitation.

While recalling countless conversations, interactions and experiences benefits my understanding of the events, it also introduces a degree of subjectivity to my research. Because of this, as well as ethical reasons, this knowledge is not included as data in the case study. By focusing on the first two weeks of the uprising, I further attempt to distance myself from the subject because these events occurred nearly six months prior to my arrival in Benghazi. By only including archival data to build the case study, I further attempt to reduce my personal subjectivity in this study. However, it is inevitable that my own subjective experience that included hearing first-hand accounts of this initial period of the uprisings will affect my research. This is something that I, as the researcher, acknowledge.

CASE STUDY

Figure 1 Map of Libya (CIA Factbook)

The Uprising Begins & The Role of the Islamists

With the collapse by popular uprising of the Mubarak (Egypt) and Ben Ali (Tunisia) regimes in the previous months, the regional unrest appeared to be taking root in Libya. In late January, a political exile organization based in London known as the National Conference for Libyan Opposition was calling for a "Day of Rage" within Libya on February 17th (McQuinn, 2015; Wilkstrom, 2011). The date chosen was not without meaning. Five years earlier, civil unrest occurred in Benghazi on the same date and was violently put down by the Qaddafi regime. In 2006, the demonstrations had been in response to a controversial Danish cartoon depicting the Prophet (PBUH) and decision by an Italian minister to publicly where a t-shirt displaying this cartoon. Some of the demonstrators over-ran the Italian consulate and set fire to a section of it, followed by a violent response by Qaddafi security forces that while successful in suppressing the demonstration resulted in as many as twenty deaths among demonstrators ("In Libya, 11 Reportedly Die In Cartoon Protests," 2006; Birrell, 2011; Joffe, 2013). While this demonstration in Benghazi had started in reaction to statements by an Italian politician, the focus of the crowd's anger shifted toward the Qadhafi regime with demands for political change (McQuinn, 2015; International Crisis Group, 2011).

However, events would not wait for anniversaries. With the arrest in Benghazi of human rights activist and lawyer, Fathi Tirbil, earlier in the day, demonstrations started in the city on the evening February 15th. Tirbil was the legal representative for the families of victims of the 1996 Abu Salim massacre, in which more than 1000 prisoners had been

killed in an infamous prison located in Tripoli (Bartu, 2015; "Violent Protests Rock Libyan City of Benghazi," 2011; Joffe, 2013). Tirbil, too, had lost three relatives in the massacre (Fitzgerald, 2015). Many of those prisoners, coming from the eastern region of Libya, had found their way into the prison because of their religious affiliations. As Lindsey Hilsum notes "Some were Islamist fighters who had taken up arms against Colonel Gaddafi's regime while others were just religious men who went to the mosque too frequently, and so came under suspicion." (2012: 9). Among those killed in the Abu Salim prison massacre were members of Islamist groups. The two most prominent being the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) and the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood (Fitzgerald, 2015; Joffe, 2013).

The LIFG was comprised mainly of former Libyan mujahidin fighters, numbering as many as one thousand, that had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviets in the 1980s. As these fighters began to return to Libya in the early 1990s, they started to replicate what they had learned abroad culminating in a guerrilla campaign in the mid-1990s primarily in the Green mountains region of eastern Libya (Joffe, 2013). After suffering heavy losses in clashes with units of the Libyan army, hundreds of survivors were arrested and sent to Abu Salim prison. Some of LIFG's leadership managed to flee overseas, but were detained by foreign intelligence agencies in early 2000s and sent back to Libya and ultimately the same prison. One such case was the rendition by US and UK intelligence agencies of Abd al-Hakim Belhaj, who would later play a prominent role during and after the Libyan uprising (International Crisis Group, 2011; Fitzgerald, 2015).

The Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood first started to take shape in the 1950s, but unlike branches of the group in other countries, the Libyan branch was never able to put into practice the Brotherhood's model of political activism and charitable activity within the country. From the first years of the Qadhafi regime, the Muslim Brotherhood were targeted and suppressed meaning that the network of Libyan members mostly took shape among exiles living abroad. In the 1980s, the group did attempt to make in-roads within Libya but with little success as the regime detained many of its members. Some would be imprisoned in Abu Salim, while others were executed. In 1998, the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was again targeted by the regime with more than one hundred and fifty of its members being sent to Abu Salim prison (International Crisis Group, 2011; Fitzgerald, 2015).

While the LIFG and Muslim Brotherhood did not see eye to eye ideologically, bonds of trust did form among them and other Salafist prisoners through their shared experiences and interactions in Abu Salim prison. The bonds would prove beneficial during the 2011 uprising. As a prominent Qatar-based Libyan cleric, Ali Sallabi, noted "There were former prisoners in every Libyan city, with relationships of great trust which created a strong, secure network which grew quickly during the revolution because it was difficult to disrupt" (Fitzgerald, 2015: 179).

While the initial demonstrations on February 15th focused on the release of Fathi Tirbil, the families, mostly women, of the Abu Salim prison massacre had been organizing small protests over several years demanding justice for their relatives as well as more information about the incident (Joffe, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2015). On February 15th,

the detention of Tirbil, a member of the legal community, not only caused the family members of the Abu Salim victims to turn out in protest, but also many local lawyers and judges (Fitzgerald, 2015). Ultimately this small demonstration over the arrest of Fathi Tirbil would swell to thousands in Benghazi later in the evening resulting in a heavy-handed response by regime security forces who used water-canons and rubber-coated bullets to disburse the demonstrators resulting in reportedly 38 injured (McQuinn, 2015; "Libyan Police Stations Torched," 2011). Meanwhile, Benghazi was not the only city that experienced demonstrations on February 15th. In Al Beida, a city to the east of Benghazi, small demonstrations had open conflict with security forces in which two demonstrators were reportedly shot dead and groups of protestors stormed a police stations and set fire to it (Bartu, 2015; "Libyan police stations torched," 2011).

Demonstrations Spread to the Mountains & Amazigh-Arab Relations

With fires smoldering from the evening before, demonstrations in Benghazi and Beida continued for a second day. Meanwhile in the Nafusa mountains to the south of Tripoli, demonstrations started in the towns of Zintan, Kikla and Rujban. In all three towns, violence between protesters and security forces occurred. In Rujban and Zintan protesters overran government buildings, setting fire to police stations as well as to Revolution Committee and Internal Security Service buildings (Lacher & Labnouj, 2015).

The fact that demonstrations started in the Nafusa mountains was not entirely surprising, however, the town of Zintan being the first to demonstrate was surprising to

some, particularly to its neighbors from the Amazigh communities. This was because the Zintan community had traditionally supplied many senior officers to the regime's security forces. Further, the tribes that comprised the Zintan community had historic ties to the Moamar Qadhafi's tribe, the Qadhadhfa. In fact, the regime had dispatched representatives from this tribe to Zintan on the 16th in an unsuccessful attempt to weaken the support for protesters among Zintani notables (Lacher & Labnouj, 2015).

The Amazigh, also known as Berbers, are an indigenous ethnic group in North Africa that predates the migration of Arab groups to the region. Within Libya, the Amazigh ethnic groups comprise approximately nine percent of the population and are mostly situated in the Nafusa mountains (Maddy-Weitzmann, 2015). Under the Qadhafi regime, Libya's ethnic minority communities, including Amazigh, were not acknowledged as the regime promoted an Arab national identity. The Tamazigh language was outlawed as was giving children traditional Amazigh names or in general promoting Amazigh culture and rights (Joffe, 2013; Pargeter, 2016). Often the regime utilized inter-communal tensions and mistrust with neighboring Arab communities, such as Zintan, as a means to suppress Amazigh efforts to exert their own identity (Lacher & Labnouj, 2015).

Among the Amazigh towns in the Nafusa mountains the popular uprisings in neighboring Tunisia as well as Egypt gave inspiration, particularly among disenfranchised Amazigh youth. In fact, on February 12th some youth in the town of Nalut had set fire to a local bank. Reportedly in response over housing credits offered by the regime to placate growing discontent among the Amazigh communities. In general,

however, the leadership among the Amazigh communities was cautious about anti-regime demonstrations potentially breaking out in their communities. This was in part due to fear that the regime would react harshly to revolts by Amazigh towns and potentially mobilizing the Arab communities in the region to suppress such revolts. Of particular concern would be the potential role of Zintan, who had close ties to the regime's security forces. With confidence that large anti-regime demonstrations would emerge in Benghazi and other eastern cities, the Amazigh community leaders in the Nafusa mountains decided in early February that the best course of action was to wait and observe how their Arab neighbors would react to anti-regime demonstrations in the East (Lacher & Labnouj, 2015).

As mentioned, it was the Arab communities, particularly Zintan, where anti-regime demonstrations first emerged in the Nafusa mountains. The close ties between Zintani notables and the regime were well established. In fact, the negotiations between these groups started on February 15th with senior representative of the regime's People's Guard force meeting with Zintan's Popular Social Leadership (council of tribal leaders) in order to sure up communal support for the regime. Recognizing growing resentment within the community and fear that a decision to support the regime could cause intra-communal divisions, the council opted to hold a broader meeting among the Zintani tribes and notable citizens (Lacher & Labnouj, 2015).

With five representatives from each of the Zintani tribes asked to attend, a second meeting concerning Zintan's position was held on February 16th. It is reported that the debates were intense as community leaders struggled with the decision to join

demonstrations starting in eastern Libya or to support the regime in suppressing future

protests. However, one key voice was absent from the discussion. Zintani youth had

been organizing in different parts of the town and were beginning to voice their opinion

concerning the debate at hand. Finally, a group of youth burst into the debate among the

notables, disrupting and ultimately bring the discussion to an end. Those who had been

arguing to support the demonstrations in Benghazi, joined the youth and began to

consolidate as a growing mass of protesters in the central square of Zintan. In a similar

vein to the protests in eastern Libya, clashes with security officials occurred in Zintan and

protesters looted and set fire to a police station and local branch of the regime's

Revolution Committee (Lacher & Labnouj, 2015).

Despite attempts by the regime to quell the protests, allegedly by offering each

adult male 160,000 Libya dinars (approximately \$120,000 USD) in Zintan, the

community was quickly shifting its support to anti-regime demonstrations. With Zintan

and other Arab communities, such as Kikla and Rujban, casting their lot with growing

opposition in eastern Libya, the Amazigh communities, too, began to organize anti-

regime demonstrations in the following days. Their demonstrations also would involve

setting fire to government buildings, such as police stations and Revolutionary

Committee offices in their communities (Jadu on the 18th, Nalut on the 19th, and Yefren

on the 20th). By February 20th, several Arab and Amazigh communities in the Nafusa

mountains were positioned in opposition to the regime. As the demonstrations mutated

into a violent uprising, the new alliances between these communities would become more

important (Lacher & Labnouj, 2015).

The Day of Anger and Emergence of New Political Actors

By the time the "day of anger" arrived on February 17th, demonstrations had occurred in both the eastern cities of Benghazi and Beida as well as in Arab communities in the Nafusa mountains. These demonstrations resulted in casualties among protesters as well as the torching of several government buildings. Despite SMS messages sent by the regime to the general public in advance of February 17 warning the public not to participate (McQuinn, 2015), demonstrations continued in Benghazi and Beida as well as in Zintan and Rujban. Additionally, the eastern cities of Ajdabiyah and Derna saw violent demonstrations break out on February 17th. The experience in previous days of clashes with security officials resulting in casualties among demonstrators and the torching of government buildings was replicated in many of these cities. Additionally, many of the demonstrations began to voice similar demands revolving around opposition to the Qadhafi regime and calls for the Qadhafi to step down ("Deadly 'day of rage' in Libya," 2011; "Anti-government protesters killed in Libyan clash," 2011).

As mentioned previously, the Amazigh communities of the Nafusa mountains did not organize anti-regime demonstrations on February 17th. Neither did the communities in the economically influential city of Misrata, located approximately 200 kilometers to the east of Libya's capital, Tripoli (McQuinn, 2015). In Tripoli, small demonstrations in the traditionally working-class neighborhood of Fashloum materialized, however, large demonstrations comprising multiple neighborhoods of Tripoli did not occur. Those

earlier demonstrators in Fashloum were quickly dispersed by the regime's security forces (Cole & Khan, 2015).

Unlikely the anti-regime demonstrations in 2006 that never significantly spread beyond the city of Benghazi, by February 17th 2011 there had been three days of growing public demonstrations spreading across many of the major cities in eastern Libya. Media reports suggest that even in these early days the demands of protesters focused on the removal of Qadhafi ("Deadly 'day of rage' in Libya," 2011). The running battles with security forces and tendency to loot and set fire to government buildings and police stations tends to support Wolfram Lacher's argument that the "unorganized unrest of the first two weeks was driven by underemployed young men" (2011: 141). However, these descriptions of the early days of the Libyan uprising may not be entirely accurate.

Based on interviews with participants of the early demonstrations in Benghazi, Peter Bartu suggests that the leadership of the Benghazi protestors, while showing an organic formation, included a diverse cross-section of the local population. These leaders came from local prominent families and the professional class of lawyers and academics as well as regime defectors from security and government agencies. Additionally, youth activists and diaspora played a significant role. In fact, even as demonstrations spread across Benghazi, several academics and lawyers, who had joined the demonstrations, began to gather at the central courthouse to deliberate on the next steps with the decision to form a new opposition coalition that they named the "17 February Coalition" (2015).

On the same day, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, the regime's Justice Minister who had been dispatched to Benghazi to negotiate the end to demonstrations, indicated his desire

to defect from the regime and join the demonstrators. It is important to note that Jalil was not only from Beida, one of the first cities to revolt, but also a had long established associations with the networks of lawyers whom were increasingly taking a leadership role via the 17 February Coalition. In the coming week, Jalil would be tapped to lead the first local committee that would eventually emerge as the National Transitional Council (NTC) (Gritten, 2011; Bartu, 2015).

The influence of the 17 February Coalition was evident from its formation. In addition to reaching out to other established political opposition groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, LIFG, and the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL), the son of Moamar Qadhafi, Saif al-Islam, contacted the 17 February Coalition in order to identify ways that the regime could de-escalate the situation. The Coalition's response to Saif al-Islam's enquiry was similar to what the other opposition groups had advised – namely that the regime should restart the political and constitutional reform process that had stalled in the previous few years. On February 17th, the consensus among established opposition groups as well as the newly formed 17 February Coalition was not to undertake a revolution, but instead to force significant reforms within the regime (Cole & Khan, 2015)

In addition to forging alliances with the defecting Justice minister and opening channels of dialogue with Qadhafi's influential son, the 17 February Coalition also made efforts from its first day to lobby the regime's Interior minister, Abdul Fathi Younis (Bartu, 2015), whose defection, along with many of his soldiers, from the regime later in

February would be a significant development enabling the anti-regime opposition to gain

near total control over eastern Libya (Chulov, 2011; Lutterbeck, 2013).

The Demonstrations Continue and Misrata Makes a Choice

As the uprising progressed through its fourth day, it had already shifted in scale

far beyond the anti-regime demonstrations in Benghazi five years earlier. With all the

major cities in eastern Libya now experiencing large anti-regime demonstrations and the

emerging alliance between Arab and Amazigh communities in the Nafusa mountains,

there was growing speculation that the regime could not sustain such pressure for much

longer. However, there had yet to be any significant developments from Libya's third

city, Misrata. This would change on the February 19th.

Misrata is situated approximately 200 km to the east of Tripoli. While historically

part of the Tripolitania region, the city has a unique position with a power base not

entirely connected to the other cities in western Libya. It is the third largest city in Libya,

known as a hub for business, trade and other economic activities. Some in Misrata

explain that it was this position as an economic hub that was the cause for a lack of anti-

regime demonstration during the first few days. However, as the regime's heavy-handed

response to demonstrations, particularly in Benghazi where many Misratan's have close

ties, there was an emerging recognition among the population in Misrata that they must

publicly express their solidarity with those in Benghazi. Particularly after security forces

had fired on a funeral procession in Benghazi on February 18th (McQuinn, 2015).

Among the initial organizers, the plan had been to launch a demonstration on

February 19th following mid-day prayers at the central mosque. However, security was

aware of this and established a blockade around the mosque. Essentially isolating the organizers and approximately 40 demonstrators. What the organizers did not know was that simultaneously, several small protests were ongoing throughout the city. With an aggressive response by security forces, the protesters were unable to merge into one large demonstration and instead the first day of demonstrations in Misrata evolved into a day of ongoing skirmishes between security forces and protesters resulting in many injuries among the protesters as well as many detained by security forces. As the skirmishes progressed into the night, the protesters proceeded with actions similar to those done in other cities, they attacked and set ablaze police stations and other buildings associated with the regime (McQuinn, 2015).

Among the casualties during February 19th was Khalid Bu Shahma. His death would be a critical moment and turning point for anti-regime demonstrators in Misrata. While the demonstrators were unable to merge into one large demonstration the day before, thousands came out for the funeral of Khalid. At the funeral it was reported that his father addressed the crowd of mourners saying "Thank you for coming to my son's funeral. He is a martyr. But I do not want you to say that you are sorry for my loss. I do not want you to come to my house and give me condolences. I want you to go to the main square and shout it." (McQuinn, 2015: 235).

The crowd complied and made their way to the square, despite attempts by security forces to disperse them by reportedly firing live ammunition over their heads. As the crowds merged with those already at the central square and potentially recognizing the volatility of the situation, local notables from the community successfully

negotiated a truce with the security forces. In exchange for the security forces

withdrawing from city to their barracks at the airport, the community leaders would

ensure that the demonstrations did not antagonize security forces. This truce was agreed

for a two week period (McQuinn, 2015).

With a safe space created for anti-regime demonstrators, the square became a

central hub for information sharing, discussion and debates over what should be the

future course of action. Included in these early discussions were youth, businessmen as

well as lawyers and judges from the legal community. Coordination and organizing were

central themes in these discussions with consensus that the neighborhoods should begin

to form committees for self-protection in case the security forces returned. Quickly

checkpoints across the city were established and manned mostly by unarmed youth. The

idea being that checkpoints in these close-knit neighborhoods could easily identify

infiltrations by security agents or agitators. As these self-protection groups formalized,

local businessmen played a critical role in ensure the groups had sufficient funds and

supplies. In the coming months, these groups and their financial backers would emerge

as key actors in the siege of Misrata that would start in March 2011 (McQuinn, 2015).

Additionally, the safe space created on February 20th and vibrant discussions in

the coming days produce consensus that the community needed to establish a body that

could oversee administrative functions of the city. These discussions resulted in

formation of a local council and the appointment of Khalifa al-Zwawi, a well-respected

judge, as its chair (McQuinn, 2015).

The Regime Speaks: Saif al-Islam and the Reform Agenda

Despite the increasingly violent demonstrations spreading across the country during the past week, it was still not clear among the anti-regime demonstrators that the desired outcome of the demonstrations should be a significant reform of the regime or the toppling of it. As one prominent Benghazi actor who would later play a significant role in the National Transition Council, Fathi Ba'ja, revealed about the early deliberations in Benghazi "their intention was not to create revolution" (Cole & Khan, 2015). In fact, it had only been during an emergency meeting in Switzerland among the Muslim Brotherhood diaspora on February 19th that the group had decided to abandon its separate efforts to negotiate with the regime and throw its support behind the anti-regime demonstrators (Fitzgerald, 2015).

For those who held out hope that the outcome of the demonstrations to be significant reforms to the regime, much hope rested on the role of Muammar Qadhafi's son, Saif al-Islam. Since the mid-2000s, Saif had positioned himself favorably among both reform-mind Libyan elites and technocrats as well as among Islamist groups long oppressed by the regime. After all, it was Saif who had negotiated on behalf of the regime with the influential Qatar-based cleric, Ali Sallabi, on the release of LIFG prisoners from Abu Salim prison as well as negotiations with the banded Muslim Brotherhood (Cole & Khan, 2015; Joffe, 2013). In fact, it was these very negotiations and the Muslim Brotherhood's decision to not attend the first Libyan pan-opposition conference in London in 2005 that caused so much resentment among the other groups (Fitzgerald, 2015).

Saif al-Islam, the eldest son from Muammar Qadhafi's second marriage, had since 2005 begun to assert himself politically and developed around him a group of reform-minded technocrats and academics (Pargeter, 2010; Joffe, 2013). Speaking publicly, he used "buzzwords" the registered positively among some in the Libyan population as well as abroad. Among the three reform areas that Saif al-Islam claimed to have interested in promoting included economic reform, human rights advocacy, and political reforms (Pargeter, 2010).

Among these initiatives, his advocacy for human rights appeared to produce the most promise during the late 2000s. In what was called the "Reform and Repent" program, he reached out to Islamist prisoners and Islamist opposition groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and LIFG. Ultimately, assisting in the release of hundreds of prisoners. He also attempted to negotiate a resolution with the families of victims of the Abu Salim massacre. However, these efforts were rejected as they focused on compensation rather than providing information about the incident and justice (Pargeter, 2010).

Concerning political reforms, Saif al-Islam reportedly encouraged forums to debate reform initiatives at Garyounis university in Benghazi (Joffe, 2013). In 2007, he established a committee to draft a constitution. Called the National Charter, a draft version was leaked in 2008 and after receiving criticism from the old guard of the regime the initiative appeared to be abandoned. During the same year, Saif al-Islam withdrew from public life causing many of the reform initiatives to lose momentum (Pargeter, 2010).

In 2009, Saif al-Islam re-enters political life and again presented himself as an advocate for human rights. The Qadhafi Foundation, chaired by Saif al-Islam (Joffe, 2013), issued its first report on human rights in Libya and further coordinated with Human Rights Watch and facilitated the press conference of HRW's report on Libya. In addition, Saif al-Islam attempted to promote apolitical civil society within Libya, but faced strong resistance from within the regime and quickly abandons the initiative. The advocacy and reform efforts by the Qadhafi Foundation and Saif al-Islam appeared to be totally abandoned in December 2010 with the announcement by the Qadhafi Foundation that it was removing human rights advocacy and politic reform in Libya from the foundation's mission (St John, 2011).

It seems likely that at least during the first several days, Saif al-Islam was actively looking for ways to de-escalate the emerging anti-regime feelings manifesting itself as demonstrations. This is evident by reports his outreach to established opposition groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, LIFG and NFSL as well as emerging groups like the 17 February Coalition in order to find a solution (Cole & Khan, 2015). Whether or not his intentions were genuine is difficult to assess, however, it did cause some in the opposition to consider an outcome other than revolution. Because of the importance of the capital to the regime and fear of a particularly harsh crackdown, there had only been small demonstrations thus far in the capital. This would change significantly by the evening of February 20th (Cole & Khan, 2015).

While many in Tripoli waited for an anticipated speech by Saif al-Islam, the emerging opposition to the regime in other cities continued to keep up the pressure. In

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Benghazi, the lobbying of Interior minister, Fathi Younis, by the 17 February Coalition and others began to show promise. Younis negotiated the evacuation of security forces from Benghazi. However, this only happens after a particularly violent confrontation between protesters and security forces earlier in the day. The protesters had been attempting for several hours to breach the walls of one of the main security compounds in Benghazi and where only successful after Mahdi Ziu, a manager at a Libyan oil company and father of two, loaded his sedan with gas cylinders and ignited them as he drove into the gate of the compound – tearing a whole in the perimeter wall and killing himself in the process (Bartu, 2015).

In the Nafusa mountains, the Amazigh communities had joined their traditional adversaries, such as Zintan, in opposition to the regime. As demonstrators in Yefren and Nalut confronted security forces and torched Revolutionary Committee and security buildings, Zintani leaders successfully negotiated the surrender of army units in several towns in the Nafusa mountains – both Arab and Amazigh. In fact, the efforts of Zintan had enabled the Amazigh communities to arm themselves with the weapons abandoned at the army bases (Lacher & Labnouj, 2015).

With several areas of the country slipping from the control of the regime, many waited in anticipation for a televised address on the evening of Febraury 20th by Saif al-Islam. Would he take the advice offered by the opposition he had consulted and embark on genuine reforms or would he reinforce the position of the old guard in the regime? They would be disappointed. In a speech lasting less than ten minutes, Saif al-Islam threatened civil war, accused foreign agitators of instigating the uprising, and claimed

that protesters were under the influence of alcohol and drugs ("Libyans react to televised address by Gadhafi's son," 2011).

The reaction by people in Tripoli, particularly from the working class neighborhoods of Souq al Juma, Tajoura and Fashloum, was immediate. Reportedly thousands took to the streets and moved towards Green square with the intent to occupy it. Protesters moving towards the square were met by security forces with some reportedly firing into the crowds, while others fired into to the air or withdrew instead of confronting the protesters. The decision to not confront the protesters may have been due to alleged orders given by the Interior minister, Fathi Younis, who was in Benghazi and already wavering in his support for the regime (Cole & Khan, 2015).

While protesters occupied Green square, some began to overrun and set fire to buildings belonging to the security forces near the square. Others moved towards the People's Hall and also torched the building. As dawn neared on February 21st, those protesters occupying the central square of Tripoli may have had glimmers of hope as they looked around at each other and the small space that they had successful taken control of over the night. This would not last. Security forces returned to Green square at 5:00 AM, heavily armed with truck mounted weapons, and began firing into the crowds in the square – quickly scattering the protesters before sunrise. Following this, security forces seem to have withdrawn from their positions in the neighborhoods of Souq al Juma and Tajoura, but reinforced their positions within the central areas of the city (Cole & Khan, 2015).

Violence Increases: Defections Among Military and Political Elites

The bloody suppression of protesters in Tripoli's Green square by regime forces on the 21st as well as reports of Libyan air force launching air strikes against civilian protesters in eastern Libya (Peregin, 2011) appear to demonstrate a hardening determination by the regime to suppress the demonstrations spreading across the country by violence if necessary. While these methods appear to have worked in Tripoli, where opposition protesters had been scattered, it appears that the use of violence further weakened the regimes grip on the country.

The defection of two fighter pilots to Malta after refusing to carry out orders to bomb civilian targets made international headlines, though reportedly other pilots had opted to eject from their jets and crash them in the desert instead of carrying out similar orders (Hooper & Black, 2001). By the 22nd, defection among the army in the eastern region was growing, particularly in Benghazi ("Gaddafi defiant as state teeters," 2011). Most notable was the defection of Interior Minister, Fathi Younis, on the same day (Bartu, 2015) announcing from Benghazi that he was joining the 17 February revolution and urging the army join the protesters who were voicing legitimate demands ("Defiant Gaddafi vows to fight on," 2011).

The evening of the 22nd saw the another televised address by a member of the Qadhafi family. As crowds gathered in Benghazi's main square to watch on big screens, the nation awaited to hear from Muammar Qadhafi, himself. In an address lasting nearly an hour, the leader made no acknowledgement of the protesters demands. Instead, he launched accusations that the uprising was part of an Islamist and foreign backed plot.

Going further than his son, Saif al-Islam, he claimed that the youth involved in protests were under the influence hallucinogenic drugs. He urged his supporters to "attack these cockroaches" and promised a response similar to the Chinese government's response to Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 ("Libya protests: Defiant Gaddafi refuses to quit," 2011). The reaction to Qadhafi's speech, especial in Benghazi, was defiant. In a scene reminiscent of Hosni Mubarak's speech to the Egyptian people in January, the crowds gathered in Benghazi's square began to throw their shoes at the screen projecting Qadhafi's televised speech ("Gaddafi defiant as state teeters," 2011).

The actualized and threats of violence by the regime as well as Qadhafi's resolute position to not step down or enact significant reforms, not only caused defections within the military. During this time a wave of senior political officials also defected from the regime. The defection of Justice minister, Mustafa Jalil, on the 21st and the Interior minister, Fathi Younis, on the 22nd were not the only senior officials to abandon the regime. Starting on the 22nd, a number of senior diplomates cast their lot with anti-regime protesters. Libyan ambassadors in India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia all announced their defection over the violent response of the regime towards protesters. The Ambassador to the United States, Ali Aujali, summed up his position by saying "How can I support a government killing our people? What I have seen in front of my eyes is not acceptable at all" ("Libyan diplomats defect en masse," 2011).

Diplomates representing Libya at international organizations, such as the Arab League and United Nations, also announced their resignations over the excessive use of violence by the regime. The deputy ambassador to the United Nations, Ibrahim

Dabbashi, stated "All the Libyan people want Gaddafi to go" (Hooper & Black, 2001).

The Libyan ambassador to the UN, Abdel Rahman Shalgham, would soon follow with

his defection on February 25th during a speech to the United Nations Security Council

(Bartu, 2015). Yousif Sawani, a professor at Tripoli University and senior aide to Saif al-

Islam, also defected. The Warfalla tribe, the largest in Libya, too announced its

opposition to the Qadhafi regime and along with other tribes called on Qadhafi to resign.

("Gaddafi defiant as state teeters," 2011).

The Alternative: Local Councils and The National Transitional Council

On February 22nd a curious thing happened at the courthouse in Benghazi. The

iconic green flag, so associated with the Qadhafi regime, was replaced with tri-colored

flag of red, black and green adorned with a single star and a crescent moon (Bartu, 2015)

This was the flag of the Kingdom of Libya. The state headed by the Senussi monarchy

who had been overthrown by Muammar Qadhafi in his own revolution forty-two years

earlier (Vandewalle, 2012). This defiant action could represent a growing consensus

among the protesters that the removal of the regime would be the inevitable trajectory of

their demonstrations. The uncompromising positions taken by both Qadhafi and his son,

Saif al-Islam, appeared to leave little alternative to regime change.

The defection of Fathi Younis and army units, such as the Libyan special forces

unit based in Benghazi known as the "Saiqa brigade", likely made this idea of regime

change all the more tangible. With Younis and his soldier supporting the anti-regime

movement in the East, the control of Benghazi by the regime evaporated – creating a

"safe haven" for the anti-regime movement. On the same day, the 17 February Coalition

decided that a Benghazi Local Council should be formed to administer this newly liberated area (Bartu, 2015). As demonstrators gained control of their own cities, they too would create administrative bodies called local councils. For Misrata the local council would be created on February 24th (McQuinn, 2015).

Recognizing the common cause that the liberated communities shared and that coordination and support would be beneficial, there was a growing belief in Benghazi that a national council was needed. Therefore, representatives from the local councils in the liberated areas were sent to Benghazi to discuss and reach an agreement on February 26th. After some deliberation, it was decided to create the National Transitional Council (NTC). On February 27th, the NTC established its headquarters at the al-Fadil hotel in Benghazi (Bartu, 2015).

Shortly after setting up its headquarters, the NTC was supplied with Inmarsat satellite communication equipment by the United Kingdom. While this was a modest donation, it proved enormously beneficial to this nascent council because it greatly improved the NTC's ability to have routine direct communication with the other liberated areas of the country, such as Misrata and Zintan. It further allowed the NTC to begin to establish external links with the international community. Mahmoud Jebril, arriving in Benghazi on February 28th, would play an important role on the international outreach front (Bartu, 2015).

At its creation, there were two frontrunners to lead the NTC, both of whom were regime defectors. Mustafa Jalil, the until recently Justice minister, and Fathi Younis. Ultimately, the decision was to appoint Jalil. The general feeling being that it was better

for the NTC to lead by a former judge, instead of a military man. This also followed the

pattern chosen in Misrata to pull from the legal community a leader of the local council

(Bartu, 2015). It also was likely to curb concerns by Islamist, some of whom had fought

Younis and the army in the Green mountains during the 1990s (International Crisis

Group, 2011).

While it has been argued that established opposition groups, mostly in exile, were

absent during this initial period of the uprising and thus exercised little influence over the

early developments (Lacher, 2011), this may not entirely be the case. The selection of

Jalil over Younis, may be evidence of this. While the emissary, Alamin Bilhajj,

dispatched by the Muslim Brotherhood did not arrive in Benghazi until March 1st, it was

evident that its membership within Libya had been activated during the first week of the

uprising. Clerics associated with the Brotherhood are reported to have given multiple

sermons encouraging the demonstrations, while other members began to utilize their

networks to coordinate humanitarian aid in various communities across eastern Libya

(Fitzgerald, 2015).

However, it is clear that even at its creation there was some concern about the

make-up of the NTC. Bilhajj, the Brotherhood emissary, expressed his concern at the

first meeting of the NTC that he attended. Commenting that the composition of the

council was made up of too many liberals, by which he meant lawyers and academics,

and over represented by individuals from the eastern region (Fitzgerald, 2015). Such

criticisms in likely the reason for the general anxiety within the NTC that emerged during

the days after its inception. They feared being perceived by segments of the anti-regime

movement as assuming power and, thus, felt that they could only speak on behalf of the movement in situations where there was broad consensus. This consensus essentially boiled down to an agreement that the Qadhafi and his family must be removed and that elections must be held for legislative body with a democratic mandate to replace the NTC (Bartu, 2015).

By the end of February, multiple cities across Libya had experienced large anti-regime demonstrations. Nearly all had turned violent with security forces clashes with protesters resulting in casualties on both sides. As the leadership of the regime repeatedly demonstrated, in word and action, an uncompromising position, many reformists who had hoped for a peaceful transition begin to gravitate to the anti-regime demonstrations. Further, safe haven areas were eventually created for the demonstrators, largely due to defections of army units but also when community notables were able to negotiate temporary truces between security forces and demonstrators, such was the case in Misrata.

The hard fought victories of the first week of uprising, harden the resolve of the anti-regime movement. Regime change would be the trajectory and in order to achieve this, the demonstrators would need to organize themselves. The creation of the NTC was the first major effort of the anti-regime movement to present a common voice to both the regime as well as the international community. The success of this representative body was questionable from the outset, and perhaps it could have performed better.

FINDINGS

The case study of the initial two weeks of the 2011 Libyan uprising produces some interesting findings. In this chapter, I will elaborate on four findings that are particularly informative. First is that despite the 2011 Libya uprising being labeled as many things, such as a revolution, civil war, uprising, and even as riots, the phenomenon that played out during the second half of February 2011 meets the definition of contentious politics. Second, the emergence of new political actors in this episode of contention suggests that it can be further categorized as transgressive contention. Third, the case study demonstrates that unlike previous episodes of contention in Libya, the process of scale-shifting appears to be occurring during the first two weeks of 2011 Libya uprising with evidence indicating that both brokerage and diffusion mechanisms are present during this period. Finally, the case study reveals that in addition to replicating the "occupy" method of protest used in Egypt and Tunisia, the first two weeks of the 2011 Libyan uprising also produce a type of protest that was already familiar in the Libyan context. This being the overrunning of buildings associated with object of the claims and setting these facilities on fire.

Episode of Contentious Politics

The criteria for contentious politics put forward by McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow is an "episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of a least one of the claimants" (2001). Considering the case of Libya and the initial phase of the 2011 uprising, the evidence suggests that it meets the criteria necessary to be labeled as an episode of contentious politics.

While the claims were many and arguably evolved over the first two weeks of the 2011 uprising, it is apparent that the Qadhafi regime was clearly positioned as the object by the claim-makers. The demands for reform, justice or removal of the regime all would have had some impact on the government and produced an affect that would change its power relation with the public. Additionally, these claims were acted out in public and collectively through demonstrations involving increasingly large segments of the population. Finally, the 2011 uprising was not an example of tradtional politics, but episodic because the process did not play out through routine relations within the society (McAdam et al, 2001). By establishing that the 2011 Libyan uprising is most likely and episode of contentious politics, the next logical aspect to consider is the type of contentious politics involved in this case. Was the 2011 Libyan uprising, or at least its initial phase in February, a case of contained contention or of transgressive contention?

Transgressive Contention

Based on the nature of the political actors involve, contentious politics can take two forms. The first is contained contention. This is the case when the actors involved in the contention existed as political actors prior to the start of the episode of contention. The second form is called transgressive contention. This is the case when new political actors emerge during the episode of contention (McAdam et al, 2001).

In late 2011, Wolfram Lacher wrote that the "unorganized unrest of the first two weeks was driven by underemployed young men" (Lacher, 2011: 141). If this was the case, then one could argue that these youths constituted an emerging political actor, even if profoundly unorganized, and thus, the uprising would constitute transgressive contention. However, this study of the first two weeks of the 2011 Libyan uprising, provides evidence that both established political actors as well as new ones were involved as claim-makers opposing the regime.

Among the pre-existing political actors, included a number of opposition groups. This included previous regime defectors, such as the NFSL, as well as banished and imprisoned Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the LIFG. Within Libya, one could argue that community and tribal elites acted as political entities within their own specific localities and that issue-groups, such as the families of Abu Salim prison victims, also constituted existing political actors prior to the February uprising.

In addition to the "unorganized youth" described by Lacher, this study shows evidence of new political actors emerging during the first two weeks of the Libyan uprising. The creation of the 17 February Coalition is one such examples. The creations

of political bodies that could directly challenge the sovereignty of the regime also emerged. First at a local level with the creation of local councils within cities that slipped from control of the regime, and second with the creation of the National Transitional Council that challenged the regime's sovereignty at a national level. Further the defection among military units as well as the creation of neighborhood defense groups, constituted new entities that challenged the regime's monopoly on the use of violence. These sorts of armed actors, too, should be considered as political groups.

As shown in Table 1, these two categories of political actors, pre-existing and newly formed, are present during the first two weeks of the Libyan uprising. Therefore, the evidence suggests that not only was this an episode of political contention, but it was transgressive in nature.

Table 1 Political Actors

Pre-Existing Political Actors
National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL)
Muslim Brotherhood – Libya branch
Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)
Families of Abu Salim Prison Victims
Legal Community
Academic Community
Reformist Technocrats & Officials
Community Notables/Tribal Leaders
Newly Formed Political Actors
17th February Coalition
National Transitional Council
Local Councils
Community Defense Groups

Processes of Contentious Politics – Scale Shifting

A distinct process found in contentious politics is that of scale shifting. According to McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow, scale shifting is the observable phenomenon in which local contentious actions expand into broader coordinated action by claim-makers against the object of their claims. This process is typically produced through both diffusion and brokerage mechanism, which create attributions of similarity among groups allowing for emulation and leads to coordinated action (See Figure 2) (McAdam et al, 2001: 333).

Of the mechanisms associated with scale-shifting, brokerage involves a new connection between previously unconnected social groups, while diffusion "involves the transfer of information along established lines of interaction" (McAdam et al, 2001: 333). The evidence in this study suggests that both mechanisms are present in the scale shifting that occurred over the first two weeks of the 2011 Libya uprising. I will expand on this below but to summarize, it appears that diffusion is the causal mechanism for the expansion of contention geographically, while brokerage influences expansion across Libyan society.
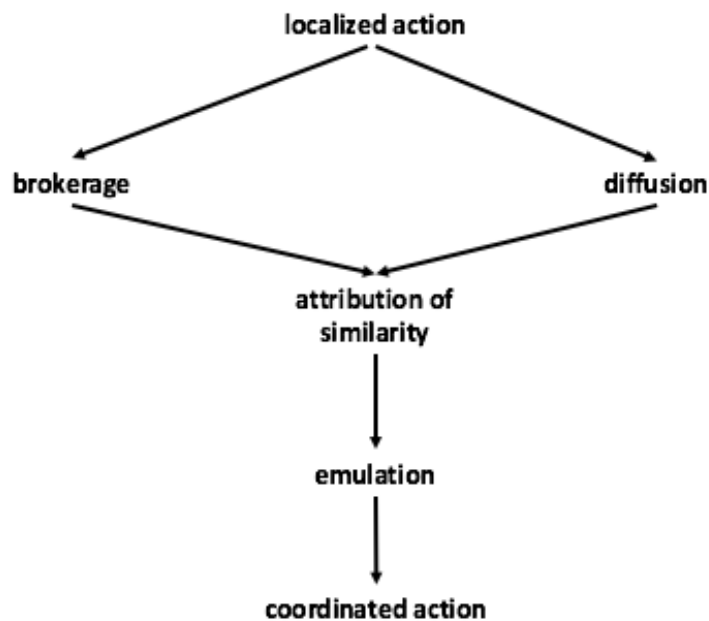
Figure 2 Scale Shifting Process

The role that brokerage played in scale shifting process is, perhaps, most evident in the eastern region of Libya, namely Benghazi. This is potentially due to the fact that Benghazi, with the defection of Fathi Younis, produced the most robust "safe space" during the second week of the uprising and thus permitted more overt brokerage mechanism. The study shows that among the political actors, both new and pre-existing, linkages to other actors were not universal. Of the pre-existing actors (blue), the Islamist groups and Benghazi academics appear to have two pre-existing linkages, while the families of Abu Salim prison victims and the Benghazi legal community have three linkages. The reformist technocrats and regime officials produce the most pre-existing linkages with four. Among the new political actors (red), the National Transitional

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Council has the highest number of linkages with six, followed by the 17 February

Coalition with four, and the defecting military and senior officials with three (Figure 3).
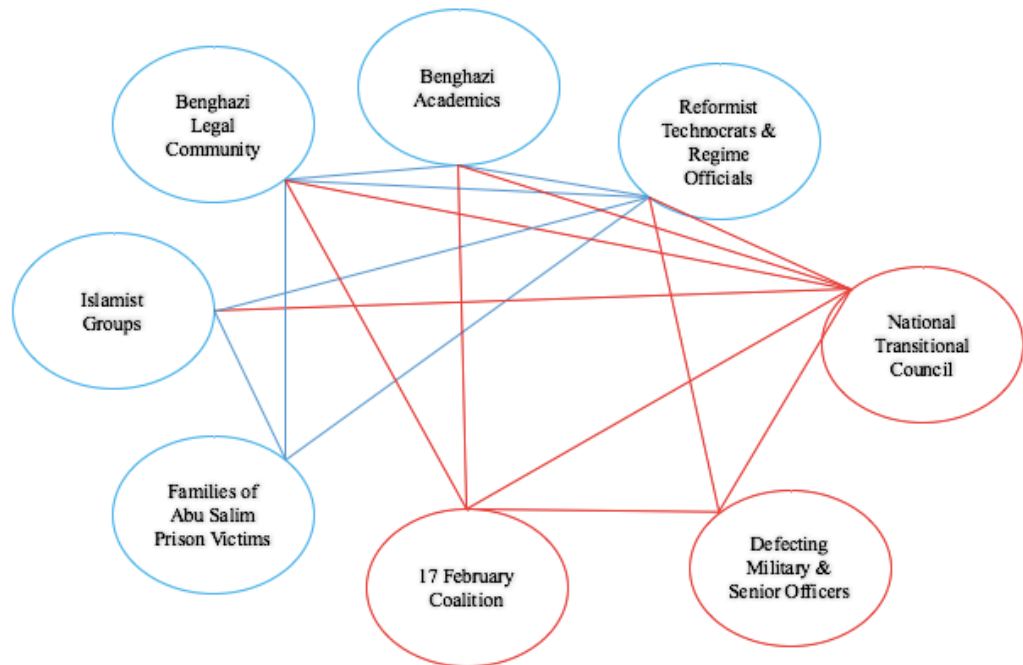

Figure 3 Brokered Linkages

It is worth also noting the lack of linkages between Islamist groups and the

families of Abu Salim prison victims with the new political actors that emerged during

the initial weeks of the Libyan uprising. In fact, it appears that the only linkage is

between the Islamist groups and the National Transitional Council. This may speak to

Ali Sallabi's emphasis on the fact that many of those within Islamist groups had

established trusted connections with like minded individuals during their years spent in

Abu Salim prison, which remained their main connections during the 2011 uprising (Fitzgerald, 2015).

The fact that the National Transitional Council ultimately established the highest number of linkages among the groups identified suggests that a brokerage mechanism produced a scale shifting process that brought in previously disconnected groups. Noting that there does not appear to be any direct linkage, prior to or during the uprising, between Islamist groups and the defecting military and senior officers is evidence of this brokerage mechanism. Evidence of this lack of linkages between the Islamist groups and other political actors could be the reason that upon arriving in Benghazi, the Muslim Brotherhood's emissary, Alamin Bilhajj, expressed concerned that the National Transitional Council was made of too many liberal lawyers and academics and did not represent Libyan society (Fitzgerald, 2015).

While brokerage mechanisms may explain an upward shift within Libyan society, diffusion appears to be at play concerning geographical scale shifting, with one exception being the spread from Arab to Amazigh communities in the Nafuse mountains. In this case, the study suggests that brokerage between these communities occurred. The study does not show clear evidence of brokerage between communities, particularly during the first week of the uprising. Considering the rapid expansion geographically in which most major communities experienced large anti-regime demonstrations within a single week, it is likely that expansion is due to diffusion. However, while diffusion can occur through direct lines of interaction, known as relational diffusion, information can also transfer through non-relational diffusion because "contentious politics may spread even in the

absence of direct communication between social movement actors if actors in potentially contentious sites define themselves as similar to transmitters (Vasi, 2011: 12).

In the study of the first two weeks of the Libyan uprising suggests that non-relational diffusion could be a causal mechanism that produced the geographical scale shift in contention. As observed, the demonstrations first began in eastern Libya on February 15th instigated by the those opposing the detention of a human rights activist, Fathi Tirbil. During this first day, significant demonstrations were limited to two cities, Beida and Benghazi. In both cities the security force's reaction was harsh resulting in casualties. As information spread through social and traditional media as well as informal networks, it appears that other communities increasingly defined themselves as similar to the initial demonstrators. Evidence of this sort of non-relational diffusion is perhaps most evident in the case of Misrata who's population first organized demonstrations five days after protesters went to the streets in Benghazi. A principal organizer of the first protests in Misrata affirmed that a central motivation for the initial demonstrations had been to show solidarity with the people in Benghazi and opposition to the harsh tactic used by security forces (McQuinn, 2015).

While many Misratan's may have defined themselves as similar to demonstrators in Benghazi and other communities opposing the regime, this sense of similarity was ultimately confirmed as they went to streets, using similar protest repertoires, and experienced the same, if not even more, harsh reaction from security forces. The same non-relational diffusion is probable for the protesters in Tripoli who went to the streets following the televised speech by Saif al-Islam. They too would have a sense of

similarity with fellow Libyan protesters once experiencing the harsh push back by the regime's security forces.

While non-relational diffusion may be the causal mechanism that shifts local actions in two eastern cities to attributions of similarity among cities across Libya. The protest tactics replicated from the initiator to the other protesters shows that emulation is present in the scale shifting process. It is notable that as each city erupted with demonstrations, this study demonstrates that these protester replicated the tactic of attempting to occupy a public space. However, what is perhaps more interesting and potentially unique to the Libyan context is that protesters in all the cities in the study engaged in overrunning and burning government buildings during the first day of the demonstrations.

A review of Libyan protests prior to the 2011 uprising, reveal that this same tactic was utilized by protesters on multiple occasions. In 1980, a mob reportedly burned down the French embassy in Tripoli in reaction to the French government's support for Tunisia ("Libyan mob burns down French embassy," 1980). As mentioned previously, a similar incident occurred at the Italian consulate in Benghazi in 2006. However, such tactics were not exclusively used against foreign targets. In July of 2000, enraged football fans in Benghazi stormed the field after what they perceived as match rigging in favor of the Tripoli club owned by one of Muammar Qadhafi's sons, Saadi Qadhafi. The fans next moved to the Libyan Football Federations local Benghazi office and set it on fire (Mittelstaedt, 2011). What this demonstrates is that this protest tactic is a reoccurring phenomenon within Libyan society (See Table 2).

Table 1 Protests involving fire

Date	Location	Description
February 1980	Tripoli	Protesters set fire to French embassy
July 2000	Benghazi	Protesters set fire to office of Libyan Football Association
February 2006	Benghazi	Protesters set fire to Italian consulate
12 February 2011	Nalut	Protesters set fire to bank branch
15 February 2011	Beida	Protesters set fire to police stations
15 February 2011	Benghazi	Protesters set fire to police stations
16 February 2011	Zintan	Protesters set fire to police stations & Revolution Committee building
16 February 2011	Rujban	Protesters set fire to police stations & Revolution Committee building
17 February 2011	Ajdabiyah	Protesters set fire to police stations
17 February 2011	Derna	Protesters set fire to police stations
18 February 2011	Jadu	Protesters set fire to police stations & Revolution Committee building
19 February 2011	Nalut	Protesters set fire to police stations & Revolution Committee building
19 February 2011	Misrata	Protesters set fire to police stations
19 February 2011	Yefren	Protesters set fire to police stations & Revolution Committee building
20 February 2011	Tripoli	Protesters set fire to government buildings near Green Square and the People's Hall

What this demonstrates is that protesters were both emulating tactics used by

fellow Libyans who went to the streets on February 15th, but were also pulling from pre-

existing protest tactics familiar to the society and understood by the regime. While in

democratic or less repressive regimes, protesters may more commonly use non-violent

protest tactic, in repressive regimes the use of disruptive and direct action tactics are

more common. In fact, under repressive regimes, such as Libya, violent tactics might be

the only option for protesters. While the use of a tactic such as setting fire to buildings

may commonly be viewed as an act of rioting, it can in certain contexts be a powerful tactic of protest (Alimi, 2015).

However during episodes of contention, repertoires do not simple replicate tactics of protest known within the society. Instead these tactics must adapt and show innovation as they spread (McAdam et al., 2001). This too is evident as demonstration spread across Libyan communities. From the earliest demonstrations, it is apparent that protesters were not exclusively using one protest tactic. In nearly every example during the first week, protesters not only set fire to government buildings but also attempted to occupy public spaces – typically city squares. This disruptive tactic is quiet similar to the tactics used by protesters in Egypt. In addition to combining both violent and disruptive tactics, the emerging anti-regime movement in several cities learned that in order to retain control of occupied space, it must have de facto control of the community itself. In Libya, where this was successful we see emerging movement leadership actively engaging with security forces in order to achieve this. In Zintan and Benghazi, these negotiations resulted in defections by army units and senior officers. In Misrata, the negotiations were only successful in ensuring a temporary truce. However, this temporary truce proved sufficient for the anti-regime protesters to develop a self-defense force capable of withstanding a siege that would last for several months.

In summary, this case study uncovers several interesting findings. First, it shows evidence that the 2011 Libya uprising meets the definition of an episode of contentious politics because it is both episodic and public. It further demonstrates that the object of the claim-makers is the Libyan regime and that should its demands be realized would

significantly impact the status of the regime. Second, evidence is produced in this study that demonstrates a transgressive nature of the contention by showing the emergence of new political actors during the episode of contention. By producing evidence that the first two weeks of the 2011 Libyan uprising qualifies as contentious politics, it affirms the validity of using theories of contentious politics in order to the dynamics of contention within the Libyan case.

Establishing that this case constitutes an episode of contentious politics, sets forth a system of analysis in which the research question of this thesis: How did the initial period of the 2011 Libyan uprising spread so quickly? By investigating the process of scale shifting, commonly associate with contentious politics, the study provides evidence that scale shifting is present during the first two weeks of the uprising. This finding is further supported by identifying causal mechanisms present that enable local actions to shift in scale producing coordinated actions across Libya geographically via a non-relational diffusion mechanism as well as across Libyan society via a brokerage mechanism.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been a modest attempt to understand how a localized uprising far from the Libyan capital expanded and intensified in a relatively short period of time, two weeks. Obvious limitations to this research, beyond my own inexperience as an academic, include the relatively short time period to conduct research as well as the lack of funds and current insecurity in Libya, which made field based research unrealistic. Recognizing that the majority of literature on the 2011 Libyan uprising has focused on the causes and outcome and less on the process of the uprising, I attempted to apply theories prominent within the field of contentious politics by using a case study method in order develop a detailed description of the first two weeks of the 2011 Libyan uprising.

Despite prominent scholars in the field of contentious politics, such as Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow, and Donnatella Della Porta, acknowledging the 2011 Libyan uprising as a case of contentious politics, researchers within this field have for the most part not produced significant literature on the Libyan case. This apparent oversight is unfortunate as it appears that theories associate with contentious politics could add valuable insight into the processes that occurred during the 2011 uprising. The theory of the scale shifting process, and it's associated mechanisms of brokerage and diffusion, is a case in point and a means to understanding how the 2011 Libya uprising spread so quickly across Libya, both geographically and within society.

The first success of this thesis is that I have demonstrated that the criteria for contentious politics are present during the initial period of the 2011 Libyan uprising. This affirms suggestions by scholars of contentious politics that the Libya case should be included as a case to be studied. Second, I have also demonstrated that the emergence of new political actors during this initial period of the uprising indicates that Libyan case of contentious politics is transgressive in nature.

Through a case study approach and the development of a detailed description of the initial period of the uprising, I have produced evidence that suggests that a scale-shifting process was present during the first two weeks of the uprising. By identifying brokerage and diffusion mechanism that likely produced an attribution of similarity among various components of Libyan society, I call into question a prominent argument in the literature concerning the 2011 Libyan uprising. Namely that it was a product of a disconnected struggle between the Libyan periphery and center primarily concerning local interests. The creation of new political actors and brokerage between actors previously disconnected demonstrates that a richer understanding of how the uprising transpired is needed. Further the emulation of repertoires of contention through non-relational diffusion also reinforces the need for more research of the Libyan uprising as a case of contentious politics.

In addition to further testing the tentative findings that I have produced in this thesis, I believe there are two interesting and potentially fruitful areas of research that could be particularly useful to understanding the Libyan cases as well as contentious politics in general. The first would be more research into the social networks that

emerged during the 2011 Libyan uprising and the role of the brokerage mechanism. As demonstrate in my findings, the linkages among Islamists and rebelling components of the military appear to be rather weak. Future research that affirms this weak linkage or provides a deeper understanding of how these two actors interact could produce further insight into not only the Libyan case, but also into how similar actors, who find themselves on the same side in contentious politics, engage with each other.

Second, my findings indicate that a prominent repertoire of contention in the Libyan case is for protesters to overrun and set fire to buildings that they associated with the Qadhafi regime. In fact, my case study suggests that this repertoire was not only emulated in each community that saw significant protests during the first week of the uprising, but that it was frequently one of the first protest performances enacted by demonstrators. Further research into this particular repertoire could, again, produce a richer understanding of the Libyan case and the initial motivations of protesters. However, it could also add to the study of riots and the use of violence by protesters. What is particularly interesting in the Libyan case is that riotous behavior demonstrated by protesters does not necessarily appear to be an escalation related to an actual crackdown by police forces. Instead it is a repertoire that is utilized at the onset of protests, perhaps in anticipation of an inevitable response by security forces. Considering that most of the research on violence in contentious politics and riots has focused this phenomenon and its manifestation in Western, democratic societies (Alimi, 2015), future research of this particular repertoire in the Libyan case could enrich the study of this phenomenon in non-Western societies under autocratic regimes.

In conclusion, this thesis has demonstrated that evaluating the Libyan case through the lens of contentious politics, can produce valuable insight into not only how the uprising evolved in Libya, but also how contentious politics unfolds in places where political space in particularly limited and where regimes are less tolerant or accommodating to opposition. As contention continues in Libya, as well as other countries included in the Arab Spring, research on the processes of contention is a valuable means of understanding how such uprisings occurred.

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