

A History of Modern Libya

DIRK VANDEWALLE

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A HISTORY OF MODERN LIBYA

Libya is coming in from the cold, but for most of the three decades following Mu'ammār al-Qadhafī's self-styled revolution in 1969, the country was politically isolated and labeled a pariah state by the West. Dirk Vandewalle, who was one of only a handful of western scholars to visit the country during this time, is intimately acquainted with the country. This history – based on original research and interviews with Libya's political elite – offers a lucid and comprehensive account of Libya's past, and corrects some of the misunderstandings about its present. Vandewalle begins in the 1900s with a portrait of Libya's desert terrain, its peoples, and the personalities that shaped its development. He then moves on to the harrowing years of the Italian occupation in the early twentieth century, through the Sanusi monarchy and, thereafter, to the revolution of 1969. The following chapters analyze the economics and politics of Qadhafī's self-styled revolution, with some intriguing insights into the man and his ideology as reflected in *The Green Book*. The final chapter is devoted to the most recent events that brought Libya back into the international fold and concludes with some likely scenarios for its future. As the first comprehensive history of Libya in over twenty years, this book will be welcomed by scholars and students of North Africa, the Middle East, and by those who are visiting and doing business in the region for the first time.

DIRK VANDEWALLE is Associate Professor of Government at Dartmouth College. He is the author of *Libya Since Independence: Oil and State-building* (1998), and the editor of *Qadhafī's Libya, 1969–1994* (1995).

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Preface

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

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

allowed me to finish the manuscript. Marigold Acland and two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press provided insightful and thoughtful comments as the manuscript progressed.

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

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

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

Chronology, 1900–2005

THE OTTOMAN AND ITALIAN PERIOD

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

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

- October 1919 Separate statutes known as the *Legge Fondamentale*, for Cyrenaica and Tripolitania accepted by Italy; each province to have its own parliament and local councils.
- August 1920 Ramadan al-Suwayhli is killed in a battle with rival tribesmen who object to the Tripolitanian Republic.
- October 1920 The al-Rajma Agreement between the Italians and the Sanusiyya confirms Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi as Amir of Cyrenaica.
- November 1920 At the Gharyan conference Tripolitanian leaders attempt to forge a common agenda to press their demands vis-à-vis Italy.
- 28 July 1922 Representatives from the Gharyan conference offer the Amirate of Tripolitania to Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi.
- October 1922 Benito Mussolini comes to power in Italy.
- November 1922 Sayyid Idris accepts the Amirate of Tripolitania, and is now the recognized Amir of both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania.
- December 1922 Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi leaves Cyrenaica for exile in Cairo where he will remain until after World War II.
- 1923 Umar al-Mukhtar organizes the resistance to the Italians in Cyrenaica after Sayyid Idris's exile to Cairo.
- 11 September 1931 Umar al-Mukhtar is captured by the Italians.
- 16 September 1931 Umar al-Mukhtar is executed.
- June 1934 The Libyan–Sudan border is agreed upon between Great Britain and Italy.
- March 1937 Mussolini visits Libya to inaugurate the Litoranea Libica and to have himself proclaimed Protector of Islam.
- 1938 Italy embarks upon grand-scale agricultural settlements in Libya.
- August 1940 During a meeting in Cairo with Libyan exiles, Sayyid Idris al-Sanusi is authorized to negotiate with the British after the war for independence.

- October–December 1942 Second battle of al-Alamein. As a result of the battles in Cyrenaica and western Egypt, the Italian settlers leave Cyrenaica and the Italians withdraw from Libya.
- 1943 The Allies' expulsion of Germany and Italy from North Africa leads to the creation of a British Military Administration in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, and of a French Military Administration in Fazzan.

LIBYA IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II

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

- 2 December 1950 Libya's National Assembly decides to create as soon as possible a United Kingdom of Libya and offers Idris al-Sanusi the throne.
- 4 December 1950 The National Assembly creates a Committee of the Constitution to prepare a draft constitution.
- March 1951 Provincial governments are created in Tripolitania and Fazzan.
- 29 March 1951 Libya's National Assembly creates a provisional government.
- 10 September 1951 Discussions begin in the National Assembly on a draft constitution.
- 7 October 1951 Libya's Constitution is promulgated by the National Assembly.

THE LIBYAN MONARCHY

- 24 December 1951 The United Kingdom of Libya proclaims its independence, and is headed by King Idris al-Sanusi.
- 19 February 1952 Libya holds its first general election. Political parties are banned in its aftermath.
- 25 March 1952 Libya's Parliament meets for the first time.
- 12 February 1953 Libya joins the Arab League.
- 26 July 1953 Libya signs a twenty-year military agreement with Great Britain.
- 9 September 1954 Libya signs a military agreement with the United States.
- 5 October 1955 Assassination of Ibrahim al-Shalhi, Councilor to King Idris, by Al-Shariff Bin al-Sayyid Muhi al-Din al-Sanusi, grandson of Sayyid Ahmad al-Shariff and cousin of King Idris.
- 1955 Libyan Petroleum Law comes into effect, also creating the country's Petroleum Commission.
- 24 May 1957 Mustafa Bin Halim resigns as Prime Minister
- 1961 Amendments are added to the 1955 Libyan Petroleum Law.
- 25 October 1961 Libya's first oil shipment leaves from Marsa al-Burayqa [Brega].

- 1962 Libya joins the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).
- January 1963 Re-establishment of Sanusi *zuwaya* (religious lodges).
- April 1963 The federal arrangement is abandoned in favor of a unitary state.
- May 1963 Libya launches its first five-year plan for economic and social development. Creation of a Ministry of Planning.
- 1963 First development plan from 1963–1968.
- 1965 Second set of amendments added to the 1955 Libyan Petroleum Law, followed by the creation of the Libyan National Oil Company.
- April 1968 Creation of the Libyan Petroleum Company (LIPETCO).
- July 1968 Libya announces that it will no longer award concession agreements, and that all future agreements will be awarded under joint ventures with LIPETCO.

THE QADHAFI PERIOD

- 1 September 1969 A military coup, headed by Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi, overthrows the monarchy.
- 29 October 1969 The Libyan government demands the withdrawal of all British troops and the liquidation of its military bases.
- 14 November 1969 The first foreign banks and hospitals in Libya are nationalized.
- 28 November 1969 First major speech by Qadhafi on why representative democracy is unsuited to Libya.
- 11 December 1969 Proclamation of the new Provisional Constitutional Declaration.
- 27 December 1969 Libya, Egypt, and Sudan sign the Tripoli Charter.
- 28 March 1970 British forces are requested to evacuate Al-Adem Airbase.

- 5 May 1970 First colloquium of Libyan intellectuals and revolutionaries to debate the revolutionary orientations of the country.
- 16 June 1970 The last American troops evacuate Wheelus Airbase.
- 21 June 1970 Confiscation of Italian-owned properties announced.
- 5 July 1970 First major laws on the nationalization of the oil industry, initially limited to the nationalization of the internal distribution networks of Shell and Esso.
- 1 August 1970 The internal distribution networks of the remaining oil companies are nationalized.
- 28 September 1970 President Nasser of Egypt dies.
- 14 November 1970 Administrative reorganization: creation of governorates (*muhafadhat*) and municipalities (*baladiyyat*) or districts (*mudiriyyat*) to break down traditional tribal administrative boundaries.
- December 1970 Nationalization of all banks.
- 14 January 1971 At Zawiyah, Qadhafi announces the creation of Popular Congresses.
- 15 January 1971 Libyan Producers' Agreements announced.
- 17 April 1971 Libya, Egypt, and Syria agree to create the Union of Arab Republics, to officially come into effect on 1 January 1972.
- 5 June 1971 All foreign cultural centers, except that of France, are closed.
- 12 June 1971 Creation of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU).
- 15 October 1971 All Libyan insurance companies are nationalized.
- 28 October 1971 Creation of a commission by the Revolutionary Command Council to revise the country's legal system in conformity with Islamic law.
- 7 December 1971 British Petroleum nationalized.
- 28 March–7 April 1972 First national ASU congress in Tripoli.
- 12 April 1972 Abolition of the right to strike.

- 30 May 1972 The ASU adopts a law making all political activities outside the single party punishable by death.
- 4 August 1972 The United States reduces its embassy staff in Tripoli to fifteen members at Libya's request. The US ambassador in Tripoli resigns.
- November 1972 Qadhafi for the first time specifically proclaims sovereignty over the Gulf of Sirt.
- 16 April 1973 Qadhafi issues his Third Universal Theory and announces the popular revolution in a speech at Zuwara.
- 18 April 1973 Creation of the first popular committees.
- 2 June 1973 Popular committees take over the country's television and radio stations.
- 8 June 1973 Libya accuses the United States of infringing its 100-mile "restricted air zone" off the Mediterranean coast. Tripoli expels a US diplomat for not having an Arabic passport.
- 11 June 1973 The popular committees take over education, agriculture, and culture in the country.
- 11 August 1973 The Libyan government nationalizes 51% of Occidental Petroleum.
- 1 September 1973 51% of all remaining foreign oil companies nationalized.
- 6 October 1973 Start of the Ramadan / Yom Kippur War, leading to the end of Qadhafi's unity plans with Egypt.
- 18 October 1973 The average price of Libyan crude oil jumps from \$4.604 to \$9.061 per barrel.
- 26 October 1973 Libya embargoes oil exports to the United States for its support of Israel.
- 1 January 1974 The price of Libyan crude jumps from roughly \$9 per barrel to \$15.768 per barrel.
- 11 February 1974 Libya nationalizes three US oil companies: Texaco, the Libyan American Oil Company, and California Asiatic.

- 7 April 1974 Qadhafi resigns to devote himself to revolutionary activities, becoming the *qa'id ath-thawra* (Leader of the Revolution), but remains head of the armed forces. Abd as-Salam Jallud becomes head of state.
- May 1974 Jallud visits the Soviet Union and concludes the first major Soviet–Libyan arms agreement.
- 6 September 1974
1974 Reinvigoration of the popular revolution. Libya concludes its first Exploration and Production-Sharing Arrangements (EPSA I).
- 2 March 1975 Student demonstrations against the Qadhafi government in Benghazi.
- 27 April 1975 New statutes of the ASU announced.
- 13 August 1975 First major abortive coup against the Qadhafi regime, led by two Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) members.
- 26 August 1975 Creation of Revolutionary Courts.
- 3 September 1975 Three major “socialist” laws are announced, restricting real-estate speculation and imports of certain goods.
- 12 September 1975 The United States announces restrictions on strategic equipment purchased by Libya and restrictions on training of Libyans in the use of certain types of aircraft.
- 17 September 1975 Publication of the first of several essays in *Al-Fajr al-Jadid* that will eventually become *The Green Book*.
- November 1975 First Basic People’s Congresses created.
- 5–18 January 1976 The first General People’s Congress (GPC) convenes; the ASU is abolished.
- 7 April 1976 The government puts down student demonstrations.
- 25 May 1976 Qadhafi announces the creation of special committees that will intensify the revolution. They will eventually become the Revolutionary Committees.

- 17 September 1976 Official publication of *Democracy*, the first volume of *The Green Book*.
- 13–24 November 1976 Second meeting of the General People's Congress.
- 4 February 1977 Libya is added to the United States Defense Department's list of potential enemies of the United States.
- 28 February 1977 Extraordinary GPC meeting at Sabha to ratify the declaration of People's Power.
- 2 March 1977 Sabha Declaration: the GPC special congress declares Libya a *Jamahiriyya* – a state managed directly by its citizens. The Declaration on the Authority of the People replaces the Provisional Constitutional Declaration of 11 December 1969.
- 3 July 1977 Major debate between Qadhafi and the *ulama* at Tripoli's Moulay Muhammad Mosque regarding the political and economic role of Islam in modern societies.
- 21–24 July 1977 Egyptian–Libyan border clashes.
- 6 November 1977 Establishment of the first Revolutionary Committee in Tripoli.
- November 1977 Third GPC meeting. The second volume of *The Green Book* – *The Solution of the Economic Problem* – is published.
- March 1978 Announcement of the elimination of private property.
- 6 May 1978 Promulgation of the *bayt li sakinihi* policy: "The house belongs to [those] who live in it."
- 1 September 1978 First calls for the separation of "the instruments of the revolution" and "the instruments of governing."
- 19 December 1978 Qadhafi resigns as Secretary General of the General People's Congress to dedicate himself to the intensification of the revolution.
- December 1978 Intensification of the campaign to abolish all retail and private trading.

- 2 March 1979 Remaining Revolutionary Command Council members are relieved of their duties. The GPC issues “The Declaration on the Separation of Rule and Revolution,” officially separating the “instruments of the revolution” and the “instruments of government.”
- 1 June 1979 Publication of *The Social Basis of the Third Universal Theory*, the third part of *The Green Book*.
- 1 September 1979 Libyan embassies are converted into People’s Bureaus. Announcement of the creation of Revolutionary Committees within the Libyan army.
- 2 December 1979 Attack on the US embassy in Tripoli; the embassy is set on fire.
- 29 December 1979 Libya is put on the State Department’s list of sponsors of state terrorism.
- 1979 Libya concludes its second Exploration and Production-Sharing Arrangements (EPSA II).
- 3 February 1980 Qadhafi calls for the physical liquidation of Libyan dissidents – “stray dogs” – living abroad.
- 15 February 1980 The US embassy in Tripoli closes.
- Spring through Fall 1980 First campaign spearheaded by the Revolutionary Committees to eliminate Libyan opponents – “stray dogs” – overseas.
- March 1980 Elimination of private savings accounts.
- 16 May 1980 26 US citizens expelled from Libya; the United States withdraws its two remaining diplomats.
- 2 September 1980 Libyan–Syrian union announced. Libya opens itself up to all Arabs and creates Arab passports.
- 6 May 1981 The United States closes the Libyan embassy in Washington.
- 12 May 1981 The right to maintain private practices for all professional occupations is abolished.

- 19 August 1981 Two Libyan aircraft downed by the United States over the Gulf of Sirt.
- 7 October 1981 Creation of the National Front for the Salvation of Libya, an opposition movement to Qadhafi.
- 4 November 1981 Exxon withdraws its operations from Libya.
- 10 March 1982 The United States bans all exports except food and medicine to Libya; the import of Libyan oil into the United States is prohibited.
- 13 December 1982 Qadhafi announces the replacement of the country's armed forces by a popular army.
- January 1983 Mobil withdraws its operations from Libya.
- June 1983 Second major Libyan invasion of Chad.
- Spring 1984 New campaign against "stray dogs."
Creation of state supermarkets.
- 17 April 1984 British policewoman Yvonne Fletcher is fatally shot by Libyan security personnel outside the Libyan embassy in London, leading to a rupture in British–Libyan relations.
- July/September 1985 Libya expels large numbers of foreign laborers, in an effort to help balance the country's budget in the wake of lowered oil revenues.
- 15 November 1985 President Reagan bans the import of all refined petroleum products from Libya.
- 7 January 1986 The United States invokes the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, halting imports of all goods and services of Libyan origin. US companies are prohibited from engaging in industrial or commercial contracts with Libya.
- 5 April 1986 A bomb explodes at a discotheque in West Berlin, killing three people.

- 15 April 1986 US aerial attack on Tripoli and Benghazi. In its aftermath, officially organized demonstrations in Tripoli are lackluster. Qadhafi fails to make public addresses for several weeks. The European Union agrees to more restrictive visa policies for Libyan nationals.
- 6 May 1986 The leaders of the G7 countries vow to fight terrorism and single out Libya as a major perpetrator.
- 30 June 1986 The US Treasury Department forces remaining US oil companies to leave Libya but allows them to negotiate standstill agreements, retaining ownership for three years while allowing the Libyan National Oil Company to operate the fields.
- February 1987 At the GPC meeting, criticism of the country's economic hardships paves the way for an attempted economic and political liberalization.
- 26 March 1987 Announcement of Libya's first *infithah* (economic liberalization).
- 23 May 1987 Qadhafi speech on industrial and agricultural reform.
- 1 September 1987 Qadhafi speech at the anniversary celebrations of the revolution, allowing the re-introduction of a private sector.
- 22 November 1987 The Revolutionary Committees are severely criticized at the thirteenth General People's Congress.
- March 1988 Creation of the Ministry of Mass Mobilization and Revolutionary Orientation to limit and institutionalize the power of the revolutionary committees.
- May 1988 Curtailment of the power of the Jamahiriyya's revolutionary courts. They are replaced by People's Courts.
- 12 June 1988 Adoption of the Great Green Charter of Human Rights.
- 21 December 1988 Pan Am flight 103 explodes over Lockerbie.

- 1988 Libya concludes its third Exploration and Production Sharing Arrangements (EPSA-III).
- 4 January 1989 US fighter jets down two Libyan aircraft over the Gulf of Sirt.
- 1 September 1989 Libya agrees to submit the Aouzou dispute to the International Court of Justice.
- 19 September 1989 French airliner UTA 772 explodes over Niger.
- 15 November 1991 Libya is indicted by the United States and Great Britain in connection with the 1988 Lockerbie bombing of Pan Am 103. Two Libyans are charged with the bombing.
- 21 January 1992 The United Nations Security Council unanimously approves a resolution requiring Libya to cooperate with investigations made by the United States and Great Britain in the Lockerbie incident by surrendering two of its citizens.
- 31 March 1992 The United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 748, asking Libya to turn over suspects in the Lockerbie and UTA cases.
- 15 April 1992 A boycott of commercial airlights into the Jamahiriyya, approved by the United Nations Security Council, takes effect.
- 11 November 1993 UN passes Resolution 883, strengthening existing sanctions and freezing Libyan assets in foreign banks, as well as banning imports of spare parts for the country's oil industry.
- 3 February 1994 The International Court of Justice assigns the Aouzou strip to Chad, voiding Libya's claim to the disputed territory.
- October 1994 Major rebellion by army units near Misrata are put down by units loyal to Qadhafi.
- 11 November 1994 The United Nations Security Council further extends its embargo against Libya.

- 5 August 1996 The United States adopts the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act that penalizes all firms (including foreign ones) that invest more than \$40 million in the Libyan energy sector.
- April 1998 Libya confirms that it will allow a trial of the Lockerbie defendants in a neutral country, operating under Scottish law.
- 24 August 1998 The United States and Great Britain agree to a trial in the Netherlands for the Lockerbie suspects.
- 27 August 1998 The United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 1192, promising to suspend economic sanctions if Libya turns over the Lockerbie suspects.
- 5 April 1999 Libya agrees to surrender the two Lockerbie suspects for trial in the Netherlands.
- 11 June 1999 Libyan and US officials meet for the first time in eighteen years to discuss the UN sanctions.
- September 1999 Libya organizes a special meeting of the Organization of African Unity in Sirt.
- 25 March 2000 US State Department officials visit Libya to assess lifting the ban on travel into Libya.
- 3 May 2000 The Lockerbie trial opens.
- 31 January 2001 A panel of three judges finds one of the Libyan Lockerbie defendants guilty and acquits the other.
- March 2003 The GPC adopts legislation to reform the Libyan economy.
- June 2003 Dr. Shukri Ghanem is appointed as Prime Minister, in part to guide the economic reform efforts.
- May 2003 Libya approaches Britain and the United States to discuss outstanding issues, including weapons of mass destruction. Libya makes an offer to the Lockerbie families for a settlement that ties compensation to the lifting of sanctions.

- August 2003 Libya and the Lockerbie victims' families agree on a framework for compensation totaling \$2.7 billion.
- 18 August 2003 Libya and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conclude Article IV consultations.
- 12 September 2003 The UN Security Council votes to lift sanctions against Libya.
- 23 October 2003 The IMF issues Public Information Notice 03/125 following the conclusion of Article IV consultations.
- 19 December 2003 The Libyan government announces that the country will abandon its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.
- January 2004 The United States removes from Libya equipment and documents related to the country's nuclear and missile programs, and starts to destroy its chemical munitions.
- 9 January 2004 Libya agrees to pay additional compensation to the families of victims of a French UTA airliner that exploded in 1989 over Niger.
- February 2004 Muhammad Al-Baradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, arrives in Tripoli for discussions to dismantle Libya's nuclear program.
- 26 February 2004 President Bush issues an executive order that will allow American companies to begin negotiating a return to Libya. The order lifts the ban on travel to Libya.
- March 2004 The National People's Congress discusses an additional number of measures meant to liberalize the Libyan economy.
- April 2004 Qadhafi visits Brussels at the invitation of the European Union, his first trip outside the Middle East or Africa in fifteen years. Prime Minister Tony Blair visits Tripoli.